

Drag King: Camp Acts, Queer Bodies, Desiring Audiences

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The motivations for, and intentions of, the performances of any given Drag King are as various as Drag Kings themselves. The boundaries tested by the Drag King are reached through his performances, with the participation or refusals of his audience—as an embodied queering of play across gender. The Camp and Drag traditions from which his performances draw facilitate this, and draw out erotics—an essential performance of the Drag King—articulated through varied methods of access to the incoherently gendered or re-gendered body. Working through the piece as a desiring audience, these acts are examined and explored in the light of this desire.¹

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Without a doubt, Johnny T is all about exhibiting sexual self-confidence. He revels in his erotic pulse and the pleasure it evokes among his peers and/or audience. Johnny T understands that desire is bigger than getting someone in the sack—it's about being so fully in the erotics of your body that you want to feel the charge of your desire out in the world, to feel how it pulses in and against other people, generating a heat that comes back to you.

It was these sentences which captured me, and got me started on the train of thought that has now evolved into the writing before you. I was transfixed, mesmerised by the possibilities and theoretical turns in front of me, triggered by these few words. In the writing of her piece 'Grease cowboy fever: Or, the making of Johnny T', K Bradford engaged with her work as a Drag King through both her daily persona, with almost schizophrenic interjections from her Drag King persona, Johnny T.² At that point, I saw a humour I recognised—one similar to my own, and one I came to realise lay in Camp. But beyond that, I saw evidence of my experiences of Drag Kinging—from the audience—and I wanted to know more, I wanted to find my experiences and desires reflected in this kind of work. I searched. I found nothing that did it justice, that said the things I felt when I, as audience, participated in a Drag King performance. And so I decided to find it myself. This piece is an attempt to create a coherent reaching out towards the Drag King performer and his performances, to value his work, and to show how and why we desire him. I want to meet the Drag King, arms open—and maybe even get to take him home with me.

The Drag King is not one, but many. The work of many different performers and personas goes into elaborations of the Drag King. They reflect the many and varied types of male masculinities, which they parody and re-interpret and are themselves just one of a number of different performances of female masculinity. Judith Halberstam, in her book *Female Masculinity*, has gone some way to elucidating some of the elaborations of female masculine presentations, as well as presenting taxonomies of Drag King performers.³ There has been much said about presentations of female masculinity—of 'Butch'

in particular—and, while theorising about Drag King presentations, one must always remain mindful of these.⁴ I believe that the self-consciousness and the Camp parodic humour of Drag Kinging encapsulates its difference from other performances of masculinity while simultaneously creating its disruptive potential. Although I constantly reference female masculinities, and use words written in reference to them, in this work, we must set the Drag King apart from the rest of these presentations. Drag Kings are a presentation of female masculinity, but they are not necessarily linked to any other presentation—Butch, for example—and have their own set of ways of being, presenting and performing in the world. They should also be set apart from the various transgendered performances. Drag Kinging relies on the matter of a female body for its work, as opposed to an essentialist definition, in a shape that is coherently female outside the enactments of the Drag King performance. It does this through a combination of self-and other-identification, through the many codings and forms of meaning and embodiment that 'femaleness' has in society.

I have read extensively in my pursuit of the Drag King in his many forms and descriptions, and have come upon many of his (re) presentations.⁵ I have read to address my 'using' or 'appropriating' the female masculine, and the risk I run in this work of 'reducing' the performances to one side of the dialectic placing the feminine firmly within the body. These are questions I have asked myself, and to which I return: as a human being, I am implicitly a gendered subject—with or without my permission. This is a fact which follows from the regulatory fictions that govern our world. Hence, I am—as in fact we all are—always invested in the relative success or failure of performances of masculinities and femininities. The incoherent access to bodies which is here represented by the Drag King's performances allows us a way of looking at these kinds of daily gendered performatives in new light, with fresh potentialities. And I'm excited.

