THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE THEORY

Theatricality

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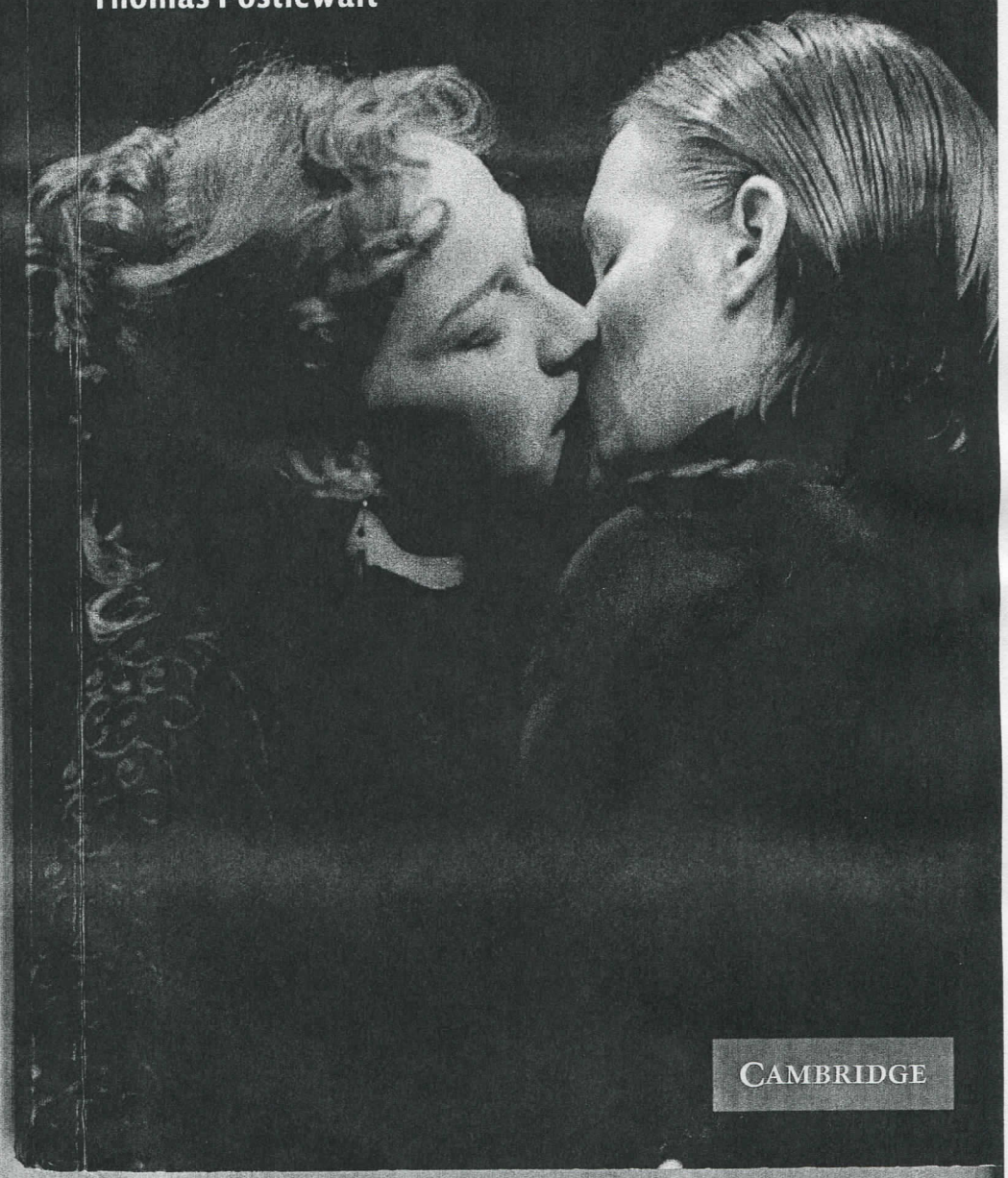

CAMBRIDGE

7 Theatricality's proper objects: genealogies of performance and gender theory

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> The institution of the "proper object" takes place, as usual, through a mundane sort of violence. Indeed, we might read moments of methodological founding as pervasively anti-historical acts, beginnings which fabricate their legitimating histories through a retroactive narrative, burying complicity and division in and through the funereal figure of the "ground."
>
> (Judith Butler, 1997a)

> I've tried acting, but I just can't do it.
>
> (Judith Butler, from a conversation with the author about theatrical performance)

As a theory of performativity re-emerged in the United States during the last decade of the twentieth century, the question of its relationship to theatricality often followed close behind. Is the performative related or opposed to "acting"? Is acting related or opposed to the concept of theatricality? What, ultimately, does performativity have to do with theatre? The different intellectual assumptions and institutional allegiances behind such questions structured numerous conversations and determined patterns of disciplinary inclusion and exclusion. For American scholars and graduate students in theatre and performance studies, the circulation of the term "performative" exerted contradictory force, paradoxically elevating and eclipsing our favorite objects of study. On the one hand, its theoretical prominence in the anti-foundationalist work of critical theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler seemed to pull theatre and theatricality into the critical spotlight. On the other hand, performativity's location inside a tradition of speech-act theory that was indifferent and, in some cases, hostile to all things theatrical dimmed that light considerably. This complex theoretical context

was further confounded by the specific investments – political, philosophical, aesthetic, disciplinary – in which such terms appeared. In rhetoric, literary studies, critical race theory, art history, postcolonial theory, and other critical circles, terms such as theatricality and performativity were easily and differently aligned with the traditions, vocabularies, conflicts, and goals of each field.

In this chapter, I investigate the theoretical complications of theatricality and performativity by using "gender studies" as both an allied theoretical field and a case study. Because issues of gender are intimately linked to theories both of the theatrical and of the performative, gender serves as a useful counterpoint. In the USA, in fact, some of the most productive work on the theatricality/performativity debate occurred in the field of gender studies. Prominent sex/gender theorists took up the idea of performativity while feminist theatre theorists came to terms with its theoretical fallout. Furthermore, the discourse of gender and the discourse of theatricality are both similarly divided, varied, and dispersed. As such, their simultaneous investigation gives an illustration of the kind of confounded theoretical investments described above. For many of us, there is not an equivalence between the study of performativity and the field of performance studies. Nor is either of these inquiries equivalent to the study of theatricality. Similarly, for many of us, there is not an equivalence between queer theory and lesbian/gay studies. Nor is either of these inquiries equivalent to feminist studies. Nevertheless, all of these fields and terms can be elided with each other – and often are – in even the most careful discussions. Coming to terms with the entwining of gender-based theory with theatricality thus means disaggregating a series of hurried equivalences and dismantling a series of defensive oppositions. Such instances will testify to the curious status of gender and of theatricality as both fields and critical concepts – the conflicted way in which they and their researchers could be elevated and eclipsed, critically central and abjectedly peripheral, at the same moment in the history of very late twentieth-century theory.

