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Queer Citizens: the Structural Similarity between the post-Revolutionary Citizen and the Figure of the Homosexual

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M.A. Central European University, 1999

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
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2009

Abstract

Queer Citizens: the Structural Similarity between the post-Revolutionary Citizen and the Figure of the Homosexual

By Eszter Timar

The dissertation focuses on several conceptual presuppositions of modern Revolutionary citizenship arguing that a multifaceted, fundamental link connects the figure of the citizen and the figure of the (male) homosexual.
It traces this connection around notions of democratic transparency and the public sphere through a series of readings of mainly18th and 19th century texts from philosophy and literature in the light of theories of revolutionary citizenship and fraternity, queer theory, deconstructive philosophy, and social histories of the public sphere and masculinity.
First, relying mainly on Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*, Derrida's work on citationality, and texts by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler, I demonstrate a structural similarity between the modern figure of the homosexual and the figure of the actor by tracing a thread of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality to J.L. Austin's concept of performativity, and the way queer theory apprehends dominant cultural tropes of homosexuality.
Combining Hannah Arendt's philosophy of the revolution and Paul de Man's work on performative subjectivity, the second chapter traces the link between the actor and the citizen to the positing, performative force of the revolutionary declaration of the rights of man and citizen suggesting that these are metaphorical figures of the terms of the crucial tension between authenticity and inauthenticity instantiated by this performativity positing "man and citizen."
Next, I look at the concept of the homosexual closet and the post-Revolutionary public sphere. Reading Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* and drawing on Luc Boltanski's and Susan Maslan's analyses of modes of theatricality and spectatorship structuring this public sphere, I argue that *Adolphe*'s closet-like conflict coincides with these two modes and suggests that modern masculinity is shaped significantly in this superimposition.
Finally, I offer a reading of Hungarian novelist G. Thurzó's *Days and Nights* (1944), a closeted novel that, through making explicit its closeting intention, resists any readerly classification of gay, straight, in or out. Relying on Derrida's work on fraternity in *Politics of Friendship*, I argue that the novel effectuates this interpretive chaos by reconfiguring the aporetic terms of fraternity thus highlighting the tacit but powerful political dimension of the closet.

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago I reread a Hungarian novel, written in 1944, Gábor Thurzó's *Nappalok és éjszakák* (*Days and Nights*) as I was looking for gay literature from Hungary. I remembered having read this book several years earlier and discovering for myself that Hungary had at least one literary product featuring a romantic story between men before 1989 (when public discourse on homosexuality started as it became legal to found civil organizations, including LGBT NGOs). This was a story of two friends in a small Hungarian town and took place sometime between the two world wars. Two young men met in the story and became close friends. The friendship temporarily broke down the abusive relationship one of them, an actor, was living in with a rich widow. The other young man, an unmarried schoolteacher, the narrator of the story, is very passionate about the friendship and is heartbroken when after a while his friend the actor moves out of the hostel room that he was invited to share in order to rejoin the widow. He leaves the town and starts life anew in another at the other end of the country with his favorite pupil, a young boy he thus saves from the poverty of the boy's family. This was a novel of melancholia, passion, pain, emotional manipulation: the corniest romantic triangle imaginable.

The project I envisioned at the time, a project on a distinctively Eastern-European gay cultural history, changed in an instant when I got to a scene that I discuss in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. In this scene, the teacher is trying to convince the actor to accompany him to a prestigious soirée hosted by the director of the town's school. Some of his colleagues, the town's elders, as it were, are scheming to appease the rich

widow (whose financial support the town needs) by ushering the actor back into his relationship with her; and they pressure the teacher to cooperate by stressing that his friendship with the actor is not appropriate. Eager to conform to social norms, the teacher complies and, without disclosing the scheme, tries to relay the same pressure to conform to the actor. But the actor does not want to go and repudiates the teacher for being a coward, for even aspiring to appear to have a "natural," public friendship.

I was struck by the scene: this is a conflict about coming out but it is reversed completely, I felt. One of the friends wants to do what appears socially acceptable even if it is dishonest while the other refuses dishonest ways of avoiding public scorn. But the actual terms of being honest or dishonest are switched around: to appear in public would be the dishonest, cowardly act of conforming to social norms banning intimacy between men. This fictitious episode prompted me to think about the relationship between the public/private distinction and the closet. As a corollary, I also sensed that whatever enabled this curious switch of the terms of the closet was also connected to the fact that the novel as such was closeted; in other words, my interpretation of the plot as a romantic story made it a tacit narrative about an illicit relationship and not a simple story of a friendship.

The scene, and the novel in general, triggered several questions. What makes it possible for me to detect a closeted narrative and therefore a closeted narrative about coming out if the terms of coming out do not correspond to our contemporary understanding of the closet? To the extent that this closeted narrative on the closet suggests that its closeting hinges on a reversal of the terms of public and private in its treatment of coming out, it also asks about or highlights the relationship between coming

out as we know it and its intimate connection to the public/private distinction: outness, in its very name, conjures up associations of the openness of the political agora, while closetedness seems to conforms to the notion of privacy. It is in this framework of public and private that the terms of coming out make sense: to be closeted is to harbor an essential secret from some external gaze (perhaps even our own), while to be out means that we stop veiling this essential truth. When the novel reverses these terms and thereby calls attention to the agreement between the closet and the public/private distinction, it also necessarily highlights the connection between these concepts (public and private, out and closeted) and citizenship. For if the public sphere is the very space where citizens convene and interact freely, coming out and the closet are closely connected to citizenship as well. Another line of questions concerned the character of the actor: What is the relationship between the profession of this character and the "queerness" I immediately sense in him? In other words, why does an actor facilitate a gay reading so effortlessly? And if the reversed terms of coming out point to a link between citizenship and queerness, what is the relationship between citizenship and acting?

Gay identity, as we (post-Stonewall readers of literature) came to know it, has indeed a key feature that is shared by the concept of the post-Revolutionary citizen: both figures emerge in an act of declaration. As the citizen is effected politically by his own claim to the human rights he bears as a man, so is a gay identity effected by its declaration of coming out. These cases may seem dissimilar: the citizen becomes a citizen through declaring his rights, the homosexual becomes a homosexual by declaring his or her being a homosexual. In the light of a poststructuralist strand in theorizing

citizenship[1], it is the act of declaring that effectuates both the rights the citizen bears and his citizenship: the citizen as a subject appears in the moment of his declaration. We may say that the way gay identity is constructed socially is similar to citizenship with the exception that we do not need deconstructive philosophy to tease out its self-positing aspect: all it takes for someone to be a homosexual is to declare his or her homosexuality, first to him- or herself then to others. Strictly speaking, same-sex experience is neither a prerequisite nor a definitive proof of gay identity: people can identify as gay with no sexual experience, and people can identify as straight while regularly engaging in same-sex activities. Gay identity may be characterized by some consistent relation to same-sex desire, nevertheless, it is effectively constructed by the process or act of what we call coming out.

Tied to citizenship via the terms of public and private and the structure of a constitutive declaration, the modern figure of the homosexual seems to be something like the imprint of the citizen: it appears to display the self-positing mechanism of post-Revolutionary citizenship. It is this agreement between citizenship and the figure of the homosexual that the novel and its inverted coming out scene disturbs and thereby highlights. Michel Foucault argues in *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* that homosexuality is one of the guiding tropes of the concept of sexuality (the innermost core of a person) introduced by the dominant discourse of the nineteenth century. The era of the emergence of this new figure of the homosexual coincides with the consolidation of the Revolutionary discourse of democratic citizenship. While Foucault mostly discusses the significance of medical discourse in the emergence of homosexuality, the homosexual

[1] Exemplified by the work of Thomas Keenan, Etienne Balibar and Claude Lefort.

also appeared from the start as a figure who claims rights. Károly Kertbeny, who coined the term "homosexual," did so in his efforts to shift the discursive current of medicalizing homosexuality to a framework of rights.[2] As early as 1869, Engels in a letter written to Marx expresses his concern that the "urnings" will no doubt triumph in securing their rights, leaving regular straight people like himself oppressed.[3]

But if the homosexual is in fact an imprint of the citizen, then why are the rights claims made in the name of homosexuals met with such vehement resistance everywhere in the West or in the democracies characterizing present Judeo-Christian societies, even if this vehement resistance takes on very different forms? From hate killings in the United States to a relatively religion-free homophobia of Hungary,[4] gay rights never get acknowledged with the ease one would expect from a claim made in perfect agreement with the democratic template of declarations.

This is the question of my dissertation. Why is the figure of the rights-claiming homosexual at the same time an iconic appearance of the discourse of modern democracy and modernity and also something deeply resisted by this discourse? If both advocacy of gay rights and its opposition stating that homosexuality, as well as other non-heteronormative sexualities, threaten society are modern phenomena, then the modern figure of the homosexual as a rights-bearing citizen is something that the current

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[2] See Judit Takács, "The Double Life of Kertbeny," in *Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics*, ed. Gert Hekma, 26-40 (Amsterdam: Mosse Foundation, 2004).

[3] See Andrew Parker, "Unthinking Sex: Marx, Engels, and the Scene of Writing," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner, 19-42 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[4] Two of the slogans from the violent 2008 demonstration against the annual Gay Pride March were "Aberration is Provocation" and "Difference, clear out to a different place!" Stripped of any moral sentiment, these slogans clearly indicate that gay rights trouble the normal concept of community.

discourse of democratic citizenship cannot fail to both propagate and oppose. In the dissertation I will look at this aporetic characteristic of the modern figure of the homosexual through examining a limited arena of modern political philosophy and reading a limited number of key texts from within that philosophy and subsequent scholarship that is most sensitive to constitutive aporias in political thinking: the deconstructive arguments laid out by Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man (as well as the texts they rely on when interpreting political theory and subsequent scholarship relying, in turn, on their work).

As a point of departure, following one of the great closeting moves of Thurzó's novel, i.e. that the queer character is an actor, I take a look at the compatibility between the figure of the actor and the modern figure of the (male) homosexual. In the first chapter, I will suggest a structural similarity between these figures and suggest that the political stakes of this agreement between them connects the figure of the homosexual to the modern political discourse of antitheatricality.

By the term "modern political discourse of antitheatricality," I refer to a specific tendency within a more general discourse of antitheatricality characterizing Western or European metaphysics. This vast discourse known as the topos of *teatrum mundi* presents the idea that representation, conceived as imitation (mimesis), entails a loss of value present in the original object of representation but lacking in its copy. The theater is deployed in this discourse as a metaphor condensing this idea: it is said to represent reality while losing its reality as what is represented appears real without being real. Real and imitation, then, are set up in an opposition where the first term is imbued with a positive value while the second term operates as a hollow and thus devalued semblance

of the first. Luc Boltanski sums up four related currents of the discourse: it may signal the denunciation of hypocrisy; it may be deployed to present our reality as a mere illusion, a non-reality; it may further posit a more authentic reality beyond ours; or it may facilitate a different view holding that our reality is the performance of a play written by God.[5] Out of these currents originating in ancient Greece, I will only discuss a restricted variant of the first: a political discourse denouncing the hypocrisy of acting in relation to republican citizenship in modernity.

This particular part of a general discourse of antitheatricality posits an opposition between the republican citizen and the figure of the actor. The actor is the opposite of everything the citizen is supposed to be: if the citizen is a subject with a consistent inner core that he displays honestly in public, the actor wears a mask that hides a radical lack of an inner consistency.

The first chapter attempts to show that some key texts suggest a robust similarity between the figure of the actor in the modern political discourse of democracy and the modern figure of the homosexual. The most important texts I am reading in this chapter are J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* and Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*. I discuss Jacques Derrida's analysis of Austin's famous exclusion of the "doctrine of the etiolations of language," in "Signature, Event, Context," and how Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in their introduction of *Performativity and Performance*, discover queerness in what Austin excludes as well as shift the terms of this exclusion from Derrida's citationality to theatricality. In other words, I suggest that their discovery is tacitly aided by a consensus on the similarity between the actor and the homosexual. I

[5] Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25-26.

continue by looking at Rousseau's text on spectacles as he gives a rigorous account of the exclusion of the actor and theatricality from the realm of republican politics. In order to show that indeed, the figure of the homosexual is like this actor, I give a combined account of Butler's treatment of claiming homosexual identity and Sedgwick's arguments on the particulars of the homosexual closet and coming out. I conclude that both the figure of the actor and the figure of the homosexual appear as a combination of counterfeiting and hollowness.

In the second chapter, focusing on the citizen's declaration of his rights, I am looking at the way the template of revolutionary citizenship relies on attributes that the modern political discourse of antitheatricality wishes to abject from citizenship. This argument is prompted by some of the corollary insights from the previous chapter: that the actor in fact figures that which is inherent in citizenship but is unthinkable by the discourse of citizenship (that the citizen's authenticity can only mask an underlying inauthenticity or, that this authenticity can only be set up through some prior operation of inauthenticity). To formulate this argument, I will turn to Hannah Arendt's thoughts on the meaning of revolution and what B. Honig identified as Arendt's performative theory of declaration,[6] and Paul de Man's "Shelley Disfigured" read as an argument on political subjectivity and citationality.

In the third chapter I consider Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* as it is read by James Creech who argues that this canonical text from the period forging modern masculinity displays, in fact, a proto-closet in the main character (who is characterized by a social dissent Creech interprets as a gender dissent and who confesses his failing in his

[6] See for instance, B. Honig, "Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic," *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 85, No. 1 (1991): 97-113.

masculinity due to a depraving dishonesty in his character). Creech also argues that since Constant's personal diaries suggest that he had some same-sex experience, the closet discovered in *Adolphe* is indeed a gay closet. I rely on Creech's decoding the closet structure in *Adolphe* but I attempt to show that this closet originates less in some ahistorical constant homosexuality but is a corollary of the discourse of Revolutionary citizenship that, in demanding transparency from citizens (following the political discourse of antitheatricality), it necessarily posits a prior secrecy. In other words, I argue that the modern homosexual closet is conceptually inextricable from the posited secrecy organizing the political public sphere after the French Revolution (here I rely mostly on Susan Maslan's work on antitheatricality and the French Revolution). I also show that the social dissent interpreted by Creech as a gender dissent and therefore a symptom of an ahistorical homosexuality is in fact also something that originates in the modern discourse of the public sphere and its citizens (here I rely on Luc Boltanski's theory of the democratic public sphere as a space for pure spectatorship, from his book *Distant Suffering*).

In the fourth chapter, following the suggestion that modern homosexuality is connected to problems within citizenship regarding the public sphere and publicness, I finally turn to Thurzó's *Days and Nights* containing the particular scene of "coming out by staying in" that I mentioned earlier as the springboard for this dissertation. I will argue that the narrative's reflexive closeting produces a queer text that a conventional gay reading (following the work of James Creech and Lee Edelman) cannot satisfactorily "out." Satisfactory outing is troubled not because the text offers itself in any way as not queer but because its queerness exceeds conventional binaries of sexual difference by

suggesting that the closet, along with a clear distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, as well as love and friendship, can only function in a certain constellation of the public discourse of fraternity. For the theoretical background on the discourse of fraternity, I rely on Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*. This chapter suggests that the closet is inextricable from and seems to be governed by the affective discourse of citizenship.

In sum, in this dissertation I focus on several aspects of modernity's concept of republican democracy in order to suggest a connection between the modern figure of homosexuality and that of the modern citizen and argue that the figure of homosexuality, his claims to legal acknowledgement are both irresistible and unacceptable for democratic thinking and its underlying definition of community; and that this aporia highlights a similarly aporetic relationship of certain limitations and potentials within the concept of democracy.

How does the literary help the thinking of democracy? What kind of interventions in political philosophy can one make with the help of the literary? And what is the significance of certain literary texts, always singular, in the project of contesting, and indeed, uncovering, the most basic assumptions of democratic thought?

Derrida has provided a forceful argument on the theoretical connection between what he calls the literary and literature and democracy. In presenting this argument, I will rely on his essay "Passions: An Oblique Offering," and Derek Attridge's interview with Derrida in "This Strange Institution Called Literature."[7] Derrida considers literature a relatively modern institution intimately connected to democracy and he proposes that

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[7] Jacques Derrida, "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering,'" in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 5 – 35 and "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida" in *Acts Of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 33-76.

democracy and literature always appear and disappear together. Let me quote (with minor omissions) a relatively short excerpt from "Passions" as it sketches up, in a most succinct manner, this connection before I expand on the steps within its argument that are most relevant to the question as it related to my dissertation project.

> Literature is a modern invention, inscribed in conventions and institutions which, to hold on to just this trait, secures in principle its right to say everything. Literature thus ties its destiny to a certain non-censure, to the space of democratic freedom (freedom of the press, freedom of speech, etc.). No democracy without literature; no literature without democracy […]. But in no case can one dissociate one from the other […]. The possibility of literature, the legitimation that society gives it, the allaying of suspicion of terror with regard to it, all that goes together—politically—with the unlimited right to ask any question, to suspect all dogmatism, to analyze every presupposition, even those of ethics or the politics of responsibility.
>
> But this authorization to say everything paradoxically makes the author an author who is not responsible to anyone, not even to himself, for whatever the persons or the characters of his works, thus of what he is supposed to have written himself, say and do, for example. This authorization to say everything (which, moreover, together with democracy, as the apparent hyper-responsibility of a 'subject') acknowledges a right to absolute non-response, just where there can be no question of responding, of being able to respond. This non-response is more original and more secret than the modalities of power and duty because it is fundamentally heterogeneous to them. We find there a hyperbolic condition of democracy which seems to contradict a certain determined and historically limited concept of such a democracy […].This contradiction also indicates the task […] for any democracy to come.[8]

In Derrida's view, the connection between literature and democracy consists of the shared combination of a constitutive lack of an assignable essence, and a related openness to internal difference. Literature is the institution of saying everything. The ability, or perhaps even the demand, of saying everything (unconstrained by any limits of what is sayable according to some governing principle) is a form of an openness to difference because it by definition always offers the possibility of contesting any definition of truth

[8] Derrida, "Passions: An Oblique Offering," 23.

according to these various governing principles. This also implies a radical suspension of referentiality. One of Derrida's favored examples is autobiographical discourse (exemplified by Rousseau, Nietzsche, or Gide)[9] which makes it unclear whether its "I" refers to the person saying (or writing) within it or, through the example of that person, it refers to an abstract "I"-ness. This also entails that the literary may contain other kinds of texts: legal, philosophical, religious texts may feature within the literary without effectively changing its literariness: it "will never be scientific, philosophical, conversational."[10] Literature's ability to function as a realm different from any of these textualities (which will, then, differentiate themselves from the literary based on their shared characteristic that not everything can be said within them i.e., that they are bound and issued by their respective principle of reference) entails that there "is no literature without a suspended relation to meaning and reference."[11] This does not mean that literature does not refer but that the right to say everything necessarily renders it impossible that any specific principle of reference could govern it. The radical suspension of unambiguous referentiality (what Derrida calls "thetic referentiality"[12]), then, means that the literary will not have any identifiable internal essence as a text. Indeed, the literary is characterized by the "absence of specificity and the "absence of object."[13]

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[9] Derrida, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" 35.

[10] Ibid., 47.

[11] Ibid., 48.

[12] Ibid., 47.

[13] Ibid., 42.

The same combination of openness to difference and a lack of internal and cohesive essence also characterize democracy. Democracy is the form of government that is based on public debate and contestation: it is always, in principle, open to a political version of the literary unconstrained demand to say everything, i.e. free speech. Like Derrida's concept of literature, democracy is always in principle open to and is based on the right to say everything, which includes the right to contest all of the assumptions and principles guiding it as well. This also entails, in principle, an always present potential for change: democracy is a form of rule that can change itself from within through a process of contestation. In other words, democracy is, like literature, characterized by a certain lack of a consistent internal essence, a "lack of specificity." It is this lack of essence that Plato identified as the inherent danger of democracy when in the *Republic* he described democracy as a constitution that includes all other kinds of constitutions,[14] similarly to Derrida's definition of the literary.

The suspension of referentiality, however, creates this space of saying everything rather obliquely: "it shows nothing without dissimulating *what* it shows and *that* it shows it."[15] In other words, the images it shows are "illusions" and therefore, and perhaps even more significantly, that it appears to show any object is also an illusion. But this oblique dissimulation (and in the choice of this term, Derrida also identifies a certain theatricality at the heart of literature) is remarkably honest about the referentiality it suspends: in the open act of dissimulation it highlights that the referentiality operating in non-literary discourses is the function of their institution. For my purposes in this dissertation, it is

[14] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 375-376 (557 c-d).

[15] Derrida, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" 48, emphasis original.

particularly significant that theatricality enters the description of the literary operation in its performative function. This may suggest that while the literary is not the same as the theatrical, theatricality does permeate the literary in its performativity that shows (even if obliquely) that thetic referentiality is never the question of truth and untruth but instead a question of law.

Every act of law-giving and explaining will then resist the literary. In the first chapter, I will look at Austin's act of excluding what Derrida and (and Parker and Sedgwick) identify as the literary or the theatrical from the theorizable group of utterances for the philosophy of language. Austin makes this gesture while attempting to shift the thinking of language from imagining it as describing reality in truth claims to conceiving of it as making utterances with intentions and in contexts geared towards those utterances to achieve certain outcomes. In the act of setting up explaining language, his theorizing aim cannot fail to exclude instances that, disconnecting speaker, his intentions and the utterance, disturb the referentiality demanded by any thetic framework. As I will argue in that chapter, this exclusion repeats an exclusion of the theatrical in a political discourse of citizenship (where the citizen is the figure who is seamlessly one with his will and corresponding utterances). If the literary shares decisive characteristics with the queerness of the abjected actor, then a careful reading of queer literary texts cannot fail to yield productive insights about the workings of the political framework of citizenship that denounces it as inconsequential.

The dissertation has several limitations. It only concerns a very limited scope of theoretical texts. The scholarship I am relying on consists of the following: a significant part of Derrida's work on modern political philosophy as it is exemplified by Rousseau's

writings (and some select scholarship on Rousseau's relevant work); some related deconstructive scholarship with a political relevance by Paul de Man and Claude Lefort; a very limited selection from Hannah Arendt on the French Revolution, and some other contemporary political theorists of literature whose work corroborates and connects my specific interest regarding the link between the figure of the homosexual and the figure of the modern citizen: Susan Maslan, Luc Boltanski. These texts all share either an explicit interest in the performative as it was presented by Austin's speech act theory, or contain sensitivity to performativity within the discourse of citizenship (e.g. Arendt). Curiously this sensitivity to performativity also seems to mean a sensitivity to a poststructuralist current in theorizing that seeks to uncover the rhetorical mechanism in setting up the subject as authentic, prior to and in control of his intentions, speech and acts. There is, then, a certain coherence across these texts and to the extent that my arguments work, they do so within the scope of this coherence.

I have not included any inquiry into other strands of political theory, nor have I asked questions regarding the relation between modernity's discourse of antitheatricality and the specific political discourse of antitheatricality that I sample here: based on the Derridean-Rousseauean angle I choose for my research that opens up a question exceeding the scope of this dissertation, the question of the relationship of Rousseau's so-called political and so-called personal works.

Even though the arguments seem to complement the Foucauldean theory of the emergence of modern homosexuality, the dissertation does not include an assessment of this theory in general, or vis-à-vis my interest in the link between the figure of the citizen and the figure of the homosexual. This latter line of inquiry would conclude in an

argument about the relationship between the Foucauldean notion of governmentality and the modern political discourse of antitheatricality.

In other words, I do not consider the arguments in this dissertation to be exhaustive. Instead, I consider it as an initial study whose chapters suggest a structural link between modernity's democratic concept of citizenship and its concept of homosexuality: the latter seems to be shaped and at the same time deployed by the discourse governing the former. In order to make this link visible, I will draw on some literary texts and look at the connection between the discourse of citizenship, the public/private distinction of post-Revolutionary democracy, its concept of fraternity and the modern figure of the homosexual as it emerges during in the nineteenth century. In the discourse of modern democracy, citizenship hinges on the public/private distinction that is structured by spectatorship and transparency. Because transparency necessarily evokes a limit in the figure of obstacle to clear vision, secrecy will be elementary in setting up this public sphere. This secrecy will be coded primarily sexual because citizenship itself is primarily sexual: it is imagined as a fraternity. The sexual secret conjured by a public sphere of transparency will be a secret disturbing the fraternal link between the citizens.

CHAPTER 1

ACTING WEIRD: HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE FIGURE OF THE ACTOR

This dissertation was triggered by a particular scene –I will discuss it in detail in the fourth chapter - in a Hungarian novel from 1944, Gábor Thurzó's *Nappalok és éjszakák* (*Days and Nights*).[1] The novel features a narrator telling a story of his passionate but non-sexual friendship with an actor during a year several years prior to the narration when they both lived in a relatively small bourgeois Hungarian town. I was always struck by the clarity of both the gay sensibility of the text and its loud closetedness: the reader is explicitly told that the friends, although for a while sharing the same hotel room as their home, never engage in any sexual activity. Explicitly self-declared to be asexual, the actor is described in terms that clearly evoke an interpretation that decodes him as the stereotypical effeminate homosexual: he is plump, blond, vain, charming, flighty, and much of his aura of lack of consistency originates in his being an actor. The novel builds on the reader's intuitive sense of an affinity between homosexuality and acting. Indeed, this novel is only one of several from its period that thematizes homosexuality, and in the other two novels featuring adult characters with a recognizable homosexual sensibility (as opposed to other texts treating homosexuality as a fleeting and unstable period in the lives of adolescent bourgeois schoolboys), acting is always attached to the character.

[1] Gábor Thurzó, *Nappalok és éjszakák* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1944).

In Sándor Márai's *Zendülők* (translated as *The Rebels*)[2], written in 1930, a group of adolescents forming a bourgeois gang commit family theft for no other reason than rebellion. In the course of escalating crime, they are befriended and impressed by an actor who seems to understand and appreciate their company. At the climatic peak of the story, the actor lets the boys into the otherwise vacant theater on an evening when no performance is scheduled. He gets them drunk and dresses them up; the most beautiful boy receives the costume and the makeup of a young woman. The group improvises a performance for themselves on the stage. During this performance, while he pretends to be drunk, the actor puts on a quiet record and a beautiful and terrifying seduction scene takes place between him and the cross-dressed boy resembling a scene from a vampire story: at the moment when the music stops, the couple stops dancing as well, the boy is tilting his head backward and the actor's head is tipping forward.

In the third novel, Jenő Rejtő's *Csontbrigád* (*Skeletal Brigade*),[3] written in 1942, much of the plot takes place in a work camp established by the French Foreign Legion in Africa and is based on the author's experience in a Labor Service camp shortly before his death in another.[4] In the camp depicted in the novel, inhabitants gradually lose their civilized behavior in order to focus on survival in the direst circumstances of the desert. One of them, however, a tailor from Paris, seems to be unaffected by these circumstances: he keeps his polite and effeminate behavior intact, lacing it with the slight

[2] Sándor Márai, *Zendülők*. (Budapest: Helikon, 2007). In English: *The Rebels*, trans. George Szirtes (New York: Knopf, 2007).

[3] Jenő Rejtő, *Csontbrigád* (Budapest: Alexandra, 2005).

[4] Labor Service camps were unique to Hungary and were established in 1919 for people unable or unwilling to serve in the regular army; from 1938 the Labor Service became an institution of enforced labor targeting only Jews.

irony so characteristic of campy drag queens. It is only at the very end of the novel that we find out that the French tailor's queer persona was taken on in a performance by a physically strong, masculine character as a form of disguise shielding him form being found out in his noble quest of revenge.

While these novels treat acting and homosexuality differently, they all insist that these terms are in a close relationship and that their combined force enhances their affective potential: the queerness of the actor in *Days and Nights* coincides with his being an actor, the actor in *The Rebels* perfects his insincere and dangerous character by being a homosexual, whereas the third character acts as if he were a non-significant person, someone not to be reckoned with.[5]

This is by no means a Hungarian phenomenon. Texts featuring the double figure of acting/masquerading and homosexuality range from Balzac *Sarrasine* through Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, to Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. And literature is by no means the only depository for such figures.[6] My aim in this chapter is not to give a full account of the literary and other cultural appearances of the superimposition of acting on homosexuality: I index these examples in order to signal that Thurzó's novel is a part of a cultural trend. *Days and Nights* is especially important for my inquiries because it is particularly informative

[5] Regarding homosexuality as something outside the scope of significance, as something inconsequential, see David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 53. Also of importance is Henry Abelove's argument that Thoreau in *Walden* rebels against the cultural ennui attached to any kind of narrative not fitting that of heteronormative domesticity. See Henry Abelove, "From Thoreau to Queer Politics" in *Deep Gossip* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 29-42.

[6] Consider for instance the title of noted American psychoanalyst of homosexuality, Edmund Bergler's book from 1958: *Counterfeit-Sex: Homosexuality, Impotence and Frigidity*.

about the relationship between the phenomenon it exemplifies and the imaginary of fraternity within the modern discourse of democracy. I will give an exposition of the character of the actor from the novel now to give an illustration of the almost isomorphic similarity between the figure of the actor and the figure of the homosexual in order to introduce this chapter but also to present this character as an emblem for several questions in the whole dissertation, I will briefly index where the character telegraphs some key elements of the subsequent chapters.

The actor in *Days and Nights* is sketched up with erotically charged qualities of femininity as well as other forms of effeminateness, untrustworthiness and immaturity. He is effeminate in his looks: he is plump rather than masculine and his stage costumes tend to fit a little too tight: "He smiled and bowed to the audience while singing. He wore Hussar pantaloons and his thighs bulged forth plumply."[7] This invites a reading that superimposes the image of a sexually desirable woman's body over his. His lack of restraint in uninhibited displays of emotion evokes the sense of excess associated with conventional femininity. His laugh is described as "adolescent" suggesting a certain immaturity, a position of not being quite a man. In describing the actor in these terms, the text at the same time invites a gay reading and constructs this character as one who fails masculinity on two counts: as a feminine person, he appears to be womanlike and as someone with adolescent-like behavior, he seems to have failed to grow up into manhood. Described through metaphors mixing femininity and adolescence, the actor figures as someone like a woman or like a boy. While "woman" and "boy" are by no means interchangeable concepts, nor are they conventionally thought to be similar, their

[7] Thurzó, 16 (translations are mine).

conjunctive appearance produces a doubly strong lack of masculinity. The dominant tropes for imagining male homosexuality correspond to this conjunction of femininity and male adolescence: male homosexuals are often considered as something feminine in a male guise (for instance in the scientific concept of the third sex – the idea of a woman trapped in a man's body) or as a practice characteristic of young, impressionable boys whose masculinity has not yet solidified into a stable and authentic heterosexuality.[8] In the fourth chapter, I will argue that male homosexuality threatens to disrupt fraternity, one of the founding concepts of democracy. To the extent that homosexuality is imagined through this conjunction of boyhood and femininity, it follows the political principles of the ancient democracy of Athens: woman and boy are two important concepts of statutory minorhood. While homosexuality as a concept was not operative in ancient Greece,[9] its logic of citizenship is still very operative today and has ramifications in areas that we may consider not political but scientific and the concept of homosexuality has been shaped by the European discourse of democratic citizenship.

Since the novel is narrated by one of the two main characters, describing the actor can only be carried out by a distillation of the narrator's reported observations and feelings of the actor as we see him through the narrator's eyes and are influenced by his

[8] The first trope is based on the idea that homosexuality takes forms in exceptionally (and abnormally) constituted individuals, the second treats homosexuality as a practice between not fully constituted individuals. I am grateful to Mark Jordan for calling my attention to the fact that the latter appears to be in conflict with the view that contemporary fraternal practices (ranging from the military to business meetings or mingling in gym locker rooms and clubbing) enact a prolonged adolescence of the men "being boys again." I will touch upon some aspects of the political concept of fraternity this tension highlights in the final two chapters; here, I would simply like to note that this tension may explain the intense homophobic anxiety (e.g. the "sissy" jokes and other displays of properly solidified masculinity) characteristic of these practices.

[9] See David Halperin, "Is There a History of Homosexuality?" in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. eds. Henry Abelove et. al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 416-432.

opinion. It is therefore impossible to describe the actor independent of the narrator's relationship to him. For instance, when we find out that the actor feels absolutely comfortable being naked in front of his friend, we also find out about the fact that the narrator is quite uncomfortable with nudity and feels repulsed by his friend's lack of restraint. This example also illustrates that the novel sets up the friends as figures for normal and deviant: the narrator holds a respectable job, is eager to earn the respect of his elders at the school and is generally concerned with proper behavior. The actor, on the other hand, does not feel the need to behave appropriately.

The great emotional bond that develops in the narrator for the actor is preceded by a fascination laced with contempt. The following quote is a part of the narrator's description of the period before he finally meets the actor. Fascinated by this figure recently appearing in town, the narrator regularly sees him in the restaurant where they both like to take their meals:

> As I looked at him now as an acquaintance from behind spoonfuls of soup, I found him fairly ridiculous. If I only saw him as I had so far, dressed in dark blue plain clothes and pearl grey tie fastened with anxious meticulousness, I would have filed him away as a very serious phenomenon. But I also had to remember as well that the previous night he had been the "singing captain", with tight pants over his plumpish thighs, wearing purple mascara and between the hanging and swinging stage wings, he did a whole lot of unnatural things: he sang, he danced, he courted the elderly primadonna. And at any rate, I hate actors.[10]

Or a little later, the narrator exclaims: "He's not even a man, only an actor, a mistletoe-like parasite on base ambition. All affectedness, vanity, emptiness and superficiality. What do I want from him?"[11] This initial contempt never goes away completely and it

[10] Thurzó, 19.

[11] Ibid., 40.

fits the framework of the discourse of antitheatricality I will discuss below. To anticipate this discourse briefly, the figure of the actor is someone who gives up the core consistency that guarantees the authenticity of a subject and thus is able to impersonate others. Taken to its logical conclusion, such a performance is threatening most importantly because it celebrates the actor's uncanny ability to leave his personality completely behind and through this self-annihilation, take up a different character. I will discuss the question of the personal core in the discourse of citizenship in the third chapter.