THE 'DRAG KING' MAKES CAMP: SETTING UP THE 'CAMP'⁶

'Camp involves a new, more complex relation to "the serious". One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious.'⁷

It's embarrassing to be solemn and treatise-like about Camp. One runs the risk of having, oneself, produced a very inferior piece of Camp.⁸

As Sontag intimated, one of the guiding principles of Camp is its humour. Add in a little theatricality, a dash of parody or irony and a fair sprinkle of style, and we have the perfect brew for the true Camp. Many people have a slightly different recipe for that brew—take Jack Babuscio's version: irony, aestheticism, theatricality and humour;⁹ or Jonathan Dollimore's 'invasion and subversion of other sensibilities, and works via parody, pastiche, and exaggeration.'¹⁰ 'The true Camp' references the use that Newton makes of 'the Camp' in the gay male cultures she became involved with when writing her book, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*.¹¹ Here, she speaks directly of 'the Camp' who constitutes one of the most interesting people at the party, for always, 'Whatever the camp's "objective" physical appearance, his most successful joke is on himself.'¹² 'The Camp's ability to use the joke of himself¹³ and put his wit to work against his situation is indicative of the spirit and the sensibility of Camp.

From the very first words of Sontag's 'Notes on camp', it is made clear that Camp is in fact a 'sensibility'.¹⁴ The 'sensibility' of Camp makes it elusive, responsive to change, and virtually impossible for any theorist to pin down its true notion. Perhaps that is the point of Camp: that it always wriggles out from pin-points. And, at the self-same time, a Camp sensibility is a 'gay sensibility'.¹⁵ Babuscio writes: 'The link with gayness is established when the camp aspect of an individual or thing is identified as such by a gay sensibility.'¹⁶ This link could probably be traced back to the first uses of the word—its wit, extravagance and humour—in and amongst the gay subcultures as lived in, and around, by the theorists themselves. Andrew Britton, however, is scathing; "'Consciousness" (which is, in itself, an unhelpful term) is not determined by sexual orientation, nor is there a "gay sensibility".'¹⁷

For Daniel Harris, diva-worship of the stars of yesteryear was a starting and rallying point for Camp, as well as for creating homosexual community.¹⁸ The homosexual could use common knowledge of Hollywood films and divas in conversation to 'out' future sexual partners without openly exposing them, while drawing on the star's wit to brighten the conversation: 'As exemplified by that time-

honoured expression "a friend of Dorothy", a particular taste in film provided a useful come-on for cautious gay men, who could reveal themselves to others without risking exposure, since only the fellow insider would recognize the allusion.'¹⁹ That this 'gay sensibility' was always implicitly the gay *male* sensibility, owned and used exclusively by gay men, was less visible. This lack was pointed out by feminist theorists who entered the field, such as Sue-Ellen Case, and hence theorising has continued, with that inherent bias of Camp now explicit.²⁰ Addressing bias incurs disagreement: should we attempt to write women into this 'sensibility', as Case has done; or insist upon its exclusive access for men (and then upon its death in that particular form), as Harris has?²¹

Camp has been written about as, intrinsically, a resistant strategy of the gay man. 'Those of us who are sufficiently sensitive to criticism of ourselves may develop a commensurate ability to isolate, dissect, and bring into vivid focus the destructiveness and hypocrisy of others.'²² The homosexual has been pathologised, rejected and labelled a pervert throughout history. The Camp has been seen to be one way of responding to the deep-rooted homophobia of our culture. The Camp way is to laugh in response to the potential difficulty and hurt in a situation, as a refusal to cry. The Camp person, act or sensibility is actively resisting stereotypes, bias and the marginality of homosexuality—using the resources of Camp: 'Camp humour is a system of laughing at one's incongruous position instead of crying. That is, the humour does not cover up, it transforms.'²³ This very transformation is the radical potential of Camp, which draws its converts to it like moths to the Camp fire.

Although 'Camp' is potentially transformative—in using humour, theatricality and irony or parody in resistant and subversive ways—as a 'gay sensibility', it has been exclusively the prerogative of the gay *man*. This entirely writes woman out of its sphere of influence, or usage, and by implication, its transformational process—except in the realm of female impersonation.