My two epigraphs offer abstract and symptomatic ways of framing this critical context. Judith Butler, a scholar widely associated with the most provocative research in gender theory and in performativity, placed her cautionary note about disciplinary

histories in an interrogation of the vexed relationship between feminist and queer theory. While her reflections might be applied to any kind of disciplinary relationship, I argue that the conflicted status of gender theory has had a great deal to do with the internally discontinuous status of theatricality as a critical term. This partnership has produced several debates, discussions that draw lines around the "proper objects" of different fields and that produce their own "retroactive narratives" of disciplinary formation. In debates about theatricality – in theatre studies, in performance studies, in speech act theory, as metaphor, as act, and as object – questions of equivalence, redundancy, tradition, distinction, and supercession constantly inhere. Is theatre a subset of performance? Is performance a foundation for or a symptom of performativity? Is performativity's act the same as "acting"? What is the difference between performance studies and performativity studies? Meanwhile, those questions are inflected by the equally complicated field of gender. Can feminism accommodate a theory of sexuality? Is sexual difference a foundation or a symptom? Is gender's act the same as "acting"? What is the difference between gay/lesbian studies and queer studies? It is often the provisional and erratic answers to these and other questions that reproduce disciplinary wars.

While I seek to clarify various "anti-historical" acts of "buried complicity" in disciplinary debates around gender and performance, I am aware that the impulse to do so can produce its own kinds of friction. The effort to disentangle disciplinary equivalences can transform into the territorial quest to erect impermeable boundaries. And given that this kind of line-drawing happens within a field of institutional power, an engaged conversation can have the character of confrontation. As Butler said of her own investigation into the "proper objects" of feminism and queer theory, "it seemed that an exploration of the 'encounter' . . . was timely and potentially productive, but I forgot at that moment how quickly a critical encounter becomes misconstrued as a war" (1997a: 1). My desire to pursue this project comes from a frustration with the occasionally defensive, proprietary, and/or anti-historical conversations that can occur within and outside theatre and performance studies. Rather than offering definitional coherence or hierarchical evaluation of different concepts, I hope to offer tools for discursive navigation.

To assist in the navigating, I make a central claim for the discursive operations of "theatricality" as we move from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. I suggest that theatricality functions ubiquitously and contradictorily because of the term's "flexible essentialism." Depending upon context, convenience, and polemics, theatricality can as easily find itself on the essentialist as anti-essentialist side of a conceptual binary. Theatricality is used as a metaphor for representation and, in other contexts, as an anti-representational ground for the authentic. While a history of Western thought associates theatricality with the figural, allegorical, and surrogated nature of representation, a host of critical theorists in the late-twentieth century used theatrical examples to characterize the literal, the stable, or the naively metaphysical "real." Thus, different invocations of the theatrical can often be diametrically opposed to each other, assuming its anti-essentialist associations with mimesis and construction, on the one hand, and its essentialist associations with the given and concrete on the other. Moreover, this constant repositioning is not always self-conscious and, hence, not necessarily "strategic."[1] Instead, the flexibility has made for a great deal of theoretical confusion, sometimes producing the defensiveness described above. Other times, however, that confusion can be experienced as enabling. When gender studies (feminist, queer, and otherwise) became involved with theatricality's flexible essentialism, the combination proved both useful and confounding. The flexible associations of both the concrete and the mimetic made an all too appropriate match for a feminist theoretical struggle that wanted to maintain a political project and to de-essentialize it, too.

I

In order to create a place from which to theorize an intellectual history of performativity's relationship to theatricality, I will discuss the work of three theorists from the United States: Elin Diamond, Sue-Ellen Case, and Judith Butler. As feminist theatre theorists and sex/gender theorists, each of these scholars has contributed significantly to our understanding of both theatricality and gender in their various guises. Each of these theorists worked on and from within the discursive milieu of the last decade of the twentieth century, and their texts serve as indices of those

debates. In 1988, Elin Diamond published the much-circulated essay entitled "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory," propelling an epistemological shift in the study of feminist theatre. In 1989, Sue-Ellen Case published "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," a piece that would become central to an emerging canon of feminist theatre as well as to that of lesbian and gay studies. In 1990, Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble*, disseminating her groundbreaking arguments on the nature of gender performativity. As the twentieth century came to a close, each of these theorists would review the central concepts of her own writing, sometimes by coming to terms with the work of one of the other two. In Elin Diamond's *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997), Sue-Ellen Case's *Domain Matrix* (1996), and Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993), "Against Proper Objects," and revised introduction to *Gender Trouble* (2000), they reckoned with the political productivity and political fallout of a decade of critical theory. I hope that an investigation of the stakes, terms, shifts, revisions, and retrenchments of this intellectual genealogy will help to focus a discussion of theatricality and its gendered alliances in the very late twentieth century. Superficially, these three theorists can be construed as illustrations of three strains of gender studies – Diamond's association with "feminist theory," Case's with "lesbian feminist theory," and Butler's with "queer theory." I hope to show that, while this retroactive positioning is conceptually convenient, it also obscures important histories and significant connections for theories of both gender and theatricality.

A number of issues in feminist and critical theory came to the fore in the late 1980s, and Diamond, Case, and Butler tried to reconcile them in related ways. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on two political and epistemological crises. Feminists needed to grapple with the issue of sexuality and with the philosophical effects of something conveniently called "poststructuralist" (sometimes, "postmodernist") thought. These crises turned out to be related. The concerns of sexuality constellated around two related movements within feminism, namely the homophobia of the feminist movement and the anti-pornography efforts of a certain strain of feminism. As feminists worked on the former issue, they came face to face with the myopias of the latter. The argument against the "oppressions" of pornography – most notably found in the work of Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea

Dworkin – argued that sexual objectification within pornographic fantasy structured and supported male domination of women. This position extended to other realms of sexuality – including lesbian sex – resulting in a feminist intolerance for sex practices and experimentation between women that did not embody a literalized ideal of "sexual equality." As a consequence, the effort to dismantle sexual discrimination continually faced condemnations of sex practice. A feminist commitment to sexual equality could actually rationalize feminist homophobia.[2] As varieties of feminists debated the issue of sexuality, they also came to terms with the impact of poststructuralist thought. In a critical foment that included revisionist takes on the complexity of the psyche, analyses of the constitutive role of discourse, and a deconstructionist stance on the instability and self-differentiality of apparently singular identities, feminists wondered how to maintain a viable political project. While the issue of sexual inclusion and the issue of poststructuralist destabilization were not always connected, at times they appeared intimately related. With the work of Michel Foucault and with applications in psychoanalysis and deconstruction, sexuality emerged as a conceptually rich frame from which to theorize the heterogeneity of the subject and the effects of discourse more generally.[3] To understand the impact of these two concerns on theories of theatricality and gender, it is important to remember the relationship between sexuality and poststructuralist thought – and equally important not to assume an equivalence. For many feminist theorists, the political ambivalences of poststructuralism were too confounding; hence, they considered poststructuralism's proponents and paradigms "patriarchal" and, ultimately, racist and heterosexist in effect. For others, however, the poststructural critique was central to the undoing of patriarchy; from this angle, those who maintained a belief in the singularity and authenticity of sex/gender identity risked succumbing to a patriarchal ideology. For some, a focus on "women's experience" and female "agency" was necessary for feminism; for others, such emphases were naive and assumed a reductive conception of the female subject. Thus, in this complicated political and epistemological scenario, it was not uniformly clear what it meant to work in gender studies, what it was to be a feminist, or what it meant to theorize sexuality. None of these efforts was equivalent to each other or even to themselves but varied

with a critical and political context. As I noted above, "gender studies" was and is an internally discontinuous field and, like the fields of theatre and performance studies, positions within it were and are retroactively and relationally construed even by its own adherents and practitioners.

