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'Little vast rooms of undoing':  
*Exploring identity and  
embodiment through public  
toilet spaces*

---

Dara Blumenthal  
Submission for Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology  
University of Kent  
Supervised by Professor Chris Shilling and Dr Dave Boothroyd

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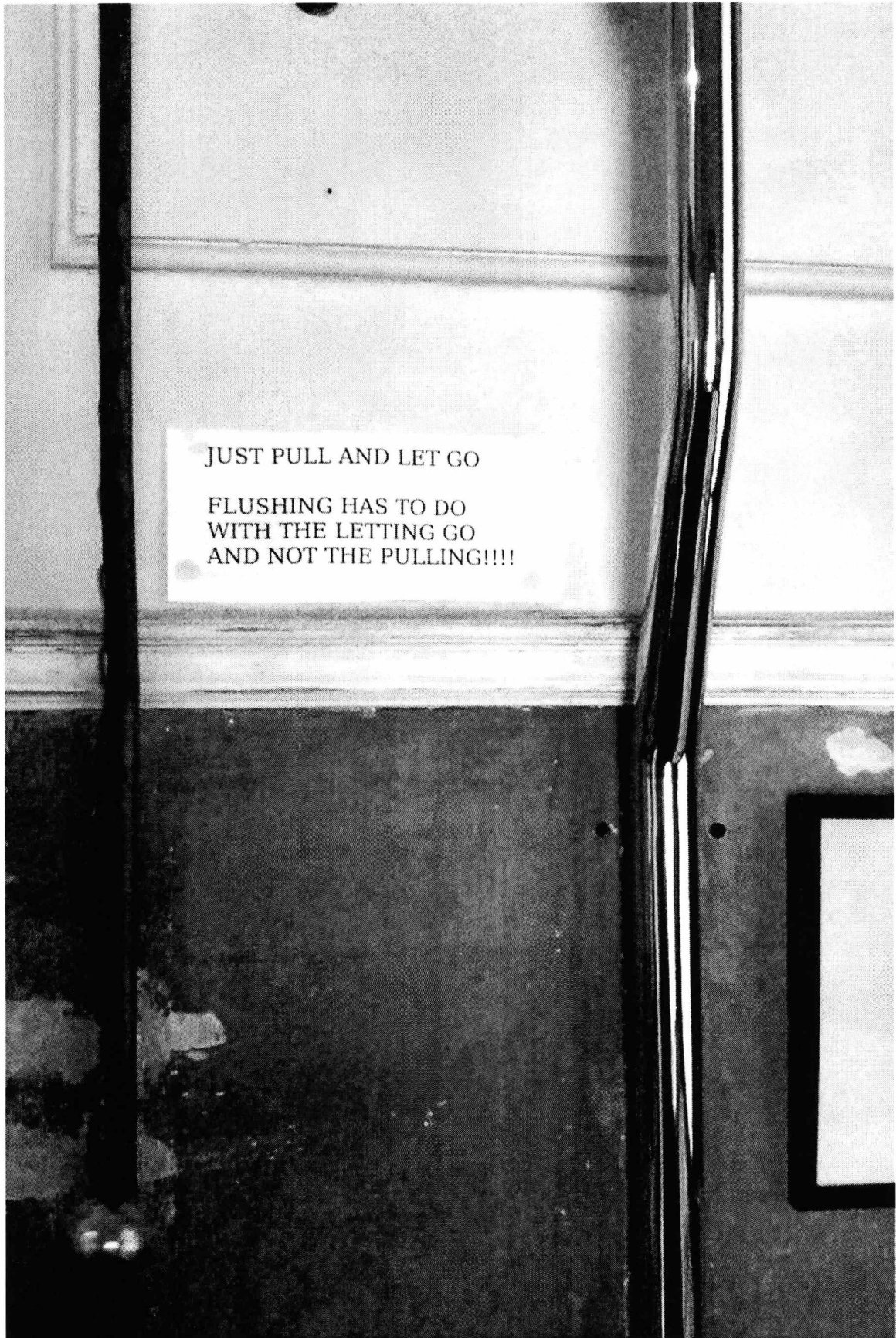
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# Acknowledgements

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Photo taken at the Dover Arts Development, July 2012, collected as part of my research



# Abstract

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This thesis is an exploration of sensory-embodied identity grounded in an empirical study of self-body experience of public toilet spaces, through which I challenge dominant conceptions of the 'individual' put forth by the Western philosophical tradition, social constructionism, and post-structuralism. Those conceptions of the self-body which tend to reproduce Cartesian dualism and apply reductionist, representationalist understandings to materiality, typically render the body into passive flesh, rendering a materiality in need of constant shaping, management, and control. To challenge these understandings, I put forth a posthumanist, material-feminist approach which takes the body not as the mere basis of the self, but rather the source of all experience, knowledge, and understanding. Rather than matter being understood as a stable thing or object directed by the rational subject or social power, this approach recognises the active, ongoing, unfinished nature of materiality. This exploration is organised through Norbert Elias' concepts of *homo clausus* (closed person) and *homines aperti* (people opened) as frameworks for elucidating the experiences of individuals and introduces a Latin neologism - *corpora infinita* (boundless bodies) - to push his process-oriented sociology further via a posthumanist-materialist lens. The empirical study focuses explicitly on individual experiences of sensory-embodiment through a universal daily practice within society: public toileting. My empirical research focuses on sex-segregated public toileting experiences of men, women, gender non-conforming, and trans individuals who have a range of sexual identities. The investigation takes the form of forty-five semi-structured interviews and over two hundred 'toilet use' surveys, completed in New York City, London, and South East England. Through a meditation on socially contingent toileting habits and associated emotions, I suggest that experiences within public toilets expose the fissures of individual identity construction and understanding according to both *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* identity structures and, in doing so, reveal an opportunity for the re-conceptualization of embodied identity as *corpus infinitum*.

ONE

## Introduction: *being (beyond) oneself*

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This thesis is an exploration into the relationship between self-identity and the body as experienced through the ongoing, mundane processes of daily life. In order to explore this relationship I have decided to ground my research in an empirical study of people's experiences of their self-body in public toilet spaces. While self-identity and the body are often understood as having both personal and social aspects, they are most typically theorised as discrete parts of one individual. Public toilet spaces in the contemporary West are thought of in a similarly individualistic fashion. They are understood as both public and private spaces, serving both social and biological needs, yet excretion is an activity normally understood as purely individual, involving just one part of the subject. Once physically and emotionally capable, human beings are expected to carry out their excretory practices as singular beings without further social interference. Interestingly, while these practices are considered wholly private, they are not usually integrated into one's sense of self. Experiences of toileting, while personal, are not thought to give any indication of one's personality or identity. Instead such habitual practices of bodily management serve as a sort of supportive function, a basis for the self



which is built onto or out of the highly managed body. Research into public toilet spaces, then, represents an opportunity to highlight the personal and social aspects of the relationship of self-identity and the body that are generally understood as 'second nature' and offer a way into how such supportive functions both maintain and disrupt the self-body relationship in daily life. In what follows, I explicate my exploration into this relationship through four interrelated sections: the research, public toilet spaces as privileged spaces, my theoretical approach to these spaces, and a chapter summary.

### **Going to the loo**

In this section I describe my experience in developing and carrying out the research this thesis is based upon. From August 2007 through August 2009, I worked in an administrative role at New York University (NYU) School of Law. Fresh out of my undergraduate studies at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized study, I understood this position as a means to an end. By that point I knew I wanted to attend graduate school, but wasn't exactly sure of the specifics. Little did I know that this office job at NYU would offer not only the conceptual 'time and space' for me to work out the particulars of my next move, but would be the literal space of generating a research project. The office I worked in consisted of about twenty employees.



There were three men (all of whom were gay) and the overwhelming majority – including myself and the Associate Dean (the highest position) – were women. This meant that my first full-time job, where I went five days a week for at least eight hours a day, was largely in the company of women. For the first time in my adult life I was using the same public toilet space, with the same people everyday; and since there were many women there, it was a fairly active space. It was in this public toilet space that I first became intrigued by what behaviours in public toilets could tell us about identity and the body.

We were a fairly sociable office of varying ages, ethnicities, and life experiences. Other than the interns, I was the youngest in the office, in my early twenties, and the oldest woman was nearly sixty. About half the women had children and not all were married. We had good rapport, we interacted *in person* often, we went out for coffee, lunch, and evening drinks and this made the job good, enjoyable. It also meant we got to know a bit about one another; we shared personal stories, gossip, and sought advice. This was an office of people who had personal lives and opinions which were easily accessible, *not hidden*, in the workplace. But even here, people did not like to admit they had bodies with biological needs. It was surprising to me, that these people who I spent nearly all of my waking hours with were still so awkward and embarrassed in the toilet.

After studying body awareness techniques<sup>1</sup> for three years (as a central element of my undergraduate studies), it was easy for me to know who was in the toilet when I was in there because, beyond being able to quickly notice and associate what people were wearing, particularly on their feet, I understood how people moved and breathed, and what they sounded like when they did so. Due to this I was able to identify people's behaviours and notice that nearly everyone followed the same patterns. I was perplexed as to why, for example, when one of my colleges was audibly unwell, she would, upon hearing someone enter the space interrupt her bodily function and leave the space as quickly as possible. I wondered why feeling ill was more desirable, or at least more tolerable than having someone who knows and cares about your well-being hear you defecate. I wondered why a woman could be the Associate Dean of an office at one of the most prestigious law schools in the United States of America, but could not defecate in public. I wondered why everyone was so ashamed of their body. So I began asking questions and the answers I received were even more intriguing.

I questioned some of my colleagues and some friends including men, women, genderqueer, and trans folk, about how they felt in and about public toilets. I learned, for example, that some women in my office admitted to 'never pooping at work' (instead they 'always' hold it for when they're

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<sup>1</sup> These include Alexander Technique, Fledenkrais Method, Kinetic Awareness

<sup>2</sup> If I were to include all of the conversations, anecdotes, and personal experiences shared

home); that some people would sneak onto different floors of the building where there was a single-user toilet so they could have 'complete privacy'; and that the associate dean of my office would police the receptionist's intake of liquids, in an attempt to limit the amount of time she spent away from her desk (!), emptying her bladder. This same associate dean, once proudly explained to me that she had 'trained herself' to not 'need' to drink as much as other people, so she rarely needed to urinate during the day which meant she was superbly efficient. In true patriarchal-capitalist fashion, she felt she had mastered her bodily needs, and was unable to recognise how truly depraved this sounded to me.

In this preliminary and nonchalant investigation two things were immediately apparent: Firstly, every single person I spoke to about public toilets not only had a story to tell but was not at all embarrassed to tell their stories; they were eager to share them. Secondly, beyond the 'extraordinary' stories many of which over time, began to repeat themselves, everyone seemed to use the same words to describe their mundane, daily experiences of their bodies in public toilets. That is to say people's descriptions seemed to suggest they experienced their bodies in similar ways in public toilets. It was this second point that intrigued me most. At the time of this preliminary investigation, as someone who was interested in identity (politics and construction), part of a queer community in New York City, and particularly engaged in practices of embodiment, both through physical practice and

through reading literature and theory, I found it difficult to reconcile the bodily experiences of people who identified themselves as so seemingly 'different'. For example, I didn't understand how a genderqueer lesbian from a small town and a stereotypical heteronormative, heterosexual blonde in four inch heels from Manhattan, could have the same experiences of anxiety, shame, and embarrassment in a public toilet. How could those individuals, whose identities, appearances, and lifestyles are seemingly disparate, have the same negative experience of their bodies in their natural biological, yet social functioning? Didn't their identities permeate their bodies and mean that they experienced their bodies differently? I began to question if identity was merely an overlay that postmodern subjects built onto their flesh, a flesh which had already been socially conditioned in along the same 'lines' according to a classical casual relationship of patriarchal (heteronormative or 'straight') sex-gender. Rather than take this self-same bodily shame and embarrassment as a given, a point of unity, merely a bodily norm, I was sceptical. It seemed to me that something else was at work here. It is this relationship between identity and the body that I am exploring most directly in this thesis. Thus the public toilet, as a space where we remove or forget self-identified self-body difference and, in its place, materialise negative self-body experiences of sameness, is the lens through which I explore identity and the body. How I went about this exploration follows.

The data I collected for this project consisted of mainly interviews and surveys. While I would have liked to conduct ethnographic methods in the toilet spaces themselves, my application to the ethics board was rejected in the first instance and was only accepted in the second instance under the condition that I remove all ethnographic components of the research. I was advised to not even use my own experiences in toilet spaces and told I could not conduct any sort of participant observation whatsoever. My second application for ethical approval was granted in December 2009, which gave me permission to conduct interviews and surveys. This meant that any potential focus on specific design and layout of toilets spaces involved in my research could not be developed, since I did not have any access to the spaces themselves. Thus I developed surveys and carried out interviews that could work for a number of toilet spaces and layouts by focusing on bodily excretory experience of the typical, everyday toilet space. In short I focused on behaviours and bodily experiences of toilet cubicles and urinals. I conducted forty-five<sup>2</sup> semi-structured interviews with people in England (London and Canterbury) and New York City. Twenty-one of those interviews occurred in New York City and twenty-four took place in England. Both locations have a high concentration of non-national residents and it should not be assumed that, based on the previous numbers, I interviewed

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<sup>2</sup> If I were to include all of the conversations, anecdotes, and personal experiences shared with me and useful for my study, over the course of the past three years this number would be well over a hundred.

twenty-one Americans and twenty-four Britons. In both cases, I interviewed people who were not born in those countries and the highly international nature of these places helped show how easily and quickly people adopted toileting practices specific to their locale regardless of where they were originally from. This fact is more important to this study than the minor cultural differences of toileting between the two countries, of which I found none of note. This is not to deny that there are cultural differences, but rather to point out that by way of interview and survey I was not able to locate any of note regarding bodily behaviour and experience. Perhaps if I had been able to conduct research in the spaces themselves I would have been able to discern some differences through participant observation. However, it is worth noting as an American living in England I have not experienced any cultural differences in using public toilets myself. Additionally, it is important to note that New York City was chosen particularly because I already had an established network of non-heteronormative and non-heterosexual people there. I would not have been able to make connections and build such a network in England in the time I had to conduct my research. In England I was only able to interview four gay men, one queer woman, and one genderqueer woman. These six individuals were not all British. Thus my network of gay, lesbian, queer, genderqueer, and trans individuals in New York City was an invaluable resource for understanding sex-gender construction and bodily experience. Including differently gendered and

sexually identified people in the study was crucial to exploring the extent that basic and universal bodily behaviours of excretion are integral to heteronormative sex-gender identity. That is to say, it was my prediction in designing the study that those non-heteronormative and non-heterosexual individuals could help give relief to those practices that are particularly normatively sex-gendered and taken for granted as human nature, in a way that those who identify with those behaviours could not. In short, experiences of those who challenge or disrupt the pervasive sex-gender binary that defines and regulates our bodies, when compared to those who don't, can help us better understand how that definition and regulation happens at even the most mundane levels of daily life.

The interviews were evenly divided, based on one of the two gendered spaces regularly used, between cis-gendered (i.e. 'normatively' gendered, meaning one's gender matches the sex one was assigned at birth) and gender non-conforming (e.g. genderqueer, transgender, trans, queer) individuals, with one outlier (as I explain further below). Those cis-gendered participants were also evenly divided between men and women and evenly divided again between straight (heterosexual) and gay/lesbian/queer sexualities. Put simply, I interviewed twenty-two people who primarily use women's public toilets and twenty-two people who primarily use men's public toilets as well as one individual who regularly uses both men's and women's public toilets. My interviewees ranged in age from twenty-one to fifty-six, and had a variety of

sexualities, occupations, and ethnicities. Three of my participants were mothers of young children and one (queer) woman who worked as a nanny for a young child. In other words, I interviewed three parents about their toileting behaviours as well as the toilet training process of their children and one additional participant about her own toileting practices as well as the toilet training process of someone else's child that she undertook as part of her job. I met most of my interview participants socially (for example, at university, parties, pubs, and other social gatherings) and asked if they'd be willing to sit for an interview based on something that intrigued me in our interaction (such as the volunteering of a toilet-related story or the expression of personal feelings about toilet spaces), or were referred to me by friends<sup>3</sup> who were aware of my study. Finding people to interview was relatively easy, though male to female (mtf) trans folk proved to be quite elusive; on three occasions when I had interviews with trans women scheduled they either cancelled last minute or just didn't show up and apologised later. If nothing else, this speaks to the particularly taboo 'nature' imposed on women speaking openly about their bodily functions (a point I explore in chapter six) and highlights how strictly feminine norms are followed by those transitioning to femininity. Beyond this, most of my interviews were comfortable, highly revealing, and funny.

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<sup>3</sup> The final chapter of this thesis, the epilogue, is based on an interview with someone who I was put in touch with by a mutual friend and whose story is quite remarkable.



In order to begin in a relaxed manner I sought informed consent verbally, which I received ethical approval for. This was important since the topic is somewhat taboo and I wanted to reduce the formality of the conversation where possible in order to make participants as comfortable as possible. Before the participants arrived at the interview we had already had at least one conversation in person or via e-mail about the project, so everyone I spoke with in an interview setting already had an idea about the project. At the start of each interview I gave an oral explanation of the project, which I also had a hardcopy of should they request it and also offered to e-mail them this information should they desire it. I explained that I was only seeking their verbal consent in participating and gave them my contact information and institutional affiliation. The explanation of the project and the information sheet covered ten points which are included in Appendix 8. After this explanation I also explained that should they be interested they could read the transcript of our interview as well as the write up of the data in the thesis and invited them to ask me any questions about the project or the role of a participant. At this point I asked if they felt comfortable to proceed and if I could record the interview. If they said yes, and all participants did, I took that as meaning they understood and consented to taking part in the research. I recorded the interviews and later transcribed them verbatim, including, to the extent this is possible, 'non-verbal and para-linguistic communications' (Hycner 1985, p. 280) (I will explain this further below when

addressing coding). As outlined in my ethics application approved by the department, I complied with the Data Protection Act by anonymising all my transcripts and keeping all digital files in a password protected folder on my password-protected external hard-drive. Additionally, all physical materials were kept in a locked box either in my bedroom or in my office on campus, which requires keyed entry. All physical materials were digitized as soon as possible and all printed transcripts and coded materials were also kept securely.

After transcribing each of my interviews I listened to them several times and made notations of non-verbal, emotional expressions. My coding was a physical process not a digital one. After reading and listening to the interviews many times I identified four broad themes: A. Normative Gender and Spatial Uses; B. Parenting, care, and non-toilet uses; C. Sex, desire, drinking, drugs; D. Transgressive bodies, queer, fluid experiences. Each theme was assigned a colour: yellow, pink, blue, green. The colours corresponded to large 5 x 8 index cards onto which I cut and pasted the relevant section of transcribed interviews onto the appropriate coloured card. Through this method I was able to colour-code all of the relevant data according one of the four broad themes in the first instance. In the second stance, I re-read the data together on the cards and using the same colour-coding system, highlighted sections which corresponded the to the other three themes that the specific section was not currently coded with. For

example if there was a story that was predominantly about sex and drinking but also had an element of care, it was put onto the blue card and the phrases about care were highlighted in pink. After these two processes I went back to the data card-by-card and looked for more specific and narrow expressions of meaning and experience. From this I devised a coding system of two-to-three letters for each unit of experience and wrote them on the card next to the transcribed text. For example the code 'ax' was written next to expressions of anxiety, 'qt' was written next to expressions about being quiet or not making any sound, and 'xc' was written next to expressions about the lack of care or a care experience that was painful or negative. I kept a spreadsheet of this list, which included all of the codes, and later the division of codes by card. The coding of my data did not follow a specific set-by-step procedure dictated by a particular method. It was an organic process wherein I devised a system that made sense to me. It was important for it to be a physical, tactile process which involved handling, shuffling and re-ordering the cards in order to experience the data differently. I am not one to follow recipes when cooking, or patterns when knitting, but rather consult a large amount of material from which I can then make my own choices on how to proceed. This process was similar. As I am wont to have my method dictated to me, I became informed about a number of methods and then improvised on what felt appropriate for me and my project. If I were pushed I could define my method as phenomenological. For example, the steps that I took are similar to those

outlined by Hycner (1985, p. 279), in the article 'Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data', who recognises that 'there is an appropriate reluctance on the part of phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps in research methods for fear that they will become reified'. Additionally, as Keen explains, '...unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a 'cookbook' set of instructions. It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals' (1975, p. 41). This approach allowed me to be open to my data as a phenomenon in its own right rather than understanding it 'as an example of this or that theory' (1975, p. 38). I address my reflections on this approach more specifically in an appendix. Moving from the data to the process of data collection, below I address my interviews and surveys in more detail.

All names except for one<sup>4</sup>, have been changed for anonymity. When presenting the data, along with pseudonyms I have included the participant's age and a term or two denoting how they identify their gender and sexuality. In some cases this will read as two distinct aspects of one identity, e.g. heterosexual woman, and in other cases as one, e.g. queer. Before I began interviews I ran a small pilot study, with four individuals (two men and two women) in the Woolf College postgraduate student housing at the University of Kent Canterbury campus, which helped me to focus and narrow my questions and learn how to better word and approach the topics. Before and

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<sup>4</sup> One name hasn't been changed at the request of the interviewee.

after this pilot study my interview schedule went through multiple drafts in an effort to distil and refine my approach. When conducting the interviews I always began by asking the participant to inform me of how they identified their sex-gender-sexuality and how that relates to the gendered public toilet space they use on a daily basis. As the interviews were semi-structured, after these two questions the interviews did not always follow the interview schedule exactly. In most cases people already had something to express about the spaces or a particular experience of the space and their identity. The interview schedule was treated as more of a guide should I have needed it, and only in one case did I follow it exactly. Rather I allowed people to speak openly and asked questions based on what people expressed to me. In this way, I responded to the participant more than the participant responded to my set questions, which enabled me to keep the focus on the bodily experience regardless of the specific content of the discussion. Since the body is present in all experiences there was a great opportunity to learn about embodied practice and experience even in those expressions which focused on 'social uses' of public toilets, which generally did not consume a large part of the interviews. For example, if someone spoke about putting on make-up or having sex I asked questions about the bodily experience of those uses rather than merely the social experience<sup>5</sup>. I think 'social uses' were of less

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<sup>5</sup> While I think this is a false distinction (body use/social use) it does highlight the difference between *having* a body and what one can *do* with their body and *embodiment*, that is the *bodily*

interest to my participants because they recognized the interview was an opportunity to speak about the personal, private aspects of public toileting that are expected to be kept quiet, whereas social uses are more accessible and less taboo in daily life. This approach to my interviews enabled me to cover all of the points I wanted to cover, as laid out in the interview schedule, while not being tied to a linear narrative of exploration and questioning.

In addition to interviews I conducted two surveys, one for users of men's public toilets and one for users of women's public toilets, both of which can be found in the appendices. The surveys, which are based on diagrams of generic public toilet space scenarios, were first piloted in Canterbury, with a small group of randomly-approached undergraduate students. In this process I narrowed the number of photos to include in the survey and identified those scenarios that were redundant or confusing, as well as streamlined the design of the survey, including formatting and instructions. The numerical data that appears in this study is from the men's study due to the fact that the way men use public toilet spaces is more conducive to quantitative-qualitative evaluation (i.e. statistics). The data gleaned from the women's survey were incorporated into my analysis of what I refer to as the Triadic Intra-action Order of public toilets (a framework I explain below), but do not appear as distinct statistics. Those who were surveyed ranged in age from 18 to 68, were approached at random, and were offered no incentive other than contributing

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*experience*. The latter, which encompasses the former, is what is of interest to this study.

to my research in completing the short, pictorial survey. Additionally, a couple of my interview participants shared personal pieces of writing with me, including essay and poetry and I was also an audience member for a piece of performance art about public toilets performed by one of my interviewees. There are a couple of monologues from that performance which, with the permission of the artist, I have also included in the thesis. In addition to these forms of research, over the last three years I have heard hundreds of toilet stories, offered to me completely without my asking or even showing interest. Even today, in the very final stages of this project, friends and people I barely know continue to tell me stories, send me articles, and links to all things toilet-related. The most interesting anecdotes though are from those people who I haven't interviewed, but merely chatted with about my work, who continually come back to me months and even years later to tell me that every time they use a public toilet they think of me and they become aware of how they are using the space and how they are feeling whilst doing so. Some individuals, both men and women, have told me that they have begun to purposely interrupt their habits and question why they feel so compelled to act in a way which makes them feel ashamed of their body. This, I think, is a small victory – an example of how researching, or merely questioning a mundane aspect of daily life, can actually change how people experience an aspect of their lives and can in turn garner a small amount of embodied empowerment.

In the collection of my data I have endeavoured to allow people to speak openly about their experiences at many levels, including their biological-social feelings, their identity politics, their stories of illness, struggle, and excitement, as well as their desire to feel and act differently, to transgress social norms and to try to enact new ways of being and feeling. In tackling a taboo subject, it seems our conversations, those between myself and my interviewees, were openings, thresholds for sharing aspects of themselves which they do not normally get to share. I felt this particularly with young men, who often feel they cannot speak openly about their bodies and emotions with young women. This is evidenced in how they themselves were surprised at how openly they were speaking with me as our conversations progressed. As public toileting experiences are generally, not discussed in daily life, our conversations seemed to offer a safe space for exploring difference for many people, a space where they didn't have to merely replicate the (interrelated) habits of toileting and acceptable conversation, but where they could acknowledge differential ways of being beyond habit and social propriety. As I quickly discovered, for many, public toileting involves habitual feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment. Those emotions were not powerful in restricting expression in our interviews, because they were not necessary for feeling 'normal', safe, and accepted, thus I felt there was a clear level of respect and solidarity. That is to say, my interviewees in most cases, recognised that I wasn't going to laugh at them or judge them and



thus they need not feel embarrassed or ashamed. I think this was a relief for many and a source of generative openness and comfort in difference. This non-judgemental, generative openness speaks to the conception of embodiment I explore throughout this thesis as a possibility for being differently embodied, for becoming-other. This possibility for difference is at the core of the theoretical approach of this thesis and is particularly made possible through the example of public toilets as I explain below.

### **Where's the loo?**

Now that I have introduced who my research involves, what my initial interest and insights were, as well as where and how they were further explored, it is important to more specifically characterise why public toilet spaces are a privileged example for exploring the relationship outlined above. Put most simply, these spaces are built for bodies. They are associated with both a universal, natural, biological need for humans, i.e. excretion, and with society-specific norms, rules, and codes. Public toilets, for the purposes of my study, are those away-from-home, sex-segregated spaces that allow for the urination and/or defecation of at least two persons any given time<sup>6</sup>. In this definition, not only is the space 'itself' considered 'public', insofar as it is not in someone's 'private' home, but the experience of using the space is also one

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<sup>6</sup> I'm not interested in those single person pods located in public as these do not demand interaction within toilet space itself.

of publicness, of varying degrees of potential intimate copresence. The private/public distinction here is not based on the economic delineation of private and public sectors of funding, though there may be some overlap, but is rather directed at the experiential, social conception, and use of the space<sup>7</sup>. Thus public toilets, for the purpose of my project, may be owned and operated by a private institution – like the one that first intrigued me while I was at NYU – or by a business where people go to work everyday, in addition to those that are ‘publicly’ funded<sup>8</sup>.

We know that these spaces are important for living daily life, as social beings, from the likes of sociologists such as Norbert Elias (2000), Erving Goffman (1971, 1977, 1990 [1959]), Shelia Cavanagh (2010), and Harvey Molotch (1988, 2010); urban planners, geographers, and architects such as Alexander Kira (1976) Clara Greed (1995, 2003), Barbara Penner (2009), and Kath Browne (2004, 2006); as well as sanitation and queer rights activists, journalists, filmmakers and public interest lawyers<sup>9</sup> (see e.g. George 2008 and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project at [www.srlp.org](http://www.srlp.org)). We also know that public toilets are important for living daily social life from personal experience. In

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<sup>7</sup> This is a point I develop at length in chapter five.

<sup>8</sup> In both the American and British contexts, the distinction between privately owned and operated versus publicly owned and operated is often unclear. For example, in New York City, there are governmentally cared for public toilet buildings on the premises of city parks, which are free to use and are funded through public-private partnerships (i.e. government funding and private funding) and in England there are department stores, which have pay entry public toilets – these can be considered public toilets on private property that fetch a public fee for use.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the Toilet Training film and recourses by the Sylvia Rivera Law Project at <http://srlp.org/resources/toilettraining/>

English-American contexts, with life oriented around waged labour, people are increasingly living in urban areas and an overwhelming majority leave their home for work, school, household errands, and/or shopping everyday<sup>10</sup>. These circumstances mean that the majority of people will by necessity have to use toilets other than those located in their own homes. Indeed, we can safely assume that most people in England and North America have used a public toilet at least once in their life, and a large majority use them everyday. While this may be the case, and while we may recognise public toilets as necessary for contemporary social life, little attention has been given to these spaces as places where power operates on, in, and through people – that is, how they not only serve an import function of social life, but how they help enable the reproduction of a normative social experience. So while public toilet spaces may not be central to how we conceive of our daily lives or ourselves – due to the taboo nature of what we do in them, we tend not to give them much experiential currency – they are undeniably important spaces for contemporary life and it is my suggestion that when we study the experience of the space, rather than the use of the space or the space ‘itself’, we can garner insights into how we construct embodiment, i.e. the fundamental way we are in and of the world.

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<sup>10</sup> While many of these activities are increasingly done online, people generally still leave their homes for at least small periods of time.

Public toilets are part of public, social life, but they are designed both through architecture and social rituals to be used by an individual in undertaking private acts of excretion. These experiences, according to the typical identity structure in English-American contexts can be described as a juggling act involving one's 'private' self and one's 'public' self<sup>11</sup>. Negotiating the space between public and private usually comes with a toll of personal (1) fear, (2) anxiety, (3) shame, and/or (4) embarrassment directed at one's bodily-self. As Goffman explains, such emotions can occur,

whenever an individual is felt to have projected incompatible definitions of himself...These projections do not occur at random or for psychological reasons but at certain places in a social establishment where incompatible principles of social organization prevail (Goffman 1956, p. 264).

These four oppressive and repressive emotions are common to public toilet use and are vital elements in this study. Indeed, throughout this thesis, I am interested as much in *how* individuals *experience* what they do in public toilet spaces as in what people *do* in public toilet spaces. This experiencing of public toilets is never merely an experience of either oneself or the space (i.e. my experience of myself versus my experience of the space), but rather is an amalgamation of one's body in space.

This experience of public toilets begins, I suggest, by identifying oneself with one('s) sex because the spaces are segregated by sex; a factor that explains why this topic has been explored by those invested in identity

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<sup>11</sup> This is a point I interrogate at length starting in chapter two.

politics whose projects are typically focused on recognition, representation, and rights of non-heteronormative 'identity categories'. For example, Shelia Cavanagh (2010), in *Queering Bathrooms*, aims to show how public toilets are experienced as threatening to non-normative folk (those who identify, as queer, gender non-conforming, trans, etc.) and, oddly in my opinion, advocates a redesign of the spaces that allows for greater visibility of those individuals who find them threatening<sup>12</sup>. Cavanagh (2010) aims to change people's experiences by changing the space. While I too am interested in how people experience public toilets, it is not my aim to suggest how we should redesign them. Furthermore, rather than a study steeped in identity politics and oriented toward representation, a politic that is predicated on stable categories of male/female, straight/gay, etcetera, my research is focused upon a theoretical investigation into the materiality of bodies (of how they are experienced in ways that often exceeds and possesses dissonance with identity categories) and what this reveals about embodied identities. The primary way I accomplish this task is from and through the work of Norbert Elias.

Elias' study of the European 'civilizing process' (2000) keenly traces the development of manners and associated ways of being and thinking about the self-body in society. The development of the European habitus traced through his study, while not specifically body-oriented, necessarily implicates the self-

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<sup>12</sup> I explain this further in chapter four.

body relationship because it socially dictates how an individual should use and be a body in an era of ever-increasing 'publicness' and corresponding 'privateness'. Indeed, this was an era when those two interrelated concepts were first developed and applied to personal habits through social manners and corresponding moral attitudes which were part and parcel of the development of 'public self' and 'private self'. Several of which were explicitly focused on excretory behaviours. It is my suggestion that many of the original social and moral attitudes and related practices, first surrounding excretion and later toileting, continue to shape how we live our daily lives and conceive of ourselves. That is to say that public toilet spaces offer a concentrated and often exaggerated (because taboo) assessment of the self-body relationship that persists today. This is something I explore at length in chapter five, but it is necessary to sketch here how important Elias is to my study.

Put simply, I use Elias' work for an historical grounding, for organising frameworks of identity, and as an opportunity for the opening of new ideas. This grounding, organising, and opening is the basis for a new ethics of being that I attempt, principally, through a radical re-reading and re-writing of Elias via a posthumanist-material feminist lens. This approach, which I explain below, enables a furthering of Elias' fleshed-out concepts and unrealised desires primarily through a

new philosophical framework that...entails a rethinking of fundamental concepts...including the notions of matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time' (Barad 2007, p. 26).

Central to this framework is a new ethics of being as I explain below.

We know from Elias' *The Civilising Process* (2000) that there are clear socio-historical elements to how we continue to conceive of and construct individuality in the contemporary West. We also know from Elias' *The Society of Individuals* (1991) that he was deeply unsatisfied with the fact that individuals and societies were often conceptualised as separate and as ahistorical. Following this sentiment I attempt to show how many of the normative, historical ways of being that we continue to reproduce today and take as 'second nature' rather than learned, are unethical according to the new philosophical framework I employ throughout this thesis. As I explore throughout this thesis, the social-moral attitudes that continue to underpin many of our social ways of being and particularly toileting practices, deny some of the most fundamental aspects of being human including being bodily, caring for others, and a creativity for new ways of living the daily. What's more, it is of no small consequence that since the built environment of interest here is sex-segregated, those self-experiences are also specifically sex-segregated and give us an opportunity to disentangle the workings of power in a space, common to yet glossed over in daily life, that helps (re)produce an

unethical binary sex-gender along a singular axis of heteronormativity, as I address below.

### **Theorising Toileting**

This project is theoretically driven and the approach taken both methodologically and generally throughout this thesis requires some explication. To begin, there are three terms that I use throughout which require defining. Those are sex, gender, and heteronormative. Typically, sex (male/female) is the biological make-up of one's body, and gender (boy/girl, man/woman) refers to those socio-cultural roles and ways of being that are typically based upon one's sex, i.e. those who are female-bodied are expected to be women and thus 'do the things women do'. This process of gendering onto the sexed body renders the materiality of the body into a passive object and the mind into an active subject. Furthermore, those bodies sexed female (and gendered woman) are understood not as *ontologically* different from those bodies sexed male (and thus gendered man), but as an inferior deviation from the ontological human norm of man. This is a classical causal relationship of the body being reduced to mere biological materiality – a *thing* – onto which gender is erected to create a subject. These dialectical relationships, binary sex and its social elaboration into binary genders via the



active mind over the passive body, are constructed according to heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity determines *how* we construct gender. Heteronormal constructions of the body are patriarchal and tend to understand the body as abject – something suspect, threatening, despicable and in need of rational management and control, as I explore at length in chapter six. Heteronormativity thus refers to *ways of being* sexed-gendered on the basis of the oppositional logics of men and women, where for example, women are passive and men are active, women are bodily and men are mental, women are irrational and men are rational. Traditionally, men, as supposedly rational beings, have been less susceptible to the abject nature of the body, whereas women have not been as lucky since their minds are not as rationally developed. While this may seem out-dated, this binary approach to knowledge and materiality is still at the core of much of our understanding of the world and is a point I develop in chapters two and three. These historical constructions of heteronormative sex-gender have shaped the ‘socially accepted’, standard (e.g. moral, ‘correct’, non-threatening, easily identifiable, ‘normal’) practices of bodies in daily life as briefly explained above. Thus those who are lesbian, bisexual, gay, and queer, can still be described as ‘heteronormative’ insofar as they have an undeniable hetero-gendering historicity and many of the practices they engage everyday can be described as heteronormative. For example, the different ways girls and boys learn to

use their bodies in childhood, which often serves as the basis for their adult forms of embodiment, are heteronormative [see e.g. Iris Marion Young's study *On Female Body Experience* (2005)]. Heteronormativity shapes our gender identity and our initial relationship to our body, and can thus be analysed as a material reality which cannot readily be erased from bodily experience. In English-American contexts heteronormativity is central to the historicity and daily experience of identity and the body, and it is through heteronormative constructions of sex-gender that we not only know which public toilet space to use, but also *how* to use it. Put simply, the way our public toilet spaces are spilt according to sex-gender; how we use our bodies in them; and how we feel about our bodies while using them have all been shaped according to (social-moral) heteronormative ways of being. In other words, toileting practices, which are set of 'supportive' practices that are considered personal but not related to one's identity, are heteronormative. Therefore, throughout this thesis, I attempt to show how sex, gender, and heteronormativity inform our materiality in meaning and experience, though often are not recognised as such.

The more general approach taken to and throughout this thesis which enables the examination of the heteronormative ways of being is *diffraction*. I borrow the term from Donna Haraway (1992) whose concern with 'the way reflexivity has played itself out as a methodology, especially as it has been taken up and discussed by mainstream scholars' prompted her to posit a new

optical metaphor for the construction of knowledge (Barad 2007, p. 29). While I explain this in more detail in chapter four, it is important to situate this approach here. According to Haraway and Barad,

a diffractive methodology is a critical practice for making a difference in the world. It is a commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom. It is a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar. (Barad 2007, p. 90).

It follows then that diffraction happens at many levels of experience because it allows one to actively recognise the possibilities in and of being through an awareness of material, sensory, and emotive experiences that are normally reduced to 'human nature', minimised through social propriety, or ignored as unimportant anomaly. This is because, at the core of a diffractive approach, is the understanding that matter is always already active, open, and ongoing, while a reflexive approach presumes matter is stable and passive. This is apparent for example in how reflexivity is attuned to reflection, mirroring, and sameness, while diffraction is attuned to differential ways of being, living, and feeling. This seemingly simple dissimilarity between a reflective versus a diffractive approach to materiality has major consequences for how we construct and understand knowledge and experience. Accordingly, I outline them below through a sustained meditation on the theory which underpins each of them. I deal first, by way of a brief detour through Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) concepts of chaos and difference, with reflection and second, with diffraction and thirdly, give three primary examples of the

diffractive approach working throughout this thesis.

As Elizabeth Grosz (2008, pp. 26-7) interpreting Deleuze and Guattari (1994) explains,

Chaos is not the absence of order but rather the fullness or plethora that, depending on its uneven speed, force, and intensity, is the condition both for any model or activity and for the undoing and transformation of such models or activities.

Chaos is an understanding of the universe that highlights the innumerable possibilities of being which are available before being named, *identified*. It is only from chaos that we can attempt to create order through models. Models of representation attempt to contain chaos through structures and systems, for example heteronormative ways of being. Reflection and reflexivity work in accordance with a representational system of knowledge, which only logically works through the essentialising of matter. As theoretical (quantum) physicist cum feminist philosopher Karen Barad explains,

Representationalism takes the notion of separation as foundational. It separates the world into the ontologically distinct domains of words and things, leaving itself with their linkage such that knowledge is possible (Barad 2007, p. 137).

Reflection and methods of reflexivity rely on this fundamental representationalist separation. For example, not only are we separated and categorised along social understandings (models) of stable sameness of sex-gender [men are one way and women are the opposite and (often inferior) way], this separation requires that things, objects, and subjects are contained within the boundaries of their *own* matter. For example, bodies have

boundaries that are sealed. That is to say, at the core of representationalist thinking is an overt wariness of matter. As Barad (2007, p. 133) posits:

Is not, after all, the common-sense view of representationalism—the belief that representations serve a mediating function between knower and known—that displays a deep mistrust of matter, holding it off at a distance, figuring it as passive, immutable, and mute, in need of that mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it? Indeed, that representationalist belief in the power of words to mirror preexisting phenomena is the metaphysical substrate that supports social constructivist, as well as traditional realist beliefs, perpetuating the endless recycling of untenable options.

In order to work, representationalism employs traditional ‘violent forces of mastery, containment, and control posed by masculinist sciences, technologies, and economies’ (Grosz 2011, p. 150) to create an essential separation between ontology and epistemology, between matter and knowledge<sup>13</sup>. While much of this construction of knowledge has been directed at locating the ‘true’ or ‘inner order’ of things, that is just ‘one mode of addressing chaos, one way of living with it’ (Grosz 2008, p. 27). As

Deleuze and Guattari have postulated, beyond the postmodern obsession with representation and discourse, with forms of order and organization, that is, with systems and structures, that philosophy develops nothing but *concepts* to deal with, to approach to touch upon, to harness, and live with chaos, to take a measured fragment of chaos and bound it in the form of a concept (Grosz 2008, p. 27, original emphasis).

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<sup>13</sup> When understood in this way any, knowledge based on representation is indebted to patriarchal ways of being.

Therefore that separation and stability that are necessary for reflection inherently deny the possibilities inherent to chaos. As Grosz explains, chaos<sup>14</sup>

abounds everywhere *but* in and through the sign. It lives in and as events—the event of subjectivity, the event as political movement, the event as open-ended emergence. The sign and signification, more generally, are the means by which difference is dissipated and rendered tame. Difference is the generative force of the universe itself, the impersonal, inhuman destiny and milieu of the human, that from which life, including the human, comes and that to which life in all its becomings directs itself (Grosz 2011, p. 94, original emphasis).

Following this, diffraction is a non-representational approach to chaos that, rather attempting to locate systems of sameness via reflection based upon representationalist models that do not trust matter, begins by assuming matter is not only trustworthy, but part and parcel of all potential systems of binding chaos, including words and discourse. That is to say, rather than the instability of matter as a source of disturbance that *necessitates* binding, diffraction begins by assuming that the instability of matter is the inherent source of all being, knowing, and understanding in the world. Instability or chaos enables the difference from which any sort of modelling could develop. So, while reflection attempts to create orderly systems of sameness, diffraction attempts to enliven possibilities of generative difference.

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<sup>14</sup> As Grosz (2008, p. 27) explains 'This concept of chaos is also known or invoked through the concepts of: the outside, the real, the virtual, the world, materiality, nature, totality, the cosmos, each of which is a narrowing and specification of chaos from a particular point of view. Chaos cannot be identified with any one of these terms, but it the very condition under such terms are capable of being confused, the point of their overlap and intensification.' To this list I would add Irigaray's 'sexual difference', my use of 'embodiment', French poet Arthur Rimbaud's 'laziness' and 'Bourdonnement' (Ross 2008), and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's 'swarm' (Ross 2008).

This understanding is important for the study at hand as sameness/difference are central to how we construct identity. According to Deleuze (1994) in *Difference and Repetition*, the concept of difference, in the history of Western thought, has been treated in two troubling ways. It has been evaded, aligned, and repressed, while *at the same time* it has been fundamentally tied to identity, resemblance, and opposition as that which is unconstrained, impossible, and monstrous (Grosz 2011, p. 92). While the chaotic possibility of difference is unethically reduced to identity politics through representation and discourse, diffraction situates difference as the ongoing, active *materiality* of knowing and being. The diffractive understanding of difference is not based in orchestrating separation, but is instead invested in *perceiving continuity*. For example, in developing her diffractive approach, Barad asks

What if we were to recognise that differentiating is a material act that is not about radical separation, but on the contrary, about making connections and commitments? (Barad 2010, p. 226)

Similarly, Elizabeth Grosz explains the relation of difference to identity and identity politics in a diffractive way. She says:

Difference is the acknowledgement that there are incomplete forces at work within all entities and events that can never be definitely identified, certainly not in advance, nor be made the centre of any political struggle because they are inherently open-ended and incapable of specification in advance (Grosz 2011, p. 94).

When considering various identity categories, difference can be used in a representationalist way for the purpose of identity politics, but this is a

practice of difference in the name of separation and as Grosz explains, is not a difference that acknowledges the ongoing nature of being; it is not diffractive. This approach to identity is one of the four philosophical techniques identified by Deleuze (1994) that accomplish the reduction of difference into representation (Grosz 2011, p. 93). These four approaches to understanding the world are the

primary means by which difference is converted, transformed from an active principal to a passive residue. Difference is diverted through identity, analogy, opposition, and resemblance insofar as these are the means by which determination is attributed to the undetermined, in other words, insofar as difference is subjected to representation (Grosz 2011, p. 93).

Thus diffraction is an approach that, instead of reducing difference to a 'passive residue', recognises the ongoing, that is *active*, differential nature in all phenomena.

Difference according to diffraction is the materialisation of 'the world in its open-ended becoming' (Barad 2008, p. 139). When we understand matter as active, unfinished, and on-going we can begin to recognise the *entangled*<sup>15</sup> nature of matter and knowledge – we can become aware 'of the apparatuses of production' and enable 'genealogical analyses of how boundaries are produced rather than presuming sets of well-worn binaries in advance' (Barad 2007, p. 30); resulting in a situation which exposes a new range of possibilities for living, being, and becoming differently. Thus

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<sup>15</sup> This term is part of one of the diffractive methods I use throughout this thesis and will be addressed below.



diffraction, as my approach is more than merely a method of research and writing, as through it I am attempting to contribute to the development of a new non-representational knowledge, a knowledge which is non-essentialising of matter. Again, as Barad says,

Making knowledge it not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations – not in the sense of making them up *ex nihilo*, or out of language, beliefs, or ideas, but in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form (Barad 2007, p. 91).

Language as something outside of or wholly separate from matter is central to representational and discursive methods and therefore a re-working of language for this alternative approach to materiality is of great importance. This re-working enables critical engagement with methods of reflection that help produce the boundaries that bind chaos and reduce materiality to passivity. When understood in this fashion, diffraction becomes a method capable of analysing the more simplistic, reductionistic methods of reflexivity. Therefore there are three diffractive methods articulated throughout this thesis, which I use to draw out differential ways of being. They are: (1) a system of 'technical' expression that attempts to bridge matter and language, (2) the use of 'imaginative' expression that attempts to draw out the material nature of reading, and (3) the overall structure of the thesis as an example of an entangled phenomenon. I will deal with these in turn. First, the technical terminology used throughout this thesis attempts to better get at the nature of being in its active, open-ended materialisation. This includes re-appropriated

words, neologisms, and expressive combinations such as entanglement (opposed to 'connection' which presumes separation), and intra-action (opposed to interaction which presumes separation), material-discourse (opposed to material/discourse which presumes separation and opposition). For example, and to flesh this out a bit more, my use of intra-action [borrowed from Barad (2007)] serves to highlight the ever-changing nature of 'subjects' and 'objects', of matter. She explains (Barad 2007, p. 33, original emphasis)

The neologism 'intra-action' *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the 'distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*.

This signals a move beyond 'the assumed inherent or Cartesian subject-object distinction' which believes 'that independently determinate entities precede some causal interaction' (Barad 2007, p. 130-31). That is to say, rather than individuals with stable identities coming into a space and interacting (or not) with other stable individuals – an understanding that would enable the reflection of norms – 'intra-action' considers how (all) elements in an 'interaction' are co-occurring rather than socially prescribed or 'naturally' destined. This enables one to access how norms are actively engaged and reproduced and in doing so, how a range of possibilities are systematically

ignored. For example, let's say a man enters a public toilet space and walks up to a line of urinals, some of which are in use by other men, he doesn't look at the other men or interact with them in anyway. Through the lens of interaction, the man in our example engages in non-interaction or what Goffman (1966) may call 'civil inattention'. That is, as Moore and Breeze (2012, p. 6) explain,

namely a studied disengagement from the space and those within it. We avoid eye contact, act as if we cannot hear or see others and cast our gaze downwards to focus on our own specific path through the space. The benefit of civil inattention in such circumstances is twofold: it is normative and an unmistakeable bodily idiom, to borrow again from Goffman. The rule of civil inattention grants a very narrow range of acceptable behaviour; breaches in the code are obvious and read as a straightforward sign of danger.

The man in this example engages in 'civil inattention' *instead of* interaction. Yet civil inattention is a practice that seeks to *reflect* social norms and thus restricts how one can act which, when we understand the same example through the lens of intra-action, is important. Through an intra-active approach we can highlight how even 'non-interaction', helps the man in our example (re)produce his *sensation* of normative, individual, masculine identity. That is to say it is precisely the non-interaction, the civil inattention that gives relief to the man's 'independent' and 'stable' identity as a man. Intra-action considers how the materialisation of one's 'choice' of behaviour (agency), based upon the entangled nature of a social situation (including the presence of human and non-human elements), is also the materialisation of

one's sense of stability as an individual who can express that choice<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, intra-action, is a diffractive approach that opens possibilities, by identifying how they are regularly shut down through social rules and codes of interaction.

Second, the use of imaginative or creative expression throughout this thesis is a diffractive method. More specifically, that is the use of art, in this case poetry and experimental writing, to aid in and enable analysis. As Grosz explains,

Art is that which brings sensations into being when before it there are only subjects, objects, and the relations of immersion that bind the one to the other. Art allows the difference, the incommensurability of subject and object to be celebrated, opened up, elaborated (Grosz 2007, p. 78).

The power of art is something many people can easily recognise as already a part of their own experience and thus is important here as a proxy, parallel, or way into becoming aware of the sort of being or embodiment I suggest is possible in daily life more generally. That is to say by recognising the threshold experiences we already engage in (e.g. through art) may help us to recognise those thresholds we are merely passing over or covering up with socially instituted habit, as I explore in this thesis. By 'thresholds' I mean the opportunities for feeling, for sensation, for embodied experiences which are not prescribed by the social, which are not pre-digested by representation,

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that matter is materialised ex nihilo through intra-action, but rather that matter is always already an ongoing and active process of being and becoming beyond identity; the sensations with which we *identify* happen in that process.

and which cannot be *contained* to identity. Thresholds open us to the moments of being which bring us beyond ourselves. Put another way, threshold experiences are deterritorializing (Deleuze and Guattari 1972). They momentarily interrupt the territorialization of our bodies and of chaos which we attempt to maintain through (practices of) identity. By engaging with the arts<sup>17</sup> we can feel before and beyond ourselves. These forms are also the framing of chaos, like science and philosophy, but instead of slowing down chaos to measure it or binding chaos in concepts to try to create consistency (Grosz 2008, p. 27), the arts frames chaos not to control it but to *enable* it. As Grosz interpreting Deleuze explains, the arts 'produce and generate intensity, that which directly impacts the nervous system and intensifies sensation. Art is the art of affect more than representation' (2008, p. 3). Thus it is through our framing or territorialization of our bodies that we are able to experience the deterritorializing effects of the arts, but we have to let those effects in, we have to learn to listen, to be aware, to feel. As I explore throughout this thesis, I fear we are becoming too rigidly territorialized or too fragmented in contemporary daily life to experience the deterritorializing effects. For this reason, poetry flanks each of the empirical chapters of this thesis, following the progressively non-normative unfolding of the experiences within the chapters – and indeed the title of this text is also a line of poetry from

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<sup>17</sup> Following Grosz (2008, p. 3), here I too am interested in 'all forms of creativity or production that generate intensity, sensation, or affect: music, painting, sculpture, literature, architecture, design, landscape, dance, performance, and so on'.

Marianne Boruch's (2011) *The Book of Hours*. The poetry is here to help spur becomings, to help you feel more, to offer a space for becoming-other and to help recognise how that may feel. The poems are all either by Arthur Rimbaud or Peter Gizzi and have been selected precisely for their themes of deterritorialization, and emergence. While poetry itself, as a form of art offers a threshold to those who resonate with it, additionally the themes of these poems are also concerned with becoming. Each poem explores possibility and differential ways of being at a level commensurate with those analysed in the chapters and expressed through my interview data. The poems offer another, imaginative or expressive way into the experiences that are described in the chapters and accordingly, the chapters enable new insights in experiencing the poems. In this way the art and the analysis are entangled.

The possibility stemming from this entanglement is made more apparent in the final chapter of the thesis where I've written an interview in a literary, poetical fashion. The narrative of the epilogue is directly pulled from one interview, but is presented unlike any of the other data in the thesis. Here instead of breaking my interviewee's experience apart, I keep his story intact and use poetry to draw out his experiences of difference, possibility, and becoming-other. In this chapter the poetry enables the analysis of experience. Taken together, this 'imaginative' expression in the form of poetry and experimental writing is in line with sociologist Les Back, in *The Art of Listening*, where he declares, 'we have to aspire to make sociology more

literary' (2007, p. 164). My attempt here is to enrich not just the sociological findings through poetry but to enrich the process of reading in its materiality. That is to say, reading and practices of knowledge do not merely 'have material consequences but that *practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world*' (Barad 2007, p. 91, original emphasis). So here poetry is a different material engagement and one that may *make a difference*, that may draw out unexpected sensations which are elusive and difficult to verbalise, and which may make the sensory-embodied exploration in the following pages more readily material. This is vital for, as Law and Urry (2003, p. 11) explain:

if social science is to interfere in the realities of [the] world, to make a difference, to engage in an ontological politics, and to shape new realities, then it needs tools for understanding and practising the complex and elusive. This will be uncomfortable. Novelty is always uncomfortable. We need to alter academic habits and develop sensibilities appropriate to a methodological decentring.

So while the poetry may be unusual or surprising, that *in itself* does not detract from the possibilities it may enliven; and this thesis is focused precisely on extracting possibility from habit.

Finally, the third method of diffraction includes those mentioned previously because it considers the form and content of thesis as a whole. While the thesis has distinct parts it is, as a whole, an example of diffraction. For example, you will notice that the poems interrupt the very structured progression of the thesis. The chapters and the content of the chapters are

very orderly – mirroring the structuring of habits they elucidate – thus the poems are moments outside of and in between the rigid structure. Put simply the format of the thesis itself attempts to materialise the experiential-concepts of (de)territorialization and entanglement I write about. The performative nature of the thesis is an attempt to diffract or materially draw out differential possibilities in- and onto the act of reading and understanding. In its materiality, the thesis is both a framing of chaos and a deterritorialization of it. One I hope you feel as you proceed.

Ultimately, the case study through which I engage these diffractive methods is the body in public toilets. The two most intriguing factors for me about public toilets, are firstly, everyone seems to follow the same rules and codes in there, which means at some point we learned them, and secondly, not only do most people follow the same rules and codes, they also experience the same *feelings while following them*. I'm not claiming that I can access people's feelings, but I can *listen*<sup>18</sup> and what people have expressed has led me to believe that not only did we learn the rules and codes of bodily usage in public toilet spaces at some point in childhood, but that we also *learned to feel the same negative bodily sensations* and associations when engaged in the rules and codes of public toilets spaces. This observation of sameness – which manifests negative, disconnecting emotions – across bodies, is an

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<sup>18</sup> The sensory is developed at length throughout this thesis and listening is extremely valued in this development. Briefly put, listening is an active material process of knowledge-making and a potential threshold for becoming.



opportunity for differential becoming. Where we have learned, for example, bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment, we can learn to *feel* and *be* differently – not by learning *what* to feel about our bodies but by learning *how* to feel, how to be *consciously-embodied*. It is my suggestion that we can *become* before and beyond<sup>19</sup> these negative, normalising, dis-embodimenting feelings when we recognise them as habits, which can be released. That is, as thresholds for change. Instead of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment we can learn bodily courage, trust, creativity, and calmness, which can bring us beyond ourselves in a self-generating, cohesive – as opposed to fragmentary and disconnecting – way. These thresholds are momentary and fleeting and they are easy to miss but they are always already there, we need to learn how to engage them. If nothing else, that is my aim in this thesis. To put it most simply, in my exploration of identity and the body I aim to show that because we have learned to be one way only means we can also learn to be another way; and not just anyway, but to be embodied in such a way that opens us to more and deeper forms of being.