A resulting certain notion of sad and vacuous bland formlessness is a definitive trait the narrator identifies in the actor. First, his impression appears in a dream of his, in which he catches sight of the actor from behind initially seeing only the back of his head to discover that "when he turned towards me to say something, the space of his face was filled with the opal reflections of the dream. His beautifully coiffed hair framed this nothing like a wig hanging in the air."[12] This dream is in seamless coherence with a subsequent incident: "In the door, he offered his hand for a handshake. I looked at his eyes, this ashen, vacant and startling glance, this confused blond face – he now looked as if he had been blown over with ash."[13] And a couple pages later, the narrator distills his impression: "His inside corresponds to his bodily constitution. A certain shapely formlessness, softness."[14]

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[12] Ibid., 63.

[13] Ibid., 95.

[14] Ibid., 97.

The normal narrator describes for his readers the parasite-like actor without the inner consistency that would render him an authentic man, while also telling the story of their passionate and unhappy friendship. Curiously, although he is eager to fulfill all his responsibility as a member of the town's little public, and intending to help the actor to cultivate a consistent will, he fails on several levels. Preoccupied with his private life of the friendship, he fails as a teacher because his students do not respect the inconsistent teacher he is, and he fails a trustworthy man when he flees an engagement that was forced on him by his colleagues. Also, he fails as a friend when he passively lets the actor passively leave him.

I gave the above description in order use this literary example to show the compatibility between the figure of the actor and the figure of the homosexual. But the compatibility does not quite end here. The structure of the narrative is somewhat similar to the mechanism revealed by the key texts I will read in this chapter: from the point of view of the normal, they describe an abnormal phenomenon characterized by a hollowness or a lack of consistency that counterfeits normal appearance while also revealing that what is deemed abnormal is to be found in the authenticated norm.

In this chapter, I intend to show that the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, and its figure of the actor in particular, influences and contributes to the structure of the figure of the modern homosexual. I will trace the similarity between the actor and the homosexual by first making use of the ways J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* has been read by Jacques Derrida in "Signature, Event, Context," followed by queer theorists Eve Kosofksy Sedgwick and Andrew Parker (showing that Austin's text fuses these figures). Then, in order to examine the figure of the actor in the

modern political discourse of antitheatricality and to show that Austin's text is deeply influenced by it, I will rely on Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*, a classic and elaborate text on the actor as it figures in the modern philosophical and political discourse of antitheatricality. Finally, I will offer a combined consideration of one of Judith Butler's influential early texts on homosexual identity and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's summary of the particulars of the homosexual closet and coming out and show the structural similarity between this figure of the homosexual that emerges from these texts and the figure of the actor as it emerges in Rousseau's text. First of all, however, let me explain why I find that the selection of these texts allows us to show the connection between the actor and the homosexual in the most convincing and economical way.

Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* is not only a highly articulate text within the modern political discourse of antitheatricality but also one that explicitly demonstrates the link between antitheatricality and revolutionary political thought and its modern democratic concept of citizenship.

Although J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* is neither a text within political philosophy, nor does it quite belong to queer theory, I will use this text for several reasons. First, there is a perhaps necessary connection between Austin's work on speech acts and the thinking of gay identity. For the decisive requirement for any kind of gay, lesbian, trans, etc. identity is having accomplished some degree of "coming out." Coming out may mean several kinds of acts, events and utterances; it may take the form of a sentence but may be a psychological process taking years, nevertheless, it is a concept templated on the declaration, "I am gay." One can indeed be legitimately gay without any other marker: no actual experience is absolutely necessary, nor can any

experience render someone gay.[15] Arguably, this is also to true for any other identity: they are also claimed by declaration. But as I will show in the next chapters, declarations that do not cite any external referent as a proof and authorizing element in their declarations are quite revolutionary, and while identity declarations generally do refer to some fact prior or external to their declaration (for instance, to chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical constitution in the case of gender identity), homosexual identity structured by coming out requires only the declaration itself.[16] Hence, speech act theory might intuitively ring very true to queer theorists as well as other scholars of gays and lesbian studies alike. In fact, the different aspects of Austin's text may very well have synergized into a particularly strong bond between speech acts and the thinking of sexuality. Arguably, Austin, contrary to his own opinion of his own project, was not the first one to study the capacity of language to "do things" (i.e. to not simply describe something independent of it); important precedents to his theory include the work of Peirce and Wittgenstein. However, the fact that Derrida pinpointed and deconstructed in Austin's text a passage in "Signature, Event, Context" that could be identified as structurally homophobic could significantly strengthen the queer engagement with his text.

The second reason concerns Derrida's reading of Austin's text and it is twofold. Derrida's reading illuminates Austin's indebtedness to a certain metaphysics that he calls

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[15] Hence we can have concepts such as men who have sex with other men: since they do not consider themselves homosexual or, to be more precise, they do not declare themselves to be homosexual, there is no legitimate grounds to consider them gay.

[16] I am by no means suggesting that it is common to see a separation of homosexual identity and experience in the lives of gay people. It is not, and yet acknowledging what any "experience" might mean for the individual is considered more important in the thinking of what makes someone gay. For an example illustrating the strength of coming out as a conventional point of reference when theorizing homosexual identity, see Richard Troiden, "Model for Homosexual Identity Formation," in *Social Perspectives of Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, eds. Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider, 261-278 (London: Routledge, 1998).

the metaphysics of presence or consciousness. He focuses on a specific passage in Austin's text that excludes a certain "parasitic" mode from "normal" language use and shows that what is excluded (including statements made in acting) reveals the significance of citation in language. Derrida's concept of citationality evokes, at least in part, theatricality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Andrew Parker later asserted that Austin's discourse of abjection is of special importance for queer theory and at the same time described the abjected explicitly as theatricality. Finally, this text provided queer theory with one of its key concepts in the term "performativity."

Butler's arguments on gender and identity (mostly known from her *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*) and Sedgwick's suggestion of the closet as a definitive concept of modern Western culture in her *Epistemology of the Closet* became crucially important points of reference for queer theory as well as gay and lesbian and gender studies. Based on this comparison, I will suggest that the similarity lies in a shared structure of a characteristic counterfeiting in combination with a certain sense of hollowness.[17]

I will start my inquiries by an exposition of this problematic and insightful point within Austin's text aided by the Derridean insights from "Signature, Event, Context." Afterwards, I will show the connection between the figure of the actor within Austin's examples identified as queer by Parker and Sedgwick and the figure of the actor in Rousseau's the *Letter to d'Alembert*: both Austin's actor (and a corresponding insistence

[17] The connection between antitheatricality and homosexuality has been raised by Andrew Parker in an essay on Marx; however, he does not specifically connect the emergence of the modern concept of the homosexual to the increasing currency of the modern discourse of democracy. See Andrew Parker, "Unthinking Sex: Marx, Engels, and the Scene of Writing," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner, 19-42 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

on "seriousness") and Rousseau's actor feature a combination of counterfeiting and hollowness. In the last section, I will show the same combination in the modern figure of homosexuality through the texts of Butler and Sedgwick: a counterfeiting guise over hollowness will be associated with both closeted and out homosexual performance. The conclusion of my argument about this structural similarity is that insofar as the modern figure of the homosexual is similar to the abject figure of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, it is intimately connected to modern republican citizenship.

1. Austin's sea-change

Austin's series of lectures subsequently published under the title *How to Do Things with Words*[18] starts out by making a radical break from what Austin describes as conventional philosophy of language. Conventional linguistic thought is based on the assumption that the ultimate function of language is to makes statements about the world. In such a system the category of assessing whether a statement is doing what it is supposed to do is its truth value: a statement is either true or false. An important feature of this conventional view of language is that it assumes a discrete boundary between language and the extra-linguistic reality it describes: language is seen merely to describe the world without exerting any effect on it directly. Austin wants to complicate this conventional view by pointing out that some statements defy this logic without being nonsensical. Citing numerous examples involving, as a rule, a present tense first person singular indicative usage of certain verbs, Austin shows that language can and does alter the world by creating objects it refers to. Austin calls these utterances performative and

[18] J.L Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

refers to what they do as speech acts. What differentiates speech acts from the descriptive utterances he calls constative is that they cannot be evaluated through truth claims. It simply does not make sense to try to decide whether the sentence "I name this ship the 'Queen Elizabeth'"[19] is true or false because it carries out an action instead of giving a description. Rather than being true or false, speech acts, Austin goes on, are effective or ineffective: they either accomplish the act they verbalize or not. To denote this characteristic feature of the performative, Austin introduces the value of felicitousness. For a speech act to be felicitous, i.e. effective or successful, it has to comply with a set of strict rules pertaining to the given act it is to carry out: a ship can only be named successfully if the person naming it is authorized and if the speech act is uttered at the right moment of the ritual of its naming.

It is through an extremely thorough process of theorizing performativity and speech acts which continuously produces obstacles that Austin gradually shifts focus from the analysis of individual performatives to thinking of speech acts as locutions with illocutionary and perlocutionary forces, i.e. verbal utterances bearing intentionality and the actual effect they perform. For the purposes of this chapter, the most significant moment of *How to Do Things with Words* is when at the beginning Austin wants to delimit the proper object of his study. During the second lecture, when setting out to analyze what makes performatives fail, in a famous passage he excludes from theoretical consideration what he calls the non-serious uses of language:

> "(ii) Secondly, as utterances our performatives are also heir to certain other kinds of ill which infect all utterances. And these likewise, though again they might be brought into a more general account, we are deliberately at present excluding. I

[19] Austin, 5.

> mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways intelligibly used not seriously but in ways parasitic upon its normal use, ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances."[20]

Austin's main point in this passage is that sometimes the performative he has just identified as an important element (and mode of operation) of language does not work, does not count, is not valid as a performative even if it may fulfill all the requirements for the given performative to be felicitous, as certain "special circumstances" render the utterance "peculiarly void and hollow." Austin suggests that this happens to all kinds of utterances, not just performatives—all language is heir to the ill of becoming hollow under these special circumstances. The passage is quite cryptic as to what this thing is that sometimes befalls language or what exactly brings about this transformation. Although the key defining phrase "the doctrine of etiolation of language" seems quite straightforward, it is unclear just what it exactly refers to. With no argument or explanation provided for this exclusion, relying instead on the intuitive understanding of his audience, Austin's use of "doctrine" here accomplishes more of the setting up of such a doctrine than a referring to it; which is also to say that his citing this nebulous doctrine here is performing the exclusion rather than accounting for it beyond the axiom of seriousness.

Nevertheless, some things can be inferred from the way Austin, who throughout the lectures strives to be meticulously lucid, is being unclear here. We do know that these

[20] Ibid., 21-22.

etiolating instances make utterances in a special way hollow and void. In a special way because in these cases language as a whole becomes unserious, whereas the "ordinary" case of the hollow performative requires something like an insincere speaker who nevertheless speaks language in its "ordinary" or "serious" way. But how are we to imagine the event of such etiolation? On the one hand, Austin speaks as if it is an infectious disease dangerous for language; on the other hand, he refers to it as a "sea-change of special circumstances." The image of something like a virus is quickly supplanted by the image of eroding environment. In the first case, something dangerous and dangerously small gets inside a larger body, while in the second, a monstrously large element, the composite of "special circumstances," threatens the organism of language.

I interpret "sea-change" as conjuring the impression of the monstrosity of the sea and its danger to a presumably human body based on the etymology of the phrase. The current usage of the phrase refers to a significant transformation of quality. However, it is strongly associated[21] with the famous song an invisible Ariel sings to Ferdinand about the death of his father in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes;
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange. [22]

[21] This association is strengthened by dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster and the Oxford English Dictionary which cite Shakespeare's text. For the widespread view that the phrase was in fact coined by Shakespeare, see Paul Brians, *Common Errors in English Usage* (Wilsonville: Franklin, Beedle and Associates, 2003), 185-186; here Brians identifies Ariel's song as "its original context."

[22] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Methuen, 1962), I, II, 329.

The interplay of change and death seems to be reversed between the origin and its later "citation:" while Austin's "unserious," "infected" language is not quite dead, it is impoverished, Alonso, Ferdinand's father, is described as dead not faded (of course, Ariel is lying here about Alonso). Correspondingly, Austin's sea-change is decreed an impoverishment of language, while Shakespeare's phrase marks a transformation into something rich. What these two sea changes agree upon is that the transformation yields something strange while depriving their object of control. Austin's choice may be interpreted as a symptomatic revelation that it is the loss of control over language in his very attempt to analyze it that compels him to interpret this "sea-change" as an impoverishment of language.

Both images (the virus and the engulfing sea) carry a sense of impending death, and this death is echoed in their effect of rendering language lifeless. The combination invites us to think of language as an organism whose immune system collapses under specific but unspecified circumstances and becomes empty of its own substance. The terms "hollow" and "void" create an impression of not-quite-death and we may find ourselves imagining a living thing becoming something like a vampire but perhaps even more so its own copy in the form of an automaton: language still speaks but the speech thus generated will cease to be fully authentic, in Austin's terminology "ordinary."

Even though Austin does not provide a framework for his examples in the passage other than some tacit axiom of seriousness, in general, however, all examples reference the literary. The actor on stage is reciting a literary text, a poem is itself a literary text and soliloquy is a literary term referencing theater: the literary seems to be indispensable for the kind of intuiting act requested by Austin's examples. These

examples, while indeed all pointing to the literary in some way, they also highlight the speaker and the speaker's relationship to his own speech. The actor quotes, poetry is the literary mode within where the lyrical "I" is thought to belong, and soliloquy is yet another kind of strange relationship between subject and speech.

The significance of the relationship between subject and speech becomes clearer when Austin refers to the same problem later, once he has already moved on from giving the failure-conditions of the performative to introducing the notions of illocution and perlocution into his speech act theory in order to understand what it is exactly that gives the power of performativity to certain utterances. Having seen that performativity does not necessarily reside only in certain verbs, he proceeds by distinguishing between the affecting force (illocution) and the actual effect (perlocution) of the utterance itself (locution). The performative use of language may then be grasped by the descriptive formula of "In saying X, the speaker did Y." It is at this point that he encounters the same obstacle as in the passage above, and summing up the problem of the possible "serious" and "non-serious" uses of language, he resorts to some of the same examples:

> To take this farther, let us be quite clear that the expression 'use of language' can cover other matters even more diverse than the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. For example, we may speak of the 'use of language' *for* something, e.g. for joking; and we may use 'in' in a way different from the illocutionary 'in', as when we say 'in saying "p" I was joking' or 'acting a part' or 'writing poetry'; or again we may speak of a 'poetical use of language' as distinct from 'the use of language in poetry'. These references to 'use of language' have nothing to do with the illocutionary act. For example, if I say 'Go and catch a falling star', it may be quite clear what both the meaning and the force of my utterance is, but still wholly unresolved which of these other kinds of things I may be doing. There are parasitic uses of language, which are not 'serious', not the 'full normal use'. The normal condition or reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocutionary act, no attempt to make you do anything, as Walt Whitman does not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar.[23]

[23] Austin, 104. I should note that the third instance when Austin's text is explicitly haunted by this etiolation of unseriousness occurs a little earlier when it seems to be presented as the category which helps

This passage[24] makes it very clear that the parasitic and non-serious status marks a quality shared by these utterances, the quality that it is impossible to assign to them an illocutionary force. Also, this second passage confirms that these utterances (made in joking, playing a part or writing poetry) are secondary to a "full normal use."[25] Again, the examples are organized by what is excluded by the discourse of authenticity (that Austin calls seriousness) and acting and poetry recur again. This second paragraph seems to say the same thing as the previous paragraph of exclusion but it now highlights the role of the speaker in relation with the "parasitic" use of language.

Thus, the speaker's person and their sincerity become crucially important in theorizing performativity. The parasitic, abnormal use of language involves a peculiar relationship between speaker and speech: when I joke, my meaning, if I have any, is not that denoted by the locution I utter; when I play a part, I do not identify with my meaning as mine, and when Whitman writes a poem, his meaning, if poetry has any, is also something other than what the locution transmits. The unseriousness, then, marks a break between speaker and speech in a way that the latter cannot be simply viewed as simply the verbal issuance of the former.

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us distinguish between phatic and rhetic acts (in Lecture VIII). Taking a closer look at his analysis of the use of the word "said" as key in making quoting explicit would be fruitful for a more detailed analysis of his work regarding how authenticity emerges in speech act theory.

[24] This paragraph is no doubt worthy of a thorough exegesis; unraveling its full significance would entail examining in detail the relationship between illocutionary force, fiction and reference and the stakes of devaluing the poetic in a theory of communication.

[25] It would also be very interesting to examine what Austin's use of quotation marks around the phrase "full, normal use" might do to his theory.

Here as well, Austin's related thoughts, this time about the significance of the first person in theorizing the performative, are very instructive. Having established that performativity is not simply a special feature of some verbs exclusively, he reflects on his initial selection of utterances featuring verbs in the first person singular present indicative active in search of some latent logic justifying this initial preference:

> We said that the idea of a performative utterance was that it was to be (or to be included as a part of) the performance of an action. Actions can only be performed by persons, and obviously in our cases the utterer must be the performer: hence our justifiable feeling—which we wrongly cast into purely grammatical mould—in favor of the 'first person', who must come in, being mentioned or referred to; moreover, if the utterer is acting, he must be doing something—hence our perhaps ill-expressed favoring of the grammatical present and grammatical active of the verb. There is something which is *at the moment of uttering being done by the person uttering*.[26]

According to this logic, we are intuitively drawn to utterances featuring the first person singular as they reflect the actual performative mechanism: not only that the speaker is doing something in the course of uttering but that it is the speaker who is doing the thing. In these linguistic formulas the "implicit feature of the speech-situation is made *explicit*."[27] Hence, Austin stresses for the second time "[t]he 'I' who is doing the action does thus come essentially into the picture."[28]

For the performative to be felicitous, we need an "I" doing the action using language in its "full, normal" mode. This fully normal "I" is set against to the parasitic and non-serious joker, actor and poet. Austin's exclusion, then, posits not only modes of language (serious and non-serious) but also something like a series of corresponding

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[26] Austin, 60, emphasis original.

[27] Ibid., 61.

[28] Ibid.

speaking subjects as well: one as the source of speech and one who is more like an impostor of this source; a figure who is a hollow, lifeless and inauthentic counterfeiter of the "ordinary" and "normal." I will suggest that the same relationship links the ideal citizen of the republic and the figure of the actor in Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*. In order to prepare that comparison, I will argue in the next section that Derrida and, following him, Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick register antitheatricality as the organizing principle behind Austin's exclusion.

2. Derrida: acting and the "force of rupture"

Derrida reads Austin's paragraph on etiolation in the last section of "Signature, Event, Context."[29] One of his major arguments in the essay is that, contrary to what instances such as Austin's exclusion suggest, language in fact works on the principle of citation since communication and language in general work on the condition that it should be understood in case of the absence of speaker or the audience. The basis for this argument is a rigorous analysis of the structure of writing but Derrida expands the scope of this mechanism for language and communication in general. Signs of any kind are applicable and decodable precisely because both transmitter and receiver can trust a system independent of the speaker's presence: we can understand, appreciate, as well as debate over endlessly, a poem or play written long ago because citationality facilitates communication. The principle of citationality, however, disagrees significantly with the traditional view of language which asserts that it is worked by a subject reporting his experience because citationality necessarily requires the always present possibility of a

[29] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307-330.

rupture between the speaking subject and his speech. Derrida suggests that any attempt to disregard this feature of language serves to uphold a defining feature of Western metaphysics that he calls the metaphysics of presence or consciousness. This metaphysics appears in the axiom of "seriousness" in Austin's discourse (I have previously referred to it as a discourse of authenticity). It is on the condition of seriousness that we can think of speech as the presence of the consciousness of the speaking subject while the cases of etiolated exceptions radically trouble this presence.

Another key concept Derrida examines here for the analysis of language and consciousness is context. He calls our attention to the fact that Austin valorizes context as that which grasps the unified, self-contained totality of the speech act throughout the lectures: speech acts can only be considered felicitous or infelicitous in light of the full context of their occurrence. This, again, reflects a view that language is somehow secondary to, or is fully governed by, the speakers who speak it and the immediate and empirical situations where it is being spoken. But in fact, context cannot contain language more than the speaking subject does. If speech acts, it can do so because institutionalized rituals allow the performatives to perform—and a key defining feature of any ritual is that it can be, and is, repeated again and again: the totality of it cannot be narrowly defined within one given occurrence. As above, any insistence of the immediate context as the ultimate measure of the performative, or of language, is telling of a metaphysics of consciousness or presence. It is then this metaphysics, according to Derrida, that still renders the Austinian framework to work through categories of truth value, despite the author's intention to move away from it: as long as language is seen as

used in ordinary and parasitic ways, truth and falseness will remain the governing categories for linguistics (displaced from the referent of the utterance to its "mode"):

> I must take as known and granted that Austin's analyses permanently demand a value of *context*, and even of an exhaustively determinable context, whether de jure or teleologically; and the long list if "infelicities" of variable type which might affect the event of the performative always returns to an element of what Austin calls the total context. One of these essential elements—and not one among others—classically remains consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of his locutionary act.[30]

For Derrida, what is excluded and is exemplified by utterances given "on the stage, in a poem, or in a soliloquy" equals citation.[31] To identify the organizing principle of what is being excluded by Austin in the concept of citation suggests that Austin's examples featuring the actor or quoting a source gain a certain priority in Derrida's analysis. The notion of citation is connected to words spoken on stage (or some other theatrical setting) or in court (or some other legal setting). Arguably, however, this concept helps us see that all of Austin's examples in the main exclusionary paragraph reference a theatrical mode of language: the actor cites on the stage, one can only cite poetry as though we were actors giving voice to the poem (including its author) and soliloquy in its very name references the theater. There are important differences between the ways the concept of citation embraces these different examples but all of them include some theatrical aspect that marks a rupture between speaker and speech or speaker and context.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Andrew Parker highlighted Austin's exclusionary paragraph and its Derridean critique in their introduction to *Performativity and*

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[30] Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," 322.

[31] Ibid., 325.

Performance.[32] A few years after the reception of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (the book that became influential by conceptualizing gender in terms of performance), this book aimed to emphasize the Austinian-Derridean influence in this "new" concept of performativity. In this essay, Parker and Sedgwick suggest that both Austin's dismissal and Derrida's analysis of it has a special relevance for queer theory.

To imagine anything like an infectious disease since the mid-19th century will necessarily have a relationship of likeness with the concept of homosexuality, especially if the trope of infection is joined by that of impending death.[33] As a primarily (and often exclusively) male concept, any notion of hollowness will enhance this association, insofar as homosexuality is thought as un(re)productivity, since "hollow" and "void" assumes a loss of at least a potential substance. Un(re)productivity also underlies the notion of the parasite. But it is indeed in the term "etiolation" that the idea of homosexuality will tacitly aid the force of the passage: as Parker and Sedgwick point out,[34] its meanings combine effeteness with the horticultural notion of impoverished withering:

> What is so surprising, in a thinker otherwise strongly resistant to moralism, is to discover the pervasiveness with which the excluded *theatrical* is hereby linked with the perverted, the artificial, the unnatural, the abnormal, the decadent, the effete, the diseased. We seem, with Austinian "etiolation," to be transported not just to the horticultural laboratory, but back to a very different scene: the Gay 1890s of Oscar Wilde. Striking that even for the dandyish Austin, *theatricality* would be inseparable

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[32]Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, eds. *Performativity and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[33] For a discussion of the wide-spread tendency to imagine male homosexuality in the figure of a young man marked by an impending early death, see Jeff Nunokawa, "'All the Sad, Young Men': AIDS and the Work of Mourning," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss, 211-324 (New York: Routledge, 1991)."

[34] Parker and Sedwick, 5.

> from a normatively homophobic thematics of the "peculiar," "anomalous exceptional, 'nonserious.'"[35]

Assessing the rhetoric of the dismissal, they assert that Austin discusses the theatrical occurrences of performatives (as well as language as such appearing on a stage or other contexts where texts are quoted) in terms of perversion. Hence the dismissal is carried out within the discourse of sexuality in general and queerness in particular: the vocabulary of illness, hollowness, etiolation and non-seriousness all conjure up the combined effect of that which is deemed sexually aberrant because it is seen as non-(re)productive: "the performative has thus been from its inception already infected with queerness […]."[36]

Another important element of Parker and Sedgwick's analysis is that they insert the concept of theatricality in the constellation of crucial terms associated with homosexuality and at one point refer to Austin's examples as "a range of predicates [Austin] associated with theater."[37] However, Austin did not in fact give any unifying concept to frame his examples of etiolation of language other than "seriousness." Also, while Derrida's concept of citationality seems to grasp the different connections of Austin's examples to theater or theatricality, it also encompasses more (legal language, for instance). [38] Therefore I think that Parker and Sedgwick's shift from citation to theater in framing Austin's exclusion is symptomatic of the intuitive connection between

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[35] Ibid., emphasis mine.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 3-4.

[38] In *Limited. Inc*., where he revisited the question of the Austinian "parasite," Derrida mentions theater in a series of concepts conjured by Austin's example. See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc: Supplement to Glyph 2*, trans. Samuel Weber (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 90.

queerness and the figure of the actor or theater. This shift seems significant precisely because it does not ring false—we intuitively accept that shift as appropriate, even though only one of Austin's examples, the actor, referenced the theater explicitly.

It is the sense of this connection that strengthens their argument when they refer to Oscar Wilde as the icon of the modern figure of homosexual (or homosexuality as such). The dandy's effeteness is also his unseriousness (as a man).[39] Wilde's iconic relationship to the emergence of the modern homosexual (man) is not only secured by his life and imprisonment, and by its imprint, "De Profundis," but also by his keen interest in authenticity and the theatrical e.g. in "The Truth of Masks," *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as several of his plays such as *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Thus Parker and Sedgwick's example of Oscar Wilde as the aggregate of his oeuvre and the kind of dandyish figure of the modern homosexual he invokes in us is so powerful when juxtaposed against Austin because the idea of inauthenticity and counterfeiting is tacitly working in both.

In this, as well as the previous, section I attempted to show that metaphysical discourse in Austin's most famous text of his speech act theory excludes something from the theorizable terrain of language that tends to be thought in terms of theatricality. This theatricality, in turn, was also interpreted as essentially queer. Before looking at the similarity between queerness and acting, I will in the next section turn to Rousseau's treatment of spectacles to take a closer look at the figure of the actor and the place he takes in the modern discourse of antitheatricality.

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[39] Without giving the question a full analysis, the dandy is unserious as a man because he prefers pleasure to responsible (re)productive calculation demanded by society, in which he might submerge himself with full abandon, but always as a fundamentally alienated individual (this line of argument asks for a fuller exposition of Baudelaire's writings involving democracy and the crowd).

3. Rousseau and the actor: "…this forgetting of the man"

Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*[40] is particularly useful for inquiries regarding the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, a relatively late development within a general (and not always explicitly political) European discourse of antitheatricality already characteristic of the culture of ancient Greece. In giving an outline of the topos "the world is a stage," Luc Boltanski sums up four related currents of the discourse: a denunciation of hypocrisy, a view of the world as illusory, a positing of a more authentic reality beyond ours, or a different view holding that our reality is the performance of a play written by God.[41] Out of these currents, I will only discuss a restricted variant of the first: a political discourse denouncing the hypocrisy of acting concerning republican citizenship in modernity.

Even this restricted strand of antitheatrical discourse is quite complex: it concerns a problem inherent in the modern theory of democratic citizenship based on representative democracy. For in representative democracy the government of citizens' representatives that carries out the general will of the citizens – which constitutes the Sovereign – in fact threatens this general will by its mere existence as a body separated from their electors (I will discuss this problem and its connection to the modern figure of the homosexual in the third chapter).

Rousseau formulated and elaborated this problem of representative democracy (and the demand for transparency was proposed as a practical solution to this problem by

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[40] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968 [1960]).

[41] Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25-26.

Robespierre in the French Revolution) very explicitly in his specifically political writings such as *The Social Contract* and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. Although his *Letter to d'Alembert* is not explicitly about citizenship in a modern democratic setting, I consider it an important text in democratic thought since for Rousseau it is the republic – a specific form of political order – whose moral integrity is necessarily corrupted by theater.[42] The connection, in Rousseau's thought, between the problem of representation in democracy and the discourse of antitheatricality has been pointed out by Benjamin R. Barber,[43] on the basis of the similarity between the citizenry of a state and the audience of a performance:

> If inauthenticity impairs our capacity for autonomy, and vicarious passivity impairs the capacity for action, the two in combination immobilize the spectator as citizen. An audience has much in common with a constituency that allows itself to be represented: "The moment a people allows itself to be represented," Rousseau warns in the *Social Contract*, "it is no longer free." How free then can a spectator be who permits his being – his experience – to be *re*-presented on stage, who allows real feelings to be simulated, real obligations to be vicariously discharged, real tears to be falsely shed, real sentiments to be skillfully counterfeited?[44]

As this quotation suggests, the *Letter to d'Alembert* articulates its argument based on the authenticity of social (including political) lives of citizens as opposed to the inauthenticity encountered in a theater (where it characterizes both the experience of the spectators and the performance of the actor). In suggesting a link between the discourse

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[42] Indeed, in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida discusses this text as spun directly out of Rousseau's concerns about the schism between representer and represented in representative democracy. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 304.

[43] Benjamin M. Barber, "Rousseau and Brecht: Political Virtue and the Tragic Imagination," in *The Artist and Political Vision*, eds. Benjamin R. Barber and Michael J. Gargas McGrath, 1-31 (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1982).

[44] Barber, 9.

of antitheatricality, citizenship, and democracy, this text also articulates very clearly the terms of the discourse on acting. While this discourse is only semi-explicit in Austin, the similarities between Rousseau's arguments and the Austinian argument of the etiolation of language will show that Austin's theory of language is related to this powerful trend in modern political thought.

In this essay, Rousseau sets out to prove exhaustively that theater is detrimental to a republic. The treatise is an answer to d'Alembert, who, in his Encyclopedia entry on Geneva, suggested that a morally unobjectionable theater may be established in the city by closely monitoring actors, ensuring that actors and actresses be prevented from engaging in immoral and criminal activities and subsequently feel disinclined to do so. Rousseau's project is one in a long series of works condemning the figure of the actor. Rousseau himself cites this tradition reaching back to Plato and classic Rome. But Early-Modern Europe also found this an especially urgent problem.[45] Rousseau disagrees with d'Alembert because his problem is not merely that actors and actresses are lewd and spendthrift. He is keen to articulate a more inherent reason for holding the theater and the actor in contempt which is "drawn from the nature of the thing":[46] something in the profession of actor is profoundly alien to the values of the republic. Therefore the theater, even if it manages to support virtues (Rousseau has doubts that such theater would be enjoyable) or to make sure that actors live a virtuous life, necessarily poses a perhaps unavoidable, because too tempting, threat to ideal society.

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[45] Nora Johnson cites several works in the world of Shakespearean theater. Many of the qualities these accounts attribute to the actor appear in Rousseau's work as well. See Nora Johnson, "Body and Spirit, Stage and Sexuality in *The Tempest*," *ELH,* Vol. 64 No.3 (1997): 683-701.

[46] Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert*, 76.

Rousseau lists a number of considerations, and within each, several individual reasons suggesting that the theater as such is undesirable. These range from considering popularity, material conditions, and theatrical traditions to make the general argument that the theater is a luxury no one can resist but which breaks up previously institutionalized ways of convening of citizens—thereby threatening the republic that relies on these ways of socialization. Rousseau's general conclusion is that the theater is good for places where the general moral state of society is low: here, with the help of style and taste, it may elevate aesthetically the immorality of the population and at least the basest forms of moral slackness will have an alternative offering opportunities for momentary self-betterment. Conversely, the theater is detrimental in places where morality is intact: when things are as they should be, theater can only corrupt. Since in his description, part of the harm of theater is that it seems impossible to resist the pleasant temptation it offers for people, in such places (he calls them simple and innocent) the establishment of theater will inevitably be the first blow to the existing good morality, and decay will by all means follow.

Among author, actor, and spectator it is the actor that seems to figure as the anti-republican essence of theater for reasons that we have already seen surface in Austin's exclusion: because the figure of the actor threatens the link between man and his speech authorizing man as subject. Rousseau has several problems with actors, and perhaps even more with actresses but his most important point is that the typical moral failings one might observe in actual persons who make their living as actors and actresses stem from the profession itself that requires from its pursuer the perfection of the skill to deceive. Rousseau quickly adds that he is naturally aware that the actor's deception is innocent

when practiced on stage. He connects the moral judgment cast on actors themselves to their profession thus: the problem is that what can be innocently practiced on stage may be maliciously used to one's unjust advantage offstage.

However, another reason seems to be at the core of his dismissal of actors and theater as such, a reason that is connected to the former one but is not at all the same: deception is not perfected by simply putting on a mask covering one's true persona but in fact, if it is to be perfected, by losing one's self altogether, in order to make space, as it were, for the character's self. In this process the actor annihilates himself and therefore abandons "the most noble [role] of all, that of a man."[47] This abandonment is the result of a combination of counterfeiting and forgetting:

> What is the talent of the actor? It is the art of counterfeiting himself, of putting on another character than his own, of appearing different than he is, of becoming passionate in cold blood, of saying what he does not think as naturally as if he really did think it, and, finally, of forgetting his own place by dint of taking another's [*d'oublier enfin sa propre place à force de prendre celle d'autrui*].[48]

We can detect a number of similarities between Austin's discourse on the etiolation and language and Rousseau's on the actor and theater: The most obvious of these is the devaluation of the theatrical in both. For Austin, the excluded state of language characterized by the actor's speech is unhealthy, for Rousseau, the actor is necessarily compromised morally.

They both assert that their respective system in question (the republic's morality or language) does not hold on stage. The actor is not simply immoral even he is using his skill to deceive that qualifies him immoral offstage. This suggests that the theater is not

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[47] Ibid., 80.