Elin Diamond's "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory" was a prescient articulation of a feminist theatrical practice that addressed this complex critical context. The central effort of her essay was to integrate feminist goals and Brechtian theatrical technique. She began the essay admitting that this was an "unlikely" grouping and that "feminists in drama studies might greet this coupling with some bemusement" (1988: 82, 83). That this combination now sounds so very "likely" testifies both to Diamond's foresight and to her historical timeliness. The use of Brecht enabled Diamond to make an argument for theatre as a feminist political practice. A creative revision of Brecht's concepts of alienation also matched the destabilizations of poststructuralist thought with a suitably ironic theatrical practice. At the same time, Diamond's argument for theatre invoked the "embodied" nature of the medium, "grounding" this articulated practice in a materiality that warded off anti-poststructuralist suspicions. A feminist Brechtian theatre's status as both overtly representational and overtly material, as ironic and embodied, made for a flexibly essentialist practice that suited the internal discontinuities of feminist theory.

Diamond relocated concepts of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the "not, but," and "historicization" to theorize a Gestic feminist criticism. At this historical moment, a feminist focus on "women's experience" appeared problematic. Feminist theatre that positioned itself within the experiential paradigm risked exclusion (which women?) and risked presuming experiential authority and authenticity. The defamiliarizing appeals of *Verfremdungseffekt* provided a different paradigm. The quest to defamiliarize the normal – to make "something ordinary and immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking, and unexpected" (Brecht 1964: 143, quoted in Diamond 1997: 84) – could denormalize masculinity and femininity. Rather than speaking unproblematically of women's experience, a feminist Gestic theatre would make strange the category of Woman itself. The defamiliarizing effort continued through a process of Brechtian "historicization,"

a mode of performance that placed the historical contextuality of gender production on display for analysis and critique. Diamond made, to my mind, her most innovative theoretical move when she used the Brechtian "not, but" as the basis for staging the differential character of sexuality. Her presentation is worth quoting at length as an illustration of a shifting epistemology in feminist theory.

> Gender critique in artistic and discursive practices is often and wrongly confused with another topos in feminist theory: sexual difference. I would propose that "sexual difference" be understood not as a synonym for gender oppositions but as a possible reference to differences within sexuality. I take my cue here partly from the poststructuralist privileging of "difference" across all representational systems, particularly language. Derridean deconstruction posits the disturbance of the signifier within the linguistic sign or word; the seemingly stable word is inhabited by a signifier that bears the trace of the word it is not. (1997: 85)

Diamond thus found, in a contemporary discussion of deconstruction, terminology that resonated with the destabilizing articulation of Brechtian theatre. "When an actor appears onstage," Brecht wrote and Diamond quoted, "besides what he actually is doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing . . . Whatever he doesn't do must be contained and conserved in what he does" (Brecht 1964: 137, quoted in Diamond 1997: 86). By making a link to Brecht's discussion of the "not, but," she proposed a theatre that could perform a deconstructive sexual self-differentiality.

Using Derrida as her theorist, Diamond's theory thus explicitly engaged the connection between poststructuralism and sexuality, using the sensibility of the former to foreground the heterogeneity of the latter. "Deconstruction thus wreaks havoc on identity, with its connotations of wholeness and coherence: if an identity is always different from itself it can no longer *be* an identity. Sexual *difference*, then, might be seen to destabilize the bipolar oppositions that constitute gender identity" (1997: 85). Furthermore, Diamond labeled this theory a "gender critique," explicitly delineating her feminist theory from its "confused" associations with sexual difference as "gender opposition." For her, the differential nature of sexuality was a question imaginatively conceived and resolutely explored within something that called itself

feminism – and that knew itself to be something other than the study of "men" versus "women." The work of Gayle Rubin served as a significant intertext. Rubin's discussion of how a "sex/gender system" exacerbates male and female difference at the expense of other kinds of commonalities supported a deconstructionist stance. "To paraphrase Gayle Rubin, women and men are certainly different, but gendering coercively translates the nuanced differences within sexuality into a structure of opposition: male vs. female, masculine vs. feminine, etc. In my reading of Rubin, the 'sex-gender system,' the trace of the difference of sexuality is kept alive within the sterile opposition of gender" (Rubin 1978, discussed in Diamond 1988: 86). A feminist Gestic theatre would thus perform with an awareness of this sexual trace, using theatricality's tools to unravel and denormalize sterile oppositions.

Diamond's essay also addressed the field of film studies. Because some of the most productive work on gender representation came from within this field, the medium of film became a favored object of analysis in feminist theory. "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory" made an explicit intervention in this critical milieu. "Now feminists in film studies have been quick to appropriate elements of Brecht's critique of the theatre apparatus . . . [They] have given us a lot to think about, but we [feminists in drama and theatre studies], through Brechtian theory, have something to give them: a female body in representation that resists fetishization and a viable position for the female spectator" (1988: 83). For Diamond, the active and embodied nature of the theatrical medium distinguished it from film, creating a unique relation between actor and spectator. "Brechtian theory formulates (and reformulates) a spectatorial state that breaks the suturing of imaginary identifications and keeps the spectator independent . . . Film semiotics posits a spectator who is given the illusion that he creates the film; theatre semiotics posits a spectator whose active reception constantly revises the spectacle's meanings" (88). Diamond qualified a Brechtian sense of embodiment by integrating it with a feminist awareness of gender and desire. Even as she argued for embodiment as a unique condition of the theatrical medium, her discussion exemplified a deconstructionist critique of presence. "I want to be clear about this important point: The body, particularly the female body, by virtue of entering the stage space, enters representation – it is not just *there*, a live, unmediated presence" (89). Thus, while arguing for theatre's embodied particularity, Diamond also insisted on the mediated nature of that embodiment. For her, the representational was part and parcel of what it meant to be theatrical.

