

I think that this comes out most distinctly in discussions of trans gender. It becomes difficult to say whether the sexuality of the transgendered person is homosexual or heterosexual. The term "queer" gained currency precisely to address such moments of productive undecidability, but we have not yet seen a psychoanalytic attempt to take account of these cultural formations in which certain vacillating notions of sexual orientation are constitutive. This becomes most clear when we think about transsexuals who are in transition, where identity is in the process of being achieved, but is not yet there. Or, more emphatically, for those transsexuals who understand transition to be a permanent process. If we cannot refer unambiguously to gender in such cases, do we have the point of reference for making claims about sexuality? In the case of transgender, where transsexualism does not come into play, there are various ways of crossing that cannot be understood as stable achievements, where the gender crossing constitutes, in part, the condition of eroticization itself. In the film *Boys Don't Cry*,¹⁴ it seems that transgender is both about identifying as a boy and wanting a girl, so it is a crossing over from being a girl to being a heterosexual boy. Brandon Teena identifies as a heterosexual boy, but we see several moments of disidentification as well, where the fantasy breaks down and a tampon has to be located, used, and then discarded with no trace. His identification thus recommences, has to be reorchestrated in a daily way as a credible fantasy, one that compels belief. The girl lover seems not to know, but this is the not-knowing of fetishism, an uncertain ground of eroticization. It remains unclear whether the girlfriend does not know, even when she claims that she does not, and it is unclear whether she knows even when she claims to know. Indeed, one of the most thrilling moments of the film is when the girlfriend, knowing, fully reengages the fantasy. And one of the most brittle moments takes place when the girlfriend, knowing, seems no longer to be able to enter the fantasy fully. The disavowal not only makes the fantasy possible, but strengthens it, and on occasion strengthens it to the point of being able to survive a vowal.

Similarly, it would not be possible to say that Brandon's body stays out of the picture, and that this occlusion makes the fantasy possible, since it does enter the picture but only through the terms that the fantasy institutes. This is not a simple "denial" of anatomy, but the erotic deployment of the body, its covering, its prosthetic extension for the

purposes of a reciprocal erotic fantasy. There are lips and hands and eyes, the strength of Brandon's body on and in Lana, his/her girlfriend, arms, weight, and thrust. So it is hardly a simple picture of "disembodiment," and hardly "sad." When s/he desires his/her girlfriend's desire, what is it that s/he wants? Brandon occupies the place of the subject of desire, but s/he does not roll on his/her back in the light and ask his/her girl to suck off his/her dildo. Perhaps that would be too "queer," but perhaps as well it would kill the very conditions that make the fantasy possible for both of them. S/he works the dildo in the dark so that the fantasy can emerge in full force, so that its condition of disavowal is fulfilled. S/he occupies that place, to be sure, and suffers the persecution and the rape from the boys in the film precisely because s/he has occupied it too well. Is Brandon a lesbian or a boy? Surely, the question itself defines Brandon's predicament in some way, even as Brandon consistently answers the predicament by doing himself as a boy. It will not work to say that because Brandon must do himself as a boy that this is a sign that Brandon is lesbian. For boys surely do themselves as boys, and no anatomy enters gender without being "done" in some way.

Would it be any easier for us if we were to ask whether the lesbian who only makes love using her dildo to penetrate her girlfriend, whose sexuality is so fully scripted by apparent heterosexuality that no other relation is possible, is a boy or a "boy"? If she says that she can only make love as a "boy," she is, we might say, transgendered in bed, if not in the street. Brandon's crossing involves a constant dare posed to the public norms of the culture, and so occupies a more public site on the continuum of transgender. It is not simply about being able to have sex a certain way, but also about appearing as a masculine gender. So, in this sense, Brandon is no lesbian, despite the fact that the film, caving in, wants to return him to that status after the rape, implying that the return to (achievement of?) lesbianism is somehow facilitated by that rape, returning Brandon, as the rapists sought to do, to a "true" feminine identity that "comes to terms" with anatomy. This "coming to terms" means only that anatomy is instrumentalized according to acceptable cultural norms, producing a "woman" as the effect of that instrumentalization and normalizing gender even as it allows for desire to be queer. One could conjecture that Brandon only wants to be a public boy in order to gain the legitimate right to have sexual relations as he does, but such an explanation assumes that gender is merely instrumental

to sexuality. But gender has its own pleasures for Brandon, and serves its own purposes. These pleasures of identification exceed those of desire, and, in that sense, Brandon is not only or easily a lesbian.