[48] Ibid., 79. For the original, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M. D'Alembert sur son article Genève* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967), 163.

simply immoral but that it does not even operate within the scope of morality whose categories fail to grasp it effectively. In the case of performative language, what Austin calls the etiolation of language suspends the felicitous/infelicitous opposition.

As part of the devaluation, another similarity appears in just how these terms are devalued in these texts: they both present their subject matter as something that threatens the well-being of an established and fully functioning organism. Austin's parasite endangers "full" and "normal" language and the actor and the theater as such endangers the republic. It is not simply that these devalued terms are considered harmful; each is also seen as an anomaly, something that does not inherently belong to the functioning of what the valued term denotes: Austin's text suggests that we can isolate instances of etiolated language (presumably, we could enlist all imaginable instances augmenting his list of examples) and Rousseau's Geneva functions very well as a republic without a theater (and can do so precisely at least partly because of that lack).

However, in a similarly peculiar way, both language and the republic seem to be infinitely vulnerable to their respective ills. All of Austin's "language" is heir to etiolation, and Rousseau is convinced that if given the slightest chance, all republics (and their communities) would happily let themselves be contaminated and rendered inert by the irresistible pleasures of the theater.

In sum, both Austin and Rousseau posit something as harmful while they decree it exterior to the term they value and claim at the same time that the valued, self-contained term has practically no immunity against the former. While they both reflect on this contradiction, they do so in slightly different ways. Austin's introductory remarks

that concede the possibility, and perhaps the need, of a theory that would account for both etiolated and serious language still allow for maintaining this difference.

Rousseau, however, goes farther in undermining his own moralizing discourse, even if he does it in its defense and is not aware of his own subversion; and this subversion is in fact crucial to the thinking of the relationship between authentic republican subjectivity and the figure of the actor. The radical threat of the theater emerges in the ease with which spectators lose their own sense of proper self in the process of utmost identification. Following his exposition of what happens to the audience when watching a play, the real danger of theater seems to be not so much that it strengthens vice in order to please people (although this feature is important as well) but that the audience identifies automatically with the character on stage:

> Let us dare say it without being roundabout. Which of us is sure enough of himself [*est assez sûr de lui*] to bear the performance of such a comedy without halfway taking part in the deeds which are played in it? Who would not be a bit distressed if the thief were to be taken by surprise or fail in his attempt? Who does not himself become a thief for a minute in being concerned about him? For is being concerned about someone anything other than putting oneself in his place [*qu'est-ce autre chose que se mettre à sa place*]?[49]

While at this point the danger seems to lie only in the vulnerability to vice, the passage gains new significance in light of what Rousseau says is detrimental (for the republic) in the profession of the actor: that he abandons his role as a man. The actor empties himself of the substance of a subject, as it were, in order to put on another character's persona. But, following Rousseau's logic of what it means to be concerned for someone, if we, affected by the actor's performance, start to be concerned and put ourselves in the place of the character he plays, we also put ourselves in the place of the same character and

[49] Ibid., 46. For the original, see Rousseau, *Lettre à M. D'Alembert*, 112.

vicariously abandon our own proper place in order to occupy another. A propensity for becoming actorish is to be found in the members of the republic, if they are infallibly vulnerable to theater. The republic not only seems to be ready for being corrupted but appears to contain quite a fertile germ of corruption.

David Marshall has connected this thought to several points in Rousseau's texts where Rousseau concedes that what he considers actorish is in fact characteristic of all participants of society,[50] suggesting that the figure of the actor in fact represents a theatricality of social life itself, a theatricality prior to theater.[51] Marshall identifies this general thought in Rousseau's philosophy in the *Letter to d'Alembert* as well:

> What is at stake, then, is nothing less than the self-annihilation of the actor. … In the *Lettre*, he speaks of the "oubli d'eux-mêmes" ("forgetting of themselves" [*L*, p. 190]) that makes lovers vulnerable and he warns that if the Genevan attended the theater he would begin to "s'oublier soi-même et s'occuper d'objets étrangers" ("forget himself and occupy himself with foreign objects" [*L*, p. 168]). According to Rousseau, self-forgetting follows self-estrangement, trying to be other than one really is: "celui qui commence à se rendre étranger à lui-même ne tarde pas à s'oublier tout à fait" ("he who begins to be estranged from himself soon forgets himself completely" [*E*, p. 290]); and this self-estrangement is associated with leaving the self.[52]

Since Rousseau's argument about the theater and the actor is framed from the point of view of the republic, it is no surprise that his description sets up the figure of the actor directly against the orator and preacher as figures of the citizen: the self-

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[50] David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 138.

[51] This insight into Rousseau's philosophy shows how his modern political discourse of antitheatricality connects to aspects that may not immediately be recognized as political concerning questions we now assign to the realm of psychology. I regret that the limits of this chapter do not allow for a comprehensive analysis of the figure of the actor within a general moral discourse of antitheatricality. I would only like to point out that this Rousseauean idea of acting as the self-forgetting characteristic of sociable man might be responsible for the difference between his idea of acting and Diderot's view that the actor is "merely" professionally skilled in imitating (without leaving his self behind). For a discussion of different understandings of acting circulating in Rousseau's time, see Barber.

[52] Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, 145.

annihilating actor highlights the opposition with the citizen who knows and owns his proper place:

> The orator and the preacher, it could be said, make use of their persons as does the actor. The difference is, however, very great. When the orator appears in public, it is to speak and to show himself off: he represents only himself; he fills only his role, speaks only in his own name, says, or ought to say, only what he thinks, the man and the role being the same, he is in his place; he is in the situation of any citizen who fulfils the functions of his estate [*l'homme et le personnage étant le même être, il est à sa place; il est dans le cas de tout autre citoyen qui remplit les fonctions de son état*]. But an actor on the stage, displaying other sentiments than his own, saying only what he is made to say, often representing a chimerical being, annihilates himself, as it were, and is lost in his hero [*s'anéantit, pour ainsi dire, s'annule avec son héros*]. And, this forgetting of the man [*cet oubli de l'homme*], if something remains of him [*s'il en reste quelque chose*], it is used as the plaything of the spectators.[53]

In this latter quote on the proper citizen we can recognize Austin's framework for the "ordinary" and "serious" state of language. This framework insists on the normal speech being controlled, governed, owned and indeed, issued and authenticated by the speaking subject who sincerely only says what he really means. Also, this last quote reveals yet another similarity between Rousseau and Austin. Rousseau's portrayal of the actor as both an irresistible mesmerizer, capturing his audience by their inherent readiness to abandon themselves in hypnotic passivity as well as a plaything of the same audience, suggests a problem of thinking this figure in relation to intention. As I have suggested before, Austin's discussion of illocution also suggested that his exclusion was triggered by the impossibility of the thinking of intention in relation to what he excluded.[54]

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[53] Rousseau, Letter to d'Alembert, 80-81. For the original, see Rousseau, *Lettre à M. D'Alembert*, 165.

[54] This problem of intention has a specifically political aspect for Rousseau's ideal republican democracy: since it is the people's general will that makes up its Sovereign, it is indispensable that individuals have individual intentions as well.

At the beginning of this section I argued that Rousseau's text is a significant text of the political discourse of antitheatricality as it rigorously formulates the terms of this discourse, exemplifying it as well as reaffirming it at the same time. The above comparison between his "sample" of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality characteristic of his influential philosophy of democracy and Austin's metaphysical discourse organizing his linguistics suggests that Austin's abject theatricality is connected to this political discourse of antitheatricality. Hence, if his abject theatricality is at the same time queer, then the modern figure of the homosexual will be a related to the figure of the actor in this discourse. In the next section, I will show how the figure of the counterfeit hollowness that we saw in both Austin and Rousseau also appears in the thinking of homosexuality.

4. Counterfeit acts

Perhaps the strongest keyword in Rousseau's thoughts on the actor, identifying his "proper talent," is counterfeiting.[55] Counterfeiting or copying is associated with homosexuality in a number of ways. The term "counterfeiting" does not appear in Austin's text; nevertheless, it is what lurks behind his notion of unseriousness that at the beginning of this chapter I identified as a major trigger for Parker and Sedgwick's recognition of something queer in the excluded aspect of language. The idea of counterfeiting as governing Austin's exclusion becomes even more palpable when we

[55] One of the important connections of this notion is to money. It would be very interesting to examine the modern connection between homosexuality conceived of as insincerity and the image of the counterfeit coin. This avenue leads too far out of the scope of this chapter. On the historical connection between counterfeit coinage and sodomy, much preceding this proposed inquiry into modernity's linkage between homosexuality and counterfeit coinage, see Will Fisher, "Queer Money," *ELH* 66.1 (1999): 1-23.

recall two other key words Austin uses: “void” and “hollow.” Apart from the shade of effeteness communicated by using “etiolation,” it is these terms that provide the association of homosexuality in “unserious language” through adding a vampire-like effect of hovering between life and death, certainly on the side of death, as I suggested in the first section. But this vampire- or zombie-like trait also entails an important connection to counterfeiting: it is non-life masquerading as life while also threatening its authenticated status as fully alive.

The discursive relationship between acting, understood as counterfeiting, and homosexuality is most significantly explored in the early works of Judith Butler. Butler’s key theoretical concept to explain gender identity is performance in her influential book, *Gender Trouble*. Here she works out her theory of gender performativity based on the idea that the assumption of any gender identity necessarily involves and indeed means an ongoing performance of gender (for one’s own self as much for others). Although her argument frequently addresses sexuality as well (especially in the last chapter, “Subversive Bodily Acts”), the main idea of performance in this book demonstrates primarily gender identity. It was *Gender Trouble* and the subsequent *Bodies that Matter* that introduced the term performance to feminist philosophy and their reception that triggered the birth of the volume whose introduction by Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick I used earlier to show that Austin’s exclusionary discourse call for a theatrical decoding especially when Parker and Sedgwick register its abjected queerness. Briefly put, Butler’s choice of performance in *Gender Trouble* could be misread as an easy suggestion that one’s gender identity is simply a theatrical performance of a role and since it was merely a property of the subject like a costume, it could just as easily be

discarded as a costume. The catchphrase "gender is a performance" could suggest that the subject has been formed completely prior to her performance and is, therefore, in absolute control of her gender identity, at least potentially. This interpretation of Butler's argument misses her indebtedness to Derrida's reading of Austin's theory of speech acts in *How to Do Things with Words*, which is somewhat understandable since she only cites these texts in the subsequent *Bodies That Matter*. Since she presented the same argument in an earlier text on specifically lesbian identity, I will here consider the argument of this text.

In "Imitation or Gender Insubordination,"[56] primarily concerned with the ways any straightforward and proud identification with any term necessarily implies excluding some other thus abjected identities (and people), Butler interrogates the relationship of copy and original as a question that has a specific urgency for the thinking homosexuality. Her main task is to highlight a political and ethical problem in claiming a lesbian identity as a definitive political strategy. The problem is the following: an inevitable route for resisting the negative value attached to stigmatized identities is to reverse the stigma and to claim the identity with pride. However, to claim, for instance, a lesbian identity, and to position it as coherent, authentic and stable will necessarily mean that it will delineate itself by considering some other positions incoherent or inauthentic and therefore devalued. Indeed, much of the debates within American feminism took place along the questions of what makes a real feminist or a real lesbian. While Butler does not want to dismiss altogether the politics of a proud identity-claiming, she does call for a conscious acknowledgement of this exclusionary politics in order to trouble its

[56] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove et. al., 307-321(New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

force. Since this force always operates in establishing an opposition between real and fake, an important possibility of the troubling proposed by Butler is the deconstruction of this opposition. For this deconstruction, she takes two figures as examples: the tomboy and the drag queen. These figures embody a certain sense of copying: the tomboy is supposed to copy a masculine ideal despite her femaleness while the drag queen is a man impersonating a woman. Butler's argument is partly convincing because she picks the figures that have been serving as icons of homosexuality in popular culture as well as in psychoanalytic thought since the end of the nineteenth century: the mannish lesbian and the effeminate man. In these iconic figures identification is seen as cross-gender imitation, a persistent and continued performance of imitating "real" masculinity and femininity. Butler then deconstructs the underlying judgment in the idea of imitation as follows.

If something is imitated, it is posited real as well as original. In other words, real masculinity and femininity are supposed to be originals while their imitations are copies. It is easy to see, however, that these are concepts are relational: we can only imagine what a real and original thing is if we have the concept of what a copy is. On this conceptual level, original and copy require each other to function intelligibly. A real, original femininity can only appear as such as long there is at the same time the possibility of a counterfeit performance of it: imitation is not secondary to a prior original. Furthermore, she shows that imitation is crucial in the production of the concept of the original: it is for this move that she employs an argument we can see in Derrida's reading of Austin.

The Austinian concept of linguistic performativity appears in combination with the Derridean concept of citationality: it is the constant citation of the "I" in gendered terms, or the performance of gender that constructs gender as a solid basis of identity. This constant performance is made possible by the always present possibility for failure:

> [It] is through the repeated play of this sexuality that the "I" is insistently reconstituted as a lesbian "I"; paradoxically, it is precisely the *repetition* of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes. For if the "I" is a site of repetition, that is the "I" only achieves the semblance of identity through a certain repetition of itself, then the I is always displaced by the very repetition that sustains it.[57]

And since this constant process of citation works by the same principle of rupture and absence Derrida describes in the case of writing, gender will be appropriated because it is thus appropriable, not because it "belongs" as one's property or essence. This is the lesson of drag: as far as drag queens appropriation of the feminine is as successful and affective as the actor's performance in his act of "forgetting of the man," their example shows that gender is no one's natural property including the identity conventionally thought to be naturally containing a given gender. Femininity, for instance, is not simply a given for women that drag queens imitate but something women themselves have to "cite" over and over again to be able to appear and identify as women.[58] Having made this point, Butler in the last section of this essay cites certain psychoanalytic theories to show that imitation is at the heart of the process producing individual subjectivity. Moving from the ethical stakes in the political claiming of identity to psychoanalytical

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[57] Ibid., 311, emphasis original.

[58] This crossing also characterizes early scientific and medical thinking about (male) homosexuality constituting a "third sex." The third sex is nothing other than the idea of a woman trapped in a man's body. The discursive strength of this idea continues today in the thinking of transsexuality that wants to distance itself from homosexuality.

theories of subjectivation, Butler suggests their inherent inextricability. It is through this suggestion that she is able to make the deconstructive claim that both claiming an identity as a political tactic (that could at least sometimes considered as a conscious act of social-political self-positioning, even if she calls for the radical ethical reconsideration of such an act) and the process of subject formation (a process that is logically prior to any "I" that can make any such at least partially conscious political decision) rely on the principle of imitation. Imitation, then, is not simply the trademark of the counterfeit nature of homosexuality imagined as derivative and parasitic in relation to some originary norm of heterosexuality: indeed to the extent that this queerness is at the heart of all identity- and subject formation, queers (and their cultural practices) expose the inauthenticity required for any performance of authenticity.

As I mentioned above, Butler's immediate political aim in presenting this argument is to articulate her concerns regarding any uncritical advocating of coming out as a political solution to the social problem of stigmatized identity. A general call for coming out, exemplified in the essay by a request that she give a lecture as a lesbian, although intuitively appropriate and also inevitably necessary in a culture that insists on silencing non-normative sexualities, does nevertheless have certain implications that its advocators may not wish to subscribe to. Briefly put, Butler proposes two general reservations. The gesture of speaking specifically as an out lesbian implies that just what makes a lesbian is identifiable relatively easily and it also logically insists on the concept of the closet that it can break by its out speech.

The first reservation concerns the problem that it may in fact be impossible to give any clear definition of what a lesbian is (aside from receiving some sort of social

stigma based on being considered a lesbian – but even this stigma can affect individuals radically differently), and, perhaps more importantly, that even if it were possible to arrive at a definition (as some people may actually claim to do), this defining will without exception necessarily depend on some gesture of exclusion. We will know who is a lesbian by knowing who is not. Indeed, much of the debates and battles between lesbians and bisexual women as well as the conflicts between butch lesbians and transgender men reflect exactly these concerns:[59] the exclusionary gestures never fail to position the debated terms with one term considered coherent and autonomous and in general worthy of a proud claim while the other term is considered essentially confused and politically or otherwise questionable.[60]

The second reservation concerns the ongoing insistence on the logical priority of the closet and includes two arguments. First, similarly to her argument on imitation, Butler turns to a well established concept in the constitution of homosexuality and shows that this concept may be discovered at the heart of not only homosexuality but sexuality in general: the closet is considered an essentially homosexual property but in the light of psychoanalytic texts, she suggests that a radical and essential opacity or secrecy characterizes any sexuality in general: "Part of what constitutes sexuality is precisely that which does not appear and that which, to some degree, can never appear."[61] In other

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[59] See Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: a Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2002) for the former and Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) for the latter.

[60] For a discussion of the way the terms of the same opposition (lesbian and bisexual) might be effectively arranged in both possible ways (i.e. both lesbians and bisexuals may be considered the good and the bad guys depending on the identifications of those articulating the definition), see Amber Ault, "The Dilemma of Identity: Bi-Women's Negotiations" in *Queer Theory/Sociology*, 311-330, ed. Steven Seidman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[61] Butler, 315.

words, matters of sex can only be what they are, affecting us the way they do to the extent that they are fundamentally unknowable. What follows, for Butler, then is that any call for a proud and honest coming out, including coming out to one's own self, attempts to eradicate this secrecy altogether.[62] In its quest to establish some sort of honesty and transparency, the discourse of coming out wants to eradicate the core of the sexuality it aims to come clean about. The second argument is an ethical problem very similar to the above reservation of the exclusionary gesture in claiming a proud lesbian identity: coming out as a proud deed and being an out homosexual may carry a positive value (that of honesty and braveness) at the expense of considering being in the closet to be a shameful and derogatory state. With each incident affirming coming out, the closet is also affirmed as an inevitable original condition from which one ought to disassociate oneself.

I gave the above exposition of Butler's arguments because they demonstrate the twofold manner in which homosexuality is imagined conventionally as counterfeiting. One way of counterfeiting is the idea of cross-gender identification: lesbians behave as men even though they are not men: they abandon their proper place in order to assume a character alien to them.[63] The other element of counterfeiting is the essential secrecy inherent in the idea of the closet: as long as individuals do not come out, they are considered to hide their true selves in order to appear normal. The conventional logic behind these concepts positions both the closet and coming out as the property of the

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[62] Although she only refers to psychoanalytic texts, her argument is also in agreement with Foucault's theory on sexuality as a modern discursive effect organized by secrecy.

[63] For a problematization of the heteronormative axiom that masculinity belongs to men, see Judith Halberstam.

individual only, hence being in the closet reflects the individual's deceitful conduct while coming out is the individual's initiative to overcome the prior deceitful conduct. This is demonstrated by the idea of passing. Passing for a kind of person one is normally assumed to qualify for but in truth does not (as straight, as white, as a man, as a non-Jew) is also considered something done by the individual overlooking tendentiously the possibility that the tacit assuming accomplished by the party who is thus "deceived" by the passing may be considered a complex activity with its own initiative and interests. Instead, passing is considered as a highly actorish performance, a deceitful pretending.

These two notions of counterfeiting necessarily contradict each other. The first assumes the very visibility of the transgression of heteronormative principles of gendered conduct (the drag queen is obviously queer and his counterfeiting is demonstrated by his publicly available feminine performance). The second condemns the pretense of the queer to appear normal. The only principle that can afford a sense of coherence for these contradictory figures of counterfeiting is that a heteronormative framework will necessarily insist that any kind of queerness needs to be counterfeit, fake, derivative and devalued.

This synergy of contradictory notions of counterfeiting corresponds smoothly to the threats represented by the figure of the actor in Rousseau's text. Not only do corresponding notions of counterfeiting appear in both figures, the relationship between them is in agreement as well. Both figures appear to conjoin deceptiveness with a radically protean character. And while the deception based on some sort of secret truth is condemned openly by both Rousseau regarding the actor and conventional homophobia regarding the homosexual through the lens of the closet metaphor and its implied secrecy

(as well as traditional identity politics in its attempt to rectify the image by coming out), it is accompanied by a more tacit and more threatening element of lacking any essence or core: Rousseau's actor does not simply deceive but does in fact leave its proper place as man, and so does the queer in his or her queerness digress from the posited inner truth of anatomical sex (in the example of the tomboy and the drag queen). This more radical threat may be so grave because, unlike the first accusation of deception and secrecy, it has implications for the authenticity of the corresponding normalized terms as well: the Rousseauean actor's lack of core questions the inevitability of having a core in general and the visible queer radically questions the extent to which gender characteristics may be considered essential property of the sexes they are assigned to.

Another important aspect of the similarity between the homosexual and the actor also concerns this element of the audience's identification with the character performed by the actor that in fact undermines the clean division between stage and spectators, and this aspect is the peculiarity of the instance of coming out as it is imagined most conventionally. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in the first chapter of her *Epistemology of the Closet*,[64] examines the uniqueness of homosexual coming out. In order to demonstrate that homosexual coming out is indeed unlike any other kind of coming out, she turns to a literary instance of coming out in Proust's *In Search Of Lost Time*, that of Queen Esther to her husband King Assuérus. Sedgwick takes Proust's treatment of (Racine's treatment of) this classic example of Jewish coming out to demonstrate that even though this specific coming out (between people very intimately connected) is in many ways similar to the modern model of homosexual coming out, they are still significantly different. She

[64] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 79-81.

identifies seven kinds of differences. Out of these seven, four articulate different aspects of the fact that a homosexual, or indeed any kind of sexual coming out is not only a declaration employed to dissolve prior (or assumed) secrecy but it is a declaration that may routinely affect its audience in ways involving their own identity. If I come out to my mother, she may very easily think that she is somehow responsible for my condition; if I come out to my partner of the opposite sex, they may feel inclined to wonder whether this new information says something about them as well (after all, they have just learned about having been involved with a pervert). King Assuérus on the other hand, no matter how intimately he is connected to his wife, will not start to wonder what his wife's Jewishness says about him. Coming out is a declarative performance that is prone to linking its audience to the performer in a dynamically intimate manner that renders a simple division between performer and audience untenable. As a particular declaration whose audience may easily feel that it activates something inside themselves, that somehow the performer's queerness puts them in a very dangerous vicinity of queerness (and indeed possibly in its midst), is not only a significant reason for imagining homosexuality in vampire-like metaphors of contagious etiolation but is also similar to the way Rousseau conceptualizes the relationship between actor and his captive, affected and therefore endangered audience that cannot help but become actorish upon enjoying the spectacle. Both acting in the theater in the Rousseauean discourse of antitheatricality and coming out as homosexual are assessed to be threats to the well-being of the very community and audience of the performance.

If the figure of the actor and that of the homosexual are indeed as closely related as I am trying to show and as the consonances between the texts I am reading suggest,

how does sex (and sexuality) figure in this analogy? This is an immensely complicated question; chapters three and four will offer ways to illuminate this link as one between post-Revolutionary citizenship, fraternal masculinity, and the modern public/private distinction. At this point, I would only like to note that the figure of the actor is not, in fact, so removed from sex and sexuality as we would think.

Benjamin M. Barber's analysis of the *Letter to d'Alembert* may also be helpful in clarifying the connection between the figure of the actor, the prostitute and the homosexual; in his interpretation we may identify the link in a libidinal aspect of the force of the theatrical performance. Barber focuses on the role of passion in the theatrical experience; for Rousseau, theater corrupts by titillating our passions over the limits of possible fulfillment. In summarizing what that entails, Barber describes the corruptive force of theater in a language of abnormal sexual desire. Theater effects in the spectator a "sapping of power, which is the inevitable outcome of the excitation of unnatural and thus unfulfillable desires;" as well as a "substitution of vicarious and thus inauthentic sentimentality for true feeling and active obligation, and a consequent decline into passivity[…]."[65] In other words, theater corrupts through awakening and fanning not merely abnormal but unproductive desires in a setting of commercial pretence, whose falsity could only render the experience fundamentally inauthentic and therefore degrading. [66]

Of course I am not trying to argue that the figure of the actor coincides exactly with that of the homosexual or that the latter is merely the former under a different name.

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[65] Barber, 6.

[66] Rousseau himself suggests a connection between acting and prostitution.

However the figure of sexual dissidence seems templated in the terms of the actor to a remarkable extent. Both figures are characteristically condemned for wearing deceitful masks and feigning something real and authentic and thereby figuring as themselves virtually non-existent (or, in the case of the homosexual, soon to be nonexistent: non-existent *as* homosexual). Also, both are characterized as parasitic, spreading debilitating hollowness.

Conclusion

My purpose in this chapter has been to show that the modern figure of the homosexual is structurally similar to the figure of the actor within the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, and that the link connecting them is to be found in the idea of counterfeiting hollowness. As a point of departure, I considered Austin's paragraph excluding from consideration utterances made in an unserious mode of language. Based on this exclusion, Derrida's deconstructive reading of this paragraph has uncovered the underlying metaphysical framework worked by the concept of presence or consciousness in Austin's theory of language. This metaphysics of consciousness cannot but devalue anything it considers a break in consciousness or presence. Acting cannot fail to execute such a break (in this case between speaker and his speech, since the actor quotes someone else's speech). Austin discusses such possibilities in terms of a parasitic etiolation rendering language void and hollow. Derrida, in turn, suggests that the principle allowing for such breaks, "citationality," is key to the working of language, regardless whether any given occurrence is etiolated or not: the excluded unseriousness is embedded in the way language can operate "seriously."

The same mechanism seems to be taking place in Rousseau's theory on the theater: the danger of the actor's self-forgetting is embedded already in members of the audience as well. The ease with which both language and the republic yield themselves to corruption suggests that what is deemed exterior to their operation is impossible to regard as alien to this operation as it is in fact essential to their very constitution. Rousseau's actor seems to be threatening because in the practice of quoting, he reveals that citing, quoting, and acting is at the heart of what makes an authentic act and what makes the "I", the man, the subject and the citizen conceived behind or prior to such authentic acts. While Austin's text excludes the actor (and what he represents) from language proper, Rousseau excludes him from what he considers proper society.

Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's text have served to demonstrate the link between the figure of the actor and the figure of the homosexual since they clearly register the queerness in the excluded element within Austin's discourse. It goes without saying that Austin never intended to suggest anything pertaining to sexuality in his exclusion, therefore Parker and Sedgwick's discovery of queerness signals that the same metaphysics of presence or consciousness organizes Rousseau's discourse of antitheatricality and Austinian linguistics. The gesture of Parker and Sedgwick identifying the excluded term as queer suggests that homosexuality is intimately linked to antitheatrical figure of the actor.

Finally, I included a section on the structure of the figure of the modern homosexual to show how a similar relationship between the abjected hollowness counterfeiting itself as something authentic plays itself out in the arena of sexuality regarding the figure of the homosexual. Similarly to the above, according to the logic

outlined by Butler, copying is not the imitation of a more real original belonging to an authentic owner of the copied gendered element. Rather, it is the means by which any element may be assumed as one's authentic property: counterfeiting and a radical sense of lacking a core will be detectable in any gendered identity. Since the figure of the actor is the abject figure of the modern discourse of republican citizenship, the similarity between this figure and the modern figure of the homosexual inevitably raises further questions on the relationship between citizenship and homosexuality. If the abjected actor represents something in citizenship that its own discourse cannot tolerate in itself, then this element will have a relationship to the way we think homosexuality. In the next chapter, I will suggest that this shared element between homosexuality and citizenship is the significance of declaration in their structure.

CHAPTER 2

ACTING WEIRD 2: REVOLUTIONARY PERFORMATIVITY AND INAUTHENTICITY

If the previous chapter suggested that the figure of the homosexual and the figure of the modern democratic citizen are oppositional (the homosexual resembling so closely the figure of the actor which, in turn, is the negative imprint of the citizen), the point of departure for this chapter is a constitutive similarity between the homosexual and the citizen. Like the previous opposition, this similarity centers on the significance of the performativity of speech acts: the figure of the homosexual and that of the citizen are both constituted through declarative speech acts. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Austinian speech act theory is significant for theorizing sexual identity because it provides a theoretical framework which can explain the ways in which coming out can be considered the essential cornerstone of gay identity. “Coming out” has been the performative declaration that functions as the basis for gay rights claims and gay identity in the post-Stonewall era and more generally within American and American-influenced sexual culture. It is facilitated by the homosexual “closet,” a trope that emerged alongside same sex orientation and gender identity as a key constitutive element of the (post-Stonewall) “gay self.” Post-Stonewall gay pride-based phenomena stress in different ways the importance of coming out as the basis of gay identity and politics. Such activities and discourses range from a salient political movement based on visibility, to published coming out stories (perceived as crucial to the formation of community and a positive sense of self), to outing famous people as part of AIDS-related activism.

Scholarship on sexuality has also theorized sexual identity as a function of coming out, whether carried out as a way to contribute to the LGBT social movement or in the service of critical analysis of the political stakes of the movement. As such, scholars have regularly turned to Austin in order to theorize the performative nature of gay identity.

Two questions delay the commencement of my argument in this chapter. First, what justifies my assertion that two seemingly unrelated figures are indeed comparable? These figures are the modern figure of the homosexual (a male figure wearing a heterosexual mask) and the "out " figure of the gay citizen asserting his rights. And the second question asks: To what extent can one claim with confidence that similarities between the figure of the citizen and the rights-claiming homosexual are in fact characteristics shared exclusively by these figures? Rights-claiming gay identity is the effect of a North American, post-Stonewall gay liberation movement. As such, it was compelled to follow the dominant form of the assertion of viable political subjectivity (manifest in the feminist movement and the civil rights movements in North America) of the human rights discourse set in motion by the French Revolution and its political-cultural-theoretical context. Thus, gay rights-claiming looks like the citizen's performative declaration. This parallel begs the question: What connects gay rights claiming to the declarative template beyond (or prior to) this general trend?

The two questions are related. The figure of the rights-claiming, out homosexual was inaugurated at the latest in the gay liberation movement that claims to issue from its own revolution of the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 and inverts the figure of the shameful invert into the proud homosexual, in part mirroring civil rights slogans such as "Black is Beautiful" with their own "Gay is Good." The fact that the civil rights

movement, as well as the feminist and gay liberation movements all combine this identity discourse with rights claiming, i.e. that it is through the gesture of rights claiming that a given identity is considered to act politically and therefore assert political subjectivity, indicates that citizenship anchored in the claiming of rights remains the template of political action. That is, identity is political to the extent it claims rights that are human rights that remain to be acknowledged. The possibility, the threat or the promise, of this relatively late development of discourses of homosexuality that add up in the notion of a specific kind of sexual person, the rights-claiming homosexual, was already present at the time when the idea of the person characterized by a consistent homosexual orientation was named "homosexual." Karoly Kertbeny, a nineteenth century figure of perfect inauthenticity,[1] coined the term "homosexual" in a conscious effort to shift contemporary debates on homosexuality from a medicalizing course to a legal one. He felt that a legal identification would provide a better vantage point for the interests of the people thus marked. In other words, the link between identity and the claim to political rights was made at the very moment when the post-Revolutionary framework of political subjectivity instituted the gesture of claiming rights. This fact suggests that the two may not be separable.

[1] Lodged between ethnicities and personal identities, Károly Kertbeny changed his name from Karl-Maria Benkert to join his beloved Magyars in their Hungarian ethnicity; he also coined the concepts of orientations of modern sexology from the lexicon of botany. This contribution was no doubt inspired by his time spent hiding, in want of a passport, in a German botanical garden. He was a man of letters whose literary endeavors continue to be considered insignificant, and a queer figure who nevertheless managed to assert his worth to the Hungarian state. The Hungarian state, at the end of his life, provided Kertbeny with a rented apartment in a bathhouse, a queer exemplar of spaces external to domesticity. For a detailed description of Kertbeny's life and political project, see Judit Takacs, "The Double Life of Kertbeny" in *Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics*, 26-40, ed. Gert Hekma (Amsterdam: Mosse Foundation, 2004).

It follows therefore that to a certain extent, gay rights claiming and its symbolic representative, the out homosexual, are intimately related to the post-Revolutionary declarative citizen sharing key feature of the political use of an identity. This connection will be shared with other identities competing and aligning for political salience. My argument is that in the case of the rights-claiming homosexual, there is another aspect of this connection that ties it to the figure of the citizen more intimately; this aspect comes not from the gesture of rights claiming but from what constitutes the very identity of the homosexual. This more intimate connection lies in the fact that both the political subjectivity of the citizen and of contemporary gay identity is constituted by the performative force of a declaration.

Based on the structural similarity between the declarative template of modern democratic citizenship and the also declarative structure of coming out as the foundation of gay identity, I will continue to examine the relationship between the modern discourse of antitheatricality and democratic citizenship by looking at how the former enters and shapes the discourse of the latter. I offer a series of readings of theoretical texts that identify some sort of performativity at the heart of the revolutionary declaration of the citizen subject as a self-positing gesture. I will argue that the figure of the modern democratic citizen, constituted by his declaration of rights, is a political figure anchoring its political authenticity, the justification for his political authority, in his own self. This gesture of self-anchoring breaks with the idea that authority should come from history (of aristocratic ancestry, in the case of aristocratic authority). Instead, it posits the citizen as a completely originary figure who cannot be considered the logical consequence of anything prior. This revolutionary discourse sets up its guarantee of authenticity through

employing the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, positing this guarantee in the internal private locus of the citizen. It is through being a man that a citizen gains political authority on the basis of inalienable rights. However, the mechanism of the discourse of antitheatricality can only posit this internal core, the seat of authenticity, through a constant public projection of hypocrisy which can always prove that a citizen is a hypocrite with a corrupt core. In other words, the discourse of antitheatricality constructs authentic citizenship primarily through a discourse of inauthenticity.