Finally, Diamond's essay invoked theatricality to make an argument about the political viability of feminist theatre itself. Many a political and social theorist could use a theatrical language to discuss political action. Not as many, however, would use that language to argue for "theatre" itself in feminist politics. For those of us for whom the term "theatricality" is tied to an object and an institutional allegiance as much as a social paradigm, the difference was crucial. Diamond's effort meant arguing against the prejudice of theatre's irrelevancy or a sense of theatre as "just" play. "Recalling such performances should remind us of the rigorous self-consciousness that goes into even the most playful gender-bending . . . When gender is alienated or foregrounded, the spectator is enabled to see a sign system *as* a sign system . . . the gender lexicon becomes so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will" (1988: 85). Diamond's argument thus featured theatrical practice as serious, as rigorous, and as an arena of feminist political agency.

Sue-Ellen Case's 1989 article also marked a critical moment in theatre criticism's relationship to feminist politics. As the latter changed, so did the imaginative capacities of the former. This article was also written in advance of a decade in which "queer" theories of "performativity" would enhance and confuse the status of something that called itself "feminist theatre." Like Elin Diamond's "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory," Case's article contended with a range of related issues and goals. It addressed the impact of poststructuralism – or "postmodernism" – on feminism. It contended with the heterosexism of the feminist movement. And it made an argument for theatre as a favored site for feminist possibility and a favored object for feminist analysis. It also foregrounded the imaginative work of Split Britches, the troupe whose performances at New York's WOW Café activated an emerging feminist theatre theory. Case's first paragraph described a "recent conference on postmodernism" that addressed the impact of Foucault. Here she articulated a concern that would become the repeated refrain in critical theory – that

the theoretical trajectory associated with postmodernism (a trajectory that echoed my description of poststructuralism above) "denies both agency and gender to the subject." Because they "suggest no subject position outside of the ideology, nor do they constitute a subject who has agency to change ideology," such theories disabled political activism (1989: 282). Case's initial suggestion that postmodernism was sexist and heterosexist emphasized only part of the story, however. In fact, a sense of poststructural possibility also galvanized her theorizing of the butch-femme aesthetic. A poststructural critique of binary discourses conceived sexuality as a field of differences, a heterogeneity unrecognizable within the constraining polarities of "sexual difference." Hence, a poststructural critique could cut both ways. While it theoretically short-circuited politicized identity claims, it also helped a project of sexual expansion. Consequently, Case's theorizing of Split Britches also cut both ways; an oft-quoted passage, for instance, invoked both of these "bad" and "good" possibilities:

> These are not split subjects, suffering the torments of dominant ideology. They are coupled ones that do not impale themselves on the poles of sexual difference or metaphysical values, but constantly seduce the sign system, through flirtation and inconstancy into the light fondle of artifice, replacing the Lacanian slash with a lesbian bar. (283)

In this model, being "split" could mean many things. One could be tormented by ideological self-division, or one could be enabled by its inconstancy and artifice. Case would use the terms of theatricality – as concept and as practice, as norm and as act, as essentialist and as anti-essentialist – to settle into a flexible paradigm that intersected with all of these roving associations. In the process, theatricality's referent would change dramatically.

Psychoanalytic theory and the revisionist work of Jacques Lacan functioned as significant, if not explicitly quoted, intertexts. Case looked to Joan Rivière's work on Lacan, particularly to a discussion of how a choice between "having" and "being" the Phallus constituted male and female sexual difference. Since women – for Lacan, Rivière, and a host of psychoanalytic theorists – are not able to possess the Phallus and, with it, the capacity to render themselves intelligible and signifiable, women are compelled instead to occupy a compensatory role as a vehicle

for and partner in male identity formation. Helpfully for theatre theorists, both Rivière and Lacan used a theatrical metaphor to theorize the female side of this normalizing operation – the term "masquerade." In this formulation, a theatrical mode was associated with processes of convention, constraint, reaction formation, and gender constitution (Lacan 1986, Rivière 1986). Theatrical masquerade was a "mask" worn unconsciously by a female "both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it" (Rivière 1986: 38). Masquerade was thus not playful or liberatory but rather the defensive mechanism by which "womanliness" became internalized and consolidated. In "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," Case rehearsed the idea of masquerade as normalization. However, as the essay proceeded, the term underwent redefinition.

> Rivière notes a difference here between heterosexual women, and lesbian ones – the heterosexual women don't claim possession openly, but through reaction-formations; whereas the homosexual women openly display their possession of the penis and count on the male's recognition of defeat . . . I suggest that this kind of masquerade is consciously played out in butch-femme roles . . . If one reads them from within Rivière's theory, the butch is the lesbian woman who proudly displays the possession of the penis, while the femme takes on the compensatory masquerade of womanliness. The femme, however, foregrounds her masquerade by playing to the butch, another woman in a role; likewise, the butch exhibits her penis to a woman who is playing the role of compensatory castration. This raises the question of "penis, penis, who's got the penis," because there is no referent in sight; rather, the fictions of penis and castration become ironized and "camped up." (1989: 291)

In the butch-femme scenario, Case argued, the processes of sexual differentiation were replayed but also played with; masquerade returned, but its theatricality was of a different order. Rather than the site of female normalization, masquerade became the site of feminist resistance.

The essay thus made use of two associations of theatricality – as habituated convention and as liberatory action – and linked them both to masquerade, allowing the theorist to effect a theoretical move while using the same term. Interestingly, the pivot between these two associations rested on the presence

or absence of consciousness. Unlike the *feminine* masquerader, the *feminist* masquerader "foregrounds," "openly displays," and "consciously plays" (Case 1989: 291). A kind of will or choice determined which kind of theatricality was at work and at play. For a feminist movement preoccupied with the location of agency, the second sense of theatricality resonated appropriately. Case's language echoed the revolutionary formulations of the feminist movement.

> From a theatrical point of view, the butch-femme roles take on the quality of something more like character construction and have a more active quality . . . these roles qua roles lend agency and self-determination to the historically passive subject, providing her with at least two options for gender identification and with the aid of camp, an irony that allows her perception to be constructed from outside ideology, with a gender role that makes her appear as if she is inside it. (292)

By developing the inside/outside positionings, this form of lesbian feminist theatricality addressed the political conundrums of poststructuralist and feminist theory. It posited a subject with an outsider's "perception" and the capacity for "agency" and "self-determination" while also acknowledging her embodiment within social convention, gendered "roles," and sexual "appearances."