DRAGGING IT OUT

I decided that if I was going to be labelled a queen, I would be the biggest, best queen there was.²⁴

And that biggest, best queen was the ‘Drag Queen’, first described in her incarnation as a female impersonator by Esther Newton.²⁵ In fact, Roger Baker speaks about this Queen’s role at length, linking the ‘Drag’ of the Queen to Camp explicitly: ‘When it did appear it was parodic, self-mocking—absolutely nothing to do with real women—and I began to understand it as a part of that vocabulary which criticises the mundane and everyday by transforming them into a glamorous, satirical frivolity; a process generally identified by the term “camp”.’²⁶ The Drag Queen’s use of theatricality, humour and parody in the ‘anarchic fun’²⁷ of her performance is indeed completely consistent with the basic premises of the performance of Camp. The ‘queen’ as the effeminate, not-quite-man stereotype of the gay man had been taken in the Camp stride, and made more so... more amusing, more feminine, more a part of the gay male subculture, and further apart from the masculine norm—a ‘Drag Queen’. The subversive act of this Queen was Camp indeed, taking stereotypes of normalised culture and making them a celebratory and entertaining part of the marginalised. But she also challenges the notion of the ‘gender invert’—as the pathologising rhetoric of psychoanalytic theory named the homosexual—as not only homosexual but also as sexual deviant, through the very excessive nature of her performances of femininity. In fact, ‘The double stance toward role, putting on a show while indicating distance (showing that it is a show) is the heart of drag as camp.’²⁸

The Drag Queen imitates the feminine, but is not female. She puts on her femininity, and can discard it just as readily. In fact, Newton reports that many of the campier acts of her ‘Female Impersonators’ involved ineffective or transparent performances of femininity—the performer taking off his wig to reveal the man beneath, or making reference to his Adam’s apple or the tell-tale bulge at his groin.²⁹ And in these performances of femininity, the Drag Queen implicates all femininity. For if the appearance of femaleness is so easily created, and then set aside, by the man who performs as Drag Queen, then all femininity can be implicated in his performance. Femininity is exposed for the masquerade that it is, through the use of female artifice in the construction of the Drag Queen and her performance.

‘By focussing on the outward appearance of role, drag implies that sex role and, by extension, role in general is something superficial, which can be manipulated, put on and off again at will.’³⁰ It is from

this premise, as stated by Newton, that Judith Butler’s ideas of the performativity of gender first took flight. As Butler states: ‘gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original,’³¹ and she uses the artifice of the gendered role, as exemplified in the work of the Drag Queen, to expand her argument further. Butler’s idea revolves around the repetition of gendered performances as both constituting and exposing the performativity of gender in the quotidian. For Butler, ‘The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction.’³² Through this failure of repetition, the regulatory fiction that is gender breaks apart, aided by the performative fiction of Drag.³³

The difficulty of the widespread use of the word ‘Drag’ in contexts such as this is similar to that of Camp: the gay male is always central to the theoretical discussions around it. The general use of the word ‘Drag’ has been conflated to the term ‘Drag Queen’, always implying the man who impersonates woman, by taking on an artificial performance of femininity. This makes Drag implicitly a male homosexual construction, just as in the case of Camp. Even the titles of contemporary books, such as: *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts*, create and reinforce this artificial equivalency between the term ‘Drag’ and the ‘Drag Queen’.³⁴ There is an outwardly inclusive spirit to Drag—in the words of arguably one of the most famous Drag Queen performers of our time, RuPaul: ‘I always say “we’re born naked and the rest is drag”. Any performer who puts on an outfit to project an image is in drag. Everything you put on is to fit a preconceived notion of how you wanna be seen. It’s all drag.’³⁵ The kinds of equivalencies that have been set up around the performance of Drag as the performance of the Drag Queen have set up their own exclusions. Women whose feminine masquerade is the premise of the successful Drag Queen are written out of this powerful subversive practice in order for the gay man to claim it as his own.

CAMP FATALITIES

The grain of sand, our oppression, that irritated the gay imagination to produce the pearl of camp, has been rinsed

away, and with it, there has been a profound dilution of the once concentrated gay sensibility...³⁶

Some have claimed the death of Camp—of that humorous, theatrical, parodic, and inherently subversive sensibility. Two of the most strident are Caryl Flinn, in her ‘The deaths of camp’, and Harris’ ‘The death of camp: Gay men and Hollywood diva worship, from reverence to ridicule’.³⁷ These supposed epitaphs have been written for Camp based upon the supposed death of the resistant or subversive spirit upon which its success rests. Civil rights agendas, stemming from the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, have worked to allay significantly levels of stigma attached to homosexuality and latent homophobia in society. Flinn and Harris thus claim this has concomitantly de-problematized the outing of the homosexual, making it no longer necessary to have Camp up the homosexual’s sleeve: ‘Oppression and camp are inextricably linked, and the waning of one necessitates the death of the other.’³⁸ If we have successfully eradicated the necessity for the homosexual to resist oppression, we have potentially simultaneously removed the need for Camp’s work.

