

The following is an adapted transcript of a performance by a self-described 'upright standing, forward-facing male humanoid' called Mister Hans¹, whose biography is surprisingly similar to my own. The performance took place on September 22nd, 2007 as part of the panel "Critical Perspectives on Conceptions of Queer Theory and Politics" in the Queer Leben conference, part of the Queer Feministische Tage in Berlin. As a performance, there were some aspects which the team responsible for this publication pointed out didn't make sense in this new context, and as such the text has required some revision. These revisions have been undertaken with the help of the Publication Team (whose comments appear underlined) and myself, and appear as footnotes. Wherever possible, criticism received on the day has also been incorporated into this new version, as have some examples which took place after the presentation.

One of the hopes expressed by the Queer Leben conference organisers was to "create a space for the practice of and the reflection on realities of queer life/lives."² The reality of my life is that it mostly happens in Berlin, and regularly in the queer scene, where I am best known for my performance art. I view my own identity as 'queer' in terms of it being a process that I consciously engage with, and one which is constantly unfolding.

When I began writing this paper I was feeling very disillusioned with the way the word 'queer' was being represented in Berlin's subculture, and what I saw as an aggressive conservatism arising. In the course of writing I was able to meet many new people within or on the fringes of Berlin's queer scene, many of whom felt similarly alienated, offended or in some cases outraged by the things done in the name of 'queer'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people for being so open in talking to me about their concerns.

I hoped to draw attention to the ways some groups that have claimed the word 'queer' perpetuate the systems of power which, at least as I understand it, Queer Theory ought to challenge. Since this is a large part of what I often find problematic with these approaches, I wanted not just to create a list of things that I was against, but to offer some tangible suggestions for ways in which queering could be applied to create a radical shift in habitual ideologies within the queer scene itself.

It is worth mentioning upfront that I am not an academic, so if you are looking for a purely academic text you might want to flick forward a few pages. There also seems to have been some confusion as to whether this paper is intended to be a manifesto³. It isn't.

Hans
Berlin, December 2007

1 It is also worth noting that on the day, Mister Hans' skin colour appeared to be pinkish, by which we might well decide that he is 'white'. Mister Hans didn't reveal anything about his sexual orientation at the conference, therefore we cannot assume that he is not straight. Mister Hans also did not mention his social situation, for all intents and purposes he may be rolling in cash. There is every chance that Mister Hans is part of the hegemony, and not to be trusted.

2 <http://www.queerleben.de/indexenglish.html>

3 If, after reading the entire thing, you have any questions about my intentions, I would recommend reading Mieke Bal's chapter on intention in her book *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (2002)

I Didn't Even Use the Word 'Queer' in this Title.

*****/*****^{4 5} reads:

10 Jahre für das Dagegensein!
Was mit Schlamm begann, geht mit Wut weiter.
Und wir sind richtig wütend! Denn es gibt uns seit 10 Jahren – toll!
Doch es ist zum kotzen, dass es uns immer noch geben muss.
Wir wollen keinen Transgenialen CSD mehr!
Aber solange es Diskriminierung, Profitgier, globalisierte Zwangsausbeutung,
vorgeschiedene Zweigeschlechtlichkeit, Armut und all die andere Scheisse gibt, und
nichtsdestotrotz lustige Spass-Leistungs-Paraden durch die Stadt ziehen, geben wir keine
Ruhe!
Wir haben keinen Bock auf Gleichschaltung und hüpfen in keine Mainstream-Schubladen,
um endlich in der Mitte angekommen zu sein.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf Nazis, in Parlamenten, Darkrooms und Köpfen.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf G.walt, G.winnsucht, G.schlechtsdiktate und G8.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf Gesetze, die uns vorgeben, wie wir aussehen, auftreten und
heißen sollen, um akzeptiert zu werden.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf Grenzen, Kriege und Abschiebungslager, denn Menschen
sollen fliehen können, wohin sie wollen.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf Parteien, uns könnt ihr nicht ausnutzen!
Wir haben keinen Bock auf eine sexistisch organisierte homo- und transphobe
Gesellschaft, deren Grusel-Gurus ihren Gott dazu benutzen, Gewalt gegen uns zu predigen.
Wir haben keinen Bock auf die Diskriminierung von Migrant_Innen und auf die
Diskriminierung von Menschen unterschiedlicher Hautfarben, Lebensweisen oder
körperlicher Eigenschaften, auch nicht in der Szene!
Wir wollen kein Stück vom Kuchen, wir wollen ein anderes Rezept!
Und bezahlt wird immer noch nicht.
Tragt die Wut mit uns auf die Straße. Lasst uns lieben, lachen, kämpfen für queere
Solidarität auf dem Transgenialen CSD und überhaupt!