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<sup>19</sup> This phrase connotes an engagement with those aspects of being animal (e.g. sensation) prior to reorganization through humanistic models of being (e.g. identity) as well as those phenomena that bring us out of our humanistic understandings to new and different post-human experiences.

## Chapter Summary

The thesis consists of three main parts: theory and history, empirical findings, and poetry and narrative. I will begin with the end and then elucidate each chapter in order. As I've already mentioned the text culminates in an experimental poetical narrative. The epilogue, chapter ten, is based upon one extremely rich and engaging interview that I had with one person. I wanted to keep his story intact instead of pulling it apart to prove separate points as I found his journey extraordinary and inspiring; his is a tale of becoming-other. Along with the narrative which occupies the left side of the page, there is poetry merged with and coming out of the main text. This formatting is intentional to express another material engagement with structure and chaos. The poems, by Peter Gizzi (2011) from his most recent collection *Threshold Songs*, are purposefully placed to help one feel the character's journey and to point out moments of becoming. Below I summarise the other two parts of the thesis, theory and history and empirical findings<sup>20</sup>.

The three immediately preceding three chapters serve as the theoretical basis of this thesis. These chapters establish the central theme that flows throughout this thesis: the relationship between self-identity and the body. The conceptualisation of this relationship is of vital importance for

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<sup>20</sup> The only chapter not addressed in the following explication is chapter nine, the concluding chapter.

understanding individuality, society, and everyday life. In chapters two, three, and four I introduce multiple theoretical approaches that seek to make sense of how our bodies and identities interrelate. These approaches are steeped in and stem from the Western philosophical tradition, which conceptualizes body-identity through a dualistic (e.g. Cartesian) body (flesh) / mind (identity) model. This portrays the body as passive flesh and a shell that contains the active mind. Even approaches that focus explicitly on the self in experience (e.g. phenomenology) have trouble reconciling this dualism; a dualism that disables us from recognizing how the body is more than the sum of its parts, that is an active and indispensable element to what it is to be a human being.

Throughout chapters two and three I will expose the limitations inherent in this Western philosophical model and in chapter four put forth an approach that seeks to view identity not as separate from or merely expressed through the body, but irreducibly and thoroughly embodied. This approach places the body *as alive*<sup>21</sup>, rather than the mind, at the centre of experience, knowledge, and understanding. Working through this alternative approach in (chapter four), with the emphasis always on, from, and through the body, my interest is not primarily on how one experiences the body in terms of

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<sup>21</sup> I use this term in opposition to the phenomenological 'lived experience', which generally locates experience in the individual rational mind. Rather than 'lived', this represents a move to further conscious awareness of how rational (i.e. mental) and sensory-embodied practices are inherently entangled, while making space for sensory-embodiment that is not necessarily rational. When bodies are understood to be alive, they are able to feedback into rational, cognitive, and discursive ways of being. They are able to *become-other*.

one's identity (e.g. How a heterosexual woman thinks and feels about her body), but rather how one experiences one's social identity from and through a self that is itself *enfleshed* (e.g. A heterosexual woman not only has but also *is* a body that is inextricable to her social existence. Thinking, feeling, and knowing all happen through her body, not merely her mind situated within her skull.) This may seem a subtle distinction but it is an important one: if we first consider that many people in the contemporary West experience their identity or 'self' as something that exists *within* and not *as* or *through* their body, we can begin to grasp just how different these two philosophical, theoretical, and experiential approaches are. Shifting from thinking that we merely have or possess a body, to the realisation that (a sensory-embodied) identity is only possible *because of* active, on-going enfleshment, points to new possibilities for conceiving of and also actually *living* individuality and society.

In exploring these approaches – several that are associated with the dominant Western philosophical tradition's separation of the body from the mind and equation of the self with the mind, and my own alternative that seeks to locate selfhood as derived through enfleshed subjects – I am particularly interested in locating how public toileting practices problematise dominate models of identity and can help us see the need to reconceptualise embodied identity. The approach I seek to develop is an empirical elaboration of what Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman are calling 'the 'material turn' in

feminist theory, a wave of feminist theory that is taking matter seriously' (2008, p. 6). In order to show how different this approach is to conventional views of the body in modernity, I begin (in chapter two) by focusing on Norbert Elias' analysis of the dominant conception of the embodied self within modernity, the closed, monadic *homo clausus*, and use Leder's (1990) phenomenological account to elucidate this monadic experience. While this way of being is theorised and even experienced as 'natural' or given in the contemporary West, it requires a considerable amount of conscious and ingrained body work and social management in order to be sustained. I then introduce (in chapter three) social constructionist and postmodern<sup>22</sup> approaches that focus on the self as developed from *outside* of one's body. These approaches are in line with Elias' *homines aperti* (men [sic] opened) model, but are not entirely successful in moving beyond the ontologically assumed dualisms intrinsic to monadism (i.e. a contained self within a passive, bounded body). Lastly, (in chapter four) I undertake a more sustained focus on the materiality that informs our bodies and identities by analysing material feminist and posthumanist theories<sup>23</sup> that facilitate a new

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<sup>22</sup> I use 'postmodern' and 'poststructuralist' to generally refer to theoretical approaches that are primarily linguistic, invested in discourse and seek to further an understanding of identity as something which is in the first instance individual and fragmented in the second. These approaches tend to focus on the way social structures work on and produce individual bodies, making the body a locale for theory and understanding, but do not account for the body as the generative source of knowledge. Inherent to this is an understanding of humans as singular, individual, bounded entities.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that many of the material feminist and posthumanist theorists I engage with here are heavily influenced by science studies and a Latourian point of view.

understanding of the embodied self. My aim here is to provide a theoretical basis for questioning the taken-for-grantedness of *homo clausus* identities that avoids the weaknesses of both social constructionist and postmodern approaches to *homines aperti*. Ultimately, via a detour that involves the development of a posthumanist-materialist lens, I seek to extend Elias' *homines aperti* conception of body-identity by pushing it beyond the inner/outer, open/closed dualisms it retains and the material losses it sustains. In doing so I offer a Latin neologism that is in keeping with both Elias' work and my posthumanist-materialist approach: *corpus infinitum*, meaning boundless, unlimited, or indefinite body. In doing so, it is possible to productively problematise the 'humanistic model of a subject which has complete control over access to knowledge of experience' (Shilling 2003, p. 55 my emphasis) and instead to situate embodied experience and knowledge as alive, ongoing and potentially becoming-other.

These three chapters unfold via three overlapping, entangled sections which trace the conception of self-body experience, knowledge, and understanding from individual independent monad (*homo clausus*), to interdependent fragmented monads (*homines aperti*), to unbounded cohesive sensory-embodiment (*corpus infinitum*). Building on this alternative conception of *corpus infinitum*, these theoretical chapters will then provide the

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Karen Barad, one of the most important feminist theorists contributing to this school of thought, obtained a PhD in particle physics, where she taught for many years, before moving into more interdisciplinary, feminist, and philosophical work.

foundation for the following empirically oriented discussions by conceptually and experientially situating *why* and *how* public toileting practices are able to reveal the immense amount of work necessary for maintaining the seemingly stable and normative *homo clausus* identity and for demonstrating where postmodern understandings of the fragmented individual fall short. The three approaches (monadic, postmodern, and becoming) established in these chapters will be employed later as an ideal-typical device that enables us to illuminate and elucidate people's daily experiences. This enables access to sensory-embodied knowledge and understanding that, rather than based on a rigid and simplistic identity structure (*homo clausus*) that is subject to fragmentation and over stimulation (*homines aperti*), is pliable, cohesive, and indefinite (*corpus infinitum*), because it takes the materiality of the body as ontologically primary and always already actively open to change. Thus *corpus infinitum* offers a way into experiences of becoming-other, of opportunities for differential ways of being. This signals a move away from the classical identity structure based on bodily dominance and control as the root necessary for knowledge, to new ways of conceiving of and recognising material living as the inherent source of it.

Following the theoretical section is a short historical elucidation of the development of public toileting spaces. Therefore, in chapter five I outline the history of public toilet spaces since the 15<sup>th</sup> century through three spatial-historical milestones. Those milestones include both the social and the

architectural developments of public toileting and are elucidated according to their entanglement with the normative identity structure they support. I explicate these milestones through a sustained focus of Elias' (2000) *The Civilizing Process* through which I consider the development of manners and bodily ways of being associated with increasing levels of shame and embarrassment of the body. Central to this development is the progression of privacy from the communal and thus results in the development of public and private as parts of the social as well as, part of the person. In this chapter I show how the development of privacy and the public toilet are implicated in the development of individuality as the standard model of identity construction in the West. Both the spaces of public toileting and the associated attitudes, as I explore in this chapter, have not changed much since they were solidified in the Victorian era and thus are continually reproduced in our daily experiences and expectations of the body and social propriety. Following this chapter is the section of empirical findings as I discuss below.

The three empirical chapters of this thesis, chapters six, seven, and eight, correspond with the three theoretical chapters described above insofar as they each explore, through empirical, experiential data, one of the primary themes laid out in the theory chapters. Specifically, chapter six is an empirical elucidation of chapter two, chapter seven corresponds to chapter three, and chapter eight explores the approach taken in chapter four. In order to explicate the three different approaches to self-body identity through my



empirical data I have developed the idea of an 'intra-action order' of public toilets that enables me to analyse what I depict as normative experience while also giving relief to the non-normative and threshold experiences contained in my data. In other words, through the territorialization or structure of public toileting behaviours in chapter five, I can more readily access both the deterritorializing behaviours as well as the opportunities for becoming-other through a system of 'intra-action' in chapters six and seven. I will outline this in more detail below.

Chapter six introduces the 'triadic intra-action order' (TIO) of public toilets based on the *homo clausus* experience of the abject body. I use Kristeva's (1982) concept of abjection to elucidate the *homo clausus* approach to the public toileting body as something untrustworthy and in need of control. My intra-action order is developed from and in response to Erving Goffman's (1983) interaction order, through which he analyses the social dynamics of co-presence. The TIO operates according to three entangled rules. They are: minimize your movement, mind your eyes, and manage your boundaries. The TIO refers to a set of practices that are embodied from a young age and through repetition appear natural and universal. They are a conditioning of the body that is experienced as separate from the self. Each rule of the TIO is elucidated through data from my interviews and/or surveys and includes experiences of men, women, gender queer and trans individuals. The rules of the TIO apply to both men's and women's spaces though often operate in

seemingly opposite ways. This contributes to how heteronormative *homo clausus* sex-gender is constructed along a singular axis of ontology with two 'different', indeed opposite, versions – male and female – of the same bodily need. I also explore in this chapter, how learned experiences of fear, anxiety, shame and embarrassment perpetuate the TIO and help *homo clausus* maintain their sense of individuality.

Chapter seven introduces practices of embodiment that correspond to *homines aperti* ways of being. This chapter explores how bodies are interconnected and interrelated in public toilet spaces. The practices focused on in this chapter are thematically related to practices of care. These practices of care include self-care and caring for others and are transgressive insofar as they explicitly challenge one or more rules of the *homo clausus* triadic interaction order which attempts to stabilise *homo clausus* body-identity through experiences of bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment. Practices of 'care in toileting' explored in this chapter work to overtly expose the inherent openness and interconnectedness of bodies by highlighting their vulnerability and in doing so can reveal how the monadic confines of *homo clausus* norms are contingent and frail rather than universal and stable. I also explore how, while fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment continue to play a large role in the practices of *homines aperti*, practices of care can help expose the fissures of *homo clausus* individuality, and thus better enable us to access thresholds for greater intervention in sensory-embodied experiences.

Chapter eight is the final (traditional) empirical chapter (chapter ten is also empirical, but is presented in a very different way). Building on from the developments gleaned in chapter seven, chapter eight pushes my analysis of the fissures in the *homo clausus* identity structure even further. The stories in this chapter coalesce around themes of play, pleasure, and possibility, and work to expose how one's bodily being in the world can shift from rigid habit to open, boundless becoming. These experiences explicate the possibility of self-bodily identity to be described and experienced as *corpus infinitum*. In this chapter I explore the limits of *homo clausus* habit ordered by the triadic intra-action order and show how habits can be dissolved over time, allowing for new ways of being to have an a/effect. This chapter explores how differential ways of being are part and parcel of all practices, and thus expose how the rules of the triadic intra-action order are not immutable, but rather contestable and easily ignored. The practices of play, pleasure, and possibility in this chapter point to the potential to experience a self outside of the *homo clausus/homines aperti* dialectic of understanding and point to the possibilities of being inherent to a material-self which is active and always already open to the experiences of becoming-other. Along with interview data, I also use text from a piece of performance art entitled *Tearoom Sympathy* (written and performed by one of my participants) in order to expose the ability to experience a self not restricted by *homo clausus* heteronormative ways of being. The practices presented in this chapter explore how when experiences

of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment are actively ignored or productively utilised for the opening, that is the deterritorializing of one's self-body, the power of those emotions to regulate behaviour is radically diminished. These practices seize the fissures inherent to *homo clausus* (in)stability and expand them through new ways of being. This results in a radical politic of bodily being, beyond passive habit, anxious abjection, and rational control. That is a new ethics of being.

Overall, throughout this thesis I explore how people experience their bodies in public toilet spaces and how that impacts their sense of self. I study how when ideas of the self are too rigid, when the body is too territorialized, the powerful effects of deterritorialization, of active materiality can barely be felt. Likewise, I investigate how when one is seemingly too fragmented, too accustomed to change, that is, too deterritorialized, there is little room for growth and change through a sensory-embodiment that is not considered active. In order to problematise this dialectical approach to identity as open or closed, inner or outer, I develop an approach which seeks balance between the two. Thus, this thesis isn't about a new structure of identity, but about the ability to recognise the myriad potentials available to us as bodily beings. It is my hypothesis that when we learn to trust matter, to recognise its inherent and active part in all of our entangled phenomenon (e.g. thinking, knowing, understanding, experiencing), we can allow ourselves to be open to becoming beyond those habits and ways of life that prop up social structures based on

passive, stable matter. Thus we open ourselves to embodiment, to threshold experiences, to becoming-other. Rather than a collection of stories and anecdotes that tell us something about social life, the following chapters contain experiences of habit, struggle, and becoming-other that tell us something about being human, about having and being a body in society. It is my suggestion then, that public toilet spaces can help us access the workings of power usually ignored in daily life, and thus help us to recognise the need to reconceive of how we construct and understand identity and embodiment in our (re)configuring of the world.

TWO

# The Dis-Embodiment of Identity: *Homo Clausus*

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‘Walls, then, are built not for security, but for a *sense* of security. The distinction is important, as those who commission them know very well. What a wall satisfies is not so much a material need as a mental one. Walls protect people not from barbarians, but from anxieties and fears, which can often be more terrible than the worst vandals. In this way, they are built not for those who live outside them, threatening as they may be, but for those who dwell within. In a certain sense, then, what is built is not a wall, but a state of mind.’ Bradatan (2011, no page)

## Enclosing the Monad

This chapter will introduce and set out the main features of Elias’ model of *homo clausus*: the conception of the body-identity relationship that he identifies as dominating the Western philosophical tradition and as reflecting how many people experience and live their bodily being in modernity (Elias 2000). *Homo clausus* is the closed, monadic subject who has a high degree of rational, emotional, and physical self-control. As independent individuals, they are separated from others by the borders of their physical selves and are assumed to be autonomously in control of their bodily being. These autonomous individuals seemingly have no bodily or social history. As Elias (1978, p. 116), explains:

the concept of the individual is one of the most confused concepts not only in sociology but in everyday thought too. As used today this

concept conveys the impression that it refers to an adult standing quite alone, dependent on nobody, and who has never even been a child.

In line with this autonomous individual who does not have a childhood (during which social ways of being embodied were naturalised as I explore below), *homo clausus* is assumed to possess a basic, essential identity that exists prior to and remains significantly untouched by social interaction. Instead of being differentiated on the basis of the material or lived differences deriving from such variables as sex, gender, and sexuality, the *homo clausus* model of the embodied self assumes a universally knowable, 'neutral', and stable *subject* that *has* or *possesses* a passive material body. *Homo clausus* subjectivity thus functions through a high degree of bodily disconnection, control, and management. This work enables one to rationally hold together an individual self-identity, which gives the impression of body-identity stability; even though one's physical experience may not be so stable. My suggestion here is that the *homo clausus* subject is encouraged and taught to know themselves *rationally* not physically or sensorially, because all experience, knowledge, and understanding (supposedly) happens through their mind. This body-identity is steeped in a *naturalised* experience of the individual self, existing *within* the sealed borders of the passive body and therefore is a dualism that is experienced in daily life as singular, monadic and teaches one to try to ignore, suppress, or 'correct' any physical or emotional differences that do not fit this conception of individuality. *Homo*

*clausus* is not just a collection of social norms, but also, a matter of how the body is socially and individually *experienced* as an entirely separate, self-same, sealed off entity. *Homo clausus* is thus, most fundamentally, a style of *dis-embodiment*.

### **Individuating Bodies**

To arrive at and maintain *homo clausus* identity in daily life involves the condensation and reproduction of several personal and social processes that attempt to stabilise it. As conceived by Shilling (2012) *homo clausus* identity is made possible through the development of three primary bodily characteristics: Socialization, rationalization, and individualization. Firstly, socialization involves making bodies 'socially acceptable' through the specific embodiment and 'expression of codes of behaviour' and 'the hiding away of natural' and biological functions through personal, spatial, and technological means (Shilling 2012, p. 175). Through the distancing and denial of natural and biological realities the body increasingly becomes associated with the social (Shilling 2012, pp. 175-76). While Elias (2000) initially located this socialization process on an historic scale, developing over many centuries, as I highlight in chapter five, it is for contemporary individuals a condensed process, occurring over a matter of months and years in one's childhood. This social control that everyone in modern Western society is expected to go through, is experienced as learning self-control. The most obvious example



relevant to this study is the process of toilet training, through which small children learn to discipline and control their natural, biological functions through the space and technology of a 'private' toileting facility. In order to become a recognised member of Western society one must express control over excretory functions. This process, among other things, teaches one that the body is fundamentally biological, is something to control and manage *in order* to have a human identity.

Secondly, *homo clausus* is also an outcome of corporeal rationalization; a rationalization that also involves a physical differentiation as the body 'is seen as less of a 'whole' and more as a phenomenon whose separate parts are amenable to control' (Shilling 2012, p. 176). By learning to give attention to the body in terms of separate parts, one learns to rationally discipline and control oneself in what seems like discrete 'mind over matter' expression. Through rationalization, the body is conceptually (and thus experientially) broken down and pieced out, allowing it to be described through modern mechanical metaphors which render the body into nothing more than the sum of its parts. This process of rationalization speaks directly to what I term 'sensorial individuation', i.e. a mode that allows us to conceptually separate and count our sensorium and apply cultural value and meaning to some 'senses' over

others<sup>24</sup>. Consider how our rational counting of 'the senses' (that being five) differentiates them, makes them *knowable*, but does not necessarily make them separate in *experience*<sup>25</sup>. In the contemporary West we conceptualise 'normal' able-bodied persons as having the capacities for seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling as discrete senses, not a cohesive sensorium. Furthermore, we give little attention to proprioceptive and/or kinaesthetic sensorium and label balance, for example, as something that someone either 'keeps' or 'looses' and the degree of spatial awareness someone may possess (e.g. how clumsy they might be) as part of their 'personality' or 'genetics', erasing the fact that we *learn*, firstly in childhood and as a continual process, how to use our bodies in space and how to move around in the world. Rather than a source of knowledge, expression, or oddly identity, the separated senses and partitioned body become tools for rationality through which passion, pleasure, and violent emotional expressions are mediated and controlled. Developing 'sensorial individuation' and drawing on Asia Friedman's (2011) 'selective attention' and 'optical socialization', I suggest below that the sense of sight is one of the most intensely rationalized senses

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<sup>24</sup> This also means that non-normative or non-traditional (e.g. those developed through Buddhism and yogic practice) sensing abilities can be devalued, mocked, and rendered obsolete.

<sup>25</sup> In one of my upper level undergraduate courses I asked my students why they thought we counted our senses and they could easily reach rational explanations. When I asked them to describe experiences in daily life when they actually use their senses separately, they quickly realized that was much harder to rationalize. This discussion ultimately undermined their initial rational explanations and if nothing else provided some interesting and engaging bodily-awareness building.

and extremely vital for the maintenance of *homo clausus* identity. This process of rationalization necessitates mental disconnection from, learned ignorance towards, or over-simplification of the physical and sensorial. It is a system of categorization. Processes of *consciousness* are often necessarily processes of *sensing* (and are always material process as I explore in chapter four), but sensory-embodiment is ignored or left out of the rational construction of knowledge, understanding, and 'sense making'. That is to say consciousness is not merely rational, but an entangled embodied process which is crudely condensed into the rational. Consciousness *is* material. Thus 'rational processes' often leave out the embodied aspects and are taken to be separate from or the basis for other 'rational processes'. As Elias (1991, p. 102) explains:

The idea that what we reifyingly call 'consciousness' is multi-layered is the outcome of an attempt to set up a new mental framework within which specific observations can be processed and that can serve as a guide for further observations.

Observations are crucially sense-based happenings. In order to *perceive* one must engage one's embodied sensorium. It is only through this foundational 'mind over matter' split that we can continue to produce dualistic, rationalistic observations emblematic of the Western philosophical tradition. The rationalization of the body constructs not only the imagined borders of the mind, i.e. within the skull, but also firmly locates thinking, knowing, and understanding within those borders by neglecting to become aware of, or include sensory-embodied experiencing. The *homo clausus* individual knows

experience only through the rational mind, not the sensate body. Those rational processes are understood to be something other than material and since it is the basis of understanding, *homo clausus*, is a conditioning of materiality that seeks to produce this same binary amongst all bodies. It is a functional procedure of sameness from which representational difference can be ascertained.

Thirdly, the individualization of the body completes the monadic *homo clausus* identity by supplying it conceptually and experientially with an 'outer' boundary (i.e. the skin) that separates the 'individual' from other 'individuals' within 'society'. As Elias (2000, p. 475) points out, 'The idea of the 'self in a case' is a central theme within modern Western philosophy and vital for the dualisms raised above. As explained by Mennell (1989, p. 88, my emphasis),

Descartes (1596-1659) played a major role in establishing the tradition of philosophy which is preoccupied with a consciousness of one's own consciousness, and striving to understand one's own understanding, as a single adult mind, *inside*, striving to grasp by Reason the problematic world *outside*.

This philosophical basis has seeped into daily life and forms the basis of how many people understand their experience within Western capitalist individualism; that is, through a false awareness of consciousness as separate from the body. That is to say we are still suffering the effects – both in the production of philosophy, knowledge, science and in mundane daily life – of Cartesian dualism that completely overlooks the process of how one's

consciousness of being conscious is only possible through active, ongoing embodiment. Individualization creates the imagined borders and boundaries, between the 'inside' and 'outside', of one's body, with the outermost layer of skin acting as the sealant. While Descartes takes it as a given that consciousness lives within one's body, it is only possible through an ongoing process of dis-embodiment. In order to create an internal sense of self, the body has to be hemmed in and made distinct from *other* bodies in the 'external' world. This is necessary to give the impression that one has a stable sense of self, an identity that is separate and distinct from those selves around them. Together, these three interrelated and interdependent processes enable the *homo clausus* self-body-identity.

### **De-sexing the Monad**

Before continuing my general elucidation of *homo clausus*, it is important to briefly address the relationship of sex and gender to this monadic self-body-identity. In reflecting the dominant Western philosophical tradition's focus on the mind as that which defines us as humans, *homo clausus* is founded upon a heteronormative view of the male, heterosexual body as that which approximates closest to its autonomous ideal. This ideal serves as the ontological basis for all bodies regardless of sexual difference. Historically, this has been extremely problematic for those sexed as female

and gendered as women because menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and menopause are fundamental to sexual, that is *ontological*, difference but are not the types of bodily functions that are easily inculcated into the rational *homo clausus* system of identity and knowledge; and let us not forget that feminine sexuality has a long history of being completely ignored, obfuscated or stigmatised through religion, science, and medicine<sup>26</sup>. This is how the self-same 'neutral' (i.e. male) body-identity has been perpetuated for so long. Emily Martin (2001, p. 22) brings these discrepancies to light in her study of American women in which she asks women *not* to discuss

their families, spouses, and children (when they seem very likely to simply reproduce a version of dominant cultural ideology) but about themselves, through the medium of events which only women experience and which perhaps for that reason are rarely spoken of—menstruation, childbirth, and menopause.

She points out that, 'women are not only fragmented into body parts by the practices of scientific medicine, as men are; they are also profoundly alienated from science itself' (Martin 2001, p. 21). Since women have been historically and systematically excluded from the process of knowledge making, their ability to express their 'consciousness of being conscious' (in the Cartesian sense) has been socially limited or entirely unrecognised. Therefore 'The depiction of modern consciousness leads to the conclusion that women's lives are especially degraded, fragmented, and impoverished' (Martin 2001, p. 22).

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<sup>26</sup> Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) where, she rewrites Freud and interrogates many other philosophers is a clear case-in-point.

Sexual difference is taken not as the fundamental difference of a different type of human being, but as indicators of weakness and inferiority which ultimately mean they are lesser than the ideal man. Even where women attain positions of power within patriarchal hierarchies, their bodies are still considered to 'interrupt' or 'interfere' with their 'mental' capacities. Thus, no matter how strictly those sexed female adopt and adhere to *homo clausus* norms, their bodies will always be transgressive because their biological realities and their 'perceived' (i.e. presumed) mental capacities are limited because of their biology and thus do not match those of the *homo clausus* ideal; that is an ideal of sameness across all bodies. It is only through the questioning and exposure of this taken-for-grantedness that new models can be developed. This cause is taken up by queer and feminist theorists, such as Judith Butler (see e.g. 1988, 1993, 1999 [1990], 2004) who sought to disrupt heteronormative assumptions of sex, gender, and desire, as I will address in chapter three when interrogating social constructionist and postmodern approaches.

### **Containing and Controlling the Monad**

As explored above, the development of the *homo clausus* identity structure involves the naturalised splitting of the mental and physical functions through society-specific propriety (Elias 1991, 2000). We learn how to be and have bodies based on societal systems of rationality and dis-

embodiment; this is a point I develop at length in chapter five. While this may seem like 'human nature' (i.e. innate), it is instead the outcome

of a long civilizing process in the course of which the wall of forgetfulness separating libidinal drives and 'consciousness' or 'reflection' has become higher and more impermeable (Elias 2000, p. 410).

This sense of 'human nature' is continually reproduced in contemporary societies because

the adaptation of young people to their adult functions usually happens in a way which particularly reinforces such tensions and splits within the personality (Elias 1991, p.122).

Maintaining the *homo clausus* way of being requires a high degree of self-consciousness<sup>27</sup> and self-control (which falsely gives the impression of complete mental understanding of and control over experience while ignoring that those *are* indeed material processes). Elias (2000) speaks explicitly about how the battles that used to take place between people, for example, now more frequently take place within individuals; as the supervising elements of one's consciousness struggle to keep drives and desires from 'breaking through' one's 'bounded' flesh or spilling out into the public realm as that would signify a loss of control and a loss of the borders that contain the individual. This no doubt, results in a loss of awareness of

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<sup>27</sup> I use this term in contrast to 'self-awareness', which points to a more thoroughly embodied, emotionally and sensorially engaged process. Self-consciousness tends to be a rational, reflective process where one projects their awareness 'out' of and back 'in' or 'on' to their body. Self-consciousness tends to serve a social function, whereas self-awareness is more personal and diffractive (happening at several levels of being), rather than merely reflective. For more on this distinction see Barad 2007.



one's drives and desires and instead becomes a consciously controlled way of being.

Without this work the *homo clausus* subject could not maintain a normative, legible body-identity in society. Through this self-consciousness and self-control the *homo clausus* subject learns how to *have* a body, rather than how to *be* embodied. The body is merely a biological given, a supportive apparatus for the mind (i.e. self) that requires strict physical and emotional management. This management of the fleshy, biological, and emotive body is apparent through not only outward social manifestation, but also bodily patterns on the more subtle, personal level. This is clear if we compare characteristic modes of breathing that separate individuals in the contemporary West, from those Eastern practitioners of yoga or tai chi chuan analysed by Mauss (1973). Individuals brought up in the domestic cultures of the West tend to breathe shallowly using only the upper portion of their lungs and restrict their breathing in daily life when engaged in certain activities, whether that be reading e-mail, in conversation, or driving to an appointment. This is also clear in how people deal with stress that cannot be emoted freely, by holding it in their muscles by tensing, e.g. their shoulders, jaws, and/or stomachs, or constantly shaking a foot. Similarly, *homo clausus* subjects are inculcated to employ certain emotional states to hold together this body-identity.

As Elias' (2000) elucidation of *homo clausus* suggests, deeply ingrained experiences of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (FASE) overlay these bodily processes and disciplines and are vital for maintaining the sense of sameness and stability in this individual body-identity. FASE are deeply connected to the development and continued engagement of self-consciousness and self-control and are four emotions I focus on throughout this thesis. These states of being are experienced as part of 'human nature' but how, why, when, and where we experience them are taught and learned in a society-specific way. FASE are so powerful for the *homo clausus* identity because they are socially instilled to reinforce the 'self in a case' experience. To paraphrase Elias (1991, p. 122), these emotions arouse the feeling *within* an individual that one is separate from other people. FASE, deny the connectivity of people and social life and often make us feel like shrinking, hiding, or fleeing. Learning to experience these states as individuals props up and increases the seemingly palpable divide between one's self and others<sup>28</sup>.

FASE are basic and crucial aspects of *homo clausus* identity because individuals are not only encouraged to experience these emotions but to also impose them upon *themselves* during occasions when they fail to live up to the standards of the isolated, ideal monadic subject. This imposition requires both

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<sup>28</sup> When considering toileting behaviours, the shame and embarrassment that contemporary individuals experience, as explored throughout this thesis, did not always exist. The progressive development of this fear and anxiety as tied directly to the body and bodily functions is dealt with directly in chapter five.

self-consciousness and self-control. Should someone fail to engage in or display such self-centred characteristics, they are thought to lack the level of maturity or rationality of the stable, controlled *homo clausus* subject. They are thought to be abject and *different*. FASE in relation to the *homo clausus body* are of particular interest here. When it comes to these emotions as based upon the fleshy, biological body, it is often difficult to rationally understand the emotions separately. A general sense of fear and anxiety (e.g. unease, worry, concern) regarding bodily transgression work to keep the *homo clausus* subject mentally aware of and in control of bodily borders (to the extent possible) at all times. When control cannot be maintained or must be relinquished (e.g. during excretion, sex, or a heated argument), the subject risks shame and embarrassment. FASE are related to the ability of one to maintain their *homo clausus* identity as stable and socially legible. Fear and anxiety, in relation to the body, are emotions entangled in social connectivity. One may fear or be anxious about social exclusion and ridicule based on embarrassing or shameful instances or possibilities. Shame and embarrassment are some of the first emotions we learn to feel in relation to our bodies; we are taught to control, manage, and discipline our bodies because otherwise they will bring about embarrassment and shame. Thus instead of leaning to *feel* our bodies as entangled with our minds, we learn to feel these emotions. They act as a self-body buffer; a rational-emotional system used to keep the body merely biological, untrustworthy, and disconnected from the self. What's more,

these emotions are often considered juvenile and can make one feel young or small because they are emotions learnt early in life, when one is learning to discipline one's body according to *homo clausus* subjectivity, and thus we associate them with our 'base' bodily needs. They are both inherently degrading while and necessary to function socially.

Erving Goffman, who describes how *homo clausus* ways of being operate in social life (as explored in the following chapter), has given thorough attention to the topic of embarrassment. He describes it is as:

a possibility in every face-to-face encounter...It occurs whenever an individual is felt to have projected incompatible definitions of himself [sic] before those present. These projections do not occur at random or for psychological reasons but at certain places in a social establishment where incompatible principles of social organization prevail. In the forestalling of conflict between these principles, embarrassment has its social function (Goffman 1956, p. 264).

As Goffman describes, embarrassment acts a sort of buffer zone within an individual. Because certain bodily expressions are not socially acceptable, yet individuals must still be (bodily) in public, embarrassment helps create distance between these two incompatible features of the social. Goffman explains how individuals are understood to have one body and thus engage in one set of performances which expresses one's self. These characteristics are generally static, innate and do not allow one to have different personalities, but rather one enduring (i.e. highly managed) identity. Furthermore, according to Goffman's interpretation, one is expected to have complete agency over one's bodily 'projections' – that it is one's duty to be in

control of the way one's identity is 'given off' and 'sent out' into the world. He believes that individuals can and should be able to manage this process and by using FASE, help that management process.

Similarly, Scheff, who posits that experiences of shame exist at a low grade in all social interaction, understands shame to be '*caused by the perception of negative evaluation of the self*' (1988, p. 398, original emphasis). Instead of the belief that, in modern societies, shame is an emotion that adults rarely experience (as evidenced, for example, in anthropology and psychoanalytic theory), Scheff (1988, p. 397), believes, similar to Goffman's convictions regarding embarrassment, that shame is always potentially present in social life. He explains that, 'shame is *the* social emotion, arising out of the monitoring of one's own actions by viewing one's self from the standpoint of others' (Scheff 1988, p. 398, original emphasis). (This is also a prerequisite for *homines aperti* and explored in detail in chapter three.) The experiencing of these emotions are socially instituted and individually imposed. They help create and maintain naturalised barriers between bodies and reinforce *homo clausus* subjectivity as separate from and merely expressed through the body. Instead of an embodied experience of one's self, this embarrassed and shameful subject is created by projecting awareness or consciousness (oneself) outside of and back onto the surface of the body; confining the emotion to the internal parameters of the enfleshed self. *Homo clausus* subjectivity is based upon this ability to 'naturally' monitor the

borders of one's body from one's rational awareness and not allow anything to leak out of the 'sealed' body.

'Naturalness' is generally associated with comfort and 'unnaturalness' may refer to embarrassment, shame, or other type of discomfort. As Goffman (1956, p. 264) explains:

In the popular view it is only natural to be at ease during interaction, embarrassment being a regrettable deviation from the normal state. The individual, in fact, might say he felt 'natural' or 'unnatural' in the situation, meaning that he felt comfortable in the interaction or embarrassed in it. He who frequently becomes embarrassed in the presence of others is regarded as suffering from a foolish unjustified sense of inferiority and in need of therapy.

In Goffman's conception, 'naturalness' is conflated with 'normativity'. This is similar to the way that heteronormative *homo clausus* identity is conflated with the biological body. FASE help maintain this sense of 'naturalness' in the reproduction of *homo clausus* body-identity. They help prevent the loss of monadic boundaries because they act as the body's defences from the outside-in. Fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment, through rational awareness, produce the boundaries and barriers of one's physical self because they require one to experience self-awareness from an imagined outside (i.e. self-consciousness). The social taboo and stigma associated with these negative feelings also keep subjects from experiencing other aspects, emotions, sensory processes, and movements inherent to embodiment. FASE regulate how the body can be used in everyday life according to naturalised normativity. While FASE may be experienced as uncomfortable or even painful, they are not

natural, but rather learned barriers imposed onto the fleshy-self that help activate a very specific sense of inner and outer worlds. When experienced, these emotions give the impression that the body is bounded and sealed, while actually revealing the intense mental and emotional work that goes into holding together the *homo clausus* body-identity. These negative feelings rationally construct and distance one's sense of self from one's bounded body in a cycle that ensures the continuation of FASE. Since this cycle begins at such an early age (e.g. with toilet training) the borders of the body/self seem natural and stable, as do the associated embodied emotions. Through the early embodiment of FASE we learn to stabilise and mentally distance 'ourself' from 'our (and other) bodies'<sup>29</sup>.

### Looking Out From Within

Bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment have a very clear, socially distinct, rational basis that one typically begins to learn in early childhood and is a process that continues throughout adolescence. It is often through these negative feelings that people first learn how and where to conceive of the borders of their bodies and therefore what they *should* feel responsible for as *their own*. It is an overarching process that allows one to quickly identify and define (i.e. categorize) the world around them. It is the

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<sup>29</sup> This process is a beautiful example of two related concepts I deal with starting in chapter four: onto-epistemology and material-discourse.

process we in the West understand as becoming *an* individual. Thus FASE are crucially enacted or prevented through the visual since that is how one seemingly 'projects' one's self outside of one's body. The sense of sight helps one maintain the borders of their body through deciphering and mediating what can and cannot come into contact with the imagined borders of the body<sup>30</sup>. As Colebrook (2010, p. 17) explains,

When the eye is privatized it takes on the mode of viewing from the point of view of the bounded and isolated individual, no longer *feeling* as part of its own life the infractions on other bodies. Instead the eye becomes a detached observing organ, intensifying the border between self and other.

Many classical and contemporary sociologists have given perception and sensation at least a cursory glance<sup>31</sup>. Simmel (1995) and Goffman (1963) give particular attention to sight and eye contact in social life, as does Child (1950),

who claims that perception buttresses the sociology of knowledge, and Lowe (1982), who offers that perception is the link between the content of thought and the structure of society (Friedman 2011, p. 189).

The way we use our senses in daily life and what and how we perceive is a culturally constructed process (Friedman 2011) based upon various 'structures of expectation' (Tannen 1993). In the contemporary West, because we are inculcated in early life to restrain our sensory-embodiment and

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, these value judgments are generalised and society specific.

<sup>31</sup> For example, according to Friedman (2011, p. 189) Cerulo (2002) 'locates traces of what she calls a 'sociology of sensation' in the work of Durkheim (1966 [1951], 1995 [1912]), Marx (1978), Cooley (1962 [1909]), Schutz (1951), and Weber (1946)'



manage our physicality in socially-specific ways, we learn to use our 'sense of sight' to apprehend the world most readily. Goffman highlights this in his analysis of perceptual framing and the import of the visual. He says:

What is heard, felt or smelled attracts the eye, and it is the seeing of the source of these stimuli that allows for a quick identification and definition – a quick framing of what has occurred (Goffman 1986, p. 146).

For the *homo clausus* subject vision is extremely important because it is most closely tied to rationality and enables the rationalization of the material world. Sight is experienced as the sense most closely related to the mind (the mind's eye, as it were) and recruited to do the work, at times, of all of our senses<sup>32</sup>. 'Seeing is believed to be unique among the senses in terms of its ability to provide the undisputable [sic] truth' (Friedman 2011, p. 189). The way FASE are twined with sensory-monitoring is a sophisticated system of body-identity management: Learned shame and embarrassment foster distrust in one's body; fear and anxiety create distance from feelings of shame and embarrassment; and the sense of sight assuages fear and anxiety moment to moment. Sight is arguably the most highly regarded sense in Western society<sup>33</sup>. It is the primary mediator in daily life<sup>34</sup> and, while maintaining the

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<sup>32</sup> Consider the vast array of visual metaphors that permeate our language (e.g. 'seeing is believing'); we even use vision-based euphemisms to obfuscate the use of our other senses. For example, often when we want to touch and hold something we say 'let me *see* that'. This means that even when we are able to use our sensory-embodiment in fuller ways we still credit the rational, sense of sight for the action.

<sup>33</sup> With the 'global village', the spread of Westernization, visual cultures, and screen-based technology an argument could be made that the sense of sight is becoming the most important sense throughout the world.

status quo, it arguably keeps us from a fuller sensory-embodied life. As Colebrook (2010, p. 18, original emphasis) explains:

The eye increasingly becomes a site of passional attachment in itself: if in the primitive social machine the eye operates hapitcally...the eye of modernity becomes a *reading* eye centred on man as an organism who views the world as so much calculable material.

Vision and our overemphasis of it keeps us from using and being sensorially aware bodies in new and different ways because it has been socialised for purpose-oriented use, which tends to be dis-embodiment; rendering flesh into passive materiality while the knowing-eye reads the world. Taken together, vision is hierarchical: valuing front-body, forwarding looking, heteronormative progression; selective: according to 'optical socialization' (Friedman 2011); and limiting of embodied innovation on an individual scale.

According to Elias (2000), as the process of civilization and individualization moved along, social life started to become more predictable, quieter, and less dangerous. People learned how to discipline and manage themselves in order to avoid breaking into wild and often violent swings of emotionality. Instead of social issues, these drives and passions became the domain of the individual and restraint was expected for the sake of others. (It was man's civil duty and since women were understood as particularly emotional beings, they were not fit for public life and thus not considered

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<sup>34</sup> Consider how contemporary Western ideals understand those with sight 'loss' as ill equipped for contemporary life -- yet possessing an 'extraordinary' ability to engage with their 'other' senses.

citizens. This still affects citizenship and civil rights today. For a discussion of the implications of such an ethics see for example Irigaray 1996.) Social control shifted to self-control and danger became 'internalised' instead of acted 'out'<sup>35</sup>. This is where the import of the visual takes hold for the development of *homo clausus* subjectivity. As outbursts and dangerous rages are rendered socially unacceptable, the individual not only learns how to restrain such urges, through a reconditioning of the embodied-self (to a disembodied-self), but also learns to observe, to *view* the subtly and distinctiveness of other people's actions with a new awareness. As Elias (2000, p. 420) explains:

Just as nature now becomes, far more than earlier, a source of pleasure mediated by the eye, people too become a source of visual pleasure or conversely, of visually aroused displeasure, of different degrees of repugnance. The direct fear inspired in people by people has diminished, and the inner fear mediated through the eye and through the super-ego is rising proportionately.

This situation is the outcome of processes that occurred gradually over hundreds of years, but it is now replicated within each individual, on a much more condensed scale, in the matter of a few years of one's upbringing. It can be seen, as Bourdieu describes it, as 'a structuring structure, which organizes practices and perceptions of practices' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 170). Through this individual yet collective self-regulation enacted through the eye and understood through the rational mind, the inner sense of self, from which

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<sup>35</sup> When children cannot yet control their body-selves according to social standards they are described as 'acting out' their urges and impulses.

individuals watch other individuals, is further consolidated. Foucault describes this as an 'inspecting gaze'. He says:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself (Foucault 1988, p. 155).

The *homo clausus* self surveils itself and others to maintain heteronormative sameness and detects any difference, with their probing eye, as repulsive. At the daily experiential level this consolidation is apparent in how, instead of touching or engaging with something or someone directly – *physically with our flesh* – we merely *look*. Eye contact has replaced enfleshed engagement in many cases and helps solidify the ideals of stable, self-same *homo clausus* body-identity. While we may not *touch* very many people or things every day, we are constantly bombarded by images, sights which we visually consume (or not) in socially relevant ways. Bruner (1958, pp. 92-3) takes this point further by talking of 'perceptual readiness' as a process that works in tandem with 'selective attention' (not wholly unlike Goffman's devices of 'framing', 'disattention' or 'inattention'), through which 'we seek out and register those details that are consistent with social expectations, while overlooking other details that are equally perceptible and 'real'' (Friedman 2011, p. 191). The *homo clausus* knowing-eye seeks out consistency in all bodies, in a self-same way, while overlooking other aspects. This is clear when women who appear masculine are forcibly ejected from public toilet spaces because they have

short hair, no make-up on, and are not in particularly feminine clothing even though they are clearly female-bodied (e.g. breasts, hips, lack of facial hair). Thus *homo clausus* relies on the gaze to police bodies, to prop up social propriety, and to adhere to heteronormativity. Bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment, without socially contingent ways of perceiving, would lose all currency.

### **Dis-Embodying the Monad**

This 'stable,' 'self-distanced,' sensorial-individuated position of the *homo clausus* body-identity is at the core of what I term 'dis-embodiment'. While much of the *homo clausus* identity is based on controlling, ignoring, and denying the fleshy, physical, emotive body, one can never entirely disentangle from it. Instead, one creates distance from the fleshy body through imagined (i.e. conceptual) bodily borders, which are maintained by sight via optical socialization and selective attention. This is a position of dis-embodiment; the subject is obviously always a body, but the body is not integrated into the most fundamental aspects of the sense of self<sup>36</sup>. This is not to say that it is favourable or even possible to experience an 'unfiltered' sensory-embodiment<sup>37</sup>, but rather that we must acknowledge 'the vast

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<sup>36</sup> In the most extreme cases, transgender and transexual individuals feel that they are 'trapped' inside of the '*wrong*' body and take steps to change the physical/biological make-up of it through surgeries and hormonal therapy.

<sup>37</sup> Through I wonder if this is how certain people who are autistic experience the world.

amount of potentially perceivable data that is normally blocked from our awareness' (Friedman 2011, p. 192). Like *homo clausus* subjectivity generally, this state of dis-embodiment, facilitated through perceptive blockage, is not *naturally* occurring, but rather *naturalised*. The body is actively *rendered into* an encapsulating, passive mass via *homo clausus* subjectivity which is itself enflashed.

Drew Leder, in *The Absent Body*, offers a keen phenomenological treatment of the *homo clausus* body-identity, but his understanding differs fundamentally from my conception of dis-embodiment, which I will explain below. While he seeks to move beyond Cartesian dualism, and is successful in much of his critique of that approach, his observations remain dis-embodied and heteronormative (i.e. in his case, white, middle class, male). He reinforces the phenomenological *homo clausus* experience in his analysis of how, in the normal course of events, the body fades from experience or consciousness of the individual self. This understanding of embodiment nicely highlights the paradox within phenomenology, described by Shilling (2005, p. 56) as:

Having been interpreted by many theorists as analyses of the 'lived body', of how people experience their bodies, the work of Merleau-Ponty and others within this tradition is actually concerned with the bodily *basis* of experience.

By giving attention to the *homo clausus* body, Leder merely describes the dis-embodied subjective experience of a bounded self that inhabits a sealed body; the body is simply the basis for *conscious* (not *bodily*) experience. This is

apparent in his description of the status quo, where the only concern is with movement and rational front-body use; e.g. walking down a long corridor in the airport to reach one's gate is typically a rational, progression-oriented action. The movement is about the destination and during it, one's consciousness is seldom directed beyond the goal, beyond the rational into the sensory or embodied. Leder's mistake is that he believes it is his body which must get his mind to break the rational process, to go beyond the rational into the sensory. This understanding reifies rationality as that which is separate from the body. His mind, seemingly located in his skull, maintains *homo clausus* and Cartesian boundaries as he is unable to dissolve the imagined borders of his mind in order to permeate his 'non-active' body. That is to say, it is his mind, his conscious awareness that must be taught how to permeate his body, not the other way around. This training of the mind is overlooked by dis-embodied phenomenology. In Leder's formulation of embodiment, conscious awareness of the self (i.e. the active mind) is *required* for experience – whereas sensory-bodily experience or embodied awareness, rarely leads to consciousness. This is because the body is not understood as active materiality but rather passive and in most cases, stable. Leder cannot bring his mental awareness into his 'motionless' body and thus he concludes that the non-active body 'disappears' from awareness *because it is not active*. He says:

Bodily regions can disappear because they are *not* the focal origin of our sensorimotor engagements but are backgrounded in the corporeal gestalt: that is, they are for the moment relegated to a supportive role, involved in irrelevant movement, or simply put out of play (Leder 1990, p. 26, original emphasis).

The inherent implication in his conclusion, laden with visual metaphor and bodily hierarchy, is that only overtly 'relevant' movement can warrant mental attention. This is a mind-body relationship that is focused on *doing* not on *being*. The mind can only become aware of the body when the body is *doing* something practical or painful, i.e. in Leder's formulation, doing something new, different, or wrong. Otherwise, the body should 'disappear' into its normally passive state. There is no space for the mind to become aware of the *being*, living body or for embodied awareness of the mind. There is a clear split between the two.

In this theory, Leder reveals to his readers that, in his acceptance of his mental processes as primary, he is unaware of the patterns of his own mind<sup>38</sup>. This is an explicitly heteronormative (and arguably, white male) understanding of embodiment insofar as heteronormativity is generally concerned with progression and usefulness<sup>39</sup> (i.e. production) and thus views queerness (as one oppositional framework to hetero) as 'stagnant and useless'

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<sup>38</sup> Just as one can learn to become aware of their patterns of movement or breath, one can learn to notice their patterns of thought. Learning this sort of awareness is part of very basic (i.e. beginner) meditative practices which teach one to firstly notice that they are thinking, secondly notice the types of thoughts they tend to have (e.g. if they are regarding the future or past), and thirdly learn that simply noticing them can be enough, rather than judging or engaging them.

<sup>39</sup> This is in parallel to 'Georges Bataille's work on eroticism, waste, uselessness and unrecuperability [sic]' (Giffney 2008, p. 59)



(Giffney 2008, p. 68). Leder's apprehension of embodiment is one of selective attention, based upon a particularly Western style of centring attention on a 'focal point' (Nisbett and Masuda 2003, p. 11163). This way of being and comprehending (central to *homo clausus* identity) operates via a pattern of exclusion and ignorance of sensory-embodied experience in social settings as well as when one is alone. As Zerubavel (2006, p. 23) explains:

Ignoring something is more than simply failing to notice it. Indeed, it is quite often the result of some pressure to actively disregard it. Such pressure is usually a product of social norms of attention designed to separate what we conventionally consider 'noteworthy' from what we come to disregard as mere background 'noise'.

Leder furthers this paradigm of social norms (i.e. heteronormativity) in his account of the body. He believes the body, when not engaged in purposeful action 'that creates our environment and governs our daily routines' is not part of our experience, because we are not consciously aware of it, but also that the body 'can abruptly reappear as a focus of attention when we are ill or in pain and when our bodies are at their least socially productive' (Shilling 2005, p. 57). Leder terms this reappearing of the body '*dys-appearance*'.

That is, the body *appears* as thematic focus, but precisely as in a *dys* state—*dys* from the Greek prefix signifying 'bad,' 'hard,' or 'ill' (Leder 1990, p. 84, original emphasis).

He explains that 'Dys-appearance characterizes not only the limits of vital functioning but those of affectivity' where, for example, he may experience some emotions within himself 'holding sway...as an alien presence' that he

cannot get rid of (1990, p. 84). Leder (1990, p. 84) adds that 'Anxiety provides a good example of this phenomenon'.

While compelling, this understanding of embodiment clearly suffers from monadic *homo clausus* experience. It fails to question how certain engagements, emotions, and ways of understanding are learned in such a way that typical bodily 'relegation' can even occur. This is evident in his use of 'focal origin' and the ideas of 'disappearance' and 'dys-appearance' in and of themselves. 'Focal origin' implies an understanding of *having* not *being* a body, that while may not be entirely visually based, is steeped in optic metaphor and the use of sight to notice a 'region' of the body (e.g. he cannot see his legs when he is sat in a chair reading because his eyes are engaged in something else – reading – thus his legs fade from his experience). For Leder, experience is only ever able through consciousness (i.e. rational, mental apprehension), and he is unable to assign any value to non-activity, stillness, or the back-body, all of which can be read as 'useless' or 'queer' in his formulation of body-identity<sup>40</sup>. What he problematically fails to acknowledge is that his entire thesis is predicated upon a highly rationalized style of dis-embodiment, which is highly demonstrative of adult *homo clausus* body-identity. As Shilling explains:

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<sup>40</sup> Non-normativity or generally termed here as 'queer' plays an important role in my elucidation of the normative triadic intra-action order of public toilets introduced in chapter six.

The body only fades for Leder when it has become sufficiently *rationalized* to be engaged in instrumental action and is actually *engaged in* such action. Thus Leder's account can usefully be read as an ethically worrying explanation of what happens to bodies when they become locations for the effects of a highly rationalized society (2005, p. 58, original emphasis).

Leder's is a very limited understanding and experience of being both conscious and embodied which makes for a troubling ethics of personhood. His conception implicitly honours a straight, front-body, forward motion<sup>41</sup>, sensory-embodiment that supports the *homo clausus* way of being insofar as it implies that there can only be one main point of bodily sensing at a time; meaning the body is always separated (i.e. sensorially individuated) through rationality in a hierarchical way. His account, more than embodied is *cognitive*; the description of 'fading' and his inability to notice or be conscious of certain sensory, perceptive, and emotive happenings is akin to a 'cognitive structure' concerned with 'relevant attributes' defined by Fiske and Taylor (1991, p. 15) as 'schema'. Cerulo (2002, p. 8) explains that

schemata...allow the brain to exclude the specific details of a new experience and retain only the generalities that liken the event to other experiences in one's past.

Cognitive schemata produce sameness (normality) where there may be differential ways of being. Thus one may fail to recognise their own inherent difference in their ongoing embodiment. When the body is understood as

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<sup>41</sup> This can be read as a heteronormative, linear, success and progression-oriented way of being.

passive materiality and only 'normal' when one is not conscious of it, experiencing only makes sense through focused rationality.

The two types of disappearance Leder terms, '*focal*' and '*background*' (Leder 1990, p. 26), honour a 'focused' perception that again, is rational in its splitting of the body and sensing capacities into 'knowable regions'. Where the body cannot be split and conquered rationally it becomes a mystery. The issue of 'disappearance' and 'dys-appearance' as ways to describe one's experience of the body in use inscribes a sort of mystical unknowable sense that the body on its own is something that just happens *to us* and is *naturally* out of our control. This is clear in his treatment of the 'affective' where his emotions are described as something foreign to him, which he cannot seem to master or control. Again, this is a heteronormative understanding of adult embodiment, where masculinity cannot make sense of emotionality *because* it happens *in the body*. This is clearly where Leder's phenomenology does not fulfil its mandate; this is decidedly not about the body as a living being. In his elucidation of his experience of anxiety, he does not seek to understand *why* he experiences this state (the 'why' of emotionality is not a productive question for heteronormative masculinity), or where in his body he feels it, but rather how he experiences it. That is, how he is conscious of it. This description is useful for creating a *rational* and highly distanced understanding of an emotion but does very little to understand why he is experiencing it in the first place, as if emotions just 'appear' on their own. This

also means that he is disconnected from his emotions and thus he is creating the 'out of control' feeling in his own body that patriarchy inscribes onto women's bodies. Since women, historically, have been 'expected' and 'allowed' to be emotional (at least to a certain degree) they have a better opportunity and material history for understanding why they feel certain emotions. Thus, logically, we can draw the conclusion that women may generally be less subject to experiencing their emotions as 'out of control', since they are given the space to engage with them, to feel them, which is in contrast to Leder's experience and the general masculine pressure to disconnect from and rationalize emotional processes – rendering masculine emotionality more 'out of control', because more out of touch (i.e. they don't *feel* their emotional processes, they are disconnected) than women.