The premise of Butler’s notions of the performativity of gender has been said to be a key element of this supposed death of Camp. In the words of Andy Medhurst; ‘if we conclude that *all* gender is play and performance, then camp, which has long held that conclusion as its cherished secret weapon, no longer has any unique contribution to make.’³⁹ Statements such as these conflate the subversion of gender categories to the workings of Camp, and oust any possibility of Camp being present in other places. Perhaps this quote would be more accurate were the word ‘Drag’ substituted for the word ‘camp’? And perhaps this referent is in fact the Drag Queen. The Drag Queen is everywhere, and often appropriated for heterosexual use, for mass culture appeal. If the Drag Queen performer has her act used to promote a direct dialling service, or makes an appearance on Channel Ten’s very successful reality television series, ‘Big Brother’, one must ask how subversive she can possibly be. The notion of the family-friendly Drag Queen at the point of its origin would have seemed a contradiction in terms, but this has changed such that Senelick felt it appropriate to state: ‘This neutralisation of male-to-female drag was, however, what enabled its ubiquity.’⁴⁰

And so it is that the notion of the subversive Camp is said to be put to death. Which may well be a just commentary, if one is prepared to simultaneously conflate Camp and the work of the Drag Queen. For the gay man, perhaps enough of his stigma has been erased to simultaneously erase his need for resistant discourses such as Camp. Whether this is the case for the lesbian is another source of discussion altogether. As Halberstam asserts: ‘because the business of survival as a butch woman is often predicated on one’s ability to pass as male in certain situations, camp has been a luxury that the passing butch cannot afford.’⁴¹ Perhaps the civil rights movement has not entirely erased the difficulty of positioning the lesbian—positioned as she is in a doubly oppressive situation, both as gay and as woman.

PERFORMING THE NON-PERFORMATIVE: ‘KINGING’ AND MASCULINITY’S NEUTRAL

the truth is that as long as we have known the phrase ‘drag queen’, the drag king has been a concept waiting to happen.⁴²

The appearance of books such as *The Drag King Book*, *The Drag King Anthology*, and films such as *Venus Boyz*⁴³ would seem to confirm this statement. Drag Kings are not just being theorised, they perform every Wednesday or Friday night,⁴⁴ they star in music videos.⁴⁵

While there have been attempts to write women into the discourses of Camp and Drag—positing the necessity of including (gay) women in this discourse, and giving them access to their resistive strategy—they have not generally used the Drag King as a focal point. Sue-Ellen Case’s *Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic* is a case in point; hers was probably the first clear effort to write lesbians into the history of Camp.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, most of these attempts have been as unsuccessful as Case’s. In her use of the Butch-Femme couple as unitary, yet simultaneously individual subjects, she fails to account for one key aspect of Camp—its humour. The constructions of the Butch-Femme couple are not humorous for them, or for anyone else for that matter, and yet it is the presence of humour that makes up a key precept of Camp’s workings.

One of the key elements of this failure is the very different functions that embodied femininity and masculinity are given in our

society. While femininity is revealed as constructed and performative through the Drag Queen's act, the masculine is not. The feminine 'otherness' is always Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* to a universalised masculine neutral.⁴⁷ As Judith Halberstam argues: 'It is difficult to make masculinity the target of camp precisely because, as we have noted, masculinity tends to manifest as non-performative.'⁴⁸ It is the very unquestioned nature of this neutrality of the masculine that allows its bias to go without remark.

If we then insist upon masculinity as masquerade, in a similar vein to the already established feminine masquerade, we open the hitherto undiscussed neutrality of masculinity up for parody, and for questioning. This is where the role of the Drag King comes in. In the repetition and mimicry of his performance, the Drag King confers the radical potential of Camp and Drag upon the masculine, exposing it as Butler's 'regulatory fiction'.⁴⁹