Mister Hans reads:

The manifesto I just read could be found this year on the official website of the Transgenialer CSD⁶ – the alternative Christopher Street Day parade as it is sometimes known. As a declaration of political intention it is pretty clear, but to roughly summarise for the non-German speakers: under the banner “10 years of being opposed”, 'we' are unimpressed by and against many things, amongst which we find such diverse enemies as international borders, greed, discrimination against people with various skin colours, lifestyles or physical attributes, the G8, political parties in general, national socialists in particular and mainstream pigeonholes. At the end they urge us, the reader, to join them in “...loving, laughing and fighting together for queer solidarity...⁷”.

This is but one of many instances this year that I found myself confronted by some aspect of Berlin's queer scene and thinking

4 [...prefacing the Transgenialer CSD Text with '*****/*****'\(or almost any other text, for that matter\) is not ok for us](#)

5 The stage direction for this section included the names of two people which I am not allowed to tell you. This omission is denoted here by the use of asterisks.

6 <http://www.transgenialercsd.de/seite1.htm>

7 Translation by the author

“Who said anything about queer being a bunch of rules and political dogma?”

In this paper I will be reflecting on my personal take on the application of Queer Theory⁸ to cultural and social space, and addressing my concerns with the current queer scene in Berlin - both as someone who saw themselves as being a part of it, and as a performance artist working within it.

I say 'as someone who *saw* themselves as being part of it' because these days I feel more ostracised by the social codes of queer spaces than I do by those of non-queer spaces⁹. In a movement to which I initially felt I had a lot to offer, I feel less and less like there is space for me, which seems ironic to the point of being tragic¹⁰

My main interest in Queer Theory lies in relating it to my artistic work – regardless of the media I have worked in, my intention has always been social transformation, to which end 'queering' has become an invaluable tool. In terms of my appreciation, queering shares aspects with carnivalesque, parody, kabarett, punk, dialogical and relational art¹¹, as well as having its own unique applications and dynamics. From my own experiences, I have found that 'queer' functions as a verb much more readily than it does as a noun or an adjective – I am thus in favour of 'queering' versus 'identifying (something) as queer'.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, my name is Mister Hans, and it is my humble belief that 'queer' as a word and a concept has become so fashionable that it has wound up being misrepresented by certain groups here in Berlin¹².

The word 'queer' is, like myself, a relative newcomer to Berlin, but it has quickly become a socio-political banner that people rush to to gather with like-minded others – people who are going to change the dominant systems of exclusion through transgressive acts and radical politics. However, a quick look at some of Berlin's key queer events reveals some very fixed codes of behaviour, action and expression, and certain identities which are explicitly excluded from dialogues with the queer scene. I see this setup – the form, if not the content – as being a direct mirroring of the power structures of heteronormative society. I suggest calling such events 'queer' is not just inaccurate but also hypocritical, since a central concern of Queer Theory is the examination of dominant power structures with the aim of rearticulating and revolutionising them, not validating and strengthening them.

When Judith Butler began to theorise the social construction of gender, she had been motivated in part by a concern that the feminist movement was neglecting the side-effects of its own agendas

8 Please see the reading list at the end of this paper for a list of publications which have inspired or informed this.

9 It has been suggested to me since this paper was presented that my privileged position as a white biological male may be a large part of why I find the codes and ethics of many queer events in Berlin so problematic. This may well be the case since, as someone pointed out in personal communication recently „...how exactly do we arrive at thinking that none of us have the potential to be sexist, racist, classist, prejudiced against handicapped people, or much more. As if we we grew up on the moon without manipulation or tyranny“. For the record, so far in my life my 'position of white male privilege' has seen me, like most others, be forced to constantly contort my identity in order to remain in society, have my thoughts judged based on their academic value by people who don't seem to recognise the oppressiveness inherent in academia, be beaten up in public for what I am wearing, be disowned by my family, be dealt with with scorn by the police after being raped and asked „what did you do to encourage him?“, be forced into gender stereotypes based on my biological sex and much more over the years. Quite how powerful my privileged position *is* is sometimes unclear to me, though it evidently seems perfectly clear to others.