Similarly, despite the inclusion of the sensorimotor apparatus as something seemingly disperse there is, in Leder's work, a strong undercurrent of rational focused knowledge as the way to *access* sensing, feeling, and perception. This conception of the body is not about embodied-knowledge, it is about knowing through the focused mind (i.e. consciousness) and maintains sensorial individuation and dis-embodiment. For Leder, consciousness and experience are nearly synonymous. My conception of dis-embodiment presupposes Leder's mystical body, which is experienced as *naturally* absent (passive) or dys-appearing (active). It goes beyond this by highlighting how his account unintentionally points to the ways that the body

is *made into* something we *learn* to keep from conscious awareness, not something that is naturally separate from it. Unlike the mystery of the disappearing body, dis-embodiment implies that we actively diminish our awareness and distance our consciousness from our bodies – that is, we create that sense of mystery about ourselves through an *active*, ongoing process of dis-embodiment. One implication of my approach here is that we can also actively shrink that distance, should we be inclined, in order to create more, and greater forms of, embodied awareness. Through *homo clausus* dis-embodiment the rationally bound mind (seemingly confined to one's skull) is experienced as the central source of knowledge, information, and understanding while the body is merely the encapsulating, pragmatic mass, requiring control and management. This is a body that one inhabits (and inhibits) through rationally embodied connections (dis-embodiment), but not a body that one *always already is*. *Homo clausus* body-identity takes the 'raw data' of sensory-embodied experience and through 'consciousness' turns it into knowable information; this is the very limited, narrow depiction of rational experience. The body is always active in this formulation but rarely acknowledged as such; thus there is little room for sensory-embodied experience and virtually no space for thresholds of becoming-other. Leder's *homo clausus* phenomenology exemplifies a self who *has* a body, not a self who is thoroughly and actively embodied. Fortunately, this is not the only way to conceptualise or to experience our embodied being.

## **Conclusion: Body as territory**

*Homo clausus* subjectivity is based upon a self within a body. This body-identity is not natural, but rather requires a substantial amount of work and effort to maintain. The inner sense of self is consolidated through the rational control of desires, drives, and emotions and the body is made into a conceptual case through the manifestation of imagined borders, which must be managed accordingly. This is accomplished (at least partly) through sensorial individuation, selective attention, and optical socialization. Independently managed through socially instilled fears and anxieties of shame and embarrassment (which seek to make individuals *feel* disconnected from society), the individual body becomes the vessel that contains the all-important self. Individual consciousness, mediated through the distancing eye, becomes the primary mode of subjective experience. While we may interact with and even rely on other individuals in daily life, our self seemingly remains locked inside our bodies, constant and without direct social interference. The self can only be accessed through the conscious, rational mind, which one apparently has control over, as the body is not a source of experience, but merely the basis for it. For most who are raised in a Western society, it is extremely difficult to

imagine that there could be people who do not experience themselves in this way as entirely self-sufficient individuals cut off from all other beings and things (Elias 2000, p. 472).

This phenomenon, where the core or true self 'appears likewise as something divided within him [sic] by an invisible wall from everything outside, including every other human being' (Elias 1991, p. 472), *is homo clausus*. In experiential terms, it is a detached style of *inhabiting* the body, where the *individual* is the primary social entity. Rather than the body being thought of and thus experienced as active and integral to social life, it is understood as a tool, vessel, or machine required to sustain the self<sup>42</sup>. It works along a singular heteronormative axis of sameness.

While this may seem logical and even *natural* to some, as many sociological theorists<sup>43</sup> today accept this self-perception, and the image of the individual corresponding to it, as the untested basis of their theories (Elias 2000, p. 472)

the blatant rationalization and oversimplification of the self-body relationship is highly problematic. It renders individual social identity as the way one *interacts with* but does not necessarily *constitute*, society. This situation is the precursor for Elias' (1991) examination in *The Society of Individuals*, wherein he interrogates the relationship of these two 'parts' of the 'whole'. While we may think of the individual as the pre-social or constant core entity and the socializing or social conditioning a person goes through as two separate

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<sup>42</sup> When I tell people that I do 'sociology of the body' an overwhelming percentage cannot even understand without prompting from me, how the body could possibly fit into sociology. This alone is a clear testament to the dis-embodied nature of daily life in the contemporary West. I can generally clear up some of the confusion by simply asking, 'well you need a body to be a member of society, right?' or 'doesn't everyone have a body?'

<sup>43</sup> The examples Elias gives are Descartes, Max Weber, Parsons, Leibniz, and Kant. Leibniz stands out among them as being credited for monadology, an important step away from egocentrism. (Elias 2000, Mennell 1989).



layers they 'are in fact nothing other than two different functions of people in their relations to each other, one of which cannot exist without the other' (Elias 1991, p. 60). Individuals are both shaped by their relations to other people and actively shape other individuals in and through their relations. To think of this merely in terms of self-society interactions is a grossly reductionistic understanding of the social process, of embodiment, and of the self. The very existence and development of individuals is only possible through contact with many other people, other bodies that are different to one's own. If anything, embodiment *as the seat of experience*, is the given, the logical, ontological starting point, and the individual self is formed from and through contact with others. Yet, the body gets left out because the focus is on individual subjectivity as the primary mode of experiencing, not on embodiment. Furthermore, the potential for personal change, (physical, ethical, political or otherwise) is barely possible for the *homo clausus* individual. As any process of deterritorialization is highly threatening for *homo clausus*, there are very few opportunities for personal growth, for becoming-other. When they do happen they may be experienced as a particular crisis (e.g. 'identity' or 'mid-life'), an 'epiphany', or entirely devastating. In order to push Elias' conception further and to better grasp the alive, becoming body, we must seek to move experience and knowledge beyond the construction of the walled-in, highly territorialized, individual self and allow materiality to feedback into and disrupt the purely cognitive

loop. I begin this move in the following chapter through my exploration of Elias' attempt to better situate the relationship between society and the individual with the concept of *homines aperti*, or opened selves. These selves begin with the social, not the individual.

THREE

# The Dis-Embodiment of Identity: *Homines Aperti*

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## Opening the Monad

The *homo clausus* subject, as explored in the previous chapter, embodies a paradox. This subject is an individual who can only exist as such through the denial or ignorance of the (collective) social processes which help create a sense of territory, of individuality. Theories and philosophies which interrogate or engage with this subject may acknowledge the social (or at least the existence of other individuals), but the emphasis tends to be on the individual mind-self within the 'passive body'. Such accounts of the self fail to realise or neglect to give attention to the ongoing social processes undertaken (and thoroughly embodied) which *actively render* the body into something that *could be* rationally understood as passive, merely biological, materiality. While some philosophical approaches, such as phenomenology, claim to capture the 'lived experience' they are not always successful in moving beyond dualistic, representationalist understandings of embodied selfhood. According to Elizabeth Grosz (2011, p. 28), phenomenology is inadequate because it 'assumes the functional or experiencing body as a given rather than as the effect of processes of continual creation, movement, or

individuation.' For example, while Leder's (1990) phenomenology gives attention to the body as the *basis* for experience (but not the active source of it), it does not open up or challenge the *homo clausus* body-identity as natural, given, or occurring from *within*. Rather, it reifies that notion. In Leder's conception, as explained by Shilling,

There is little suggestion that the body can become a major, prolonged focus of attention in its 'normal' state; that it can become a sensual vehicle for creativity or an explicit site for individual development (Shilling 2005, p. 59).

Leder supports the Western philosophical tradition's understanding of monadic embodiment, where individuals possess an 'inside' life from which they rationally view and comprehend the 'outside' world. This binary, like most, can be easily problematised due to its simplistic, reductionistic nature.

Elias attempts this problematisation through the concept of figurations, a term chosen to highlight those webs of interdependency and interrelatedness in which all humans exist. Whereas Parsons (et. al) 'take the privacy and individuality of every person's bodily sensations as evidence that man [sic] is by nature in effect a self-contained and solitary being' (Elias 1978, p. 134), Elias swiftly exposes the over-simplistic nature of this view. He shows how both individuality and emotionality are directly connected to and reliant upon the social, upon other 'individuals', highlighting that we are *social* beings, not solitary ones. For example, he points out that each person's striving for gratification is directed towards other people from the very

outset' and that the experience of gratification is not 'itself derived entirely from one's own body – it depends a great deal on other people too (Elias 1978, pp. 134-5). This example underscores how embodied experience is construed as purely individual, when in practice (i.e. daily life) it is wholly reliant upon others and not only in evocation, but as a *possibility for experience in and of itself*. To account for this interrelatedness, and to expose its continued misconstruing by Western philosophy and sociology, Elias posits humans as *homines aperti*, or 'opened selves'. This conception sits in dialectical opposition to the *homo clausus* model of the sealed-in, entirely territorialized, independently functioning self, by targeting the collective and interchanging nature of identity construction and experience.

Society is not merely a collection of closed, independent individuals, but rather open, interdependent, people; i.e. there is no 'person' in the singular without 'people' in the plural. The potential to shift from an individual, monadic experience of *homo clausus* to that of dynamic, open, *homines aperti* is more productive for understanding individuality, society, and everyday life. As Elias (1978, p. 122) explains, it is

essential if people are to recognise that the apparently real partition between self and others, the individual and society, subject and object, is in fact a reification of the socially-instilled disengagement of their own self-experience.

That is to say, in order to become an individual, to develop *homo clausus* body-identity, one must manage, control, and sensorially discipline one's

body. This process, as explained in the previous chapter, is socially specific. Individuals are constructed through social processes that rely on dis-embodiment, sensorial individuation, selective attention, and optical socialisation. These are processes of a representationalist epistemology through which materiality is understood as passive and stable. Likewise, in order to understand how societies consist of and function through individuals, it is vital to study how individual body-identity experience is fundamentally built upon this dis-embodiment and sensorial individuation *as socially instituted*. This 'socially-instilled disengagement' has been productively explored by social constructionist and post-structuralist<sup>44</sup> theorists (e.g. Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault) who posit an understanding of identity that can be described as largely social, that is as *homines aperti*. Many of these approaches, including their feminist, queer, and linguistic variants, aim to open the closed *homo clausus* subject through identity politics, queerings, discourse, and fragmentation; through disrupting bodily boundaries, the stable sense of self, and the individualistic, dualistic notion of inside/outside. These re-imaginings re-present *homo clausus* as *homines aperti* and represent a move toward an understanding of society as a collection of open, interrelated people, where experience is contingent not on the individual rational mind, but on social life.

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<sup>44</sup> For ease of articulation I refer to social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches collectively as postmodern.

Questioning the source of the 'basic identity' (e.g. the body as 'neutral' ontology) that *homo clausus* subjectivity relies on for 'stability' enables reconceptualisations of materiality, identity, sexuality, gender, and society. Rather than a basic identity constructed along the heteronormative dialectic of sameness coming solely from one's body and then developed through the rational mind (with little contribution from the social realm), postmodern approaches posit that identity is inherently social and cannot be made separate from social life. In what follows I outline the shift from *homo clausus* to *homines aperti* through three approaches that engage with and/or further theoretical developments, which have been vital for new ways of thinking through material human life. First, I focus on Erving Goffman and Judith Butler's approaches to body-identity as inherently connected to social performances, which are understood as explicitly discursive. Second, by focusing on Shelia Cavanagh's use of the theoretical (Lacanian) mirror to discursively construct body-identity, I show how such approaches, which render materiality into 'a kind of citationality' (Butler 1993, p. 15), are severely lacking in their formulation of body-identity. Third, I further elucidate the limits of language and discourse that these approaches prioritise by returning to Elias' conception of *homines aperti*. Finally, I briefly introduce the alternatives I work with in chapter four.

## Fragmenting the Monad

*Homo clausus* subjectivity is based on an understanding of the self as an internal, initial, and persistent individualism. Alternatively, and though their ideas are not necessarily congruent, Erving Goffman's and Judith Butler's work on the social performance of gender as the basis of body-identity is focused on an external or social individualism. Put simply, Goffman's (1990, 1963) view 'posits a self which assumes and exchanges various 'roles' within the complex social expectations of the 'game' of modern life' (Butler 1988, p. 528), while Butler's conception of the self is that it

is not only irretrievably 'outside': constituted in social discourse, but that the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication (Butler 1988, p. 528).

Butler develops Goffman's ideas and opens pathways into useful critiques of both *homo clausus* and *homines aperti*. I will deal with these theorists in turn.

Goffman's approach while maintaining some of the 'basic identity' traits of *homo clausus*, recognises that social life and social interaction are vital to the construction, experience, and performance of body-identity in everyday life. For him experience is not purely an individual, inner phenomenon, but instead socially contingent. He introduces a nascent sense of fluid identity (which queer and posthumanist theorists develop much further, see e.g. Butler, 1990, 1993; Creed, 1995; Feinberg, 1996, 1998; Halberstam, 1998, Wilchins, 2002) where, rather than being constant, it can change depending on with whom and where one is engaged in social interaction; though it is



implied in Goffman's work that the social roles we employ are relatively stable as is the body-self that employs them (hence the assumption of stable vocabularies of bodily idiom that underpin what counts as valid performances, back-regions, stigmas, etc.). While we can engage in different roles at different times, his understanding does not question how and where these roles originate and then become the norm. Like *homo clausus* subjectivity, Goffman's 'actors' (he was a fan of theatre metaphors) have a body-identity that is seemingly self-same, stable and heteronormative, *from* which they engage in different social roles. This is similar to a performer putting on different costumes to signal a character change – the performer remains the same while the role being played differs. For Goffman, the roles of individuals are seemingly based on and derived from the stable self inside the passive fleshy body; what changes is the setting, the staging, the interaction. Goffman's interactive theory begins to theorise the power of social interactions but does little to speak to how interaction (i.e. sociality) actually spurs the change of roles one plays. Part of the inability to account for the dynamism of interaction and the power for interaction to change one's 'role', is the failure to engage the materiality of the body at the same level as, or better still, as part and parcel of the interactive self. This theory remains rational, insofar as people are understood to *consciously* understand and actively *choose* the different roles played. Though the rationalization of choice of role often seems retrospective, reflective, and inactive. This experience,

while it may be concerned with the social, is still highly rigid, individual, and rationally directed.

Butler's (1988, 1993, 1999) approach takes Goffman's performing actors to the extreme. Her conception of performativity posits that it is *the performance*, and its constant repetition, that creates one's body *and* one's identity. She seeks to render the flesh and identity completely open to social intervention, but maintains the inside/outside binary in her description. Her primary interrogation is of conceptions of identity based upon some inner essence that is derived from the ontologically self-same material body. Through her theory of performativity, she posits that our social expectation and anticipation for the manifestation of some pre-social essence, which would reveal the 'nature' of one's sex via one's gender, we end up producing the very phenomenon we expect (Butler 1999, p. xiv). In the preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble* (originally published in 1990) she explains:

In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration (Butler 1999, pp. xiv-xv).

As individuals are vitally sexed/gendered from birth – *homo clausus* ways of being are reliant upon this performativity and Butler (1993, p. xii) seeks to expose how:

the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative.

Sexual difference for Butler is merely biological, not ontological, and is thus restricted to heteronormative ideals. In this formulation 'the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements' are entirely material, but it is a materiality that is 'the effect of power, as power's most productive effect (Butler 1993, p. xii). This materiality is not active but *reactive*; a product of the social.

For Butler there is no individual without the social. Heteronormative power structures work to manifest not only sex, gender, and sexuality, but the body *itself*. The only given in this account of dis-embodiment is power. Rather than based upon the rational mind, individual experience for Butler is entirely reliant upon the discursive practices (the performances), instituted from outside of the body through dominant power structures. This performative understanding of power-embodied is not wholly unlike the power dynamic necessary for the construction of *homo clausus* in the first place. The major difference between the two approaches (*homo clausus* and *homines aperti*) is that for Butler the body is seemingly territorialized by culture, not the individual rational mind, and thus the individual rational mind (i.e. the self) is left feeling entirely *deterritorialized*. That is entirely open to social control.

In an effort to resituate agency and instigate opportunities for change, 'in place of the flawed conceptions of construction that circulate in feminist

theory and elsewhere' (Barad 2007, p. 64), Butler calls for 'a return to the notion of matter' (1993, p. 9); though she isn't entirely successful in articulating how one goes about expressing agency from the materiality of the body into the power of discourse. This is because for her the self still isn't enfolded (matter still isn't active here), but is both inside of or outside of the body – fragmented and overstimulated through social power and patriarchal capitalism. Which may explain her move to conclude that the body itself must also be constructed through social power – that way even if something *seems* essential we can take refuge in knowing it isn't possible since the vessel holding that essentiality is not a 'real' given in the first place. This is an attempt to shift power from the social to the personal (but is arguably unsuccessful). For example, she usefully highlights while gender cannot be true or false, real or fake,

Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all (Butler 1988, p. 528).

Put another way, performative body-identity is constructed *through* the social which also constructs the body. As people engage in the same seemingly natural performances everyday, based on the perceived sex of their body, their performances *naturalise* gendered bodily-identity. For Butler, the body is always gendered by the social, and the material make up of the fleshy body is not prior to or more important than that gender, but is fundamental to

identity. Through this conceptualisation she is able to pull 'natural gender' apart from 'biological sex', since gender comes from the 'outside' (of the body, of one's sex) as does the materiality of one's sex; i.e. Society constructs gender identity, which constructs the sexed-body. Thus the materiality of the body is passive, in need of socio-cultural shaping and sexual difference is not an *ontological* difference but a tool of power. Furthermore, she points out that the need to continually reassert body-identity, through repetitive gender performance, exposes its inherent weakness, as there are always slips and errors in repetition.

Regardless of this astute observation, that repetition inherently exposes body-identity instability, people are still subject to conforming their performances to social norms. This is the only way to avoid the personal experiences of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment which is still so deeply rooted in the construction of individuality itself – both for *homo clausus* individuals and those who have been rendered 'open' and/or 'fragmented' through society. While performativity and social roles are useful in *describing* and critiquing what one may witness or even experience in daily life, they are unable to dramatically challenge the idea that the experiencing body-self can be anything other than a reflection of deeply entrenched social norms according to the reproduction of monadic, individualistic *homo clausus*. As Barad points out,



While Butler correctly calls for the recognition of matter's historicity, ironically, she seems to assume that it is ultimately derived (yet again) from the agency of language or culture. She fails to recognise matter's dynamism (2007, p. 64).

Both 'social roles' and 'performative repetition' as ways of understanding the self-body flatten embodied experience<sup>45</sup> and glaze over experiential, material difference as the potential source of power.

To restrict power's productivity to the limited domain of the social, for example, or to figure matter as merely an end product rather than an active factor in further materializations is to cheat matter out of the fullness of its capacity (Barad 2007, p. 66).

Furthermore, the very possibility for differential being is missed in Butler's understanding of repetition as the production of the self. Performativity as constant repetition ignores the ongoing historicity of the body and replicates the *homo clausus* tendency to continually manage the body, this time from the 'outside'. That is to say it misses that the body is always already active, entangled in performative practices and with capacities for memory. As Grosz explains,

Life is temporal, durational, which means that within it, there can never be any real repetition but only continual invention insofar as the living carry the past along with the present. This situation implies that even a formally identical state can be differentiated from its earlier instantiations because of the persistence of memory, the inherence and accumulation of 'repetitions' in the present (2011, pp. 31-2).

Performativity treats the body as a blank slate, a passive piece of matter without any intelligence. Thus, by failing to give power to sensory-

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<sup>45</sup> This flattening of the experiential is the same (ignored) process that renders 'social structures' in place of practices of action, movement, thinking, and ways of being.

embodiment these approaches miss out on the opportunity for change and limit the ability to recognise thresholds for differential experiencing. Ultimately, these approaches do their work at the expense of the materiality of the body as the self is still rationally contained within the deterritorialized and socially controlled body; it is this 'postmodern tendency to 'textualize' or 'idealize' the body in ways that ignore the 'facticity' of the body...[and] result in disembodied accounts of social interactions and practices' (Friedman 2011, p. 195).

As in Leder's phenomenology, the body in these approaches remains passive flesh. The main difference between the aforementioned approaches and *homo clausus* is that in postmodern approaches sensory-embodiment is understood to be entirely open to yet constrained by social discourse instead of the rational mind. Thus, in these respects, postmodern and phenomenological approaches are not that dissimilar, especially since, as shown above, they both reveal that *homo clausus* identity is not natural, but rather naturalised through social practices. In both instances individuality is never individual. Postmodern subjects are still dis-embodied, sensorially individuated, and maintain an inner and outer self that is regulated through the visual and is still vulnerable to *homo clausus* fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (as I deal with specifically in the first empirical chapter, chapter 6, on normative uses of public toilets). While these subjects may allow the social *into* their identity construction, they still remain singular entities

that rationally inhabit a body which is thought to be non-existent without social discourse. These approaches fail to articulate how the materiality and historicity of the body can feed back into the social and discursive processes which shape them. This results in an entirely deterritorialized body which can only be (re)territorialized by the social. The sense of self comes from the outside and is moved into the body, while the body is a marker, a symbol, a representation, or something to actively transgress or shape; it is discourse, and not the source of all thinking, knowing, and understanding. This body-identity, at the whim of social discourse, cannot readily experience the deterritorializing effects of becoming-other, of differential ways of being because those opportunities are used instead to *territorialize*, to build one's identity. This furthers a representationalist logic of matter as passive and rigidly bound but open to fragmentation by a fickle world.

While postmodern theory seeks to render open subjectivities (e.g. open to influence, to change, to fluidity, to new identities), the dis-embodied position of the *homo clausus* identity remains intact as the ontological *basis* and instead the open/closed, inside/outside body-identity is *fragmented*. This is akin to shattering a glass window, instead of sliding it open (and using the shards of glass to continually rebuild the shattered pane). The social conscripts the self into anxious activity on and through and passive body. As explored above, these approaches fail to bring together materiality, rationality, and discourse in a non-dualistic, non-hierarchal, and non-



chronological way and thus severely limit the possibilities for *homines aperti* subjectivities. That is to say, they rely on the individual monadic position from which queering, disconnection, and fragmentation can happen and these approaches do not problematise how bodies are rendered into the vessel that contains the individual self. Instead they seek to open the already individuated body-identity (i.e. *homo clausus*) through fragmenting the 'natural' monadism via social discourse. These *homines aperti* individuals remain dis-embodied because the materiality of the body remains the ahistorical basis of the self and not the open-ended, ongoing *source* of all experience. Part of their problem in reproducing body-selves that are merely representational and not thoroughly material, is that they fail to interrogate the fact that they only work 'cognitively and visually' through 'presumptions about the transparency and accuracy of visual perception' (Friedman 2011 p. 201). A vital point I explore below.

### **Symbolisation and Fragmentation**

As Barad (2008, p. 120) keenly asserts, 'it seems that at every turn lately every 'thing'—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation.' This observation is at the heart of social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches to the self, as they are unable to directly embed the *living* body into their understanding of the self. The body is 'oppositely' approached (from the outside), yet still acts as the

bridge between the self and the social. This is evident in how 'Butler's theory ultimately re-inscribes matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than as an active agent participating in the very process of materialization' (Barad 2008, p. 151). This power given to discourse, as introduced above, will be given a closer look in the remainder of this chapter through a critique of Canadian sociologist, Shelia Cavanagh's use of the conceptual mirror in *Queering Bathrooms* (2010).

The idea that theoretical mirrors are vital for the construction of subjectivity is rooted in psychoanalysis but continues to permeate many disciplines including many of those working specifically with gender, sexuality, and the body. For Cavanagh social and literal 'mirrors' discursively give relief to the self through the overemphasis of the visual, of sight – that is, by seeing, and by being seen. This is an example and reproduction of how 'the structure of watching and being watched is key to the operation of patriarchal society' (Moore and Breeze 2012, p. 2). Thus how someone looks, in both senses, is assumed to enable access to someone's 'inner' or 'private' life. Colebrook explains this in regard to desire:

The privatization of the eye in late capitalism also seems to run alongside what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a transition from the regime of the signifier—in which the viewed world is the sign of some ultimate reality—to the passional regime....And Judith Butler (2005) notes, following Laplanche, the eye (now) sees its world and the image of its own ego-self as if from the point of view of an other whose desire would grant the truth of its being. I am a self only if I am recognised by an other. In this passional regime the self is created, located and privatized less by submission to a system of signifiers through which it

articulates its desire than by relation to the face of an other whose desire is essentially hidden (2010, pp. 17-18).

In patriarchal capitalist society, we build our identities based on heteronormative ideals which presume desire – they inscribe it into our ways of being so it can remain hidden from view. Desire which is visible is ‘different’, non-normative, abject as normative (non)desire is expected to be mirrored or mediated through capitalist consumption.

Like Butler’s performativity, mirrors construct the individual from the outside-in. Thus the visual, for *homines aperti*, is highly important not just for maintaining the borders of one’s body, but for the articulation and reading of identity. According to the mirror theory, individuals construct and know the borders of their bodies *and* their identities through contact with reflective surfaces and others whose desire is at once needed for affirmation while remaining inaccessible. There is less emphasis on innate truth of self and more need to be seen by others, to be recognised in order to have a sense of self at all. This understanding is based on using what is outside of the body to understand what one ‘is’ and what one is not on the inside. Feeling and desire is not rooted in sensory-embodiment, but rather accessed and processed through the visual. This is emblematic of postmodernity where ‘the eye neither feels collectively (haptically), nor reads the world digitally (as equivalent units) but is dominated by passion and affect’ (Colebrook 2010, p. 18). While the theoretical mirror, as the mode of identity construction,



fundamentally differs from *homo clausus*, by working from the outside-in, it does not disrupt individual and independent bodily boundaries. Both *homo clausus* and discursive approaches take the separate individual as the starting point (Elias 2000, p. 474). Like Goffman's frame, the mirror concept is only viable through visual and rational understandings of individuality as it is based upon

a clear depiction of 'in' and 'out', it is a binary representation in which the attended and disattended are fully separated and spatially contiguous, rather than interwoven in the same conceptual space (Friedman 2011, p. 193).

Put simply the power of a mirror, whether it is a reflective surface (e.g. a shop window), a sensory experience (e.g. hearing an echo), or an Other (e.g. another person, or another person who is conceived of as *different*, opposite, negatively dissimilar), to reflect on back onto the borders of one's body, exposing differentness or sameness, is only viable because of dis-embodied identity and clear conceptions of categorisation (e.g. inside and outside). In order to work, a mirror requires the internal monadic experience of *homo clausus* paired with the external experience of sociality. *Homines aperti*, as conceived through mirrors, are only open to discursively confirming or further fragmenting bodily boundaries. Reflections are de/re/territorializing. Self-same reflections help repetitively re-territorialize while incompatible reflections are suspect and threatening. They are negatively deterritorializing. Consider that reflection is a 'pervasive trope for knowing', a knowing that is

attuned to sameness and repetition, not creation and difference<sup>46</sup> (Haraway as read through Barad 2007, p. 72). Reflection thus enables the creation of types and taxonomies, a system of superficial difference that ignores the ongoing difference of all bodies and is only possible through division, simplification, and reduction.

While Cavanagh (2010), whose empirical research process and data are in some respects similar to my own, seeks to 'queer bathrooms' her project remains heavily steeped in this concept of the mirror and thus seeks to queer discourse through more *representationalist* discourse. She refers to many different mirrors throughout the text. Some are specifically sensorial (e.g. acoustic) and others more general (e.g. reflective surfaces, heteronormative people). She says, 'People in the bathroom behave like mirrors; architectural shapes and material objects, including reflective glass and metallic surfaces, all act as mirrors' (Cavanagh 2010, p. 84). In line with *homo clausus* sensing, she explains that acoustics also work as mirrors because 'Sight and sound work in concord. We learn to 'see'...with our ears' (Cavanagh 2010, p. 110). What she means, I believe, is that we must learn to deploy our other senses to manage and monitor the borders of our and other bodies in the same way we rely on our sight to make the world knowable. When enclosed in a cubicle within a toilet space, one's vision becomes less valuable, as there is little to *see*, so one must 'see' through one's ears. Characteristic of *homo clausus*

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<sup>46</sup> I further elaborate these terms in chapter four.

understanding of the ability for sight to provide access to knowledge via the rational mind, she interprets the use of 'other' senses within this framework. Hearing is less valued than sight as a direct and reliable source of knowledge, so she couches that sensation in terms of sight in an attempt to elevate it to the all-important level of rationality. Cavanagh seeks to use mirrors to expose how public toilets are inherently discriminating to non-heteronormative folk by constantly reasserting the importance of the visual to individual experiences of public toilets. While perhaps useful for discussing the power of discourse, this, as an understanding of queer embodiment, is fundamentally flawed insofar as it supports rational, heteronormative *homo clausus* ways of being because it assumes that through the visual we have ultimate access to knowledge, experience, and understanding. As Barad (2007, p. 86) explains, 'Representationalism [is] the belief that words, concepts, ideas, and the like accurately reflect or mirror the things to which they refer'. Mirrors do not socially construct bodies, 'what is social is the process of selectively emphasising and mentally weighing the existing bodily similarities and differences' which 'highlights the socially constructed character of [identity] categories' (Friedman 2011, p. 200). The importance of the visual supports a socially constructed materiality as it is tied directly to *homo clausus* patterns of selective attention and optical socialisation. As Arthur Frank (1995, p. 45) simply states,



the mirroring body tells itself in its image, and this image comes from elsewhere. The images this body mirrors come most often from popular culture, where image is reality.

Cavanagh ultimately reifies the individual subject as existing within the confines of the body through her reliance on the social to reflect and represent 'reality' through the outside of the body. Here dominant culture determines reality. Thus embodied experience for Cavanagh is discursive, not *living* and very limited to experiences of becoming.

In attempting to make space for queer bodies, Cavanagh does very little *queering* (opening, twisting, disturbing) of social norms or understandings of power, but instead solidifies the need for queer bodies to become more *visible* (so that the mirrors they contact are more like them, and thus less alarming or exposing). It seems her approach is to try to disrupt people's perceptual and cognitive practices through a sort of re-optical socialisation. The logic is if people see new bodies, they will eventually accept them as one version of normal. This does very little to disrupt heteronormative *homo clausus* ways of being and is ultimately just another way to continue the cycle of FASE. Put simply, this is the use of a patriarchal system to normalise queer bodies. It is not a queering of bathrooms but instead a project to make queer bodies more visible. As Phelan (1993, p. 7) astutely points out:

While there is a deeply ethical appeal in the desire for a more inclusive representational landscape and certainly under-represented

communities can be empowered by an enhanced visibility, the terms of this visibility often enervate the putative power of these identities.

Furthermore, Cavanagh's understanding that public toilets are heteronormative spaces that need to be made more inclusive for queer bodies is based on the assumption that they are only experienced as oppressive, dangerous, and uncomfortable, via individual and independent queer identity. As explored throughout this dissertation these spaces are not merely difficult and problematic for those who do not subscribe to heteronormativity. Instead, it is my argument that they are heteronormatizing spaces because they rely on *homo clausus* fear, anxiety, shame and embarrassment as primary states of being for individual identity. That is to say they are oppressive for all bodies regardless of desire or identity. Therefore the visibility she is advocating risks three problematic phenomena: one, a binary understanding of queer identity versus heteronormative identity; two, a reductionistic view of the body as passive materiality, i.e. the body is merely the sum of its parts; and three, an easier inculcation into social norms once visible.

This sort of reductionism caused many queer and feminist theorists to turn away from the material body initially and instead honour the linguistic and discursive over the embodied self and here, Cavanagh is reproducing that representationalist mistrust in matter making her approach to queerness dis-embodied. The desire for queer visibility seeks to stabilise queer identity



by making it *clearly visible*. It is the use of rational discourse to empower more discourse. Put simply, this is not very queer. In many ways, stability through visibility is the antithesis of queer. It is not surprising then that Cavanagh's ultimate goal is the redesigning of public toilet spaces, not the challenging of how we understand non-heteronormative identities; though it remains unclear if that goal would enable greater visibility of difference, of *Otherness*, or better hide it.

Cavanagh exposes and renders her subjects utterly vulnerable through the inscription of the dis-embodied discourse of the mirror. The use of mirrors as a primary mode of understanding the self maintains, through the visual, the mind as the primary mode of experience. It reifies the inner self and the external world, but it is also a robust, albeit problematic example of how *homines aperti* work through interrelation and reflection. In the contemporary West, mirrors, like language do not create or give relief to the material body, they further dis-embodiment by visually condensing the sense of outer bodily boundaries and leave the inner sense of self intact yet entirely open to fragmentation through dissimilar mirrors. This is how reflective, representational, symbolic – that is *discursive* – systems of understanding completely leave out the materiality of the body and render it into mere passive biology. These approaches work by denying the ontological basis of being by rendering the body into a *thing* through representationalist ways of

being based upon an epistemology which is deeply sceptical of matter. As

Barad (2007, p. 133) posits:

Is not, after all, the common-sense view of representationalism—the belief that representations serve a mediating function between knower and known—that displays a deep mistrust of matter, holding it off at a distance, figuring it as passive, immutable, and mute, in need of that mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it? Indeed, that representationalist belief in the power of words to mirror preexisting phenomena is the metaphysical substrate that supports social constructivist, as well as traditional realist beliefs, perpetuating the endless recycling of untenable options.

In order to better get at how *materiality* is caught up in figurational social systems, such as sex-gender-sexuality and the family, there needs to be a joining of the epistemological and the ontological which honours the material body as not merely passive matter collectively produced and shaped, yet individually experienced. There needs to be a new approach to matter not the visual. While useful these linguistic approaches are not adequate in and of themselves.

### **Conclusion: Limiting the Language**

This precarious situation that posthumanisms and material feminisms are working to exploit (as I explore in the following chapter), in an effort to redefine the role of matter, has not occurred without warning. Nietzsche in the nineteenth century,

warned against the mistaken tendency to take grammar too seriously: allowing linguistic structure to shape or determine our understanding of the world, believing that the subject and predicate structure of

language reflects a prior ontological reality of substance and attribute (Barad 2008, p. 121)

It is through this awareness, of language as metaphor for ontology, that Nietzsche is able to swiftly dismantle Descartes' dualism as a product of the way his belief in and use of language has been shaped. Descartes' dualistic understanding and elucidation of the 'thinking self' is too simplistic; rendering the mind separate from the body, even though the body is most certainly required for thinking and the existence of the mind. It is unsurprising then, as we are still suffering the repercussions of Descartes' unaware and facile treatment of the body-identity, that as *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* we make our language and discourse in the image of ourselves and we make ourselves in the image of our language and discourse. Like individuality and the visual, language is employed as though it too is a given, perfectly apt to *mirror* 'the underlying structure of the world' and the seemingly 'preexisting' phenomena that support representationalist, realist, and social constructivist<sup>47</sup> beliefs (Barad 2008, p. 121). As elucidated above, the linguistic and discursive are understood to impact upon and even *produce* bodies, rendering *homines aperti* society; but the body, as given, stable, and/or passive, is unable to feedback into the relationship in any way. The opportunities for becoming-other are few and far between. These body-identities may be open, but they are not active, instead they are anxious.

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<sup>47</sup> Feminist and queer theorists have expressed dissatisfaction at both social constructivism and social constructionism. See, e.g. Haraway 1987 and 1988 and Butler 1989.



Similarly, as explored in the discussion of the mirror, the attempt to account for difference, in the form of queer bodies, through representationalist frameworks only reproduces heteronormative conditions for understanding. Thus rendering difference into sameness. In these attempts there is no space for the body (let alone the development of sensory-embodied-identities) because materiality has been flattened by the power given to words, discourses, and epistemologies that maintain the two-dimensional nature of *homo clausus* identity. According to French sociologist and urban theorist, Henri Lefebvre (1991, p. 407, original emphasis):

Western philosophy has *betrayed* the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorisation that has *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body. The living body, being at once 'subject' and 'object', cannot tolerate such conceptual division, and consequently philosophical concepts fall into the category of the 'sign of non-body'.

Without resolving these fundamental fissures there is no way to reconcile the internal self with the external world, even if that self is seemingly open. These oversimplified binary constructions of body-identity need to be brought into dialogue, need to be recognised in their ongoing entanglement; rather than materiality existing outside of, or in opposition to discourse, we need to productively recognise their inextricable relationship. It is only then that we can recognise the possibilities and potentialities available for an *experiential* (not merely discursive) shift to *corpus infinitum*, an approach that understands sensory-embodiment as actively alive and part and parcel of all knowledge, experience, and understanding.

## FOUR

# The Dis-Embodiment of Identity: *Toward an onto-epistemology of materiality*

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### **Towards Sensory-Embodied-Selves**

The preceding chapter acknowledges the importance of society to the creation of the individual. The body, instead of merely the outside shell to the mind (self), is the thing discursively manipulated by power (e.g. language, culture, images), which creates the self through approximating categorical representations. The self, instead of existing prior to and separate from the social, is constructed through power relations that operate on and through the body largely through reflection and repetition. These approaches are useful in problematising *homo clausus*, by drawing out the undeniable social aspects of it, yet are still unable to give the materiality of the body the attention necessary for moving beyond monadic, representationalist notions of the individual self. Instead of sensory-embodiment being central to all knowledge, understanding, and experience it is the means for making docile bodies through discursive power relations (Foucault 1995). Still, by recognising that the 'outside' of the *homo clausus* subject is rendered discursively permeable through *homines aperti* approaches, we are able to

productively advance Elias' project beyond dialectical monadic and dualistic understandings of the self.

Problematizing the *homo clausus* (person closed) through its undeniable interrelatedness to other people or *homines aperti* (persons opened), enables us to expose the open/closed, inner/outer, same/different binaries, inherent in both of these conceptions of subjectivity. In doing so, we can locate the limits of these body-identity models, both of which severely ignore or limit sensory-embodiment and instead rely on specific rational processes. Through positing body-identity as primarily enfolded, sensorial, and undeniably entangled (materially *and* discursively), I propose the term '*corpus infinitum*' to push Elias' project further. Both '*homo clausus*' and '*homines aperti*' take individual *selves* as given, as the primary avenue for understanding societies while also minimising or entirely neglecting the role of sensory-embodiment. This somewhat surprising error, (considering Elias' keen attention to the formulation of the self as socially situated) in which sensory-embodiment is crucially overlooked, is what I seek to rectify theoretically and experientially throughout this thesis. Elias' *homines aperti*, while a move toward a better understanding of living bodies, suffers from the social constructionist tendency to rely on atomised social categories and binaries, for example, inside/outside, mind/body, self/other. This representationalism extends far beyond bodies and into how we conceive of the world generally. As Karen Barad explains,



Representationalism takes the notion of separation as foundational. It separates the world into the ontologically distinct domains of words and things, leaving itself with their linkage such that knowledge is possible (Barad 2007, p. 137).

This separation requires that things, subjects, objects are contained to their own matter. For example, bodies have boundaries that are sealed and stable. That means matter is not active, but rather passive and in need of inscription or shaping or some such ongoing management. This approach to the world generally and the body specifically, renders an insurmountable rift between things, subjects, objects, and language. This is an epistemology based on atomisation and to borrow Kristin Ross' (2008) language, we must recognise our 'radical atomisation' before any change is possible. That is, we must replace matter as alive, as active at the centre of our understanding.

Post-structuralist and social constructionist approaches, while generally very useful for identifying the normative perceptual and cognitive practices (schema) we employ (e.g. I see a person who is wearing a dress so they must be a woman), they are not successful in identifying the sensory-embodied practices that we could potentially engage because they rely too heavily on the visual-mind as the source of/for experience, knowledge, and understanding based on categories of same/different. Via *homo clausus* individuality we learn to perceptually identify and categorise sameness and difference in a simplistic two-dimensional way (e.g. alike/unlike); this, for example, is the only way that the mirror concept could be productively

employed since it works through reflection of sameness/difference. Furthermore, reflection (or a reflexivity as a methodology) 'invites the illusion of essential, fixed position' (Haraway 1992, p. 300) from which sameness/difference can be ascertained. This binary is perhaps the most pervasive dualism inherent to *homo clausus* individuality. It is, in many ways, the same dualism as 'inner/outer' in terms of constructing and maintaining the borders of the body and one that I hope to dislodge from conceptions of the self through my introduction of *corpus infinitum*, the boundless, unlimited, indefinite body.

*Corpus infinitum* entangles identity with *fleshy living bodies* as fundamental for social life generally, and crucial for the conscious rational self specifically. This signals a move beyond the modern independent self and postmodern interdependent selves to a posthumanist-materialist understanding of the self as always already entangled in becoming phenomena, or happening *through being*. For *corpus infinitum*, consciousness is not merely mental, visual, or rational, but fully living sensory engagement. It is attentive to *patterns* of difference, not simply representations of sameness (Barad 2007, p. 29); It is not reflective but instead diffractive. As Barad (2007, p. 29) explains:

Donna Haraway proposes diffraction as an alternative to the well-worn metaphor of reflection...diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference.



In this conceptualisation of subjectivity, sensory-embodied experience is never stable or bounded – that is, concerned with maintaining and replicating sameness of being and experience – because it recognises the active, open-ended, and ongoing nature of material being and engagement. It is through the active, ever-changing, differential experiences of materiality that consciousness, knowing, and understanding can happen. Diffraction as a vital way of elucidating *corpus infinitum* is also the methodological approach I employ as discussed in the introduction (chapter one). Diffraction requires more subtle and developed sensory engagement; it necessitates ‘the processing of *small but consequential* differences’ and ‘the processing of differences ... is about ways of life’ (Haraway 1991, p. 318, my emphasis). Thus *corpus infinitum* is not focused on sameness or difference, inner or outer, because it is less invested in classificatory systems and more concerned with understanding how sensory-embodiment is minimised through such systems. Furthermore, it takes difference as its condition for being, not some monstrous thing to avoid, because living sensory-embodiment is always already an ongoing process. It is never self-same. Ultimately, by recognising how, where, and when we’re limited in daily life, we can begin to recognise how such minimisation can be expanded to enable fuller experiences, to seize the thresholds of becoming already inherent to, yet overlooked, in our daily ‘ways of life’.

In what follows then, I focus on material feminist and posthumanist philosophies, which work to identify and productively correct the binaries, biases, and material losses that are essential to the preceding approaches. To give life to *corpus infinitum* subjectivities, I unpack and connect these theories in three entangled ways. First, I show how the preceding approaches highlight the need for the joining of ontology and epistemology (i.e. ways of being and systems of knowledge and/or classification), for example, through Barad's onto-epistemological re-appropriation of Butler's performativity. Second, I put forth the assemblage, sex-gender-sexuality, to illustrate how onto-epistemology and material discourse operate experientially and theoretically, in the construction of body-identity experience. Third, I highlight the importance of reading Elias through a posthumanist-materialist lens. In doing so, I reveal the possibilities and potentialities intrinsic to the re-conceptualisation of living sensory-embodiment as vital for not only the construction of the self but for all experiencing, knowledge, and understanding; a situation which maintains the personal yet aims to move beyond the (e.g. patriarchal, capitalist) individualism that animates the preceding approaches. Within the previous two chapters I began to point to the ways that practices of perception are used in systems of knowledge as important to *homo clausus* subjectivity. This is an important illustration of an onto-epistemology (albeit a uni-directional, and overly rational one) and vital point of convergence in beginning to elucidate *corpus infinitum*.

## Making Connections

Karen Barad poses a vital question when asking 'How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter?' (2008, p. 120). Language, existing in the realm of the rational, has not been opposed to the material body per se, but worse, it has been allowed, encouraged even, to usurp it entirely. This is evident at least in Goffman, Butler, and Cavanagh's failed attempts to flesh out the material, as they remain firmly planted in the discursive. For example, as Barad (2007, p. 64) explains,

it is not at all clear that Butler [following Foucault] succeeds in bringing the discursive and the material into closer proximity...Questions about the material nature of discursive practices seem to hang in the air like the persistent smile of a Cheshire cat.

Postmodern accounts that believe the body is materialised *through* discourse, cannot account for the materiality of the body itself or how the materiality of the body can disrupt the discursive. Instead (and unsurprisingly) social products are believed to be the most concrete things (Maryanski and Turner 1992, p. 105). This highlights the discursive and decidedly not the material nature of social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches. As Butler (2004, p. 198) herself admits, 'I am not a very good materialist. Every time I try to write about the body, the writing ends up being about language.' These attempts reveal the limitations of Elias' *homines aperti*; Partly because the social is *always already* inextricably linked to the construction of identity and the experience of the body, even when it was not acknowledged as such. That



is to say, even in *homo clausus* accounts where the social is ignored, it still remains part and parcel of the construction of the individual. The social constructionist and post-structuralist take on *homines aperti*, in many ways, replicate the construction of *homo clausus*, but from the other direction: from the outside to the inside. Where *homo clausus* constructs the self within the bounded body, *homines aperti* (de)constructs the body in order to create the self. In both cases the body is rendered into passive materiality, which requires active shaping, management, and control according to social propriety and through social power. *Homo clausus* and *homines aperti* do not do justice to sensory-embodiment because they seek to understand ways of being purely through ways of individualistic, rational knowing; they are only ever theorised epistemologically (based on what we can know or 'is known') even when ontological practices are clearly important to their formulation, because knowing *is* being. This replicates the representationalist split between knower and known, observer and observed.

'Ontological theories are about matter; unlike epistemological theories, they cannot 'lose' the real—it is their subject matter' (Hekman 2008, p. 98). The 'new settlement' [in Latour's (1993) terms] or 'new ontology' that science studies, posthumanism, and material feminist theories are seeking to enact is deeply invested in the ontological as known and understood through the empirical. Linda Alcoff (1995), the American feminist philosopher, describes the ontological as accessible *through* the discursive. This approach recognises

that 'our language structures how we apprehend the ontological but [that] it does not constitute it' (Hekman 2008, p. 98). Thus we must be critically aware of how we arrive at and use discourse in our understanding and construction of knowledge. For example, as Barad states, 'theorising must be understood as an embodied practice, rather than a spectator sport of matching linguistic representations to preexisting things' (2007, p. 54). Whereas linguistics and discourse do not even leave room for sensory-embodiment in their creation of knowledge and understanding, ontology reveals where we have given cultural representation too much power.

While I am in favour of this approach generally, it is even more useful to describe the approach taken throughout this thesis using Barad's (2008) term: onto-epistem-ology. Keeping ontology and epistemology separate, even in an approach that recognises how they relate, continues 'a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse' (Barad 2008, p. 147). Onto-epistemology acknowledges how ways of being and ways of knowing are not two separate processes, but rather intra-acted. That is, knowing is only ever possible through being and what and how we know is contingent on myriad material entanglements. Furthermore, since ways of knowing and being *matter*, as they are always caught up in socio-cultural ethics and politics, onto-epistemologies are always also 'ethico-onto-epistemological' (Barad 2007, p.185). Thus this approach contributes to an ethics of being and a feminist

philosophy of the real. The concept of 'intra' is also highly useful, as it stresses the inherent unsealed nature of being, whereas 'inter' [e.g. in Goffman's (1983) Interaction Order] presupposes an observable and lived separateness between bounded, sealed bodies that exists prior to the social. 'Inter' follows representational concepts, as explored in the previous chapter, whereas 'intra' acknowledges the nuance and entanglement of being. Intra-activity allows us to re-conceptualise modes of being and experientially change ways of understanding, by highlighting the ability of materiality and ontology to 'feedback' into discursive epistemologies; that is by exposing their highly entangled nature as I explore in the following chapters. It does not presume that the self exists *within* independently bound bodies or outside of interdependent yet sensorial individuated, dis-embodied selves. Rather, it helps us recognise that, as Barad (2003, p. 815) states, 'It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the 'components' of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful.' Similarly, Donna Haraway (2008, p. 250) explains that:

the infolding of *others to one another* is what makes up the knots we call beings or, perhaps better, following Bruno Latour, things. Things are material, specific, non-self-identical, and semiotically active...Never purely themselves, things are compound; they are made up of combinations of other things coordinated to magnify power, to make something happen, to engage the world, to risk fleshly acts of interpretation.

Put simply, bodies are never merely discursive, but rather, 'always already material-discursive' (Barad 2008, p. 141). It is through intra-action that more



'things' we call bodies are condensed into individual selves. *Homo clausus* and *homines aperti* conceptions skip the steps of condensation and begin theorising at the level of the individual, the already assumed self. Furthermore, if we conceptualise the social world in terms of material-discursive practices, as *phenomena through* which agency happens, we can directly access the ways that 'boundaries do not sit still' (Barad 2008, p. 135).

For example, the use of an intra-active onto-epistemology enables a re-imagination of performativity through a posthumanist-materialist lens. This is not merely a set of new terms to describe the happenings of daily life but a revelation of how language is given power *and* how epistemology is always already ontology. As Barad (2008, p. 121) argues:

Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. Hence, in an ironic contrast to the misconception that would equate performativity with a form of linguistic monism that takes language to be the stuff of reality, performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve.

Here Barad connects the power granted to discourse to our minds (cognitive processes) which are normally understood as somehow other than our bodies and highlights how our systems of rational understanding restrict our embodiment and thus our possibilities for becoming-other. She says that discourse, as rationally operative, is the epistemological system that *manufactures* the understanding of ontology. Hence through a

representationalist discursive framework, ontology is always already misunderstood at best and utterly mistrusted at worst. This emphasising of Butler's error is quite similar to how Nietzsche pointed out Descartes' oversimplification of nearly the same relationship I refer to in the preceding chapter's conclusion. In Butler's formulation, while performativity may come from outside of the body (that is because the practices are socially *learned*), ways of being – by being made into mere discourse (i.e. representations) – have no direct recourse to ways of thinking, knowing, or understanding. Here ontology is overtaken completely by epistemology.

Reading Butler's notion of performativity (i.e. 'iterative citationality', introduced in the preceding chapter) through Barad's lens of intra-activity, offers an opportunity to deconstruct and move beyond binary oppositions such as internal/external, self/other, mind/body, active/passive, material/discourse, same/different, ontology/epistemology, subject/object, language/thing, etc. This view does not support Butler's notion of materiality as produced by discourse, but reveals instead how materiality is defined and separated into individual bodies, i.e. made into passive social products. It is vital to understand the process of intra-action in order to contextualise the *feeling*, that is the *rational embodiment*, of individuality. Intra-action gives relief to how bodies are linguistically differentiated and experientially established as separate and open or closed.



Taken together, these neologisms represent an opportunity for the honouring and exploration of knowing *as* and *through being*. They emphasise an approach to identifying, understanding, and theorising social experience that values, above all else, sensory-embodied knowledge. This is not a return to the reductionistic modernism that caused feminist theorists to disown the material body. Rather, the new settlement 'accomplishes what the postmoderns failed to do: a deconstruction of the material/discursive dichotomy that retains both elements without privileging either' (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, p. 6). Modern, social constructionist, poststructuralist, and queer approaches either are not concerned with the boundaries of the material self or are interested in fragmenting those boundaries through a privileging of transgression (Colebrook 2008, p. 21). As Georges Bataille points out: 'There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted, often it is even prescribed' (1986, p. 63). Instead, the theoretical method espoused here seeks to put into question and ultimately move beyond the importance of those boundaries entirely by exposing their inherently unfinished, shifting nature. Through the dissolution of *rigid* rationalist bodily boundaries new possibilities for embodied change are revealed and made possible beyond the *homo clausus/homines aperti* binary. In order to experience the deterritorializing effects of threshold experiences, those liberating and generative opportunities for becoming-other, the body must be understood as *corpus infinitum*. This is a move beyond identity

politics toward a new ethics and politics of embodiment. That is, a feminist philosophy of the real.

Elias was unsatisfied by the philosophical and sociological tendency to reproduce the mind/body, inside/outside binaries which took individuated, adult identity as the given starting point. His work emphasised process, history, and interconnectedness. Thus social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches that understand *homines aperti* through the fragmentation of body-identity, do not fully speak to his project. The shift to a more cohesive approach to body-identity construction requires more than simply giving power to the social from the outside of the body (especially when the materiality of the body is the cost). By honouring Elias' process oriented sociology, I posit a rethinking of the self as *corpus infinitum*, or boundless, becoming, intra-acted bodies. By starting with bodies, not *selves*, my goal is a material feminist, posthumanist understanding of embodiment that honours sensation and difference in a move toward new perceptual systems of knowing, experiencing, and understanding. One way to engender this sort of dynamic intra-connectedness is through the assemblage sex-gender-sexuality. Instead of conceiving of sex-gender-sexuality as constituted through discursive practices that produce the material body, the conjoined triad points to the functionality of material-discursive practices.

## Assembling Material-Discourse

In the approaches covered in chapters two and three, the body is decidedly not the experiential starting point in creating, assuming, or reproducing social identity. Rather, it is the socially anticipated and socially constructed *individual*, that is the rational self who creates dis-embodied experience through a sort of socially taught, self-imposed sensory-embodied filter. This individual is always gendered according to the heterosexual matrix, as it is only through the expectation of heteronormativity one can observe those who do not follow it. As Colebrook (2008, p. 21) highlights,

It is because there is a heterosexual matrix that constitutes and delimits subjective possibilities that we could pay attention to those modes of person and enactment that disturbed normative structures.

Heteronormativity is a primary onto-epistemological system of sameness and difference, sensorially-embodied through ways of being and knowing.

Working against Butler's (1993, p. 30) blatantly dis-embodied notion of the body as merely the *effect* of discourse, feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray (1996), Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 1995, 2011), Susan Bordo (2000) and Moira Gatens (1996) call for the move away from a degendering politic. Following on from social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches, which are unable to account for the materiality of the body and therefore decide it too must be discourse, a 'degendering politic' seeks to explain away gender so it does not get in the way of theories which *discursively* promote sex/gender fragmentation and fluidity via the phenomenologically 'lived' body. These

theories are ultimately unsuccessful in terms of living bodies in daily life because the materiality of personhood remains active and ongoing regardless of sex/gender theory. Furthermore, degendering ignores any possibility of sexual difference *as ontological* difference – where sexed bodies are ontologically different to other sexed bodies from birth – thus allowing for a politics of visibility and equality where for example, woman fight for the right to be equal with men; an impossible project of sameness in *homo clausus* representationalist societies. Degendering ignores the enfleshed reality of every body through a singular axis of sameness. This degendering of the sexually different body through an identity politics of equality is what Irigaray (1996, pp. 60-2) calls the ‘new opium of the people’. She explains,

Some of our prosperous or naïve contemporaries, women and men, would like to wipe out this difference by resorting to monosexuality, to the unisex and to what is called identification: even if I am bodily a man or woman, I can identify with, and so be the other sex. This new opium of the people annihilates the other in the illusion of a reduction to identity, equality and sameness, especially between man and women, the ultimate anchorage of real alterity. The dream of dissolving material, corporeal or social identity leads to a whole set of delusions, to endless and unresolvable conflicts, to a war of images or reflections... (1996, pp. 60-2).

For Irigaray, those genderqueer or gender nonconforming people take the denial of the material body even further. Identity politics and the struggle for equality become the project, which is much less radical than Irigaray’s project (or mine for that matter) but those gender non-conforming identities are an unsurprising development in the heteronormative world. They represent a

desire to get out from under the singular vision of life and to be different. They speak to *difference*. Yet, queer and trans identities still render the body into passive materiality, and this is how I am able to theorize those 'non-normative' experiences with normative ones. Though in their non-normativity, in their speaking to and toward difference, those individuals may be more open to experiences of becoming-other. What is of particular interest to me in this research is the possibility for becoming and while both queer, trans, and heteronormatively identified people have the potential for becoming-other, as explored in this thesis, perhaps some queer and trans individuals may have an easier time engaging with those potentials due to their non-normative status. Still both normative and non-normative gender identities participate in a single shared (i.e. patriarchal) world, not one in which 'sexual difference is ontological difference, [that is] the condition for the independent emergence of all other living differences' (Grosz 2011, p. 105). For both normative and non-normative identity, difference is representational not fundamentally generative because the body is understood as passive materiality. Instead of an emphasis on self-body identity where gender expression is divorced from the materiality of the body, the call for a move away from degendering places embodiment at the core of experience. It recognises that particular styles of embodiment are vital to how people actually experience their body-selves and the desire to flatten

those experiences through theoretical discourse does little to change how people are embodied, that is, how people live each day.