Halberstam is plagued by the history of the terms 'Camp' and 'Drag', and their explicitly gay *male* origins, which would implicitly exclude the Drag King from participation in this history, since he is woman performing man.⁵⁰ To resolve the difficulty that she finds there, Halberstam puts forward the term 'Kinging' for the performance of the Drag King. In this new term, she intends to write out the male history of Drag and distinguish it from the usual interpretation of 'Drag'—the Drag Queen. In her words: 'I want to propose the term "kinging" for drag humour associated with masculinity... because I think that a new term is the only way to avoid always collapsing lesbian history and social practice associated with drag into gay male histories and practices.'⁵¹

'THE QUEEN IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE KING'⁵²

Once drag queens had become Disneyfied and safe, drag kings... seem to have emerged as another dangerous alternative.⁵³

As Halberstam has argued, danger for masculine women lay in the deliberate decision not to pass, since the fact of 'passing' as male for many butch women was a large part of their successful survival in the everyday. A successful Drag King act revolves around the exposure of

the woman-performing-man's constructed masculinity, in the reverse of the formerly subversive method of the Drag Queen. And this is particularly difficult, for the insistence upon the non-performativity of masculinity, and its naturalness as it is inscribed upon the male body, is the premise for the success of the continuing dominance of the invisible masculine neutral. In this way, even the existence of the butch lesbian is evidence of the artificiality of this construct, since: 'within butch realness, masculinity is neither assimilated into maleness nor opposed to it; rather it involves an active disidentification with dominant forms of masculinity, which are subsequently recycled into alternative masculinities.'⁵⁴ The mere existence of masculinities, as described by female bodies, is a subversive and resistant action.

Drag King's resistant performance may be a response to the call to represent masculinities in this way. His performance is becoming more available and current, while being still very firmly embedded in its subcultural roots. Although the possibility of the Drag King was around at the conception of the Drag Queen, if Halberstam is to be believed, this specific type of performance has only received note of late. Theorising around Drag Kinging is the latest in a continuous effort around theorising Camp and Drag, particularly in addressing the necessity of writing women into this discourse. The Drag King makes the masculine neutral visible through his performance. And: 'While femme hyperbole plays on the outrageous artificiality already embedded in social constructions of femininity, masculine hyperbole imitates itself.'⁵⁵ But not only this, he parodies masculinity, he theatricalises it, he isolates the humour in it—he fails to take masculinity seriously. When dominant paradigms require masculinity to be non-performative, to be taken seriously, 'because men try not to exaggerate the external symbolic supports that make them men, trying to make their social and political power seem entirely a result of their "natural" power'⁵⁶, this failure of seriousness seems to me a transgressive act.

Not only does the Drag King fail to take the portrayal of masculinity seriously, his humour creates other kinds of dialogue involving humour. This intrinsic sense of humour, and indeed of theatricality, not only explodes ongoing stereotypes of the humourless lesbian / feminist, but it also resists the invisibility of many lesbian subjects—which many theorists, such as Sarah Murray, have discussed.⁵⁷ This invisibility has been a fact that has plagued the lesbian subject, in her

inability to effectively access power and voice; but it has also implicitly shielded her from some of the worst excesses of homophobia and sexism. This form of resistant speech is new and potentially powerful for the female subject to have access to, in a feminist tradition.

It seems to me that the performance of the Drag King has both become an important site of discourse and, implicitly, a continuation of the original Camp sensibility. And why not Camp? It seems only logical: Drag Kinging contains the same elements of theatricality, humour and irony / parody which have been said to run through Camp in its every other incarnation. Drag Kinging contains the same subversive and resistant spirit that got Camp going all those years ago. The nature of Camp—its being a ‘sensibility’—implies fluidity, implies alteration. And to say that Drag Kings (en)act a performance which is very different from the first manifestations of Camp seems to be perfectly consistent with this ‘sensibility’ that is Camp. In the face of the vaunted ‘death’ of Camp, I say the Drag King is the heart transplant that keeps it going, regardless.

I believe that to write out the Drag in the ‘Drag King’ is to attempt to write out that same tradition of resistant performance, which can only impoverish what the Drag King has to say. He has the right, despite all likely difficulty, to write in his voice, his form of gender parody, his theatricality and humour. To take away the ‘Drag’ in the King would be to remove that potential, and deny a part of his possibility.