Like Elin Diamond, Sue-Ellen Case also used film and feminist film theory as a specific counterpoint to her own theorizing. Case noted a connection to Mary Ann Doane's theorizing of female masquerade. In Doane's use of Rivière, a female spectator would "'flaunt' her femininity . . . and reveal 'femininity itself as a mask'" (Doane 1982: 292, quoted in Case 1989: 81). Case suggested that the "masquerade that Doane describes is exactly that practiced by the femme – she foregrounds cultural femininity. The difference is that Doane places this role in the spectator position, probably as an outgrowth of the passive object position required of women in the heterosexist social structures" (Case 1989: 292). Despite the connection, Case thus made an explicit argument about the difference between film and theatre. By emphasizing the role of the actor in the theatre, she claimed an activist position for feminism. Because film theory focused on the figure of the spectator, the discipline of film, in Case's reading, could not claim the "more active" stance of

"a theatrical point of view." By "reinscribing [flaunting] within a passive, spectatorial role, [Doane] gags and binds the traditional homosexual role players, whose gender play has nothing essential beneath it, replacing them with the passive spectatorial position that is, essentially, female" (293). Thus, Case's theory claimed an anti-essentialism for lesbian feminist theatre (one that "has nothing essential beneath it") while at the same time invoking the "tradition" of homosexual role-playing as well as the "essentially" "passive" and "female" nature of spectatorship. The film-versus-theatre duality framed Case's claims for the exceptional bodiedness of performance. As opposed to "theorized spectators in darkened movie houses . . . [where] the erotics are gone, [her] theoretical maneuvers [would] maintain what is generally referred to as 'presence'" (289–90). Case's theorizing thus exemplifies the tendency to grant theatricality a theoretically useful flexible essentialism. At times, she used the anti-essentialist language of theatrical mobility, instability and dynamism. The butch-femme performance was a duo that together inhabited a subject position; the actor-character was thus a doubled and therefore unstable figure. However, Case also used the more stabilizing language of the theatre at other times. She would oppose theatre and film by virtue of the former's corporeality, thus allowing – if not necessarily arguing – for a link between the theatre and the feminist privileging of "experience." She would also differentiate butch-femme masquerade from the reaction-formation of anti-feminist masquerade by giving the actor "self-consciousness" and – like Elin Diamond – the capacity to inhabit and uninhabit various roles "at will." As the reference to bodies echoed the language of the feminist experiential, so this reference to actor intention reinforced a political commitment to "self-determination" and a "more active" "agency." In a feminist struggle that wanted to maintain a political project *and* to de-essentialize it, theatricality's flexible essentialism allowed feminism to have it both ways.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, the text that many credit with the inauguration of queer theory, appeared in 1990 to address a similar set of conundrums. Butler sought to reckon with the homophobia of the feminist movement and was particularly "enraged" by the assumptions of sexual difference and sexual morality mobilized by the anti-pornography crusade (1997a: 1). She

also used poststructuralist paradigms to place even more pressure on the foundational assumptions and foundational texts of feminist studies. Indeed, if there was a recurrent theme in *Gender Trouble,* it lay in its repeated critique of the concept of foundation itself. The first paragraph offered an efficient précis of essentialist feminist thought. "For the most part, feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued" (1990: 1). Butler's text inserted Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida in its first two footnotes and, by page 2 countered the "for the most part" assumptions of feminist theory with the paradigmatic arguments of poststructuralist theory and its radically anti-essentialist implications.

> Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subject they subsequently come to represent . . . If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. (1990: 2)

Butler thus argued against the notion of a "prior" identity, psyche, or feminine language that could somehow exist before or beyond the productive operations of discursive regulation. She followed the Foucauldian articulation with a Derridean critique of the subject: "In effect, the law produces and then conceals the notion of a 'subject before the law' in order to invoke that discursive formation as a naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law's own regulatory hegemony" (2). The rest of *Gender Trouble* came to terms with the impact of these opening statements. Butler reviewed and resituated key arguments in critical, social, and feminist theory by thoroughly testing and incorporating poststructuralist positions on identity and representation.

Butler's philosophical intertexts were wide-ranging. She invoked Descartes, Leibniz, Engels, Marx, Nietzsche, and Lévi-Strauss. While the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin was not explicitly cited in *Gender Trouble,* Austin's sense of the performative appeared in various parts of the text. The notion that language could be constitutive rather than simply expressive fits nicely with her argument on the power of discourse to produce that which it

sought to describe. Working with the notion of Woman as a discursive "effect" and against the idea of a female consciousness "before the Law," Butler also reconsidered a variety of familiar feminist texts and intertexts, including the work of Jacques Lacan, Joan Rivière, and Gayle Rubin. Arguing that Lacan was imprecise in his theorizing of "masquerade," she suggested various possible interpretations. "Does it serve primarily to conceal or repress a pregiven femininity, a feminine desire which would establish an insubordinate alterity to the masculine subject and expose the necessary failure of masculinity?" (1990: 48). The belief in an "insubordinate alterity" and in masculinity's "failure" would have been embraced relatively easily by a feminist movement that wanted female resistance and self-determination. Indeed, Sue-Ellen Case isolated and redefined masquerade by foregrounding the insubordinate alterities of butch-femme performance and by counting on "the males' recognition of defeat" (1989: 291). Butler, however, emphasized a somewhat different reading. "Or is masquerade the means by which femininity itself is *first* established, the exclusionary practice of identity formation in which the masculine is effectively excluded and installed as outside the boundaries of a feminine gendered position?" (1990: 48). Working with the assumption of regulation as simultaneously constraining and productive – and with an anti-essentialist critique of the subject – Butler's text argued that female identity came into being through a process that simultaneously negated it. A similarly structured argument informed her reading of Gayle Rubin. Rubin's discussion of the over-polarizing operations of the sex/gender system "sets the stage," argued Butler, "of a Foucaultian critique" (1990: 72). Focusing on Rubin's reading of the incest taboo as simultaneously prohibitive and constitutive, Butler asked whether it could be "reconceived as a productive power that inadvertently generates several cultural configurations of gender" including the assumption of sexual difference in the first place (1990: 72). Paralleling Elin Diamond's move in her redefinition of sexual difference within feminist theatre, Butler questioned the notion of biological sex as existent prior to gendering, radicalizing Rubin's insights into the sex/gender system in order to undo the sex/gender distinction itself.

The final chapters of *Gender Trouble* tried to come to terms with the significance of these arguments for activism. These pages

would be the most often read, remembered, misread, and debated. These pages would also propel and confuse the status of theatricality as a term and a practice during the course of the next decade. Given the gendered subject's perpetual enmeshment in and constant citation of gender norms, conventional notions of liberatory action or subversive alterity were not possible in Butler's frame. She thus advocated the performance of "gender parody" as a way of differently citing gender normalization. It was here that she proposed drag performance as a mode that "fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity . . . *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*" (1990: 137, emphasis in original). Redeploying terms such as imitation, "cross-dressing," drag, and parody, Butler made alternative use of what sounded like a theatrical language. In a model that could not subscribe to conventional notions of a self-determining feminist resistance, parodic repetition became a form of political practice. "The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat, or indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (148). While the language may have sounded familiarly theatrical, however, a particular distinction lay in the "complex temporality" that Butler theorized, one in which neither the actor nor gender norms preexisted each other. Parody was Butler's way of imagining a political practice within what was still a recursive process, that is, the performative means by which representation installs a gender that it seems to describe. Finally, queer theories of performativity emerged in tandem with this radically anti-essentialist critique of gender; the recursion of identity formation was key to both theoretical developments. Whether that recursion was necessarily "theatrical" remained unclear. The "queer" theoretical move was thus related but not wholly equivalent to either feminist or gay and lesbian studies. As such, it also had an attenuated relationship to the field of feminist theatre and performance. Fields and concepts would become elided and equated, of course, ultimately creating confusing assumptions about epistemological boundaries, "burying complicities" and intellectual kinships whose resilience still confuses us now.