While many feminist and queer theories have sought to divorce sex (i.e. 'biology') from gender (i.e. the cultural expression of the 'sex'), I do not find this distinction useful or even possible when understood through material-discourse. It is only possible linguistically, *discursively* because we learn how to be and have bodies based on heteronormative sex/gender. As Butler (1988, p. 524) explains,

Indeed, if gender is the cultural significance that the sexed body assumes, and if that significance is codetermined through various acts and their cultural perception, then it would appear that from within the terms of culture it is not possible to know sex as distinct from gender.

What's more, sex and gender are absolutely condensed *experientially*, empirically since one cannot get out from 'within' their culture. For example, toileting practices are foundational to socio-cultural understandings of sex-gender. Regarding Lacan's story of the 'laws of urinary segregation' (1989, p. 167), MacCannell (quoted in Phelan 1993, p.151) explains:

same sex bathrooms are social institutions which further the metaphorical work of hiding gender/genital difference. The genitals themselves are forever hidden within metaphor, and metaphor, as a 'cultural worker', continually converts difference into the Same.

Genitals (i.e. materiality) are usually hidden through clothing, averted gaze, or physical barriers (i.e. more materiality) which *symbolically produce* gender (i.e. discourse); this condensation of materiality into discourse via

epistemological expectations and anticipation – we assume that we know (based on sensory experiences that are construed as rational) how people will act, what they will look like, and thus how they are sexed according to practices (i.e. ways of being), that are collectively taken as gender – is how matter is understood as discourse. It creates sameness of bodies where there is difference (because all bodies are always already different).

This is similar to how *homo clausus* identity is *naturalised* according to its many binaries. Therefore, as long as one's expression of social identity conforms to the gender listed on the toilet room door, the material make-up of one's genitals is of no real consequence (though it is rare that people actually transgress these social codes without good reason, like the many trans and gender queer people who have not undergone sexual reassignment surgery and use these spaces daily, often fearful of the materiality of their bodies being seen as not matching the gendered discourse they 'give off'). What is vital here is recognising where materiality shows up in daily social practices and self-body experiences, but is condensed into the rational and discursive. The above example, regarding same sex toilet spaces, is one way material-discourse works by giving relief to some embodied practices which help maintain *homo clausus* individuality (via rational classification of the sameness/difference of bodies), and also an example of where we can begin to cultivate sensory-embodied awareness as a living source of knowledge and understanding. I am not suggesting that we all need to start looking at one



another's genitals in public toilets, but rather noticing when and where our sensory-embodied practices are rendered into flat discursive understandings and disconnected through socially instilled feelings like fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment. Materiality is always linked with discourse because our *lives are material*. Bodies being hidden, eyes being averted, and standing behind an erected barrier are all sensory-embodied practices, *not* discursive practices. These material happenings may give way to discourse, to epistemology, but they are fundamentally about ways of being.

Thus the turn away from materiality in queer, postmodern, and feminist theories has enabled the *linguistic* distinction of sex, gender, and sexuality. These three 'identity categories' are vital to one's 'basic identity' in the *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* conceptualisations. Gatens (1996), who understands the body *not* as passive materiality onto which gender is discursively sculpted, points out that the body is not neutral to begin with. She argues: 'If one wants to understand sex and gender or, put another way, a person's biology and the social and personal significance of that biology' (Gatens 1996, p. 11) then what we need is to understand the body as *lived* (Hekman 2008, p, 107). Therefore the post-structuralist and social constructionist separation of sex (biology), gender (social expression of sex), and sexuality (what/who/how 'one' desires) is another example of granting discourse too much power over the experiential. Furthermore, these distinctions ignore that linguistics, words, thoughts, and discourse are all

material process too. They are not other than matter, but rather materially entangled phenomena. Thus rendering sex, gender, and sexuality distinct classifications, can work epistemologically, but it does not work ontologically – instead of reducing these elements to materiality *or* sociality, it is more useful to understand them onto-epistemologically. Otherwise, they will remain *either* in the realm of discourse *or* the material and prevent any new ways of being, knowing, and understanding.

The atomisation of sex, gender, sexuality into three distinct categories, is what enables the discursive phenomenon of fragmented identity. When the body is thought to be entirely deterritorialized, until social discourse is used to re-territorialize it, one's identity is fragmented from one's materiality. This requires a rational separation that flattens embodiment into mere biology and produces a discontinuity of experience in the attempt to create stable sameness. This gets us nowhere in terms of sensory-embodied experience since we cannot simply turn off or disengage parts of ourselves, even if we believe this is conceptually possible; the body remains. Just as the process of sensorial individuation, which seeks to separate and control the 'senses', does not allow use to willingly disengage from parts of our bodies entirely. Therefore, these categories must be brought into conversation; pulled from their neat classifications outside of the body and immersed into sensory-embodiment. Sex, gender, sexuality are always already condensed according

to heteronormative (and homonormative<sup>48</sup>) *homo clausus* assumptions of the body via material-discursive practices. To echo Irigaray, we live our identities through a sexed body. The body is primary and however we may live our gender or express our desire, it all happens through our flesh. While sex, gender, sexuality, as three distinct elements, may create the *impression* of variable identity through dis-embodied *homines aperti* fragmentation, it is only variable when compared against the rational heteronormative matrix. In order to begin shifting conceptions of social embodiment, from the closed/open binary to knowing through doing and being, it is important to make these elements cohesive. Bodies are messy, dynamic, and unfinished and it is time that conceptions of subjectivity acknowledged this. This is not a call for a return to naturalistic, reductionistic, or deterministic approaches to the material body. Instead, sex-gender-sexuality, in whatever combination, is a move toward the *living* body and sensory-embodied knowledge. Sex-gender-sexuality, as an assemblage, points to material-discursive bodies in action. This assemblage happens in time and space – it is material and discursive, ontological and epistemological, differential and becoming – as opposed to separate categories that are rationally constructed onto the material body, or naturally occurring from within.

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<sup>48</sup> Hetero- and homo-normativity both rely on two distinct and stable sexes, genders, and sexualities. They encompass more than *just* sexuality because they implicate how the body is used generally in everyday life according to my understanding of sex-gender-sexuality as fundamental to social identity and bodily experience.

While sex, gender, and sexuality are often most immediately associated with the domain of the 'inner' life and thus one's private lifestyle, they are absolutely vital to the experiencing of everyday public life because they are assumed to line up according to the discourse of/discursive heterosexual matrix. For example, as Siebers (2008, p. 298), when speaking about differently-abled bodies engaged in sexual acts, explains,

Sex may seem a private activity, but it is wholly public insofar as it is subject to social prejudices and ideologies and takes place in a built environment designed according to public and ideal conceptions of the human body.

Even the most seemingly private acts are subject to social standards of heteronormative sex-gender-sexuality. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the most mundane aspects of daily life (e.g. toileting practices) are too. This is why the styling of the body *through* sex-gender-sexuality is so crucial. As Peggy Phelan explains, 'Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express *being* fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning, exactly' (Phelan 1993, p. 7 my emphasis). Therefore the assemblage, sex-gender-sexuality is more useful to an onto-epistemological understanding of the embodied self as it speaks to how bodily experience is always already caught up in myriad ways of being and understanding that cannot be cleanly parsed out into three separate categories. It points to the materiality that is caught up in clandestine social-rational process that condense to categorise and name bodies, practices, and desires. Sex, gender, sexuality are not

performed social variables, but rather ongoing, open-ended sensory-embodied processes that are part and parcel of the materiality of the body. They are variable and changing depending on how one is embodied, not stable features of identity. To keep them separate denies the entangled, differential, and becoming nature of living.

To flesh this out a bit more and from a different approach, I will now consider the reproduction of sex-gender-sexuality as something which is clearly entangled but is rationally understood and thus taught/learned as distinct categories. Like Elias' annoyance at the tendency of Western philosophy and sociology to take the adult *homo clausus* subject as given, a criticism associated with his espousal of the need for empirical awareness of the processes of becoming and being an individual in society, Lee Edelman (2004) is fed up with the heteronormative project of 'future children'. This project shores up social individualism and the *homo clausus* self in the form of families who reproduce this individualism in and through their offspring. As the process of childrearing is highly social it is extremely difficult to raise children outside of or in opposition to it. Heteronormativity is reliant upon two distinct sex-genders to further the mission of the linear progression of the species, in the form of families that occur as distinct units consisting of a 'mother' and a 'father'<sup>49</sup>. According to Edelman, 'Fighting for the future of the children' is arguably the ultimate heteronormative political and moral project

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<sup>49</sup> These familial units are also locales of capitalistic consumption (see e.g. Irigaray 1996).

– as it is necessary for the reproduction of capitalist individualism – and there is an immense amount of social inculcation into this project that occurs in childhood. Edelman works, in his polemic *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, to unpack it. He argues,

*queerness* names the side of those *not* ‘fighting for the children,’ the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism (2004, p. 3, original emphasis).

This idea of the family and those who should make-up families is a fantasy that provides a false sense of stability (sameness) to gendered social identities and related bodily ways of being according to sex-gender-sexuality (Edelman 2004, p. 7). As I work to show in this thesis, heteronormative practices imbue our ways of life generally, even for those who are not heterosexual. This is largely due to how we construct gender identity and sensory-embodiment based on heteronormative ideals, which entangle sexual ways of being with the sexed and gendered body. In other words,

one way in which [the] system of compulsory heterosexuality is reproduced and concealed is through the cultivation of bodies into discrete sexes with ‘natural’ appearances and ‘natural’ heterosexual dispositions (Butler 1988, p. 524).

Gay or straight, male or female, this naturalisation is primary for individual, rational *homo clausus* identity, because sexuality and gender are reliant on the materiality of the body. Instead of rationally separating sex, gender, sexuality, to combat the already overly rational *homo clausus* sex-gendering, we need to return to the materiality that is suppressed in identity construction. In order

to do so we need to learn to recognise patterns of difference (without categorising and pathologizing them) which are always already present for all bodies every day. The economic, ethical, and moral project for the 'future for children' is concerned with sameness and seeks to demonise difference according to heteronormative ways of being. This dynamic is even at work in public toilet spaces.

Children and their 'innocence'<sup>50</sup> are of a specific concern when it comes to public toilets and the need for bodies to replicate heteronormative sex-gender-sexuality. It is through their invocation in public toilets that queer and trans bodies are made into something to be suspect and scared of and often those individuals are labelled as 'perverts' or 'paedophiles' simply because of the fear surrounding non-normative sex-gender-sexuality. This was reflected in my interviews with both queer women and trans men, who dislike when children are in public toilets because they tend to be curious and not fully inculcated into *homo clausus* norms and thus are thought to be able to spot difference; a curiosity that could result in abuse from angry parents. Part of this concern is due to how sexuality is always entangled with sex-gender because it is never *just* about how and with whom one has sex, but instead the entire implied or assumed lifestyle, ethics, politics, and morality that is seemingly expressed through one's embodied self – that is, one's identity.

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<sup>50</sup> This is a trope that denies that children have sexuality. Generally, sexuality is only problematic for parents and children when that sexuality is non-normative.



This is an example of material-discourse at work; In public toilets, where sex-gender is condensed, sexuality that is not normative is expected to be able to be accessed through appearance and bodily behaviours, through the visual, so that even those who do not 'identify' with heteronormativity, experience pressure to embody the socially 'proper' behaviours as not to appear suspect and threatening<sup>51</sup>. This is because according to *homo clausus* norms there is a right and a wrong way to be embodied; hence the rational expectation to be able to access one's sex-gender-sexuality through a material-discursive reading of one's body. A reading which is understood not as fleeting or momentary, but rather an image of stability that gives access to one's entire way of being according to normative social structures.

This bodily reading of one's presumed identity is a representationalist practice that seeks to create sameness amongst identity 'types' and can only account for difference in oppositional terms. Like Grosz, my interest in this thesis is 'in addressing how difference problematises rather than undergirds identity' (2011, p. 91). That is a difference which is the ontological condition for the social; a material, sensory-embodied difference that is before and beyond 'identity', 'subjectivity', or 'consciousness'. This

is an understanding of difference as the generative force of the world, the force that enacts materiality (and not just its representation), the movement of difference that marks the very energies of existence before and beyond any lived or imputed identity (Grosz 2011, p. 91).

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<sup>51</sup> This is confirmed by my empirical research and will be acknowledge in the following chapters.

Put simply, and to reiterate, difference is the condition for being in the world and differential ways of being do not stop appearing no matter how intensely we normatively and continually (re)territorialize ourselves (via identity, social propriety) against them. Difference is before and beyond any categorisation of sameness from which superficial, representational difference can be located and *corpus infinitum* is a way beneath identity and into difference through sensory-embodiment. Sensory-embodiment, when given the opportunity, can open those self-variations and experiences we learn to ignore, hide, or neglect according to social practices of teleological sameness, that bring us beyond the self, or 'make us *more than we are*' in Grosz's (2011, p. 91 original emphasis) terms. In *Difference and Repetition*,

Deleuze outlines how the concept of difference is aligned, repressed, and evaded in the history of Western thought, but also the ways in which nevertheless a monstrous, impossible, unconstrained difference is implicated in all concepts of identity, resemblance, and opposition by which difference is commonly understood and to which it is usually reduced (Grosz 2011, p. 92).

This point is also why sex-gender-sexuality is an important way into the understanding and valuing of difference. The triad removes the possibility for definition and stability based upon and between identity categories and rather, makes room for ongoing difference as inherent to sensory-embodiment. No longer are we subjects with specific sexes, genders, and sexualities, attempting to cobble together a stable, self-same experience from discontinuity, but instead are open, becoming entities with various features of

materiality and opportunities for ways of being that enable a smoother, more cohesive daily experience. Rather than allowing difference to be 'subjected to representation', *corpus infinitum* is an attempt to move beyond and get before 'identity, analogy, opposition, and resemblance' which transform difference 'from an active principle to a passive residue' (Grosz 2011, p. 93). That is to give difference its place as generative force. This, I believe is possible when identity is not based on the categorisation and pathologization of ways of being, which require individuals to ignore, exclude, or refrain from the curious, and creative opportunities that do not perfectly align with one's 'identity'. This social restriction through identity creates fragmentation and disconnection while trying to produce sameness.

Thus in acknowledging sex-gender-sexuality as experientially entangled according to social norms that can be accessed by others through the visible, allows us to begin to locate where discursive sameness overtakes material difference. Phelan (1993, p. 4) echoing Lacan reminds us that 'visibility is a trap...it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession.' Social identity is reliant upon the specific control, management, and styling of the body and those stylings are always caught up in heteronormativity (and in the project of the family, even when the parents aren't heteronormative, because heteronormativity is the basis for both the family and sex-gender-sexuality). The categories of sex, gender, sexuality, while perhaps useful for

linguistic distinctions, and the construction of a 'stable' 'identity', which is not consistently 'reflective' of sensory-embodied practices, (because reflective categories ignore subtle patterns of difference) are inseparable in the daily experience. For that reason sex-gender-sexuality as a linked onto-epistemology is more accurate for an empirical study of sensory-embodiment and a vital opening into daily patterns of difference.

### **Materializing and Posthumanizing Elias**

The awareness, arguably developed out of Butler's brand of performativity, that 'self-identity needs to be continually reproduced and reassured precisely because it fails to secure belief' is a starting point for understanding how onto-epistemology happens through repetitive material-discursive practices (Phelan 1993, p. 4). Barad's grounded performativity, which 'can only be understood as an explicit challenge to Butler's concept' (Hekman 2008, p. 104), offers an opportunity to recognise where it makes sense to actively intervene in the reproduction of heteronormative *homo clausus* body-identity. Reading Elias through material feminist and posthumanist theories enables a perspective of how bodies are transformed into and experienced as individual selves. "Humans' are neither pure cause nor pure effect, but part of the world in its open-ended becoming' (Barad 2008, p.139). By reading Elias through Barad there is a new opportunity to not only *observe* and *describe* human society as *homines aperti* – consisting of

individuals who are 'interdependent people in the singular' and society as 'interdependent people in the plural' (Elias 1978, p. 125) – but to account for the intimate, entangled experience of living and being by bringing this epistemological view into the ontological through the intra-active *corpus infinitum*.

*Homo clausus*, the typical individual identity formation and experience in the English-American context, is based upon 'a cultivation of inwardness' (Elias 2000, p. 512) and an honouring of the rational self who *has* agency. But *homo clausus* is much more than an 'image' of the self that took hold overtime (Smith 1999, p. 85); *It is an entire ontology*. In fact it is an onto-epistemology, because knowing and doing are always entangled, and intra-acted. *Homo clausus* is not just how people construct their body-identity, their 'self', but it is how people *experience, know, and understand* their body-selves. Without the strict and rational shaping of the experiential body, the self would not be able to condense into an 'image' or 'stable' identity. Therefore, I view this conjoined theoretical opportunity as a potential for sensory-embodied-identity to not only be recognised and empirically theorised as open, fluid, and interconnected (e.g. *homines aperti* or queer), but that a profound shift in the experiential, the living self is possible when we place sensory-embodiment at the core of our understanding. This is a re-focusing of what we take to be real and powerful and a re-conceiving of those relationships. By placing *active* materiality (as the real) at the centre of power there isn't a

denial of rationality, the mind, epistemology or theory, but rather, because this is non-dialectical, a new more cohesive, expansive, and entangled approach to being. Both *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* understandings of selfhood and the social are inherently limiting because they attempt to create stability and legibility through material-discursive practices through the denial of inherently open-ended, ongoing difference. As Grosz (2011, p. 97, original emphasis) explains,

Oppression is made up of a myriad of acts, large and small, individual and collective, private and public: *patriarchy*, *racism*, *classism*, and *ethnocentrism* are all various names we give to characterize a pattern among these acts, or to lend them a discernable form. I am not suggesting that patriarchy or racism don't exist or have mutually inducing effects on all individuals. I am simply suggesting that they are *not* structures, *not* systems, but immanent *patterns*, models we impose on this plethora of acts to create some order.

Similarly, *corpus infinitum* seeks to get before and beyond the acts, the structures, to the patterns that condense into individual identity and keep people from the becoming nature of sensory-embodiment. This is a potential to shift from individual identity, to immanent patterns of being and from social structures to greater personal empowerment.

By first locating (through empirical research) fissures in the monadic self-image (via socially experienced identity) and then exploring how those fissures are felt in relation to the individual body, I believe this shift is possible. Put simply, instead of a social identity based on dis-embodiment for the sake of social connectivity, by way of maintaining classificatory systems,

this is a move toward sensory-embodiment that is not swiftly weakened through fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment. Through sensory-embodied cohesion, the loosening of internal and the external borders, and a devaluing of boundaries created by discourse, the power of FASE to regulate individuality can be radically diminished. This is extremely important not merely theoretically, but empirically and onto-epistemologically. Sensory-embodied relationships, as reliant on the notion of fixed or fragmented boundaries of the individual body (*homo clausus* or *homo aperti*), excludes an entire range of embodied possibilities, let alone access to ‘important dimensions of the workings of power’ (Barad 2008, p. 144). By giving attention to enfolded potential I aim to empirically explore how the dominant system of individual identity creates dis-embodiment and thus severely limits us in our social connections. In doing so, I seek to extend Elias’ project beyond the binaries, biases, and material losses inherent to *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* and offer an understanding of the body as *living*. By taking sensory-embodiment as the source of experience, knowledge, and understanding – not the mind – new socially experiential possibilities can be forged.

## **Conclusion**

Posthumanisms, material feminisms, and Eliasian sociology stress the need for empirical research. The empirical research within this thesis aims to



build a cohesive English-American understanding of sensory-embodiment through Eliasian understandings of identity and society. This work is situated in relation to Mennell's (2007, p. 295) Eliasian study of America, wherein he shows that

the broad trend of the development of manners and habitus in the USA was very similar to that which Elias observed between the late Middle Ages and the nineteenth century in Western Europe, and later studies (notably by Cas Wouters) suggest that in the twentieth century the pattern was one of further convergence...On both sides of the Atlantic, changes in social standards were driven by similar, though not identical, processes...[and] Through a growing social constraint to self-constraint, the same advance in the thresholds of shame and repugnance is evident in American [sic] as in Europe.

In my research, I have focused on the experience of sensory-embodied living in gender-segregated English-American public toilet spaces. Since these societies have developed and construct identity and self-control in very similar ways, that is based upon similar ideals of gender and morality that is expressed, for example, through an engagement with patriarchal capitalism, including media and consumerism, it is possible to theorise them together. This offers a better opportunity to give relief to the naturalised taken-for-grantedness inherent to *homo clausus* identity construction as it opportunes access to more types of identity. Public toilets, simply put, bring together individuality, social identity, the biological body, sensory individuation, dis-embodiment, sex-gender-sexuality, and experiences of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment on a daily basis. They are spaces where monadic *homo*

*clausus* thrives through *homines aperti* fragmentation of the self as separate from the 'disgusting' or 'abject' material body.

Public toilet spaces also offer a vital link to the body as living *before adulthood*. As Elias (1991, p. 25) stresses, 'The historicity of each individual, the phenomenon of growing up to adulthood, is the key to an understanding of what 'society' is.' Toileting practices are expected to be taught and learned once and for all. Once we learn them in the initial years of life, they become tamed by taboo and we are not to speak of them again; an example of material-discourse in action. Toilet training for parents of toddlers is actively and enthusiastically discussed for a very brief (and often frantic) time, then the discussion is abruptly quashed when it is expected that all children have rationally learned what they 'needed' to learn in order to control their bodies accordingly. These are some of the earliest and deepest experiences of dis-embodiment and they are some of most long-lasting sensory-embodied practices we sustain in our performances of sex-gender-sexuality.

By taking the living adult toileting-body seriously it is my goal to better understand social identity as necessarily tied to sensorial individuation and dis-embodiment from our earliest social relationship with bodies. In doing so I elucidate how individual social identity maintains socially legible bodies and continues the valuation of social connection based upon reductionistic dis-embodiment. Through prying open individual experiences of social identity (as required for social connectivity) and putting them into

conversation, I point to strategies people have adopted both by choice and out of necessity, that further a richer more embodied experience, which I describe as bodily becoming. These experiences explore an embodied shift from *homo clausus* to *homini aperti* – from closed self to open interconnected self – and beyond; from dis-embodiment reliant on sensory individuation to sensory-embodiment as boundless becoming, as intra-active social happening. Ultimately, it is a shift that explores the potentials of bodily becoming above mere social connection, by directly taking on fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment and exploring personal and non-conventional forms of embodied knowledge, as the very thresholds for becoming-other. Through this exploration I hope to reach an understanding of how we can become more than merely the sum of our parts.

The posthumanist-materialist formulation of sensory-body-identity is about taking a diffractive and onto-epistemological approach that aims to recognise, understand, and disrupt limiting material-discursive practices inherent to *homo clausus* or *homines aperti* ways of being, knowing, and experiencing. This approach frees the mind from the imagined boundaries of the skull and allows for bodily awareness, for *knowing through the consciously aware body*. By taking a posthumanist and material feminist approach to my research I aim to understand body-identity as *living*, not rationally *maintained*. Sensory-embodiment is about knowing through *being* not merely *doing* based upon knowing. Toileting practices and public toilet spaces offer an

opportunity to understand where and when *homo clausus* identity breaks down and therefore how the shift to *corpus infinitum* can happen. This work explores new ways of being embodied and thus new forms of sociality.

In the chapter that follows I give a history of the public-toileting-body. This includes an outline of the development of public toilet spaces and the corresponding development of moral and bodily attitudes. Utilising Elias' Civilizing Process, I locate the development of individual social identity in terms of the public-toileting-body, through a process I term the 'modern excretory shift'. By first understanding how these spaces and the linked social attitudes about 'the body' came to be, it is possible to locate how the early lived experience of the body is shaped, and thus how it corresponds to contemporary experiences of the living body as inseparable from sex-gender-sexuality. Looking specifically at the historical process of sensorial individuation and dis-embodiment helps give relief to the power of the material-discursive practices we engage every day.

# Individuating the Communal: *The history of Western public toilets since the 15th century*

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## Introduction

There are several histories that can be written which take as their focal point the locus of public toilet spaces in the Western world. Public toilet spaces impact, historically and presently, upon constructions and experiences of individuality, race, class, gender, age, ability, mobility, morality, sexuality, health, sanitation, technology, and urbanity. They are essential spaces for Western civilisation. It is more than a little surprising, however, that if we consider the social and technological advancement that the word 'civilisation' implies, these toilet spaces as we know them today (i.e. gender segregated with individual, enclosed flush toilets) stopped developing almost as soon as they came into being. As Lambton (2007, p. 25) points out, the toilet 'was invented some 100 years ago [and] since the 1880's has changed neither its workings or its basic shape'. This lack of advancement is not global; high-tech Japanese toilet and fixture manufactures have spent millions trying to break into the Western market, but have found that Westerners just 'don't care' about advancements in toileting styles and technology (George 2008, pp.

52-3).

The public toilets familiar to those in the United Kingdom and North America, which were developed from early Western European models, namely French and English (Cavanagh 2010), have not changed much since the late 1800's and neither arguably have our bodily dispositions while we use them. As Alexander Kira, in *The Bathroom* (1976), his unique, important, and severely overlooked<sup>52</sup> architectural study of the way modern people physically use bathing and toileting facilities, reminds us:

[T]echnology is to a very large degree a variable that can be speeded or slowed according to the social and cultural demands of an era. While we can create new technologies to satisfy our demands, we can also ignore particular technologies and allow them to lie idle for years (1976, p. 5).

Public toilets took several hundred years to come into fashion and, in their earliest forms, were only considered necessary by the ruling elites when continued urbanisation was threatened by the increasing amount of human waste being thrown out of windows, piling up in the streets, and contaminating the bodies of water necessary for sustaining life. As people settled together, creating more densely populated areas, there needed to be some organisation of the human waste that was threatening to submerge the city, hinder mobility, and threaten the health of the population. The privatising process around which this organisation developed began in the

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<sup>52</sup> This text was problematic for booksellers because of the 'uncouth' content and the photos of nude bodies (though with black-barred eyes) and was therefore categorised as 'dirty' and 'pornographic' and/or 'comedy' until it went out of print (Kira 1976). It is now a very difficult text to locate.

home with chamber pots and cesspits and eventually moved out to the public realm and onto the street with specific spaces designated and then built for excretion. This eventually led to the development of flush toilets and sophisticated plumbing and sewerage systems we are familiar with today; systems that whisk our bodily waste away from us in an instant.

Kira's point becomes exceedingly clear when we consider that the flush toilet, a technology Westerners not only rely on but *always* expect in daily life, was first<sup>53</sup> designed and gifted to royalty at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but did not gain popularity until the Victorian obsession with health and hygiene took hold roughly 200 years later (Cavanagh 2010). It was only through the development of modesty, guilt, and privacy that the technology became vital, a point I develop later when considering the cultural shift from *gemeinschaft* (community) to *gesellschaft* (society). The acceptance and development of public toileting was a 'civilising process' in its truest sense; implicating not only the development of technology and new living standards, but also an intense overhauling of peoples' understanding of and attitudes toward their own bodies and the bodies around them. This process arguably created a new, fragmented, and individuated form of embodiment, one that approximates *homo clausus* ways of being.

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<sup>53</sup> It has also been reported that 'primitive forms of the flushing toilet, together with channels to carry foul water away, were found at the 3,700-year-old palace of King Minos at Knossos' (George 2008, p. 24).



## The history of public toilets from the communal to the public

Clara Greed (2003, p. 32), one of the few toilet space scholars, claims that 'there have always been public toilets'. This rather ahistorical statement, rife with modern mentality, misses the nuance of what it means for a space, particularly a space built for the body, to be 'public'. (We could call the street a 'public toilet', but it will still function primarily as a street.) In order for a space to be labelled and experienced as 'public' there first needs to be a sense of 'publicness' (and a parallel sense of 'privateness'). Particularly when considering toilet spaces, there needs to be bodily modesty and the sense of personal *privacy*. Without this the space is merely communal. It is more useful to say without euphemism that there have always been public acts of urination and defecation. In the following section I will first broadly consider the public and private, personal and communal aspects of toileting and second, begin focusing the discussion more specifically on three spatial-historical milestones of public toileting.

Historically, the spaces where excretory acts took place (without modern shame and embarrassment) ranged from the communal to the personal to the common. In the medieval era, people would urinate or defecate in all manner of different spaces; whether these be in a field or street (still acceptable in many places for men and children), or while sitting at a table, in the corner of a room, or on the stairs in one's home (Elias 2000). Medieval cities did sometimes possess latrines which sat anywhere from eight

to twenty-eight users at one time. In contrast, beginning in the 1700s, some women had portable glass, leather, ceramic, or wood urinals which enabled them to urinate anywhere, at any moment, without staining their heavy, layered clothing (Cavanagh 2010, p. 28, Greed 1995, Penner 2005). Those who didn't have these urinals still urinated in public, but simply risked wetting their clothes.

In all of these cases there was a lack of distinction between 'public' and 'private'. There were many overlapping options for excretion in public life throughout the centuries and of those mentioned above, the one that most closely resembles the public toilets of today (medieval latrines) was favoured for a purpose that would, in the 21st century, be considered (according to the rules of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order I put forth in chapter six) utterly undesirable: they were spaces to socialise *during* excretion (Kira 1976). Thus at a time before modern guilt, modesty, shame, embarrassment, and privacy, latrines were the 'public toilet' of choice in the 15<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and were probably utilised *precisely because they were communal*. As Kira (1976, p. 6) notes, 'not only was defecation simply not always private; it was also often an activity to socialise over' and not only for the lower classes who had more relaxed codes of social propriety. As Wright explains,

Kings, princes and even generals treated it [the latrine, basin, or whatever apparatus favoured at the time] as a throne at which audiences could be granted (Wright 1963, p. 102).

From commoners to royalty, toileting was often enjoyed as an opportunity to be with others. Further, it has been suggested that

shared toilet facilities engendered a sense of community among users that would be the envy of modern town planners trying to regenerate the inner city (Greed 2003, p. 34).

This communal aspect is manifestly absent from the 'private acts' we accomplish in the public toilets of today; communality as explored in the following chapter is not only absent but anathema to contemporary public toileting. Socialisation into the 'proper' use of these spaces and our bodies within them has required communities to become individuals and for individuals to become quiet masters of their bodies, learning strict control and management in accordance with social propriety or otherwise risk personal degradation and social embarrassment. This is exemplified in the toilet training process Western parents put their children through today, with children having 'in the space of just a few years to attain the advanced level of shame and revulsion that has developed over many centuries' (Elias 2000, p. 119). This is a point I develop generally throughout this chapter and deal with explicitly in the final section on embodiment and individuality.

In order to better understand how we sustained this massive shift from toileting spaces that were enjoyed because of their communality, openness, and sociality to the closed and intensely managed spaces of modern public

toilets<sup>54</sup>, I will focus on three spatial-historical milestones and their corresponding attitudes and developments in socio-bodily practices. These milestones are anchored to specific design or architectural developments that highlight how the (*homo clausus*) self-bodily disposition we tend to adopt toward bodily functions today was developed and directly entangled with social discourse and material everyday engagement throughout history. It is worth briefly noting that in terms of types of embodiment as well as toileting technology, these changes were not automatically welcomed, supported, or embodied and certainly not adopted without conflict. I have chosen just three for both ease of explanation but also because there weren't that many to choose from. As mentioned previously, very little has changed about these spaces since they came into being. Thus the three developments I have chosen show how slowly these changes developed and how quickly cessation of development set in. To accomplish this task I rely largely on Elias's *The Civilizing Process* (2000). His analysis is highly relevant to my study overall and particularly useful in this chapter because of his development of the European habitus. That is, his keen tracing of how socially-based emotional modelling and physical behaviour (e.g. manners, violence, repulsion) was shaped, made relevant, and gradually expected in all individuals; a large portion of which we continue to adopt as 'second nature' today. While his

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<sup>54</sup> This process and its corresponding socio-bodily attitudes and practices is later referred to as the 'modern excretory shift' and is concerned explicitly with the changes that occurred starting in the 16th century and continued through the 19th century.

work doesn't focus explicitly on the body, much of his observations, particularly in the first volume of *The Civilizing Process*, focus explicitly on bodily functions and the development of shame and embarrassment connected to those functions. Accordingly, my history focuses on the body in public toilets (i.e. the development of the modern, *homo clausus*, toileting body) and begins in the Tudor era: Starting with the 'great house of easement' then moving to the first gender-segregated toileting spaces at an elite French ball in 1739, and finally arriving at the first permanent, public-private, gendered-segregated toilets that resulted from the Great Exhibition and the Victorian obsession with hygiene and sanitation. I then consider the intrinsically linked spatial-historical and socio-cultural shift to *gesellschaft* via individuation, and the resulting implications for embodiment (which I more directly flesh out in the following chapter). My suggestion throughout this account is that the history of the modern public toilet can be interpreted as one of ever-increasing separation, suppression, and hetero-sex-gendering in the name of moral propriety, safety, health, and hygiene.

### **The First Spatial-Historical Milestone**

The latrine, a nascent multi-user public toilet, is the first spatial-historical milestone in toileting technology. It was the communal option of the 15<sup>th</sup> through early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and was simply a long bench with several holes over which people sat. Latrines were usually built over a body of water

(e.g. the edges of bridges over the River Thames in London) into which expelled waste would directly drop. Latrines were viewed as spaces in which group identity could be encouraged and celebrated (or read differently, where group identity could be shaped and then observed), which is why they are utilised, even in the 21st century, by 'highly structured and authoritarian' institutions (e.g. the military) who are seeking 'to minimise individual identity, so as to foster or force a strong group identity' (Kira 1976, p. 167). A royal version of the latrine, built for courtiers and servants at Hampton Court in London, called the 'great house of easement' was built in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century during Henry VIII's massive expansion of the grounds. It had twenty-eight seats over two levels -- making it highly social and very busy -- and emptied into brick-lined drains which carried the waste to the River Thames. While latrines were popular, people still had the legal right and the social custom to excrete in the street or anywhere else they pleased, in plain sight of their community, indoors and out.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, new bodily habits, attitudes, and practices began to occur with the emergence of new instruction manuals, schoolbooks, and court regulations. In this regard, there are three issues highlighted by Erasmus's 1530 *De civiliate morum purilium* worth discussing.

#### **Example A**

It is impolite to greet someone who is urinating or defecating (Erasmus 1530 in Elias 2000, p. 110).

In this example we glean at least two important distinctions: First, it would not have been an extraordinary occurrence to meet someone in your path or in your home, who was urinating or defecating. Second, the need to issue this advice suggests that at some point in the not too distance past it was not considered impolite to speak to someone who was openly engaged in excretion, but rather that it was a relatively new social problem which required direct behavioural instruction.

### **Example B**

A well-bred person should always avoid exposing without necessity the parts to which nature has attached modesty. If necessity compels this, it should be done with decency and reserve, even if no witness is present. For angels are always present...if it arouses shame to show them to the eyes of others, still less should they be exposed to their touch (Erasmus 1530 in Elias 2000, p. 110).

Here we see an early attempt to instil bodily shame (through 'modesty') in the readers of this advice. Those receiving this instruction learned that they were *supposed* to start hiding their bodies and *begin feeling* ashamed not only while around other people but also while alone. Clearly, this modesty didn't come from within individuals, but instead was instituted upon a community in the name of 'nature' and 'decency', and a new level of morality in regard to the religious notion of ever-present angels. The instructions in examples A and B prop each other up and work to cooperatively *construct* bodily shame and modesty from many angles. They encourage people to consider questions pertaining to how and when they interact with others, how one's own body is



viewed by others, and how to regard other people's bodies as potential sources of shame.

### **Example C**

To hold back urine is harmful to health. [And regarding farting or passing gas:] If it can be purged without a noise that is best. But it is better that it be emitted with a noise than that it be held back (Erasmus 1530 in Elias 2000, p.110).

Early concerns over health and illness as related to how one uses their body are introduced in this example. The conflict here is revealing. On the one hand, there is a general understanding that it is not healthy to hold in one's bodily functions, as it is widely believed to easily lead to illness<sup>55</sup> (Elias 2000, p. 111). On the other hand, there is tension and delicacy about *how* one should engage their bodily functions while in the presence of others. Still, at this time it was clearly more important to allow the bodily functions to occur in public, in order to maintain the *appearance* of health<sup>56</sup>, than to institute complete control over them. As explained alongside example C: 'it is not pleasing, while striving to appear urbane, to contract an illness' (Erasmus 1530 in Elias 2000, p. 110).

It is vital, when considering these examples from a contemporary Western perspective, to recognise the mere fact that these topics were

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<sup>55</sup> There was clearly a popular stance, as Erasmus explains: 'Regarding the unhealthiness of retaining the wind: There are some verses in volume two of Nicharchos' epigrams where he describes the illness-bearing power of the retained fart, but since these lines are quoted by everybody I will not comment on them here' (Erasmus 1530 in Elias 2000, p. 110).

<sup>56</sup> While it was still socially acceptable to pass gas in public during this time, it was ultimately allowed in order to maintain the appearance of good health, which was still a social end. As the body becomes more intensely divided and heavily controlled, audibly passing gas later becomes a sign of illness – or at least illness is often invoked when it happens in public.

discussed at all and the openness with which they were discussed. As Elias (2000, p. 111) explains:

The thoroughness, the extraordinary seriousness, and the complete freedom with which questions are publicly discussed here that have subsequently become privatised to a high degree and overlain in social life with strong prohibitions shows particularly clearly the shift of the frontier of embarrassment and its advance in a specific direction. That feelings of shame are frequently mentioned explicitly in the discussion underlines the difference in the shame standard.

As shame and modesty increased and began to be embodied from a young age, it became increasingly inappropriate to speak directly about these matters. For example, it would be shocking and 'inappropriate' to see instructions in a contemporary schoolbook explaining the 'right' and 'wrong' way to use and feel about one's body during excretion; instead this instruction now happens in early childhood as part of the toilet training and socialisation process in general. It is something that is dealt with in the *privacy* of the family home (not in the *public* domain of the school) and it is seen chiefly as the responsibility of parents and guardians<sup>57</sup>.

Along these lines, the continuing advancement of the modern excretory shift is evident in examples from only a slightly later period, namely the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The following three examples expose new societal attitudes and practices in Western Europe.

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<sup>57</sup> Some of the participants in this study who were privately employed by busy New York City families partook in the toilet training of the children they were paid to care for as they typically spent more time with the children, on daily and weekly bases, than parents spent with them.

### Example D

[I]t does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people, nor to do up his clothes afterward in their presence. Similarly, he will not wash his hands on returning to decent society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people [(From *Galateo* or, 'A treatise on politeness and delicacy of manners') Della Casa 1558, p. 32 in Elias 2000, p. 111].

This example shows how modesty was pinned to a whole series of bodily actions undertaken before and after excretion, with particular emphasis on not disturbing other people who may be present. This imperative required people to become increasingly cognisant of their actions *as they were happening* and then have the wherewithal and foresight to be able to change or modify their behaviour without social awkwardness while in the presence of others. This set of psychic and physical practices is, again, something that individuals in contemporary society learn during toilet training and early socialisation, but for adult individuals in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it meant consciously learning a new way of being embodied. The obvious correlate to this new 'etiquette' is that people were then *expected* to be easily and instantly disgusted (another learned response) by the *mere thought* of someone else's bodily functions. This expectation is in stark contrast to example A, which urged people not to *greet* someone who was *engaged in excretion*. The stunning difference between these two instructions, these new social expectations, exposes the advancing desire to distance bodies from one another. The instruction in this example is concerned with keeping individuals unaware of

the bodily needs of others and it only worked by keeping individuals hyper-aware of their *own* bodily needs and actions so that they could be 'properly' managed and controlled.

In example D we also begin to see another form of bodily distancing through the employment of euphemism. In this case the phrase 'relieve nature' is taking the place of specific names of bodily waste and bodily functions that were explicitly discussed and written about in European contexts just twenty years prior. One additional point to consider in example D is the instruction not to wash one's hands. This is interesting as, less than two hundred years later, we see the exact opposite instruction based on the same reasoning. In contemporary Western societies individuals must at least make it *appear* as though they've washed their hands after they've urinated or defecated to maintain hygienic decency and, for many, hand washing has become habituated into their public toilet practices.

### **Example E**

Let no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the staircases, corridors, or closets with urine or other filth, but go to suitable, prescribed places for such relief (Brunswick Court Regulations 1589 in Elias 2000, p. 111).

This example is concerned with monitoring other people's bodies and actions. It is an encouragement for those hosting guests to instil propriety about where their visitors should be allowed to excrete, while also exposing all of the newly 'incorrect' places that people would normally go. It is worth noting that we also see the continued use of euphemism in this example. Instead of

'defecate' or 'excrement' we now have 'foul', 'filth', and 'relief'.

**Example F**

the extreme heat is causing large quantities of meat and fish to rot in them [the streets of Paris], and this, coupled to the multitude of people who . . .<sup>58</sup> in the street, produces a smell so detestable that it cannot be endured (Duchess of Orleans 1694 in Elias 2000, p. 112).

Example F is unique insofar as it is part of a private correspondence written by a French woman, the Duchess of Orleans. She is writing about her visit to Paris and what is most intriguing is the ellipsis that appears. It seems as though where the Duchess could not write any words to describe the acts of human excretion she was witnessing, she wrote an ellipses instead. She does not seem concerned with the *sight* of such acts, as she only reports on the smells produced by them. With the emergence of euphemism seen in previous examples, the words necessary for the description of her experience at the time of this correspondence have become unutterable and unwritable (and unreadable).

In all of the aforementioned examples (A-F), spanning over 160 years, we can see the beginning of the modern excretory shift: the early efforts to impose shame and modesty (in the name of 'decency', 'morality') onto natural bodily functions through psychic, linguistic, and physical means. Over the next few centuries the blurring, distancing, and 'quieting' of the toileting body increased. The advancement of the modern excretory shift means

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<sup>58</sup> This ellipsis appears in the original text to serve as a 'blank' or to indicate the absence of an appropriate word.

continued transformation of individuals within the West. The second and third spatial-historical milestones have a distinct feature not yet explicitly dealt with in the nearly 200 years already discussed: Gender difference, or sex segregation. This was a newly important distinction that required the erection of new spaces and advanced technology.

### **The Second Spatial-Historical Milestone**

The second spatial-historical milestone that represented an important move toward the contemporary public toilet spaces we rely on, was the appearance of sex-segregated toileting spaces in 1739, initiated by the French upper classes. A restaurant in Paris, which was hired to hold a great ball, allotted toileting

*cabinets* with inscriptions over the doors, *Garderobes pour les femmes* and *Garderobes pour les hommes*, with chambermaids in the former and valets in the latter (Wright 1963, p. 103, original emphasis).

This appears to have been the first time that separate toileting spaces were provided for men and women. While more precise details about the physical layout of these temporary spaces remain unknown, they were clearly intended to implement a gendered propriety and, as Shelia Cavanagh argues (2010, p. 28), to ‘accentuate sexual difference and to project [that] difference onto public space’.

At the time of the appearance of these new sex-segregated spaces, the continued quieting, shaming, and covering of the body and natural bodily

functions, further propelled the modern excretory shift. There was an increased emphasis on the visual, with strict orders to cover one's entire body, not only the sexual/excretory organs, from all eyes including one's own. By this time concern about bodily sounds and 'proper' language was increasing, as evidenced by the invention of even more euphemisms. To further explicate this phase of advancement I consider two 18<sup>th</sup> century examples as laid out in *The Civilizing Process* (Elias 2000). Examples G and H are from the same chapter (*On Parts of the Body That Should Be Hidden, and on Natural Necessities*) but from two different editions of *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility) by La Salle (which was used in Christian schools). Example G is from the 1729 edition and example H is from forty-five years later, the 1774 edition. I will discuss these two examples together.

### **Example G**

It is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and the hands. You should care, so far as you can, not to touch with your bare hand any part of the body that is not normally uncovered...You should get used to suffering small discomforts without twisting, rubbing or scratching...

It is far more contrary to decency and propriety to touch or to see in another person particularly of the other sex, that which Heaven forbids you to look at in yourself. When you need to pass water [urinate], you should always withdraw to some unfrequented place. And it is proper (even for children) to perform other natural functions where you cannot be seen.

It is very impolite to emit wind [gas] from your body when in company, either from above [burp] or from below [fart], even if it is done without noise; and it is shameful and indecent to do it in a way that can be heard



by others.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should be hidden, nor of certain bodily necessities to which Nature has subjected us, *nor even to mention them* (La Salle 1729, p. 45ff. in Elias 2000, p. 112, my emphasis).

### **Example H**

It is part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands.

As far as natural needs are concerned, it is proper (even for children) to satisfy them only where one cannot be seen.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should always be hidden, or of certain bodily necessities to which nature has subjected us, or even to mention them (La Salle 1774, p. 24 in Elias 2000, p. 113).

We can see, just by looking at examples G and H, that the ability to openly discuss bodily matters shifted considerably in just forty-five years. Example H is much shorter in length than example G though they cover roughly the same material and comprise the same chapter in their respective editions. As Elias (2000, p. 113) highlights, while these two examples constitute the same chapter in name and topic, the 1729 edition (example G) 'covers a good two and one-half pages' and the 1774 edition (example H) covers 'scarcely one and one-half.' By comparing these two examples, we can safely assume 'much that could be and *had to be* expressed earlier is no longer spoken of' (Elias 2000, p. 113 my emphasis). For example, there is just brief mention of sexual difference in example G, which does not appear in example H. The similitude of adult and child standards is also significant in these two examples. This is one of the first times that the bodily actions of children are held to the same

high standard as adults and if we consider the ever-rising levels of shame and embarrassment associated with adult bodies this is not surprising. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, parents were not only expected to feel shameful about their own bodies, but also be embarrassed by the bodies of their children. By instilling these negative emotions in their children, parents could hope to avoid being betrayed and disgusted by them in the future.

There is one more point I want to make regarding examples G and H. When we compare these two examples to examples associated with the first spatial-historical milestone we can see that there is a clear shift from the imperative to manage one's body in accordance with one's own needs (e.g. to avoid illness), to being managed in line with a social standard or a moral 'decency'. In example G, the passage that begins 'It is very impolite to emit wind from your body...' (La Salle 1729, p. 45ff. quoted in Elias 2000, p. 112), conveys the exact opposite advice given two hundred years prior, as detailed in example C (Elias 2000, p. 113). To be considered a 'decent' human being in the 18<sup>th</sup> century one must control one's body entirely, for the sake of others and even when one is alone. The threat of illness occurring from within one's body as a result of holding in bodily waste, emphasised less than two hundred years prior, has now been entirely replaced by a concern for social propriety and moral indecency. People are not only told to learn to suffer bodily 'discomforts', but they are also encouraged to begin thinking about and experiencing their bodies from the outside in, actively disconnecting from

their bodily sensations, desires, and needs. This is arguably an explicit sign of the emergence of individuality. Taken together, examples G and H emphasise the continued public 'modesty' (i.e. private shameful) expected of individuals and the move away from managing and *valuing* one's own bodily needs to managing the body according to the social and moral standard.

### **The Third Spatial-Historical Milestone**

The third and final spatial-historical milestone is the permanent, gender-segregated public toilet from the Victorian era. The emergence of this new space resulted from the six-month-long Great Exhibition of 1851 that was held at the Crystal Palace (erected in London's Hyde Park). This exhibition boasted the first public toilet facilities (with basically the same flush technology we use today), which were used by 827,280 visitors<sup>59</sup> who paid to use them (Kira 1976, p. 195, Wright 1963, p. 200). According to Greed, at the beginning of the exhibition toilets were only provided for men but, realising their error, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) quickly arranged to provide more that women were permitted to use (AMC, 1997 Newsletter, January in Greed 2003, p. 42).

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<sup>59</sup> Regarding the wild popularity of the public (pay) toilets at the temporary Crystal Palace, the Official Report after the Great Exhibition stated that: 'No apology is needed for publishing these facts, which...strongly impressed all concerned...with the sufferings which must be endured by all, but more especially by females, on account of the want of them'. Despite this, 'when the building was re-erected...it was strongly urged on grounds of economy that lavatories should be excluded.' This battle was ultimately won by Jennings who 'was crusading for the provision of 'conveniences suited to this advanced stage of civilisation' in place of 'those Plague Spots that are offensive to the eye, and a reproach to the Metropolis'' (Wright 1963, p. 200).

Possibly the planners of the Great Exhibition were expecting families, or at least women to attend, but were unable to anticipate the need feminine bodies would have to urinate and defecate in a public space.

After the success of these public toilets at the Great Exhibition, the RSA embarked on a scheme to design and implement a series of freestanding public toilets in London (Greed 2003, p. 42). The timing and order of events that lead to the implementation of the public toilets is unclear. This lack of clarity suggests how indirectly the process was dealt with, (which is unsurprising considering Victorian attitudes toward 'delicate' matters of the body, waste, and hygiene) a point I expand below. According to Greed (2003) it was a relatively easy and quick process that occurred in just a matter of months. She reports that the first permanent public toilets (seemingly for both men and women, or rather, men and all 'others') opened in late 1851 and 'were supplied with a superintendent and two attendants each, and comprised two classes of toilets, for gentlemen and the masses' (2003, p. 42). Shortly thereafter, in February 1852, a separate and specific public toilet opened for women, which was soon followed by a separate and specific public toilet for men. According to this estimation, the gender segregation at work here at first wholly othered all bodies (and thus those bodies' needs) which were not male and then later created a clear binary of men and women. Maybe, upon later contemplation, the men making the decisions regarding these spaces felt women *needed* to be kept separate from potential dangers of

bodies that were not granted full male status.

However, the somewhat more plausible timeline, as interpreted by Kira, found that the process was prolonged by a few years and was not without obstacle. While there was a greater development of public toilets in the newly constructed rail terminals in the years immediately following the Great Exhibition, the first freestanding public toilets (i.e. facilities conceived of and built solely for the purpose of human excretion) in London were initially met with trouble. When George Jennings, the man responsible for the public facilities at the Great Exhibition, proposed building “halting stations’ at strategic locations around London’ his offer, which included ‘supplying and fixing the appliances free of charge’, was rejected by the authorities (Kira 1976, p. 195, Wright 1963, p. 200). As Jennings explains:

[The] Gentlemen (influenced by English delicacy of feeling) who preferred that the Daughters and Wives of Englishman should encounter at every corner, sights so disgusting [i.e. human excrement] to every sense, and the general public suffer pain and often permanent injury rather than permit the construction of that shelter and privacy now common in every other city in the world (Jennings in Wright 1963, p. 201).

At this point bodily functions, while still a feature of the public landscape (i.e. with excrement literally on the streets), were not considered a public issue and thus public facilities were not something the authorities were willing to discuss at length or spend money on. Seemingly, the main obstacle hindering the Victorians’ progression and urban development at this moment in time was their own attitude [‘influenced by English delicacy of feeling’ (Jennings in

Wright 1963, p. 201)] about role of the 'private' body in public life. Perhaps the authorities felt if everyone adhered to the level of social propriety they did, public toileting would not be an issue, as everyone would deal with their bodily functions in private.

At this point in the modern excretory shift the discourses surrounding the body and bodily functions, as elucidated in several previous examples, were severely limited and shrouded in euphemism. As the Victorians were known for taking propriety to the extreme, it was easier and more socially acceptable among the elite to allow the somewhat medieval status quo to continue rather than have serious and direct conversations about the need for permanent excretory facilities. 'The subject was indelicate, and the problem was not admitted to exist' (Wright 1963, p. 200). This exposes a conflict between the Victorian desire for an ever-increasing individual, self-managed, and quiet bodily etiquette and the willingness to then break this ideal etiquette in order to implement an infrastructure through which this bodily management could occur. Put simply, it was important to tell people how to manage their bodies and then expect them to individually deal with it themselves, but when it came to taking responsibility for the new bodily standard writ large it was not immediately seen as a societal problem. For the time being it was better left unsaid. Daily encounters of human excrement and common physical suffering and discomfort (from holding in waste) was bearable and honourable but publicly admitting that they, the decision-

making Gentlemen of the time (and no doubt their daughters and wives too), partook in the private and disgusting acts of excretion and witnessed all around them, was utterly unbearable.

Jennings won the toileting battle and 'went public' in the 1870's when public toilets were deemed necessary and shortly thereafter became widely available (Wright 1963, p. 201, Kira 1976, p. 195). According to Greed, 'The first permanent public toilets for women, and men, were built in 1893 opposite the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, London' (1995, p. KL 824-25)<sup>60</sup>. It seems the change came only when the Gentleman of the time could no longer ignore the issues being caused by the lack of facilities and realised the conversation was worth having<sup>61</sup>. With Victorian delicacy suppressed long enough to make the vital decision regarding the need for public toilets, we arrive at the final spatial-historical milestone: the first gender segregated, permanent, flushing public toilet facilities. These modern toilets, and the embodied practices of their time, are the not-so-distant relatives of the public toilets operating in much of the Western world today. This important development resulted in a new public social space, that surely required a specific set of manners and etiquette, but there is little documented instruction on the proper way to use them.

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<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to determine when the first public toilets were actually built and opened. This difficulty is most perhaps evident when the same scholar - in this case Clara Greed - reports two different dates for the same happening.

<sup>61</sup> I assume that this must have been connected to cholera outbreaks and contaminated water systems, though I haven't found this link written about explicitly.



Considering the unspeakable nature of bodily functions, it is not surprising that we find little discussion or social instruction regarding these new public spaces by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the new public space, the bodily matters those spaces were built for were no longer in the realm of the public, but rather something dealt with in private. Bodily restraint, silence, and individuation choked the topic and the Victorians used social taboo and the guise of health to continue the trend. While health concerns are not primary in most of the examples above 'in the 19<sup>th</sup> century...they serve as instruments to compel restraint and renunciation of the gratification of drives' (Elias 2000, p. 115). As shown throughout the preceding examples, individuals learned self-restraint through mostly social and moral pressures, whereas Victorian society pushed this further by directly employing moral threats via 'health' and 'hygiene' as the way to demand self-control, suppress pleasure, and further the specific emotional modelling of individuals (Elias 2000, p. 114). As Elias explains:

These hygienic reasons...played an important role in adult thinking about civilisation, usually without their relation to the arsenal of childhood conditioning being realised. It is only from such a realisation, however, that what is rational in them can be distinguished from what is only seemingly rational, i.e., founded primarily on the disgust and shame feelings of adults (2000, p. 114-15).

The overall process of the modern excretory shift, including increasing levels of shame, embarrassment, modesty, disgust, and repugnance cannot be fully understood by exploring in isolation the development of bodily practices or

the advancement of technologies (e.g. flush toilets, sewage systems). The social changes that occurred from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century have since persisted and can only be understood through the combination of these factors. It would be very difficult to understand the societal shift only by looking at the scientific discoveries and technological inventions (Elias 2000, p. 119). Instead, when we consider the societal interventions and the overall transformation of bodily needs, it becomes evident that

the development of a technical apparatus corresponding to the changed [social] standard consolidated the changed habits to an extraordinary degree. This apparatus served both the constant reproduction of the standard and its dissemination (Elias 2000, p. 119).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries open bodily excretion was taken for granted as part of everyday life much in the same way that we, the contemporary products of the modern excretory shift, take for granted bodily control, self-restraint, and the availability of flush toilets in our daily lives (and surely the absence of cesspools and human excrement in our streets). This process can be seen as playing an important part in transforming the open body into a closed or bounded body, (an understanding and related style of embodiment that persists today as *homo clausus*). In order to fully understand the history of modern public toilets I will lastly consider the dimensions of the modern excretory shift that have most contributed to the production of individuality, the closed-rational body, and the relationship of publicness and privateness.