Recognition and the Limits of Complementarity

Can gender complementarity help us here? Benjamin writes, "the critique of gender complementarity results in a necessary paradox: it at once upsets the oppositional categories of femininity and masculinity while recognizing that these positions inescapably organize experience."¹³ And right before this statement, she asks, "if we do not begin with the opposition between woman and man, with woman's negative position in that binary, we seem to dissolve the very basis for our having questioned gender categories in the first place." But what were those questions, and were they really posed in the right way? Were we right to presume the binary of man and woman when so many gendered lives cannot assume that binary? Were we right to see the relation as a binary when the reference to the tertiary is what permitted us to see the homosexual aims that run through heterosexual relationality? Should we have asked these questions of gender instead? At what psychic price does normative gender become established? How is it that presuming complementarity presumes a self-referential heterosexual that is not definitionally crossed by homosexual aims? If we could not ask these questions in the past, do they not now form part of the theoretical challenge for a psychoanalysis concerned with the politics of gender and sexuality, at once feminist and queer?

It is important to ask these questions in this way if what we want to do is offer recognition, if we believe that recognition is a reciprocal process that moves selves beyond their incorporative and destructive dispositions toward an understanding of another self whose difference from us is ethically imperative to mark. As I hope is clear, I do not have a problem with the norm of recognition as it functions in Benjamin's work, and think, in fact, that it is an appropriate norm for psychoanalysis. But I do wonder whether an untenable hopefulness has entered into her descriptions of what is possible under the rubric of recognition. Moreover, as I indicated above, I question specifically

whether overinclusiveness as she describes it can become the condition for the recognition of a separate Other, neither repudiated nor incorporated.

Let us turn first to the question of whether negation can be clearly separated from destruction, as Benjamin suggests. And then let us consider the Hegelian notion of recognition, emphasizing its ek-static structure and ask whether that is compatible with the model of overinclusiveness. How do such different models fare regarding the ethical question of whether they facilitate recognition, and in what form? Finally, what are the implications of these different notions of recognition for thinking about the self in relation to identity?

Benjamin clearly states that it has been her position since the publication of *The Bonds of Love* that "negation is an equally vital moment in the movement of recognition. Nor can any appeal to the acceptance of otherness afford to leave out the inevitable breakdown of recognition into domination."¹⁴ This represents her position published in 1998. And yet, since then she has moved away from this "inevitable breakdown." Whereas the earlier position seemed to claim that recognition presupposes negativity, her present one seems to imply that negativity is an occasional and contingent event that befalls recognition, but which in no sense defines it. She writes, for instance, that we should expect breakdowns in recognition," but that "destruction" can be surmounted: "destruction continues until survival becomes possible at a more authentic level." Recognition is the name given to this authentic level, defined as the transcendence of the destructive itself. It is subsequently described as a "dialogic" process" in which externality is recognized. The analyst in such a situation is not an idealization, for that is still a failure to release the analyst from internality. It is the Other as he or she breaks through either the ideal or the persecutory image that marks the "authentic" emergence of a dialogic encounter and the creation of what Benjamin refers to as "intersubjective space." My question is whether intersubjective space, in its "authentic" mode, is really ever free of destruction? And if it is free of destruction, utterly, is it also beyond the psyche in a way that is no longer of use for psychoanalysis? If the "third" is redefined as the music or harmony of dialogic encounter, what happens to the other "thirds?" The child who interrupts the encounter, the former lover at the door or on the phone, the past that cannot be reversed, the future that cannot be contained,