KING IT BACK TO ME

It seems to me, at this point, that the very excessiveness specific to the performance of Camp, of Drag, as constituted in the act of the Drag King, is a new kind of performative for the female body. The work of the Drag King allows a different kind of work to be done in this performance—different from the work done by the Drag Queen, different from other kinds of theatre enacted by women.⁵⁸ The Drag King’s Camp act allows a form of performative ‘violence’, or an ‘in your face’-ness to take place, which is a highly subversive and resistant way of framing the performance of the female body, and one that I firmly believe to be clearly unique to the site of the Drag King performance.

In the words of the Drag King who started my thinking along this route:

We make desire public property. This is our revolutionary work: we put our bodies on the line to enact queer and trans visibility and to forge new social spaces and relations in a rigid, role-bound society... Drag kinging produces new erotics, new genders, and new forms and modes of power.⁵⁹

Camp is played out on the body through the Drag King’s revitalised Camp, as the frivolous seriousness or the serious frivolousness of his work engages in ‘Dark play’. This form of play is destructive, disturbing and disruptive, with potentially risky consequences⁶⁰. As Schechner claims: ‘Dark play subverts order, dissolves frames, and breaks its own rules—so much so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed... dark play is truly subversive, its agendas always hidden.’⁶¹

Play of the Camp kind has its own perils / dangers, for the excessiveness and flamboyance of Camp ‘forces the issue’, so to speak, of the gender transgression taking place in the performance of the Drag King, removing the shield of invisibility that the lesbian subject has been able to use as self-protection. As Butler has observed: ‘We regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right.’⁶² Many have, all too rightly, feared this punishment too greatly to perform alternatives to gendered norms. But the Drag King—a female body who performs a Camp masculinity—does not ‘do’ his gender ‘right’: his gendered presentation is in fact intentionally incoherent and problematic. The Drag King does not attempt to ‘pass’ as male, Halberstam’s dangerous luxury to those presenting as Butch.⁶³ Instead, he is deliberately visible in his Camp gendered performance; he ‘Camps’ it up for all to see.

The ‘charge’ of the Drag King’s performance with which I began—an always implicitly erotic / eroticised charge—stems from negotiations of this risk or danger occurring with desire, at the boundaries of bodies. The Drag King’s performances crucially occur on the margins, through the marginalisation in society of the incoherently gendered body, which simultaneously pushes conceptions of gendered possibility to its limits.

The coming performances of the Drag King can only have more to seduce us, his audience—who constitute a crucial, intertwined, productive and occasionally buffering part of his performance—with more questions, more challenges, more interpretations and, of course, more erotically charged acts. I tremble with breathless, delicious anticipation. ❖