I will start by showing a link between theories on the figure of the post-Revolutionary citizen as a figure of something original and unforeseen and those which analyze the declaration of rights as a performance that constitutes modern citizenship. Specifically, Hannah Arendt's treatment of the French Revolution in *On Revolution* (and, to a lesser degree, in *Origins of Totalitarianism*) provides an analysis of the tropes of revolutionary discourse. In probing the historical differences between the American and French revolutions and the paradox that the tropes of the latter have come to define revolution in general, she articulates a theory of political authority (and subjectivity). Her theory is particularly important for my analysis because subsequent scholarship has explicitly connected it to the performativity of speech act theory. Of particular importance in her work on revolutions is the connection it illuminates between the key trope of revolution (inaugurated by the French) and the performativity of the declarative template of modern rights-bearing citizenship. The key feature of the modern concept of revolution, according to Arendt, is un(fore)seen originality; revolution is an event that violently erases an existing form of order. It does so in a way that allows a subsequently emerging principle of order to appear as absolutely novel and original. This sense of

novelty corresponds to the declaration's performative incorporation of sovereignty in the citizen, producing a figure that fully contains his political subjectivity, free from any historically authenticating legacy. At the same time, the gesture of placing political authority in the figure of the rights-bearing man will need a guarantee that this citizen is an authentic element of the Sovereign previously embodied by the monarch. This need for authenticating leads to the constitutive role of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, contrasting the ideal citizen with the inauthentic actor. Arendt analyzes this discourse as the mistake of the French Revolution to transfer into the heart of the concept of the political some aspects of social life that were previously not considered political. However, I will argue that her discussion of the revolutionary discourse itself suggests that what she considers to be a mistake is in fact a manifestation of a necessary aspect of the political innovation she admires.

From the Arendtian theory of revolution, I will move to more contemporary theories of the democratic subject focusing on the performativity of the citizen's declaration. The works of Claude Lefort and of Jacques Derrida in particular take a step further in the Arendtian direction. They argue that freed from the anchor of the past, the revolution's new subject emerges as a figure whose ties of reference to anything logically or historically prior to his existence have been severed. The citizen, in fact, is constituted by the retroactivity of his own declaration.

In order to gain insight into the political significance of this retroactivity, I will turn to another thinker of performativity. Paul de Man's essay, "Shelley Disfigured" focuses on the performativity of linguistic signification in general and its bearings for the thinking of subjectivity. Aided by Orrin N. C. Wang's essay on de Man's text together

with Shelley's final poem, I will be able to show that de Man's thoughts in this text indeed shed light on the revolutionary discourse of the citizen subject. Furthermore, this specific political significance was crucial in choosing Shelley's final and unfinished poem as the literary point of reference against which de Man articulated his theory of language. My aim here will be to connect his ideas on retroactive positing and what he calls effacement to post-Revolutionary political discourse. According to de Man, this political discourse posits the citizen as a figure of authenticity through gestures that ironically characterize the inauthenticity it wants to define itself against. It is in this moment that inauthenticity is embedded in the core of the discourse constructing the authentic citizen.

1. Democratic performativity

In the first chapter of *On Revolution*,[2] "The Meaning of Revolution," Hannah Arendt offers a careful analysis of the meaning of the modern concept of revolution and its driving tropes. In subsequent chapters she connects those tropes to the multi-layered relationship between the American and the French Revolution and their socio-historical contexts. In what follows I will focus on the main trope at the heart of the modern meaning of revolution as it effaces completely the *ancien régime* to make space for a democratic rule hitherto unseen.

Arendt traces the astronomical origins in the contemporary concept of revolution. She finds a contradiction: the word, first in an astronomical sense but later in political thought as well, denoted a return to a previously abandoned state. The idea of any return,

[2] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963).

however, has not only disappeared from the current meaning but in fact is negated by it. And it was the French Revolution, Arendt suggests, that changed the meaning so radically:

> The notion of an irresistible movement, which the nineteenth century soon was to conceptualize into the idea of historical necessity, echoes from beginning to end through the pages of the French Revolution. Suddenly an entirely new imagery begins to cluster around the old metaphor and an entirely new vocabulary is introduced into political language. When we think of revolution, we almost automatically think in terms of this imagery, born in these years – in terms of Desmoulins' *torrent révolutionnaire* on whose rushing waves the actors of the revolution were borne and carried away until its undertow sucked them from the surface and they perished together with their foes, the agents of the counter-revolution.[3]

For Arendt, our modern concept of revolution is dominated by this torrent: a vast wave that sweeps away the order of the past, gathering all actors, the revolutionaries among them, and throwing them about with a vast force uncontrollable by these actors caught up in it. I would like to underscore one aspect in particular of the great threat this image conveys. Being carried away by a great wave means losing one's foothold on anything that can be considered real ground. As one is being swept away, enveloped in an infinite element of dimness whose force of movement is uncounterable due to its liquid softness, it becomes impossible to indicate directions. Both the foundation and the directions leading to it are lost. In this section I would like to show how this image of engulfing chaos is connected to the performativity of the declaration.

Arendt suggests that this shift in the concept was most importantly brought about by the significance of the masses (i.e. the poor) in the French Revolution; further, it is this historical development that has given the French Revolution its iconic status as a revolution for contemporary critics. She explains,

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[3] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 48-49.

> It was the French Revolution and not the American Revolution that set the world on fire, and it was consequently from the course of the French Revolution, and not from the course of events in America or from the acts of the Founding Fathers, that our present use of the word 'revolution' received its connotations and overtones everywhere, the Unites States not excluded. […] It is odd indeed to see that twentieth century American even more than European learned opinion is often inclined to interpret the American Revolution in the light of the French Revolution […].[4]

Arendt distinguishes between the two revolutions according to a crucial difference she makes in her political theory in general. She analyzes these events and their differences as representatives of the difference between political and prepolitical. In her view, the French Revolution, in responding to man's natural needs for self-sustainment, folded the prepolitical question of "necessities" (which was of urgency for the poor masses in France at the time) into the arena of politics:

> The French Revolution of the Rights of Man, as the Revolution came to understand it, was meant to constitute the source of all political power, to establish not the control but the foundation-stone of the body politic. The new body politic was supposed to rest upon man's natural rights, upon his rights insofar as he is nothing but a natural being, upon his right to 'food, dress, and the reproduction of the species', that is upon his right to the necessities of life. And these rights were not understood as prepolitical rights that no government and no political power has the right to touch and to violate, but as the very content as well as the ultimate end of government and power. The *ancien régime* stood accused of having deprived its subjects of these rights – the rights of life and nature rather than rights of freedom and citizenship.[5]

The American Revolution's faithfulness to the proper boundaries of the political also means that it still kept, in principle, to the old meaning of the term while the French Revolution, with its new trope of the torrent, changed it radically. The first, the classical – the historical – American model kept the idea of a faithful return to a historical origin while the latter French version enacted a new model based on novelty. The historical

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[4] Ibid., 55.

[5] Ibid., 109.

model of historicity is supplanted subsequently by a new model inaugurating the new as the essence of revolution.

It is clear from the above paragraph that Arendt prefers the American over the French Revolution. She is dissatisfied with the fact that the discourse of the French Revolution proved to be so irresistible that it came to define the concept of revolution itself and by extension, I would add, changed the discourse of rights into the discourse of human rights. Her judgment follows from the fact that she associates political action – the active character of political life where questions around rights and authority can be negotiated independently of considerations of material necessity – with the "political" proper. It is this quality of activeness that she identifies in the American Revolution and that attracts her to the American Declaration of Independence. And it is this reading of Arendt's that resonates particularly well with theories of performativity and speech acts.

In her essays on Arendt's philosophy of political action, B. Honig calls attention to the affinity between Arendt's thoughts on political action, revolutionary declaration, and speech act theory. She does so by analyzing Arendt's thoughts on the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man through the Austinian framework of performative vs. constative language.[6] The basis for this affinity is Arendt's analysis of a phrase in the American Declaration of Independence. For Arendt, Jefferson's wording of the American Declaration of Independence is crucial in understanding the nature of political action and authority. In the sentence starting with "We hold these truths to be self-evident," Arendt finds an important incongruity between

[6] B. Honig, "Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (1991): 97-113; and "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan Scott, 215-236 (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

"hold" and "self-evident": strictly speaking, self-evident truths do not need people's accord in holding them, instead, their self-evidence would be prescribed for them. Honig identifies Arendt's pre-Austinian distinction between performative and constative most saliently in her contrasting this "hold" with this "self-evidence." Further, Honig interprets Arendt's use of "incongruence" as a sign of her preferring speech in action, i.e. the performative term over the one that refers to self-evident truths. This preference is so strong for Arendt that despite her quarrels with the French Revolution, she is still critical of the Americans as "the Declaration of Independence does not consistently maintain the performative posture she so admires."[7] Instead, Honig continues, it constatively anchors its force in two sources of authority: an appeal to God, and these self-evident truths.

I attend to Arendt's preferences[8] and dissatisfactions because I wish to argue that it is precisely what she admires in the "performativity" of the immaculately political American Revolution that is present in the guiding trope of the inferior yet still triumphant French Revolution. In other words, it is not entirely clear to what extent the two revolutions can be distinguished according to Arendtian guidelines. In *On Revolution*, she says of the American Revolution that its apparent return to history (the ancients) was a return neither to "the traditions of customs and institutions nor [to] the great tradition of Western thought and concept," but was in fact due to the fact that the actors of this revolution "discovered in [the ancients] a dimension which had not been

[7] Honig, "Declarations of Independence," 99.

[8] For a careful study of Arendt's problematic treatment of the social in *On Revolution*, see Hanna Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 217-225.

handed down by tradition […].”[9] Similarly, in an earlier book, Arendt makes a statement which B. Honig characterizes as her notion of performative posture. In *Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt writes:

> When the Rights of Man were proclaimed for the first time, they were regarded as being independent of history and the privileges which history had accorded certain strata of society. The new independence constituted the newly discovered dignity of man. From the beginning, this new dignity was of a rather ambiguous nature. Historical rights were replaced by natural rights, “nature” took the place of history, and it was tacitly assumed that nature was less alien than history to the essence of man. The very language of the Declaration of Independence as well as the *Déclaration de Droits de l’Homme*—“inalienable,” “given with birth,” “self-evident truths”—implies the belief in a kind of human “nature” which would be subject to the same laws of growth as that of the individual and from which rights and laws could be deduced.[10]

In the above quotes both revolutions are interpreted as supplanting history with a new notion of man’s dignity. What appears as a lawful return to the origin of community is in fact a discovery of something so new that Arendt is compelled to call it a new dimension. New independence matches the new concept of the dignity of man, indeed, the new concept of man as a key concept and subject of politics, the same “man of natural rights” that appeared in her reproachful discussion quoted earlier (on p.75). Within this independence and legal dignity, manifested and indeed executed through active speech, the speech act of declarations is achieved through a radical gesture of cutting ties from history. Instead of relying on history, the new concept authenticating the political subject is nature, something that can be an anchor without being tied to anything. Man’s nature is the concept that allows the perfecting of the “performative” aspect of revolutions because of the fact that it is always contained in man; man always embodies his nature; nature is

[9] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 198.

[10] Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, 1973), 298.

not in any way prior to man's existence but is coexistent with him, rendering history obsolete in the modality of the declaration.

In this gesture of breaking with history and anchoring political authority in the self-contained nature of man and citizen, we can discern the rhetorical force of the torrent. Washed away in it are not only particular past histories, but also order as understood through historical affiliations. In its imagery of an overwhelmingly powerful and unpredictable chaos that human calculation cannot fathom or manipulate, the figure of the individual can emerge as unbound, his political subjectivity untethered by further qualifications. And importantly, he can construe his self as the foundation of his political personhood. Unlike monarchy, where the Sovereign inhabits the body of the monarch, the individual here emerges as a distinct unit of this Sovereign, yielding a myriad of independently sovereign political subjects. The declaration is the instance of the citizen's gesture of anchoring his political subjectivity as a distinctly individual part of the Sovereign in his own self.

The image of the torrent condenses the declarative template of revolutionary citizenship. It does not merely signal the violent chaos of the uprising that sweeps away the *ancien régime*, it also metaphorically gathers into an image the political subject's unprecedented shedding of any authenticating foundation external or prior to his political subjectivity. Put differently, I suggest here that the French Revolution's image of the torrent may not only be interpreted as a reflection on the very literal chaotic violence but also as a complex rhetorical insight about the citizen's self-anchoring declaration. The declaration is a double movement of cutting binds. There is a gesture which frees the citizen of any requirement authenticating his political subjectivity by premising it on the

rights he naturally possesses as a human being. This move is something completely new, unable to be logically traced back to anything historically prior. As we have seen in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt herself viewed the American Revolution as a discursive event that may claim it accomplishes a great return to lawful origins, but which in fact introduces an absolutely new dimension of the political. The torrent image as Arendt presents it, is in great accordance with her analysis of the revolutionary declaration as a "performative" or, in her terminology, as a politically active event.

An important difference between the American and the French Revolutions in Arendt's account – and perhaps the most important one to motivate the folding of the social into the political – is the role of passion in shaping revolutionary discourse. Arendt writes, "[it] is as though the American Revolution was achieved in a kind of ivory tower into which the fearful spectacle of human misery, the haunting voices of abject poverty, never penetrated."[11] In stark contrast, motivated by the compassion compelled by that misery in abject poverty, the French Revolution placed matters of the heart at the center of its revolutionary discourse. This passion inevitably results in the "fateful mood of suspicion" that "arose directly out of this misplaced emphasis on the heart as the source of political virtue, on *le coeur, une âme droite, un caractere moral*."[12] Thus, Arendt explains the revolutionary leaders' obsessive suspicion and surveillance, and their anxious demand for transparency in terms of the impossibility of the revolution's psychological demands. She writes,

> However deeply heartfelt a motive may be, once it is brought out and exposed for public inspection it becomes an object of suspicion rather than insight; when the light

[11] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 95.

[12] Ibid., 96.

> of the public falls upon it, it appears and even shines, but, unlike deeds and words which are meant to appear, whose very existence hinges on appearance, the motives behind such deeds and words are destroyed in their essence through appearance; when they appear, they become 'mere appearances' behind which again other, ulterior motives may lurk, such as hypocrisy and deceit.[13]

By inevitably becoming "mere appearances," emotional motives in public also inevitably entail a constant suspicion of hypocrisy as a significant feature of the revolutionary public and are held in counter-distinction to the authenticity of citizens' moral character.[14] What follows in Arendt's account is a detailed analysis of the corresponding vice of hypocrisy and its "momentous role" in the French Revolution. From the discourse against hypocrisy represented iconically by Robespierre ("the incorruptible"), Arendt selects the key phrase "tearing the mask of hypocrisy."[15] Similarly to her method to get at the heart of the change within the concept of revolution, she turns to the etymology of hypocrisy. The word "hypocrite" descending from Greek, originally denoted the figure of the actor. Hypocrisy, the vice attempting to "undo the vices" by pretending, could become the "vice of vices."[16] This is so because the hypocrite "plays a role as consistently as the actor in the play who also must identify himself with his role for the purpose of play-acting; there is no *alter ego* before whom he might appear in his true shape," and so "[p]sychologically speaking […] he eliminates from the world

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[13] Ibid.

[14] In Arendt's own words: "If, in the words of Robespierre, 'patriotism is a thing of the heart', then the reign of virtue was bound to be at worst the rule of hypocrisy, and at best the never-ending fight to ferret out the hypocrites, a fight which could only end in defeat because of the simple fact that it was impossible to distinguish between the true and false patriots. When his heartfelt patriotism or his ever-suspicious virtue were displayed in public, they were no longer principles upon which to act or motives by which to inspired; they had degenerated into mere appearances" (*On Revolution*, 97).

[15] Ibid., 106.

[16] Ibid., 101.

[…] the only core of integrity from which true appearance could arise again, his own incorruptible self."[17] In undoing his vices, the hypocrite also undoes his self. This radical self-annihilation carries the hypocrite beyond a certain threshold within which vice and responsibility create a coherent framework of crime and exterior to which such a framework cannot operate. As Arendt claims, "Only crime and the criminal, it is true, confront us with the perplexity of radical evil; but only the hypocrite is really rotten to the core."[18]

The modern political discourse of antitheatricality as exemplified by Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* (analyzed in the previous chapter), enters the rhetorical framework in this trope of "tearing the mask of hypocrisy." This is not in the least surprising, since Robespierre was guided by his intention to implement Rousseau's political philosophy. Rousseau treated the actor as detrimental to the republic precisely because the actor can impersonate any character through abandoning his proper place as man. Arendt's analysis suggests that the modern political discourse of antitheatricality is mostly invested in creating the figure of the citizen characterized by the values of honesty and authenticity. The ideal citizen is someone whose core is free from rot. The significance of the trope of "tearing the mask of hypocrisy" for Arendt is that it gives up any distinction between the political and the prepolitical. Sporting the mask is political and removing it is political also. To not wear the mask is the truest, most natural way of being "man and citizen."

Clearly, Arendt considers the French revolutionary obsession with hypocrisy and the related culture of surveillance characterizing the Reign of Terror misguided. For her,

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[17] Ibid., 103.

[18] Ibid.

it is the result of the erroneous idea of folding the social into the political by rendering the concept of the political subject to coincide with the human being, and thereby have it constrained by nature and necessity. She claims that the political trope of "tearing the mask of hypocrisy" is ignorantly simplistic in treating the concept of the mask as the obstacle to true or honest politics instead of its enabling concept.[19] To counter the Greek political heritage behind hypocrisy, she turns to the Romans. Crediting them with the purest conceptual framework of politics, she contrasts the Roman concept of the legal subject with the new French idea of "man and citizen." The Latin *persona* signaled the mask worn by the actor on stage in a way that does not simply denote hiding or dissimulation, nor simply self-annihilation. Besides hiding or covering over, the other function of the mask is precisely to enable "the voice to sound through."[20] Further, "it was in this twofold understanding of a mask through which a voice sounds that the word *persona* became a metaphor and was carried from the language of the theatre into legal terminology."[21] Arendt states that "the men of the French Revolution had no conception of the *persona*"[22] and they employed the figure of the mask as merely an extension of the

[19] Historical arguments aside, Arendt's disappointments with the discourse of the French Revolution could be interpreted as an anxiety over the loss of indivisibility within political subjectivity. According to the exposition of the Roman framework, there is a clear division between the prepolitical and the political: the mask marks this division. The face (the human body) behind the mask is imagined externally to the political, which only contains the mask, thus leaving the resulting political subject undivided in its sovereignty (even if it needs the human voice to be animated politically). The French model, however, seems to install a principle of division within the concept of the political subject, even if it demands no division (between public appearance and internal reality): in the former case, there is no room for such a disturbing division, while in the latter, it is not only possible but considered a constant threat we need protection from.

[20] Ibid., 106.

[21] Ibid., 106-107.

[22] Ibid., 107.

Greek imagery around the figure of the actor. In other words, Arendt suggests that unlike the American revolutionaries, the enactors of the French Revolution in fact erroneously simplified the concept of citizenship when they equated the figure of hypocrisy with a mask one must remove to enable the citizen to appear.[23] The result, for the French, is a citizen who is also at the same time a natural being, an *homme*; his rights do not issue from the legal aspect of his *persona*, which is merely a particular social status enabling his citizenship, but follow from his very being a man.

I would like to highlight an important connection between the declarative template of modern democratic citizenship and the strong discourse against hypocrisy characterizing the French Revolution. Arendt interprets the French Revolution as a mistaken course of events since its founding principles (wanting to tear the mask of hypocrisy out of compassion for the masses) inevitably lead it to terror. Nevertheless, I think her attention to what later thinkers call performativity, and what she calls the authority issuing from "the act of foundation itself,"[24] points to the image of the torrent as the metaphor of this authority. Insofar as this act of self-anchoring posits political authority in the figure of man, compulsory compassion and publicly demonstrated good moral character may not merely be the effect of revolutionaries' simplistic views of political subjectivity (or ignorance of classical political concepts). They may, in fact, be ways of making this innovation of the self-anchoring political subjectivity, by which this new citizenship is justified, meaningful. Arendt discusses the threat of hypocrisy as a

[23] Arendt also argues in "The Social Question" that the American Revolution could be accomplished without the turmoil that came to characterize its French counterpart because there were no American masses of *sans-culottes*.

[24] Ibid., 196.

necessary effect of a psychological mistake on the part of the revolutionaries and does not examine hypocrisy itself as a political term at the time.

However, her insights concerning hypocrisy are evocative: "[in] politics, […] we have no possibility of distinguishing between being and appearance," the "demand that everybody display in public his innermost motivation […] transforms all actors into hypocrites […]."[25] They are valuable for thinking the political stakes of revolutionary discourse when we read it for the connection it implicitly makes between the charge of hypocrisy threatening everyone in a regime of internal moral character, the democratic public sphere, and the concept of the individual with a personal core.[26] The charge of hypocrisy, insofar as it reaches all citizens precisely for the reasons Arendt identifies, cannot fail to affirm and render politically salient the concept of the individual as a container of internal sentiments and motivations, as a vessel for character, as someone with an essentially pre-public, private core that may or may not be rotten in hypocrisy.

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[25] Ibid., 98.

[26] Arendt only traces the meaning of "hypocrite" to the ancient Greek *hupokritēs* as "actor," but does not examine the previous meanings this actor developed from. The fact that the ancient Greek "actor" came from the verb "respond" (as well as "interpret") shows that it always involves the public. At the same time, the Greek etymology shows no initial moral stigma around the actor (Rousseau finds this quite baffling in *Letter to d'Alembert*): this actor does not pretend publicly to be something different from what he is in private; instead, in the way he responds in the dialogue of the play, he interprets a role. Arendt herself touches on this publicness when she ponders that the vice of the hypocrite is that he "bears false witness against himself" (*On Revolution*, 103), since the idea of bearing witness evokes a performance in court, an explicitly political and public situation. In seeing the link between the hypocrite and the actor but not between the actor and the one who interprets or responds, Arendt seems to agree, along with the French revolutionaries she critiques, to think about hypocrisy as simply a moral and private vice and leaves unexamined its efficacy in constructing the notion of the pre-public private as one's real self. In considering only a part of the development of our concept of hypocrisy, she too subscribes to a moral discourse of antitheatricality whose deployment in politics she critiques. For the etymology of "hypocrite," see William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 140-143. For a more detailed exposition of the cluster of concepts gathered around the root of *hupokritēs*, see Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Responses*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 35-38.

In this image of the citizen as an individual member of the public with a distinct internal and private world, we can recognize another aspect of the self-anchoring gesture of the declaration. An important observation for my analysis is that when this discourse of citizenship demanding a public demonstration of appropriate "innermost motivations" demands authenticity through a ubiquitous charge of hypocrisy, it relies on a principle of inauthenticity. If everyone is by default assumed and can, according to Arendt, always be found to be inauthentic and to be prosecuted, then inauthenticity is a major organizing principle of the post-Revolutionary democratic public sphere; it cannot cease to trigger attempts of appropriate demonstrations of authenticity. Following Arendt, it seems then that the declarative model of citizenship is imbued with this constant tension between authenticity and inauthenticity. I will return to this point when I discuss de Man's theory on subjectivity and effacement later in this chapter. Although argued through a different set of texts, this will also be a key point in the next chapter examining the relationship between the modern homosexual closet and modern notions of the public sphere.

In the above reading of Arendt, my aim has been to show that what she considers doing active politics and calls the "act of foundation" and what Honig recognizes as a precursor of Austin's concept of performativity, is in fact what organizes the dominant image of the revolution as a torrent violently sweeping away previous order. Further, I highlighted the emergence of a declarative model of modern democratic citizenship and the self-anchoring gesture of this declarative model that posits the authenticity of the citizen in the natural character of man. Arendt is consistent in her admiration for a revolution that makes its own founding gesture explicit as a founding one (as opposed to referring to an external or prior element granting authority to the foundation). In this

consistency, Arendt already telegraphs subsequent poststructuralist thinking about citizenship and democracy. She registers the tension between the constative and the performative aspects of the citizen's declaration and she identifies openness, and mutability as the spirit of revolutionary action.

For the purposes of this chapter, this post-Arendtian thinking of the declaration as a speech act adds the important point that the declaration as a performative enacts all of its terms: in doing the declaration, the inalienable rights are constructed simultaneously with the subject of the declaration in an act of retroactive positing. This point of view takes for granted that such declarations are performative; it holds that while they document the rights or the independence of "the undersigned," they also posit what they declare. The speech act of declaration works by a version of a general formula of "we declare our inalienable rights." Applying speech act theory allows these authors to complicate the vectors of causality expressed in this formula and to show that the subject is not prior to the rights he is in possession of, nor are the rights prior to the declaration.

Claude Lefort sums up the inherent tension between the constative and the performative aspect of rights claiming as the necessity of the conjoining of these two aspects. He writes:

> [the] rights of man are declared, and they are declared as rights that belong to man; but, at the same time, man appears through his representatives as the being whose essence it is to declare his rights. It is impossible to detach the statement from the utterance as soon as nobody is able to occupy the place, at a distance from all others, from which he would have authority to grant or ratify rights. Thus, rights are not simply the object of a declaration, it is their essence to be declared. [27]

[27] Claude Lefort, "Politics and Human Rights," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 256-57.

The result is a paradox: why does the subject have to claim something that he inalienably, unquestionably owns? Jacques Derrida in "Declarations of Independence"[28] reads Jefferson's document explicitly within the framework of speech act theory and grasps its performativity in the written declaration form, that of a signed document. He shows that the convergence of the constative and the performative retroactively effects the emergence of the "we" as the authentic subject of the declaration:

> Here then is the "good people" who engage themselves and engage only themselves in signing, in having their own declaration signed. The "we" of the declaration speaks "in the name of the people."
>
> But this people does not exist. They do *not* exist as an entity, it does *not* exist, *before* this declaration, not *as such*. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer. This signer can only authorize him- or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end [*parvenu au vout* (sic!)], if one can say this, of his or her signature, in a sort of fabulous retroactivity. That first signature authorizes him or her to sign.[29]

As a result of this "fabulous retroactivity" working what we may call democratic performativity, Lefort points out that "a new point is fixed: man."[30] He comes to a conclusion similar Arendt's argument on the disappearance of the Roman legacy of *persona* in the modern concept of human rights: "And what is more, it is fixed by virtue of a written constitution: right is categorically established in the nature of man, a nature present in each individual. But what kind of anchor point is this?" he asks.[31] This anchor cannot be properly imagined by the metaphor of the anchor, a heavy object providing

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[28] Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science*, 15 (1986): 7-15.

[29] Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," 10, emphasis original.

[30] Lefort, 256.

[31] Ibid.

support to the boat by linking itself to an external point of relative fixity.[32] If man is an anchor point by declaration, this anchor is radically unfixed:

> The rights of man reduce right to a basis which, despite its name, is without shape, is given as interior to itself and, for this reason, eludes all power which would claim to take hold of it – whether religious or mythical, monarchical or popular. Consequently, these rights go beyond any particular formulation which has been given of them […].[33]

In other words, these rights, the anchor point of "man and citizen," are infinitely mutable. This shapelessness is inseparable from the positing force constituting them and therefore it plays a crucial role in what they appear to fix - the figure of man himself.

2. Subjectivity, effacement and the Jacobin imaginary

I ended the previous section with Claude Lefort's remark on the inherent shapelessness of the human rights fixing the emerging figure of the republican "man and citizen." In this section, I turn to another elaboration on the connection between figuring, shapelessness and performative power in Paul de Man's essay "Shelley Disfigured."[34] Arendt's thoughts on the dominant discourse of revolutions were already sensitive to an inherent tension between authenticity and inauthenticity within this discourse. I argued that this tension surfaced in the significance of the modern political discourse of

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[32] The image of the anchor metaphor strengthens the rhetorical force of the main naval metaphor of the torrent in thinking the revolution and republican citizenship. Interestingly, as I discussed in the previous chapter, in disqualifying what he termed the non-serious use of language exemplified by literary and theater-related instances, Austin chose a Shakespearean figure of speech also connected to the sea. This thematic similarity suggests that Austin's concerns of how to theorize language may be inextricable from a political framework of republican citizenship in which sincerity guarantees authenticity.

[33] Lefort, 259.

[34] Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 93-124.

antitheatricality as the trope of "tearing off the mask of hypocrisy" in positing the new concept of man as a political subject. Paul de Man's essay, written on a poem that explicitly evokes founding figures of the French Revolution (such as the torrent image and the figure of Rousseau), gives an insight into the mechanism of that tension. Man (as subjectivity) is posited by a performative force (of language); in order to appear autonomous, in control of – and prior to – his speech, he needs to be forgotten. In this forgetting, I would like to argue, the positing force of the performative is the inauthenticity that makes possible the authentic subjectivity that represses it.

Reading Shelley's unfinished "The Triumph of Life," de Man here examines the complicated web of relationships between subjectivity, signification, figuration and positing in a light that accentuates the political aspects of this web. "The Triumph of Life" narrates the story of a series of questions, on cognition, subjectivity and origin, relayed from one subject to another involving complicated and multiple paradoxical connections between figures of forgetting, light, and mirroring. If "Shelley Disfigured" itself is not explicit enough about the relationship between citizenship and performativity, Orrin N. C. Wang provides a clear explanation.[35]

Wang rereads Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" in the light of de Man's analysis in order to cast light on an aspect of Shelley's poem that de Man's reading "suppresses." He argues that "The Triumph of Life" is a textual example of a certain tradition of "the recognition, thinking through, and dramatization of [what Chantal Mouffe called the] 'crisis of the Jacobin imaginary' […]."[36] It is within this project which examines the

[35] Orrin N. C. Wang, "Disfiguring Monuments: History in Paul De Man's 'Shelley Disfigured' and Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life.' " *ELH*, Vol. 58, No. 3, (1991): 633-655.

[36] Wang, 652.

"suppressed sociohistoric context" of Shelley's fragment, that Wang shows the connections between the "The Triumph of Life" and "Shelley Disfigured" and the figure of Rousseau. Giving a historically contextualized reading of the poem attentive to Rousseau's reception in England that Shelley (a keen reader of Rousseau) must have been aware of, Wang emphasizes the extent to which modernity allows the figure of Rousseau to metaleptically personify the French Revolution:

> The event most entwined with the identity of Rousseau is of course the French Revolution. When one asked at the end of the eighteenth century who Rousseau was, one was asking that person what he or she thought of the massive changes European society had undergone, and was still experiencing.[37]

I would like to single out three points where Wang shows that Shelley is engaging with the imagery of the French Revolution in his treatment of Rousseau's figure such that Rousseau (resonating well with Hannah Arendt's interpretation in *On Revolution*) comes to stand for the French Revolution's conflicted imagery of novelty, republican celebration and the horrors of the uncontrollable masses. This imagery in fact accompanies Rousseau's appearance in the poem. The poem is precipitated by the narrator's vision, hovering between dream and daydream, whose main image is the march of a triumphant chariot in the midst of a mass of people. In front of the chariot the crowd is young, joyful and the march takes the form of a celebration. In contrast, the large group of people treading behind the chariot seem to have fallen back in weakness and old age, and are in a general state of hopeless misery and suffering. This double-faced crowd evokes the similarly double-faced imagery of the revolution: on the one hand the public celebration of citizens (the open-air, public celebration is the ideal moment of democracy for

[37] Ibid., 643.

Rousseau),[38] and on the other hand, the image of these same people being swept away in the awesome torrent of the masses:

> [T]he poem's crowd scenes are charged with a sensual ecstasy that then becomes a death frenzy of the species, where the dance surrounding the chariot's procession moves from the sensual «*fête*» that inaugurates society in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, to the bloodthirsty mobs that gyrate through Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.[39]

"What once was" Rousseau appears in "The Triumph of Life" as something resembling an "old root":

> And the grass, which methought hung so wide
> And white, was but his thin, discoloured hair,
> And the holes he vainly sought to hide,
> Were or had been eyes[40]

Where Paul de Man stresses a process of defiguration as defacement, Wang offers a reading of the root as an image in which Shelley sets up Rousseau as both a priapic figure and "the parody of Nature and the priapic."[41] The element of mockery comes out most sharply in the absence of eyes. This element is read by Wang as a comment on "the Enlightenment and French Revolutionary claims of a clear, visible system of truth."[42] And importantly: "as a root he is the Latin *radix*, the radical all Europe and England

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[38] He advocates is for instance, in his *Letter to d'Alembert* as a morally ideal form of public entertainment. I will discuss it in detail in the fourth chapter.

[39] Wang, 646.

[40] P. B. Shelley, *"The Triumph of Life"* in Donald H Reiman, *The Triumph of Life, A Critical Study* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), 186-188.

[41] Wang, 644.

[42] Ibid.

knew."[43] Also in the light of Wang's earlier suggestion that Rousseau's figure has come to signify the French Revolution, the *radix* might position Rousseau as the root of the Jacobin imaginary (and perhaps its crisis as well).[44]

The third point concerns the connection between forgetting and the revolution. Responding to the narrator's inquiry about his identity, Rousseau tells a story of how he himself asked the same series of questions of an apparition of light. Her response was to give him a cup of *nepenthe,* inducing him to completely forget his previous state upon waking from what he experienced as a profound sleep. Wang reads "the drug of forgetfulness" and the scene in general as "a fitting emblem for the new revolutionary faith that wants to create a new society, and erase all past traditions of government and law."[45]

These three points themselves sum up the modern concept of the revolution as it is discussed by Arendt. They show that insofar as "The Triumph of Life" can be read as a general treatise on history and language, as de Man suggests according to Wang, this analysis gains its force precisely because the Jacobin imaginary shapes and saturates modern concepts of subjectivity. Therefore de Man's thoughts (precisely because they found themselves in alignment with a cryptic fragment struggling with and through this imagery), enable us to see clearer the connection between modern subjectivity and language on the one hand, and the major tropes and operations of the revolutionary tradition on the other hand.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Hannah Arendt devotes much of her attention to the analysis of the link between Rousseau and Robespierre, see *On Revolution*, 97-98.

[45] Wang, 644.