## To arrive at publicness is to begin at individuality

With the techno-spatial-historical timeline clear, it is vital to return to a point introduced earlier, the concept of 'publicness'. Publicness and privateness are central to the development of public toilets as they are ideological systems that helped shape individual desire, modesty, and guilt in relation to how one should feel 'in' and use their body in everyday life. The transformation from the beginning of this account in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the three specific milestones and the broader, more subtle and entangled bodily and interpersonal changes (taken together, I term the modern excretory shift), can be generally understood as a transformation of how people related to their own body and to one another generally. This can be characterised as contributing to a shift from a *gemeinschaft*, or community of people to a newly formed *gesellschaft*, or society. As a result of this civilising process there was a distinct transformation, from a communally based culture to a society of individuals, and it is my suggestion that the formation of the modern toileting body played a large, albeit largely unacknowledged, part in that shift. The *gesellschaft* resulting from the modern excretory shift is made up of individuals who harboured shame and embarrassment about their bodies and bodily functions that were once comfortably expressed in public, often as a social activity, without fear or taboo. The process of individuation included shaping people's thoughts and feelings about their bodies, creating new practices of embodiment, and



developing new spaces and technologies specifically for the acts of excretion. Through these related changes, people took on what David Inglis (2001) terms the 'bourgeois faecal habitus'. He explains that the:

repressions over excretory practices were dependent upon alterations in the ways that the human body in general terms, and that's also in excretory terms, was received and represented. Repressions over practices were thus dependent upon a shift from the set of representations of the body's excretory capacities that were dominant in the medieval period, to those informed [by the] bourgeois faecal habitus (Inglis 2001, p. 116).

A catalyst for the change in the way that people viewed and used their bodies, from the medieval to the Victorian period, resulted 'from the development of class habituses over time' (Inglis 2001, p. 16). The bourgeois faecal habitus grew out of general attitudes regarding bodily restraint and repression. As Bourdieu (1992, p. 7) has identified more specifically, it was reliant upon:

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural—enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane.

Therefore, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as a result of the emerging hierarchy in class structures,

the ruling classes were obsessed with excretion. Faecal matter was an irrefutable product of physiology that the bourgeois strove to deny. Its implacable recurrence haunted imagination; it gainsaid attempts at a decorporealization; it provided a link with organic life...the bourgeois projected onto the poor what he was trying to repress in himself. His image of the masses was constructed in terms of filth. The fetid animal, crouched in dung in its den, formed the stereotype (Corbin 1986, p. 144).

As this attitude was projected onto the lower classes by the ruling classes, the lower social classes were compelled to adopt the habitus of those above them and as it was instituted as a *moral* imperative, they changed their bodily practices accordingly. 'For the bourgeois faecal habitus, bringing moral cleanliness to the city, and to the proletarians who dwelled therein, involved an 'orderly' recasting of urban space' (Inglis 2001, p. 234). Vital to this new urban space was the distinction of publicness and privateness.

The concept of 'publicness' draws on a confluence of factors. As it directly relates to public toilet spaces, those factors include:

the degree of strangeness of other users from oneself, the extent of usage of a facility, and perhaps most important ultimately, the level of cleanliness and maintenance, which, in turn, relates to our concerns regarding territoriality and privacy (Kira 1976, p. 201).

These factors did not exist at the beginning of the modern excretory shift (in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century) and neither did such a consolidated concept of 'privateness' or public toilets. It is only through the development of the modern excreting body and the ultimate dominance of the bourgeois faecal habitus, that these concerns were developed, made relevant, and began to seep into everyday thought. Bodily concerns about privacy did not pre-exist the development and adoption of public toileting practices. Directly related to and reliant upon 'publicness' is the sense of 'privateness'. Privacy (and the feeling of privateness it enables) is significant here because, as previously demonstrated, it is a learned social value that has become necessary in order

to maintain socially acceptable behaviour. As Kira explains, 'we must have privacy in certain instances so that we do not violate cultural norms specifying that certain things be done in private' (1976, p. 168). What's more, 'privacy and privateness sustain...our sense of individual identity' and 'in its simplest form it involves 'aloneness,' or freedom from the presence and demands of others' (Kira 1976, p. 166-67). Similarly, in Goffman's terminology, privateness is directly related to our 'territories of the self' and the ability to maintain our public performances (Goffman 1971). Considering these points together, we arrive at the paradoxical nature of public toilets.

While public toilets are spaces where we can seek privacy from the masses for our 'disgusting', unspeakable acts, they are not private enough to shield us from the 'disgusting', unspeakable acts of others. So as long as there is the continued threat that someone else may see or hear us while engaged in excretion, the Victorian taboo, we are bound to the rules and codes of the space and the bourgeois faecal habitus that honours 'cleanliness' and repression. What's more, 'while our own excretory processes and products may be more or less disagreeable,' as long as the processes are carried out in the socially prescribed ways and we never actually have to come into direct contact with their products, 'those of strangers tend, in general, to be viewed even more negatively' (Kira 1976, p. 201). Just as the spaces themselves maintain the Victorian ideal, this social standard of considering other people's bodies and bodily waste as alien or threatening, continues the sense of self as

individually bound and entirely separate from other bodies. This way of being denies the entangled nature of bodies, *through the experience* of their entanglement. That is to say, it is only through the sensorial impact other excreting bodies have on our own, that we can feel a particular way about them as alien or other. Therefore individuality, as a way to maintain the borders of oneself became increasingly important throughout this civilising process. As I explore in the following chapter, at the core of these constructions of individuality is gender and sexuality, or put simply, the adopted style in which a body urinates and defecates.



## A Winters Dream

Arthur Rimbaud

In winter we shall travel in a little pink railway carriage

With blue cushions.

We'll be comfortable. A nest of mad kisses lies in wait

In each soft corner.

You will close your eyes so as not to see through the window

The evening shadows grimacing,

Those snarling monsters, a swarm

Of black devils and black wolves.

Then you will feel your cheek scratched . . .

A little kiss, like a mad spider,

Will run about your neck . . .

And you'll say to me 'Find it!' bending your head,

--And we'll take a long time to find that creature

--Who travels far . . .

# The Triadic Intra-action Order of Public Toilets: a *Technology of Homo Clausus Abjection*

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'Abjection...is immoral, sinister scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you...'  
Julia Kristeva (1982, p. 4)

## Introduction

This chapter seeks to locate *homo clausus* ways of being in public toilet spaces. As explored in previous chapters, *homo clausus* is an onto-epistemology that permeates much of the Western philosophical tradition's understanding and construction of individual selfhood. *Homo clausus* is both a mode of embodiment and a system of constructing/comprehending the world that is predicated upon an immense amount of ongoing social, emotional, physical, and mental work concerned with shoring up the boundaries of the individual self; the process is conceived to be directed by one's independent mind from within one's bounded body. The management and maintenance of *homo clausus* self-body relationships take various forms, via different sets and styles of material-discursive practices, which are (generally) socially instituted and culturally circumscribed. The social and personal processes employed within English-American public toilet spaces are no exception. As evidenced

in my empirical data, the particularly *homo clausus* practices repetitively employed within public toilets can be understood as condensing around the three primary features of dis-embodiment outlined in chapter two: Socialization, rationalization, and individualization (Shilling 2012). In order to focus on the material-discursive practices that are based upon these three bodily characteristics of *homo clausus* identity, I have broadly categorised the communicated behaviours, ideas, and experiences of those interviewed for this study into three rules or phenomena that amount to what I term the triadic intra-action order (TIO). The rules of the TIO are as follows:

1. Minimize your movement (socialization)
2. Mind your eyes (rationalization)
3. Manage your boundaries (individualization)

I use the term TIO order in order to refer to a set of practices that are embodied from a young age and that, through repetition, appear natural and universal; not taught and learned. This order takes natural bodily functions and in certain circumstances, that is, in the presence of others in a public toilet space, imposes upon them a rigid, highly controlled system of bodily management in order to maintain identity. The TIO takes something natural and universal, and renders it dangerous, threatening, abject. As Butler observes, these constructed identities and related bodily dispositions, appear to be based upon an essence which give the identity substance, when it is only merely constituted:

the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Butler 1997b, p. 402, original emphasis)

Like Butler's brand of performativity, the TIO prohibits sensory-embodiment from playing an active role in experiential becoming, which has implications for understanding how *homo clausus* bodies are constructed, disciplined, and made fragile in daily life. Through the TIO the body is rationally directed lived according to the learned principles of this mode of interaction, making it an excellent example of an onto-epistemology. What is most readily apparent in these spaces is how social power works 'from below' in the Foucauldian sense, 'regulating the most intimate and minute elements of the construction of space, time, desire, embodiment' (Bordo 2003, p. 27). As feminist philosopher Susan Bordo, interpreting Bourdieu, asserts, 'Banally, through table manners and toilet habits, through seemingly trivial routines, rules, and practices, culture is 'made body'...converted into automatic, habitual activity' (Bordo 1997, p. 91). By understanding these daily habits of social life we can better understand how *homo clausus* dis-embodiment is lived out and reproduced through a set of sexed-gendered practices and performances that effect embodiment, desire, and public life. Before unpacking the rules, I will situate their general operational purpose in relation to the abject body.

Material-discursive practices that coalesce into these three categories differ for the respective sexed-gendered spaces (i.e. Men's Rooms and Women's

Rooms), but generally serve the same purpose: to simultaneously perpetuate and assuage entangled feelings of bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (FASE), in an attempt to stabilise individual rational, monadic identity. These feelings within these spaces are tied intimately into what Kristeva terms the abject (1982). The abject lurks in the spaces between one's body and one's mental body image, requiring one to rationally 'keep an eye' on what escapes the outer layer of skin, i.e. the imagined outer boundary of *homo clausus* individuality. It is, as Morris and Sandilands (2011, p. 17) explain, 'the revolting outside to the body born from within it, without which its appearance of separateness is not possible'. The abject are those bodily excretions that are part of one's body but with which one does not subjectively identify. What we have come to consider abject is directly related to *homo clausus* identity and the desire to maintain it. As Kristeva (1982, p. 4) explains,

It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.

The body's abjections and their associated connections to FASE help prop up the borders of and are considered a threat to the stabilisation of the monadic individual. Crucially,

this threat is intensely, and nauseatingly, corporeal; mucus, blood, faeces, vomit, pus are expelled from the body as if they were alien. But they aren't, and they do not go away (Morris and Sandilands 2011, p. 17).



What is abjected by *homo clausus* simultaneously exposes its failure to be contained and gives relief to the practices one employs in attempting to maintain the sense of a monadic self. Therefore, the TIO of English-American public toilets is a technology of *homo clausus* abjection which requires individuals, in order to remain socially viable, to engage constantly in actions and behaviours which seek to distance one's self from the abject. Bodily FASE act as constant reminders that the 'disgusting' corporal body is at odds with one's rational mind; it maintains the stiff barrier between what is known rationally and what is experienced in sensory-embodied becoming. As Morris and Sandilands (2011, p. 18, original emphasis) put it:

Embodiment thus concerns a constant tension between the impossible image of the whole, clean, coherent body and its multiple abjections. At once physiological and social, abjection is part of the process of bodily materialization in which power ritually writes the body, organizing corporal desire and disgust.

In the subsequent elucidation of the intra-action order of public toilets I aim to show how bodies in their potentially open-ended and boundless capacities for becoming (*corpora infinita*) are actively converted via rationally driven sensory-embodied practices into conceptually closed and bounded forms. These practices are material-discursive because they implicate both the living of the body and the ways we rationally understand how bodies *should be lived*. In a broad yet basic sense, this is both the construction and mediation of desire and disgust insofar as material-discursive practices structure how the body can live in space with other bodies and how, when it doesn't, it is

understood as disgusting. By starting with the premise that the body is always already actively open, and the *homo clausus* must work to rationally separate and close it, we can begin to identify how and when we can most usefully allow the material experientially of sensory-embodiment to feedback into the discursive loop. That is a move which represents the potential to shift from dis-embodied being to sensory-embodied becoming.

### **Intra-action**

The TIO of public toilets is developed from Erving Goffman's 'interaction order'. As he observes, 'for most of us, our daily life is spent in the immediate presence of others' (Goffman 1983, p. 2). Even when not in situations of visible contact with others, nearly everything we do is socially situated. Furthermore, Goffman recognises that the arrangement of gender segregated public toilets:

is totally a cultural matter. And what one has is a case of institutional reflexivity: toilet segregation is presented as a natural consequence of the difference between the sex-classes, when in fact it is rather a means of honoring, if not producing, this difference (1997, p. 205).

He also realises that within these spaces women must spend time in the company of other women (Goffman 1997, p. 204), yet gives little attention to the time that men must also spend in the company of other men or to the intricacies of movement and negotiation of bodies that occurs in these spaces. In short, Goffman fails to explore how gendered interaction within these



segregated regions may do the work of (re)producing gender difference and how the body is experienced according to that difference.

Developing Goffman's (1983) analysis of the interaction order, this chapter explores men's and women's public toilets by suggesting that there exists in these places an intra-action order which normalises and condenses users' actions into conventionally masculine or feminine identities. Goffman employed the term interaction order as a way to refer to how the manner in which individuals negotiate physical copresence can be viewed as a system which seeks to minimize disruptions in social life and manage and maintain the social fabric (Rawls 1987, Shilling 1997, 1999). His approach towards the interaction order is to treat its effects as 'indicators, expressions or symptoms of social structures', yet he displays 'no great concern to treat these effects as data in their own terms' (Goffman 1983, p. 2). By moving beyond Goffman in this respect, by treating these 'effects' as *empirical data*, I will show how the TIO of public toilets is not merely reliant upon or bound by rules derived from biological necessity, but can be viewed as an important instrument for managing the threat that leaky, naked, unstable bodies pose to conventional constructions of *homo clausus* identity. In contrast to Goffman's (1983) suggestion that there exists a universal 'interaction order', based upon certain common features of human embodiment, this chapter explores the ambiguous public-private space of gender segregated public toilets and suggests they are characterised by a distinctive 'order' of intra-action

predicated upon a code of *homo clausus* dis-embodiment. I posit that the intra-action order is, rather than universal and reflective of ordinary embodiment, a socially taught and learned system of *homo clausus* monadic, rational individuality.

It is evident, for example in Khadijah Farmer's story, one of those collected for my research, that such norms exist in women's public toilets and that transgressing these norms, even just through appearance can be highly threatening. Farmer, a gay woman in her late 20's, was thrown out of a West Village restaurant in New York City, after the Gay Pride Parade in 2007. As reported on the New York Times City Room Blog (Lee 2007), Farmer explained the situation:

He [the security guard] began pounding on the stall door saying someone had complained that there was a man inside the women's bathroom, that I had to leave the bathroom and the restaurant...Inside the stall door, I could see him. That horrified me, and it made me feel extremely uncomfortable. I said to him, 'I'm a female, and I'm supposed to be in here.' After I came out of the bathroom stall, I attempted to show him my ID to show him that I was in the right place, and he just refused to look at my identification. His exact words were, 'Your ID is neither here nor there,' which means that my ID didn't matter to him.

This example is revealing. Here, what one person thought they saw (seeing = knowing) – i.e. a man in the women's room - was evidence enough for security personnel to take action and deny someone their rights. Instead of listening to Farmer's voice, pausing to look at her, or at the only thing she could use to defend herself, her state-issued ID, the security guard had

already decided on the set of actions he was taking; rational, masculine, goal-oriented progression. One person's selective attention in determining Farmer was a man, by seeing only her masculine characteristics, meant that she was then treated as a criminal, as abject. In that moment of rational, selective attention her humanness was taken from her and she was thrown out like a piece of garbage. Clearly, the comfort of those who embody conventional *homo clausus* gender expression and identity took precedence in this situation. The fact that this occurred in the West Village, an extremely important neighbourhood for the gay rights movement historically, and on the day of the Gay Pride Parade, show the problems that can confront individuals who transgress conventional gender expression boundaries. Despite her identity as a woman, Farmer's unconventional femininity was seen as highly threatening to other, more conventionally feminine individuals. This threat is similar to the fear produced in transmen who use men's rooms. I spoke with many who, despite always passing (as 'real' men assumed to have a penis), still often fear being 'found out' (as not having a penis and thus not actually being 'real' men) and threatened with violence. This fear persists even though they have no personal precedent for such violence and could not use a women's room without trouble.

By examining the intra-actional practices within men's and women's public toilets, through the TIO I aim to begin bridging this gap in Goffman's writing; by demonstrating that what occurs ordinarily within these spaces

involves a heteronormatively directed embodied reflexivity (i.e. men and women managing their bodies and their interaction with others on the basis of prevalent standards of *homo clausus* 'decency' underpinned by FASE, selective attention, and sensorial individuation) which is reproductive of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity and femininity. While they often provide people with a 'structure' on which to anchor identity, I view these attributes as limiting because, for example, they deny rigidly gendered bodies an openness or fluidity of exchange with other like-gendered bodies. As Sara Ahmed (2006, p. 87, original emphasis) (here engaging with Judith Butler, whom she quotes) states:

Heterosexual genders form themselves through the renunciation of the possibilities of homosexuality, as a foreclosure which produces a field of heterosexual objects at the same time as it produces a domain of those whom it would be impossible to love.

To remain stable and valid, the norms that imbue dominant notions of *homo clausus* heterosexuality rely on binary gender expression (i.e. men are men because they are not women), the embodiment of 'correct gender roles' (e.g. men are stronger, more powerful, and less emotional than women), and a corresponding (assumed) material reality of external (and thus internal) genital organs (i.e. masculine bodies have penises, testicles and feminine bodies have vulvas, breasts). Thus, I use the term 'hetero' throughout this chapter to do more than act simply as the first part of a term denoting a specific identity predicated upon belonging to one of two opposing and



opposed sexes, it is more than a term which carries representational ways of being, it is an onto-epistemology. Thus, I am referring to a range of practices and ways of being that prop up specific assumptions of conventional, *homo clausus* gender and corresponding heterosexuality, i.e. how bodies are expected to be lived *based on* their materiality. For example, hetero men are rational and thus not physically or emotionally expressive in their mannerisms and style of communication and because women's bodies are soft, delicate, and always smell good, hetero women do not enjoy engaging in activity or labour that results in sweating and getting 'dirty'. According to Saunders, 'inherent in such renderings of the body is an anti-body sentiment, which seeks to curb and control the body's openness to possibilities' (2008, p. 127). Hetero is a mediation of the *homo clausus* body and the abject. It works to straighten, organise, and order bodies and with the TIO, as a technology of *homo clausus* abjection, it is possible to understand how this works not merely discursively, but through fleshy material, feeling, sensing bodies. What interests me in this chapter are the forms heteronormative embodiment takes in everyday life (at even the most subtle and intimate levels) and how in identifying those forms, we can better understand the reproduction of gender, desire, and sexuality as firmly bound within the rigid subject position of *homo clausus* identity.

## Methods

Using data from forty-five semi-structured interviews and over two hundred 'toilet use' surveys I elucidate the triadic dimensions of the intra-action order of public toilets. The data were collected in roughly equal amounts in Southern England (London, Canterbury) and New York City. It is important to note that Goffman's observations are generally seen as relevant for English-American society and have been used in that context (see e.g. Goffman 1997) and empirically, my results seem to be the same for both areas. This is unsurprising because both cultures tend to construct basic, individual (i.e. *homo clausus*) identity in similar ways. Therefore the exact social practices and related socially instituted feelings may differ slightly between societies, but the underlying identity structure they seek to maintain remains the same. Additionally, I want to emphasise that I am dealing with bodily functions that, although culturally shaped in all manner of ways, are anthropologically common parts of what it is to be a human across all cultures and societies. Accordingly, I have analysed the data together in an effort to forge a cohesive English-American observation.

While not necessarily representative of the population as a whole, this sample is useful theoretically as it serves to highlight the rule-bound nature of toilet use. Interviews with differently identified users of public toilet spaces offer the greatest opportunity of having the complex and deeply performative nature of the rules of these spaces brought to the fore. Trans (e.g. -gender, -

sexual, or just 'trans') and queer (genderqueer or just 'queer') identities are particularly important in this study not only because of the status of their already non-conventionally-bound identities, but also because these individuals are often most conscious of their bodies in these spaces (often not by choice). Many trans and queer individuals find that they are already breaching a rule of the action order by merely being present in the space (based on their appearance entangled with their sexuality, i.e. sex-gender-sexuality) when generally, they just want to use the toilet in peace like everyone else. That is to say, just because certain individuals choose to identify and present outside of conventional (heterosexual) sex-gender-sexuality, it does not mean they are actively seeking to break any of the rules of the action order in their daily use of these spaces.

In what follows it becomes clear that each user of the space is expected to follow and reproduce the triadic dimensions of the intra-action order, thus differently identified users provide varying opinions, experiences, and insights. For example, the use of the mirror may be seen as natural and necessary for a heterosexual woman, whereas for a queer user, the mirror may be seen as a locale of uncomfortable pressure. It is through these differing experiences that I hope to show the inflexible nature of the TIO that works to maintain the most rigid and unnatural aspects of *homo clausus* disembodiment. Furthermore, I present the experiences of the sample together, rather than based upon the two spaces, to show how the TIO works on and



through *homo clausus* bodies to create order and identity, via material-discursive practices, where it does not naturally coalesce.

### **1. Minimize your time and space (socialization)**

Once the *homo clausus* subject has determined where to locate the imagined borders of their body, through sensorial individuation and other early socializing processes, they must engage in practices which continually help maintain that sense of boundedness. Without the imagined borders of the body-self, there could be no subject and no object. Therefore, this is a process which helps manage who and what one is. One of the most fundamental ways of managing this dis-embodied state is simply how one's body can be in, use, move through, and take up space. Public toilet spaces are generally understood as goal-oriented, spaces that people try to spend as little time in as possible, as they are imbued with an underlying anxiety and general fear of transgression (which may erupt into shame and embarrassment). Thus, users of men's and women's rooms alike are taught, when it comes to carrying out everyday bodily functions at an away from home toilet to be as quick and direct as possible. While women may freely spend time in front of a mirror, a highly normalising activity I will explain in rule two, the time spent in a cubicle is strictly monitored. Similarly, while men may feel free to spend more time in a cubicle than women do, they are expected not to linger at urinals, sinks, or in front of mirrors. Therefore the

management of the body in time and space may differ slightly for the gendered spaces, as those slight differences do the work of perpetuating sex-gendered difference, but on the whole this rule operates in nearly the same way for both spaces in an effort to maintain the sense of individual boundedness and the disconnection from other bodies. This sameness is characteristic of heteronormative, patriarchal gender, which is constructed along a singular axis and does not recognise sexual difference (i.e. one's specific materiality) as *ontological* difference. If the boundaries of the body are allowed to loosen, connections with other bodies may become much more fluid, entangled; a more processual state which is considered antithetical to rational, *homo clausus* identity.

This attitude is reflected in the practices of economic movement. The economy of movement means that bodies move through space in a rational and directed fashion, wasting as little time, space, and motion as possible. When speaking about overarching regimes of patriarchal power and evoking Foucault, feminist phenomenologist, Sandra Bartky (1997, p. 131) recognises, 'The body's time...is as rigidly, controlled as its space'. Here, the mind directs the body in a purposeful way; the body is a tool, a means to a rational end – one first looks and then moves directly to *that* urinal or *that* cubicle – which is ironically, ultimately serving a physical not a rational end: excretion. Here rationality directly implicates embodiment and embodiment directly implicates rational processes. Natural bodily functions, especially in public,

are inherently abject and thus threatening to the order and borders of mature, rational *homo clausus* identity. So, for example, rather than movement in and through a toilet space being understood or experienced as sensory-embodied, it is instead made into rational, directed progression. Material-discursive practices that support this rationale and help maintain the sense of a closed body – even while the body is engaged in acts of literal openness – are evidenced in both my interview and survey data. When it comes to the ‘different’ gendered spaces, the rule functions in equal ways yet with opposite emphases. While users of both men’s rooms and women’s rooms are expected to monitor their bodies according to both time and space, there is greater emphasis for users of women’s spaces to be concerned about time and for users of men’s spaces to be concerned about space.

As women’s cubicles are often oversubscribed, users who confront this situation have no choice but to wait in line; a situation that often causes them to be hyperaware of the time spent within a cubicle and of how they use their bodies in space. As Plaskow (2008, p. 52) points out, ‘Women’s willingness to wait on line offers important insights into the process of female socialization’ and while not as overt as a school bell for example, the underlying pressure to manage one’s body in terms of how much time is taken is a system of disciplining the body material-discursively. This waiting increases the numbers of closely present bodies, and subjects those users actually occupying cubicles to the potential monitoring of near present others, a point

I will come back to in rules two and three. What exactly they are doing in there, what they are 'admitting' to doing based on the amount of time being taken, and are they legitimately denying access and use to other users in making other women wait in line? This monitoring of absent yet also present bodies in enclosed toilet spaces can be seen as highly discomforting, destabilising, and threatening to conventional femininity as it is often associated with bodily FASE. In order to maintain *homo clausus* boundaries and manage bodily FASE (by keeping it present yet under control), users of women's public toilets are concerned with minimizing their time spent in a cubicle. For example:

Lucy, 23 years old, bisexual woman: I'm more interested in getting in and getting out as quickly as possible. In and out!

Billie, 23, genderqueer: I try to go as fast as possible.

Cece, 20, heterosexual woman: I always feel rushed...Just because I want to get out really quickly so I consciously don't spend a lot of time in there.

Natalie, 24, queer: I try not to spend a lot of time in there.

Elizabeth, 24, queer: I feel rushed and don't like to keep people waiting; this definitely causes anxiety in me.

Each of the above quotes was made in the context of longer comments referring to the users' discomfort at spending any longer than necessary in what they viewed as an identity-threatening locale. The pressure to spend as little time as possible limits how individuals can use their bodies. For example, Alice, 26, who identifies as a queer female, but not as a 'woman',



explains how this pressure requires her to modify and control her bodily needs in order to minimize time spent. She says:

If there was a line, I wouldn't go number 2 [defecate] just because I would be self-conscious about taking too long.

There is a huge amount of FASE surrounding defecation in women's public toilets. Many of my interviewees admitted to never defecating in public. This is part and parcel of maintaining *homo clausus* boundaries generally and is implicated in each rule of the TIO for users of women's public toilets. Here, since *homo clausus* feminine sex-gender is already caught in a double standard of irrationality and pristine materiality, users of women's public toilets experience much unrest when it comes to time spent in defecation, as I explore further below.

Beyond the largely accepted practice of queuing for a cubicle (itself an act of bodily management and control), users of women's public toilets minimize the use of their bodies in time and space by controlling what their bodies can or cannot come into contact with and by following ingrained habits when choosing and using cubicles. While in a cubicle many users try to minimize their bodily contact with the space. This is most readily evident in the hetero feminine practice of hovering. Many users hover over the toilet seat, not allowing their bodies to come into contact with the apparatus *they are in the space to use*. Lucy a 23 year old bisexual woman, like many of the users I

spoke to, directly relates this practice to her early *homo clausus* socializing experiences when speaking about her mother and childhood:

I never sit on toilet seats. When I was little my mom was always super paranoid about that, she was always like 'don't sit on public toilet seats!' It is just such an ingrained thing; it's just what you do.

Part of this ingrained behaviour limits what users can do with their bodies; it binds them to a particular embodiment of hetero femininity. Consider that it becomes especially difficult to hover and do anything else when you have to hold your coat or purse (also keeping them from touching anything 'dirty') or the cubicle door shut for example. (This may explain why so many mobile phones meet their demise in toilet bowls.) One queer woman I interviewed described this as 'bathroom yoga', making light of an annoying and difficult reality. A reality which renders defecating nearly impossible as it is exceptionally difficult to hover over a public toilet seat and defecate, let alone defecate quietly; which is a mandate of the third dimension of the TIO and a practice which requires that users exercise intense control over the orifices of their bodies. Regarding habitual use, even when users don't have to queue for a cubicle, when they have the luxury of choosing, users tend to not fully use the space available. Instead, they simply replicate their individual patterns of use, keeping everything about the process direct, minimized, and controlled.

Elizabeth, 24, queer woman: I always use the first cubicle if I can.

Lana, 30, queer woman: I usually go to the far end of a bathroom and use the last stall.

The tendency to replicate individual patterns is also a way to minimize the time spent in these spaces because generally, engaging in a pattern that doesn't require much conscious effort or decision-making is quicker than looking around and choosing a cubicle based on the particular space

Similarly, users of men's spaces engage in nearly the same behaviour but with an even more rational basis, because typically, men's spaces include urinals that are visible to anyone moving through the space thus users are required to manage their bodies under the potential gaze of other men. This means users of men's toilets have to be even more conscious (than users of women's toilets since the queuing system and personal patterns tend to direct women) of where they place their bodies in space; being careful to minimize their chance of coming into contact with other bodies. By turning to the survey data, we can conclude that there is a clear order to the way users choose urinals based on other masculine bodies in the space. Specifically, men

Figure 3

always try to distance themselves as much as physically possible from other men at the urinal. While this



may seem obvious, it is important to highlight that this act of choosing a urinal, of distancing one's body, is an utterly social act, one which does not



happen independently or individually, rather, it always requires an active knowledge and conscious awareness of where other bodies are in the space and how they correspond to the unwritten<sup>62</sup> codes of 'proper' urinal usage. According to my survey data, in a men's public toilet with six urinals, where men are occupying the first and last urinals (Fig. 3), 72% of men surveyed choose to use one of the centre two urinals, with only three percent choosing a urinal directly next to another man. The remaining 25% opted to use a cubicle or simply leave the space altogether. These numbers show just how exacting the TIO is, as it suggests that there would not be this highly defined pattern of use without the pressure to manage comportment in particular way. The premium placed on maintaining bodily distance and swiftly and directly choosing 'the correct' urinal may help explain some of the hesitation in the proceeding story.

Rick, a 24 year old straight man shared this story with me about a time when he didn't minimize his movement and instead hesitated, engaging in additional, irrational movement.

This was at work; the whole space is pretty cramped. I went to the toilet and there were people at the urinals, two people staggered over the four urinals. So I was not only next to someone, but pretty close physically -- one of them was a superior who is very macho and you have to kind of be a frat guy around, so I started to make an entrance to the urinal between them, but it was SO close, SO CLOSE -- I'm like my elbows are touching them! It just feels really weird, so I step back,

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<sup>62</sup> Though a quick internet search will show that men have started writing these codes 'down' via games, blogs, videos, and other media showing how men should conduct their bodies in space.

and then I felt even more weird about stepping out of it! So then I stepped back into it -- No, no, I started to step back into it and then I was like NO it is too tight! And then I went to use the stall. So I pulled every taboo in the book. I felt like such a loser, all that hesitation. It doesn't really make rational sense, and obviously they knew what I was doing because I was so clumsy about the whole thing, but I didn't want to offend them, by being like, I don't want to pee next to you, you're too close -- but also there is this sense that guys pee in public, like that's what guys do, so there are both of those things that, like if I retreated, that it would be these two things of not wanting to, like saying I feel uncomfortable peeing next to you and then this sense of being called out, 'what you can't pee next to another guy?' The whole thing was very uncomfortable!

Here Rick failed to display economy of movement, taking up additional time and space to reach his goal, based upon how his body felt in relation to other bodies near to him. He struggled with how he felt in his body on the one hand and what he rationally knew he was supposed to do on the other hand. He was caught between the need to minimize his contact with other bodies, to minimize the time spent in deciding where to place his body, and the hetero masculine ability to be near other male bodies. Ultimately, for Rick, this display of indecisiveness was embarrassing and somehow, he felt, revealed something about his 'nature' -- about his ability to 'naturally' 'do what guys do'.

Similarly, Zevi, a 23 year old queer man speaks about the awareness he has of his body when entering the space and how he adapts his movement from a looser, more open, 'queer' style of walking, to more of a 'straight', economic, and restricted one. He says,

Like for me, I think about whether like some queeny fag is going to swish on into the restroom or whether, well, I'll like, try and move very rigidly and unnaturally.

In Zevi's example movement, which is expressive of and a valued part of his identity, is not valued – it is queer, excessive, superfluous of what is rationally necessary – so instead he consciously changes his style of embodiment to match that of the *homo clausus* hetero masculine norm. While Zevi doesn't personally 'identify' with this norm, within these spaces he 'naturally' (without difficulty) adopts the material-discursive practices expected of him in order to remain legible and non-threatening. In both Rick and Zevi's examples movement which is not directly goal oriented is understood to connote some greater truth about that person's identity, showing how *homo clausus* dis-embodiment restricts sensory-embodiment to what is rational, orderly, and consciously managed.

Minimizing one's movement in the time-space of public toilets requires a set of material-discursive practices that seeks to maintain the imagined borders of one's body. For users of both men's and women's public toilets this management is rarely questioned and regularly engaged. Such patterns of use, according to Ahmed, are directive and directed. She says (Ahmed 2006, p. 16):

lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.



It is through these self-generating lines that deviations can easily be spotted. By limiting the time spent and minimizing the use of one's body in space via social and personal patterns -- repetitive lines of use -- one can limit one's exposure to the potentially threatening space of open, excreting bodies; An abject reality that fundamentally stands in opposition to *homo clausus* subjectivity. In order to avoid the abject – the breaking down of bodily borders – the *homo clausus* subject maintains a precarious relationship to FASE, which propels one to follow the rules of the intra-action order. An important facet of that management concerns how, where, and when the senses can be used.

## **2. Mind your eyes (rational)**

According to *homo clausus* sensorial individuation (i.e. the division and counting of the senses which allows sensory happenings and observations to become the domain of the rational mind) seeing is of crucial importance. Not only is sight believed to be the sense most closely related to the mind (if it is experienced as such, it is because of this process of sensorial individuation), it is vital in the management of the abject. As *homo clausus* individuals use their sight to do a huge amount of their sensing and monitoring – instead of touching we merely look with the 'mind's-eye' at something and not physically coming into contact with it helps keep the imagined borders of the

body safe and stable – the gaze within public toilets is intensely and expertly managed in the effort to maintain distance between bodies, hetero sex-genders, and firm up bodily boundaries. This is a process of structuring and maintaining desire as much as it is about bodily distance. Like in the previous rule, this rule operates in equal yet seemingly opposite ways in the two spaces, again enabling material-discursive practices to solidify sex-gender difference. For users of men's spaces, the role of sight is one of expected self-censorship, regardless of sex-gender-sexuality, because the male gaze is typically an objectifying gaze and there is seemingly nothing to objectify (no women) in the hetero masculine spaces of men's public toilets. For user's of women's spaces, i.e. those who are typically objectified by men, theirs is

An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his [sic] own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself (Foucault, 1980, p. 155).

Users of men's public toilets refuse to look at one another in an effort to avoid objectification (an expression of desire) while users of women's public toilets look at one another to ensure hetero femininity is being upheld and not exposed to the opening of sexual objectification by any women. For in both cases, the sense of sight is used to manage the imagined borders of *homo clausus* bodies; masculine users remain closed by not looking and feminine users look in order to remain closed.

Users of men's spaces, when speaking about their behaviour generally, had the following to say in relation to the use of eye contact:

Jared, 28 year old, straight man: You generally don't look at people or talk to them.

Justin, 33 year old, queer trans man: In the men's room there is no eye contact and little to no acknowledgement.

Jason, 28 year old, queer trans man: My concern would be more about just avoiding eye contact with everyone.

The material-discursive practice of avoiding eye contact means that men's public toilets are generally experienced as heteronormative spaces regardless of sex-gender-sexuality. This is evidenced in the pervasive understanding that those who do not keep this practice are inherently non-normative and deviant. For example:

Emit, 27 year old, queer trans man: There is no eye contact, and if there is you're gay

Ford, 24 year old, queer trans man: Men don't pay attention to what anyone else is doing and if they do they're gay.

For some who imagine they may be on the receiving end of a glance from another masculine user experience this as an inherent threat to their own hetero masculinity and have a strong desire to discipline the 'looker' through masculine, (often 'penetrating') violence. For example:

Ash, 32 year old straight man says: If I saw someone looking at my dick at a urinal I would piss in their eye.

Those who are non-normatively sexed-gendered clearly represent an inherent threat to closed masculine bodies. Men who desire other men represent an



openness and fluidity between bodies which is disturbing to *homo clausus* identity. *Homo clausus* bodies are so intensely managed that even a simple glance is understood as suspect and threatening. Here sight is another condensation point of FASE. As Edelman states,

The law of the men's room decrees that men's dicks be available for public contemplation at the urinal precisely to allow a correlative mandate: that such contemplation must never take place (1996, p. 153).

Furthermore, there is the need to strictly deny the intense erotic potential inherent in these spaces. According to Jeyasingham,

legitimate use of the urinal, use that asserts its functionality, depends on looking straight (ahead or down), and that incognisance to the looks of others in the room (whether for all intents and purposes waiting for stalls to become vacant, or washing their hands methodically and scrupulously), to the extent that it refuses to acknowledge the pissing male figure's erotic potential, multiples it (2002, p. 77, original emphasis).

Other bodies, other dicks in the space become the proverbial elephant in the room. This reality has the potential to create an intensely charged space which men are, within the TIO, only allowed to deny. While this was implied in many of my interviews, very few men spoke about it openly. Steve and Erik, both a 24 year old straight men, while speaking about their experiences at the urinal had the following to say:

Steve: I feel like we're all trying to avoid trying to look at each other's dicks so we're not looking at anything, so yeah I'm not trying to, or trying not to make eye contact with other people in the bathroom, definitely when I'm peeing I'm trying not to look at anything except for the wall in front of me or my stream of urine.

Erik: Like there is, there is the thing, like, about, other people seeing your penis, or something like that. It's like, wouldn't it be weird if this happened and like, I don't know, I don't know, it's just like, try to avoid this potential thing from happening...the awkwardness comes from other people seeing your private parts.

From a slightly different angle, Kel a 33 year old straight man, who prefers to avoid the urinals altogether and urinate instead in a cubicle with the door left ajar, speaks about his internalisation of the pressure to hide his body from other's eyes in a moral or religious sense, ultimately connecting it to desire, love. Overall, there is a strong connotation of sex and sexuality in his explanation:

My biggest concern is visual privacy. I try to live a pure life and in some way having my wiener [penis] out in front of other guys to see feels impure -- I think there must be some religious or moral undertone to this feeling. It's like being naked in public, but not really, it just feels inappropriate. I think you should only be naked and show your body to your partner or loved one so it isn't something I like to do in public, even in the bathroom. I find that trying to maintain a sense of purity is just really hard to do in the bathroom.

Despite the fact that men are very aware that they should never look at each other's dicks in a public toilet, Kel uses this potential as a justification for his behaviour and related discomfort in public toilets. Ultimately, these experiences highlight the power given to *homo clausus* sight and the nature of the masculine gaze to objectify and sexualise, as well as, how men work to manage bodily FASE.

In women's public toilets, rather than objectifying one another, the gaze is employed for hetero feminine policing. As Bartky (1997, p. 149) highlights,

Normative femininity is coming more and more to be centered on woman's body -- not its duties and obligations or even its capacity to bear children, but its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance.

As the TIO of women's public toilets are heteronormativizing, all bodies that enter are expected to at least conform to *homo clausus* hetero feminine behaviour and appearance. Put simply, women look at themselves and other women in public toilets to make sure they appear to be hetero women and thus non-threatening, legitimate users of the space. This is why, for instance users who know or fear they do not immediately appear hetero feminine adjust their bodies, voices, and clothing in order to show other users that they are indeed in the correct space, though this is often not enough as the visual, enacted via hetero selective attention, takes primacy in *homo clausus* ways of being. Much of this looking occurs through the space of mirrors. The mirror in a public toilet is an important tool for asserting hetero femininity, which is why many users of women's public toilets who do not identify with it feel uncomfortable using the mirror. Like washing one's hands, the use of the mirror seems to be a 'cleansing' ritual that, after the dirty, destabilising use of the cubicle, reestablishes a user's femininity. The mirror space is the only place within women's public toilets where users feel they are permitted to



take their time. The use of the mirror is an important performance and public embodiment of conventional femininity and many users speak about using the mirror as something that is normal, natural, and necessary:

Cece, 20, heterosexual woman: Retouching your make-up is a big one...there is a need [to use the mirror], especially if you go to the toilet in the middle of the day and you need to look at yourself or if you're having a night out and go to the toilet, I think there is a need to look in the mirror because a lot of girls care about how they look, make-up wise, in public.

Rachel, 37, lesbian woman: When I use the toilet I always feel compelled to check myself in the mirror, it is very much a part of being female, I'm not sure why I do it but I know it is what I'm supposed to do.

Emit, 24, queer transguy: Yeah in women's bathrooms everybody cares about their looks and appearances and is checking themselves out.

Many trans, lesbian, and queer users I interviewed, who use women's public toilets daily, have a complicated relationship with the mirror. They speak of it as an uncomfortable pressure, a practice that makes them uneasy.

Elizabeth, 24, queer woman: There is definitely a pressure for vanity for women...I'll walk out of the bathroom and think maybe I should've checked the mirror.

Lana, 30, queer woman: Yeah, I do look in the mirror and I do feel self conscious about looking in the mirror...I don't like when people catch me looking in the mirror.

Frankie, who is 25 and queer, takes this discomfort one step further and considers this practice in relation to her gender and sexual identity:

I've been thinking about how I never look in the mirror when I wash my hands but everyone else does, kind of for a while to fix things, I've never done that my whole life. I'll look in a mirror, but I won't stand there and preen and I think maybe, largely it is part of my sexual-

gender identity. I know I'm a woman, but I feel more like, not more like but just that I don't fit in with women and so maybe that pardons me. It's not that I'm better than this, it's just that I don't do it and I feel like I'm not supposed to do that or don't need to do that.

While aware of the pressure for hetero feminine displays of vanity which overtly satisfy the policing gaze, Frankie feels that she isn't supposed to use the mirror because she isn't heterosexual and conventionally feminine. She still feels the pressure to display the social identity of conventional femininity by using the mirror, even though she knows she already undermines and threatens it through her unconventional queer identity.

The use of the mirror and an inspecting gaze generally, are also used for overt, non-self imposed policing of hetero femininity where users are, for example, able to call upon state police officers and/or security personnel to further inspect users' bodies who are believed to be the threat to femininity incarnate. Throughout my research I heard many stories of users' bodies being visually policed, supporting the *homo clausus* notion that to see something is to know it. Sam who is a 24 year old queer transguy, told me about a policing experience when he and his girlfriend went into a women's public toilet together. He explains:

This was before I began my transition [to masculinity] and I was identifying as genderqueer. Two women in the bathroom got the police and told them there was a man in the women's room. Then two male police officers came into the bathroom to seek me out. My girlfriend vouched for me, said I was female, that we were in the right place. It makes me wonder why was I so scary to those women? I mean should I have to show my ID to be able to use the toilet? This experience was a point of anxiety for me about my body and public life.

Beck who is 50 years old and a butch lesbian who uses women's public toilets 'with complications every time' shared this story with me about a toilet attendant:

She [toilet attendant] actually followed me out of the bathroom and across the street, into Starbucks because she still couldn't tell [if I was a woman] and wanted to make sure [of my sex-gender] and she waited until I got my coffee and she was pretending to clean up there! And I said to her, do you want to talk to me? She just got all flabbergasted and walked away. She didn't want to talk to me, she just wanted to look at me, and probably see if she could get me arrested.

Billie, a 23 year old, genderqueer person spoke to me about hir regular policing experiences:

I've been told by women that I'm in the wrong restroom so many times that I've come to expect it every few times I use one. One of my most vivid memories of being gender-policed was in an airport when I was 18 or 19. I was about to go into the lady's room when a woman walking by shouted at me: 'That's the women's room!' I always feel sort of bad and embarrassed for people when they make assumptions about me and I have to correct them.

In these stories, users saw an individual who didn't *look* conventionally feminine and without speaking to that individual, or even looking a bit more closely, immediately felt threatened or, in Billie's case, assumed the person they saw didn't know what they were doing. In Sam's story, the policers, sure of their judgement and assuming the mere presence of a man in a feminine space must mean trouble, sought enforcers of the law. The irony of inviting two 'powerful' men into the space to further investigate the possible aberrational presence of a man is both hypocritical and unsurprising. Here



conventional femininity relies directly on patriarchy to reinforce *homo clausus* gender boundaries and manage what is believed to be a threatening situation. Beck and Billie's stories also expose how closely heteronormative binaries are bound to appearances and how readily *homo clausus* individuals rely on selective visual attention, via sensorial individuation, to make sense of a situation. Despite the fact that each of these individuals had 'female' bodies (e.g. breasts) at the times of their stories, their visible gender expression was not overtly feminine enough to keep them from being policed.

The gaze is particularly important here because it takes precedence in determining one's right to be in the space. All of the individuals who I spoke with, who are policed in their daily lives, expressed frustration in the refusal of their policers (those who challenge another's right to be in the space) to speak to them, to simply *listen* to their feminine voices before making a judgement about their gender. Instead, users judge who is feminine 'enough' through the appearance of hetero feminineness. Despite the fact that users of women's public toilets who are regularly policed in these spaces already modify their behaviour in accordance with this critical gaze (e.g. by removing layers of clothing or sticking out their chests), the policing continues. A point which highlights the instability, fear, and anxiety connected to feminine embodiment and sexuality, and how it feeds the immense yet disperse pressure users feel to conform their immediate appearance and style of looking (in both senses) to match what is expected by the policing feminine

gaze. Furthermore, while the surveillance and policing of other bodies in women's public toilets is justified in the name of safety, it seems obvious here that the threat to users in these spaces is rarely a threat of crime or violence (though it does happen, just not nearly as often as queer users are policed). Instead the apparent threat is to the reproduction of hetero femininity. As feminist academic and author Sally Munt (interpreting Eve Sedgwick) explains, '[the butch] instigates female homosexual panic amongst the women, a violent reaction which betrays the disturbing belief that sexuality is the solvent of stable identities' (Munt, 1998 p. 201). She goes on to explain:

I am painfully aware that being challenged about one's sex is not usually the issue; my body is read 'correctly' as female, but my gender causes the problem, hence the question 'Are you a man or a woman?' is a displacement of the unutterable 'Are you a lesbian'? (Munt, 1998 p.205)

Munt, writing from her own experience powerfully shows the entanglement of sex-gender-sexuality both in experience and in discourse. Through onto-epistemological, material-discursive practices, her example nicely highlights the intra-acted nature of heteronormativity. In the preceding examples then, it would be naive to merely dismiss the intense disciplining of the body within these spaces as a by-product of a necessary way to keep the space safe. Instead, the TIO works mainly to keep users' bodies in line with *homo clausus* heteronormativity by continuously fuelling the threat within the space. However, the bodily acts which require the most intense hetero feminizing, in

order to stabilise *homo clausus* subjectivity, involve those that prompt most individuals to use the space in the first place, excretion.

### **3. Manage your boundaries (Individualization)**

The third dimension of the TIO of public toilets is concerned with maintaining social and rational individuality while engaged in acts that inherently transgress bodily boundaries. Transgression of this sort is intensely tied to FASE as it is instilled through some of the earliest experiences we have in relation to our embodied-selves. Such bodily experiences, where something from the inside of one's body makes its way to the outside, are typically experienced as abject, non-personal, and learned to be managed according to feelings of FASE. During bodily excretion the possibility for losing or transgressing *homo clausus* boundaries is very high, but not a given since the boundaries are largely rationally imposed, not necessarily based on experiential reality. They exist in a state of mentally imposed reflection, which is embodied through material-discursive acts. Bodily boundaries are material-discursive, propping up both socially normative understandings of the 'natural' body and the socially appropriate behaviours, in which the body participates, with neither being innate. That is to say, even though bodily excretion always already reveals the unstable and unrealistic nature of the bounded *homo clausus* identity – because it explicitly exposes how the body is

not constant, not stable, and not sealed in everyday, mundane ways – one is able to rationally keep the self together through this directly lived threat (bodily excretion) via an emphasis on learned experiences of bodily FASE in relation to the imagined borders of the body.

What's more, instead of a point of convergence, recognition, or bodily openness, acts of excretion in public toilets are normatively construed as a personal aberration that must be managed accordingly. They are acts that are experienced and thus understood as purely singular, despite their utter ubiquity. This, again, is how the bodily is not merely discursively bounded but how bodies in space are material-discursive. Like *homo clausus* generally and the other two rules of the TIO, this rule is never enacted from a point of pure individuality, but rather exists socially, entangled with other bodies in time and space; it is not individual but rather, works to make one *feel* individual. Therefore the material-discursive practices and experiences that go into managing one's boundaries are reliant upon the socially situated nature of the TIO for both men's and women's public toilets. Collectively held and deeply ingrained assumptions of *homo clausus* bodies are bound by binary gender in public toilets and serve as the basis of socially appropriate, individual bodily conduct and appearance. For men and women's public toilet spaces, users are concerned not only with maintaining the boundaries of their own bodies, but also in making sure other bodies remain, at least conceptually, closed and sensorially impermeable. Similarly, but observed

from a different perspective, Moore and Breeze (2012, p. 6) research how the spatial location of public toilets disrupt social boundaries, insofar as they are not 'regular social spaces' and 'might strike us as beyond social management, control and order'. My exploration here takes a similar approach to boundaries but happens at the scale of the body, showing how when we understand social life from sensory-embodied experience, we can access the extent to which 'social management, control and order' continue to organise our behaviour and support dis-embodied identities.

In women's public toilets there is an interrelated sensory-embodied awareness that permeates the space, fosters anxiety, and encourages the overt management and policing of bodies. This general 'sense' of the space is supported by the first two rules of the TIO which ensures that users of women's public toilets minimize their bodily use of time and space and adopt an inspecting gaze which seeks to maintain hetero femininity. These two rules are operational only because people actively demarcate what is and is not one's body; a process of weeding out sameness and difference which identifies what is an abject other. As *homo clausus* subjectivity is built on an impossible universal bodily likeness, enacted through the division of bodies along hetero gendered lines – a process which turns material differences into a failure of sameness through exaggerated sex-gender difference via discursive practices – awareness, anxiety, and policing in women's public toilets seeks to maintain the hetero gendered division materially-discursively

by identifying and expelling those bodies which do not fit neatly on either side of the gender binary; those bodies which are considered abject.

Furthermore, as Bartky (1997, p. 148) explains,

the disciplinary power that is increasingly charged with the production of a properly embodied femininity is dispersed and anonymous; there are no individuals formally empowered to wield it; it is...invested in everyone and in no one in particular.

Hetero femininity, since it is both performative and required in public toilets, can easily be threatened by those bodies which do not properly embody it and, as women's public toilets are experienced in mundane daily excretory usage as individual, yet collectively managed, all bodies have the potential to be threatening. This is because each body, each individual, is expected to entirely discipline and manage themselves without interfering with other individually managed bodies; a compulsion that attempts to entirely obscure the social, entangled nature of the action. When bodies are controlled in such a way – where each body is radically alone in its experience – those who fail to maintain the standards of such management and control leak out into the space in a disturbing and apparent transgression of the individual boundaries the body. This management of bodies operates through one's general spatial awareness of where bodies are in the space and what acts they're engaged in, which fosters and furthers bodily anxiety regarding the transgression of sensory boundaries during excretion. I will deal with these in turn.



First, a general sense of awareness of bodies in space is required in order to determine the intensity and style of boundary management required for one to engage in at any given time. A crucial aspect of managing one's boundaries is sensing other bodies in the space. For example, users I interviewed, while speaking about their use of the space generally, had the following to say:

Alice, 26, queer: I think I'm quite aware of other people in the space. I don't know even why or how, just when I go in, I'm not even really paying attention, but I immediately scan the place and you know where other people are in the toilets and what they're doing.

Cece, 20, heterosexual woman: Well, I think I'm pretty aware of what everyone is doing in there...If I am in a place where I know people, I can usually tell who is peeing where, just by the way they are in the cubicle.

The first two dimensions of the TIO create spaces which are primed for self/other policing, while a general sense of awareness capitalises on this dynamic and helps maintain the feeling of needing to actively managing one's boundaries. This is evident in how users speak about always knowing where other people are in the space and what they are doing. This knowing or general spatial awareness is a step toward overt policing, it is a less intense yet more pervasive management of body-selves which provides an understanding or embodied knowledge for knowing to what extent one has to manage their boundaries -- if the space is empty or if the space is very busy (and noisy) the pressure to manage bodily boundaries is extremely reduced as the imperative to be responsible (to other users in the space) for what one's

body produces, for the transgression of bodily boundaries, is severely lessened and often nearly non-existent.

This awareness or material-discursive process of knowing, rather than simply rational, is a sensory-embodied knowledge which is seldom understood as such. The low-grade anxious awareness that permeates women's public toilets is an example of sensorial individuation in action. It is an awareness, which has been individually conditioned to work without overt mental attention, but satisfies a rational anxiety which is not biologically or practically necessary for using the space. Rather, one's senses are employed and deployed to form an awareness of bodies in space which acts to mentally form an understanding of one's own body in space through rational sensing of difference and distance according to reflective *homo clausus* understandings of self-body subjectivity. The awareness seeks to maintain and preserve hetero femininity at the individual level via FASE. It is not a sensing of becoming but instead of judgement, of anxiety.

This process of being aware of, looking at, smelling, and listening to other bodies is a prerequisite of policing. Cultivating this sensory-individuated awareness necessarily requires users to keep their own bodies in line with the TIO through psychically projecting the self outward (instead of cultivating an embodied awareness) and back onto the borders (outer surfaces) of the body. It creates an anxiety which keeps users hyperaware of their bodies, emphasising the need to rationally maintain the imagined

borders of one's self-body. Users spoke about mundane usage of public toilets in the following ways:

Natalie, 24, queer: For me, the experience is anxiety provoking. I always feel like I'm going to be judged somehow on what I'm doing. By even, like, the sound of the way I use the toilet paper.

Cece, 20, heterosexual woman: I definitely don't think they're relaxed spaces.

Frankie, 25, queer: I think everyone, including myself does have anxiety about bathrooms, it is the norm.

The material-discursive practice of building spatial awareness of bodies in space and of what they're doing is preservationist and anxiety producing. It simultaneously strengthens the sense of one's bodily boundaries while exposing their weakness and openness to interruption. It is through this individualization, this solitary *individual* experience, that the experience of atomisation and the ongoing anxiety that one may accidentally transgress one's bodily borders is perpetuated.

Second, bodies engaged in acts of excretion represent interruptions and fissures in the presumed cohesiveness of bodily boundaries. They reveal the unstable nature of bodies. Such realities, while inherently part and parcel of public toilet spaces, are felt to be disturbing to all those present, an individual deviation. Users feel that their bodies, when engaged in excretion, are beyond the limits of their boundaries and thus out of control and invasive. For example, when speaking about excretory acts, users explained:

Alice, 26, queer: There is always this thing, especially with women I think, that you're always very careful not to disturb anyone.