ENDNOTES

- 1 K Bradford, 'Grease cowboy fever: Or, the making of Johnny T', in Donna Troka, Kathleen LeBesco and Jean Noble (eds), *The Drag King Anthology*, Binghamton, Harrington Park Press, 2002, 15–30.
- 2 Bradford, 15–30.
- 3 Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press, London, 1998.
- 4 For examples of 'Butch' examinations, see: Sue-Ellen Case, 'Toward a butch-femme aesthetic', in Fabian Cleto (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1997, 185–99; Ann M Ciasullo, 'Making her (in)visible: Cultural representations of lesbianism and the lesbian body in the 1990s', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2001, 577–608; Melinda Kanner, 'Toward a semiotics of butch', *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2002, 27–29; Robin Maltz, 'Real butch: The performance / performativity of male impersonation, drag kings, passing as male, and stone butch realness', *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1998, 273–86.
- 5 See Gabriel Baur (dir.), *Venus Boyz*, New York, 2003; R Best, 'Drag kings: chicks with dicks', *Canadian Woman Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1996, 58–9; Judith Halberstam, 'Drag kings: masculinity and performance', *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press, London, 1998, 231–66; Judith Halberstam and Del LaGrace Volcano, *The Drag King Book*, Serpent's Tail, London, 1999; Maltz, 273–86; Sarah E Murray, 'Dragon ladies, draggin' men: Some reflections on gender, drag and homosexual communities', *Public Culture*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1994, 343–63; Troka et al. (eds).
- 6 A section of discussion around Camp revolves around the question of little 'c' camp versus big 'C' Camp, and their distinctions as with 'Naive Camp' vs. 'Intentional Camp'; 'gay Camp' vs. 'Pop camp'. This is not a particularly useful strain for my argument but, if interested, see, for example: M Meyer, 'Introduction: reclaiming the discourse of camp', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, Routledge, London, 1994, 1–22; Chuck Kleinhans, 'Taking out the trash: camp and the politics of parody', in Meyer (ed.), 182–201. As is apparent, I have decided to err on the big 'C', Camp side of the debate.
- 7 Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "camp"', in F Cleto (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1997, 62.
- 8 Sontag, 62.
- 9 Jack Babuscio, 'The cinema of camp (Aka camp and the gay sensibility)', in Cleto (ed.), 117–35.
- 10 Jonathan Dollimore, 'Post/Modern: On the gay sensibility, or the pervert's revenge on authenticity', in Cleto (ed.), 221–36.
- 11 Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- 12 Newton, 56.
- 13 In Newton's instances, 'the Camp' is always explicitly male, as a distinct part of a gay male subculture.
- 14 She attempts an appropriate response through transforming her essay into a series of notes.
- 15 Babuscio; Cynthia Morrill, 'Revamping the gay sensibility', in Meyer (ed.), 110–29.
- 16 Babuscio, 119.
- 17 Andrew Britton, 'For interpretation: Notes against camp', in Cleto (ed.), 139. Note: ironically, though he writes against it, the very title and semblance of his writing mimic Sontag's 'Notes on camp' in what seems to me a highly Camp way.
- 18 Daniel Harris, 'The death of camp: Gay men and Hollywood diva worship, from reverence to ridicule', in *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*, Ballantine, New York, 1997, 8–39.
- 19 Harris, 20.
- 20 Case, 185–99.
- 21 Case, 185–99; Harris, 8–39.
- 22 Babuscio, 126.
- 23 Esther Newton, 'Role models', in Cleto (ed.), 106.
- 24 Thompson, as quoted in Annabelle Willox, 'Whose drag is it anyway?: Drag kings and monarchy in the UK', in Troka et al. (eds), 263–84.
- 25 Newton, *Mother Camp*; and, for example, Roger Baker, *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts*, Cassell, London, 1994; or the film, Jennie Livingston, *Paris Is Burning*, Lions Gate Home Entertainment, New York, 1990.
- 26 Baker, 2.
- 27 From Baker.
- 28 Newton, 'Role models', 105.
- 29 Newton, *Mother Camp*.
- 30 Newton, 'Role models', 105.
- 31 Judith Butler, 'Imitation and gender insubordination', in Henry Abelove, Michele Barale and David Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, 1993, 307–20.
- 32 Judith Butler, 'From interiority to gender performatives', in Cleto (ed.), 361–8.
- 33 There have been many difficulties in her use of Drag to illustrate this point—these are addressed in a later book; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Routledge, New York, 1993.
- 34 Baker.
- 35 Baker, 258.
- 36 Harris, 34.
- 37 Caryl Flinn, 'The deaths of camp', in Cleto (ed.), 433–57; Harris, 8–39.
- 38 Harris, 34.
- 39 Andy Medhurst, 'Camp', in Andy Medhurst and Sally R Munt (eds), *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, Cassell, London, 1997, 274–93.
- 40 Lauren Senelick, 'Afterword: From dressing up to dressing down', *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*, Routledge, London, 2000, 501–11.
- 41 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 234.
- 42 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 233.
- 43 Halberstam and Volcano; Troka et al. (eds); Baur.
- 44 For example, at the former Kingki Kingdom, Sly Fox, Enmore, NSW; or, King Vic, The GlassHouse, Collingwood, Vic.
- 45 New York Drag King Murray Hill appears in Scissor Sisters, 'Filthy Gorgeous', 2004. And Sydney native D'Vinyl stars in a music video clip 'Feels So Good' directed by Max Burke.
- 46 Case, 185–99.
- 47 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1953.

- 48 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
49 Butler, 'Imitation and gender insubordination', 307–20.
50 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
51 Halberstam, 238.
52 Willox, 263–84.
53 Lauren Senelick, 'A gender of their own', in *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*, 492.
54 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 248.
55 Halberstam, 259.
56 Murray, 355.
57 Murray, 343–63.
58 For example, see Davy's engagement with the specifics of one lesbian theatre (WOW) and its efforts at representation. Kate Davy, 'Fe/Male impersonation: The discourse of camp', in Meyer (ed.), 130–48.
59 Bradford, 28–9.
60 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2002.
61 Schechner, 107.
62 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 180.
63 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.