De Man offers his reading of Shelley as an exegetic treatise on the theoretical stakes of the poem. However, I read him here for his theory of performativity and language illustrated by his reading of Shelley. I rely on Wang's essay as an augmentation of Paul de Man's argument that enables us to better grasp the connections between the "crisis of the Jacobin imaginary" and the positing force of language as a political phenomenon.

In the poem the narrator depicts both himself and the figure of Rousseau to ask about Rousseau's identity. De Man takes this repeated instance of questioning as his point of departure. The structure of the poem presents Rousseau as the figure of Enlightenment subjectivity;[46] the narrator's experience seems to be a distant echo of the turns of Rousseau's story. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator only wakes to find himself in a subsequent dream. In the dream, the chariot of life and Rousseau later appear to tell, in turn, the tale of his dreamlike vision presented to him, himself also having woken from a deep sleep, as a sublime answer to his own inquiries regarding his identity. The parallels between the narrator's and Rousseau's conditions seem to point towards Rousseau as the figure of subjectivity based on a continuous and complicated chain of questioning which always induces an absolute forgetting. De Man reads Shelley for the connection between this structure and language, and especially meaning making. Shelley's metaphors are interpreted as depicting a significant tension between the referential and the signifying aspects of language. The scarf of rainbow, standing for the seamless unity of language and its world of referents, is trampled upon by the "shape all

[46] See Wang, 642-643.

light" embodying "thought and 'thought's empire over thought'[…]."[47] Her trampling feet are dancing to the measure of water. It is in this image emphasizing measure that the signifying aspect of language disturbs and reigns over the referential one. De Man identifies positing as the force of language:

> The positing power does not reside in Rousseau as subject: the mastery of the shape over Rousseau is never in question. He rises and bends at her command and his mind is passively trampled into dust without resistance. The positing power of language is both entirely arbitrary, in having a strength that cannot be reduced to necessity and entirely inexorable in that there is no alternative to it. It stands beyond the polarities of chance and determination, and can therefore not be part of a temporal sequence of events. The sequence has to be punctured by acts that cannot be made a part of it.[48]

The "shape all light" in de Man's reading illustrates different ways of thinking how language works and the relationship between them: her scarf the rainbow falls away from her feet moving to the music of the water. If Wang reads this "shape all light" as the figure of Enlightenment's light, i.e. reason, de Man's reading stresses that she can be read as light only insofar as a light allowed for by language. And unlike the reason we associate with the discourse of the Enlightenment, the light of this language is not controlled by the subject. Rather, it is the light that governs the subject quite violently through its positing power as follows. Subjectivity is seen as the process of asking about one's identity. This process is presented not only as an inquiry about one's history, but also as a temporal sequence of events where the inquirer's questions are rendered forgotten by the very answer to the inquiry. The answer arrives in the instance of a sudden event, unrelated organically to what has gone on in the scene before, of a violent imposition of forgetting. In this imposition, de Man recognizes the positing power of

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[47] De Man, 118.

[48] Ibid., 116.

language that is the condition of possibility of any meaning to emerge while it constantly threatens to efface, with each imposition earlier impositions. De Man considers this power as a political force; it is arbitrary in that its power resides outside of the order of the subject that it generates. In other words, the positing does not follow from the sequence ("cannot be reduced to necessity"), nor does it operate as a part of the sequence it punctuates.

The positing power of language, however, cannot gain absolute control over the referential aspect:

> [W]e impose, in our turn, on the senseless power of positional language the authority of sense and meaning. But this is radically inconsistent: language posits and language means (since it articulates) but language cannot posit meaning; it can only reiterate (or reflect) it in its reconfirmed falsehood. Nor does the knowledge of this impossibility make it less impossible.[49]

Language and subjectivity are intimately connected since subjectivity emerges as the linguistic act of questioning but this questioning also entails a necessary forgetting: "To question is to forget. Considered performatively, figuration (as question) performs the erasure of the positing power of language."[50] To make sense of this last cryptic sentence, we should take into account the different meanings of the word "figure" that are at play in de Man's vocabulary. Figure means shape (which, in turn, is Shelley's favored term in "The Triumph of Life"); but as a false cognate, it also evokes face (the meaning of the French word *figure*). And figuratively, it means figure of speech, the most important term in rhetoric. It is the aspect of language that does not simply refer, the aspect which disturbs any conventional theory of language as a basically constative tool

[49] Ibid., 117-118.

[50] Ibid., 118.

of representation of external reality. Hence in this last meaning, “figure” is aligned with the performativity of speech act theory. However, performativity here does not end in executing a given perlocutionary effect. It hinges on an act of erasure of its own positing force. It seems that language can mean only at the expense of effacing its performativity.

I would like to link this complicated chain of readings to the tension of inauthenticity and authenticity in Arendt’s exposition of revolutionary discourse. I do so to argue that Wang’s arguments for treating de Man’s reading of Shelley as a theory of the connection between language, subjectivity and the Jacobin imaginary justifies this link. If the Jacobin imaginary is constituted by the rhetorical inventory of the declaration as Arendt’s theory suggests, then the de Manian insights are instructive about this inventory as well. They even suggest that the meaning of “language” and the ways we can theorize it were also generated by a declarative performative. According to this reading, it is the performativity of the declaration that posits the subject (with his rights) as the subject of the declaration, while its constative aspect is the subject’s attempt to own the declaration as its issuing source. At stake is the subject’s authority which, according to this reading, can only be an illusion that needs to forget that it is an effect of the positing power of the declaration. It is at this point where I would like to link my discussion of Wang on de Man and Shelley to the preceding discussion of Arendt (and Lefort and Derrida). It is the repressed memory of this empowering forgetting as a defacement that instantly returns in the trope of “tearing the mask of hypocrisy.” The autonomous rights-bearing citizen can appear as such through the employment of a discourse of hypocrisy – enacting the modern political discourse of antitheatricality – as the principle of assessing authenticity. Deeming public appearance to be constantly

suspect and demanding proof from an internal, private core in the same instance posit this private core as the seat of authenticity. Since this core is directly inaccessible (as accessing it makes it a public appearance), it is never fully verifiable. This means that, to repeat Arendt's point, everyone can "turn out" to be a hypocrite and fail the ideal of incorruptibility. Additionally, there is no way to verify that the core is incorruptible. But the inaccessibility of the core entails that sincerity or incorruptibility can only be appearances. They can be appearances that have yet to be unmasked; that is, inauthentic performances of the authentic. Nevertheless, this authenticity cannot be but the posited source of any performance. Posting this core repeats the retroactivity of the declaration as the de-anchoring anchor, the guarantee of the rights and of the declaration itself.

In calling attention to the explicit references to the French Revolution in the Shelley poem, Wang's analysis paves the way for a further question about the connection between the French Revolution as it figures in the "crisis of the Jacobin imagery" and the modern speaking subject. If the figure of Rousseau can be read, after de Man and Wang, as the metaphor of "man and citizen," then this reading connects to my earlier discussions of the tropes of the revolution and theatricality in a number of ways.

While de Man makes it clear that forgetting does not mean the disappearance of the forgotten, the instance of forgetting is a crucial element marking the force of positing. Much like the image of the torrent references the lost ground of previous authority, it illustrates the gesture of severing any possible historical ties from its own instance. The tropes of forgetting, effacement, and disfiguration and the emergence of Rousseau as the figure of man (and citizen) evokes the shapelessness of the right and the figure of the man this shapelessness nevertheless fixes in Claude Lefort's argument. The element of

disfiguration or effacement shows the link between Lefort's argument on the shapelessness of the posited right and the disappearance of the *persona*, the legal mask as the condition of citizenship in Arendt's argument.

The figure of disfiguration and effacement is also familiar from Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert.* In the previous chapter, I showed that in Rousseau's argument repudiating theatricality and the profession of the actor is twofold. The moral repudiation of deceit is attached to an anxiety about a radical abandonment of one's own character as the skill required for dissimulation. Here we can hear Arendt again in her discussion of hypocrisy as the only vice where the sinner is rotten to the core. Having the core rot away or dissolved imagines an eventual lacking of this core, one's character. As long as man is fixed by an inherent shapelessness as his inalienable property in an instance of self-anchoring that is also a de-anchoring, repudiated theatricality will be at work in the emergence of the citizen.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the declarative template of modern democratic citizenship, illustrated here by the guiding tropes of the French Revolution constitute political subjectivity through the performative construction of human rights and democratic subjectivity. They anchor the political authority of these inalienable rights in the figure of man himself alone. This gesture provides an infinite mutability and augmentability of the political order. But it also necessitates, insofar as some legitimizing guarantee is required, the guarantee of this subject's authenticity. This authenticity is posited in the private, personal core of the citizen (again, his being a man), by a principle

forbidding inauthenticity; this principle is the modern political discourse of antitheatricality. Antitheatricality polices public appearances and posits this internal core by demanding an authentic, internal, therefore private, moral character. The citizen can appear authentic as a man insofar as he can convincingly display his sincere moral authenticity. However, since displaying it necessitates bringing it to public light, the distinction between authentic essence and its convincing public display can only be problematic. The ideal of public authenticity needs a close and causal connection leading from the essence to its public appearance. The trouble is that since essence is necessarily lodged in the personally private, its display is virtually indistinguishable from hypocritical pretense, rendering all displays perpetually suspicious and any resulting public judgment of authenticity contingent. [51]

The central role of the discourse of antitheatricality in the rhetorical construction of the democratic citizen will evidently also determine the figure of the proud rights-claiming homosexual. As a homosexual, this figure continues to bear the features of the actor within this discourse of antitheatricality. He will therefore appear as the very figure of hypocritical inauthenticity against which the authentic citizen can appear as the legitimate subject. But as a rights-claiming individual whose performative declaration constitutes his very being as the gay citizen (with no additional, referential or constative authorization required), this figure is also at the same time a faithful reiteration of the self-anchoring "man and citizen." In other words, the "out" homosexual as a public and political figure is something of an impossibility: the figure of inauthenticity posited by

[51] As Lionel Trilling quoted André Gide: "'One cannot,' André Gide has said, 'both be sincere and seem so.'" Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 70.

the template of rights claiming (that, according to de Man, needs to forget his own inauthenticity) is claiming rights.

However, this impossibility is far from unproductive or debilitating. This figure of impossibility appears explicitly in an essay by Henry Abelove where he offers a theory of the direct-action characteristic of Queer Nation.[52] Queer Nation, a loose organization developed from ACT UP, kept ACT UP's principle of direct action to broaden its scope from demanding an urgent and effective response to the AIDS epidemic. It targets the general heteronormative political and cultural discourse on homosexuality which framed and was affirmed by the AIDS crisis at the time (it was indeed Queer Nation that claimed the word "queer" as a self-identificatory term). Abelove identifies the difference between homosexual politics prior to the AIDS crisis and the appearance of the "queer" politics of Queer Nation. He identifies it in terms of the conventional difference within political activism according to representative democracy and direct action activism. While the former revolves around citizens communicating their interest and will through demonstration and appealing to the appropriate political forums, the latter prioritizes gaining public attention and awareness over securing calculable political gains. While he never explicitly suggests so, from his analysis it seems that there is a crucial difference between these forms of activism in their assessment of their position vis-à-vis citizenship. Demonstrations mobilize according to the position of the citizen displaying rights and demands; direct acts call attention to society's failure to acknowledge the rights of certain

[52] Henry Abelove, "From Thoreau to Queer Politics," in *Deep Gossip* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 29-42.

social groups or consider certain questions as pertaining to the whole of society.[53] While this general differentiation includes a wide array of possible direct acts (e.g. burning of cars), Abelove explicitly identifies a further qualification that narrows the kind of direct act this queer politics would yield. In the following quote, he designates the *modus operandi* of the work required in making claims lacking general acknowledgment through behaving as if this acknowledgement is granted thus positing it simultaneously with the claim itself:

> When formerly, before the days of queer politics, we made just demonstrations, say as part of a campaign for a lesbian/gay civil rights bill, we were, I think, in fact demonstrating something. What we were demonstrating was a conviction that a lesbian/gay civil rights was proper and necessary, that we lesbians and gay men were marginalized in American society and needed protection against discrimination. Similarly, when in the 1960s we demonstrated against the U.S. military adventure in Vietnam, we were also demonstrating a conviction. If we say, "We're here, we're queer, and we've designed everything that you're wearing," then we assert not our marginalization but our centrality. This claim, as we nowadays make it, is less than a conviction but more, I should say, than just a hope. To make the claim requires a performance rather than a demonstration. It requires that we be actorish.[54]

Abelove here suggests that perhaps the most salient feature of queer direct acts before all others is this radical performance of political subjectivity. His concept of "being actorish" highlights the productive potential of the "impossibility" of the homosexual citizen and shows that this "impossibility" or aporia resides in the concept of democratic citizenship itself. Being actorish here encapsulates the contradictory relationship between performance and authenticity in the modern concept of democratic citizenship. What is performed here is the performative positing of the centrality of the political subject. Since

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[53] Both of these positions are included in the modern discourse of democracy; see Jean-Luc Nancy, "On the Meanings of Democracy," *Theoria,* Vol. 53, No. 111 (2006): 1-5.

[54] Abelove, 40.

the queer subject is not acknowledged, this performance is a claim that has to resist, through claiming otherwise, the social reality that prompted it. Hence, "actorish" refers to the fact that the claim to centrality is not a reality that could be demonstrated, but is a hope to be achieved performatively. Radically contradicting its own heteronormative social context, this principle of being actorish also cites the revolutionary performativity of democratic citizenship. Queer centrality is posited as an absolute novelty that does not follow from anything prior or contextual (other than this template of performative citizenship). Insofar as it is guided by hope, being actorish reflects its own potential to work as a subject-generating performative. Its efficacy both as a tactic and as a theoretical claim made by Abelove here relies on the dual and dubious nature of performing authenticity as it appears in the modern political discourse of antitheatricality that perpetually leaves any performance of authenticity without guarantee. Abelove's concept of being actorish refers not to a hiding of a corrupt core but to the fact that all authenticity is effected through performance. This is made possible by the radical shapelessness of human rights and therefore of "man" as well, the shapelessness identified by Lefort. Possibility, however, does not entail a guarantee. I would like to conclude with a quote from Lefort that connects the potential Abelove and queer politics rely on to the never-guaranteed potential of this shapelessness. Abelove connected in the quote above the queer performance of centrality to hope (as opposed to the conviction of centrality in demonstration). The hovering between conviction and hope is what Lefort articulates in the following argument expanding the shapelessness of the right to the undetermined openness of democracy:

> From the moment when the rights of man are posited as the ultimate reference, established right is open to question. It becomes still more so as the collective wills,

> or one might prefer to say, social agents bearing new demands mobilize a force in opposition to the one that tends to contain the effects of the recognized rights. Now, where right is in question, society – that is, the established order – is in question.[55]

[55] Lefort, 259.

CHAPTER 3
THE CASE OF *ADOLPHE*: THE PUBLIC SPHERE, MASCULINITY, AND THE HOMOSEXUAL CLOSET

The first two chapters examined some of the connections between the figures of the actor, the citizen and the homosexual in the post-Revolutionary discourse of democratic citizenship. In the first chapter, I identified a structural similarity between the actor and the homosexual. In the second chapter, I looked at the performativity at the heart of revolutionary citizenship. I argued that the political discourse of antitheatricality, featuring the actor as the negative figure of the citizen, functions to help to construct the concept of the personal core of the citizen as the anchor point of its performative positing: I interpreted the French Revolutionaries' slogan of "tearing the mask of hypocrisy" – as it was discussed by Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution* – as a deployment of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality in this project. In this chapter, I will continue to interrogate the connection between the concept of the person's core and the discourse of democratic citizenship as part of a more general argument about the link between this personal aspect of the figure of the citizen and the public sphere the revolutionary concept of citizenship entails. "Tearing the mask of hypocrisy," and the ensuing culture of surveillance characterizing the French Revolution and its Reign of Terror is a discourse of secrecy: it posits the personal core as something that can be (and by default, is) hidden from the public gaze. This institutional secrecy of citizenship provides the link between the previous chapter and this one.

The literary focal point of this chapter is Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* from 1816.[1] A melodramatic love story told by a conflicted male narrator, this novel is an exemplary articulation of the intersection between modern masculinity and the public sphere: the narrator confesses his sordid story in a manuscript that a fictional editor shares with the public of the readers and the story itself is organized by an irresolvable conflict between the alienated narrator, his lover and the public around them, a conflict that was triggered by this public's expectations for Adolphe to be a proper man and maintained by his inability to be one. The point of my departure will a reading of *Adolphe* by James Creech, who argues that *Adolphe* records that a proto-closet is at work in forging post-Revolutionary masculinity. Creech quotes significant passages from the book suggesting that Adolphe's alienation is a symptom of what he calls a gender dissent in order to connect Adolphe's failure to his self-confessed secrecy and argue that a secrecy conjoined by gender dissent is an operation we know contemporarily from the homosexual closet. I will agree with Creech up to the point that Adolphe is indeed a figure of social alienation and that his failure of being a proper man is a result of a constitutive problem of secrecy; however, I will disagree with Creech about his considering this constellation as the manifestation of some proto-modern homosexuality. Instead, I will try to show that Adolphe's social alienation and problem with secrecy represent two major principles of the modern democratic public sphere, both connected to vision: one of the detachment of the objective observer, the citizen who sees everything around him and another which internalizes the public's gaze into self-surveillance repudiating anything that might obstruct the free movement of the public's gaze. I will

[1] Benjamin Constant, *Adolphe*, trans. Leonard Tancock **(**Harmondsworth and Genéve**:** Penguin Books, 1964).

rely on three sources: Luc Boltanski's theory on what he calls the "pure" spectator and Susan Maslan's analysis of the culture of surveillance in the French Revolution and its connection to deep seated anxieties about the legitimacy of representative democracy within the modern discourse of democracy (as they were articulated by Rousseau) that it aimed to appease. These theoretical arguments will suggest that what Adolphe manifests may not be some earlier forms of a transhistorical personal truth (of sexuality), rather, they seem to be principles of the modern democratic public sphere along which any personal truth can be conjured and negotiated. Adolphe shows not only the failure case of modern masculinity but the principles yielding this failure – in that regard, *Adolphe* the narrative is a powerful artifact resonating with these principles. In order to emphasize the significance of the emerging public in shaping Adolphe to be the failure that he is, I will also rely on Michael S. Kimmel's analysis of (contemporary and American) homophobia: Kimmel convincingly argues that homophobia is not first and foremost the intent to ferret gay men out of the fraternal public but is a general principle of policing the fraternal public as a whole, a contemporary mechanism through which the public is regulated through the regulation of its members. I will not be able, within the limits of this chapter, to trace how exactly Adolphe's failed masculinity transforms into contemporary homophobia – I merely would like to argue that what now is identified as contemporary homophobia and the homosexual closet is inextricable from the post-Revolutionary discourse of democratic citizenship and the public sphere.

Having disagreed with Creech, I will, based on his remarkable insight, offer a reading of *Adolphe* that shows a connection between this narrative and the theory of the modern public sphere as it was theorized by Jürgen Habermas. Arguing that the modern

democratic public sphere contained an element of dissimulation, I will turn to Boltanski's and Maslan's particular models of spectatorship in the construction of the public to show that Adolphe is a figure of the juncture of these two models. My ultimate goal is to show through juxtaposing Creech's insight of identifying something closet-like in *Adolphe*, Michael Kimmel's suggestion that homophobia is a powerful discursive tool regulating masculinity through instilling in men a fear of other men policing them, and these theories of the public sphere to lay down the foundations of a general argument that the modern homosexual closet is inextricable from the modern discourse of democratic citizenship as it posits, and polices, its citizens as men with a private, consistent and sincere core.

1. *Adolphe*: dissent, masculinity and the closet

Adolphe comprises the story of the title character framed by remarks and correspondences of the character of a publisher telling the story of finding and publishing the manuscript, and several prefaces by "Constant" introducing it. The manuscript is narrated by the hero, a young man brought up by an emotionally distant father to be shy and constantly experiencing a scornful inability to fit in what he calls "the little public" around him. Instead of trying to conform to social conventions and adapt to "the mold" everyone is supposed to follow, he develops a "secret dissent" from society. Society in turn, he feels, becomes suspicious of him and decide that Adolphe is untrustworthy, an *homme peu sûr*. Subsequently (when his isolation renders him emotionally desperate), he succeeds in seducing Ellénore, the common law wife of Count P. He eventually does fall in love with her but still remains perpetually ambivalent about her. Much to his father's

displeasure, the two of them elope, and a pertinacious bond develops between them whereby Adolphe is constantly on the verge of parting with Ellénore but is unable to bring himself to leave. The emotional tugging between the lovers is only ended by Ellénore's withering away in early death brought on by her discovery of Adolphe's intention of leaving her.

In his essay, "Forged in Crisis: Queer Beginnings of Modern Masculinity in a Canonical French Novel," James Creech detects in *Adolphe* a closet-like structure in the formation of inadequate masculinity and suggests that this is a precursor of what later emerges as the homosexual closet.[2] The argument of the essay is based on three pillars. First, Creech gives a detailed psychoanalytic reading of *Adolphe* based on the work of Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Luce Irigaray to suggest that modern masculinity is forged as a gender dissent unable to perform the disavowal of the feminine (or simply, feeling) that is required for ideal masculinity. The requirement of this disavowal, the ongoing crisis it entails, and the failed masculinity it produces in the case of the hero all occur in a web of cathected relations between men that always verge on tipping into homoeroticism.

Second, he argues that the hero of *Adolphe* is considered an untrustworthy man, an *homme peu sûr* because he harbors a gender dissent in his personality and this dissent is connected to secrecy – it is in the connection between Adolphe's secrecy and his being a failed man that Creech detects the closet structure. It is the same closet structure that we

[2] James Creech, "Forged In Crisis: Queer Beginnings of Modern Masculinity in a Canonical French Novel" in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction.*, ed. Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 249-269 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

associate with the idea of the third sex: a central essential secret linked to sexuality and/or gender in the figure of failing masculinity.

Third, relying on the argument that *Adolphe* loosely follows the events of Constant's life, Creech cites biographical evidence, most notably Constant's diary (where the young Constant records the phrase "Greek love in Berne") to point out that it is quite possible that Constant may have had some same-sex relationships during his life. Thereby Creech connects this possibility to Adolphe's social dissent.[3]

I intend to devote close attention to Creech's reading of *Adolphe* because the I-narrative that makes up its central text, and especially the brief paragraph on secrecy, carries significant contradictions. Creech discovers in the text the manifestation of what later emerges as the homosexual closet and suggests that this can be explained by the operation of some ahistorical queer subjectivity without giving an account of these contradictions. In what follows, I would like to show that Creech is right to the extent that Adolphe's failed masculinity is structured along the same contradiction or incoherence as the emerging figure of male homosexuality that later appropriated it as its own structure. If I think that Creech's argument is problematic, it is not because I do not appreciate his points. In fact, I would like to suggest that his insights go beyond his conclusion: they have implications for the connection between homosexuality and citizenship.

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[3] The move of equating the same-sex behavior called "Greek love" with the gender dissent in the concept of the "third sex" seems hasty since it overlooks the important discursive difference between competing conceptualizations of male same-sex practices in the nineteenth century; also to conclude that experience in "Greek love" is likely to instill some gender dissent in the young Constant fails to acknowledge the possible multiplicity of these conceptualizations. The practice of "Greek love" for Constant may not have necessarily entailed a crisis of masculinity we see in his character Adolphe; it may have been partially constructed by taboos but also by expectations (stemming from his educational and class background). In other words, we really do not know what it is that we verify with Constant's diaries.

Adolphe's secrecy becomes the focal point in the story when having lived with Ellénore for a while in an illicit and socially despised partnership, he tires emotionally and the relationship gradually loses its appeal. He makes friends with an older man and friend of his father, Baron T, who openly intends to convince the young man to leave Ellénore. After a while he stops protesting the Baron's intentions and even signals that he himself wants out. Yet, he cannot break the attachment to Ellénore. Creech focuses on the following quote where Adolphe analyzes his moral failing:

> In this way, by the mere fact that I had hidden my feelings, I more or less deceived everyone; I was deceiving Ellénore, for I knew the Baron wanted to separate me from her, and I said nothing to her of this; I was deceiving the Baron, for I let him hope that I was ready to break my bonds. This duplicity was far from my natural character, but man *becomes depraved* as soon as he has in his heart a *single thought* which he is constantly obliged to dissimulate.[4]

It is this "*single thought*," this one secret, Creech argues, that defines his relationship to both his mistress and the various men in his environment, it is this secret that makes Adolphe an *homme peu sûr* (one of the novel's theoretically most impactful phrases in Creech's argument), an untrustworthy man, a man whose masculinity, no matter how straight, is inadequately constructed—and this inadequacy emerges in a closet structure:

> […] we must indeed acknowledge that Constant has housed Adolphe's "secret dissent" in an internalized structure we recognize as that of the modern, homosexual closet—or at least, in a structure built from the same blueprint. And that is finally the point, *Adolphe* demonstrates that the blueprint of the closet has already been drafted as an integral part of the larger structure of post-Revolutionary masculinity.

We may interpret the combined argument in two ways that are only slightly dissimilar: *Adolphe* may be the closeted confession of a gay man coded in a way that, if not paved the way altogether, at least coincided with how modern masculinity was

[4] Creech, "Forged in Crisis," 258, emphasis original.

forged. Or, a slight inflection, the gender-sensitivity of the text of *Adolphe* might be attributed to a closeted and gay author: it takes a gay man, alienated from normative society, to highlight, to make legible what Creech calls the queerness of modern masculinity.

I find this argument both compelling and disturbing. If we accept that *Adolphe* is autobiographical enough to consider the uncovered proto-closet the literary representation of Constant's own dissent then Creech's proof from Constant's diary seems more to trouble than to corroborate his suggestions. If Constant's reference to Greek love in his diaries is to be interpreted as a secret and tabooed homosexual experience then the fact that the autobiography that records important elements from Constant's love life with his women lovers is absolutely silent about these homosexual attractions suggests that the closet that we read in *Adolphe* as it provides the story its gripping tension is not a "blueprint" or a "proto-homosexual possibility"[5] of the modern homosexual closet but it is the closeted imprint of its full-fledged operation very much linked to homosexuality.

The questions do not end here: if we decide that it was a homosexual closet that produced both *Adolphe* and the text of Constant's diaries, then why not simply declare him gay? Is it because this homosexuality could not but silence some kind of bisexuality?[6] Is it because it leaves unexamined the gesture of finding proof in diaries? Or

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[5] Ibid., 259.

[6] It is besides my point in this chapter but what might be at stake here is the status of the reading of bisexuality: there would be no interpretive problem if we considered all the biographical data of Constant to suggest that he could be attracted to both men and women. But Creech wants to argue that what Constant shows us in Adolphe is a precursor of the later *troisième sexe*, the invert and not the perhaps even more questionable figure of the bisexual. The problems and politics of the representation of bisexuality (including the problems any such attempt would pose to the concept of representation itself) are connected

is it because that triumphant discovery would not in itself provide the real triumph of having secured a homosexuality that is essentially ahistorical: if Adolphe's closet is a possibility of a later homosexual kind, then the historical variations of closets are still connected by some common experience across different times and locations.

Significantly, Creech does not put Constant's possible same-sex practice in a historical context, fostering the impression that this very private mention of "Greek love" took place in a cultural vacuum concerning same-sex practices and institutions. In "The Enlightenment Confronts Homosexuality," Bryant T. Ragan provides a detailed historical account of a salient male homosexual subculture with a flourishing network of public institutions such as bars and cruising areas in Paris (and other Western European cities) and established cruising codes dating as far back as the early 1700s.[7] In the light of this account of a lively homosexual public life that, according to Ragan, by the eighteenth century crystallized into the culture of sodomites, i.e. people with a strong homosexual preference, the idea that Constant articulated a blueprint of a subsequent homosexual closet would require some further explanation. As a result, biographical findings in Constant's diaries, an interpretation of these findings tacitly assuming that acts, even a single act, of "Greek love" will germinate a homosexual identity (which can be closeted or revealed) and the lack of attention to the historical and sociological context all help to affirm this ahistorical homosexual closet.

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to my interests in sexual authenticity but fall outside the limits of my inquiry in this chapter. For an outstandingly careful analysis of the network of available discourses employing some concept of bisexuality, see Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), especially the first chapter.

[7] Bryant T Ragan, "The Enlightenment Confronts Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality In Modern France*, eds. Merrick, J. and B. T. Ragan, 8-30 (New York: Oxford University, 1996).

Creech in this essay carries out a project of gay reading as it was outlined in his earlier book, *Closet Writing, Gay Reading*. Gay reading is based on a certain response to a certain content by a certain kind of reader: "[g]ay reader response to gay literary content requires… the possibility of camp reading: 'What if whoever made this was gay too?'"[8] Indeed, an important part of Creech's overall argument about *Adolphe* is his own history with the novel. He shares with us that even as a college student, he had "always 'known' and been drawn to [his] sense of a queer subtext in *Adolphe* […]."[9] The biographical data about Constant serves the purpose to suggest that this experience is not merely the contemporary reader's projection on an accommodating text but is in fact the appropriate decoding of a secret code of homosexuality connecting closeted writers and readers across time and space.

Instead of this gay reading, I am proposing here a reading that would by no means negate the validity of Creech's gay reading but that would want to emphasize, instead of the positing of any ahistorical gay experience or essence, how any notion of an opposition between straight and gay, normal and abnormal yields the devalued category such that it disturbs the normalizing discourse that the opposition serves to affirm in the first place. In the case of reading *Adolphe*, this would mean to extend the insights of any gay reading to concepts that at first glance seems to exceed the terrain of homosexuality.

Creech acutely and accurately registers something very queer in *Adolphe* manifesting itself in its full complexity in the lines where Adolphe discusses his secrecy. Adolphe speaks as though there were no contradiction in his words but in fact there is a

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[8] James Creech, *Closet Writing/Gay Reading: The Case of Melville's Pierre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 75.

[9] Creech, "Forged in Crisis," 263,

significant play between their possible interpretations. When Creech finally equates this superimposition to a precursor of the concept of the third sex, someone neither female nor male, he relies on a specific reading of the quote on secrecy I cited on p. 111.[10] The original French helps to show that Adolphe's confession is significantly ambiguous:

> De la sorte, par cela seul que j'avais un sentiment caché, je trompais plus ou moins tout le monde: je trompais Ellénore, car je savais que le baron voulait m'éloigner d'elle, et je le lui taisais; je trompais M. De T***, car je lui laissais espérer que j'étais prêt à briser mes liens. Cette duplicité était fort éloignée de mon caractère naturel; mais l'homme se déprave dès qu'il a dans le coeur une seule pensée qu'il est constamment forcé de dissimuler."[11]

The ambiguity of this text emerges from the interplay between the strange duplicity Adolphe confesses and the phrase, in English translation, "as soon as he has in his heart a *single thought*." The phrase can be read to mean that having one single thought concealed from one's environment leads to depravation or that even one single thought is enough to lead one into depravation. Creech seems to rest his argument on the similarity between the closet structure (having one central secret to withhold or to reveal) and the first reading of the phrase. In the light of the preceding mention of duplicity, however, this move might seem reductive. There are two possible readings here, the first of which produces a proto-gay Adolphe (a subject closeted in secrecy); while the second shows a radically queer Adolphe whose deprivation erodes subjectivity. If we read this single secret as one that unifies the subject, we can indeed set up a seamless homology with the idea of something like a "third sex," an idea that there is a third "kind" besides man and woman characterized by some perhaps not so visible but still clearly determinable distinctive features. However, from his confessions it seems that Adolphe's ethical

[10] Ibid., 258.

[11] Benjamin Constant, *Oeuvres completes* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957), 102-103.

problem does not simply come from hiding the same secret from *tout le monde*. He in fact has at least two secrets (the kind of which one is already enough to compromise one's character): from Ellénore he hides his wish to break away from her and from the Baron he hides that he does not have the strength to carry this out. Ultimately, it is quite difficult to discern what exactly his secret is. If it is the weakness to perform what he decided he needed to do, then it is the content of the secret that produces what he says is the effect of having the secret: in this case he is an *homme peu sûr* already on the account of what he is hiding (his unmanliness as weakness), trying to keep it as a secret becomes merely another instance of his unmanliness (as dishonesty). This reading, for it suggests at least a tentative link between homosexuality as secrecy and as unmanliness, would still fit Creech's aims to highlight the contours of the closet in a text preceding the historical emergence of the homosexual closet.

At the same time, however, there remains the possibility of another reading, according to which Adolphe has precisely too many secrets to be a coherent person. What differentiates him apparently from *tout le monde* is precisely that he does not have an inner core that he could hide or reveal. As Creech sums up: "he will weakly give each camp what it wants to hear, while carefully hiding what they don't want to hear […]."[12] He fails as a man completely because he fails both definition of manhood he is exposed to: both Ellénore's and the Baron's. If he is hiding anything, it is that he has no consistent truth, an inner core, to hide or reveal. In this regard he is similar to the reading I offered in the first chapter of the actor emerging in Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* where first we find that the actor is dangerous because he impersonates characters other than his

[12] Creech, "Forged in Crisis," 258.

own—a simple case of deceitfulness on stage; and later realize that the real threat posed by the actor is that he did not appear to have a character he could call his own—a radical inconsistency enabling the deceit. Adolphe first seems to have a secret, which suggests that he is simply deceitful; then it turns out that what he hides changes upon the given situation—and this is enabled by a radical inconsistency of character.

The argument, that *Adolphe* (both the character and the text as a whole) is structured following the blueprint that we may recognize as that of the homosexual closet, can appear so cogent precisely because Creech does not take a closer look at this incoherence within Adolphe's confession; instead, the contradiction within Adolphe's sentiments carry seamlessly on to the way Creech connects this text to the epistemology of the closet. He posits the link between Adolphe's gender dissent and homosexuality in what we term the closet structure: to be a different kind of individual with one defining secret housing our inner truth. But the queerness of Adolphe works in a reverse manner: the possibility of any inner truth is radically foreclosed if Adolphe is lying to both opposing parties.