II

In many ways, all three of these theorists came close to theorizing parallel modes of theatricality. For Diamond, a Brechtian feminist theatre would defamiliarize the ideological operations of the sex/gender system. For Case, a dynamic and self-conscious butch-femme masquerade displayed and "camped up" the reaction formations of feminine masquerade. For Butler, a drag performance of gender parody would repeat but displace the norms of gender performativity. All of these theorists attempted to address a poststructuralist awareness of gender normalization. They were all critical of a homogenized notion of "women's experience," and all were critical of feminist homophobia. Many of their intertexts – Lacan, Rivière, Rubin, Foucault, Derrida – were the same, even if they were put to different use. Most significantly, Diamond, Case, and Butler all used a performance vocabulary to face the mixed metaphors and epistemological conundrums of late-twentieth-century feminist and critical theory. This meant conceiving of theatricality as something that worked within as well as against the conventions it sought to critique. It meant finding a way to "resist" domination while remaining aware of its pervasiveness. In other words, it meant deploying both the conservative and progressive dimensions of theatricality within the same theory; sometimes theatricality was invoked as a norm (feminine masquerade), sometimes as an action (feminist masquerade); sometimes these two axes were given different labels, and sometimes the same term was re-theorized. Whether it was *Gestus*, camp, or drag, however, a counter-gender theatricality could no longer install itself unproblematically outside patriarchal ideology or inside an uncontaminated feminist subject. Instead, these savvy performances would use the techniques of defamiliarization, of irony, and of parody. They would have the both/and character, the yes/but quality that characterized so many critical theories of resistance in the 1990s.

Diamond, Case, and Butler, however, would not find themselves entirely allied with each other over the course of the next decade. To track the ways in which their differences would be emphasized (and the ways in which complicity would be buried) tells us something about the conceptual ambivalences of feminism and queer theory as well as about theatricality and performativity.

As a presumably "experimental" or "active" medium, theatre could be undone as much as enabled by queer theories of performativity. One central factor to consider – and one that has been shadowing this argument – revolved around the critique of presence. Like other insights associated with poststructuralism, the critique of presence unsettled conventional assumptions of Western metaphysics and, with them, some of the assumptions of theatrical discourse. Derrida's critique of orality and embodiment stalled some of the central features by which proponents of theatre and performance art argued for performance's exceptionalism. When Derrida asserted that the desire for presence – an unmediated state of Being outside of writing, textuality, and inscription – was an epiphenomenon of Writing itself, his move kept scholars of theatre and speech from appealing to embodiment and orality in purely celebratory terms. References to the body and to the spoken, to immediacy, spontaneity, and presence now sounded naive, literal, unsophisticated, and reductive. In actuality, there was nothing about Derrida's argument about Writing that made it impossible to study bodies and speech. In fact, theatricality's flexible essentialism means that it does not necessarily occupy one position in a critique of presence. Theatre's longstanding associations with artifice, figuration, and representation suggest that it could function as the ultimate figure of deconstructionist self-difference. At the same time, its assumed status as a "co-present" medium in "real-time" makes theatre ripe for caricature within deconstruction. Theatrical discourse constantly vacillates between these sensibilities. "This is about copies," some might assert; "this is about real bodies" another group will respond, all of them waving hands in the air or bringing fists to the table depending upon context, convenience, and polemics. In the late-twentieth century, a number of contexts emphasized the latter set of associations, however, and often with a negative spin. Not only did Derrida use performance-based examples – of speech, of Antonin Artaud – in his critiques of metaphysical naiveté, influential figures such as art historian Michael Fried used the word "theatrical" as a synonym for literality (Derrida 1974; 1978, Fried 1967). Hence, at a moment in intellectual history when it became fashionable to be associated with the figural, critical theorists linked theatre to the literal real.[4]

The impact of the critique of presence on the theorizing of theatricality paralleled its impact on feminism. Since feminism too laid claims to the "body" and to "experience," such references could also sound reductive – especially when viewed in hindsight. When proponents of "feminist theatre" such as Elin Diamond and Sue-Ellen Case reviewed their earlier work, they were both placed in the position of defending themselves against accusations of metaphysical naiveté. For Diamond, this meant returning to her earlier discussion of the "female body" – reasserting that in no way had she suggested that such a body was "just there, live, unmediated." So important was it by the mid-1990s "to be clear about this point" that Diamond elected to reprint the entire passage in italics (1997: 52). Sue-Ellen Case created a different "amulet to ward off haunting spirits," however, remaining skeptical of the political and disciplinary effects of the deconstructionist critique (1996: 6). As she had earlier located the butch-femme aesthetic in "what is generally referred to as 'presence'" (1989: 290), so she remained unwilling to accept the argument of Writing's pervasiveness and supercession. Joined to a theory of performativity, the deconstructionist move was for her ultimately "a privileging of print culture" (1996: 17). Arguing that the critical context surrounding performativity was "burying the live body" of theatricality, Case thus found it necessary for theatre, for feminism, and for women to "bring home the meat" of live performance and, in a partnered move, to "recharge essentialism" (1996: 17, 186, 11).[5] Some might argue that, when Derrida and others referred to Writing, they did not intend to refer to "print" per se. And when theorists of performativity referred to citational processes, they did not assume that citations only occurred in print texts. What Case indirectly identified, however, is how the disavowals of an academic institutional context can exert unintended pressures and exacerbate disciplinary inertias. The principle that Writing is everywhere – that there is "nothing outside the text" – does not necessarily encourage disciplinary expansion. And in this context and at this intellectual moment, any reference to bodies or to speech can prompt the accusation of essentialism and intellectual naiveté – whether in feminism, or theatre, or feminist theatre.

In addition to "presence," a second theoretical conundrum contributed to a theatricality/performativity opposition:

specifically, the issue of "choice" inside the operations of performance. Butler's extrapolation of Derrida for feminism and for speech act theory emphasized the absence of a pre-juridical consciousness that could formulate intention and will before and outside of the Law. The absence of such a preexistent consciousness or identity was fundamental to both her critique of feminism and her theorizing of performativity. In the delight and furor that followed *Gender Trouble*'s publication, however, the most common misreading assumed the presence of a self-consciously performing agent behind the performance of gender. Butler took great pains in numerous discussions to correct this notion. In "Critically Queer" – republished later in *Bodies That Matter* – her statement explicitly critiqued the concept of will and choice – and did so by distinguishing performativity from performance.