Miriam, 25, queer woman: I feel guilty that I'm disrupting other people's bathroom time. It's not like anyone would ever be, or I've never experienced, after tooting [passing gas] or shitting in a public restroom with other people around, like someone giving me a dirty look or asking me, why did you do it? That has never happened, but I think that I imagine that is what they're thinking.

These feelings are based in rationality, not in experiential reality. While users I interviewed have never experienced any overt social ridicule in relation to excretory acts, their inherent transgression of bodily boundaries is experienced as abject and continues to propel self-enforced FASE. This transgression is experienced as such because of the sensory. Despite intense management of bodily boundaries, one cannot always choose what one senses and this reveals a fundamental reality about *homo clausus* individuality: no matter what, it is never individual. The spatial awareness (explicated above) produces a tension which is both a manifestation of the expectation to manage and maintain the boundaries of one's body and is a way of perpetuating the threat to them. This awareness and tension also works through self-other transgression and sensory infiltration which is highly threatening to hetero feminine *homo clausus* identity.

In public toileting scenarios one's bodily experience is directly caught up in the living of other sensory-bodies in the space. While users' bodies in excretion are not normally seen by other bodies in excretion (or generally in women's public toilets), they do come into contact through other sensory

modes, which are judged and mediated according to feelings of FASE. As a result, an uneasy, tentative atmosphere exists in the space. It produces an anxiety concerned with maintaining hetero feminine, *homo clausus* behaviour. The spatial awareness produces a tension which is both a manifestation of the expectation to manage and maintain the boundaries of one's body and is a way of continuing the threat to them. This awareness and tension also works through self-other transgression, and sensory infiltration which is not visual is highly threatening to hetero feminine *homo clausus* identity.

The sensory space users are most concerned with transgressing is sound, often coughing or rustling toilet paper or clothing to mask the bodily sounds they can't avoid making. There is a code of silence in women's public toilets that should only be broken by conversation at the sinks or mirror, not by a body within a cubicle. The taboo on the apparent transgression of bodily boundaries tries to keep hetero femininity stable, while exposing its reliance on the body. Keeping in mind that the muted feminine body is an ideal of patriarchal culture (Bordo 1997, p. 99), the transgression of sensory barriers when expelling bodily waste is highly problematic and threatening to *homo clausus* hetero femininity. When users do defecate, a natural bodily function that many users admit to never doing in public, the pressure is immense as the risk for shame and exposure of the fragility of the 'stable' body is high. When defecating one often has to pass gas, or fart. Emitting sound even in the confines of a private cubicle, within a space seemingly built precisely for the

act, is usually experienced as highly embarrassing and de-feminizing. As evidenced in the following quotes, these universal bodily functions are highly problematic for users:

Miriam, 25, queer woman: When I'm using a public bathroom, I feel uncomfortable, I feel guilty if I fart or poop.

Lana, 30, queer woman: You try not to make a lot of noise in there, always, like if you're having a noisy poop or any kind of poop, you flush or cough to cover the sound, or you don't move or make a sound and just wait until you're alone.

Frankie, 25, queer: If I have to poop and I'm at school...it makes me really nervous and I'll time it for when someone else flushes or makes some sound, I don't know how I do it, but its very intentional.

Natalie, 24, queer: In a more intimate setting of two or three cubicles and you need to poop and you know the other cubicles are filled, I feel like I need to wait and be really quiet and wait 'til everyone leaves to poop.

Kelly, 28, heterosexual woman: I had a friend who would wrap her arm in toilet paper and catch the poop as it came out to keep it from making that horrible plopping sound...I thought that was so clever!

Additionally, when users do defecate in public there is also a fear that they may not be able to distance themselves from the physical evidence of their taboo transgression. Cece, a 20 year old heterosexual woman, speaks about how she copes with this fear in public toilets:

Well, I usually avoid doing it [defecating], I need to have done it there before just to see that the flush works and that they have a plunger just in case. I wouldn't easily go, especially if there is a queue. I'd rather go to a disabled toilet where people don't normally go.

The use of the disabled toilet in this situation is acutely understood by Munt (1998, p. 203) who, again, draws on her own experience:



Using this toilet is inflected by shame. I am...not 'worthily' disabled, but certainly afflicted. It is at once a perfect, and anachronistic designation, the same positioning simultaneously dis- and en-abling.

Cece goes on to explain:

The thing is if there is a toilet which had issues flushing in Bombay [India], I wouldn't remotely think about not using it because it isn't a big deal, it is just here it isn't acceptable behaviour for girls in Britain.

Cece, who is originally from Bombay, India, has realised how her feminine identity and related behaviour has shifted since moving to England for university. She has consciously adopted *homo clausus* ways of being as a young adult in order to properly embody the hetero femininity expected of her in England. Part of that includes learning to embody FASE regarding her bodily functions generally and particularly around any visual evidence of such functions. On several occasions throughout our interview she explained that there were many aspects of toilet use in England that 'were strange at first' but to which she has gotten accustomed and now view as normal and necessary.

Taken together, the immediately preceding examples show the various concerns and practices that go into managing the threat faced by bounded bodies in women's public toilets and how those threats are both mitigated and sustained through awareness and anxiety surrounding bodily transgression. In this dimension of the TIO we can further see how all bodies in women's public toilets are expected to follow specific regimes of

conventional feminine appearance and performance according to *homo clausus* bodily ideals.

Men's public toilet spaces operate in accordance with this rule in nearly the same ways as women's public toilets: awareness of bodies in space and the fostering of a general bodily anxiety. The experience for users of men's spaces though is more concerned with masculine heterosexuality, whereas users of women's spaces are generally concerned with keeping their bodies in line with hetero femininity (where heterosexuality is implied according to sex-gender-sexuality). The emphasis is less on gender expression for men because of the nature of phallogentrism, and more on the expression of desire. The awareness and anxiety surrounding the shoring of masculine bodily boundaries is expressed in terms of keeping straight the presumed heterosexuality of excreting bodies. Users, while speaking generally about usage of space, had the following to say:

Erik, 24, straight man: I just want to go in do my thing and get out of there as fast as possible...So yeah, if I have to urinate, I'll be looking to see if there are dividers between the urinals and if there aren't, how many people are there, what is the likelihood that someone is going to come in, or whatever and then I might use a stall and I try not to touch anything...I definitely wouldn't start a conversation.

Emit, 27, queer trans man: In men's bathrooms, if you're social, you're gay. There is no eye contact, and if there is you're gay, and it is sort of like these unwritten rules -- you're in there to do a job and get out...So, you see women going to the bathroom together, you don't see men going to the bathroom together, if they do, they're gay. There are all of these things and they're somehow linked to an expression of your sexuality.

Robby, 32, straight man: If there is a line of urinals and you have the option of choosing, you cannot choose any urinal next to someone. It is just really gay.

These statements expose the underlying thought processes and feelings surrounding use of the space generally (as related to *homo clausus* onto-epistemology) and the material-discursive processes mandated by the first two rules of the TIO. The heteronormative goal-oriented nature of the material-discursive processes engaged in by users of these spaces is highlighted in these quotes; they point to how anything beyond the absolute necessary movement and usage of the space, is anxiety provoking, because it is read as gay. The awareness and anxiety around being read as gay is experienced by heterosexual, gay, and queer users alike. Here sexuality is bound up with the level of one's masculinity and the imperative in these spaces is to be bounded and closed also means to be categorically masculine (another example of sex-gender-sexuality). Leaky, unstable, out of control bodies are historically negatively associated with the feminine (which they too must work at managing according to *homo clausus* ideals) through patriarchal heteronormative constructions of gender. It seems, the nature of excretion in public, inherently threatens hetero masculine *homo clausus* subjectivity because it reveals the undeniably open, fluid nature of masculine bodies too. Thus there is an immense amount of bodily awareness that goes into keeping masculine bodies rigidly directed and closed.

Admission of masculine bodily openness is fundamentally inimical to the sealed, bounded nature of *homo clausus*, which often means that users of men's public toilets have trouble with literal acts of bodily openness. Since *homo clausus* identity requires that individuals are bounded and rational, not open in sensory-embodied becoming, excretion is difficult for many. The experience of stage fright – being unable to pee -- at the urinal makes for a particularly revealing example of the pressure to remain closed and individually bounded. Steve, a 24 year old straight man, speaks candidly about this experience.

I have stage fright. That's what they call it and it is a weird thing because I'm totally conscious of it and it's not, there is no emotional sensation or anything, it is literally like I am completely comfortable right now, there is a dude standing next to me, I'm relaxed but I just cannot pee because there is a dude next to me; I cannot explain it, it is like some magic of science, it is this mind boggling thing. So if I'm in a busy crowded bathroom and I see that there is a stall open, I'll go for the stall most of the time because I know that I'll pee and there is no pressure and the only time that I do start to feel weird about it [stage fright] is when I'm sort of like, when I do go to a urinal and it is crowded and I have stage fright and I'm just like OKAY I'm just going to pretend like I'm peeing now, I hope nobody can tell...So, it's more like, it's like I don't know, my mind and body doesn't want it [urination] to happen, because I can't help it and then I have stage fright and I do become more embarrassed...There was definitely a time when the idea of stage fright, I was not comfortable with that and thought that, not that I had some problem, but that I was like some kind of wuss or something.

Steve's experience of stage fright shows that despite his status as a straight man (who is not interested in having sex with other men), he still has trouble performing this private bodily function in the presence of other men because

bodily openness is understood as gay, deviant, by *homo clausus* subjectivity. Additionally, since all action in men's public toilets is expected to be directed and purposeful, standing at a urinal with your penis out, but not being able to perform the 'simple task' of urinating can be highly problematic. While it is something Steve has accepted as part of his life, he is unable to stop it because the embodied pressure remains. To cope, he disconnects himself, removes his agency from the situation and blames his 'mind and body'. Shilling (1993, pp. 7-8) notes that individuals 'frequently experience their bodies in a number of ways as being beyond control'. Therefore, in order to maintain his straight masculine status and preserve the *homo clausus* borders of his body he either hides in cubicle or pretends he is able to accomplish the task at hand in order to enact some control.

To further understand how intensely men have to monitor and control their bodies while enacting this and the previous rules, it is useful to look at ways some men remove themselves from the TIO by limiting their ability to come into contact with other open, excreting bodies through the use of a cubicle or by leaving the space altogether. According to my survey data, men's public toilets which had three of the six urinals occupied, surveyed in two different spatial configurations (Figs. 1 and 2), showed that 12% of men surveyed, would turn around and leave the toilet space if they were confronted with these arrangements in a public toilet, completely removing themselves from the TIO and not having to publicly reveal the openness of

their bodies or  
subjecting  
themselves to the  
possibility of being  
read as gay. The  
presence of 'too

Figure 1



many' masculine bodies in these spatial configurations renders some users  
unable to carry out their hetero masculine duty mandated by the TIO and  
they would rather ignore their bodily needs than risk error in performing the  
intra-action order. Similar awareness and anxiety surrounding the opening of

the closed, bounded  
hetero masculine  
body is evidenced in  
the use of the cubicle.  
The same two spatial  
configurations (Figs.

Figure 2



1 and 2) nearly doubled the use of the cubicle when compared to when just  
one fewer body was positioned at the urinals (Fig. 3): 43% of men surveyed  
opted to use a cubicle in Figs. 1 and 2, while only 23% of users surveyed  
opted to use a cubicle in a room that had just one fewer person (Fig. 3). Taken  
together, these two sets of data reveal that over 50% of men surveyed would  
rather use a cubicle or leave altogether when just *half* of the urinals are in use.



These findings would seem to suggest that when users are required to literally expose the openness of their bodies in public toilet spaces, many prefer to opt out of the intra-action order by either leaving the public toilet space without urinating or defecating, or by entering directly into a cubicle, shutting themselves away from the other bodies in the space. These are actions that carry a potential cost such as physical and social discomfort, loss of opportunity to use the toilet, embarrassment, and extra time spent on finding an alternative.

Additionally, while using a men's public toilet is necessarily an individual activity it does not always begin as such. The taboo is not so much around users physically going to the space together, but instead on any indication that two users within a masculine space may be together in any way. This sort of open sociality is again read as 'gay' and risky by *homo clausus* subjectivity because it overtly reveals an openness between what are expected to be closed hetero masculine bodies in the already threatening spaces of bodily openness. Users, on several occasions, expressed to me how when they go to a public toilet with a friend, any conversation that was happening between them immediately and unthinkingly stops upon passing through the door of a public toilet and does not resume until they've exited the space. In this way, there is also a particular social code regarding sound in men's public toilets, as there is in women's public toilets, but one that functions in the opposite way. While silence in women's public toilets

operates in order to keep users' bodies closed and managed according to hetero feminine gender (a silence that can only be broken in polite conversation at the mirrors not by out of control, excreting bodies), in men's public toilets sound is restricted to bodily sounds; any conversation is considered superfluous, suspect, and threatening to *homo clausus* masculinity. Put simply, any social activity is generally prohibited in men's public toilet spaces because it represents an opportunity of and for bodily openness. While social activity, like simple conversation, may not be problematic in other situations, in the context of men's public toilets where bodies are open in irrational fluid processes, everything else needs to be intensely managed in order to keep the imagined borders of the body firmly in place. Despite this understanding, some users, when they do happen to enter the space with another user, feel the need to overtly prove to other users in the space that they are definitely hetero masculine and thus not threatening to other *homo clausus* subjects. While a bit unusual, Steve, shares an interesting method he and his friends employ to mitigate the pressure to maintain the imagined borders of hetero masculinity when in the precarious situation of entering the space together. He explains:

And sometimes we [me and a friend] walk into a public toilet and it is suddenly quiet and we know that anything we say, every other dude in there can hear, so on purpose we'll say something like, 'oh how was the chick you fucked the other night?' ya know just something, ya know, R-rated, X-rated.

[Is it always sexually charged?]

Oh no, that was the example I used, um, no I would say they are not necessarily sexually charged, but usually, probably more profane, or related to where we are right then but even in that sense it is usually like, 'oh did you see that hot chick over there?' which again, yeah, relates back to sex...

Users of various sexual and gender identities all seemingly understand that they are supposed to perform a clear display of heterosexual masculinity regardless of their personal identification. In Steve's example, when his display of hetero masculinity may be unclear, he chooses to do something conspicuous and speak about a blatantly masculine and heterosexual act of 'fucking a chick' in order to announce that he is not a threat to the *homo clausus* hetero masculine space.

In this third and final rule of the triadic intra-action order the material-discursive practices employed by users of both men's and women's public toilets are concerned with acts that firm up bodily boundaries and clearly state that their bodies are in line with *homo clausus* ideals of boundedness and are therefore non-threatening. Bodies which are disruptive to the *homo clausus* style of bodily management in women's spaces are those which undermine hetero feminine gender expression through 'out of control' bodily excretion, while in men's spaces those bodies which jeopardise hetero masculine sexuality through acts which point to overt or inherent openness between bodies are most troubling. Through different points of emphasis this dimension works to condense sex-gender-sexuality onto the *homo clausus*

body through material-discursive practices that implicate desire with everyday, mundane acts. In both women's and men's spaces expressions of bodily excessivity are considered abject. Here, where bodies overflow their boundaries, the *homo clausus* subject is at its most vulnerable.

### **FASE and the Abject: Management and Maintenance**

Throughout this chapter I have posited that the mundane use of both women's and men's public toilets in daily life is rigidly structured by a triadic intra-action order (TIO). The TIO operates via material-discursive practices which seek to maintain the imagined borders of the *homo clausus* dis-embodied subject. The material-discursive practices are heteronormative and work through a condensation of sex-gender-sexuality into two distinct sex-genders. *Homo clausus* dis-embodied subjectivity is generally the same for all bodies and it is through sex-specific material-discursive, practices necessary for maintaining *homo clausus* that bodies coalesce into separate sex-genders. I have worked to show that the material-discursive practices employed and deployed in public toilets spaces are nearly the same for both men's and women's spaces, yet often operating in equal yet seemingly 'opposite' ways, pointing to the fundamental likeness of identity construction for all bodies in the contemporary West. Generally, the emphasis in men's spaces is on the maintenance of hetero sexuality which implicates gender expression, whereas in women's spaces the emphasis is on hetero gender expression which

implicates sexuality. Instead of understanding this as two binary oppositions at work (gender/sexuality and male/female) the TIO exposes how close constructions and expression of sex-gender-sexuality are, operating on more of a continuum where subtle material-discursive phenomena are construed, via rational processes, into major differences. In both men's and women's public toilets, bodies are kept in line with the TIO through a strong undercurrent of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (FASE) which act as 'a straightening device' of compulsory *homo clausus* heteronormativity (Ahmed 2006, p. 23). It requires all bodies to manifest the same style of sex-gendered being (according to the space they use) in order to not appear suspect and threatening. When bodies deviate they are considered abject, not just because of the acts being carried out (i.e. excretion), but because they directly and fundamentally challenge the bounded, stable nature of *homo clausus* being. FASE are therefore crucial in maintaining the underlying abject potential vital for *homo clausus* subjectivity; these feelings are always necessarily present and requiring rational management and dis-embodied attention in order to maintain the feeling of individual stability. The TIO of women's and men's public toilet spaces serve to keep bodies rigidly, rationally managed in order to continue the re-production of the *homo clausus* individual. Public toilet spaces are where bodies are obviously open and shared in their unboundedness, here they represent one of the most apparent yet potentially devastating threats to *homo clausus* ways of being: undeniable

openness. Self-bodies openly experienced, expressed, and explored in their unbounded sensory-embodied becoming are antithetical to *homo clausus* subjectivity and represent an opportunity for new ways of knowing, understanding, and experiencing. Thus the rules of the TIO are not stable in themselves, but like *homo clausus*, are stabilised through habitual patterns of use. Thus they can be easily transgressed or completely ignored in ways that radically diminish their power, allowing for fuller sensory-embodied experiences, greater connection with others, and opportunities for becoming-other. The rules of the TIO normally operate through discontinuity of embodied experience but they are not permanent or without challenge, thus they constitute an opening for cohesion through differential ways of being.



## The Sisters Who Search For Lice

Arthur Rimbaud

When the child's forehead, red and full pain,  
Implores the white swarm of indistinct dreams,  
There come near his bed two charming sisters  
With delicate fingers and long silvery nails.

They take the child with them to an immense  
Window, where blue air bathes a flowery grove,  
And through his heavy hair, as the dew descends,  
Their terrible, enchanting fingers probe.

He listens to their fearful slow breath vibrate,  
Flowering with honey and the hue of roses,  
Broken now and then with whispers, saliva  
Licked back on their lips, a longing for kisses.

He hears their lashes beat the still, sweet air;  
Their soft electric fingers never tire –  
Through his grey swoon, a crackling in his hair –  
Beneath their royal nails the little lice expire.

Within him then surges the wine of Idleness,  
Like the sweet deluding harmonica's sigh;  
And the child can feel, beneath their slow caresses,  
Rising, falling, an endless desire to cry.

## Careful Matters: *Bodies as intimately open and interrelated homines aperti*

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'It is impossible, however, to deal adequately with the problem of people's social bonds, especially their emotional ones, if only relatively impersonal interdependencies are taken into account. In the realm of sociological theory a fuller picture can be gained only by including persons interdependencies, and above all emotional bonds between people, as agents which knit society together.' Elias 1978, p. 137

### Introduction

This chapter explores different modes of caring for bodies in public toilets that explicitly challenge one or more rules of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order. The intra-action order seeks to stabilise *homo clausus* body-identity by keeping the imagined borders of the body as controlled as possible. While caring for others in many aspects of public life is socially laudable or acceptable, caring practices within the confines of public toilets are often transgressive of social norms as organised by the triadic intra-action order (TIO) and highly problematic. Crucially, the expressions of care I highlight in this chapter expose potential fissures between the binds of (*homo clausus*) individuality and human sensory-embodied desires and needs for care, closeness, and intimacy with other people (*homines aperti*). In this chapter I argue that this is because 'caring in toileting' overtly exposes the inherent

openness and interconnectedness of bodies, highlights their vulnerability, and reveals how the monadic confines of *homo clausus* norms are contingent and frail rather than universal and stable. Toileting practices necessitate that bodies are open, yet openness is antithetical to a stable *homo clausus* identity and thus any acts that directly socially reveal and sustain this openness are often seen as despicable. Care does happen in public toilet spaces, however, and I want to suggest that this exposes opportunities for valuing the body as dynamically living and as evidence that it is possible to understand individual identity instead via *homines aperti*; that is showing how identity is formed through direct connection with, rather than separated from, other bodies. This is akin to Frank's model of communicative bodies, at least insofar as is not only descriptive in nature but also proposes an ideal bodily ethics (Frank 1995, p. 48).

However socially challenging it may be for those individuals who live through modes of care, it is important to recognise that what I shall analyse as this move from *homo clausus* to *homini aperti*, as experienced through material-discursive practices and sensorial engagements, it is itself an opening for new ways of sensory-embodied becoming. By giving non-judgmental attention to practices which are socially understood as non-normative, but that actually occur regularly in mundane, daily practices, we can bridge our conceptualisation of the 'human' with those experiences of bodily living that are ignored or systematically neglected in that conception. This is where onto-

epistemology can be usefully highlighted for better integration into our ways of experiencing, knowing, and understanding. For example, instead of applying and then analysing a socially prescribed, predigested sensation or reaction to an experience (e.g. why some women feel threatened by the presence of a butch lesbian), the data presented in this chapter seeks to expose where we can break habitual conditioned judgment, by better understanding how-where-when identity is experienced as interdependent and begin to move toward new practices of sensory-embodiment.

The empirical data within this chapter focuses on mundane social practices of daily caring which are expressed in multiple forms, reoccur, and fall into roughly three categories. These are: protective care, collective care, and bodily care. This chapter includes data from men, women, queer, and trans individuals, with a range of sexualities, as well as, queer and heterosexual couples, including some who are parents of young children. The data offers multiple perspectives concerning how, why, and when care happens in public toilets. The examples explored here are not concerned with how people maintain the *homo clausus* intra-action order in an effort to maintain bodily boundaries, (e.g. how a mother may make a bed of toilet paper for her young daughter to sit on thus trying to control what her body can come into contact with, an example of rule three of the TIO, manage your boundaries), but rather how bodies are cared for beyond or in direct contention with those practices allowed by the intra-action order. Therefore,

through a confrontation with and acceptance of themes related to vulnerability – often by ignoring or moving beyond socially instituted feelings of bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment – this chapter will show how the borders of *homo clausus* identity can easily break apart and/or be actively dissolved in daily life, allowing for new forms of embodiment and social cohesion. This is a move toward a new ethics of being bodily.

Practices of care in mundane, daily circumstances embrace the leaky, unstable, abject body through honest acceptance, expression, and acknowledgement of bodily needs. The material-discursive practices elucidated in this chapter begin to point to the possibilities and potentials available to everyday embodiment but which are often precluded through social patterns of use, like those mandated by the triadic intra-action order of public toilets (TIO). While caring for bodies in public toilet spaces may at first seem odd, disgusting, or taboo, when we situate these practices within the paradigm of embodied knowledges we can begin to see how such knowledges are devalued in society and reflected in ourselves. By understanding the circumstances where caring practices are destabilising to *homo clausus* identity it becomes possible to build an awareness of where sensory-embodied becoming can be released from the rigid boundaries of the monadic self-body. Put simply, practices that can be characterised as typical of *homines aperti* can help us locate thresholds for becoming-other.

## Protective Care

Since public toilet spaces are intensely straightened and maintained through the TIO, there are many opportunities for and threats of transgressive action. Often someone does not desire to transgress the TIO overtly, but is read by users of the space as inherently suspect and threatening simply because of the way they embody and perform sex-gender-sexuality in this 'private' space. For example, while some queer and/or trans people may not want to disrupt or disturb anyone else who is using a public toilet, it is often difficult for them to avoid doing so because the spaces are so rigidly maintained according to heteronormative *homo clausus* ways of being that are reliant on the visual for affirmation. Queer and trans people often simultaneously feel *both* threatened and threatening in public toilet spaces and because of this paradox of threat, they often put great care and attention into using public toilets. In the examples below, the practices of care are both protective and preventative, expressed in effort to try to avoid a potentially dangerous or personally damaging experience.

Beck is a 50 year old butch lesbian whose body-identity is constantly policed when she uses public toilets. While her friends have encouraged her to use men's public toilets (an even more risky option) instead of women's, she maintains that she does not want to. This is an example of protective self-care as she is protecting both her sense of self by choosing to do what she finds most comfortable, and by avoiding the very real potential threat she



could face if she used men's toilets and was discovered to be a queer woman.

She explains:

everyone says 'just go into the men's room, men won't say anything' and I'm like fuck no. I'm just not, I don't want to go in the men's room! They're dirtier for one, for the most part and I feel like I'm not supposed to be in the men's room so I don't want to do that.

While Beck may look more conventionally masculine than feminine in her adult presentation of self, she is a woman who is subject to the same deeply instilled feelings and fears about women's access to men's public toilets as heteronormative women generally are. She feels strongly that she does not belong in those spaces and that they are dirtier and smellier than women's public toilets – a common assumption (and misconception) among both women and men. Her desire to only use women's public toilets, despite her butch appearance, points to how deeply ideas and beliefs about sex-gender are embodied from an early age and the ongoing historicity of the body informs ways of living. While the current (adult) expression of her identity may not agree with the early socializing into femininity she experienced as a child, those messages about her body only being with other women's bodies while she engages the intimate act of excretion remains. Beck may more easily and readily identify with men and masculinity in her bodily gender-sexuality expression, but when it comes to her sexed body, she still feels she needs to be with other women for this act, despite the constant strife it causes her. This

highlights the importance for Beck of maintaining her ability to be able to use women's public toilets despite the dubious status of her feminine legibility.

One of the most successful methods she has developed for using a women's public toilet without harassment or at least much diminished social attention, is through the care of her girlfriend. As Beck explains:

sometimes I don't want to be bothered [by other women in public toilets] and my girlfriend will say 'do you want me to come in with you?' and I'm like 'Yes! Please!' And she'll go in first and then I don't have to say anything because she's got a bigger evil eye than I do! She's very femme and it makes me feel like I don't have to say anything because she'll just take over and then I don't have to confront anyone looking at me while I'm trying to go to the bathroom. Or she'll turn around and talk to me as if, ya know, it is no big deal [that this very masculine-looking person is in here]. So maybe that is it, when I'm with her, it makes me feel like I don't have to confront it at all. I don't have to deal with it alone or at all. She'll protect me.

This practice of protective care is directly tied to Beck's experience of the legitimacy of her body-identity. The clearly feminine status of her girlfriend normalises, or at least legitimises Beck's presence in the space. While this practice of care may be seen as taboo because it exposes an openness and connection between bodies that jar with the heteronormative *homo clausus* social codes of the space – i.e. a clearly feminine woman openly accompanying a masculine-looking body into a sacred feminine space – it is a vital example of people as *homines aperti*. As Elias explains, 'people look to others for the fulfilment of a whole gamut of emotional needs' and the physical expression of the emotional bond between Beck and her girlfriend speaks directly to this point (1978, p. 135). While this may not be a major

event, it is a small expression of protective care which is predicated upon an emotional-physical bond. It is important to note that while it is a generally accepted fact that women often use public toilets in friendship groups, this example is quite different from that. This form of shielding is protective *from* women and especially those in groups who can be even more threatening to someone like Beck. Women who use public toilets in groups as a social practice is a form of *homo clausus* normativity and something that most queer women I interviewed claim to not understand and never engage in. It may be a caring practice, but it is a wholly normative one and thus not of interest here. When women use the toilet together in groups it both socially eschews the need to actually engage in excretion, because it is couched as a social activity to others, and detracts from any sensory-perceptual evidence of the actual excretory process – since more sounds from more bodies means less direct responsibility for sounds and smells individually produced. It is a form of social policing in the form of sociality. Women using public toilets in groups is a public and private heteronormativizing, which may have some benefits of protection and solidarity, but it is not disruptive to *homo clausus* norms.

Alternatively, Beck and her girlfriend's practice of care shows the utter openness of sex-gender-sexuality in its simple yet powerful ability for an expression of femininity to be overtly protective over and in defence of masculinity. Beck's 'femme' girlfriend, through the strength of her socially

legible femininity is able to both protect Beck's embodiment of masculinity and support her unconventional sensory-embodied identity. This works at least in part by other users locating a reflection of socially accepted representation of heteronormative femininity in Beck's girlfriend, which grants her access to the space and an implied understanding that she knows the rules and codes of it. Thus she is able to use her normatively read body in an act which is non-normative. If Beck's girlfriend wasn't 'femme' I suspect this shielding practice would be much less successful, creating even more problematic confrontations.

While protective caring practices are much less common in men's public toilets they do occur. Joseph, a 26 year old queer man shared this story with me about himself and his 31 year old transgender friend Jason<sup>63</sup>, about engaging in a shielding practice, like Beck and her girlfriend. Jason is more butch and hetero-masculine in appearance than Joseph, who is on the slighter side and often read by people as 'gay'. Joseph explains:

the bathroom was in this club, which was filled with these really intense hetero guys and we just swapped door duty – because the bathroom wasn't explicitly for one person, but it was pretty small...I mean I did it for protection, and felt like it was important to protect Jason too. And to combat being aggressively accosted or having my space invaded by some hypermasculine Long Island dude.

Here Joseph and Jason protect one another by taking turns using the toilet and acting as 'door security' – standing at the door and not allowing any

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<sup>63</sup> Jason also took part in my study.

other men to enter the space. A similar story was shared by Justin who is a 33-year-old transguy. He says:

One time when I was playing a show [with my band] I was with a trans friend and we blocked the men's bathroom off for each other, we guarded each other. I really, really liked this. It was like, really empowering. Yeah, I totally liked it. It was this acceptable protectiveness of my dude. I guess maybe it's a territorial thing, it just felt empowering to keep people from entering and knowing he [trans friend] got his privacy too.

These practices of protective care over the ability to safely carry out intimate bodily processes are expressions of masculinity rarely captured publicly. While these sorts of practices are considered non-normative by the TIO and heteronormative *homo clausus* masculinity (surely they would be labelled as 'gay' according to the TIO) they are not experienced as emasculating by those men who engage in them. On the contrary, they are described as empowering and important masculine acts. Like in Beck's story, the *act* itself supports a heteronormative construction of sex-gender-sexuality, but the intention and experience of the act is utterly disruptive to *homo clausus* norms. The act of protection through a sort of territorialisation can be understood as quiet normative, but the desire to protect another man's excretory needs by creating a safe environment for them, is decidedly non-normative.

Similarly, in subsequent interviews and social conversations with straight men, when I would proffer this practice of care as an example of my findings, many seemed fascinated and even envious of this expression of masculine, protective care for friends. In these conversations, it was as though

labelling something as queer or gay from the beginning nullified the threatening power of being identified and labelled, called, or thought of as gay by other men. While generally men, in order to maintain the TIO, are concerned not so much with appearing *straight*, but rather with making sure they do not do anything that may make someone think they are *gay* and thus suspect and threatening, when it came to hearing these stories of protective care by queer and trans men, the general sentiment was that these were stories of liberation (!) from heteronormative masculinity, not examples of shame or fear. So while the heteronormative men I spoke with, upon hearing these stories, said it was something that would 'never happen' between straight men, they also did not find this behaviour threatening or repulsive in anyway. This is unsurprising because while this sort of behaviour completely violates the rules of the TIO, it simultaneously invalidates the entire premise of needing to appear straight in the first place. When men simply are not so concerned with not appearing gay, the power of the TIO is radically diminished since the entire premise of the *homo clausus* normativity is based upon the closed, rational boundaries of heteronormative masculinity. That is to say men, by simply engaging in different practices – perhaps spurred by hearing of those practices of queer men – may feel less compelled to so intensely control their own bodies according to the TIO. This is how fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment in conjunction with the intra-action order begin to lose their persistent power; by taking small risks in breaking their



embodied habits, men can begin to be differently embodied. This protective care works because, while hetero men may not find this queer protective care overtly abject, the way that the TIO works is less by being concerned with what other men are doing and more concerned with their own behaviours.

Joseph's, Jason's, and Justin's protective care points to the inherent openness between bodies, and particularly between men's bodies emotionally and physically. The affective bonds expressed by these men point to 'the possibility of there being very strong emotional bonds of many kinds without any sexual overtones' (Elias 1978, p. 135) as basic and integral to human relationships regardless of sex-gender-sexuality. Furthermore, these expressions of care, as understood by those men rigidly tied to the heteronormative *homo clausus* TIO exposes a potential fissure between the binds of masculinity (*homo clausus*) and human sensory-embodied desires and needs for care, closeness, and intimacy with other people (*homines aperti*). This is an example of a process of individuality as explained by Elias. He says, 'Biologically determined instincts are still present, but they can be greatly modified by learning, experience, and the processes of sublimation' (Elias 1978, p. 136). That is to say, these practices of protective care expose a bodily desire to be close and connected to people, through overt actions of connectedness that many men have learned to sublimate or express in only very rigid, socially deemed appropriate ways. Protection of this sort speaks to an ethics of materiality that is beyond mere biological control and

management. Rather it speaks to the active nature of materiality that informs a desire to be close and connected to other bodies even if that requires a transgression of heteronormative identity. Protection is a practice of care that overcomes the social feelings that help maintain the sensation of atomisation and helps highlight the intra-active nature of bodies. These are acts of solidarity and hospitality, with oneself and others, which value differential being over and above representational sameness. This is similar to practices of collective care which are even more intimately related to the bodily desire for human connection as it bumps up against individual anxieties surrounding the maintenance of *homo clausus* boundaries.

### **Collective Care**

Practices of collective care expose the social and interpersonal struggle some people face when opening the body in excretion cannot be a purely individual act. The struggle between maintaining individual adult status necessitated by the TIO, while requiring or highlighting the need for assistance in public toileting brings bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (FASE) to the fore. When practices of collective care – those are entanglements that implicate personal assistance in the acts of excretion – intervene in bodily FASE there is an opportunity for those emotions to be released and a new opening for fostering bodily connection and compassion can be revealed.

Frankie, who is 25 and queer, shared one story of collective care with me about her and her girlfriend. While her girlfriend generally has bathroom anxiety and does not feel comfortable receiving care in public toilets, one incident quickly changed their usual dynamic in these spaces. Frankie explains:

We [me and my girlfriend] had never been in the bathroom together while pooping, and one day, she [my girlfriend] was in there pooping and I heard a huge bang and she had fucking fainted while going to the bathroom, or right after and I had just heard the bang and it scared me! So I went to the door and she didn't respond, so I just went in and she was naked, kind of half naked passed out on the floor and had hit her head, and it was really scary! And all of a sudden that awkwardness [of being in the toilet together] disappeared. I don't think I'd go in with [her] today to poop, but that day and the next couple days, I was really aware and okay with being in there with her, and it is funny the how second I thought [she] could get hurt again, [she] didn't care that I was in there...that boundary broke down when there was a seeming necessity for me to be in there and now we're way more comfortable with our bodies bathroom stuff generally.

In this example, a couple who had never shared this particular aspect of their bodily-selves quickly and easily overcame any FASE they had previously held in association with toileting and allowed a new bodily openness and connection to happen between them through an act of care and compassion. That incident has had an enduring effect on their relationship and on their embodiment, enabling them to now be 'more comfortable' with their bodies generally and particularly with toileting together. This highlights that the rules of the TIO are socially contingent and can be overcome and is in contrast to Butler's (1993) and Foucault's (1980) understandings of discursive power

which are unable to account for how sensory-embodied individuals can challenge or change the workings of power (i.e. how materiality is related to discourse). The above story highlights how agency happens intra-actively through material-discursive practices, that is how new ways of being are entangled with new ways of understanding. Put simply, when personal habits and social propriety are ignored or overcome, a threshold for differential becoming can emerge.

The preceding story is in stark contrast to an earlier experience in Frankie and Natalie's relationship. Natalie, Frankie's girlfriend, who is 24 and queer, told me another story when she was unwell in a public toilet. She recalls:

I'm remembering at the Bellhouse [a large performance-dance-music venue] I had a stomach flu and I was in the bar's bathrooms for like an hour -- we were there for a show -- it was a two stall bathroom and I just could not physically get out of the stall, I was unable to move, cause it was coming out of both ends and [Frankie] kept coming in [to check on me] -- there was a huge line of people and I could hear women saying 'someone's been in there for so long!' I felt really bad, [Frankie] kept coming in and asking if I needed help, and I just felt so awkward and embarrassed, I just kept saying, no its okay, its a public restroom...I just felt really bad receiving care in the public bathroom.

In this story, Natalie expresses her rationalized social discomfort with receiving care in public. Her story highlights why it is so horrible to be ill in public toilets under the *homo clausus* regime of the TIO; you can't relax, you feel on display, you feel childish, you feel completely out of place all of which negatively intensifies everything you're experiencing to begin with. Natalie's

FASE about publicly admitting the need for help, for requiring care, meant that she struggled, ill, embarrassed, and alone for the sake of maintaining whatever aspects of the *homo clausus* TIO that she could. I'm not suggesting the maintenance is necessarily a conscious process but rather an unfortunate, unnecessary social expectation that denies one the right to ask for help, to take up space, and to be in a state which is not up to the *homo clausus* ideal because we generally do not understand or realise that these emotions are not natural but rather socially instituted or we do not have the tools to overcome their oppression.

While Natalie thought that actually receiving care would be even more embarrassing than denying it, using a huge amount of time and space, and being sick alone, as evidenced in the first story told by Frankie, this was not the case. Instead of allowing her rational FASE to control her bodily needs and desires, when she received care from Frankie after passing out she realised that it was much less problematic than she thought it would be. For Natalie, it was only through overtly experiencing her body-self in the *receiving* of care that she is able to overcome her rational FASE and feel more comfortable in her body and with Frankie's body too. This again, highlights how material-discourse is intra-acted and inherently material, that is entirely entangled with sensory-embodiment.

The next two stories explore collective care from a slightly different angle. While the stories are told by those who are socially and emotionally

close to those giving and receiving the care, they usefully highlight the *homo clausus* anxieties felt by those who merely witness the acts of care. The first story was shared with me by Monica, who is a 46-year-old lesbian. She explains:

It [our conversation about sex-gender-sexuality policing] makes me think of my step-father who had a stroke 10 years ago. So he is an over 65 year old man who can't go into the men's room by himself [because of limited mobility resulting from the stroke], so my mom has to take him into the women's room with her and people will say shit to him! They still think, they still think he is an intruder or a pervert or something! My mom is there, helping him walk, he's got a cane, she is clearly helping him, he moves very slowly and people will still say things to her about him being in the bathroom! And it is just like oh my god, close the door or wait until he leaves to pee if you're that embarrassed about it! It is so frustrating that people are so freaked out about this!

The deep frustration expressed in Monica's story is palpable. It seems difficult for her to understand how people can be so ungracious when faced with this display of collective care. While she explains this as the embarrassment of those women who hound her mother and step-father, there is much more at stake here than simply women being embarrassed about a man hearing them pee.

Her story brings issues and ideas concerning sex-gender-sexuality, age, (dis)ability, *homo clausus* bodily boundaries, masculinity and practices of care to the fore. Despite her step-father's clearly legitimate need for care by his wife, displayed in his slow comportment, use of a walking aid, and presence in the 'wrong' public toilet accompanied by a female aide, women still feel



threatened enough by his mere presence to harass them. This daily reality for Monica's parents reveals a troubling feature of *homo clausus* selective attention<sup>64</sup>. It seems some users of women's public toilets are so deeply offended by the presence of men in 'their' space, they fail to recognise *and value* – put another way, to *empathise* with – the fact that his needs are clearly different from those of an able-bodied person and that his receiving of care is clearly legitimate. We can speculate that witnessing this act of collective care is troubling for some women because, despite the maternal trope of femininity, it is generally understood that when it comes to issues of physical weakness it is men who are expected to provide support for women. Put simply, the display of an adult feminine body providing care in the form of physical strength to an adult masculine body within a public toilet fundamentally challenges many *homo clausus* assumptions of sexed-gendered bodies, which tend to be shored up and *stabilised in the toilet space*. So while women may realise that a disabled man may require care, by noticing his comportment and use of a walking aide, they do not find his need legitimate enough to be overlooked and without harassment. This act of collective care draws out socially reproduced FASE and points to where *homo clausus* constructions of identity fail to be open and amenable to the embodied possibilities of daily life. As women are socialized to feel afraid of men in

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<sup>64</sup> While I don't have the space to develop it, it is important to mention that this is also clearly an example of ageism, which operates through social policing to keep older 'object' bodies out of public life.

women's public toilet spaces, some are unable to look past the assumed presence of a penis (which must mean danger) in the space and compassionately connect with the practice of interpersonal care happening before them. Such FASE is a clear display of where assumptions of sex-gender are delimited onto the body via *homo clausus* identity and allowed to precede the ongoing material reality of sensory-embodiment. It seems some women so fundamentally believe that men's experiencing of their bodies is (and should remain) and their approach to the bodies of 'others', so different from their own, that they are unable to connect to a very basic human need for care. That is to say, some women may have so much invested in the construction and reproduction of heteronormative femininity, that they are not able to understand an equally large investment two people may have in one another. Similarly, as Elias (1978, p. 137) explains, 'People's attachment to such large social units is often as intense as their attachment to a person they love.' It seems in Monica's story both cases are present; some women are so connected to their social unit of hetero feminine gender that they are unable to reconcile, with their own sensory-embodiment, an expression of love between two people because of the location in which it takes place – a location that is arguably instrumental in the reproduction of that social unit.

The last story of collective care is similar to Monica's in many ways, but happens from the reserve. It reveals, instead of women's fear of men's aggression and danger, men's concern for aggression or abuse toward young

girls. As elucidated in the previous chapter on the triadic intra-action order, *homo clausus* material-discursive practices construct bodily boundaries in equal yet opposite ways, resulting in binary sex-genders that are reliant upon one another for stability. Therefore, where Monica's story exposes women's fear of being victimised by men, this next story exposes men's fear of victimising young girls. Deborah, who is a 41 year old, heterosexual woman, shared this story with me about her family:

So we [my family] often use public toilets but it is also an issue for us because obviously it's my husband [who is with them] -- we have [three] girls [aged 2, 6, and 7] -- he is most often out with them [because I work full-time] and he finds it rather difficult because he doesn't really want them to go and use the toilet on their own in the ladies [women's public toilet] but it isn't always particularly suitable to bring them into the gents [men's public toilet] but that is usually what he has to do...we have a particular issue with where they go to do gymnastics, all the girls -- there are obviously toilets there and adults use the gym too and, well, he used to bring them into the men's changing room to use the toilet and so they can get changed but he was actually asked not to, they said 'could you not bring them into the men's room because they might see other men using the toilet'. Now, this situation is very difficult! I mean, what is he supposed to do?! So it is quite an issue that I hadn't really thought about before but that is difficult for dads. It's hard to deal with, you know it is quite different for women, you can take a little boy into the ladies toilet and you've got a cubicle there so it's not really an issue. I think so it must be the privacy thing, because my husband wouldn't let the girls see anything he wasn't happy for them to see but the people at the gym didn't want them to go in there. I don't know, I'd like to question them [the people at the gym] about that, because I'd like to know if they thought other men might be encouraged to do it [bring their daughters into the men's toilet] or are they more concerned for the children? But he was there, he was there! He would have been around, he would look after them. He wouldn't have let anything happen to them. Yeah, it made me, it really surprised me that they said that [he couldn't bring his daughters into the men's room anymore]. Well, I suppose it wasn't really our

problem, he [my husband] is happy to take them into the gents and he will look out for them but I guess it makes other people uncomfortable.

Deborah's story is quite illuminating because it touches on many different sex-gender issues at once and is something rather simple yet, surely plagues many families.

People are uncomfortable by the mere idea of young feminine bodies in a masculine space and the potential of young feminine eyes *seeing* men's bodies; Young masculine bodies present in women's spaces do not, in any way, represent the same socio-cultural concern or stigma as the oppositely gendered configuration. While at first thought this may seem ironic considering Monica's story, but upon closer consideration it shows how basic ideas of binary sex-gender are deeply instilled into even the youngest bodies in social life. Here young feminine bodies are expected to be victimised by masculine bodies by their mere presence in the space – the concern assumes that seeing a man urinating or just seeing penis is inherently violent to young female sensibilities (that is, to see a, most likely, flaccid penis is somehow violent, unless it belongs to their father or brother in which case that is generally accepted) – and thus they are treated *as victims* of male violence in the name of avoiding such possibilities of harm. In my interviews I heard many stories from women, who accidentally used men's toilets as children and have lasting positive and even affectionate memories of seeing men urinate; as though the vulnerability of men in that position is to some degree

comforting. Correspondingly, this dynamic reproduces the assumption/expectation that men are violent to women; it is part of a larger social process that teaches girls to be afraid of men and that they are weaker and inferior to masculine bodies. As Twigg (2000, p. 408) drawing on Connell (2005) states, 'Hegemonic masculinity constructs men as sexually predatory; and limits are placed on male access to bodies...' whereas 'women are allowed greater leeway in performing the transgressive acts of bodycare without their being constructed as threatening or sexual' (Twigg 2000, p. 408). Young masculine bodies, while not thought to be able to victimise adult women's bodies, are not treated as victims in women's public toilets spaces and their presence is not socially problematised. My goal here is not to reproduce these cultural tropes but instead to point out how *homo clausus* material-discursive practices impact the materiality of bodies in their reproduction of heteronormative sex-gender.

In this example specifically, *homo clausus* individuality is invoked in order to deter a practice of collective care between an adult man and his three young daughters, an example that reinscribes feminine bodies as victims and masculine bodies as perpetrators of violence. Deborah's husband is left with few options, regarding the mundane care of his daughters, by those who manage the gymnasium. Since he has been asked to not bring his daughters into the men's public toilet and he, himself cannot access the women's public toilet, he now sends them into the women's room unsupervised and stands by

the door, waiting for them. The irony of this situation is that the FASE surrounding bodies in public toileting scenarios takes precedence over the caring of a father for his daughters. It removes his agency as a father and as a man engaged in a caring practice. Deborah's daughters now have to use the women's public toilet on their own – certainly making them more vulnerable than if they were with their father – and her husband now has to loiter around the door to the women's public toilet to try to make sure his daughters are okay – certainly rendering him suspicious and potentially threatening in the eyes of other women. The social stigma surrounding young female bodies with male bodies transforms a masculine caring practice into a practice that reinscribes men as suspect, untrustworthy, and threatening to women (with an underlying current of sexual violence). This is a clear example of the entangled nature of intra-acted material-discourse in action.

The whole situation is compounded by the fact that the girls' father is their primary caretaker while their mother works full-time. While it is socially acceptable and even laudable for fathers to act as primary caretakers in young families – a role that challenges heteronormative gender stereotypes – when it comes to the practice of fathering in public, fathers are still plagued by *homo clausus* gender stereotypes based on the sex of their children which may imply that men are not suited to fulltime care. (There is an underlying implication in this story that the father is unable to keep his children safe around other men.) The gym example exposes how in public toilet spaces it remains



difficult for men to act as the primary caretaker of young children who are gendered female. This is another instance where *homo clausus* constructions of individuality cannot account for realities of the open, interconnectedness of people in their daily activities and how those people do not necessarily follow conventional sexed-gendered constructions of heteronormativity in living sensory-embodiment. As *homo clausus* bodies are threatened by the overt openness of bodies, it is vital to also explore the intimate bodily care people engage in independently during acts of excretion, which clearly have social ramifications. As evidenced in the final section of this chapter, when bodies are open they are no longer individual (and bodies are always already open).

### **Bodily Care**

In order to make the case for bodies as having boundaries that are not stable or static, but rather involved in an opened-ended becoming (*corpus infinitum*), we must first give attention to the material openness of bodies. While using a public toilet for the literal act of excretion may be thought of as an entirely independent act, the materiality of the body cannot be contained to one's flesh as it produces sounds, smells, and wastes which vitally transgress imagined bodily boundaries. If this were not the case, the power of bodily FASE to control material-discursive practices would be radically diminished. Thus, even when using a public toilet alone, as a singular person, bodies are always already intra-acting because of their inherent co-presence.

The following examples aim to draw attention to this point. They show how, when people are alone, their bodies are still entangled with other bodies in the space and how this care is an undervalued and necessary form of 'dirty' bodywork. According to Twigg (2000, p. 389), 'The term bodywork' has commonly been applied to the work that individuals undertake on their own bodies, often as part of regimens of health and wellbeing'. I draw on Twigg's (2000) insights on 'dirtywork' – i.e. dirty bodywork – throughout this section to elucidate how such basic and universal caring practices, as excretion, can be understood as utterly despicable and at odds with one's 'self-image'. The stories shared below are bound up with people's working lives and expose how, when one tries to take care of their needs in a space where bodily intimacy and openness is not valued at best and often problematic at worst, they are ostracised.

Ford is a 24 year old queer (ftm) trans man who, at the time of our interview had undergone top surgery and been on testosterone for many years. His self-body identity is read by others as male and he is rarely questioned about his sex-gender status. If anything, people assume he is a gay man (which can often be problematic for him as he feels he is still a 'gender minority', solidly identifies himself as 'trans', and often works in genderqueer and trans advocacy). While he is 'passing 100% of the time' he still has deep concerns about using public toilets. His experience of bodily FASE extends

beyond the confines of a public toilet and for ease of explanation his story requires some context. He explains:

Bathrooms were a huge issue in my transition and they still invade my thoughts. Before, during, and after my transition I have had nightmares about bathrooms...In them [the nightmares] the stalls have no doors, or the door on the stall continues to shrink exposing me more and more every second, or I walk into the women's room and everyone starts screaming at me.

Before and at the very beginning of his transition (to masculinity) he would go out of his way to use a unisex bathroom, to avoid using women's public toilets where he felt he didn't belong. At that time he was masculine enough to be policed in women's spaces but still too feminine-looking to comfortably and confidently use men's public toilets.

In order for one to begin taking testosterone, a life-long treatment for trans men, one has to first be in therapy for, at least, several months, and be 'presenting' (one's body-self) as a man daily. While Ford passes as male now without any issues, this was not always the case. He shared this story with me from the beginning of his transition:

I started T [testosterone] close to the same time I started a new office job. One day I was in a stall in the men's room and there was one other person in the bathroom, and on this person's way out they stopped at the door and shouted [at me] 'This bathroom is for men only!' After this incident and speaking to HR [human resources] I found out that there had been a lot of complaints made about me using the men's room but the HR person never said anything to me and basically they didn't know how to handle it...later I found out that there was a trans woman who worked in the same building a year before who also had a lot of issues using the women's room and she ended up leaving her job because of it. This situation was hard because I needed a bathroom to use and I didn't feel that I 'belonged' in the women's room, yet other

people felt I didn't belong in the men's room. To make matters worse, at this job I often had to stay late and work and my boss told me not to use the bathroom after business hours. So, my boss was making me stay late to work but told me I couldn't use the bathroom!

Here, despite Ford's status as a trans man who was taking male hormones, presenting as male everyday, and performativity engaged in the material-discursive practices of masculinity in public toilets and elsewhere, his body in excretion was still highly problematic for some of his co-workers. This instance shows how even the extremely mundane and universal act of bodily excretion can become an intense and intensely charged caring practice for someone. That is to say, while someone who is not regularly hassled and denied access to space may never think of toileting as a fundamental right to self-care the situation is wholly different for those who are differently abled and/or face prejudice in public life. While the men who shared the public toilet with Ford did not necessarily feel *physically* threatened for their safety *by* his presence, his presence, nonetheless prompted enough FASE in some users of that space to make pre-emptive complaints about him; and they were not taking into consideration this basic need and right to care for his body<sup>65</sup>. As the *homo clausus* TIO in men's spaces operates by keeping men mostly concerned with their own bodily actions and not those of others, Ford's story suggests that the psychological attention some men could not resist giving his

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<sup>65</sup> While I don't reference it here there are some interesting and direct parallels regarding self and other in this section/chapter and Derrida's work on hospitality. See e.g. Derrida 2005, 2000, and Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000.

body, meant they were transgressing the TIO which inherently has negative implications for the status of their heteronormative masculinity.

Furthermore, this experience was surprising to Ford because in the other spaces of the office there was no indication that anyone was overtly uncomfortable with his being there. It was only in this space of literal openness, when people gave their bodies directed and careful attention, that his body became problematic enough to warrant complaint. This shows that even those who may imagine their bodies are closed and sealed can feel open and exposed – made vulnerable by bodies that are not conventionally masculine. This vulnerability may be compounded by the act of bodily care – that is, an act of self-love and labour (Twigg 2000, p. 394) – as masculine bodies are not typically inscribed (or easily accepted) into bodily caring practices and roles. As Twigg explains:

There is a complex set of reinforcing influences that together construct bodywork as female. First, these are tasks that are naturalised in the bodies and persons of women. Women have traditionally represented the Body in culture (Jordanova 1989; Lupton 1994). They have been presented as more bodily than men, bound up in and defined by the processes of reproduction, and prey to the shifting tides of emotion. Women also represent the Body in terms of male desire, the form of desire hegemonic in culture. They thus come to represent sexuality itself, something that can be controlled through the control of women's bodies. Confining desire (at least in its legitimate forms) and the needs of the body to the domestic sphere allows the public world to be constructed as disembodied, rational and male (2000, pp. 406-07).

Toileting as a form of bodywork for men is only acceptable through the intensely individualistic and rational nature instituted by the *homo clausus*

TIO – material-discursive practices which have direct implications on male desire – as men are trying to avoid being read as anything but heterosexual while in public toilets. When there are bodies present that blur the sex-gender binaries and highlight the bodily caring aspects of excretion, it may draw men’s attention away from their task at hand to the other bodies in the space which may result in those heteronormative men feeling uncomfortable and threatened by *their own* transgression of the TIO. The men in Ford’s story are not directly threatened by Ford – Ford *makes no threats* – but are instead made to feel endangered by their own cognitive schemata, their own thoughts about Ford’s body.

Seemingly, it can be difficult for some people to imagine different, non-normative bodies in basic modes of care. It is interesting that the person who shouted at Ford waited to do it on their way out, when Ford was indisposed, locked in a toilet stall; a rather cowardly expression characteristic of *homo clausus* FASE. Furthermore, the human resources person’s total inability to engage the situation as something that deemed attention and warranted a conversation with Ford is upsetting, as is his boss’ insistence on his working late but not being allowed to use the toilet. With situations like these it is unsurprising that queer and trans people are victimised in toilet spaces when they’re simply trying to care for basic bodily needs. Luckily, this attack on Ford was verbal, pusillanimous, and not physically violent; though it is troubling that he had to be victimised in this way in order to get his HR



person to do their job in looking out for the welfare of employees. While it does not excuse the neglect inflicted by Ford's HR person it is not wholly surprising. Toileting practices are a form of bodywork that is:

closely connected with the negativities of the body, and these are aspects that modern culture tends to shy away from, in analysis as much as in day-to-day life (Twigg 2000, p. 408).