This oversight is fully supported by the fact that tropes of homosexuality are indeed contradictory exactly in the way Adolphe's confession is. Following Creech, we can discern two figures in this queerness, currently associated with (male) homosexuality: the one whose true substance is hidden (the figure of the man whose masculinity is undermined while being determined by the single thought he is hiding) and the one with no substance (whose greatest secret is not merely one single secret but that he cannot properly have a secret); these two figures are superimposed in Adolphe's paradoxical confessions about secrecy and failed masculinity. Their isomorphic paradox is that these

figures are contradictory: the idea of not being able to keep a secret because of a lack of an inner core cannot simply coexist with the notion of one central secret making up an inner core. For Adolphe, and for Creech as well, these figures converge into the same figure of failed masculinity.

An important critical insight comes from the work of Michael S. Kimmel writing on modern American masculinity. Even though his theory focuses on a different time and place than Constant's France, Kimmel's approach to theorize masculinity supports my argument and his main points connect to Constant's novel (which, in turn, supports Creech: *Adolphe* is indeed a novel about the beginnings of modern masculinity). In "Masculinity as Homophobia," Kimmel argues that that key feature in the construction and permanent and efficient reproduction of dominant masculinity (i.e. heterosexual, sexist and competitive) and by extension, patriarchy, is men's fear of other men.[13] The repudiation of the feminine is carried out in fear of the father and is maintained in fear of male peers (hence the influence of Baron T. on Adolphe). Heterosexual "conquests" such as Adolphe winning Ellénore, are also primarily motivated by bonds between men (Adolphe tells the reader that he seduced Ellénore to impress a friend). In his account the general explicit homophobia so visible in contemporary American culture is a form of policing sexual bonds that serves the purpose of maintaining a standard of masculinity according to which individual men are always judged and can always be found lacking: "we learn that our peers are a kind of gender police, constantly threatening to unmask us

[13] Michael S Kimmel, "Masculinity As Homophobia: Fear, Shame And Silence In The Construction Of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. H. Brod & M. Kaufman, 119–141 (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994).

as feminine, as sissies."[14] In other words, men can and do fear homophobic shaming regardless of their actual orientation since this form of shaming is not primarily interested in finding the sexual truth of their lives but rather in maintaining dominant masculinity through this ubiquitous policing. One is a sissy when one cannot prevent being marked by others through symbolic or physical violence as a sissy. Creech's reading of *Adolphe* corroborates Kimmel's suggestion, while Kimmel's theory suggests that what Creech identifies as a proto-closet is a structure setting up what later develops (with the growing cultural salience and visibility of homosexuality) the main policing strategy of dominant masculinity in the form of the closet.

I would like to emphasize two important points in Kimmel's argument: if we consider homophobia as an effective intragender policing tool acting on men's "fear of being perceived as gay, as not a real man,"[15] then actual gayness will be only one (although the most powerful) way of being perceived gay, a modern *homme peu sûr*. Homophobia keeps all men in check; there may be crucial differences between ways this is enacted in individual situations depending also on the sexual orientation of the people involved but homophobia is not the straight man's tool to persecute "others" but a key discursive component of ordering relationship between men. Therefore, the "possibility of being unmasked is everywhere."[16]

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[14] Ibid., 132.

[15] Ibid., 133.

[16] Ibid., 132.

The other important element is that Kimmel theorizes masculinity as a "homosocial enactment,"[17] emerging as men interact with other men and relationships to women are subordinate to the internal mechanisms of the boys' club organized by fear. I do not necessarily take this view as empirically impeccable but I think that it is a very productive approach for my purposes in this dissertation. Masculinity as a homosocial enterprise offers an alternative to the popular psychoanalytic view that considers masculinity as the product of the defensive mechanism(s) triggered by the fear of women or, almost interchangeably, castration. Clearly, both conceptualizations of masculinity appear in *Adolphe*. Indeed, Adolphe's sharp sense of masculine inadequacy, the trait that is perhaps most dominant in his confessions, resonates very well with Kimmel's arguments when the latter employs supporting quotes from contemporary psychology such as "[the] birthright of every American male is a chronic sense of personal inadequacy."[18] In sum, I am interested in Kimmel's emphasis on homosociality because I think it helps us better see the ties between the post-Revolutionary discourse of citizenship positing a male public sphere and the construction of adequate or authentic masculinity as the personal aspect emerging as the internal stuff of the citizen. If Creech wants to argue that *Adolphe* is about a proto-homosexual failure to repudiate femininity as it is required in modern masculinity, I would like to suggest that *Adolphe* shows how that demand is a public demand employed within the discourse of citizenship that anchors its symbolic legitimacy in an authentic private internality of man. The consonances regarding masculinities between *Adolphe* and Kimmel's argument suggest that Kimmel's

[17] Ibid., 129.

[18] Ibid., 130.

claims about dominant masculinity in contemporary American society may be extended to a more general argument about the concept of modern Western masculinity. The consonances also suggest that *Adolphe* shows the link between the production of modern masculinity according to Kimmel and the post-Revolutionary discourse of citizenship that created the idea of the modern democratic or republican citizen through an abjecting discourse of antitheatricality, demanding a constant public demonstration of sincerity in the image of the face free of masks of the hypocrites.

Creech seems to accept that the construction of modern masculinity, all that which render someone a man is intimately connected to citizenship in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France: *Adolphe* captures something relevant for modern masculinity and he refers to the historical context of the novel to mark the generational difference between father and son as that of the difference between aristocratic and republican ideals of masculinity. This element gives special currency to his argument about the closet as a constitutive characteristic of modern masculinity since the discourse of the French Revolution is a defining component within the larger discourse of modernity and its cultural imaginary. Insofar as this is a tenable assumption, we cannot ignore the political discourse of citizenship this political event brought on. This also entails that what we assert about what being a man means in this context will be connected to the meaning of citizenship as well. Dissimulation and masks, as terms within the modern political discourse of antitheatricality, were operative terms in constructing the authentic, sincere citizen of the Revolution. The text of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* makes it very clear that what it means to be a man is indissociable from what it means to be a citizen: the phrase “man and citizen” occurs three times in the text—all three

stressing (through this cumbersome composite) the unity of the concept the text aims to affirm. The *Declaration*'s formulation makes it clear that it is nearly or absolutely impossible to talk about citizenship without talking about masculinity and vice versa. This is not to say that all novels on men from this period are about citizenship but that to the extent a novel articulates the problems of modern failed masculinity, or modern masculinity as failure, it has corresponding implications for the concept of modern citizenship as well.

What are those implications in the case of *Adolphe*? The appearance of the proto-closet in *Adolphe* suggests that the homonymy and the corresponding conceptual juxtaposition of maleness and subjectivity—in the words *l'homme* and *man*—suggests not only a connection between maleness, subjectivity, and a corresponding concept of the citizen but also a connection between the constellation of the latter three and homosexuality. In fact, the phrase Creech so aptly highlights in his argument may help us see this connection:

> Thus, if you are not a standard-issue male whose masculinity is produced by self-mutilating severance from "the feminine," then you will be seen as immoral. Whatever there is about this secret dissent that makes Adolphe immoral in the eyes of his society, also makes him appositively, an "homme peu sûr," which means both an untrustworthy man, but also, here, someone who is not reliably a man.[19]

The closet or proto-closet emerges as a result of the post-Revolutionary solidification and construction of proper modern masculinity since it is the repudiation of the identification with the feminine that produces a masculinity which is adequately *sûr*. The emergence of this proper masculinity brings with itself a necessary delineation of an inadequate, untrustworthy, failed or soiled kind, whose essential fault is pinned down by its murky

[19] Creech, "Forged in Crisis," 258.

secret. Hence, proper and trustworthy masculinity is that which is publicly transparent. And this is precisely where the stakes become visibly political. As I have argued above, Adolphe's failure is more radical than harboring secrets. Adolphe is *peu sûr* because he can harbor secret intentions that cancel each other out: the secret he hides from Ellénore, that he intends to leave her, cannot simply be his hidden truth since as soon as he makes this truth public to Baron T., it becomes an appearance whose truth is denied by his secret attachment to Ellénore. When manifested vis-à-vis another, each intention proclaimed publicly promises the other to be Adolphe's secret personal truth, working in tandem like a revolving door of public display. Neither can be his ultimate truth and conversely, no act of his can be sincere but be only an inauthentic act of the actor, an act of hypocrisy without a personal core, without any stable division between his private truth and his public performance.[20] At the heart of his confessions about his failed masculinity lies Kimmel's insight that the "possibility of being unmasked is everywhere."[21] Thus, the problem of his failed masculinity, when considered from the point of view of citizenship and politics, appears as a problem of a proper functioning of the distinction between public and personal and invokes the problem of theatricality.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will connect what Creech refers to as the proto-closet to the structures of theatricality within modern public sphere theory in order to further corroborate the arguments of the previous chapters that the modern figure of the modern homosexual is structurally similar to the figure of the actor within the modern political discourse of antitheatricality.

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[20] In fact, he is a perfect illustration of the Arendtian insight I discussed in the last chapter: that the demand for public sincerity renders all appearances instances of "mere" appearance.

[21] Kimmel, 132.

First, I will turn to the classic text of contemporary public sphere studies and to demonstrate the theatricality in Jürgen Habermas' account of the Kantian public sphere.[22] This theatricality is that of the spectator who watches the world around him. I will analyze Adolphe's dissent as an illustration of public membership as spectatorship, relying on Luc Boltanski's work on what he calls the "pure spectator." I will then continue to analyze the public sphere from the point of view of the modern political discourse of antitheatricality that characterized the French Revolution: here I will rely on Susan Maslan's work on connecting Robespierre's principles to Rousseau's political philosophy focusing on the problem of citizenship in representative democracy.

Before I turn to Habermas's classic articulation of the philosophical and historical background of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere resting on the idea of man and citizen, I would like to briefly position my argument about the relationship between theories of the public sphere, masculinities, and theatricality vis-à-vis the significant scholarship on gender within public sphere studies critical of Habermas. This line of criticism appeared and started to gain force soon after the English publication of *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* and concentrated on Habermas' gender-blind approach in his historical account. This body of work is critical of Habermas because he takes for granted the exclusion of women from the modern public sphere. He describes the philosophy and the practice of that exclusion but never examines the exclusion itself. Geoff Eley's essay "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures" is exemplary in this literature as it clarifies the symptomatic value of Habermas' gender-blindness and gives a sensitive analysis of gender in relation to

[22] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (London: Polity Press, 1989).

thinking the public sphere.[23] Eley draws on the work of Joan B. Landes who centered her historical account of the emergence of the public sphere in post-Revolutionary France on the analysis of gender (and had critiqued Habermas' account before it was translated to English).[24] From their combined work, it is clear that the French Revolution did not merely continue some older form of exclusion of women from politics when it denied them citizenship. Such a continuation would oppose our modern idea of revolution as it is discussed by Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution*. The modern concept of revolution refers to an event that sweeps all past rule away and founds order completely anew. In accordance with this image of the revolution, Eley argues that the process of women's exclusion from the modern public sphere was a Revolutionary process and that the "new category of the 'public man' and his 'virtue' was constructed via a series of oppositions to 'femininity'"[25] as a combined product of Revolutionary discourse.

The historical event of positing what Habermas can then take for granted as *the* public sphere[26] for Eley and Landes takes a comparable form to the psychic repudiation of the feminine required from Adolphe: his failure to accomplish this repudiation renders

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[23] Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, 289-339 (MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1992).

[24] See Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* **(**Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

[25] Eley, 309.

[26] I do not want to suggest that the Habermasian public sphere was indeed the only public that emerged in modernity. Susan Maslan in her book points out that Habermas' focus on print and café culture necessarily ignores other competing publics. For an excellent study of how a focus on women's exclusion from *the* public sphere proves to be class-blind and overlooks the presence, conflicts and competitions among parallel publics, see Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, 109–42 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

him lacking the masculinity that in the above quote emerges as the result of the political exclusion of women from the body politic. However, this parallel does not provide us with a direct link between the queerness of the proto-closet and citizenship: it demonstrates how the bourgeois public sphere "was itself shaped by a new exclusionary ideology directed at women;"[27] that the gender difference was employed as a fence between the public and the private. It is not surprising, I think, that considering gender (differentiating between either men and women or masculine and feminine) in relation to the emergence of the blueprint of the closet in revolutionary citizenship is only partially productive. The gender-sensitive critique of Habermas focuses on the construction of the public as a male-only conceptual place. Its main aim is to describe the historical context in which the bourgeois public sphere could emerge based on a difference between men (primarily social beings) and women (primarily natural beings) and to document the social conflict surrounding the construction of this difference that helped to create the figure of the citizen as the "public man of virtue." The focus of this critique will primarily be the historical shift of the bourgeoisie's gaining political legitimacy, political, symbolic, and cultural capital through embedding the distinction between men and women into the most basic difference organizing politics and the public/private distinction. This approach, while offering a crucial historical insight about the general political stakes involved in the construction of modern masculinity, will not be particularly interested in understanding the emerging conceptual gendered network of men and citizens as an internally regulated set. The group that manages to emerge as dominant can seem like a friendly, indeed, fraternal, space since it becomes the

[27] Eley, 311.

triumphant group by justifying the exclusion of women. When Michael S. Kimmel theorizes masculinity as a network of intragender policing, he prepares the question of asking about the gendered construction of the bourgeois public sphere and the corresponding concept of citizenship.[28] I would like to suggest that Creech identifies the workings of this intragender policing of the emerging bourgeois (democratic) public sphere as the blueprint of the modern homosexual closet. Clearly, the construction of this public is inextricable from the bourgeois discourse of the exclusion of (bourgeois) women from the (bourgeois) public sphere but it is also unimaginable without the threatening discourse of inauthenticity figuring as theatricality of this new public sphere.

2. Habermas, Kant, Rousseau: theatricality and the public shpere

The public sphere is the arena where the right bearing and responsible citizen can, free from the authority of the state, exchange ideas that result in his individual assessment of interests and opinions; it is a logical prerequisite for the abstract sovereignty of democracy: the general will of the people. Habermas' account of the public sphere rests on Kant's and Hegel's philosophy of citizenship and civil society and argues that the rise

[28] Arguably, our concept of the exclusion of women from the public sphere can quite easily follow a certain logic of imagining bourgeois men with uncomplicated shared interests in gaining power (over women, or, in a more complicated version, over other classes through the exclusion of women), assuming a relatively conflict-free bond between men prior to this exclusion because, being uncritical of our concepts of gender, we consider these bourgeois men in the light of what their emerging discourse of gender (and nature) claimed about them. Hence in perhaps overly simplistic accounts, Olympe de Gouges can be understood as a feminist whose royalist leanings may be considered almost idiosyncratic (or the Rousseau of *Émile* since Mary Wollestonecraft may be considered as dominantly mysogynist when he argues against the artifice of pretentious and educated women) because we are the heirs of the conceptual framework of the modernity of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution that coined our notions of gender. According to this framework, the most basic distinctive human feature is sexual difference and is thought to more intimately construct our subject positions (as a primary, natural distinction) than, for instance, class (a subsequent, social one).

of the culture of the printed press created literal as well as virtual spaces where private individuals could convene to discuss matters of public interest. The "private" of this formula implies personal independence by means of property ownership and it is what the public is guaranteed by against the tyrannical state. In other words, private independence was the prerequisite for public membership. This condition serves to make the linkage between man and citizen seamless: "Only *property owning private people* were admitted to a public engaged in critical political debate, for their autonomy was rooted in the sphere of commodity exchange and hence was joined to the interest in its preservation as a private sphere […]."[29] In turn, for the individual "there was no break between *homme* and *citoyen*, as long as the *homme* was simultaneously an owner of private property who as *citoyen* was to protect the stability of the property order as a private one."[30] While giving a detailed analysis of the private/public distinction, Habermas turns to the terms we have also seen highlighted in *Adolphe*: the public visibility of the internal, private, and moral truth of a person:

> The specific relationship between private and public sphere, from which arose the duplication of the selfish *bourgeois* in the guise of the unselfish *homme*, of the empirical subject in that of the intelligible one, was what made it possible to consider the *citoyen*, the citizen eligible to vote, under the twofold aspect of legality and morality. In this "pathologically enforced" conduct he could at the same time appear as a morally free person as long as the concordance of the political public sphere with its self-interpretation (derived from the literary public sphere) was ensured by the intent of nature, that is to say, on the basis of a society of freely competing property-owning private people emancipated from domination and insulated from intrusions of power. This had to occur in such a way *that these interested private people*, assembled to constitute a public, in their capacities as citizens, *behaved outwardly as if they were inwardly free persons*. Under the social conditions that translated private

[29] Habermas, 110-111, emphasis original.

[30] Ibid., 87, emphasis original.

> vices into public virtues, a state of cosmopolitan citizenship and hence the subsumption of politics under morality was empirically conceivable.[31]

In this quote we can clearly recognize the link between theater and the citizen-crafting discourse of the French Revolution. Habermas in this quote is drawing on Kant's argument on morality and citizenship from his essay, *Towards Perpetual Peace*.[32] Somewhat ironically, Kant sees the guarantee of the republican machinery precisely in a moral weakness quite similar to the hypocrisy Revolutionary discourse intended to purge. Kant's initial paradox is that while the republic requires that citizens subject themselves to universal laws, "each is secretly inclined to exempt himself from such laws […]."[33] But, according to Kant, the problem can be solved without attempting to morally improve these men (which would render the problem unsolvable):

> [The solution] requires only that we know how to apply the mechanism of nature to men so as to organize the conflict of hostile attitudes present in a people in such a way that they must compel one another to submit to coercive laws and thus enter into a state of peace, where laws have power.[34]

In other words, the citizens will keep each other in check, although none of them wish to comply with the rules, their individual interest is to make sure that all others do in fact comply. Thus, in an ideally transparent setting, everyone's gaze upon everyone else forces each to behave appropriately.

The theatricality of the public sphere appears in this spectacle for the audience of peers in which property and morality intertwine: the condition of a material freedom (of

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[31] Ibid., 111-112, emphasis mine.

[32] Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983).

[33] Ibid., 367.

[34] Ibid.

masters) is joined by the requirement of a moral virtue ensuring the authenticity of the person of the citizen, and by extension, his vote. Habermas' wording suggests that although he designates the literary public sphere (the domain of the printed media and the spaces of clubs where one could read and discuss this media) as that which secures the bourgeois public sphere, he still relies on a profound theatricality of how this public sphere functions. The outward performance of the "inward freedom" by the private individual is what constitutes the citizen. The paragraph explicitly suggests some kind of hypocrisy: the citizen, as a man, is necessarily "interested" as a private person, and yet the citizen-function of this same individual becomes divested of these interests; and this divesting takes the form of a "behaving in a certain way," which, in turn, suggests that something like dissimulation is necessarily at work here in stabilizing the public sphere of citizens.

3. **Variations of spectatorship**

If the public sphere is a conceptual space where people keep each other in check then this space is organized by the spectacularity of theatricality: people look at each other and this is facilitated by positing this space where the gaze can freely travel. In this section, I will discuss two models according to this principle of the public space where the citizen's gaze can move freely. The first model is based on Luc Boltanski's theory of the "pure spectator," and its notion of the free gaze indicates that Adolphe's social dissent is a fairly regular effect of the public sphere governed by this free, unbound gaze. I will quote the passages from the beginning of the narrative (before Adolphe and Ellénore

meet) that tell us about Adolphe's detachment from the community around him which in turn earns him the judgment of being an *homme peu sûr*:

> Je ne veux point ici me justifier: j'ai renoncé depuis longtemps à cet usage frivole et facile d'un esprit sans expérience; je veux simplement dire, et cela pour d'autres que pour moi qui suis maintenant à l'abri du monde, qu'il faut du temps pour s'accoutumer à l'espèce humaine...
>
> Cette société d'ailleurs n'a rien à en craindre. Elle pèse tellement sur nous, son influence sourde est tellement puissante, qu'elle ne tarde pas à nous façonner d'après le moule universel. Nous ne sommes plus surpris alors que de notre ancienne surprise, et nous nous trouvons bien sous notre nouvelle forme, comme l'on finit par respirer librement dans un spectacle encombré par la foule, tandis qu'en y entrant on n'y respirait qu'avec effort.
>
> Si quelques-uns échappent à cette destinée générale, ils renferment en eux-mêmes leur dissentiment secret; ils aperçoivent dans la plupart de ridicule le germe des vices: ils n'en plaisantent plus, parce que le mépris remplace la moquerie, et que le mépris est silencieux.
>
> Il s'établit donc, dans le petit public qui m'environnait, une inquiétude vague sur mon caractère. On ne pouvait citer aucune action condamnable; on ne pouvait même m'en contester quelques-unes qui semblaient annoncer de la générosité ou du dévouement; mais on disait que j'étais un homme immoral, un homme peu sûr: deux épithètes heureusement inventées pour insinuer les faits qu'on ignore, et laisser deviner ce qu'on ne sait pas.[35]

The perceived immorality of Adolphe comes from his refraining from participating fully in "the little public" around him. The secret dissent he harbors stems from his inadequacy or refusal to identify as a member of the social sphere that offers nothing but "insipid amusements"[36] It is this dissent that Creech identifies as a gender dissent, arguing that its root is his inability to conform to the role of masculinity (understood as manifested in the figure of his father: the emotionally detached man). However, Creech neglects another possible source of such a dissent which Adolphe himself offers as an explanation. Besides his relationship with his emotionally unavailable father, Adolphe had another formative relationship in his youth prior to the

[35] Constant, *Oeuvres completes*, 52.

[36] Constant, *Adolphe*, 40.

plot in the form of a friendship with an old and wise lady: "The woman who had first developed my ideas had inspired in me an insurmountable aversion from all hackneyed phrases and dogmatic formulae."[37] Adolphe emphasizes the social aspects of his inability or unwillingness to feel a social belonging that seems to be, according to the paragraph above, the basis of being accepted as a member of the public. His relationship to the social itself is defined by a profound alienation. He observes the public around him as well as his own inner self with a detachment free from passion.

At this point I would like to turn to Luc Boltanski's argument in *Distant Suffering* on morality, the media and the Habermasian public sphere to suggest that Adolphe's detachment figures what he calls "pure spectatorship" – something that is required of citizens in the modern public sphere.[38] At the beginning of his book, Boltanski discusses the long political tradition of antitheatricality. He introduces his concept of pure spectatorship in order to call forth the figure of the objective reporter (whose reports in the printed media could effectively set the scene for the public sphere in the Habermasian account). He argues that the metaphor of the theater underwent a shift in the discourse of modern democracy: instead of singling out the actor as the emblematic and devalued figure of theatricality (as the source of deception), it now extended to include the spectator observing the spectacle (I will discuss the problem of democracy and representation that this shift captures rhetorically later in this section). This spectator is someone who can see the spectacle as well as other spectators without (necessarily) being seen. Being different from a spectator who only observes the stage and the performance

[37] Ibid., 41.

[38] Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

and having a point of view encompassing stage and audience in his scope of vision, this "pure spectator" acquires the property of a certain independence or uninvolvement and "[as] spectator, he is detached."[39] The interplay of invisibility and detachment construct a figure characterized by a lack of a consistent, particular identity:

> The spectator's invisibility when he [enters] the microcosm of society constituted by the big city […] takes the form of an *ability to change identity according to the place in which he finds himself,* passing from club to café, from inn to market.[40]

The spectator's invisibility is at least partly a consequence of the urban setting in which the Habermasian public sphere offers a multitude of separate but proximate locations; and the spectator comes to lack a particular identity through his flighty movements between these. Indeed, the "pureness" is the result of the absolute freedom of his movements and guarantees that what he relays in his report will be uninfluenced by any particular perspective:

> By means of unhindered movements, observation from an invisible position and close relationship with an indefinite audience, the spectator fashions the public sphere. In fact, the ideal public sphere is inseparable from the possibility of moving around in an open and homogenous social space and of conveying 'without deformation' … observations made at one point in this space, within the exteriority of a relationship available to anyone.[41]

The freedom of unhindered movement, which requires a radical detachment from any locality, then, creates a public sphere for "an indefinite audience" that can be observed by "anyone." Indeed, this lack of particularity creates a figure of observation that is himself without any consistent substance:

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[39] Boltanski, 28.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 29.

> This ability [of being an uninvolved spectator] presupposes *someone vague, without definite substance, someone with no precise place or definite opinion*… and whose *raison d'être* is like that of a spy – to observe, listen and report. …The [Habermasian] public sphere thus presupposes the existence of a detached, casual observer who can survey the peculiarities of society in the way that the geographer, cartographer or painter inspired by the cartographic ideal surveys the peculiarities of the landscape.[42]

These quotes show a similarity between Adolphe and the pure spectator: both figures are characterized by the linking of detachment to a lack of internally consistent substance. Adolphe is relentlessly observant in his detachment. This ability never ceases to leave him: it is his spirit to observe and report meticulously that yields the manuscript of his autobiography. The other characteristic they share is being "without definite substance": the pure spectator is so without any particular identity that, paradoxically, in his capacity of spectator, he resembles Rousseau's actor whose chief characteristic is the ability and willingness to abandon his proper self.

On the other hand, Adolphe may not appear to be a pure spectator because he is not unseen by the society he observes (he is, after all, in a small town: this public is merely "a little public"). Nor is he without any definite opinion: he detests his fellows in the little public around him because they seemed to have conformed to the mold that unifies them into a society. His dissent is articulated against society as an aggregate effacing the individual. He is, in turn, despised as if he were indeed something like a spy. However, these characteristics – his visibility and the mutual resentment between him and his peers – render his detachment particularly salient as a "relationship to exteriority," a relationship that any member of the public is capable of having to the public itself.

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[42] Ibid., emphasis mine.

The difference between Adolphe and the pure spectator lies in secrecy: both his detachment and his lack of a consistent core are covert, whereas Boltanski's spectator has no faculty for secrecy: as an objective observer, hiding is contrary to the principles that call forth his figure. This difference shows that Adolphe as a character is at the juncture of two discourses of the public: the one based on the pure spectator and another, the modern political discourse of antitheatricality. Although Boltanski does not underscore this, the discourse on spectatorship is not necessarily a discourse of antitheatricality: spectatorship, and the corresponding figure of the spectator, is not something this discourse aims to devalue based on democratic and republic principles. Instead, the spectatorship Boltanski discusses treats the act of observing as the basis of any well-functioning public. This difference is due to the fact that his pure spectator does not observe spectacles of which he would be the intended audience: his invisibility guarantees that what he sees is no dissimulation; and his detachment guarantees that he can relay his observation without any transformation based on his particular personal interests or passions. However, at the end of the last section, I already indicated that even the Habermasian model of the public sphere (based on the idea of the free and independent press) necessarily bears the element of dissimulation (occurring between the composite parts of the man/citizen compound). As I will show in the remaining part of this chapter, secrecy enters the discourse of the modern democratic public most visibly in the French Revolution's culture of surveillance.

As I discussed in detailed in the previous chapter, in her analysis of the French Revolution, Hannah Arendt pays attention to the different theatrical metaphors of citizenship in ancient Greek and Latin in order to unravel the philosophical nuances of

the phrase, "tearing the mask of hypocrisy,"[43] a figure of speech authenticating the citizen as a sincere person divested of anything but his human rights. "Tearing the mask of hypocrisy" is a negative formulation of the demand for transparency. In this framework, where transparency is that which accords authenticity to revolutionary citizenship, the public is the place where people act in a way that is deemed sincere (and, ideally virtuous). Adolphe is caught up in this structure as well: he is not supposed to have secrets. As I have argued above, his ultimate failing is that he does not have the capacity to have a coherent secret: he is a figure that calls attention to the necessity of having an inner core that he could hide or reveal. It is this core that is established in the discourse of transparency and then revealed and seen in the course of this spectacular structure of the public. The discourse of antitheatricality that installs the culture of surveillance into the French Revolution responds to the concept of the public sphere organized by the unbound gaze that might be fooled by theatricality.

The sweeping power of the revolutionary discourse of antitheatricality is illustrated brilliantly by Susan Maslan's discussion of theater life during the revolutionary era in France.[44] Through a careful analysis of the doomed political project of playwright and revolutionary Fabre d'Englantine, to purge theater of theatricality, Maslan summarizes the revolutionary discourse of transparency:

> Fabre d'Englantine believed that he could make a place for theater in revolutionary culture and redeem French drama by developing a new form of theater that would promote the new social order of equality and fraternity. That order required transparency; it required that citizens open their hearts fully to one another, theatricality, by contrast, made citizens opaque to one another by teaching them, or

[43] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 106-110.

[44] Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

> requiring them, to don masks in order to enter society…. The only way to revolutionize theater, according to Fabre, was to detheatricalize it; thus Fabre hoped to create a genuinely revolutionary theater precisely by refounding it on the basis of Rousseau's devastating critique on theatricality.[45]

Maslan links the discourse of antitheatricality within the French Revolution and its culture of surveillance to the problem of political representation within political philosophy and revolutionary thought. Having elected representatives to execute the general will presented a serious problem for ensuring that the democratic state functions in a manner that is democratic through and through, i.e. that it is indeed the general will that governs society and not a particular will of the government. Rousseau, whose work crucially determined Robespierre's thought and action, in *The Social Contract* is in fact skeptical about the possibility of a representational government that does not endanger the liberty of the citizens. As soon as people rather have representatives than decide personally in every matter of the State, they themselves give up the liberty on which their democracy is founded:

> Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated; it consists essentially in the general will, and the will does not admit of being represented: it is either the same, or it is different; there is no middle ground. The deputies of the people therefore are not and cannot be its representatives: they are merely its agents; they cannot conclude anything definitively. Any law which the People has not ratified in person is null; it is not a law. The English people thinks it is free; it is greatly mistaken; it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as they are elected, it is enslaved, it is nothing. The use it makes of its freedom during the brief moments it has it fully warrants its losing it.[46]

Maslan explains that Robespierre fully accepted Rousseau's skepticism, and considered representative democracy to have lost its democratic essence in the institution of representation. In such circumstances, he argued, it is "fiction that the law is the

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[45] Ibid., 79.

[46] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 114.

expression of the general will."[47] The supplement of publicity serves as a corrective answer to the problem of representation but not without engendering further problems. Publicity is supposed to make sure that the representatives serve the public good and nothing else; in other words the aim is to make sure that even if they, simply by being representatives, can distort the general will, they do not do so. Robespierre thought that only publicity can achieve this through the force of "the gaze of the represented."[48] Surveillance, the institution of this public gaze, is then, according to the revolutionary model, the only means "to reconcile popular sovereignty […] with representative government,"[49] and is thereby an indispensable element of modern democracy.

However, the emphasis on the public gaze creates a public based on spectatorship, which reintroduces theatricality in revolutionary democracy at the same time that it wants to do away with it:

> But for Robespierre publicity itself posed a problem. The puzzle presented by a system of representative democracy supplemented by publicity was this: how could the Republic create and sustain the maximal publicity that he, along with many others, believed necessary to the protection of liberty and democracy while ensuring that that very publicity not be perverted into a species of theatricality? How could the Revolution open up all aspects of France's political life to public scrutiny without creating a theatrical relation—a relation that could mislead, mystify, or otherwise introduce opacity—between those who watch and those who are watched? Publicity corrupted, publicity degenerated, threatened to widen, rather than mitigate, the gap between represented and representative. Publicity was truly a dangerous supplement: while it was necessary to lend representative democracy its democratic character, it risked transforming the represented into spectators and their representatives into actors.[50]

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[47] Maslan, 146.

[48] Ibid., 145.

[49] Ibid., 146.

[50] Ibid., 131.

From Maslan's detailed historical exposition and analysis it appears that theatricality is not contained by the theater; what is more, it seems that the theater may not even be the locus of its issue. On the one hand, theater itself may intend to distance itself from theatricality (in the project of Fabre d'Englantine), on the other, Robespierre, in trying to guarantee a political framework free of the theatricality of hypocrisy only strengthens theatricality through this instrumental spectatorship. Public transparency creates a sphere where authenticity and sincerity are established through ceaseless scrutiny. This unyielding gaze of spectatorship, in its efforts to assess the authenticity of its object turns it into a spectacle. A necessary consequence of this process is that even the most authentic sincerity cannot appear outside a system of theatricalization and become performance. This suggests that theatricality is not merely a function of the theater but that instead, theatricality is "a particular mode of publicity"[51] and is in fact an ineluctable characteristic of modern democracy characterized by the valorization of transparency.

Surveillance and spectatorship are not the same: Boltanski outlines the figure of the pure spectator who is watching his surroundings in a state of detachment without any particular commitment; Robespierre's surveillance is a gaze with the purpose of gauging the object's moral and political worth. Surveillance cannot be performed by the "anyone" of Boltanski's pure spectator since it has a concrete aim: it posits inauthentic subjects to find and expose. The most significant difference between them, however, is that the pure spectator is supposed to be invisible (i.e. his looking on does not influence what he observes), whereas surveillance so powerfully polices its object that it results in self-policing citizenship. Maslan discusses this phenomenon by describing the pervasive

[51] Ibid., 78.

appearance of pictorial representations of the all-seeing eye in Revolutionary France: "The revolutionary images of the eye represent a continuum; at one end the eye represents a universal, disembodied, objective view—the gaze of justice and posterity. At the other end, the eye represents the soul of the revolutionary republican citizen […]."[52] This soul is not represented as the object of the eye of justice, external to it, nor simply as the eye of individual citizens keeping an eye on one another, instead, the eye of the soul represents self-examination: "[The] revolutionary soul is constituted through surveillance, by the turning inward of the same scrutinizing gaze that was to preserve the virtue of politics."[53]

In sum, while the two models of spectatorship are different, they do seem to agree on positing the public as an undifferentiated or homogenous space. The glance of the all seeing eye discussed by Maslan (but also, the aggregate of the scrutinizing glances citizens cast on each other in Kant's theory) may travel without difficulty as long as the public is as transparent as it ought to be: the obstacle, i.e. some secret, does not present a difficulty for the process of surveillance but is taken as the proof it is looking for and the justification of its process. Similarly, Boltanski's spectator, the "anyone" observing whatever takes place in front of his eyes moves as freely in his public as Maslan's gaze. Within the framework of positing this "homogenous social space," Boltanski's pure spectator and Maslan's citizen with his gaze turned inward are positioned along a line of familiarity: while the spectator is detached from his object of observation, the citizen

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[52] Ibid., 164.