> In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that is performed is therefore the "truth" of gender; performance as bounded "act" is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performance and in that sense cannot be taken as a fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice"; further, what is "performed" works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake. (1993: 234)

When taken back to the context of feminist politics, this kind of statement was hard to swallow and would ultimately drive a retroactive wedge between concepts of performativity and theatrical performance. The assumption of a conscious feminist performance was critical to the theorizing of several types of feminist and sexual activism in the early 1990s. As Butler said, "The publication of *Gender Trouble* coincided with a number of publications that did assert that 'clothes make the woman,' but I never did think that gender was like clothes, or that clothes make the woman" (231).

For Sue-Ellen Case, the presence of an intentional domain distinguished the feminine masquerader from the feminist masquerader. Case had also used her focus on the female actor – in artistic and social terms – to argue for the theatrical as a "more active" basis from which to theorize feminist practice. In *Domain Matrix*, Case remained suspicious of Butler's anti-metaphysical

theorizing, ultimately arguing that Butler's paradigms created a reversed metaphysics in which "regulatory norms" occupied the grammatical position of a primary, self-generating principle in lieu of a conscious agent (1996: 16).

For Elin Diamond, too, a feminist *Gestus* had entailed a "rigorous self-consciousness" that would expose the illusion of gender as something to "be put on or shed at will" (1988: 85). When her revised essay reappeared in *Unmaking Mimesis*, Diamond addressed the tension. She was more willing to accept Butler's theorizing of a "complex temporality" in which neither norms nor performer consciousness preceded the other. She also adjusted particular phrases to address a new discursive context, one in which clothes definitely did not make the woman. In lieu of "gender is exposed as a sexual costume" (1988: 85), she argued that "gender is relentlessly exposed as 'performativity,' as a system of regulatory norms which the subject cites to appear in culture" (1997: 46). Diamond also deleted the reference to a performer's ability to shed the illusion of gender "at will," substituting instead a lengthier discussion of the impact of queer performativity on feminist theatricality. Diamond's argument also made a disciplinary claim. While acknowledging that Butler's charge that theatrical performance "implies one who ontologically precedes and then fabricates gender effects . . . is irrefutable," she also suggested that it promoted a theoretical insularity.

> Though "performativity" is not an "act" but a "reiteration" or "citation," why should we restrict its iterative sites to theory and to the theorist's acts of seeing? . . . Performance, as I have written elsewhere, is the site in which performativity materializes in concentrated form, where the "concealed or dissimulated conventions" of which acts are mere repetitions might be investigated and reimagined. (1997: 46–7)

As Case charged that a critique of performativity circumscribed the range of favored analytic objects to "print" forms, so Diamond argued that the term required analytic expansion. Indeed, in an institutional context where scholars of theatrical performance still fought for legitimacy, Butler's use of the term "reduction" in reference to performance had a painfully exclusionary ring. Case and Diamond's arguments for theatre's "rigorous self-consciousness" were thus specifically directed at an institutional establishment (in higher education and elsewhere) that was

quite used to assuming that theatre people actually did not know what they were doing.[6] Less than a decade later, however, the critical context had changed. Feminist attempts to correct the assumption of theatre's irrelevant instability in the 1980s ended up justifying a critique of theatre's overly stable assumptions of relevancy in the 1990s. Just when it became theoretically interesting *not* to be an intentional agent, a theory of performativity "reduced" theatricality to a state of a simplistic intentionality.

III

Whether it was through a critique of presence, embodiment, and experience or a critique of action, will, and intention, proponents of theatrical performance could find their terms and their objects both critically central and abjectedly peripheral in late-twentieth-century theory. If we can be vigilant – rather than defensive or territorial – about how this paradox formed, perhaps we can learn to navigate it better. Theoretical explorations of both queerness and performativity prompted emulation, revision, and critique from feminist theatre theorists. Elin Diamond would see the need to delete references to the "sex-gender system" in *Unmaking Mimesis*, substituting "heterotopia of difference" in its place (1997: 48). Sue-Ellen Case's anti-essentialist theory of feminist theatricality looked more essentialist in hindsight. However, it is exactly this kind of retroactive attribution that is most dangerous for disciplinary discussion. Recall Judith Butler's statement in my opening epigraph, where she – the unintended architect of "queer theory" – called for more awareness of the mundane violence at work in the impulse to divide feminism and queer theory. In her analysis of the introduction to *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* and its quest to delimit the "proper object" of *sex* to gay and lesbian studies, Butler describes a complicated process of disavowal and terminological relocation, where "commonality must be denied, through elision or through the semantic splitting and redistribution of its constitutive parts" (1997a: 4–5). In Butler's example, feminists constructed a sex/gender paradigm that announced a distinction between sex as "sexual difference" (the opposition between men and women) and gender as social construction. In queer theory's retroactive construal, however, the feminist interest in "gender"

was redefined as the opposition between men and women (sexual difference), thereby equating the second term with a much less interesting association to which it had previously been opposed. Recall that it was precisely this "confused" equation that Elin Diamond, along with many other feminists, sought to redress in the late 1980s. A similar process of elision could be said to structure a theatricality/performativity binary, one where the quest for theoretical supercession can also prompt a semantic splitting and redistribution. It is then that questions such as those I posed in my introduction start to have more urgency for some scholars and seem irrelevant to others. For theatre scholars, the relation between theatricality and performativity is more pressing, and a cause for defensiveness, in a theoretical context where the latter term has intellectual currency. For non-theatre scholars with an interest in performativity, the question about its relation to theatricality is perhaps pressing and more pesky, something that does not seem to require complex treatment in order to secure intellectual legitimacy. Nevertheless, to engage theatricality is to engage both a longstanding association with the figural as well as a longstanding debate about the intentionality of the actor. That history, however, can be conveniently sidestepped by the frame of performativity, one that equates theatre with the real and the intentional in order to celebrate (or condemn) theories of performativity for their engagement with the play of representation.

To elide and align completely the debates in gender studies with those of theatricality and performativity would be extreme. However, the articulations of gender theory and of performance theory do share in a similar "anti-historical" act of disavowal in the shaky quest for intellectual transcendence. The anti-essentialist dimensions of the "first" term (feminism, theatre) are backgrounded by the discourse surrounding the "next" term (queer, performativity) in order to prop up the latter's claims to radical anti-essentialism. In this relational process, feminism and theatre are caricatured retroactively as bastions of political and formal essentialism. Proponents of both feminism and theatre, it should be noted, can participate in the same process of partial recall. Resistances to both queer theory and theories of performativity often have an essentialist inertia, making claims to "experience," "embodiment," "ground," and the "real" in order to stall the presumably groundless and "textualist" spin of

poststructuralist theorizing. In the process, all of these moves participate in the "burial" of both feminism and theatricality as arenas of representational complexity in favor of performativity as the operant theoretical category.