In this example Ford was simply trying to take care of his bodily needs; He was not doing anything devious or overtly transgressive, he was simply using a public toilet for excretion. While those basic needs are generally accepted as the same for all bodies that use public toilets, his excreting body (while in the presence of other open, excreting bodies) was somehow outside of this general acceptance and too problematic for some people to handle. Even though his excreting body was not something his co-workers were ever confronted with directly (visually or physically as he always used a stall with the door shut and locked), the rational construction of *homo clausus* identity, as a stable sexed-gendered body, cannot be reconciled with the reality of Ford's presence in the toilet space. Ford's unconventional sex-gendered body inherently challenged some men's sense of masculinity, stirring their own bodily FASE, simply because his body does not agree with how masculine *homo clausus* bodies are expected to be, i.e. the idea of what a man's body is and should be. In this instance it seems there is fear and anxiety linked to what men may see if men were to 'accidentally' look at Ford's excreting body (certainly breaking all rules of the TIO). The thought being, 'I know what I

would see if I saw a trans man's body and I know that would disturb me'. While, as far as we know, no men spied on Ford whilst he was in a toilet stall, the feelings and actions of those men who complained about his use of the space are seemingly directed by the rational *homo clausus* mind, not the living, perceiving capacities of sensory-embodiment. Whether they like to admit to it or not, in public toilets men's bodies are interrelated and reliant upon one another for the maintenance of not just the TIO, but masculinity generally. The reasons for the neglecting of interconnectedness is typical of *homo clausus* – as they are

deeply rooted in western culture and in the evaluation of the bodily, particularly those aspects of the body that run counter to modern preoccupations with autonomy and individualism (Twigg 2000, p. 409).

Even though this was not a positive experience of connectivity for Ford, it is nevertheless apparent in his story that bodies are open and interconnected, that they have the power to affect the feelings and actions of others. Situations like these continue to haunt Ford and can seriously deteriorate a person's life and, as shown in the next stories, this is true not only for trans individuals.

Miriam is a 25 year old queer woman who shared two work-related public toileting stories with me. The toileting space at her place of work was atypical insofar as it was it was genderqueer<sup>66</sup>. The space did not have a stable

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<sup>66</sup> While this space is generally referred to as 'gender neutral' I think 'genderqueer' is more appropriate since people were expected to actually change the sign on the door based on

gender but rather swiftly conformed to whoever was using it according to a sign on the door. The public toilet space plays a vital role in the elucidation of her experiences and thus it is important to have a clear sense of what it was, how it was used, and how people generally felt about it. Miriam described it to me in the following way:

I had an interesting bathroom situation at work where we had a gender neutral bathroom. It was a single bathroom [one room, with one door] but inside had it two stalls with shared sinks and it was meant to operate as a gendered space when it was in use. So when you went in you were supposed to change the sign on the door to match your gender. There were these generic men and women stickers and a magnet and you were to place the magnet on the gendered person that you were so that other people who identified with the sign you've placed the magnet on could go in while you were [in there] going [excreting]...I think it caused people a lot of stress because if you forgot, god forbid you forgot!, to put the magnet on the person on the door, or someone ignored the magnet person, then someone of another gender might come into the bathroom while you were in it. This definitely caused some people a lot of anxiety. I never really cared because the bathroom had two stalls, it was like whatever there are two stalls inside this bathroom, the bathroom itself does not need to be gendered.

Basic bodily care in this genderqueer toilet was already problematic because of the added threat of accidental transgression and the negotiation of the different sets of gendered rules. For example, to simply urinate in the 'correct' (i.e. non-threatening) way, people were expected to not only maintain the rules of the TIO, they also had to consider that people of the opposite gender would use the space, and if they were not careful, at the same time as them.

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one's own gender. Gender neutral spaces are not gendered, whereas this space has a gender that was constantly in flux.

This situation means an already heavily coded and charged space is escalated to an extent where people seem to forget the need to care for one's body.

Miriam told me this story of her co-worker, who, when trying to take care of his bodily needs, made many enemies:

I had a co-worker who I think had some serious medical issues and he would really make the bathroom smell really badly and it would carry through the hall to his office and our offices, and nobody wanted to go into the bathroom for the little while after he used it and it was just awful. It seemed like he was really sick, but no one would be like 'hey man, get some air freshener' or something. It was very disruptive to my work environment because everyone [in the office] was talking about it all of the time. They hated him for it. They hated him. Everyone was really frustrated but no one would ever say anything to him about it. It happened everyday. If he wasn't in his office someone would come to the area where our offices were and be like, 'did he just go to the bathroom?' And ask one of us where he was! I didn't really care, I would say 'yes or no' but it was just awful – the culture of that space during that time – and I would just go to another floor and use the bathroom there to try to avoid the situation.

This example of how transgressing the TIO can be so disruptive clearly shows how people's bodies are open and interconnected in three ways. First, there is Miriam's male co-worker whose bodily care was so highly disruptive to the point of his co-workers 'hate[ing] him' for his need to defecate. From the sounds of it, there was almost no respect for this man's need to take care of his body, save for Miriam's concern. Second, the policing and discussion of his bodily care practices to everyone in the office except for him exposes the social interconnectedness of people and demonstrates how an extremely negative and damaging environment is created based on one's bodily needs. It is almost as though the rules of the TIO are being enacted on his behalf

outside of the toilet space. As if he did not feel enough FASE about his body, people inscribed it onto his body for him – reflecting the utterly social nature of the TIO, which aims to keep bodies radically atomised through a valuing of those very emotions (FASE) which make people feel unfit for social life. Third, this gossiping and policing culture made Miriam change her own habits and begin using a different space for some time. Taken together, this is an example of material-discursivity in action.

Taking this into consideration we can better understand the pressure Miriam felt when she had her own need to care for her body in a similar way.

She explained:

When it came to my co-worker, I was always trying to find a can of air freshener or something to keep in that bathroom or I would call facilities and ask them to leave one in the bathroom so people could use it and I would use it when I thought I made a mess, a smell in the bathroom. Because there was a time that when I was in that office, I was on a medication that made me poop a lot and really smelly and it wasn't something I could control -- if I had to poop, I couldn't stop it and it would verge on being diarrhoea and I ended up stopping that medication because I couldn't deal with the gastro sideeffects from it. Though I was on it for eight or nine months.

[During that time were you concerned about the office culture?]

Totally. Oh of course. That's why I was so careful about it – I would even lock the door even though it was a two stalled bathroom, so nobody could come in and that caused drama too! Someone would always be like, 'this isn't supposed to be locked!' I was just like 'why the fuck not?!' Yes, there are two stalls but maybe, sometimes you want that privacy. I just wanted to be like, 'look I'm sparing you these awful, awful stomach problems that I'm experiencing!' That experience deteriorated my quality of life I think -- being on that medication and a big part of that was the work-bathroom culture...I do think that that experience did make me more comfortable with pooping in public

because I couldn't not. I couldn't hold it back. I know you're not supposed to do that [hold in your excrement], but there are ways that you can do that to yourself if you're out for a little while or don't want to poop at work. I don't do that often and I do poop regularly at work now whereas before I was on that medication I would avoid it.

Miriam's bout with the poor body-toileting culture at her place of work was at once anxiety provoking and in some senses liberating. While the medication made her ill and, as already demonstrated her co-workers seemed to have ownership issues over the space and what people could and could not do in it, Miriam gained a more open and comfortable relationship with her bodily needs. She did this through the practices of caring for her body, despite protest and malice from her co-workers.

While her initial inclination may have been to stop herself from defecating at work because of the extremely negative culture of the space – an example where language (i.e. discourse) itself domesticates, retains, sets boundaries onto bodies (i.e. materiality) – when she physically could not do that and allowed her body to openly, without restriction, experience what it needed to, she was able to overcome much of her FASE, and now she regularly defecates at work. Considering the utterly damaging social culture at her work place surrounding the open expression of intimate bodily needs, the change in Miriam's habits is no small feat. Here her co-workers attempted to straighten, order, and impose stability onto the already always unstable-gendered space, through the policing of bodies open in excretion. This openness is never singular but rather underscores the openness of all bodies.

By Miriam unapologetically taking care of her bodily needs, she undermines her co-worker's *homo clausus* efforts to remain individual and unaffected by other people's bodily openness.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various ways people, in their mundane daily lives, are interconnected with others in public toileting practices of care. Those caring practices take many forms; they are sometimes publicly visible and at other times happen behind closed doors, but are always already implicating other bodies in and around the space of care. These expressions of bodily openness and interdependency are examples of people as *homines aperti*. Even when such practices are resisted or challenged, in an effort to maintain *homo clausus* individuality and to impose FASE onto others, they continue to highlight the interconnectedness of people. While fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment continue to play a large role in the coalescing of *homines aperti* embodiment, practices of care point to the fissures inherent to *homo clausus* individual identity, exposing where greater intervention in one's own sensory-embodiment can take place. Often those fissures in the normative structures of *homo clausus* dis-embodiment are capitalised on through practices of play and pleasure which will be explored in the next chapter.



## Modern Adventures At Sea

Peter Gizzi

Say it then or  
sing it out.  
These voyages, waves.  
The bluing of all I see.  
Sing it with a harp  
or tambourine.  
With a drum and fiddle.  
These notes and its staff,  
the lines' tracery  
blooming horizon.  
These figures insisting.  
Their laws. I embrace  
accident. I accidentally  
become a self in sun  
in the middle of day.  
Where are you? Cloud,  
what shadow speaks  
for me. I wonder.  
Is there an end  
to plastic. Is  
yesterday the new  
tomorrow. And  
is that a future?  
Do we get to  
touch it and be  
content here  
before we go.  
That the signs  
won't remain  
untranslatable  
in the end.  
And that I may  
learn this language  
say with a dolphin,  
a dog, a cattle herder  
and slaughterhouse,  
a lumberyard  
and big redwood.

That someone  
could say to the crude.  
Stay there. And  
don't be drawn  
into this tired game.  
I wonder if the poem  
gets tired. If  
the song is worn  
like sea glass.  
I wonder if I am  
up to this light.  
These ideas of order  
and all I feel  
walking down  
the avenue.  
I see the sap  
weeping on the cars.  
See the wrack  
about my feet.  
Its state of decay.  
To see that decay  
as the best of all  
worlds before me.  
It's transformation  
not transportation  
that's needed. Here.  
It's embracing  
the soft matter  
running my engine.  
My guff. And fright.  
This piss and  
vinegar. And tears.  
That I won't  
commit violence  
to myself in mind.  
Or to others  
with cruel words.  
That I may break  
this chain-link ism  
of bigger than  
smaller that why  
feel bigger than  
anyone feeling smaller.

Can I transform  
this body  
I steward. This  
my biomass.  
My accident.  
When lost at sea  
I found a voice,  
alive and cresting,  
crashing, falling  
and rising. To drift,  
digress, to dream  
of the voice. Its  
grain. To feel  
its vibrations. Pitch.  
Its plural noises.  
To be upheld  
in it, to love.  
Whose book lying  
on that table?  
And where does  
the voice  
come from?  
What life was attached  
to its life,  
to its feint,  
its gift of sight.  
To understand  
oneself. With-  
out oneself.  
How to live.  
What to do.

EIGHT

# Play, Pleasure, Possibility: *Desiring toward boundless embodiment*

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## Introduction

This chapter explores various and varied experiences of public toileting practices which further challenge the rules of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order that, when adhered to, attempts to maintain the monadic experience of the self-body as stable, controllable, and closed. In this chapter I show how the rules of the TIO are not unchallengeable but rather highly contestable and instable. The stories presented in this chapter coalesce around themes of play, pleasure, and possibility – terms I use loosely and will explicate in further detail below – and expose how one’s bodily being in and of the world can shift from rigid habit to open, boundless becoming. I conceive of these shifts as happening in momentary thresholds where habit is released; they may only last for a few minutes or even seconds, but they are vital for becoming-other. These moments are what the material-discourse of new ways of being are made of – they are the stuff of difference, of change. When thresholds are opened and explored they enliven more thresholds that, over time, can unhinge habits and entangle new potentials in the everyday.

That is to say, habits are not simply broken and removed from someone's way of being, but rather weakened overtime. New ways of being are found, explored, and allowed to become, allowed to have an effect – they are not instituted or simply adopted. Habits, while useful in daily life, focus on the effect of stability and sameness while denying possibilities of/for difference. Habits are required for thinking we are stable selves (see e.g. Butler 1993) and they attempt to remove the thresholds of difference through perpetuating fragmented self-experience. Alternatively, the nature of becoming-other is directed toward recognising thresholds as the opportunities to become-other. Practices of bodily becoming, move beyond lived habits and provide new opportunities for being and exploring one's self as inherently social and spatial, that is, always already entangled in the dynamics, actions, and understandings of the people and places of an experience. This is a shift from a *doing-focused* self-body to a *becoming* embodiment characteristic of *corpus infinitum*.

Practices of play, pleasure, and possibility, point to the potential of situating oneself outside of the *homo clausus/homines aperti* dialectic of understanding, insofar as they highlight the nascent dissolution of imagined bodily borders of the individual self and allow for a continuity of experience not dictated by habit and representation. Whereas *homo clausus* is 'stabilised' through processes of territorialization of the body and *homini aperti* is 'stabilised' through a constant state of deterritorialization of the body, *corpus*

*infinitum* highlights the spaces of entanglement between stability and fragmentation, where cohesive difference and creative, curious openness are fostered. Thus *corpus infinitum* is always already before and beyond de-territorialization.

Rather than disregarding these stories as mere anomaly or unimportant leisure activity, I use them in order to further expose the boundless, unfinished nature of the social-spatial-bodily-self. While many of the examples used throughout this chapter take place in contexts of 'leisure' (e.g. bars, concerts, general socializing), the practices I have chosen to focus on need to be understood as decidedly different from and even outside of work and leisure activities in order to draw out the intra-related nature of the body-self-society onto-epistemology. As Ross (2008, p. 59), speaking about French poet Rimbaud's relationship to work and the social space of the Paris commune explains,

the refusal of work is not an absence of activity, nor, obviously, is it leisure since leisure reinforces the work model by existing only with reference to work: it is a qualitatively different activity, often very frenetic, and above all combative.

The material-discursive practices outlined below, on many levels and in many forms, express a bodily desire for openness and connection, for a becoming beyond one's self that is pointedly a refusal to *do the work* central to the sustenance of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order. My reading of this refusal to do the work of *homo clausus* embodiment can also be understood as



an effort to further challenge 'the widespread notion that there exists a social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring production that is mere fantasy on the other' (Ross 2008, p. 76). Therefore, I aim to show how frameworks of onto-epistemology, when applied to daily experiences of the desiring body in public toilets, can usefully problematise the separation of the individual body and social life, and ultimately point to new practices of sensory-embodiment that can be understood as combative to social norms and potentially liberating from individual monadic identity.

The empirical data presented in this chapter have been divided into three categories that are neither discrete nor concrete, but rather open, malleable, and entangled. In some instances the practices themselves express a direct relationship to the category they have been placed in – e.g. the use of pleasure to better enable urination or instances of lesbian sex are both clearly practices of pleasure – in other instances there is a particular sentiment or sensory-embodiment (sensation, feeling) that is part and parcel of a practice, but may not be immediately, or overtly understood as such through a rational form of understanding – e.g. conversations or interactions which establish an openness between friends, particularly when it comes to bodily practices, are often necessarily of a playful nature, there are often jokes and laughing which help avoid individual shame and instead express embarrassment in a communal way, by laughing at themselves and one another, which enables the group to then overcome their personal FASE. While conversation about



public toileting practices may not initially seem like a form of play, when we consider how it operates amongst friends and in opposition to *homo clausus* norms, it can be understood as such. Furthermore, while many of the examples used below are made possible through the consumption of alcohol (certainly many of the stories were only possible because of the need to urinate after consumption of alcohol) these instances should not be dismissed as outside of normal social intra-active practices or of any less value. On the contrary, the inclusion of alcohol in many of these stories crucially highlights how easily habit and bodily repression can begin to be released, and *is desired to be released*, exposing how willing people are to disregard the social norms of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order, in order to foster new forms of sensory-embodiment leading to social cohesion. I follow Rimbaud's sentiment again here, as Ross describes, for Rimbaud: 'Intoxication is not a dulling, a numbness or impoverishment of sensation but rather an activity: too much sensation rather than too little' (Ross 2008, p. 112).

Practices of play, pleasure, and possibility embrace and express bodily desire to become beyond individual borders of the *homo clausus* self. The material-discursive practices elucidated in this chapter further highlight how and when everyday embodiment can be released from the rigid patterns of normative use and reconfigured for more expansive, dynamic, and collective bodily experiences. By giving attention to and recognising as personally and socially significant non-normative practices of play, pleasure, and possibility

we can build a greater understanding of how and when the self-body is habitually hemmed into and condensed by *homo clausus* social roles, rules, and expectations and thus locate power in those practices which are not typically understood as useful, let alone powerful.

## Play

Play can take many forms, though is not necessarily readily recognised as a potential (let alone a generative potential) in daily adult life; it is generally associated with children and thus understood as childish<sup>67</sup>. Play in which adults partake is typically understood as 'leisure' – a way one uses their time when they are not engaged in work – and is prescribed according to social norms. This means the immanent playfulness of everyday life can be systematically lost, ignored, or forgotten whence *homo clausus* adulthood is reached. In this section, I highlight forms of play and playfulness that occur in daily life, as part of both 'leisure' and 'work' time-space, within the ambiguous, marginal regions of public toilets. In doing so I aim to show how people actively break the rules of the triadic intra-action order, forgoing fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment in a desire foster greater connections with those around them by ways of play.

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<sup>67</sup> There are various viewpoints on the topic of adult work and play. See for example Freud 1908, Huizinga 2003, Neff 1985.

Steve, a 24 year old straight man shared two relevant stories with me regarding play and playfulness in toilet spaces. The first is related to his experiences of stage fright (inability to urinate in the presence of other men) and overcoming his shame and embarrassment in talking about it. He connects this experience to one from his childhood, when he began masturbating:

Initially, it [talking about stage fright] was something that really bothered me and I guess the best comparison I have is like talking about sex and I guess masturbation is the thing that comes to mind, because I remember being a kid and when I started masturbating, and the idea of talking about that in public was like giving me the willies, and I remember being a kid and other kids joking about it and it making me feel so weird and now, obviously, I'm talking to you about it and I have no problem whatsoever, and it is sort of like, I would say it happens in an instant where you have some sort of common experience -- it usually happens with another person, another friend, another guy of mine, where we're like 'fuck yeah masturbation is awesome', or like 'fuck yeah I have stage fright too' and from that day on it is something I'm totally comfortable talking about. I would say humour is a big thing for me as far as like being comfortable with things I might not be comfortable with in the first place. Sort of laughing about it definitely helps...But then once -- I actually remember -- I went, I was at a music festival with like 5 friends and we were all like drinking and walking around together and sort of were keeping the pack together, so we all ended up, maybe like 3 or 4 of us, going to the bathroom together and we all walked up to urinals and then we all came out and all of us were like, 'dude I didn't piss, did you?' And it was that moment where I was like okay, this is funny, we can talk about this, we all deal with it -- so yeah there was definitely a switch and now I'm completely comfortable with it, it doesn't bother me; I think it is just kind of funny.

Here, Steve explores how he uses the playfulness of humour to open new possibilities in his ability to connect with his own sensory-bodily experiences and with the experiences of his friends, allowing for more open, honest, and

comfortable relationships beyond the confines of *homo clausus* masculinity. It is not insignificant that he situates the experience of connecting with his friends over the embarrassing experience of stage fright, both within terms of early childhood sexuality (i.e. pleasure) and the use of alcohol, as they are both forms of sensory-embodied becoming that have the potential to deterritorialize the boundaries and borders of the *homo clausus* self. Steve's ability to overcome his own bodily embarrassment through amusement and laughter enabled him to release FASE in intra-action with his friends, making space for greater sensory-embodied being. Similarly, and before going onto Steve's second story, Kat, a 26 year old queer female, shared a story with me about her experience also at a music festival. She says:

I was at a festival with my friends and we were given those SheWee things [which are supposed to enable women to pee standing up] and so a couple of my friends and I tried to use them at the same time in the port-a-loos and it totally didn't work. I mean, I just wee-ed all over myself, all over my jeans, and when I came out I just told my friends, 'I just wee-ed on my jeans' and they had too, so it was just hilarious. If the circumstances had been different and if we hadn't told each other, if we just tried to ignore it, it would have been totally embarrassing, it would have been different, but since we talked about it, it was fine; it was actually just really funny.

As evidenced in previous chapters, speaking about urination and defecation can be especially difficult for women as it is particularly taboo. Kat and her friends, by being honest, open, and playful about their experience of using the SheWee, were able to use humour to assuage the potentially uncomfortable and territorializing nature of *homo clausus* shame and embarrassment enabling

new ways of being in the world and being with one another, e.g. no longer having to feel embarrassed about bodily functions both individually and collectively.

In Steve's second story he again uses play and humour to connect with his friends in other ways in public toilets. He explains:

I mean usually I know my friends and if it is okay to joke around with them, to ya know try to embarrass them, and so we'll purposely disrupt and break the rules of the space by doing or saying something to one another, where everyone else in there can hear or see and its interesting because I've been on both ends of that, where sometimes a more rambunctious friend of mine will do it [something embarrassing] to me and I'll sort of like be embarrassed, but usually we're on the same level and so we're in a public bathroom, we're having fun and it's not a big deal...But I've been on both ends where I'm sort of embarrassing my friend a little bit or he's embarrassing me, ya know. But it is more that we'll say something outrageous or X-rated because it is suddenly quiet and everything we say, every other dude in there can hear...and it is just funny.

By pushing on the always already underlying fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment that one is expected to feel in these spaces, Steve and his friends are able to easily create playful situations which render those emotions much less powerful. Instead of FASE being experienced as scary and oppressive, in Steve's scenario they are positively engaged in order to lighten the atmosphere or break the tension of the space. What is produced is a fun and funny bonding experience, which Steve emphasises is always balanced, not a one-sided attack. He and his friends use these playful experiences to expand how they can interact with one another, with their bodies, in public. Additionally, it seems that since these acts are so public,

that is, with the intention of the others in the space not only seeing or hearing, but also being effected by them, in a sort of collective experience of embarrassment, they point to the political potential of playful social interactions to diminish the power of FASE by purposely drawing it out.

These examples of play and playfulness highlight how normative social relations, which are aimed at maintaining the sensory-embodiment of monadic *homo clausus* individuality, can be reconfigured to lead to new ways of being beyond FASE. In the stories mentioned above, an individual, mundane daily activity is turned through collective mediation into a playful group experience based around failure. The failure and/or active denial to 'successfully' urinate according to the adult *homo clausus* rules of the triadic intra-action order, for example, opens the connective possibility of *corpora infinita*, as playful openings are used to cement friendship rather than result in shame and embarrassment that could disturb friendship. Similar to the media-focused examples Judith Halberstam (2011, p. 2) explores in *The Queer Art of Failure*, these accounts make 'peace with the possibility that alternatives dwell in the murky waters of a counterintuitive, often impossibly dark and negative realm of critique and refusal.' While one may rationally *think* that actively exploring, expressing, or exaggerating ingrained feelings of bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment would only make those feelings worse, would only negatively intensify them, as shown above, in actual practice, intensifying or allowing those feelings to be intensified enables the



deterritorialization of the *homo clausus* self and a move toward open, boundless, becoming as *corpus infinitum*. That is, a self-body open to and configured in ongoing social experiences, not a self-body rigidly defined and managed by learned habit. A similar phenomenon can be recognised in relation to practices of pleasure and intimacy.

### **Pleasure and Intimacy**

There is an abundance of (sexual) pleasure and intimacy occurring in public toilets. Since the spaces are so rigidly managed according to the triadic intra-action order, people are able to work that 'system' to their advantage in order to have pleasurable experiences. While these experiences are considered socially 'deviant' it is important to remember that they are generally only possible because of the social norms, rules, and codes that are so firmly established in those spaces to begin with. For example, because eye contact is so taboo in men's public toilets, men can use it as a way to quickly, discretely, and easily express the desire for a sexual encounter. Sex between men in public toilets has been well documented (see e.g. Humphreys 1970), but very little has been written about women having sex in public toilets. While that is not the focus of this of this section it is important to note that every lesbian and queer woman I interviewed had had multiple sexual encounters in public toilets. Lesbian and queer female sex happens just as much if not more than sex between men in public toilets. It is a norm. This is an interesting



sociological finding, but it is not entirely of interest here because these practices do very little to challenge the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order since they generally rely on its maintenance for such transgressive behaviour; the behaviour is not 'deviant' or 'transgressive' without the norms which straighten and order the spaces. I note this here not to place a value judgment on such transgressive behaviour, I certainly do not think there is anything wrong with it (and generally believe 'deviant pleasure' in public can be powerful politically), but rather to point to how transgression and deviance of this sort does very little to challenge norms. As Bataille points out, 'There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted, often it is even prescribed' (1986, p. 63). Furthermore, I want to make clear that for the people who spoke openly to me about having sex in public toilets, the practice is not one of shame but rather one of excitement and exploration. That is to say those people I interviewed do not engage in sexual acts in these spaces because there is 'no where else for them to go' (as goes the general, out dated trope for homosexuality), but rather because they offer a different way of being sexual and intimate which is not as readily accessible to heterosexual couples. This is a point I will develop further in the possibility section of this chapter. So while I could fill several pages with stories of sex in public toilets from my participants, it would do little to further my theory of experiencing the self-body as *corpus infinitum* (they would instead approximate *homines aperti* ways of being by capitalizing on

the rules of the TIO for their transgression). Instead, I focus here on experiences of pleasure and intimacy which explicitly challenge the norms of the triadic intra-action order; they are practices which *refuse to do the work* of maintaining a *homo clausus* self. These experiences work toward undoing habit and creating new ways of being in and with others in the world.

The first example comes from Josh, a 29 year old straight man. His story takes place at a University where he was working. He explains:

Just the other day when I was [on campus] doing some work I went into the toilet and two guys were having sex! It was late afternoon or early evening, the end of the day. I went to the bathroom with my headphones on so I wasn't really paying attention, and then when I was finishing up I took off my headphones and realised there were two guys engaged in some kind of sexual act in the next stall -- I guess they hadn't realised I was in there either -- because it was like as soon as I noticed them, they seem to know that I knew they were there -- or maybe they just realised I was there too. Anyway, they realised I was there and realised that I could hear them and quickly redressed and left the bathroom. I just kind sat and waited for them to be *totally gone* - - I didn't want any chance of seeing them or knowing who they were [because I'm a lecturer] -- and then I quickly left myself. I was really surprised about this whole thing. The experience really pulled me out of my drone routine.

Josh's story both confirms the norms of how people have sex in public toilets according to at least some of the norms of the triadic intra-action order – we can infer this by how quickly they left once they knew that Josh noticed them – and also points to how such an experience can disrupt habit. The most interesting part of Josh's story is in the last line of the quote: 'The experience really pulled me out of my drone routine.' What is vital here is not that Josh caught these men in a 'deviant' act of public sex, but rather that the act caused

Josh to *feel* differently; The experience caused him to take notice of not only his disconnected, habitual way of being, but also made him feel surprised -- a sensation of *becoming* – without any of the normative FASE. This rupture is where potential and possibility thrive because with awareness comes choice to change behaviour. While it may have been a one-time or fleeting experience for Josh, it is a small fissure of the mundane opened up through a connection of pleasure, where new ways of being and doing the self-body being can be forged.

David, who is a 36 year old gay man, shared a story with me about reading poetry in glory holes, which are small openings in the walls or partitions separating cubicles in public toilets and buddy booths (small rooms where people go to watch porn). These openings are generally created specifically for sexual encounters, which could be anything from just watching someone urinate or masturbate to directly, physically receiving pleasure from the person on the other side of the wall. He says:

[these spaces] have always fascinated me. A place where one can walk in off the street, fulfil their fantasy and then leave. I liked the accessibility it offered—anyone...could go in. But my fantasy wasn't so much getting off [having an orgasm] with guys whose full body I can't touch, rather, I wanted to connect with them personally in a context that *allowed* for instant sex. And so I wrote a poem, which perhaps gives me at my most vulnerable, and I read it through glory holes [these were] mostly narrow rectangles and performed it a few times...there wasn't much interest in what I was doing, as even *talking* generally betrays the codes of these places.

Here David was not only interested in direct explorations of pleasure, but also in using the context of pleasure to foster connections, intimacy, in ways that are not necessarily expected, desired, or welcomed. What is of most interest here is his desire to connect personally in a space that allowed for public sex, but not by way of public sex. That is to use the physical openness people allow in public sex in an attempt to connect with them at a different level, that is through personal emotion and vulnerability expressed through poetry. Just as Josh experienced in the previous story, David's intention was to interrupt people's habits by interjecting a form of personal intimacy and vulnerability into the space that is not usually present or welcomed in situations of anonymous sex because it was not explicitly sexual or anonymous. David purposely engaged in an activity, reading his extremely personal poetry, that made him feel emotionally vulnerable within a potentially sexual context in order to explore the possibilities inherent in a daily social situation. This sort of practice, which challenges the norms of the space and, instead of doing the work of the *homo clausus* self, purposefully explores feelings of weakness, openness, and exposure – normally understood as threatening and degrading to *homo clausus* masculinity – exposes how the power of FASE can be significantly weakened to foster different, more comfortable, cohesive, and powerful ways of being. Additionally, it is not necessarily important that he felt there was not much interest in what he was doing, we have no way of knowing how his actions impacted those he could not see. His unusual,

poetical form of interacting with glory holes – an already ‘deviant’ spatial feature of public toilets but one that is created within the bounds of *homo clausus* being – points to the possibilities of *corpus infinitum*, of open bodies and social relations in the everyday at a subtle and nuanced level.

The next example of the power of pleasure and intimacy is from Lana who is a 30 year old queer woman. Here she is speaking about using public toilets with people she has been in relationships with. She says:

Yeah we [my girlfriend and I] have used a public toilet together and I remember because it’s very noticeable, and it’s not very often that we’re in a place where we would need to do that together -- I guess most recently we [were at a concert] and we were there [in the toilet] and it’s, I feel like she is uncomfortable with it so I don’t express anything toward her when I’m in there with her. That is specific to this relationship – it is a little uncomfortable, because I know that she is uncomfortable. But in other relationships, I’d like stick my head under or over the stall, and fool around with them [my girlfriend], like tease them and I would put my hand under the stall, I was totally comfortable and playful about it. But I think that she [my current girlfriend] is more uncomfortable, so I don’t do anything.

Not wholly unlike Steve’s joking play with his friends, here Lana explores how intimacy and playfulness was expressed in previous relationships compared to her current relationship. Since her current girlfriend is uncomfortable in toilet spaces and with toileting behaviours generally (something we spoke about at length), the potential for intimacy is precluded and Lana herself feels uncomfortable. What is interesting here is the juxtaposition of Lana’s behaviours based on the person with whom she is in a relationship. From playful expressions of intimacy to absolute rigidity, her

story shows the differences in the social potential based on how her partner feels about their self-body in public toilets. When with a more open, comfortable partner Lana felt it was possible to express a queer form of intimacy in a heteronormative social space where such an expression between partners is typically precluded.

Lastly, is another story from Steve, again about his experience with stage fright and a pleasurable body technique. He says:

Sometimes, when I do have stage fright I'll try rubbing the tip of my dick, almost in a sort of like a sexual arousal sort of way, but it can also help me pee too, I mean it's not to arouse me, it's to get the pee out. Sometimes after sex when I'm still sort of aroused, I'll rub my dick a little and it's like magic genie, I'll pee. So I'll sometimes use that technique when I'm having stage fright and sometimes that works, but that is also even more awkward if some dude looks over and I'm rubbing the tip of my dick. Wow, I'm very comfortable talking about this stuff right now.

There are a few points in this story worth exploring: the open blurring of a mundane, utilitarian bodily act of excretion with pleasure; the openly public practice of that act (where someone may see); and Steve's surprise in how comfortable he was at this moment in our interview when speaking about this body technique. I'll deal with these in turn. First, since pleasure in the context of *homo clausus* public toileting practices material-discursively challenges social norms, it is important that Steve uses a pleasurable experience to help him cope with the *homo clausus* pressures of masculinity. This is where sensory-embodiment beyond the normative self serves one's daily experience of being and having a body. The use of pleasure to combat rationally

embodied pressure points to the nature of possibility inherent to *corpus infinitum*. It is an example of what is possible when someone overcomes the rigid idea of a *homo clausus* self by purposely engaging in a risky act – an act that could surely be read as non heteronormative and thus suspect and threatening according to the triadic intra-action order. This leads onto the second point, of publicness. It is remarkable that Steve engages in this material-discursive act openly, enabling a reordering or condensation of the public-private dynamic, as it is in an act which may seem counterintuitive for someone who experiences stage fright. The logic being if someone experiences the potentially demasculinizing phenomena of stage fright and even worse, being caught by other men while it is happening, the effects on the self can be personally damaging as the TIO works by individuals engaging in hetero masculine material-discourse. Instead, Steve, ignoring (or in direct response to) the social pressure to maintain *homo clausus* masculinity, pleasures himself in order to help him urinate. While he recognises this may lead to an awkward experience if someone sees him rubbing his penis, he does not at all seem concerned about that awkwardness escalating or having damaging effects on him. It is merely the reality of the situation as he is openly breaking the rules of the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order and not allowing fear, anxiety, shame, or embarrassment to curb his embodiment. Thirdly of note is Steve's open expression of this practice to me; this is another intra-active material-discursive expression of *corpus infinitum*, an opening used for



expression instead of ingrained or expected embarrassment. In articulating this body technique with me Steve moves beyond the FASE that may normally constrict his ability to speak about his sensory-embodied experience and, in an act of becoming, recognises his ability to surprise himself. This retro-aware experience of becoming, animates the final section of the chapter where I focus on two individual's experience of making possibilities anew for everyday sensory-embodiment.

### **Possibility**

In the third and final section of this chapter I orchestrate an extended exploration of the potential to shift from *homo clausus* doing to *corpora infintia* becoming. While it is impossible to capture sensory-embodied becoming in words *as it occurs* it is vital to understand (albeit retroactively) where, when, and how those experiences materialize and come to matter, i.e. how they happen and are made 'sense' of. To do so I focus on the sensory-embodied experiences of two individuals in this section. First is a story from Joseph about the mundane turning into different forms of charged intimacy and the second is from Zevi, who engages in a more sustained, fleshed out, and encompassing exploration of the possibilities of becoming in relation to his self-body identity.

Joseph, a 26 year old queer man, shared this story with me about an outdoor concert he attended, on New York City's Governor's Island one summer night. He explains:

we were in the VIP area with its own port-a-potty toilet...And a bunch of us were waiting in line, there were maybe eight or nine people in line at that point and it was very dark outside, but we had all been outside all night so we could all see...everyone in this line was kind of chatting, not necessarily with each other but with the people they were waiting with and there was some acknowledgement that this many people waiting for one toilet to use in the dark was going to take a long time...So, someone, or somehow the conversation started about 'well, why don't the guys just go and pee somewhere else?', because despite this being a big public concert, we were in this sort of secluded area...So, it seemed at first like a joke, like 'haha, wouldn't that be funny?', and then I was just sort of like 'well, that is actually a good idea, why don't we just do that?' And there was some discussion about it...so it wasn't like this instantaneous decision. There was sort of some banter in the line about it, it was kind of a humorous, light conversation and a lot of people were like 'Yeah! That's a good idea' but then like, didn't do it, so then at a certain point, I asked [my female friend her opinion on it and she was like] 'yeah that's a great idea' and I was like 'okay!'...And I thought there would be this like exodus of people because the line was fairly split between men and women...So when I left the line I thought other people would leave and just find their own space to pee in...

So I left the line and this guy kind of left with me, but I don't remember explicitly talking to him about it, I think he was just part of the group chatter...But then as soon as I left the line he very clearly left the line too and walked next to me, and I was like 'Oh! he's walking with me', and then he maybe introduced himself to me and all of a sudden there was this sort of, I kind of realised it was just the two of us that were going, so it kind of took on a different air at that moment, and I was like 'oh this is different!', and then it became clear that he was walking with me...it was this sort of weird instant negotiation or bonding of just like 'oh well you and me are the ones who are going to pee so let's do it!'

So we both walked over to this spot, not far from where the toilet was and there was like a bush and building and a little ditch area, and we

basically stood right next to each other and we were talking, there was a continuous conversation, and I had a moment where I wasn't sure exactly if I needed to pee or if I was going to be able to pee in that situation, so there was a little hesitation, but then we both basically got out our penises and started peeing, and still talking and there was this sort of light, playful, tone...I think once I realised that I was going to be able to pee it was fine. I had a moment where I thought I wasn't going to be able to, and then I was like yeah, I actually do need to pee. And then he told me to make sure I didn't pee in his drink and I said I wouldn't. And then there was clearly a moment where he looked at my penis and I looked at his and there was this thing where it immediately became more overtly sexual whereas it was just implied somewhat before. It was flirtatious and somewhat aggressive or direct, but I wouldn't say it felt like *SEXUAL*. There was this sort of innocent, kind of summer whatever, careless attitude. I don't know how to explain it, it was just like, 'Oh we're outside and we're doing this thing together', and I realised, 'Oh you're flirting with me, that's why you're coming with me'. Then I was like well this is a pretty direct kind of flirting. So when we both finished peeing, we turned to face each other and I think I said 'I feel like I should kiss you now' so I gave him a little kiss, and there was sort of this moment of something, and that was it and we just walked away, and I just felt giddy from the whole thing because it was fun, it was like a surprise!

...It was more of an enjoyable, playful experience, than a functional one. Yes I was peeing, but it was like peeing as a form of flirtation in a way. Ya know, it was something we were doing together. It was more fun, more exciting there was more possibility that something could happen than going alone. It offered some openness; I think if either one of us has pushed a little more, something [sexual] could have happened right then...There was an abruptness to it...it was a different kind of intimacy. But it also felt very common -- it was just like this acknowledgement -- 'well as long as we're doing this we might as well do it together and check each other out', there was an inherent opportunity to that moment, which is not necessarily as foregrounded in other peeing situations. Where it is just very self-focused and just get in and get out. It didn't feel particularly rushed. I think once we both felt comfortable there and peeing, it was like okay, this is fun.

Put most simply, Joseph's experience is one of possibility. In literately leaving the straight, narrow path of the *homo clausus* intra-action order (upon leaving

the line for the port-a-potty, after affirmation from a woman) and creating a new, unordered space for the mundane (in the unusual open air, outdoor setting), Joseph vitally took advantage of a fissure of daily habit and disembodiment. In doing so he opened his experience to any number of possibilities and, at least momentarily, shed his ingrained bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment allowing an opening for new ways of being in and of the world. This enabled him to explore a new kind of intimacy which was not necessarily sexual but, rather immanent and becoming in the moment. This is decidedly different from gay cursing or cottaging insofar as there was no intention or expectation on Joseph's behalf, the encounter was not exclusively or conventionally sexual, but rather flirtatious, surprising, with an intimate playful friendliness. Joseph's exciting and endearing story is one of potential. He and the man who joined him in urinating that summer night, purposely veered away from the *homo clausus* intra-action order and explored a new, innocent sensory-embodiment within the mundane. This powerful, unnecessary indulgence of possibility transforms daily habit into open exploration; it drains the mundane of seriousness, of rigidity and infuses it with playful possibility and a nascent power of becoming beyond the self. No longer a singular, strict act, urinating in this story highlights how bodies can (be)come together, allowing for a new sensory-embodiment

Zevi, a 23 year old queer man, whose story I'll flesh out in detail below, cruises public toilets for sexual and intimate encounters. While generally the

stories and practices, regarding sex in public toilets, I gleaned through my research do very little to challenge the *homo clausus* triadic intra-action order, Zevi's are different in one fundamental way: Even while he utilises the rules of the triadic intra-action order to enable his explorations and adventures, he uses them to get before and beyond the *homo clausus* embodiment that the rules are seeking to maintain. His practice, while focused on extracting new possibilities out of his sense of self, is aware and considered. He explains:

What I have been doing, it is site specific, [I've] been going to Grand Central Station...because it is totally open to the public, and it is this huge place where anybody from anywhere can just walk in and be there. I'm really fascinated with A, the different, people from all these different places meeting in this one place that is also very private, and [B] it has this, I don't know if it is notorious, but it has this history of being this really cruise heavy restroom, this legacy. I was very fascinated with that and seeing if it was still going on and if it was, what did it look like, how has it changed, ya know everything about it. So I go and hang out for about, like a couple hours at a time, or until I got involved with someone...but yeah usually I just observe.

As a young gay man, new to New York City, Zevi was interested in connecting with a history, a material 'legacy' from those queers who came before him. He is interested in the context and chooses to place himself in it to explore parts of himself. He says a bit more about this:

When I moved to New York, [cruising] Grand Central was like something I read about and also heard about from family members. I remember once an Uncle of mine, we were at a big family gathering, like Thanksgiving, and something was mentioned, like how he had taken the train into Grand Central and had used the restrooms and was like 'oh you gotta be careful, you never know who or what is going to be standing next you', something along the lines of like it being a highly sexualized place, and I was like 'Ohhh...'. So it was in my

consciousness and was something I was always curious about but never went to for a while, until like a year ago. And then I was like I'm just going to go and do it and see!

While cruising for gay sex in public toilets has been apart of cultural lore in the West for decades, for the younger generation of gays and queers, those of and around Zevi's age, is something that many are surprised to hear still occurs, especially as a practice of a younger generation who have gay and non-gay bars, clubs, and pubs available to them. This is a sentiment I both captured in my interviews (some young men found even the suggestion of this to be appalling) and was strongly expressed by Zevi regarding his own social group and the social scenes he is a part of. Zevi's unsureness and curiosity about it are a case in point, but he also had this to say:

there are a lot of people who feel the same as me or think it is interesting. And then there are some people who think it's odd, or are a little thrown off by it. Most of my friends think it is really amusing and awesome that I'm doing this. Some friends of mine didn't even know it existed anymore. They were totally thinking it was like a way of the past, and doesn't happen anymore. It is so interesting to me that so many gay or queer men don't think it happens anymore...yeah, another piece that was interesting to me is that not a lot of my queer friends were talking about it and if they were, it was talked about as something that was a thing of the past that isn't done anymore, or that it's taboo, but really, it is really really active.

This is emblematic of the ways that material-discourse around gay rights and access to space circulates and how sex and sexuality, continues to be socially managed to remain in the private sphere. As Zevi explains:

I don't know where the disconnect was. Like this whole theory of queer or gay men having sex in public toilets because everywhere else was so policed and now this idea that queer or gay people aren't as

policed, and we have more options and don't need those spaces anymore -- which is not true. It is more exciting to be in these spaces.

For many young gay and queer people, including some I interviewed, the idea of having sex in public toilets is not only disgusting, but totally 'unnecessary'. The logic being that since gay people no longer '*have to resort*' to these marginal spaces to satisfy their sexual needs, because they have gained at least enough social 'respect' to have sex like *homo clausus* heterosexuals in their own private homes, they no longer need public toilets for such transgressive acts. Even as gay and queer sex continues to happen in these spaces, the material-discourse surrounding it has changed enough to make younger generations (in these dense urban centres) feel unsure and curious at best and disgusted at worst, by the continued existence of such practices. The *homo clausus* ways of being have been adapted through material-discursive practices to keep these sexually charged spaces increasingly non-sexualized in mundane daily use. This way of being precludes a series of possibilities which was once open to gays and queers, albeit due to marginality. Sex and sexuality as different ways of being in and of the world has lost a potentially powerful possibility in this normalising process.

Still, these acts, and Zevi's exploration of them, tap into the possibilities of embodiment which is not hemmed in by *homo clausus* ways of being, even if only for the brief time of the encounter. As Zevi explains:



I don't know what the people who are cruising in these spaces, what their sexuality is. It isn't important how people identify, it is just what is possible in that moment. Married men have come onto me there, usually gazing down at the floor and there will be two hand dryers next to each other and we'll be drying our hands and they'll like really secretly brush my hand with theirs in this way that is obviously intentional and then we'll exchange eye contact. Yeah it is really exciting. For me the married thing makes it even more so, it adds a whole other layer of yeah, deviousness, for sure. The whole thing for me is really subversive. A lot of what I'm most attracted to about it are the possibilities...An elderly Hasidic man also hit on me in Grand Central station and that didn't go anywhere but that was very interesting for me. I am a practicing Jew, but definitely not orthodox but I mean, it was really interesting to me because I'm, I don't know, I'm sure like...if we were in his community, would he be doing that? And my response would be 'no, I'm pretty sure no, he wouldn't be doing that'. But I guess secular, out of the community space, his real desires, or like him tapping into his real desires, it is really interesting.

Even while some possibilities are only made possible because of existing social patterns which restrict and constrict how people can be, the crucial point is that people are *actively choosing* to allow themselves to be differently embodied beyond those self-socially imposed limitations. The power of possibility lies in the confrontation of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment and going beyond that threshold of deterritorialization once again into comfort and grounded sensory-embodiment.

To further explore those possibilities of deterritorialization and becoming-other, Zevi has gathered his experiences and insights of cruising public toilets, of interacting playfully and pleurably, into a piece of performance that I saw performed during the course of my research, nearly a year after our initial interview. While largely movement and dance based,

there are some monologues<sup>68</sup> in the show. Two portions of greatest interest to this project flesh out Zevi's experiences of desire, exploration, and legacy. This section of text closes the scene that sets up the context for the show and his (re)telling of why and how he came to cruise public toilets. His recitation explains:

And I wanted it, I wanted it all. I wanted the risks and I wanted the legacy, to see what changed. I wanted to see who's there and to see who isn't. I wanted to find the other world, I wanted to watch. I wanted new ways to experience my body, I wanted to know what my body could do. I wanted to just walk in and be there and not know where I was going but know that where I land is where I need to be. I wanted the fun. I wanted the journey, the chase, the dance. I wanted the secrets and I wanted the truth. I wanted it all. Tell me what you want, what you really really want...

A friend once said to me, '[...] you really are an old soul, except if you had been born two decades earlier, you'd probably be dead.'

...I go to these places, these bathrooms, to feel alive. When the married father was on his knees looking up into my eyes, when my grand father died with me by his bedside, when my stomach dropped upon finding out my health had been put at risk by a lie... this is being alive.

Zevi's is a story of living beyond the *homo clausus* self. He projects himself into the past and the future through intensely charged and emotional threshold experiences of becoming. In the monologue that closes the show, he is an archaeologist on a mission. He says:

I am an archaeologist and I am on a mission.

A mission of exploration, walking narrow paths of the few and the foolish, amidst landslides and fault lines. The ground could give way, the earth could open up, the seas could part: I could reach the core.

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<sup>68</sup> The monologues in appear in their entirety in the appendixes under Tearoom Sympathy.

Lookin' for tracks, turning over leaves, evidence of what might have been, of who might have lived. Lookin' for bones, a skeleton, tombstones, a butterfly trapped in time... They say there's a secret inside of every stone, and that's why stones combust. And me? I'm just lookin' for those secrets...

Through his experiences of cruising public toilets, and the writing, staging, and performance of his show Zevi becomes sensorially-embodied in new ways beyond a stable sense of self. His experiences are deterritorializing and connective, aware and purposeful. As *corpus infinitum* he consciously releases his being in and of the world from *homo clausus* into *becoming beyond* rigid individual habit. In performing his show, he also affords others, that is the audience, experiencing of becoming, of going on a journey with him through differential experiences.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have aimed to expose how practices of play, pleasure, and possibility are inherently powerful in and contribute to the deterritorialization of *homo clausus* sensory-embodiment. These practices are excessive, unnecessary, and often considered childish, in relation to dominant norms, and they powerfully enable to people to feel surprised, excited, and different in their bodies. Fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment, in these examples, has been ignored, pushed, and productively utilised for the opposite of what it is learned for: the maintenance of the stable, controlled,

bodily boundaries of *homo clausus*. Here instead, bodies are becoming beyond the individual self into new connections and intra-actions with and through other bodies. Sensory-embodiment, not rational habit, is the focus in these experiences and the way through threshold becomings into new ways of being. Practices of play, pleasure, and possibility seize the fissures inherent to *homo clausus* (in)stability and twist and push them in and through to openings that can be explored rather than anxiously closed. This is the potential of a radical politic of *corpus infinitum*.

## **Tiny Blast**

Peter Gizzi

Just a small song with a dash of spite.  
A tiny thistle below the belt.

That's it, you know,  
the twinge inside this fabulous cerulean.

Don't back away. Turtle into it  
with your little force.

The steady one wins this enterprise.  
This bingo shouter. This bridge of sighs.

And now that you're here be brave.  
Be everyway alive.

# Conclusions: *toward a new ethics of being*

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## Introduction

For the purposes of her argument in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the politics of bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz (1995) sketches two broad categories of feminist theory: first are those that take 'women' and 'the feminine' as their focus and second are those that take patriarchal systems as their point of departure. She explains, the first type

aims to include women in those domains where they have been hitherto absent. It aspires to an ideal of a knowledge adequate to the analysis or representation of women and their interests, and exhibits varying degrees of critical distance from the male mainstream. What distinguishes this group from the second are its interests in focusing on women or femininity as *knowable objects* (Grosz 1995, p. 39).

While this first type of feminist theory, which accepts the 'basic precepts and indeed implicit values governing mainstream knowledges and disciplines (or interdisciplines)' (Grosz 1995, p. 39) has been extremely fruitful, it remains inculcated in patriarchal systems and ways of life and are thus subject to the same 'crisis of reason' that mainstream knowledges<sup>69</sup> are. That is to say,

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<sup>69</sup> I find it quite amusing that the dictionary my Microsoft Word program uses does not recognise knowledge as a world that can be plural. Instead it seems, with its squiggly red line, it is telling me, 'no there is only one knowledge'. Here in our mainstream language knowledge is seemingly 'neutral' and 'universal', not multiple and contingent.

Where feminist theory questions mainstream knowledges either to augment them; to replace them with competing feminist knowledges; or to dispense with them altogether, reverting to an anti-theoretical, anti-intellectual reliance on 'experience' or 'intuition,' it remains unresolved relative to this crisis. In other words, where feminism remains committed to the project of knowing women, of making women objects of knowledge, without in turn *submitting the position of knower or subject of knowledge to a reorganization*, it remains as problematic as the knowledges it attempts to supplement or replace (Grosz 1995, p. 40).

The second type of feminist theory then aims to recognise patriarchal investments and move toward understanding and challenging them *as the basis of knowledge*. This 'second type of feminist theory, [is] concerned with articulating knowledges that take woman as the *subject* of knowledges' (Grosz 1995, p. 39). Rather than merely attempting a critique of normativity,

these feminists have had to develop altogether different forms and methods of knowing and positions of epistemological enunciation, which are marked as *sexually* different from male paradigms (Grosz 1995, p. 41).

It is this second type of feminist theory that I have relied most heavily on throughout this thesis and the area of enquiry I have attempted to further with this project. Through my study of mundane daily practices and embodied identity, I have worked to bring together ideas and observations from the work of Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Luce Irigaray, Karen Barad, Gilles Deleuze, and others who take patriarchal knowledge as their starting point and object of analysis. Taken together these knowledges contribute to a feminist philosophy of the real; an approach to experience, knowledge, and understanding that takes matter seriously.



## Chaos, Territory, Possibility

If patriarchal reason seeks to make sense of the world and ways of life through categorical universal truths, which bound chaos through rigid systems of representation in order to *create* patterns of sameness, a feminist philosophy of real seeks to get closer to the chaos (i.e. the material, the sensory, the becoming) by learning to recognise patterns of difference. Put simply, mainstream patriarchal knowledges work reflectively, embracing sameness and demonising or systematically subduing difference, while the feminist real works diffractively, becoming aware of several levels of being and acknowledging, giving value to differential ways of living.

When considering those concepts of identity explored throughout this study, reflective understandings of the self are vital for the ability of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment (FASE) to work. This is because reflection for both *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* ways of being are processes of territorialization, albeit in conceptually opposite directions. Where *homo clausus* begins without territory and must perpetually produce the borders of one's body, one's territory, from the self within; *homines aperti* instead create their self from a constantly deterritorialized or fragmented position, creating territory through visual affirmation with other fragmented subject-objects in an ongoing, anxious attempt to 'look the part'. In both cases one is either too territorialized or too fragmented to readily experience the effects of chaos, of becoming-other, and are left stagnant, fragile, and disembodied. (I will return

to FASE below.) When one who understands their experience according to these identity politics does go through a threshold experience with conscious awareness – that is when the experience of difference is recognised and integrated into one’s identity – it can be a period of crisis or epiphany, as well as a major life event. It can be a substantial crack in the ‘structure’ of one’s being.

Alternatively, when being and ways of life are understood as less rigid and more pliable than those organised through *homo clausus* and *homines aperti*, such threshold experiences are not only less devastating, they are more common and thus highly generative of possibility. Diffraction for *corpus infinitum* seeks to expose how boundaries do not sit still (Barad 2007) and thus are open to becoming-other. Rather than creating territory onto or out of the body, *corpus infinitum* takes the materiality of the body as ontologically constant and not in need of further territorialization. Thus *corpus infinitum* recognises the differences inherent to bodies and bodily being and is open to experiences of becoming, of sensation, of change, of difference, because it is an embodiment which trusts and values the materiality of the self in and of itself. Rather than fearful, anxious, shameful, or embarrassed by materiality, *corpus infinitum* allows for the possibilities of bodily comfort, trust, creativity, and curiosity, not as something to obtain but as ontologically primary and personally vital. For *corpus infinitum* materiality is cohesive in its pliability and thus energy does not need to be spent on the process of territorialization.

When we begin to be less restricted by heteronormative sex-gender-sexuality, we can begin to trust the materiality of the body as the ontological given and not as the passive thing which we must actively shape into an image of the self.

Throughout this thesis then, I have attempted to show that *corpus infinitum* is a possibility for being and that that possibility (for becoming-other) is available to us in our lives already, even in our most mundane daily activities.

Before moving on to the implications of this possibility, I will briefly summarize the thesis both as the parts of a whole and as a whole, which – to return to an idea introduced in the theoretical chapters – can be understood as different from, more than, merely the sum of parts.

### **Parts of The Whole**

In chapters two, three, and four I introduced the specific theoretical approaches to identity that this thesis is entangled with. They were *homo clausus*, *homines aperti*, and *corpus infinitum*. While *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* are dialectically opposed, my approach, *corpus infinitum*, is non-dialectical. The *homo clausus/homines aperti* (both terms from Norbert Elias) dialectic can most simply be described as a closed/open relationship. I will summarise these in turn. The *homo clausus* is understood as the monadic, closed individual – seemingly neutral, but as we know from those feminists

described above, there are no *neutral* knowledges. The ontological basis for the ideal *homo clausus* is male and females are understood as inherently lesser and opposite to them. The *homo clausus* is highly untrusting of materiality and thus must continually territorialize itself through material processes to conceptually bound itself in order to give off an impression of stability and sameness. This process is understood to be directed from the 'self within the case' – the 'inner truth' of the bodily object. The *homo clausus* is understood as primarily a solitary being.

Alternatively, the *homines aperti* approach recognises the interrelated nature of individuals, that people are *social* beings. *Homines aperti* persons are also understood to come from a 'neutral' ontology – i.e. male – and the self is consolidated through social processes. Rather than stable, this postmodern subject is understood as fragmented, using bits and pieces of those subject-objects outside of it to create the self. That is, the process of selfhood is an ongoing process of re-territorializing the fragmented body-self. In some approaches to this model of the self, the body itself is thought to be materialised in this process. While this represents a return to materiality, it remains highly problematic because it is unclear how the process of territorialization (via discourse) creates the body. Thus the body remains 'neutral' (i.e. male) and unable to actually engage with the discursive process of territorialization. *Homines aperti* are anxiously caught in an ongoing cycle of

de-territorialization; never quiet stable enough to recognise the opportunities for becoming-other.