[53] Ibid. Although Maslan does not at this point explicitly refer to Foucault's work on the construction of the modern subject, her argument is in full agreement with Foucault's theory on the self-policing subject in *Discipline and Punish*, *The History of Sexuality Vol.1*., and his theory of governmentality.

subject could not be more intimately connected to it, indeed, it is one with it. These two forms of spectatorship appear to shape the modern, post-Revolutionary public sphere by aligning along an opposition between the stranger (the detached "anyone") and the self-same, particular individual. Adolphe is an embodiment of this complex and paradoxical amalgam of spectatorship: he is detachedly observing the spectacle of the "little public" around him while at the same his surveillance gives us a report of the closet structure of his flaws.

Conclusion

On one hand, Adolphe, as a character of these two principles of spectatorship at the heart of the public sphere of post-Revolutionary democracy, is a figure of integrity: he observes society and detests its crowd and also observes and reports on his internal conflicts. On the other hand, he cannot be more disintegrated in his reported secret unsuitability for proper secrecy. In sum, insofar as he lacks the ability to have integrity, he embodies what the discourse of citizenship repudiates but to the extent he practices the writing of his autobiography, giving a clear and clearly moral account of his failure, he follows that same discourse.

The opposing values associated with citizenship – integrity, coherence, transparency and inconsistency, disintegration and secrecy – present themselves in his character. However, somewhat ironically, disintegration takes place when he submerges himself in society and takes part of its activities. In the crucial paragraph where he gives the paradoxical account of his secrecy and degradation, he refers back to a prior state, calling it his "natural character." When he says that "Cette duplicité était fort éloignée de

mon caractère naturel," Adolphe's phrasing recalls his detachment: there is a great distance separating his natural character prior his getting tangled up in opposing commitments and the duplicity that characterizes him as a member of the public. It is being a member of the public that corrupts his posited prior integrity. Similarly to the previous chapter's discussion on the foundationless performativity at the heart of the citizen's declaration, Adolphe's character suggests that the qualities repudiated by the discourse of citizenship are inalienable from this discourse.

If the closet is in any way connected to same sex secrecy, it is definitely not obvious in the political reading of *Adolphe* that I have offered here. To connect Adolphe's proto-closet to same sex sexuality, Creech resorts to psychoanalysis and a certain reading of his biographical data but the analysis I have provided suggests that this proto-closet is brought on by the synergy of political discourses of theatricality shaping the modern public sphere and citizenship. One of these discourses posited a radically detached spectatorship founding the public sphere while the other employed the modern political discourse of antitheatricality as a supplement to the problem of representational democracy policing this public sphere by conceiving of the citizen as a potential hypocrite and demanding a convincing public demonstration of authenticity.

I cited Michael S. Kimmel's theory on masculinity and homophobia because it argued that homophobia is the disciplining principle maintaining dominant masculinity based on men's fear of other men; and as a disciplining principle that affects all men. In other words, homophobia is the principle through which any man can be considered failing as a man. Hence this homophobia is not primarily about sexual orientation but about keeping men in constant check about their performance of masculinity. Even if it is

the ultimate signifier of failed masculinity, being gay is only one of several "attributes" that this policing discourse considers proof for failed masculinity. The most important difference between Adolphe's failure as a man and Kimmel's argument about masculinity as always threatened to be revealed as lacking is that by Kimmel's time, homophobia became the explicit discursive signifier of this failure.[54] But the element of unmasking is more decisive in the policing than that what this mask is supposed to signify. It is this element of unmasking in the threat of masculinity that connects modern masculinity to modern citizenship as it connects the figure of the man to the figure of the actor in the modern political discourse of antitheatricality as the metaphor of the hypocrite. The combined figure of the emotionally detached observer who is nevertheless never free of the threat of being unmasked as a failing man organizes the emerging concept of modern masculinity. This modern masculinity corresponds to the man part of the man/citizen compound, the citizen part of which is defined by the member of the public who keeps his peers in check while demonstrating in full theatrical mode that he is no hypocrite.

[54] A potential argument here may suggest that the modern day closet functions just as much to signify the failing case of masculinity as to signal some gay shared experience, or rather that the shared feature of the modern gay experience of the closet owes much to the discourse of masculinity that employs homophobia to maintain dominant masculinity.

CHAPTER 4

COMING OUT BY STAYING IN: THE CLOSET AND THE DISCOURSE OF FRATERNITY

In the previous chapter on the relationship between the closet, citizenship and the modern public sphere, as part of my argument, I suggested that as a social space of ideal transparency, the modern public sphere emerges around two key figures of the individual citizen: the figure of the observer detached as if removed from the social altogether but without much internal specificity, and a more private figure perpetually engaged with the internalized policing gaze of surveillance – these figures appear as forms of spectatorship underpinning the discourse of transparency. I will introduce this chapter with a brief return to Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*, a key text in the history of the political discourse of antitheatricality and a text of crucial importance for the democratic discourse of the French Revolution. At the end of his essay, having laid out his argument against the theater as a radical threat to the republic, Rousseau describes his ideal form of public entertainment. From this description, it may appear that it is in fact spectatorship that pulls democracy into theatricality even at the moment when it wants to purge itself from it through repudiating the actor:

> But let us not adopt these exclusive entertainments which close up a small number of people in melancholy fashion in a gloomy cavern, which keep them fearful and immobile in silence and inaction, which give them only prisons, lances, soldiers, and afflicting images of servitude and inequality to see. No, happy peoples, these are not your festivals. […]
>
> But what then will be the objects of these entertainments? What will be shown in them? Nothing, if you please. With liberty, wherever abundance reigns, well-being also reigns. Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the spectators become an entertainment to themselves; make them actors themselves; do it so that

> each sees and loves himself in the others so that all will be better united [*faites que chacun se voie et s'aime dans les autres, afin que tous en soient mieux unis*]. [1]

Eradicating the combination of deceit and a radical insubstantiality identified earlier by Rousseau as the distinctive feature of the actor is curiously not the direct aim of doing away with acting. What is primarily discontinued in his vision is spectatorship (and with it: immobility, silence and inaction): people are prevented from the perils of acting through becoming actors and ceasing to be spectators. But even in this vision, spectatorship cannot be perfectly eliminated. Instead, acting and spectating become merged into one joyous undifferentiated activity in which one is acting as well as looking onto others in the same gaze as one is looking onto oneself. Clearly, Rousseau described his ideal form of entertainment in these terms because the elimination of the difference between actor and spectator offers the elimination of the distinction that also determines the problem of representative democracy: the distinction between the representer and the represented. It is also not too difficult to register a libidinous charge maintaining itself among these ideal citizen actors since this elimination is envisioned by a union of loving gaze. My aim in citing this passage is not simply to suggest that Rousseau's vision of ideal entertainment is directly orchestrated by what we now recognize as modern homosexuality. It is significant, however, that in this image of ideal citizenship, an undifferentiated and undifferentiating affection connects individuals in the public of the open air.

This crowd of citizens, between whom all differentiating boundaries have been eliminated by a web of affectionate gazes markedly different from a spectator's detached

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968 [1960]), 125-126. For the original, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M. D'Alembert sur son article Genève* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967), 324.

glance (as it appears to adhesively conjoin rather than to separate), becomes one community through this collectively shared affection. Underlying the story of this affectionate gaze by which one recognizes himself in the other is the assumption that each individual citizen appears fundamentally the same. They are either perfectly alike or their gaze can only register their own image as it projects it upon the other. In other words, their loving union is made possible by either nonexistent or overlooked difference. To suggest that Rousseau's vision is more likely to be based on the foreclosure of difference I will cite another ideal vision of community presented in the same text. Inserted in the middle of the diatribe against spectacles, this vision depicts a community blissfully uninfected by the weaknesses of urban civilization that renders society vulnerable to the corruption of the theater. Rousseau describes an agrarian settlement of people whose lives are determined by maximized and individualized industriousness. In this arrangement, it is precisely the lack of any kind of necessary or obligatory communion or exchange that guarantees the peaceful and satisfying operations of this community:

> I remember having seen in my youth a very pleasant sight, one perhaps unique on earth, in the vicinity of Neufchatel; an entire mountain covered with dwellings each one of which constitutes the center of the lands which belong to it, so that these houses, separated by distances as equal as the fortunes of the proprietor, offer to the numerous inhabitants of this mountain both the tranquility of a retreat and the sweetness of society. These happy farmers, all in comfortable circumstances, free of poll taxes, duties, commissioners, and forced labor, cultivate with all possible care lands the produce of which is theirs, and employ the leisure that tillage leaves them to make countless artifacts with their hands and to put to use the inventive genius which nature gave them. In the winter especially, a time when the deep snows prevent easy communication, each, warmly closed up with his big family in his pretty and clean wooden house, which he has himself built, busies himself with enjoyable labors which drive boredom from his sanctuary and add to his well-being. Never did carpenter, locksmith, glazier, or turner enter this country; *each is everything for himself and no one is anything for another*. Among the many comfortable and even elegant pieces of furniture which make up their household and adorn their lodgings,

> none is ever seen which was not made by the hand of the master. They still have leisure time left over in which to invent and make all sorts of instruments of steel, wood and cardboard which they sell to foreigners; many of these even get to Paris; among others those little wooden clocks that have been seen there during the last few years. They also make some of iron and even some watches. And, what seems unbelievable, each joins in himself all the various crafts into which watch making is subdivided and makes all his tools himself.[2]

The combined reading of the two visions presents the latter as an ideal of original and uncorrupted community, and the former as an imagined vision of a future community freed from the corruption brought by a debilitating interplay of commerce, self-love resulting in co-dependency and becoming vulnerable to and dependent upon state control.[3] Despite their differences, the two visions share the incapability to register differences between individual citizens other than those of property (Rousseau, in the latter example at least, has heads of households in mind). Whether they are neatly separated by the cells of their property, each being in absolute sovereign control over all interaction with the others or whether they are subjected completely to the love in which they are united by a gaze of friendship, the merriment characterizing these visions (marking desirable states of community) is facilitated by the fact that these individuals are fundamentally alike. In these visions, citizenship is presented as a system connecting detached individuals nevertheless ready for union whose distinct individuality is ensured by their individual land as property with their private home at the center but who, while being distinctly individual, are nevertheless interchangeable. This interchangeable individuality guarantees that the public relations, the web of an equity-based affection

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[2] Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert*, 60-61, emphasis mine.

[3] The point of deconstruction of the scene of industriousness would be the unnecessary yet solid commerce this insular community establishes for selling the surplus tick-tocking knick-knacks of their overly productive winter idle time to the most corrupted Parisian crowd: Could a community based on self-sustainment and industriousness not sell the clutter in order to get rid of it?

and friendship, between these individuals yield a homogenous space of publicity. The elimination of the distinction between actor and spectator allows for the equable reign of public affection. This undifferentiating cohesive force connecting individuals is in fact the public friendship between citizens known in the philosophy and history of democracy by the name of fraternity, the affect of citizenship as brotherly love.

In this chapter, I will take a look at the relationship between the modern homosexual closet and the discourse of fraternity in order to show that the modern homosexual closet is inextricable from the discourse of fraternity as a powerful discourse of the public. I will rely on Derrida's work on this discourse as it highlights very clearly both its heterogeneity and its publicness. His careful analysis also allows us to see fraternity as a composite discourse not only in terms of its contradictory parts (as we will see shortly) but also in terms of its historicity: Derrida argues that the differences between particular articulations of fraternity are not the signs of major shifts within European culture (assuming some radical difference between its ancient – Greek and Roman – and more modern – Christian – phases. Instead, he shows that the differences between earlier and later records of the discourse of fraternity are generated by aporias inherent to this discourse whose elements are always available for claiming authority (political or cultural).

In order to connect fraternity to the closet, I will finally turn to *Days and Nights*, Gábor Thurzó's novel from 1944, whose actor character was the point of departure for the first chapter of this dissertation. An I-narrative addressing the reader as a member of the narrator's audience of his old friends and recounting the story of a passionate friendship scorned by the public, the novel addresses the relationship between its closeted

narrative and the public on two levels: on the one hand, it depicts the conflict between the public and the internal world of this friendship, on the other hand, as it invites the reader to interpret this story as a closeted narrative, it necessarily highlights the way closeting and outing guides our interpretive experiences. Since the narrative also disturbs the interpretation that would "out" it, it leaves the reader in a constant state of reflection on the closet. In part due to this careful maintenance of readerly confusion and reflection and also because, as I will show, this narrative works only with the terms of the discourse of fraternity, it forces us to consider the closet as an effect and perhaps even the function of the public – as opposed to some container of a private truth.

1. The politics of friendship: "The brother is never a fact."

In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida discusses the principle of fraternity as the cohesive force of the philosophy of democracy since antiquity.[4] This work is an integral part of Derrida's political writings focusing on the discourse of human rights and democracy in the age of globalization, and the tension between the inherent limits of that discourse and its potential to overcome these limits. Focusing on the question of the other as a specifically political question (articulated in his terminology of hospitality, auto-immunity, and democracy to come) and the discursive necessity to construct external enemies within the discourse of democracy and human rights, Derrida's larger aim in these works is to examine the naturalizing force of the limits of democracy. In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida identifies two major discursive strands of fraternity: one focusing on the figure of the "natural brother" as a figure of the principle of autochthony founding the

[4] Jacques Derrida, *Politics Of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).

concept of community, and another focusing on the solid bond between citizen couples. These strands strengthen one another: both the familial bond between brothers and the intimate familiarity between friends posit the relationship between citizens as a bond. This bond can be effectively activated against an external enemy or, in the case of a civil war, it can provide the necessary foundation for reconciliation. At the same time, these strands contain elements that do not correspond to each other seamlessly. It is a heterogeneous discourse. In order to outline these strands and highlight their partial incongruity, I will rely on Derrida's reading of Carl Schmitt's work, mainly *The Concept of the Political* and his subsequent reading of Montaigne's essay on friendship. In the former, Derrida traces several political concepts of European antiquity – friend, enemy, war and civil war – at the heart of fraternity and shows that these concepts are governed by the principle of autochthony based on domesticity. In the latter, he demonstrates the public intimacy inherent in what Montaigne calls "sovereign friendship," a bond that can be the noblest precisely because it is free from domesticity.

According to the framework of Derrida's analysis, the figure of the brother or friend is a basic building block of the European concept of the political issued by the opposition between "friend" and "enemy." This basic opposition is inscribed in Greek thought through a more complex system of internal (domestic) and inter-national (foreign) variants of these terms. Greek thought differentiates between altercation within the community (civil war) and between communities (war) by using separate words for the corresponding concept of the enemy. There is, however, only one concept of the friend, emerging as an intragenerational concept of consanguinity through this differentiation between enemies. In this discourse, the figure of the enemy with whom

reconciliation is not to be taken as a sign of the health of the community, is marked as the non-autochthonous foreigner. That is why for Schmitt, the enemy is always a public enemy: not as an enemy in public but as an enemy of the public, the polity itself. In other words, the figure of the enemy is necessary for the concept of the polity and therefore for the definition of politics. There is no politics without the enemy:

> The naturalness of the bond uniting the Greek people or the Greek race (*Hellénikon génos*) always remains intact [*inentámée*] in *polémos* as well as in *stásis*. The Greek *génos* (lineage, race, family, people, etc.) is united by kinship and by the original community (*okeion kai suggenés*). On these two counts it is foreign to the barbarian *génos* (*tô de barbarikô othneión te kai allótrion*) (470c). As in every racism, every ethnocentrism – more precisely, in every one of the nationalisms throughout history – a *discourse* on birth and nature, a *phúsis* of genealogy (more precisely, a discourse and a phantasm on the genealogical *phúsis*) regulates, in the final analysis, the movement of each opposition: repulsion and attraction, disagreement and accord, war and peace, hatred and friendship. From within and without.[5]

In this schema of citizenship based on the consanguineous friend, the equal legal standing of the citizens is explained by a process of what Derrida calls fraternization. Fraternization is the discursive process of rendering a social institution as if it were reflecting a presocial state, in this case, the isogonic, "natural" connection between citizens, i.e. their brotherhood. The citizens are legally equal because they are considered in a community of fraternity: offsprings of some common ancestor, springing from the same mother-land. Thus connected by a common history and rooted in the same ground, these brothers comprise the community that they ought to protect against foreigners through a common effort; and should they experience any form of altercation amongst themselves, it is their posited fraternal bond that can always be activated in order to reach some form of agreement.

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[5] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 92, emphasis original.

Derrida identifies the formative combination of the image of the hearth and that of the grave in the Greek concept of brother and friend. This two-pronged fixture secures fraternity by gathering notions of place of origin such as "home, habitat, domicile" and the historical tie of kinship marked by the grave. Such a "semantic locus" yields an amalgam of "domesticity, familiarity, property, therefore appropriability, proximity" that presents the concept of friendship and fraternity "in the *familiarity* of the *near* and the *neighbour*."[6] This amalgam melts autochthony with consanguinity; and the joining of these two principles of similarity in the idea of isogony is what justifies isonomy, their legal equality. Hence fellow citizens will be coded as brothers as if their posited prior familial tie were to justify their subsequent political equal standing. Similarity, then, is coded into the heart of fraternity. Every difference ought to be overcome in this discourse of similarity and proximity.

Derrida's aim in these chapters is to deconstruct the naturalizing discourse of fraternization through the problematization of fraternity as a pre-political bond: "It is the *politeía* that forms men, from the moment it regulates itself, in its laws, on *phúsis*, on eugenics and on autochthony, giving them food and education (*trophé*) – not the other way round."[7] Artifacts of the *politeía* that these men are, "there has never been anything *natural* in the brother figure on whose features has so often been drawn the face of the friend, or the enemy, the brother enemy. De-naturalization was at work in the very formation of fraternity…" And therefore also, "[the] brother is never a fact."[8] One of the

[6] Ibid., 154, emphasis original.

[7] Ibid., 95.

[8] Ibid., 159.

key concepts that emerges in his analysis is the autochthony that principles the political theory of enemies and friends and therefore, fraternity.

However, the friend is also thought in a very intimate way within the discourse of *philía* and to demonstrate it, Derrida relies on a series of thinkers: Aristotle, Cicero, and Montaigne. The thinking of friendship in terms of intimacy is signaled by the Aristotelian formula of "One soul in two bodies" which Derrida calls a "generative graft in the body of our culture," a formulation that allows him to dismiss otherwise valid demands to account for the differences between the ages, political and religious regimes, in which these thinkers wrote. For Derrida, the presence of this graft, the graft of friendship in ancient Greek, Roman and later Christian thinking signals that the differences between historical eras and cultures are not quite oppositional enough to render them into a succession of distinctly different phases.

The idea of "one soul in two bodies" is fleshed out most beautifully in a section on Montaigne's essay, "On Friendship." Montaigne describes "sovereign friendship" characterized by a union of the souls so complete that it cannot be properly conceptualized in terms of sharing:

> For the perfect friendship I am talking about is indivisible: each gives himself so entirely that he has nothing left to share with another: on the contrary, he grieves that he is not twofold, threefold or fourfold and that he does not have several souls, several wills, so that he could give them all to the one he loves.[9]

As a union of souls, this friendship is peculiar because it appears as a union of two halves of one soul ("one soul in two bodies"), yet it is a union that engenders a passionate and unquenchable yearning to have more of its halfness to offer to the other half. The passion

[9] Cited in Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, 181.

of this friendship is incommensurable with the limits of its components (the bodies, the souls, the wills) and it is this passion, love, that provides the sovereignty of this perfect friendship: "love takes possession of the soul and reigns there with full sovereign sway […]."[10]

Reading this passage through contemporary eyes, what strikes us is that what is understood in the West today as romantic, indeed perfect, love – a love whose force takes possession of one in a constant and not quite satiable yearning for the companionship of the other and which inhabits in the couple – characterizes perfect friendship as a holy bond that can only develop between men and as such, it is intrinsically public because it is a bond between citizens. Since friendship can only exist between good men, men of virtue, it, as an institution and an affect, belongs to the *res publica* as "a virtuous reason or a rational virtue that would not be in essence homogeneous to the best reason of State is unthinkable."[11] Therefore these couples of friends are citizen couples whose "virile virtue naturally tends …to the harmonization of the measure of friendship – unconditional union or affection – with the equally imperative reason of the State."[12]

Montaigne also discusses the marital bond as a kind of affective glue that can only resemble but can never match sovereign friendship in its perfection. Derrida identifies two reasons for Montaigne's disdain for the quality of the affective bond between husband and wife. One concerns the utility of the institution of marriage as counting against the possibility of a truly noble bond between man and woman. This argument is

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 184.

[12] Ibid.

augmented by one on the nature of woman itself that would make it impossible for a truly holy bond to attach a woman to anyone else. I will quote the passage from Montaigne as the link between its sexism and its disdain for marriage is quite important for understanding the difference between our contemporary notion of romantic love and the discourse of intimate friendship and because these insights will also be relevant for my analysis of Thurzó's novel:

> As for marriage, apart from being a bargain where only the entrance is free (its duration being fettered and constrained, depending on things outside our will), it is a bargain struck for other purposes; within it you soon have to unsnarl hundreds of extraneous tangled ends, which are enough to break the thread of a living passion and to trouble its course, whereas in friendship there is no traffic or commerce but with itself. In addition, women are in truth not normally capable of responding to such familiarity and mutual confidence as sustain that holy bond of friendship, nor do their souls seem firm enough to withstand the clasp of knot so lasting and so tightly drawn. And indeed if it were not for that, if it were possible to fashion such a relationship, willing and free, in which the bodies too shared in the union – where the whole human being was involved – it is certain that the loving-friendship would be more full and more abundant. But there is no example yet of woman attaining to it and by the common agreement of the Ancient schools of philosophy she is excluded from it.[13]

The first problem is that marriage is not free: it is an act of calculation and transaction with an aim other than the relationship between the parties, it is regulated by external codifying institutions, and brings with itself countless tedious engagements stifling freedom; in other words, it is not ruled by the "full sovereign sway" of love. If friendship is a lasting and tightly clasped knot (not unlike the wedding band), its guarantee lies in the firmness of the soul(s) uniting in it and not in the calculating spirit of obligation and security, and external regulations that make it by default interminable by will. Friendship is the free reign of love, while marriage is a prison that may contain love. Derrida

[13] Michel de Montaigne, "On Friendship," trans. M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 6-7.

interprets Montaigne to suggest that "the fault lies less with marriage than in woman;"[14] who is by nature too weak and fickle for the solidity of sovereign friendship, and therefore unable to forge this holy bond. However, Montaigne's formulation with its slight tentativeness allowing for the daydream of a relationship of sovereign love between man and woman (presumably in marriage) suggests that the fault may indeed lie with marriage: even though no one knows of a woman who could be a holy friend, the constraints of marriage would necessarily stifle the freedom of that love. But in all fairness, the structure of the passage above makes sure that friendship as a true and noble affective relationship is only possible outside the sphere of domesticity and between men. True familiarity and domesticity seem to be mutually exclusive: and the noblest form of intimacy is proper to a public institution, or rather, it is the foundational institution of the public.

Clearly, the two strands within the discourse of friendship are not homogenous with one another. The first strand emphasized fraternity as a concept of community as several individuals assimilated by tropes of blood relations and autochthony while the second strand privileged the couple form and a remarkable intimacy. However, both of these aspects conjure friendship as somehow proper to the social. In the image of "natural brothers," the brothers of fraternity are not bound by the domesticity of the hearth even if it defines their bond of proximity. Similarly, the "sovereign friendship" is imagined as decidedly social and public as the ultimate bond between two public figures united not by necessity but the by the spirituality of an elective will, therefore removed from the idea of the natural. Domesticity figures very sharply in both of these strands, even if it is

[14] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 210.

employed quite differently. The image of the hearth and the image of the marital relationship as a home that binds one are crucially important in making the different strands of fraternity, brotherhood and friendship intelligible. The difference between Rousseau's examples of model citizens also demonstrates this important connection to domesticity: the sober Swiss village is shown as an evenly regulated community of individual cells with the homes of these citizens in the center of their individual property, while the passionate union of love between festive citizens takes place in public, free from any physical containment.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I would like to make sense of the homosexual closet through the Derridean lens focusing on fraternalization. In the next section I will attempt to analyze a closeted story of two friends in order to understand how fraternity governs the apparently private relationship of friends.

2. Coming out by staying in[15]

I will now turn to the Hungarian novel whose central actor character was my point of departure in the first chapter, *Days and Nights* by Gábor Thurzó[16] because it produces a closeted queer text on closeting, and also because in doing so, it employs only the heterogeneous terms of the discourse of fraternity I have discussed above: the terms of intimacy, familiarity, domesticity, the affect(s) of friendship, and the public; and finally because at one of its crucial moments it reconfigures these terms into the possibility of a

[15] I am grateful to Elissa Marder for this phrase.

[16] Gábor Thurzó, *Nappalok és éjszakák* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1944). In this chapter, I will refer to the novel by its title in English translation. Translations are mine.

queer “loving friendship” to bewail the lack of social scripts that would make such a possibility viable.

In the novel, the narrator, a school teacher, tells us the story of his friendship with an actor. They are roughly the same age and both men are from out of town. They become friends quickly after they meet, despite other characters’ general disapproval. Disapproving of the friendship are: an elderly German widow, in love with the actor who is attached to her emotionally and financially but does not appear to reciprocate her feelings; the slightly disfigured daughter of one of the teachers in the school called Pepi who falls in love with the narrator and registers the presence of the actor in terms of rivalry; the narrator’s colleagues who form the immediate public sphere of his otherwise solitary life: they consider a friendship between a teacher and an actor inappropriate for the moral requirements issuing from the latter’s profession. Caught between the emotional barrenness of his solitary life and the passionate but volatile friendship with the actor, the narrator finds some comfort and a secure source of emotional connectedness in tutoring a talented but poor pupil. The actor, wanting to break away from his life with the widow and confident in the bond he has with the narrator, severs all communications with her and moves in with him in the narrator’s rented room in a hostel for army officers. He tells the narrator his own story (his monologue is an inlay inserted as a separate chapter of its own within the narrator’s narration). The actor’s moving in with the teacher creates some tension as the widow is related to an important benefactor of the school and the faculty finds it increasingly uncomfortable that their colleague may be considered responsible for the widow’s despair. The narrator, always keen on being a gentleman, tries to persuade his friend to maintain good relations with the widow and

treat her with respect and compassion. His colleagues manage to even pressure him to convince the actor to accompany him to an event where, unbeknownst to the actor, the widow would appear as well. Reluctantly, the actor complies; he does meet the widow there and this personal encounter marks the beginning of the process at the end of which the actor returns to her and the friendship between the men ends. Meanwhile, Pepi passive-aggressively manipulates the narrator into committing to an engagement and the two of them plan to begin their married life together in another town across the country where the narrator received a job for the following year. However, just before he is supposed to show up to the ceremony as the groom, the narrator quickly decides to leave town without her – instead, he takes his little pupil with him, giving him a chance of a life of education and grateful for the warm emotional comfort his company provides.

As it may be clear from the above sketch of its plot, *Days and Nights* is a novel of sexual ambiguity. Since to collect all of the textual elements effecting the salient queer sensibility of the narrative would almost be equal to translating the text as a whole, in what follows, I will show how ambiguity surrounds and indeed figures the narrator, the actor as well as the surrounding public represented by the narrator's colleagues (who embody the morality of the community) in order to foreground my argument about the novel's peculiar explicitness about the erection of its closet. In each case, I will show that the ambiguity allows for an interpretation of the given textual instance as a closeted, gay instance (I will call this interpretation the gay reading of the text) while at the same time making this textual closeting explicit.

The narrator is a young man who aims to live life according to established social and cultural norms. As I will show later, this principle is his ultimate instrument in trying

to convince the actor to accompany him to the event where his friend and the widow could meet again. His aspiration for this general straightness characterizes him from the start: as he starts to narrate his story he tells us about his thoughts on the train on the way to his new residence: "I'd read novels about new-fledged young men renting a room from devoted provincial widows or from matrons with two or three daughters… [In a short while] I decided that I'd lodge at a family with three daughters…"[17] Yet, since he cannot find anything better on the first night, he takes a room in a cheap hostel for army officers run by an older and quite unappealing landlady who also offers sexual services, and in the case of the narrator, forces these services on him in order to charge him the extra fee at the end of the month. Somehow, the narrator continues to lodge in the hostel and it is this small room that he shares with his friend when the actor leaves the widow.

His only exposure to the kind of household inhabited by a young woman of eligible age he had read about in novels is the home of one of his colleagues (like the rest of the faculty, he is at least a generation older than the narrator) with a young bright daughter, Pepi. Pepi and the narrator become friends quite easily. She has a slight bodily disfiguration, something the narrator at first does not consider to be more than perhaps a fault in her posture. As it dawns on him that Pepi wants him to marry her, however, she is increasingly defined by this imperfection and by the end of the novel the narrator refers to her as a hunchback. The sexual contact with the landlady and the relationship with Pepi are the only cross-gender relations involving the narrator who experiences both of them as coercive and abnormal.

[17] Thurzó, 6.

As these cross-gender relations already suggest, the narrator's relationship to domesticity is quite conflicted. At the beginning, while daydreaming on the train, out of the conventionally romantic scripts he recalls fit for his situation (getting involved with a widow or with young girls through settling as a tenant), he comes to prefer the conventional domesticity of exposure to girls he could potentially marry. By the end of the novel, realizing that he has absolutely no inclination to marry Pepi, marriage becomes a prison of domesticity: "I felt sick. That's the last thing I need! A family circle, a cute little hunchbacked wife…"[18] In contrast, the affective bond of his choice founding his emotional community with his young pupil falls outside the conventional limits of domesticity: if he becomes something like a foster father to the boy, this paternal bond is organized along the concept of education, a public institution, instead of familial belonging.

Domesticity also features in one of a series of dreams the narrator has with the actor prior to their friendship. These dreams, prompted by his fascination with the unknown actor he sees on stage and around the small town, tend to foreshadow the intimacy of their subsequent friendship. In one of these dreams, the narrator and the actor are walking aimlessly the winding streets, stopping at an abandoned and empty building. Peeping through one of its window into an empty room, the room gradually appears to be populated with an extended family of three generations sitting around a table as if projected by a gaze external to the scene. Emphasizing the separation by the window and also by the magic, unreal property of the vision of domesticity to which their presence cannot be internal, this dream fits in with the several other dreams the narrator reports to

[18] Ibid., 277.

us: all of these highlight the irresistible pull characterizing the narrator's fascination with the actor and carry an insight of the social loneliness their intimate connection will bring.

The above elements: that heterosexuality only appears as either an integral part of the prescribed scripts of social norms or as something that is forced upon the narrator according to an economy of domesticity to which he always remains external to, his generally conflicted relationship to domesticity, his dispositions towards affective bonds falling outside of domesticity, and last but not least, the libidinally ambiguous dreams he has with the actor prior to their friendship; all of these elements invite a reading of the actor as a latent homosexual. And, crucially to the point I would like to argue here, the narrative explicitly encourages this reading when, struggling with the impact of these dreams, the narrator acknowledges that he is in fact familiar with Freud's work, thereby explicitly situating the novel as a whole in relation with psychoanalysis. The brief reference – "… and this is how I was introduced to Freud but [this introduction] did not extend beyond his theory of dream interpretation"[19] – treats a basic understanding of the founding principles of psychoanalysis as common knowledge (at least among his audience of friends, the readers of the novel), as a stable point of reference (appropriately: the relatively young discipline of psychoanalysis was quite well-known and popular among the educated bourgeois population of Hungary at the time). This reference to psychoanalysis as a standard interpretive practice explicitly invites and approves of a reading of these dreams, and by extension of the novel itself, according to the idea of sexual repression.

[19] Ibid., 58.

The ambiguity characterizing the actor has multiple components as well but it is precisely this widely accepted idea of sexual repression that underscores this ambiguity so strongly that it becomes quite glaring. In the short dialogue below which takes place shortly after the actor has moved in with the narrator who has just shared with him the embarrassing aspects of his relationship with the landlady of the hostel, the actor informs the narrator that he is asexual:

> "Did you know that I've never been with a woman?"
> "Oh come on, don't say that. An actor in the country!"
> "These things don't go with one's profession. Neither with mine."
> "But you have thought about it, haven't you?"
> He paused to think. While he laughed, a lock of hair fell over his forehead. He folded it back with an open palm.
> "I haven't. You won't believe it but bodily things do not matter to me. In other words: I do not have any bodily impulses. I do not know them."
> And I had to believe it. He spoke so clearly, with a childish, glass-like transparency. And this time, I sensed in his voice a sparkle of a kind of honesty he had never revealed before.[20]

The dialogue and the subsequent narration not only record the actor's revelation but transmit it in a way that resonates this revelation through another key feature in rendering the actor's character ambiguous: his profession as an actor. The text, having invited us to read it through a Freudian lens, now denies the possibility of a romantic relationship between the friends (to the extent that the idea of a romantic relationship is predicated upon the assumption of a desire organized by libidinal forces) and at the same time affirms our reading that this friendship is latently homosexual. The emphasis on sincerity exaggerates further the tension between latent sexual "truth" and overt abstinence since the more sincere the declaration, the more convincing a Freudian reading gets: we know

[20] Ibid., 99.

that it is because the actor is absolutely honest here that he must be repressing his sexuality. The paradox of conscious denial and sexual repression which is highlighted in every instance when repression is diagnosed in anyone is destabilized here by the very fact that the analysand in this case is an actor.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I described a structural similarity between the figure of the actor in the modern political discourse of antitheatricality (as exemplified by Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert*) and the modern figure of the homosexual. It is that similarity that this novel employs to make this character unambiguously ambiguous: his effeminacy, plump and blond femininity and adolescent laughter all signal a sexualized lack of adult masculinity that seems inextricable from his being an actor. Also, when the narrator remarks that the actor revealed an honesty that had to be given credit, he necessarily reflects on the question of the sincerity of the actor whose profession is to be insincere by feigning sincerity. Since he is an actor, we can never be sure when he is wearing a mask, playing a part.[21]

Also, this explicitness signals an underlying assumption that this friendship does not make sense otherwise, that the kind of bond between the friends could very easily be taken for erotic in nature, and to avoid this assumption, an ultimate explanation is necessary. If this is a story of a close friendship and nothing else, why should we have to know precisely whether there is a potential possibility for the actor to be attracted to the narrator? This explicit erasure with which the story blots out the exact thing – sex – that is supposed to issue homosexuality overtly reflects on the text's repression. The closeting itself reveals itself as closeting.