Delineating the "proper object" of theatricality is a difficult endeavor due both to the term's essentialist flexibility and to the shifting relational contexts in which it is theorized. In this complicated scenario, it is perhaps most important to be vigilant about the shaky hierarchies, chronologies, oppositions, equations, and synecdochic fallacies that we bring to bear on this process. For those of us who have a professional commitment to theatre as a discrete event and a valued practice, the invocation of a T-word has certain stakes. For many of us, the metaphors of social theory are attached to specific objects, disciplines, and institutional locations. Just as a term such as "juridical" may have specific resonances for legal scholars, so a term such as "theatrical" rings more intensely and acutely in the ears of theatre and performance scholars who seek legitimacy for their favorite objects of study. Moreover, there are gendered reasons why debates about theatricality have become particularly difficult as we move from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. The issue of sexuality – and particularly a sexuality that exposed the self-difference of identity – was an intrinsic part of feminist discussion. The self-difference of identity was, furthermore, part of feminist theatrical discussion as well. Elin Diamond theorized the "not, but" of deconstructive sexuality within feminist discourse. That such a thought-structure would become associated with queer theory and performativity – sometimes to the exclusion of feminism and theatricality – testifies to our habits of disciplinary forgetting as well as to an unequal field of institutional power. When it comes to disciplinary allegiances and oppositions, it might also be important to proceed with caution. We might be careful of equating a field with a concept, of assuming that one scholar can stand in for an entire field, of homogenizing distinct inquiries into entire fields, or of assuming that one field necessarily "preceded" the other. For instance, to study performativity is not equivalent to being a "performance studies" scholar; indeed there is a disciplinary strain within the latter so committed to a discourse of presence, practice, and intention that its assumptions would seem very nearly the opposite of those who work on

performativity – and more aligned with those who work on theatre (at least some theatres). Similarly, queer theory is not equivalent to "gay/lesbian studies"; indeed, there is a disciplinary strain within the latter so committed to a discourse of presence, practice, and intention that its assumptions would seem nearly the opposite of those who work on queer theory – and more aligned with those who work on feminism (at least some feminisms).

Finally, when coming to terms with theatricality's flexible essentialism, we might also recognize that essentialism is itself relationally produced and sometimes an unintended effect. Feminism and theatre are construed as essentialist only through a process of selective association and relational remembering. Furthermore, for all its critiques of normalization, queer theory can have normalizing effects. In 1989, Case foreshadowed the dangers of "contemporary theory seem[ing] to open the closet door to invite the queer to come out, transformed as a new, postmodern subject" (288). By 1997, Judith Butler acknowledged the misogyny perpetuated by a queer "coming out" that excluded gender from sexual critique (1997a: 23). Meanwhile, no person, argument, term, or field can be said to be purely essentialist or anti-essentialist. When Case elected to "recharge essentialism," she appealed to an earlier time when feminist theory was "describing a life – a full time commitment that is more inclusive than a vocation, or a delimited goal." She contrasted this effort to make a life with "the work in the late 1980s [that] celebrates slippage, setting oscillation against full-time political struggle" (1996: 153, 155). In 2000, Routledge published the tenth anniversary issue of *Gender Trouble*. In a new preface, Judith Butler – the critic who would be repeatedly slammed for neutralizing the conditions under which "life" could be described – reminded us that the legibility of life, in all its variety, had always been her hope. She invoked a personal history in which she came to understand "something of the violence of gender norms" – an uncle, gay cousins, lost jobs, lovers, and homes (2000: xix). She wrote, therefore, "from a desire to live, to make life possible, and to rethink the possible as such . . . This book is written then as part of the cultural life of a collective struggle that has had, and will continue to have, some success in increasing the possibilities for a livable life for those who live, or try to live, on the sexual margins" (xx, xxvi). By offering her readers "a sense of solace that there

is someone here," Judith Butler herself could be said to engage in an essentializing act (xvii). Of course, the fact that she lodged the reminder within a discussion of language and subjectification unsettled any secure reference to that person or to that here. In their entirety, her statements seem to describe vulnerability while at the same time to acknowledge that such descriptions are part of a citational process. Emotions are generated, and they are no less volatile and no less felt for being constituted. Proponents of theatricality should be the first to acknowledge the possibility, the viability, and the necessity of such a speech act. And, *pace* past repudiations, perhaps none of us should be surprised to find out that Judith Butler "can act" after all.

NOTES

1. I would thus distinguish theatricality's flexible essentialism from, say, Gayatri Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism" within feminist and postcolonial discourse. I wish to thank graduate students enrolled in my Fall 2000 course in performance theory for their enthusiasm, insight, and patience as I tested the arguments of this essay.
2. See Catherine MacKinnon (1987) and Andrea Dworkin (1979). Vonce (1984) and Benjamin, Snitow, and Stansell (1983) responded to various ramifications of the anti-pornography movement.
3. Feminist encounters with Foucault's critique of sexuality include Jana Sawicki (1991), Teresa de Lauretis (1987), and of course Gayle Rubin. Feminist encounters with psychoanalysis are also wide-ranging. Relevant intertexts for this historical moment include works by Julia Kristeva (1980) and Luce Irigaray (1985) within so-called French feminism as well as contemporaneous examples often within feminist film theory such as Kaja Silverman (1983), Jacqueline Rose (1986), Tania Modleski (1988), and Mary Ann Doane (1982) who, amongst others, developed and revised some of the initial connections made by Laura Mulvey (1975). The influence of deconstruction on feminism is both substantial and diffuse, perhaps best exemplified in this period by the work of Barbara Johnson (1987).
4. For a fuller argument on connections between literalism and theatricality, see chapter 4 of Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Such an assertion implies a much longer intellectual history than is possible to place in a footnote. For the purposes of this essay, however, one might consider the wide-ranging impact of Derrida and Paul de Man as well as the intellectual moment in which their ideas rose to prominence. In various essays and in work compiled in texts such as *Allegories of Reading* (1978, 1979), de Man's project continually addressed the figurative underpinnings of even apparently literal concepts. For more on the practice of figurative language, see Barbara Johnson (1987), Geoffrey Hartman (1975), Jonathan Culler (1982), and even Frank Lentricchia (ed.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1995), a student textbook in which "Figurative Language" receives its own lengthy entry.
5. While parts of *Domain Matrix* maintain these theatrical commitments, another recent Case essay seems to de-emphasize the possibilities of theatricality in the face of digital culture: "[W]e might see the performative as the characteristic mode of our time. From this vantage point, 'theatricality' is an impossibility, since hyperbole is impossible within the referencing process of the digital image, which is untied from the 'real' world" (Case 2002: 198–9).
6. Indeed, there is a longstanding discourse within theatre theory and performance practice against the notion of an actor's sovereign will and autonomous subjectivity, making the tendency to use "intention" to distinguish between performativity and performance somewhat erroneous. Interested readers will find that this issue is under debate throughout Marvin Carlson's transhistorical study in *Theories of the Theatre* (1993). Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion* (1985) explores eighteenth-century versions of this conundrum at length. Finally, much of what called itself "avant-garde" in twentieth-century performance experiment sought to displace actor intention, including Meyerhold's bio-mechanics, Bertolt Brecht's *Gestus*, and some of the Happenings of the late 1950s and 1960s.