Lastly, I introduce *corpus infinitum* as a way into understanding how *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* work according to heteronormative structures of disembodied identity. Where both *homo* and *homines* mean man or men – that is *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* literally and conceptually begin with identity – *corpus infinitum* begins with the body. In chapter four I posit an approach to identity that implies a fundamentally differential, non-patriarchal approach to materiality; that it is as *living*. Rather than something to be managed and controlled *in order to* enable thinking, knowing, and understanding, this approach posits that thinking, knowing, and understanding *are material processes* and that materiality is *always already active*. Thus rather than a return to essentialism which values categorical sameness, this approach to materiality espouses differential becomings. That is materiality *as the source* of experience. You'll notice sameness and experience here are non-dialectical; they are markedly different approaches to the body.

After these three chapters, in chapter five I give a brief history of public toilet spaces. I trace how they emerged and how the corresponding bodily dispositions feed directly into *homo clausus* and *homines aperti* ways of being we continually replicate today. From this chapter we learn that both the toilet

spaces themselves and our ways of feeling about our bodies while using them, has changed very little since their development.

Chapter six is the first empirical chapter where I introduce my study more specifically and begin to disentangle my data. This chapter unfolds according to the rules of the *homo clausus* Triadic Intra-action Order (TIO) which I use to elucidate my data. In this chapter, I show how the TIO creates gendered experiences in equal yet opposite ways. That is to say the rules of the TIO that govern people's behaviour are the same for both sex-genders, but are carried out in slightly different, seemingly 'opposite' ways. This is a point I return to below. This chapter illustrates how the body is construed as abject and threatening to *homo clausus* identity and thus something to rigidly manage at all times. This chapter can be understood as the most heteronormative example of public toilet use in the thesis.

Chapter seven is concerned with public toilet use that acknowledges the interconnected nature of social life which can be described as *homines aperti*. This chapter looks at practices of care that undermine or blatantly reject one or more rules of the heteronormative triadic intra-action order, but also how fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment, are experienced individually, yet for social purposes. Vitality though, in these examples of interdependency, *homines aperti* expose fissures in the identity structure of the *homo clausus*.

In the final empirical chapter, chapter eight, I explore the potentialities for being bodily when differential being is recognised and valued. This

chapter takes practices of play, pleasure, and possibility in relation to bodily being in public toilets. These practices are direct challenges not only to the rules of the TIO, but also to the emotions we are inculcated into experiencing that help maintain the TIO and *homo clausus* ways of being generally. These differential ways of life are described as *corpus infinitum* and point to the thresholds available to us when we stop allowing the de/re/territorializing nature of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment to control our ways of being. Ultimately, this chapter points to the opportunities for becoming-other that are available to us in daily life but are overlooked or ignored because of our social systems of habit which coalesce into structures of being. This chapter champions the materiality of the body as the source of all experience, knowledge, and understanding.

### **The Whole**

As a whole, this thesis is highly structured, generally following a rule of three – three primary frameworks (theory), which underpin three primary examples (chapters), which unfold according to three guiding explorations (sections within chapters). To push this observation a bit further, the overarching case study (public toilets) is a singular space in two seemingly opposite manifestations. When considered from this vantage point the thesis is *reflective* of those representational knowledges I critique (e.g. sex/gender as singular and opposite but not ontologically different, judgemental rationality



and categorization, linear heteronormative progression). Despite this, I have worked in three important ways to entangle this territory with patterns of diffraction. As already explained, patterns of difference are not always easily recognised but rather we have to *learn* to apprehend them. Thus I highlight each diffraction pattern entangled in this thesis in turn.

The first is with the concept of *corpus infinitum* itself. That is by posing a materially-directed way to approaching identity and everyday life that takes the active body, not the responsive social *self* as primary. This concept aims to destabilize patriarchal subject positions by exposing their inherently open, pliable nature. Rather than a replacement for *homo clausus* or *homines aperti*, *corpus infinitum* points to the possibility of new a subject position, which is not dialectical or conceptual, but rather experiential and material. *Corpus infinitum* is an intervening in and not an extension of the heteronormative.

The second, is the almost counter intuitive undercurrent that the empirical chapters follow. In chapter six I introduce the TIO as the heteronormative system which people are compelled to follow while using public toilets. This system is normative, orderly, and allows for predictable use of public toilets. It also relies on socially instilled bodily fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment to work. It reinforces the feeling that we should not trust or be comfortable in our bodies, each time we engage with it. Thus it is the condition and the cause of the two chapters following chapter six. Yet those chapters, chapters seven and eight, work by explicitly undermining the

power of both the TIO (the rational actions) and the emotions it imposes. This is a process of deterritorialization, of an opening to chaos from within a structure by showing how that 'structure' is easily weakened through differential ways of being.

The third, is the use of poetry through the thesis. This is perhaps the most obvious intervention of difference but an important one. It is there to help expose how knowledge practices *are* material practices, that reading *is an embodied activity*. I push this further in the epilogue, chapter ten, which directly follows this chapter. There, the text is designed to draw out the material entanglements of knowledge and identity and highlight the experiences of being and becoming-other.

These differences in this thesis should not be overlooked as mere anomaly, transgression, or unconsidered variance – that is merely the opposite of a traditional self-same approach. Rather these are interventions into ways of being and knowing in their materiality. If I had more time and space it is possible that I could compile something which is more much more diffractive, like Karen Barad's brilliant book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, where she takes a thoroughly diffractive approach to the text itself. Using that text as a point of departure, in the next and final section, I will outline the implications of this study and a few prospects for future entanglements.

## Entangled Futures

*Corpus infinitum*, rather than a new identity structure, points to ways of becoming more thoroughly embodied that are already available to us in daily life across all identities. By taking the materiality of the body as ontologically primary – the location of all social, mental, emotional, philosophical processes – our ways of life can become more comfortable, creative, curious, and trusting as well as less riddled with destabilizing fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment. I view this kernel of difference – this one case study – as part of a much larger and more densely entangled possibility. While I cannot elaborate at length on this possibility here, I will at least sketch an outline of what I have not been able to include in this text and suggest a few additionally pertinent outlets for consideration.

I consider *Corpus infinitum* to be a particular narrowing of Karen Barad's (2008, 2007, 2003) more general approach to the human that she terms agential realism. This approach understands personal agency not as something that a subject *has* or holds within their body, but rather part of a relational process that allows opportunities to emerge. This is because the body is neither passive nor fixed, not waiting for culture to sculpt it nor a thing of nature prior to culture. Instead, 'Matter is always already an ongoing historicity' (Barad 2007, p. 151). When matter is understood in this way it means we must also adjust our ways of understanding and knowledge

making to account for this ongoing historicity. For example, when developing theory (Barad's example is quantum theory)

rather than giving humans privileged status in the theory, agential realism calls on the theory to account for the intra-active emergence of 'humans' as a specifically differentiated phenomena, that is, as specific configurations of the differential becoming of the world, among other physical systems. Intra-actions are not the result of human interventions; rather, 'humans' themselves emerge through specific intra-actions.

This is basically what I have attempted to show throughout this study with my specific focus on the sex-gendered body and identity. That is, by entangling theory and practice and by practicing the theories of those scholars I admire and draw from. This approach to understanding matter and the 'human' can be described as posthumanist. Posthumanism recognises that 'we humans' are not outside of the world, we are not a supplement to nature but a natural phenomenon, just like other natural phenomena. When we begin to reconceptualise the human we can begin to reconceptualise human ways of life. One way of life worth rethinking is patriarchal capitalism.

Last February (2012) I heard Elizabeth Grosz speak<sup>70</sup> (at the American Association of Geographers annual meeting in New York City) on and around her text *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the framing of the earth*. Something she spoke about remains with me, which is how our emotions and sensations are pre-digested for us by capitalism. This is an idea present in my

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<sup>70</sup> An audio recording of the talk and discussions is available here: <http://societyandspace.com/2012/04/19/elizabeth-grosz-discussion-at-the-aag-audio-recording/>

study both specifically and generally. Specifically, with the four conditioned emotional responses (FASE) I focus on and generally, by connecting those emotions to our social ways of being, that is, how they're intra-acted. As individualism is necessary for capitalism and *homo clausus* ways of being, which are still the ontological foundation to our identity construction, are specifically individual, I view this project as a way to critique and problematise capitalist ways of being from an embodied perspective. That is to say, in many ways I believe *homo clausus* is the first inculcation not only into capitalist subjectivity (i.e. individualism) but also capitalist labour. That is to say *homo clausus* is our first lesson in capitalist labour insofar as it is the condition of individual subjectivity.

The French poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), wrote in the 'Mauvais Sang' section of his prose work *Une Saison en enfer* (*A Season in hell*) 'I have a horror of all trades' (Ross 2008, p. 50). Kristin Ross, in her excellent book *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*, relates this anti-work expression directly to subject formation. She explains that 'The regime of work, then, is inseparable from the development of form, to which corresponds the formation of the subject' (Ross 2008, p. 50). Much of Rimbaud's work is concerned with this anti-labour theme<sup>71</sup> and particularly the overtaking and dividing of individuals through the morality of work. One

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<sup>71</sup> It is thought that this is the reason that he stopped writing altogether at the young age of just 20 years old

of his famous quotes also from *Une Saison en enfer*, apropos to this discussion is 'I'm intact, and I don't care' (Ross 2008, p. 50). This is related to the idea expressed in chapter two with sensorial individuation. That is to say when we de-territorialize our body according to capitalist ways of being we necessarily divide ourselves and are no longer 'intact' as whole, cohesive beings, but are instead separated into parts with particular functions. Ross explains this through Rimbaud's work. She says to have a trade

is to lose one's hand as an integral part of one's body: to experience it as extraneous, detachable, in service to the rest of the body as synecdoche for the social body, executing the wishes of another (Ross 2008, p. 51).

In the contemporary West, a life of labour is expected for most (who are not the super wealthy) and it is my suggestion that it is through our identity construction, that persistent individualism, – taken as a given, but which I have worked to show is an ongoing process of naturalisation – that we are primed for participation in and support of patriarchal capitalism. Thus if we want to critique patriarchy and capitalism in fertile ways, we must begin by understanding identity and in order to understand identity we must be able to approach matter onto-epistemologically as active and relational. There are a few fruitful ways into such a critique and into the matter of everyday life.

This approach to matter can be applied diffractively along with other methods and knowledges in order to draw out the emergent patterns of differential becoming coalescing in daily life. There are three areas of

exploration that could benefit most readily from such an approach. Those are: science, technology, and related processes of globalisation; body and place in the postcolonial experience; and the development and application of social work (including care) practices and the drafting of social policy. These venues could mean a greater entanglement of disciplines where the humanities and sciences could more readily speak to and influence one another. This is in line with Grosz's work where she elucidates how art and science share the same (vibratory) force of chaos yet approach it differently (Grosz 2008). Where science creates rational, predictable patterns, art creates sensation. Once we understand and respect this fundamental, ontological point of departure it may be easier to entwine those disciplines that have been traditionally considered disparate. Thus it may become possible to cultivate a broad and extensive feminist philosophy of the real.



TEN\*

## Epilogue: *and in a sense that is my journey to shit too*

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I'm a gay man, I'm male; I know this now. I can say am I this or that but it is different for me everyday. My body is different everyday and I'm beginning to rethink things a little, I'm beginning to question some of those labels. I definitely recognize that there should be more fluidity in how we define and experience identity, but I am unsure of how to participate in an active redefinition, redefining, other than just living the way I want to live and trying not to be constrained. So, in the spectrum of masculine to feminine, I'm more

comfortable with  
straight men  
who are  
comfortable  
straight men,  
who are non-  
aggressive, who  
are not clinging  
to an identity  
based on  
hypermasculine,  
heteronormative  
sexuality, they  
are really my  
favourite people  
in the world. I  
love male  
energy and I  
love when it is  
friendly and  
open and hostile  
male energy is  
still the scariest  
thing to me.  
Because I had  
so many  
incidents as a kid and I was such a  
feminized child and I was so anti-male  
growing up and so expectant of abuse

This clock entitled, simply, my life, speaks at irregular intervals  
so loud there isn't room for a boy.

Few celebrate the interval inside the tock

others merely repeat fog. The unhappening of day. The sudden  
storm over the house, the sudden

houses revealed in cloud cover. Snow upon the land.

This land untitled so much for soldiers, untitled so far from swans.

Sing. Flag. Boy. Idyll. Gong.

Fate disrupts the open field into housing starts, into futurities  
neglected corners and mites.

This again, the emptied anthem, dusty antlers, pilsner flattened.

To do the time, undo the Times for whom?

Bells swinging. The head rings no. No.

The space inside is vast.

that sometimes came and sometimes didn't, that it is still something I feel very tenuous about. So, I guess my desire for fluidity is a journey toward acceptance of myself and others and that is absolutely centred around my body. For instance, now, I have a very open relationship to poop and that is a purposeful thing for me. I remember when I started acting classes and they said we are going to think about our bodies and look at and feel them and we are not going to judge, we are just going to notice. *That was revolutionary for me!* Now, in retrospect, I can think about this, about my life in terms of space. I can locate how I felt and try to understand how I became who I am through specific places and how that continues to shape me everyday. I have a lot of history of safe spaces versus not safe spaces and the space of the toilet fluctuates between the two. Now, I have a very open relationship to poop and that is a purposeful thing for me. And what I'm understanding now is that my relationship to public toilets, and toileting in general, is part of a much larger story of me becoming me. When I was younger I definitely wanted to be a woman and definitely fantasized about that. I didn't think it was practical, it was more what I saw myself as already, what I wanted to be; when I grew up I wanted to be this beautiful woman and I'm pretty sure I knew that wasn't really going to happen, but it didn't stop me from living my life in such a way that even as a child people recognized that desire. Twice when I was on the playground at school, I remember kids who were not in my normal social circle, who were not at my school, kids at a strange playground, coming up to me and asking me if I was a boy or a girl, because I was really feminine; I had really taken that on. I remember, my friend Jason, he was my best friend growing up and we were in this performing group together, and it is so funny because now that I'm finally thinking about bathrooms as these spaces, these safe spaces again it

makes me think of him. See, Jason and I would hang out in the bathroom, it was where we would kind of pow-wow, and of course later we would both be gay man, so the bathroom was where we bonded. I remember being at this festival, our group was performing there, and we were hanging out in the bathroom, the two of us sitting there judging people and their cleanliness habits through this hand washing hierarchy: from soap and hot water -- that was the best, and then with cold water and soap, and then warm water no soap, then cold water, and lastly no hand washing, which we thought was gross...so washing your hands was important and if you didn't it was naughty, naughty, naughty...

And a lot of what grossed me out and fuelled this desire to be a woman, was that I was really disgusted by these things that represented masculinity, in the way that I thought it was gross that guys burped and how they peed in the toilet. I didn't want to get hair on my legs, I thought that was horrifying. The gender issues and identification issues were wound-up with bathroom spaces, they were certainly connected to bathroom spaces, they were *automatized* into bathroom spaces. So men's public toilets were already these spaces imbued with disgust for me as a kid but they were also important spaces where my friend and I could distance ourselves from that by watching and judging other people, by holding them to our standards of cleanliness, and that helped me feel okay about not being a girl. When I was younger I had encopresis which is a term I just learned a couple months ago and I'm not sure at what age it started -- I'm trying to remember it for myself at this point as well for research material for a show I'm writing about my life and poop and just as unearthing, as my own 'who the fuck are you?' process of life. It is hard for me to track the history because I remember blips, moments, so I'm forced to fill in the rest or continue to mine for data somehow. My parents don't seem to remember *ANY* of this. I think they blocked it out, but they also had blinders on about me being queer for a long time -- I had to make it explicit, it had to be

To feel it. A draft  
from a room opening  
next to the head.  
A prism lit momentarily  
and by its glow  
I know me. It  
plays through me. It  
at the back of me.  
Plato wasn't wrong  
shadowing me.

made explicit -- ironically because they found pornography on my computer and it was like the tables have turned -- *wow, wow* -- I just made a fascinating link -- what is really interesting about that story (which is separate from this) is that, I was really into the pornography and I was hiding it and they would find it and other things that would happen. But it wasn't until it was explicitly gay and couldn't belong to anyone else that they put a stop to it and made it a big deal. There were other times when I was growing up that seemed like they were like, 'we saw this thing, we know that it is there', but they wouldn't punish me until it was definitely gay and so there was this whole guilt cycle about them finding something but not punishing me for it. So, encopresis was something that I dealt with through high school. Like I have this one incident that was the pinnacle that happened when I was in Spain the summer after my freshman year of high school. Where I didn't go, I didn't poop, for two weeks. It was to the point where I couldn't eat anymore, I couldn't take anything in, I was just full. I remember my host mother would make these omelettes and things for dinner and I would have to wait for her to leave the room and I would put it in a bag, because I just couldn't do it, I couldn't eat and it was so shameful. But the process is very much about control and for me again, there is this whole experience of safe spaces and not safe spaces, which for lack of, well, what my understanding of encopresis is about a fear of the feeling, the sensation of going poop, which may have factored in but that doesn't seem to have been the main thing for me, it was more fear of the toilet itself as dirty and the flushing and the letting go and what I had inside me as dirty, and these feelings connected to my masculinity and my sexuality too. What I seem to remember, those markers that stand out to me, the only way that I am able to trace this history is through shame and the times when I clogged the toilet and was made

to feel really badly about that. It was gross, it was an inconvenience and as a kid I couldn't deal with it, I couldn't fix it so of course it was outsourced to my father who was not a gentle -- I suppose if we want to make the link, I'll do the work for you of analysing me, which isn't your job, it is for my analyst! -- if we want to make the link between my gender and those issues and the toilet, he also was the main person who gave me negative feedback about homosexual desires and throughout my childhood, I definitely preferred my mother, I was a mama's boy and felt alienation from my father that I definitely felt as I grew older. I didn't let my Dad teach me how to shave because I didn't want to have to start shaving; I was horrified that it was going to happen at all. So, that shame about my body, my desires, my needs was very strongly felt and I didn't go in Spain because I didn't want to clog the toilet I guess or because it was a strange environment, I don't know exactly, but I'm sure fear and shame were a part of it. So, what would happen and kind of the cycle for me was definitely about safe space. I learned at some point that when I had to go, I had to go but there was also pleasure in the controlling of not going, *wow*, and in controlling it and in the actual feeling of it. I think it was both physically pleasurable and there was pleasure, satisfaction in the control itself and I think I also knew that it probably wasn't good. That I was doing something that was not right, well, that isn't the word I want to use...that it was unhealthy. Like unhealthy in a you're

This house is older than the lilac trusses glistening  
in winter ice,  
older than the pack of Winstons on the wire chair,  
older than the chair as well as this glass of water  
holding water. Is it older?  
The house lurks under the sky, which has stood over it.  
A time when this patch was a field, deer maybe shat in it,  
grazed a few leaves from a sprig, now fallen.  
The house is covered in fresh snowfall, lovely  
in reflected mercury light,  
its weary glow damaging to the cardinal flirting  
between branches  
of a stalled ornamental maple. Where is my head  
in all this data? All this  
indexical nomenclature. It's not reassuring to know  
the names tonight, lousy and grigri and non.  
Just words to fill space older than a house, a bird,  
this glass and my hand.

different way, like you're doing something other people don't do, and unhealthy in a this is bad for your body way. This is all still fresh for me...So I wouldn't shit at school and there was a hierarchy in my own house as to where I would go, ya know, I don't know, I must've gone back and forth on that. I remember another time when Jason came over to our house and he had the same thing, no, not the same thing but a nervousness about public spaces, I don't know if he withheld like me, but that he wanted to clean the toilet before he sat down to go in our house. Which I was kind of like, 'but it is my house Jason it's clean!' A little upset by that. And I remember going at his house once and my grandparent's houses were okay, well, my maternal grandparent's house was okay. But I wouldn't go anywhere else at all. The thing with my grandparents was that I felt very close to them, especially my maternal grandmother, who I suppose was probably the most positive influence on my homosexual tendencies, she is the person who pulled my mother aside on her deathbed and said your son is gay, you need to know -- aw, aw, grandma -- so I would go in their bathroom. They had this bathroom which had mirrors, a shower with a sliding door which is frosted, the toilet in the corner and the sink with sorts of perfumery things on there -- this was the show I was writing before I decided to do the poop show. A couple years ago I was writing a show about my childhood desires to be a woman and I saw my first pornographic films when I was 7 or 8 which kind of factored into my modelling of sexual behaviours -- I mean I am like a big ball of complicated but exciting issues for people like you and for people like me too -- I'm fascinated by it, like how the fuck did I come out like this? So, I remember that that was the place where I would empty myself and the mirror maybe, but I would stick my fingers in my butt and get poop out and look at it and see how it worked and sitting there



straining for something to come out because otherwise I would be holding. Maybe because my grandparents just never asked what I had been doing in the bathroom for the last 25 minutes, I don't know, but that is where I felt comfortable and otherwise I would try to hold it. And I would hold it in school and in middle school I did this production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat that came through town and I was part of the chorus and I remember messing up my costume pants, my shorts, and trying to clean it myself and being so embarrassed and I remember this one time, this is so awful, when I was in this dance studio again with the performing group and now that I think about it I remember I kept a spare pair of underwear with me, or I would put toilet paper in my shorts, or between my cheeks. I remember I would smell and other people would be like 'Ooh what is that?' And being like oh my god it is me, I know it is me! So, I would take my underwear off and stash it in my bag or something or wait until I got home and cleaned it. Oh, oh the story! So I was at this rehearsal and a little doodle fell from my pant leg onto the floor and I was like OH MY GOD, NO! and I smushed it into the ground with my shoe, in this dance studio. I was in middle school, but young because I skipped a grade and that is what is so fascinating to me about it, about my history, because I excelled and was brilliant in so many other ways as a child and really supported and it is so funny that these underbelly issues which I understood I had, but didn't really know how to deal with and it wasn't like this public family issue, at least they claim to not remember any of this even though I struggled with it for a long time. The way I remember my family being involved, well, we went to this doctor and I got put on a laxative and I tried it once and it made me gag and so we didn't do it, I didn't take it, because I was a prized child, I was golden -- *what baby doesn't want baby doesn't get* -- I



was pretty snotty actually...and then I went on a high fibre diet because they thought it was about regularity and the kid I know, I recently taught a class of toddlers and had a kid who was dealing with it and I don't remember dealing with it at the age of two, his seems to be psychologically associated, but also not. His little brother was just born and it seemed to start at the same time, and he would wail and scream and come into the class and clutch his bottom and thrust his hips forward and be screaming but no, 'I don't want to go to the potty'. I don't remember ever being like that and my parents don't either. They don't remember the laxatives, the high fibre diet and they don't seem to remember finding the poop. The dirty underwear, which I either cleaned out myself or threw away or hid for a while. And there is an interesting link there for me about fluids because I remember seeing the pornography and masturbating at a really early age, like 7 or 8, and so as soon as my body was capable of producing semen I was ejaculating onto things which would then go into the wash or I would wash myself and that was never discussed, kind of like the porn that wasn't gay. My Mother did the laundry and she was very thorough, she would've known. She knew. I had this silk robe and the whole point of this silk robe, I mean A., I loved it because I felt feminine and beautiful in it -- it was green with a black stripe, like jade -- but also, B., because I would have sex with it at night and blow my wad into it. I would take it into the bath with me and wash it. So the place where I would let the poop out was the shower and my parents would be involved in the times when I would clog the toilet and my father would have to plunge it when I was home or, when we were in California for two weeks for pilot season as a child actor, my mother and I were living in this apartment and I took one that was so big I clogged the toilet and we couldn't use it for like three days, so my mom was like shitting in jars, so it

did become a family issue in that sense. She remembers that. I also remember one time we were at a hotel, or a motel and my father was like you have to go get the plunger, *you did this*, which has this whole association, contamination thing -- like if I'm the one asking, I must've been the one who did it. So, that seems to me to be the feedback cycle, which I think again, is related to this whole issue of the person I wanted to be, who is above all of that, who is feminine and beautiful and who is not dealing with shit. And I remember at some point realizing that I spent so long holding it in and that I couldn't hold it in any longer, that it had to come out and I had the urge, and I knew I would get constipated if I had the urge but wasn't in a place where I could go. Oh my god, maybe that is why I have hip tension -- I have these spots that are really stuck and I wonder if it has to do with all of those years of holding it in, hmmm...So, at my desk at school and I couldn't go there so I had to wait until I got home, and once I was home, I needed to get the urge. So, I had to learn that when I had the urge I had to overtake it. And sometimes I would get the urge in the shower and let it come out and that is where I remember not allowing myself to go fully, I would just go a little bit because I knew the shower wasn't the right place, but I knew it was an in between place. I would go and smash it into the drain and it would smell more than when I went in the toilet of course. And finally, in high school I started to be able to poop in public toilets. I remember one experience in California, before high

I come to it at an edge  
morphed and hobbled,  
still morphing. There is also  
the blowtorch grammar's  
unconquered flame.  
That may sound laughable  
but we'll need strength.  
We'll need the willow's flex,  
the flapping windsock.  
We'll need every bit  
of solar wind, serious goggles.

This is the snow channel  
and it's snowing. Hey,  
you wanted throttle,  
you wanted full bore.  
Stay open to adventure.  
Being awake is finally  
a comprehensive joy.  
Stay open to that nimbus  
around the back porch reverie,  
every parti-colored aura  
on cars left and to the right of you.

Ascending through the core  
I am silly with clarity.  
Born of air I am and  
the dappled buttresses  
in this vacuum glisten.  
I remake my life.  
What pressure animating giddy coil.  
What not the flutter, every  
ting and flange calling to you.  
A bright patch over the roof  
on the jobsite singing itself.

school, which would have probably been sixth grade, where I had diarrhoea really badly and I had to go in a public toilet and that was like an intensely charged experience because I *had never done it before*, that is why I remember it so starkly and then, after that one time, not really doing it again until high school. I remember moments in high school where I became aware of other people shitting and going into a stall and seeing poop. So, one of the most important discoveries that happened in high school was hearing a friend of mine Laura, saying 'oh I have to shit, or oh I just shat and it is really stinky', and me being like oh my god! We're in someone else's house and she just pooped here! I don't think I had a problem with peeing, although I don't like trough urinals, I get pee shy, I know even now if there is a possibility of someone being next to me as I pee I won't be able to go. And in crowded male situations like football games, trough urinals horrify me, they always have. And public showers, which I have gotten better with, but it is something I breathe and talk myself through and I know it is all about bodily shame. So as I get more comfortable with my body it all becomes easier and the greater issue I'm dealing with is validation of my body as an okay public body, as a sexy body, as acceptance from and for my body, and just not to hide. I have been struggling with this acceptance for a long time, even as a kid, I remember my father saying, 'what you think you're so special? You think what you've got is so special?' and just being like no, that is not it -- I didn't think I or my body was better than anyone else's, he didn't understand why I was so closed -- and wrestling with this idea of why people wear clothes, we are all naked, and just not being able to grasp all of these things. And with that, those social mores about shitting, I just didn't know how to navigate them because I saw no public context that mirrored them, that said it is okay to go, or this is safe, or other people do it. I

remember wanting, but feeling grossed out, but wanting to find poop in public toilets, wanting to be like oh, there it is, *there is the evidence*. I felt so alone in this. And I think by that time, by high school, I had started doing it because Spain was a transformative event for me. It wasn't instantaneous but I knew I couldn't do this anymore. I had to be more open and accepting of myself. I had to allow myself to be empty and to stop holding onto an idea of who I was. So, in Spain, I waited two weeks and finally went after I slipped it out in the shower and being totally uncomfortable for two weeks and the difference was that my host mother, Maria Teresa, was so generous about it and with me and so warm and was like 'oh my god this is why you've felt so awful' and 'here we're just going to pour water on it until it breaks up' and 'it is okay, you have to go to the bathroom' and all of these things I never knew or believed about myself or could be possible and I was like OH, Okay, thank you, I will try. She wasn't angry, or placing any blame on me, or humiliating me. She just wanted me to be okay. To feel safe. So In high school I was older and more aware and able to deal with it I think because I was in the drama program and we had these dressing rooms with bathrooms in them and I found my places where I could go and be comfortable but also, I remember being conscious of people not washing their hands and being grossed out and these things and feelings I explored early on with Jason. And that was right around when I was figuring out my sexuality. Earlier in high school I was

When you wake to brick outside the window

when you accept this handmade world

when you see yourself inside and accept its picture

when you feel the planet spin, accelerate, make dust  
of everything beneath your bed

when you say I want to live and the light that breaks  
is an inward light

when you feel speed of days, speed of light

if one could fancy vision then let it be of you

let it be thought breaking in your view



like 'maybe I'm bisexual, maybe I don't have to be gay, maybe I like girls enough and I can just ride on that', and then I was like 'Nooo'...so there were a lot of other things I was figuring out and I was ready to admit to other people that I was going to call myself gay, and that was like sophomore year of high school. [Does when you were able to start pooping in public coincide with when you were able to start saying, "I'm gay"?] Yes, I suppose it does. I suppose it does. WOW. *Look at that.* I think it is important to realize that all of these things about identity, about being, are fluid. And in the spectrum of masculine to feminine there are still places where they are very muddy for me and I still hierarchize, like at work, but my personal comfort came to really accepting, or is a *process* of accepting who I am, how I feel and letting that exist and in a sense that is my journey to shit too. Is that it isn't about anything, it just is, it is a collection of particles but of course there are codifications. And I see my own constructed persona as very heteronormative to some extent and that is intended, I want to be able to float between both. But in the world of constructed gender with masculine dirt and feminine cleanliness, where does that leave us? And sometimes when I consider going into women's bathrooms at bars I go though this process of telling myself, 'You're not dirtier than women. This barrier is

If all the world says something we think then we know something don't we? And the blank screen or memory again. You crazy. No, you crazy. It's like his but almost always when time-lapse words and weather-swept flowering trees move in empathetic wind. I am rooted but alive. I am flowering and dying. I am you the wind says, the wind.

The embiggened afternoon was just getting started and o be adrift and stuck can be a pleasant sensation like living abstraction or a particular object's nimbus. Pick one and look at it, human or digital, vegetable, mineral, alive or dying, it's all atomic anyhow much closer, the electron part of being. Being. it's a small word. After all absence makes the particles move faster. The path tilted up to the right and the angled view so dramatic in boisterous sun.

artificial' and for the elements of it that are sanitary versus gender comfort, I remind myself that I do not abide! I am just as clean! I say this to myself. It helps. And now, often I wonder if I shouldn't be more concerned about certain things, like I'll pee or poop in a toilet that already has urine in it because I don't want to waste the water to flush it, or I'll just wipe off wetness on the seat, or I sit down and realize it is a little wet, and I just don't really care. I've become really relaxed about it. And that is the thing with my progression with poop in public, I will not put my body through what I used to do and I want to change the way that people talk about it and the presence it has in society to one, not where we have to talk about it all the time, but where poop-positive space exists, where we don't have to wrinkle our noses every time. I think it is important to realise that all of these things are fluid.

When a thought's thingness begins to move, to become unmoored and you ride the current with your head, feel yourself lift off like birdsong caught in the inner ear even the curious seems animated in their dusty shelves-- the song is alive. The part of tradition.

Birdsong and daybreak, are they not the same at the root? Twigs torn from brambles nest and house this cooing things. Close your eyes. The notes imprint their solar magic homing a musical refrain built out in a sculptural vortex-- the applause of rushes sung into a larger sequence. The sky. And now the word is fire, fire in the heart, fire in bed-- seemingly the only element to get gilded up in song.

How about dirt? I love you like dirt. I miss you dirty mouth, dirty smile, oh, and my dirt is your dirt is nice also. Closer to the ground, perhaps, on the ground, that's real enough and those goddamn spuggies are fledged and it's spring and the books in my shelves in my head have all turned. Nothing but earth and peat and mold and rich soft living manna you can breathe. The must at the root of it all, desire and wanting, must know.

# Appendixes

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## 1. Interview Schedule: General Interviews

- Can you describe your gender and sexual identity?
- Do you always use public toilets that correspond to your gender identity?
- How many different toilets do you typically use on the average weekday?
- During a typical weekday, where is the toilet you use most often?
- Can you describe some toilet rules or codes?
- What are some examples of toilet etiquette?
- Do you have any personal habits or rituals when using an away from home toilet? [e.g. flushing before you sit, not sitting, covering the seat, etc.]
- Typically, for how long do you think about going to the toilet before you decide to get up and go to one? or are able to find a one to use?
- Do you ever purposely delay or avoid going to the toilet? If so, why? how often?
- Do you ever think about time while you are in the toilet? For example, how long you're taking? Do you ever feel rushed?
- Do you ever think about your body while you are in the toilet?
- Do you ever think about your gender while you are in the toilet?
- Do you ever think about sex while you are in the toilet?
- Tell me about your experiences of using male and female toilets. Do the spaces feel and function differently?
- How do/have you use(d) your body differently depending on the space? For instance, when you're in a men's room do you always stand to urinate? Always sit when you're in a women's room?
- What are some toilet specific body techniques you use to express your gender?
- Have you ever used hormones in a public toilet?
- Are some public toilets more or less difficult for you to use than others?



## Airports vs bars/clubs?

- How would you characterise your overall experience of using an away-from home toilet? Does it feel good or bad?
- Does using the toilet say anything about your gender? Does it make you feel more or less masculine? Feminine?
- What is your relationship to your body/embodiment while in the toilet?
  
- How do you feel about other people being in the toilet while you're there?
- Have/do you ever feel like your body is being policed by other toilet users? If so, how does that feel? When was the first time it happened? How many times in your life has it happened?
- Can you tell me about a time when you were policed by someone?
- What would your ideal toilet space look like?

## 2. Interview Schedule: Toilet Training

- Tell me a little about yourself - gender, age, marital status?
- If not single: Tell me a little bit about your partner/spouse - gender, age.
- Tell me a little bit about your child.
- What sorts of activities/toys does your child enjoy?
  
- At what age did you begin potty training?
- How did you know it was the right time?
- How did you first introduce it to your child?
- Was there any resistance?
  
- What types of tools did you employ? books? television? rewards/bribe system?
- How did/do you speak about it?
- What types of messages did/do you use?
- If not single: What role does your partner/spouse play? How involved are they?
  
- When you are out in public how did/do you approach the situation?
- Was it easier to go out with your child before, after, or during toilet training?
- Tell me about going to the toilet with your child.
  
- How do you feel when your child uses a public toilet?
- What are your feelings on the general cleanliness of public toilets?

- What are your feelings about other people being in the toilet space when your child is in it?
- If you saw someone that looked like they were in the wrong toilet based on their gendered appearance would you say something to them? Have you ever?
- How would you feel if someone of the opposite gender came into the toilet?
- How do you feel about your child seeing you use the toilet?

### 3. Toilet Survey: Urinal Game

Please fill in the following boxes in regard to how you personally identify.

Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Ethnicity

Imagine you walked into the Men's Rooms pictured below. You have entered from the left side, closest to urinal number 1. Please tick the box over the urinal you would choose to urinate at in each scenario. If instead, you would choose to use a stall/cubicle or to leave without using the toilet please tick the appropriate box.

**MEN'S ROOM 1**

USE STALL/CUBICLE

LEAVE

**MEN'S ROOM 2**

USE STALL/CUBICLE

LEAVE

**MEN'S ROOM 3**

USE STALL/CUBICLE

LEAVE





## 4. Toilet Survey: Cubicle Game

WOMEN'S ROOM - CUBICLE SURVEY

Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Ethnicity

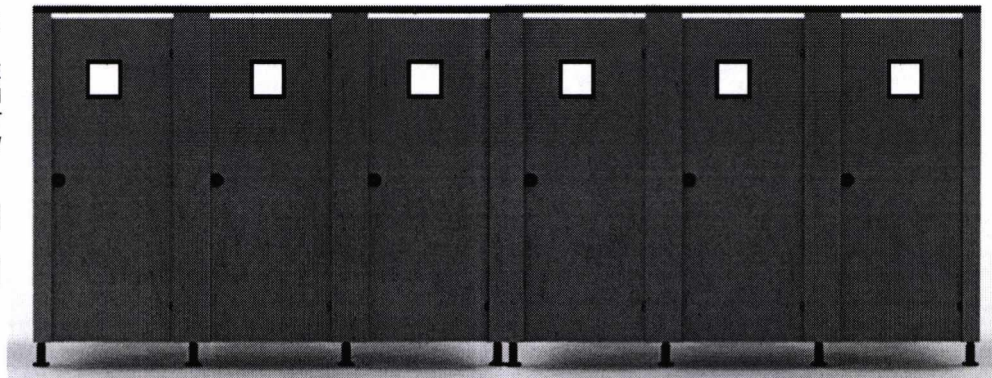
Imagine you walked into the Women's Rooms pictured below. You have entered from the left side. Please tick the box on the cubicle door you would choose to use in each scenario. If instead, you would choose to wait or to leave without using the toilet please tick the appropriate box.

### RESTROOM 1

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE

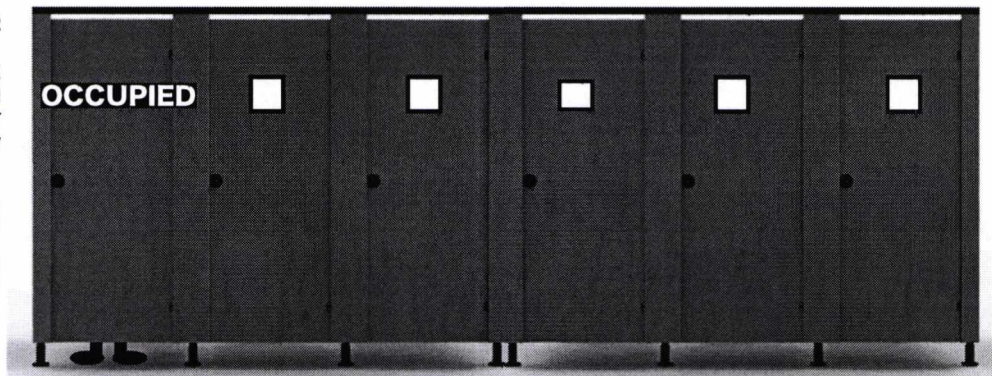


### RESTROOM 2

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE

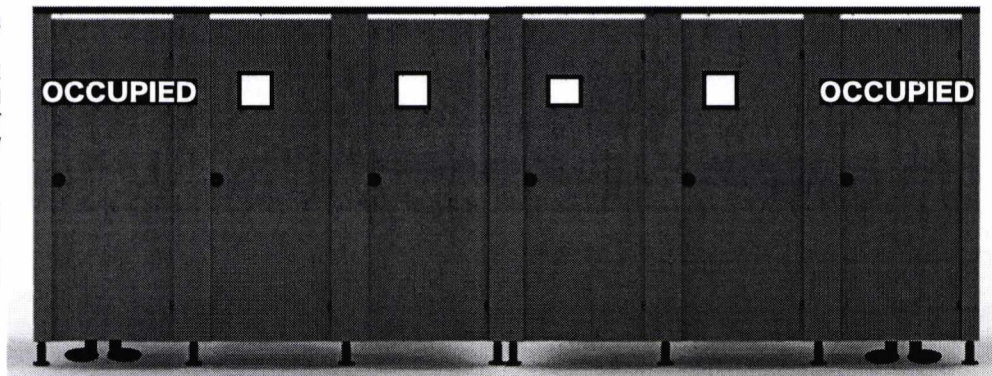


### RESTROOM 3

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE





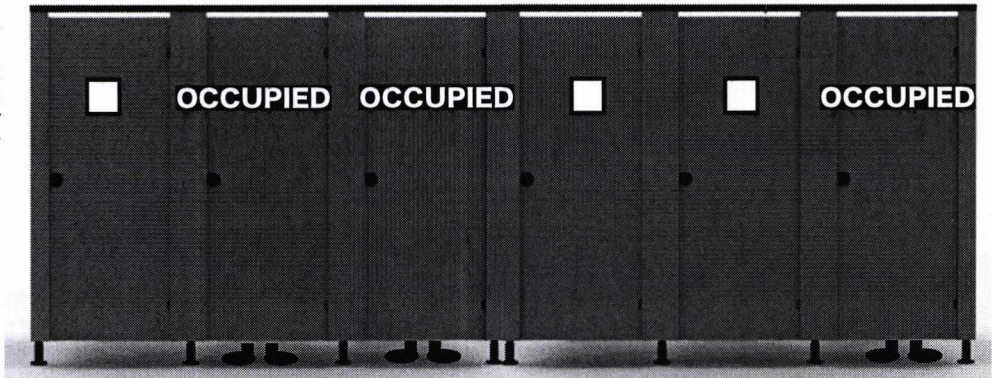
WOMEN'S ROOM - CUBICLE SURVEY

RESTROOM 4

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE



RESTROOM 5

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE

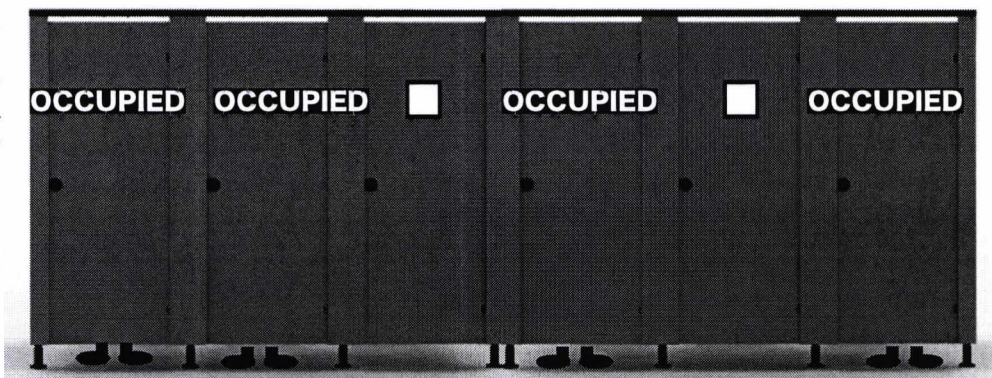


RESTROOM 6

TICK ONE  
BOX FROM  
THE RIGHT  
OR BELOW

WAIT

LEAVE



## 5. Tearoom Sympathy: I am an archeologist and I am on a mission

*\*\*Large multi-layer structure is wheeled onto stage, and then put onto a table. Pieces of structure are removed at key points throughout the monologue.\*\**

I am an archeologist and I am on a mission.

I am an archeologist and I came to hammer away and find the story of this here rock, this chunk of porcelain... this diamond in the rough. Descending down into the depths, chipping away at the slabs, underground worlds of stone cold truth: quartz and crystal, silver and gold.

I am an archeologist and I am on a mission.

A mission of exploration, walking narrow paths of the few and the foolish, amidst landslides and fault lines. The ground could give way, the earth could open up, the seas could part: I could reach the core.

Lookin' for tracks, turning over leaves, evidence of what might have been, of who might have lived. Lookin' for bones, a skeleton, tombstones, a butterfly trapped in time... They say there's a secret inside of every stone, and that why stones combust. And me? I'm just lookin' for those secrets...

*\*\*blackout\*\**

## 6. Tearoom Sympathy: What you really want

*(said through microphone while still in blackout)*

"At shortly after five o'clock on a weekday evening, four men enter a public restroom in the city park. One wears a well-tailored business suit; another wears tennis shoes, shorts, and a teeshirt; the third man is still clad in his khaki uniform of his filling station; the last, a salesman, has loosened his tie and left his sports coat in the car. What has caused these men to leave the company of other homeward-bound commuters on the freeway? What common interest brings these men, with their divergent backgrounds, to this public facility?" *(quote from "Tearoom Trade")*

*(lights up)*

Something is different about today. Fall has just started and there is a chill in the air that smells clean and pure.



I've been sitting here for the past two hours, here being this bench in the dining hall of grand central, with coffee cup and bottle of water in hand, when I notice a man standing outside the entrance to the restroom for what has to be at least 20 minutes, just waiting and pacing. When he finally ventures inside, my curiosity grabs hold so I follow him. Entering a couple moments after he does, I notice he has walked over to the left side of the L-shaped bathroom, the side where you can go to pee but also not just to pee...Y'know. So I stand awkwardly behind this large tile pillar, which always makes me think that the architect of this bathroom must have been a fag because the placing of this pillar is so convenient, that how could he not be? Which then makes me think how many other architects of men's bathrooms are fags...? But then I realize where I am, and I'm unsure where next to put my feet. I look over to the sinks where there's a business man who keeps washing his hands and then drying them over and over again, and then I look over to the urinals where this other man with sad, deep-set eyes looks right at me, almost pleading, and with small jerk-like head motions beckons me over. I decide I will wash my hands.

There, in the mirror above the sinks, I catch the eye of the repetitive hand washer, who smiles at me. He's somewhat short, stocky and handsome, so I do the nice thing and smile back, and then I leave the bathroom. He follows me out. I smile again as he talks in shy, hushed tones about wishing there were somewhere we could go, to which I lie and say I'm supposed to meet a friend soon instead of I'm here gathering material for a play. And then he asks for my email address and then he emails me, and then I find out he's married and a father, and then he tells me fantasies that will most likely stay fantasies and then he tells me that I'm beautiful, and then we meet several times on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of a near by hotel, and then I actually think he's kind of sweet, and then he pays me money, and then...

And then...and then... there's me, the bathroom queen, the kid who hangs out in grand central terminal all day doing research, which I find is very serious fieldwork and I take myself very, very seriously. Sitting around on this bench drinking coffee and water so that I'll have to go back into the bathroom to pee again, I'm that guy you tell your secrets to, your fantasies and your favorite tearoom spots way back when, back in the day.

*(boyish wonder)*

The first time I went to the Grand Central restrooms was after I visited my grandpa in the hospital, a couple months before he died. We had spent the afternoon together where at one point he had hallucinated that there were

tiny dancers inside the closet that were putting on a marvelous show. I left the hospital that day in a hurry and walked down Lexington Avenue 20 blocks all the way to 42<sup>nd</sup> street, down the large limestone and marble stairs all the way to the bathrooms. I was determined, and walked with urgency as if I had to be somewhere, walking with wide strides all the while holding my breath. Straight down the large limestone and marble stairs I turned the corner towards the bathroom, and then I walked inside. I made it, I had arrived, I had returned.

It's like with the leaving of one world, I went searching for another. It's like staring into the faces of strangers, all that became true was what stood between him and me.

And I wanted it, I wanted it all. I wanted the risks and I wanted the legacy, to see what changed. I wanted to see who's there and to see who isn't. I wanted to find the other world, I wanted to watch. I wanted new ways to experience my body, I wanted to know what my body could do. I wanted to just walk in and be there and not know where I was going but know that where I land is where I need to be. I wanted the fun. I wanted the journey, the chase, the dance. I wanted the secrets and I wanted the truth. I wanted it all. Tell me what you want, what you really really want...

A friend once said to me, "Zachary, you really are an old soul, except if you had been born two decades earlier, you'd probably be dead."

...I go to these places, these bathrooms, to feel alive. When the married father was on his knees looking up into my eyes, when my grand father died with me by his bedside, when my stomach dropped upon finding out my health had been put at risk by a lie... this is being alive.

This diamond in the rough... the ground gave way, the earth opened up, I reached the core.

## **7. Epilogue Poems: By Peter Gizzi from *Threshold Songs* (2011)**

*Eclogues*, p. 9

This clock entitled, simply, my life, speaks at irregular intervals  
so loud there isn't room for a boy.

Few celebrate the interval inside the tock

others merely repeat fog. The unhappening of day. The sudden  
storm over the house, the sudden

houses revealed in cloud cover. Snow upon the land.

This land untitled so much for soldiers, untitled so far from swans.

Sing. Flag. Boy. Idyll. Gong.

Fate disrupts the open field into housing starts, into futurities  
neglected corners and mites.

This again, the emptied anthem, dusty antlers, pilsner flattened.

To do the time, undo the Times for whom?

Bells swinging. The head rings no. No.

The space inside is vast.

//

*Eye of the Poem*, pp. 11-12

I come to it at an edge  
morphed and hobbled,  
still morphing. There is also  
the blowtorch grammar's  
unconquered flame.  
That may sound laughable  
but we'll need strength.  
We'll need the willow's flex,  
the flapping windsock.  
We'll need every bit  
of solar wind, serious goggles.

This is the snow channel  
and it's snowing. Hey,  
you wanted throttle,  
you wanted full bore.  
Stay open to adventure.  
Being awake is finally  
a comprehensive joy.



Stay open to that nimbus  
around the back porch reverie,  
every parti-colored aura  
on cars left and to the right of you.

Ascending through the core  
I am silly with clarity.  
Born of air I am and  
the dappled buttresses  
in this vacuum glisten.  
I remake my life.  
What pressure animating giddy coil.  
What not the flutter, every  
ting and flange calling to you.  
A bright patch over the roof  
on the jobsite singing itself.

//

*Snow Globe, p.13*

This house is older than the lilac trusses glistening  
in winter ice,  
older than the pack of Winstons on the wire chair,  
older than the chair as well as this glass of water  
holding water. Is it older?  
The house lurks under the sky, which has stood over it.  
A time when this patch was a field, deer maybe shat in it,  
grazed a few leaves from a sprig, now fallen.  
The house is covered in fresh snowfall, lovely  
in reflected mercury light,  
its weary glow damaging to the cardinal flirting  
between branches  
of a stalled ornamental maple. Where is my head  
in all this data? All this  
indexical nomenclature. It's not reassuring to know  
the names tonight, lousy and grigri and non.  
Just words to fill space older than a house, a bird,  
this glass and my hand.

//

*How I Remember Certain Fields of Inquiry (and one I only imagine), p. 14*

To feel it. A draft  
from a room opening  
next to the head.  
A prism lit momentarily  
and by its glow  
I know me. It  
plays through me. It  
at the back of me.  
Plato wasn't wrong  
shadowing me.

//

*Fragment*, p. 18

When you wake to brick outside the window  
  
when you accept this handmade world  
  
when you see yourself inside and accept its picture  
  
when you feel the planet spin, accelerate, make dust  
of everything beneath your bed  
  
when you say I want to live and the light that breaks  
is an inward light  
  
when you feel speed of days, speed of light  
  
if one could fancy vision then let it be of you  
  
let it be thought breaking in your view

//

*Tradition & the Indivisible Talent*, pp. 46-48

If all the world says something  
we think then we know something  
don't we? And the blank screen  
or memory again. You crazy.  
No, you crazy. It's like his

but almost always  
when time-lapse words  
and weather-swept flowering tress  
move in empathetic wind.  
I am rooted but alive.  
I am flowering and dying.  
I am you the wind says, the wind.

The embiggened afternoon  
was just getting started  
and o be adrift and stuck  
can be a pleasant sensation  
like living abstraction  
or a particular object's nimbus.  
Pick one and look at it,  
human or digital, vegetable,  
mineral, alive or dying,  
it's all atomic anyhow  
much closer, the electron  
part of being. Being.  
it's a small word.  
After all absence makes  
the particles move faster.  
The path tilted up to the right  
and the angled view  
so dramatic in boisterous sun.

When a thought's thingness  
begins to move, to become  
unmoored and you ride  
the current with your head,  
feel yourself lift off like  
birdsong caught in the inner ear  
even the curious seems animated  
in their dusty shelves--  
the song is alive.  
The part of tradition.

Birdsong and daybreak,  
are they not the same at the root?  
Twigs torn from brambles  
nest and house this cooing things.  
Close your eyes. The notes



imprint their solar magic homing  
a musical refrain built out  
in a sculptural vortex--  
the applause of rushes  
sung into a larger sequence.  
The sky. And now the word is fire,  
fire in the heart, fire in bed--  
seemingly the only element  
to get gilded up in song.

How about dirt? I love you  
like dirt. I miss you dirty mouth,  
dirty smile, oh, and my dirt  
is your dirt is nice also.  
Closer to the ground, perhaps,  
on the ground, that's real enough  
and those goddamn spuggies  
are fledged and it's spring  
and the books in my shelves  
in my head have all turned. Nothing  
but earth and peat and mold  
and rich soft living manna  
you can breathe. The must  
at the root of it all, desire  
and wanting, must know.

## 8. Interview Explanation/Information Sheet

1. That it is a research project
2. That participation is voluntary
3. That the aims of the project regard understanding the reinforcement of identity and the relationship of sex/gender experience and the sex/gendered body.
4. That participation is only expected for one interview and possibly an e-mail follow-up for clarification during the process of transcribing the interview.
5. That participation in the project contributes to a little-explored area of social life and knowledge-building about gendered bodily experience.
6. That due to the socially taboo nature of the topic some of my questions may be embarrassing to hear or answer

7. That you are free to refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any point without giving reasons as to why
8. That after the interview and at any point in the write-up process you are free to withdraw your contribution from my research
9. That all personal information will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be made publicly available or given to any other person at any time.
10. That information from our interview may, in the future, be included in publications but at no time will any information be published that could lead to your identification

## **9. Research Reflections**

In this section I will briefly 'reflect' on the methods used for this research. It should be noted from the start that the conventional nature of the methods used for this project was largely due to the fact that I was limited by the ethics board. I was only granted ethical approval for data collection which did not involve the toilet spaces whatsoever. That said, interviews were an extremely vital part of my project and if I had to do all over again I would still use interviews. This is due to the fact that in order to understand how someone experiences their body, makes sense of an experience, and conveys or understands that experience to and with themselves, some kind of verbal or textual communication is required. Language isn't simply how we represent reality or understand it, language is part and parcel of our being in and experiencing of the world. Language and materiality are inextricably entangled, networked, and changing. This idea is addressed in the thesis directly. I approached the interviews with this understanding which informed my position as a researcher as inherently non-stable and this is where I differ from the strict phenomenological approach to data analysis. I don't believe one can either remove themselves from a phenomenon or experience or remain unchanged by one. Since diffraction is all about reading differences, and differences emerge from and through ongoing experience the differences I experienced as a researcher were equally important as those

expressed to me by my participants. That is to say that my methods were not designed to *elicit* threshold experiences. Rather, my methods enabled me to do a diffractive reading – I learned how to be attentive to experience and expression in order to recognise the differences that led to threshold experiences. And my ongoing, non-stable experience as a researcher was central to that process. I learned to listen for the experiences and expressions that were openings to and between normative experiences. I learned to notice the subtle differences in my data which gave way to threshold experiences and becomings. I think I was able to do this and can ‘reflect’ on it in large part because I have spent many years engaged in bodily awareness work.

Furthermore, it should not be assumed that there are experiences on the one hand and language or modes of expression on the other hand. The assumption that language is a problematic way to access and understand bodily experience and particularly emotion fundamentally goes against much of what I have explored in this thesis. Speaking about emotions and feelings while often difficult for people, are an extremely crucial method for understanding them. The process of speaking about emotional experiences is one of the best ways for making sense of them both to oneself and others. This came through in my interviews and should be visible in my data. The important point is not to get caught up in the worlds or phrases alone but try to understand the relationships between and across experiences. This if nothing else is how I feel I built my core argument in this project and deconstructed it. My methods were not about *extracting* particular expressions of experiences from my participants but were instead particular phenomena of experience and expression (that I was a part of) unto themselves.

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