[21] Here we can see that the text, in the way the narrator honestly tells his readers about the actor's appearing to be honest plays on the Arendtian problematics of appearing sincere I discussed in the second chapter.

The dual ambiguity of the actor and the narrator meets a peculiar public reception of their friendship. The relationship is openly disapproved of because it is inappropriate for a teacher to be friends with an actor: the teacher is responsible for the reproduction of appropriate behavior in the younger generation; in other words, he is the facilitator of the seamless transmission of standardized morality. As a conductor of morality, his own standards must not be corrupted in order to maintain the appropriate general standards. The actor on the other hand, is the very figure of no fixed moral standards. This friendship, then, threatens the teacher's ability to secure morality in his students. Moreover, it might be the alarming symptom of his personal lack of morality. Alternatively, we could consider this public scorn as that which complements the ambiguity of the friendship necessary for a fully closeted text and recognize in this scorn the homophobic disapproval of heteronormative society. This interpretation is ambiguously allowed occasionally but it is at the same time also disturbed by the text (sometimes to be affirmed tentatively again in the disturbance itself). I will cite two examples. The first example is a public event where all the teachers and actors in the town gather after a theatrical production performed exclusively for the students in the school. The narrator describes in detail that after the performance teachers and actors drink and eat together and during this time, the faculty not only warms up to the members of the theater but that the two groups seem to dissolve into one another: teachers start telling bohemian jokes while actors never fail to have a good time within the confinements of appropriate entertainment. Following this brief moment of mutual assimilation, the narrator remarks that his colleagues stop being scornful about his friendship with the actor, having ascertained that the actor is a respectable member of

their community. The narrator concludes: "My colleagues – if they were embarrassed by the informal fraternization [*bratyizás*] – realized that actors are not quite scummy and so they could more easily forgive me for living together with [the actor] Kálmán Várnagy."[22] While the wording leaves some space for ambiguity and we do not know whether the colleagues have forgiven completely, it does suggest that their disapproval only concerned the moral standing of the actor's character and not the quality of the friends' relationship. This troubles our reading since the friendship itself, its nature, is not scrutinized by society: both friends are finally approved of as holding morally satisfying characters and as a consequence, the almost complete disappearance of the initial public scorn almost completely dissipates the interpretive ambiguity as well.

Another point at which the novel considerably disturbs the gay reading it evokes occurs some time after the "fraternization" I have described above. The actor has left the widow to move in with the narrator and refuses to talk or write to her. Since the widow is an esteemed relative of the benefactor of the school, the director feels extremely uneasy about the fact that a member of his faculty is involved in inconveniencing her. He decides to turn the uncomfortable situation around and benefit from the narrator's closeness to the actor by asking him to bring him along to the soirée where he would also invite the benefactor and the widow (triggering an important dialogue I will discuss below). The widow and the actor could meet in a neutral setting, and the benefactor would be pleased that the school has helped to solve the conflict. When the narrator finds the favor the director asks of him inappropriate, the director says the following: "You know that since you've been living with this actor, the actor will not go near the widow. I know this is not

[22] Ibid., 198.

your fault. Look son, I like things to be normal, and averse I may be from the type of ties that bind the lady from Berlin to your actor, I still have to ask you to do something in order for them to meet."[23] The director's suggestion that the actor's relationship to the widow is in fact abnormal but somehow necessary to restore, as well as his gesture to ask his younger colleague for help in this mission introduces considerable noise into our gay reading, if not troubles it altogether precisely because he uses the word "normal" to stigmatize an intimate relationship. "Abnormal" is exactly the term of classifying homosexual relations, the kind of relationship everyone ought to suspect in the narrator's friendship with the actor. Instead, the word is applied to a heterosexual, albeit unconventional and potentially provocative relationship deterring the direction of stigmatization. It is not that the narrator's friendship with the actor is clearly accepted and acknowledged as normal but, unlike the one between the actor and the widow, it is not deemed explicitly abnormal.

Just like my first example, the second also features a slight ambiguity opening the door ajar for a gay reading. The ambiguity here hinges on the "and" in the third sentence ("I like things to be normal and averse I may be"). We may interpret this sentence as to mean that while the director considers the relationship between the widow and the actor abnormal, he still feels compelled to help in restoring it. Yet, we could also read it to mean that while he finds this relationship repulsive, it is the normal state of things for the actor to be with the widow. This latter interpretation is slightly more tendentious but it is nevertheless arguable. Further still, as readers keenly sensitive to the closet-structure in the friendship, we may be inclined to interpret the director's words as somewhat

[23] Ibid., 209.

disingenuous. If he prefers things to be normal, he is not only averse from the actor's relationship with the widow but also from his friendship with the narrator. But why tell the narrator and antagonize him when he can be pressured into helping him and the school? This last interpretation contradicts slightly what I have discussed above: if these words are dishonest, the colleagues would not finally (almost) accept the friendship. But the contradiction is only slight; both examples contain enough ambiguity for us to link them up in a somewhat forced but not completely dismissible gay reading. Indeed, we can feel free to interpret both of my examples as illustrating the narrator's wishful delusion and/or closeted narration, if we so wish.

In sum, ambiguity characterizes the narrator, the actor as well as the attitude of the public around them; the text explicitly invites us in many ways to read this ambiguity as ambiguity housing homosexuality. In other words, the text calls attention to its own closetedness. The tension between this act of explicit closeting and the closeted text it effects is perhaps the greatest in the scene below in which the narrator is trying to persuade his friend to go along with him to the soirée mentioned above:

> Kálmán Várnagy started to laugh:
> "They invited me as well"—he laughed like an adolescent. "Excuse me while I'm laughing at this."
> "Quit putting up a scene, please."
> But he did not stop:
> "They're not afraid that I might infect their birds with some disease? That my mere presence will kill the fleas in their dogs and cats?"
> "There's no reasoning with you today."
> He leant back in the chair. The restaurant was sleepy, we were the only customers. Only one waiter was loitering among the tables, like a fall fly, with one eye on the day's paper.
> "You consider reasoning that you announce that we are invited to that education-egghead?" he asked still laughing, but somewhat more seriously.
> I snapped at him in irritation:
> "I thought you'd be pleased."
> "Pleased, no way."

> "Do you always want to live like this? In exile?"
> Suddenly, he put his hand on my arm:
> "I am with you. You are my friend. If we are together, we cannot be in exile," he looked at me absolutely seriously. "Haven't you considered that?"
> I softened. This pensive, serious voice, this slightly darkened, very earnest gaze! I pulled my hand away:
> "I've also considered that we should give our friendship some form. Don't you realize that it's not that natural for others? We are together all the time. It sort of looks like we are in hiding."
> "The stage is public enough for me."
> "But you are not an actor all the time. Life is public, too."
> He let out a laugh:
> "You're so damn straight!"
> "I'm not all that straight but I can see further than the tip of my nose."[24]

We are taken aback: we are reading something almost resembling our clichéd contemporary gay conflict of whether or not to come out but the terms of coming out are reversed; the replica is like a mirror-reflection of our familiar model of coming out. If we can recognize this as a clearly gay scene, we also recognize that its version of coming out is the exact reversal of our notion of coming out. The disturbance lies in a reversal of the terms of coming out. Going out together to the party would correspond to our notion of staying in the closet, while refraining from a public appearance as a couple corresponds to our notion of not hiding the true nature of a strange friendship. The reversal constitutes a chiastic structure of outness and the public/private distinction; the actor is coming out by staying in:

In	Out
	X
Private	Public

[24] Ibid., 213-214.

One thing immediately stands out in this chiastic structure: the terms of the categories of "outness" presuppose our current model: "out" already suggests publicness, and "closeted" evokes something private. Affirming the practice of gay reading as well as simultaneously frustrating it, the scene connects this practice and the homosexual closet to the latter's alignment with our distinction between public and private. In fact, to the extent that we are surprised, we have been reading the text according to this specific constellation. The narrator, properly positioned as a respectable male member of society, respectful of his elders and their mores, may easily be seen as the one drawn to conform to what is deemed natural—even at the cost of 'denying' the 'true', 'unnatural' nature of his friendship with the actor.

What facilitates the alignment of the terms of coming out with the notions of public and private is the secret conceived of as some inner truth ready to be shielded or revealed. One can only be in or out if one has or has not revealed one's secret—in both cases having or having had the secret is crucial. Not only does this entail that the chiastic structure of the "reverse closet" might be less "objective" than we first think but also that the closet can only come into being within a specific framework of public and private based on the principle of secrecy.

However, when the actor contemptuously tells the narrator that he is so "straight," he does not accuse him of lying or cowardly refusal to reveal the truth. His contempt is targeted at the narrator's insistence on displaying proper, adequate, straight behavior. If the narrator is weak in any sense, it is because he does not have the strength to just be a deviant and not because he hides the fact that he is deviant. As long as the conflict is

whether to perform a "natural," public friendship, the structure of the closet (requiring secret and its revelation) cannot emerge, since this conflict is not one pertaining to knowledge and truth: there is nothing to know about this friendship, the question is whether it is publicly visible or not.

In other words, the situation is not about some hidden truth about the individual; it is not that the friends "turn out to be" sick or different; their deviance is exactly only that—a deviation from proper friendly conduct. At stake is then the mending of something gone awry. And even that is not so much in the moral sense of punishing a certain form of behavior in order to change it—in the mode of adolescent boys needing some understanding yet firm parental intervention when missing the right aim. Rather, the point is to set the record straight through a simple change of behavior. In a way, the town is saying: "We couldn't care less what you are doing in the bedroom; but perform friendship properly." And this, in turn, entails that in the social constellation of the scene, there is no secret, there cannot be a secret. As a very important corollary, there can be no lies. Consequently, the closet is impossible. We are not sure if our gaydar is blinking or short-circuited and whether its breaking down is a part of its very operation.

Still, if we worked on it hard enough, we could synthesize these paradoxes into a story of a double closeting allowing for our gay reading to be a practice of decoding the text as a coherently gay narrative. We could interpret the two friends as repressing or suppressing the possibility that their friendship is based on a latent homosexual attraction and we could interpret the others' apparent failure to register the possibility of a sexual secret between the friends as a very powerful way of determined silencing. In this reading, all characters act as if no such secret could possibly exist between men. This

interpretation is possible but only through a laborious process of detective work. The reader is manipulated by the text through its ambiguities and is forced to face, in the interpretive process, the small inconsistencies that prevent any given reading from being seamlessly consistent.

In order to show that *Days and Nights* is different from a closeted text inviting a gay interpretation, I will briefly focus on the practice of gay reading and what it requires in general. What is a closeted text? Before preparing an account of the exact system enabling gay readings (for instance, determining the gender-related conditions, or psychoanalytical aspects, of such a practice), the condition of all subsequent conditions for gay reading is that the text not be out. Insofar as it is a practice of revealing a latent truth of the text, gay reading has to construct some elements of the texts as a closet. When I designate these characteristics as those whose constellation invite a gay reading of the novel, I implicitly rely on the fact that gay readings require closeted texts.[25] In other words, gay readings require texts that do not openly thematize homosexuality or same sex desire but which allow the interpretation to discover a tacit appearance of these elements. It is at this point that ambiguity plays a crucial role in allowing for the reader's detection of the closet and its outing.

In an essay on imagining the figure of the homosexual, Lee Edelman has addressed the question of the practice of recognizing gayness when discussing a film made in the year *Days and Nights* was also written, at a time when Hollywood productions had to adhere to a strict censorship of featuring same sex attractions,

[25] This insight is encapsulated in the title of James Creech's book, *Closet Writing: Gay Reading.*

yielding, instead of a simple silence, a kind of closeted homosexuality. Edelman identified as a constitutive element of the closet in an

ambiguity that a gaze so declined can out. While Edelman discusses a specific segment of American culture at a specific time, his argument is informed by and compatible with theories of modern male homosexuality and the epistemology of the closet to such an extent that it explains the connection between homosexuality and ambiguity in the Hungarian novel as well:

> Now in modern American culture such ambiguity is anything *but* ambiguous: nothing is more decidedly and punitively "known" than the "meaning" of sexual "ambiguity." And this fact is telling on a number of counts; it bespeaks, at once, the demarcation and policing of cognitive and sexual boundaries that are always mutually determining, the insistence upon stable and universally applicable categories of erotic desire, and the social imperative to recognize what are alleged to be tell-tale signs of difference. Ambiguity as such, then, is not permitted innocently or non-tropologically to enter the modern discourse of male sexual orientation since it occupies a virtually tautological relation to the construction of male homosexuality. It undergoes translation immediately into "that which is other than heterosexual," delusively reinforcing the governing fiction of heterosexuality: that it is inherently and naturally self-evident in its presence to itself. Ambiguity and homosexuality, in consequence, trope endlessly upon each other […].[26]

If, however, ambiguity and homosexuality "trope upon each other," in a necessarily ambiguous fashion, the outing gesture of gay reading (or viewing) needs to insist that this ambiguity is in fact unambiguous and it signals homosexuality. Gay reading is a practice of identifying and rewriting ambiguity.[27] We can take for example the case of Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* as it generated a debate precisely based on the stakes of reading its ambiguity. The polarities of reading are illustrated by Barbara Johnson's reading the novella for its ultimate unknowability; while James Creech argues that this reading of this

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[26] Lee Edelman, "Imagining the Homosexual: *Laura* and the Other Face of Gender," in *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 201-202, emphasis original.

[27] This rewriting does not necessarily mean that this practice is inaccurate.

particular ambiguity ignores that the ambiguity is the effect of the taboo on homosexuality as it filters homosexual affect in Melville's text.[28]

In the previous chapter, I relied on James Creech's argument in his reading of *Adolphe* that detected the closet structure in the French novel. On the level of its plot, *Adolphe* is a straight story in which the narrator's conflict is structured along the characteristics of the modern homosexual closet, and aside from this element, the text as a whole does not bear any traces of closeting. In other words, the closet structure of Adolphe's conflict is taken, by its gay reading, as the chief evidence for it being a gay text. In sum, *Adolphe* is a straight story that needs a particular gay reading to out it. In contrast, no intention to read *Days and Nights* as a straight story could succeed: it cannot really be read according to its visible closeting moves. Portraying a passionate friendship between men where each man figures as a rival to the women who wish to be attached to the other man romantically, unlike *Adolphe*, this novel does not read like a conventionally straight text that can be outed by a reading characterized by a necessary gaydar. Neither does it read like its more or less immediate literary precursors: Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger,* André Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, or fellow Hungarian Antal Szerb's *Utas és holdvilág* (*Journey by Moonlight*), works in which homosexual relations are openly represented or ambiguously hinted at with no explicit reference. *Days and Nights* is different: while telling a story of a closet related conflict, it continuously lapses between facilitating ambiguity (for example by the very motif of male friendship), giving explicit reference to homosexual attraction and then inserting explicit gestures of

[28] See Barbara Johnson, "Melville's Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd," in *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 79-110; and James Creech, "From Deconstruction," in *Closet Writing/Gay Reading: The Case of Melville's Pierre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3-44.

closeting. While the first two kinds of textual gestures affirm our gay reading, instances, moves and gestures of closeting inhibit it. *Days and Nights* is different from the texts Edelman refers to: as a text that forces the reader to interpret its closeting moves, it reflects on ambiguity as the signifier for homosexuality. Therefore, unlike the outable texts Edelman discusses, the novel refuses to reinforce "the governing fiction of heterosexuality: that it is inherently and naturally self-evident in its presence to itself." Let me show a very clear instance of this refusal, executed through the heterogeneous elements of the discourse of fraternity according to Derrida's account.

Towards the end of the novel when the actor has already reunited with the widow and both he and the narrator know that they will break up the intimate and strong bond between them, the narrator muses to his audience of friends with resigned sadness about the inevitably ephemeral nature of such bonds:

> And then for a moment I seriously did not know what I should do. To live like this, with him, this cannot go on much longer. And without him? I could not imagine that either. I was not used to lurid emotions, neither in friendship nor in love. I cannot even eat a Wiener schnitzel with passionate abandon even though I like it immensely. I've always abhorred romance [*regényesség*: "novelness"; the exuberant sentimentality of novels]. What would be best? – to board a train at night and to leave somewhere into the commencing summer. In situations like these, romance writers always find for Adam and Eve – or call them what you please – a hermit's hut where, as Robinsons tending their goats, they live happily ever after wearing their home-made clothes of bass. But what should Adam and Adam do? You cannot solve a friendship even if chance has forced it to be like ours. By that time … I knew very well that our friendship is, and all friendships in general are, insatiable, perpetually thirsty. There is no release, you cannot, like I heard you can in music, gather all the themes and weave them neatly together. It's impossible even when the passions of the body, and not just those of the soul, bluster in it as well. What can I receive in a friendship? More so than in a love: myself. I already knew this.[29]

[29] Thurzó, 246.

The passage sets up the oppositional terms of love and friendship, associates same-sex relation with the latter and heterosexual relation with the former and infuses these terms with each other completely. “Adam and Adam” will denote friendship but friendship will not only be an exuberantly passionate bond between people, it may also incorporate passions of the body. “Adam and Eve,” however, live like two Robinsons (and not like “the Robinsons”). The particular friendship that he experiences is exemplary of all friendships in its insatiable quality; and it is exceptional not because it might be too intimate for a conventional understanding of friendship but precisely because, presumably at least partially due to the actor’s lack of sexual drive, it lacks the passions of the body. Heterosexual relations are described as two individuals existing side by side whereas friendship is described as a relation of passionate exchange in which one receives “more so” a sense of self than in love. In other words, love and friendship are set up as oppositional (one based on longing passion with no social scripts to make it a durable institution, the other based on scripted co-existing) yet at the same time also as differentiated by the degrees to which they can yield a sense of self for the parties involved. Although the passage does not explicitly equate heterosexual relations with love, and same-sex bonds with friendship, the passage suggests such an understanding. The passage at the same time comments on the narrative as a novel: on this metalevel, readers are addressed not as a live audience of the narrator’s old friends but as readers who should not expect a happy end as happy ends are reserved for scripts featuring Adams and Eves. In one breath, the narrator posits friendship as something that may naturally include sexual passion and as something that is irresolvable due to the lack of authenticated scripts through which it could be lived. It is a radically queer monologue

that posits its queer point of view as self-evident reality (friendship is evidently sexual often enough and is always passionate, and "Adam and Eve" stories tend to pale in comparison) while also reflecting on the fact that this reality is unacknowledged by social scripts that would provide it with viability; which renders these queer relationships, characterized by at the same time perpetual longing as well as receiving a sense of self, more lurid than the most affirmed romance stories.

What the passage also does is to repeat to entice and to disturb our gay reading, this time not on the level of plot but rather in the narration. Clearly, once we read about Adam and Adam, the closet walls seem to crumble: the narrator might never have opened the closet door with the actor and the town's public may never have deigned to acknowledge the closet by wanting to police the possibility of the sexual secret between the friends but here, towards the end of the narrator's tale, he calls this, indirectly through the trope of substitution, a conventionally romantic relationship. Yes. And yet, the ambiguity is still not dissolved, since instead of heterosexual and homosexual romance, the passage contrasts romance and friendship. It mourns the fact that the passionate kind of friendship, friendship's exemplary kind, has no option to develop into a durable way of life. In formulating this queer sadness, Thurzó's narrative only needs to reconfigure the terms of the composite discourse of fraternity, riding, as it were the currents of its internal heterogeneity and managing to make explicit, through our readerly confusion, our interpretive needs based on heteronormative categories (love, friendship, sexual, intimate, perhaps even public and private) as historically conditioned needs tracing back to a political discourse of the autochthonous community.

Conclusion

The novel demonstrates two basic operations involving the homosexual closet: a) it recounts a closeted story or a story of the closet; b) disturbs this closeting on several occasions to the point where in the end all possible distinctions between closeted and out text crumble. While we cannot possibly read it as a story of a friendship untouched by a homosexual sensibility, we also cannot read it as an unproblematically out narrative, nor can we coherently out it as a closeted text of gay truth. Gay secrecy is foreclosed both by the glaring denials and by the explicit gay references such as "Adam and Adam": the text either posits a latency repressed too deep for it to be a conscious secret or treats the "truth" of the friendship as known by all parties (friends, rivals, colleagues, readers).

What remains is a story staging conflicts organized by the political discourse of fraternity. The reverse coming out scene is based on the plausibility of the idea of a conflict between a public that has no problem with an intimate friendship as long as this friendship is performed in public and is not rooted in domesticity. In this regard, the friendship is not "sovereign" because the actor is only public on stage: he can only appear to be the man a citizen is supposed to really be. Indeed, the narrator perceives him as private rather than public and this perception is framed in the public setting of the theater whose publicness the actor claims as his own. Looking, in the theater, at the pictures of the resident actors, he notices a picture of his friend:

> …and the picture of Kálmán Várnagy was displayed [among the picture of the other actors] as well. It was a private face, and as I glanced at it briefly, I suddenly understood something about him: this young man was always a little "private."[30]

[30] Ibid., 93-94.

The actor's wantonness, effeminateness, and adolescent laugh all put him in a position external to that of the fraternal citizen. His friendship with the narrator lacks the form of a properly conducted fraternal friendship. In this framework, it is not unnatural because it is characterized by a perverse secret but because it lacks the aspects of the naturalizing discourse of public fraternity. This friendship, then, is faulty because its couple is not comprised of two isogonic, exchangeable individuals, the basic unit of "two of the same" of fraternity's concept of friendship. To paraphrase Derrida, it is the *politeía* that makes friends, and therefore a friend, all friends, must be public.

The other important way the novel works against the discourse of fraternity is to reconfigure its terms in a radically queer way. The longer passage I quoted above seems to correspond to Montaigne's thoughts on noble friendship: it repeats the idea of friendship's superiority over love but boldly queers Montaigne's fantasy of the perfect loving friendship uniting not only the souls but also the bodies in the passion of love. Montaigne formulated this fantasy in heterosexual terms and, convinced of its impossibility, ranked it highest among affectionate (and, in general, all affective) relationships. Thurzó's narrator, on the other hand, posits not the fantasy but the reality of this kind of loving friendship. While he is never unambiguous about considering friendship a strictly homosocial institution, renders male friendship by default sexually passionate.

Between the glaring sexual denial and this queer reality of loving friendship (falling outside of the available social scripts of domesticity), the closet crumbles – without making the narrative an out gay text. Instead, along with the closet, the possibility to distinguish between sexual ambiguity as homosexuality and ambiguous

love as friendship also disintegrates. Instead of "reinforcing the governing fiction of heterosexuality," this radical crumbling – the novel's queer act – undermines the authority of that fiction by making use of the inherent reconfigurability of heterogeneous terms of fraternity. Perhaps the most radically queer aspect of the text is precisely that it writes a closeted text on the closet while also making it crumble in a relatively simple, melodramatic love story, through terms that are all internal to the discourse that serves to supply the affective glue of citizenship, suggesting that the closet, along with a clear distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, love and friendship can only function in a certain constellation of the discourse of fraternity, the discourse governing the concept of the public. Hence, the closet is inextricable from and seems to be governed by the affective discourse of citizenship.

CONCLUSION

THE QUEERNESS OF DEMOCRACY

In the previous chapters I attempted to point out a structural link between the modern figure of the homosexual and the figure of the citizen in the post-Revolutionary discourse of citizenship and offer ways in which the modern figure of the homosexual appears as the embodiment of certain constitutive aporias within citizenship. This has a crucial significance for any appearance of a gay citizen figure (of any gender). Since the shared characteristics of the figure of the actor and the figure of the homosexual – e.g. the combination of deception and hollowness – render these figures essentially and dangerously inauthentic in the democratic discourse that wants to posit the citizen as an authentic subject of rights and responsibilities. Since this authentic citizen subject is constructed as a figure whose public authenticity, as the basis of his membership in the community's fraternity, is guaranteed by a private self or core that includes his true and serious intentions and nothing else, any claim to any gay rights, symbolic or empirical, will necessarily run up against the paradox of treating the very figure of inauthenticity as an authentic subject of citizenship.

The individual chapters presented parts of a composite argument about this aporetic connection between the modern figure of the homosexual and the figure of the citizen in the post-Revolutionary discourse of democratic citizenship. These parts are as follows: the first chapter showed the structural similarity between the figure of the actor in the modern political discourse of antitheatricality and the modern figure of the

homosexual, and suggested that their shared structure is connected, negatively, to the structure of the citizen.

In the second chapter, I looked at how the elements abjected by the discourse of post-Revolutionary citizenship and presented in the structure I detected in the figure of the actor and the homosexual are in fact crucial elements that make this discourse of citizenship possible.

In the third chapter, relying on James Creech's reading of *Adolphe*, I argued that what Creech can detect as the homosexual closet is in fact a structure installed in the post-Revolutionary discourse of citizenship and its public sphere based on two ways of seeing: that of the detached observer and that of (self)-surveillance.

In the fourth chapter, I offered a reading of Gábor Thurzó's closeted text on the closet to suggest an important link between the modern homosexual closet and the European discourse of fraternity.

In sum, I attempted to offer the foundation of an argument suggesting that the modern figure of the homosexual embodies the aporia of citizenship because it bears both the constitutive features of the figure of the citizen and the "characteristics" that the discourse of citizenship contains and abjects: like a modern citizen, the homosexual becomes one by making a declaration, he is characterized by a sense of detachment and self-surveillance, he is intimately linked to a presupposed secrecy, and is both a brother and a stranger.

In embodying the aporias of citizenship, the figure of the homosexual disturbs democracy in two ways. First, it is a disturbance of the fraternity governing the modern public/private distinction. In a way, it presents a disturbance more threatening than civil

war (or any conflict-based disturbance): it disturbs the ideally homogenous relations between the symbolic brothers. The threat posed by the sexual nature of the queer fellow citizen may be interpreted as a threat of domination: we can interpret sexuality as intimately and inherently inscribing domination into a relationship (which is why, as David Halperin argues, sex between Athenian citizens was forbidden).[1] But the element of domination is only one step of the logic of a fraternity based on equality: sexuality, ultimately, renders a public relationship at least somewhat private, or adds a private link to the public bond and thereby disturbs the order of the public.

Secondly, it displays (in its open performativity) the illusory, prescribed "ipseity" in the concept of the citizen. "Ipseity" is a term used by Derrida to refer to the political principle of indivisibility: it connects the citizen and his autonomous, individual, clearly articulated and discernible intention (and ability to act) to the idea of the general will whose homogeneity guarantees the indivisibility of the Sovereign.[2] Arguably, the well-researched duality of the citizen (at the same time absolutely unique and singular and also equal to his fellow citizen)[3] that I referred to as the individual exchangeability within fraternity can be traced to this principle of ipseity: on the level of the individual, singularity is the marker of the autonomy and self-sameness of his will, on the level of the social or the fraternal, equality secures the indivisibility of the general will and the Sovereign.

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[1] David Halperin, "Is There a History of Homosexuality?" in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove et. al., 416-432 (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

[2] See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays On Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 36-37 and 100-101.

[3] For example by Étienne Balibar, "'Rights of Man' and 'Rights of the Citizen': The Modern Dialectic of Equality and Freedom," in *Classes, Masses and Ideas: Studies On Politics And Philosophy Before And After Marx*, trans. James Swenson (London: Routledge, 1994), 39-59.

The threat of this disturbance of ipseity is already present in the definition of democracy in Plato's account. When Plato describes democracy in the abstract, he likens it to a colorful multi-patterned dress attractive to women and children, and in terms of constitution, to a shop displaying a diverse arsenal of various types of constitutions.[4] Plato's description of democracy as something like a kaleidoscope, pleasing due to its ever-changing quality of diversity, positions it as a concept that is related to politics but is not proper politics at all. Linking it to women and children, democracy is rhetorically allocated to the realm of the statutory minors of Athenian democracy. If Kálmán Várnagy, the actor in Thurzó's novel, is registered as a gay character, if not the character of gayness, it is because he gathers, in his male body, the characteristics of femininity and adolescence attracted to, and living in, the colorful, ever-changing bazaar of the theater between heavily decorated brocades of curtains, costumes and characters.

Plato's critique of democracy is based on what we could sum up as democracy's radical inconsistency. The basic flaw allowing for this inconsistency is the democratic principle of freedom that extends legal equality to people and principles that are not equal in value. Democracy posits all forms of diversity fundamentally equal, thereby delegitimizing all forms of discrimination. The different qualities of people or their different lifestyles are not ranked according to value: they are all held to be equally valuable as manifestations of general freedom. This unconditional rule of freedom leaves its imprint on democracy as a constitution, on its practical operation, and on its citizens. The various forms its imprints take seem to appear among the values that the modern discourse of democracy deemed inauthentic and insincere; and to the extent to which we

[4] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 375-376 (557 c-d).

now recognize these qualities of inauthenticity as queer, Plato's democracy appears to be queer through and through in the following ways.

As an abstract concept, it is unlike any other constitution: its radical inconsistency means that all proper forms of constitutions are included within it. As a practical system of government, it is especially unstable because, due to this radical lack of a system of values, citizens do not have any principles to hold on to and consequently can be very impressionable by orators, leaving democracy a fertile ground for demagogues, irresponsible politicians who become powerful not because of their objective merit but because the popularity they can harvest by pleasing their audience. The fact that the number of citizens is the largest in a democracy only exacerbates this practical instability. The potential success of such manipulation makes this form of government especially vulnerable to a lapse into tyranny and hence, excessive freedom has the tendency to turn into a system based on the complete loss of freedom for all but one of the people.

In fact, instability seeps into the character of citizens as well: as there is no discriminating principle for evaluating qualities, man's own qualities are left without careful and consistent tending. Instead of cultivating valuable traits and aims over more objectionable ones, men cultivate all their qualities, thoughts, and wishes; one may be a glutton one day and start a strict diet on the next without either of these having any bearing on the day after. Hence, the moral constitution of the citizen will, according to Plato, be just as patchworked and volatile as democracy itself. He writes on the figure of the democratic citizen:

> 'A very good description of the life of one who believes in liberty and equality,' he commented.
>
> 'Yes, I said, 'and I think that the versatility of the individual, and the attractiveness of his combination of a wide variety of characteristics, match the

> variety of the democratic society. It's a life which many men and women would envy, it contains patterns of so many constitutions and ways of life.[5]

What we see in this representation of the democratic citizen is exactly what the modern democratic citizen is not supposed to be. Like Adolphe, Plato's figure could not have one distinct secret as his constitution is that of a lack of any durable consistency, self-sameness, and ipseity.

For Derrida, this threat to ipseity is also the guarantee for democracy to be and stay democratic. This is why in *Rogues*, he suggests that a radical reconsideration of the axiom of the indivisibility of sovereignty is one way that we can contest democracy in the name of what he calls democracy-to-come (his term for a fundamental openness to unpredictable, event-like difference within democracy). Derrida's concept of democracy to come helps us to understand the position of the figure of the homosexual vis-à-vis the modern discourse of democracy and citizenship, and also suggests that queer rights necessarily tend to probe and contest the discourse of fraternization. Insofar as the idea of these rights seems irresistible to democratic thinking, it appears so in the name of the idea of democracy. Insofar as queer rights seem intolerable, they are intolerable according to the present limits of democracy that serve to provide some formal coherence to a potentially inconsistent and illimitable concept that always exceeds its existing forms.

In other words what is inscribed in the heart of citizenship as its abject exposes ways it can and perhaps will change in the future. But that future will have to be different from what our concept of the future now allows. Since our sense of community depends so heavily on a specifically heteronormative model of reproduction, and hence, of future,

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[5] Plato, 381 (561d-e).

any such change brought about by these claims will necessarily reshape what community, reproduction, and future will mean.

Two things follow from this intimate and conflicted relationship between queerness and democracy. One concerns the debates within the multifarious theories and political movements of various actors of sexual dissent: their ongoing debate between normalized gays and notorious queers will also be predicated by this aporetic discourse of democracy (that operates through an inconsistency while also abjecting it). This conclusion is productive because it corroborates existing scholarship on the impossibility of doing away with either proud rights-claiming identity movements or queer movements and arguments resisting any discourse of normalization.

Second, as long as homosexuality will be considered, even if tacitly, as dangerous for fraternity and therefore community, the figure of the gay citizen will necessarily be a figure whose rights will not easily be acknowledged since according to this discourse of fraternity and community, these rights cannot fail to register as a license to corrupt community. Conversely, any (even partial) recognition of gay rights marks a success in contesting the principle of ipseity within this understanding of community.

Besides urging engagement with inquiries on fraternity as a major political contributor to institutional heteronormativity, I also see an avenue for connecting my inquiries here with one of Derrida's late arguments on sovereignty. At the end of *Rogues*, he suggests that one of the ways the principle of ipseity at the heart of our modern democratic thought governs this thought is in the axiom of the indivisibility of sovereignty. My limited research here suggests a link between fraternity as threatened and disturbed by queerness and this axiom of ipseity (also disturbed by queerness). This

link invites an inquiry into the specifically sexuality-oriented potential of the figure of the rights-bearing gay citizen (as the queer brother who “undoes” fraternal community from within) to augment Derrida’s own arguments based on the figure of the enemy as the outside threat.

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