10 It is perhaps worth noting that this paper was performed just hours before Mister Hans was singled out onstage during a performance at the Lange Nacht der Gender Studies (also part of the Queer Feministische Tage) and identified to the hundreds gathered to watch the show as a sexual attacker. The allegation has, at the time of writing, not since been addressed in a public forum. Many people present on the night who had seen the performance of this paper that afternoon assumed that the whole thing might have an orchestrated artwork to highlight the themes presented in this text. Officially, and sadly, it wasn't.

11 Again, please see the reading list for references.

12 There is at least one example of irony in this sentence. Please find one and circle it in pink.

when it claimed to work in the best interests of all women. Her intention in writing *Gender Trouble* as she summarises in the introduction to the 1999 edition was to open out the possibilities for gender, without dictating what those possibilities might be¹³. It was a call to enrich our perceptions of gendered life, to scrutinise the systems of power and, above all, to expand or possibly even dismantle the parameters by which sexual and gendered identities are judged as valid or invalid, real or unreal.

Butler's theories constituted a breakthrough for many groups traditionally perceived, both from within and without, as marginalised. Almost a year after the publication of *Gender Trouble*, Teresa de Lauretis coined the term 'Queer Theory', and a radical shift in identity politics was thrust upon academia worldwide. Queer Theory does not present an argument for tolerance, inclusiveness or even acceptance, it outright denies the notion that gender and sexual normalcy exist. It follows that locating identities 'on the margins of' or 'as an alternative to' a heteronormative model becomes superfluous when viewed from a queer perspective. Without such categories, there can be no 'norm', and inclusiveness thus becomes a moot point.

'Queer Theory' as it appears in the everyday lives of most people is a lot less complicated. The basic ideas that kick-started Queer Theory as a field of academic inquiry were not necessarily anything new for a lot of people – though it is has been new for academics to analyse them. 'I am what I am, and I have as much right to be here as anybody else' is a sentiment which long pre-dates *Gender Trouble*, or even de Lauretis' nifty name for the academic field¹⁴.

Despite the fact that we may not have a fixed perception of ourselves, we tend to anticipate one when dealing with the Other. When we meet a new person, a social relationship is formed. Interpreting and categorising physical signifiers is arguably the primary step in forming such a relationship – but these physical signifiers of identity are only a superficial aspect, other aspects of identity are discovered later. Forming a concept someone's sexual orientation, personal politics or social status, all key players in the illusion of fixed identity, usually takes some research. Much as Foucault comments in *Discipline and Punish*¹⁵, I would like to point out that this process of trying to gather information and classify identities is not a thoroughly evil one. These attempts at classification, misguided as they may be, are also part of the search for connection – to find elements which we share with the Other. We do not always discriminate based on the presumption of difference¹⁶.

13 Page viii

14 Queer theory is much more than this statement. Particularly, it offers an idea of society/discourse that the 'I am what I am' is rather missing. And, it is arguable whether "I am what I am" is concordant with the notion of subjectivity being produced through discourse. In a way, you make me wonder, (sic) why you refer to queer theory at all, if it has nothing new to offer

True. But as I say; "Queer Theory' as it appears in the everyday lives of most people is a lot less complicated." The idea that identity is formed in relation to society is also not that new an idea for many people. The point you suggest here would be a typical consideration for academics, which most people are not. As to why I am referencing Queer Theory - when one looks at the number of places where the word 'queer' is being used in Germany (especially considering it isn't a German word) it is most certainly related to gender studies and queer theory becoming so fashionable here over the past years. I have to refer to Queer Theory if I am going to talk about the subcultural uses of the word 'queer'. As far as "I am what I am" goes, the version you suggest would require a lyric change from "I am what I am, and what I am needs no excuses" to "I am what I am, but to be fair 'I' is a performative construct which is part of an ongoing dialogue with the culture the 'I' exists in and through, and the associated ontological presuppositions which dictate how my 'I' will be received", which nobody could sing with any gusto.

15 Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, New York: Random House.

16 With this paragraph, I think, you theorise "identification/discrimination" quite differently to Butler. Whereas she would probably argue that these processes are framed in the heterosexual matrix, you basically say it just happens, as if it was a natural thing to do. At this point I am trying to draw attention to the process of ordering information about the people around us and, you are right, I am framing that as a separate process to the phenomenon of judging. While I know that the value judgements of certain categories happens almost instantaneously after this categorising process, I do see them as two distinct aspects. Looking at my godson Juri (18 months at the time of writing) learning about the world is a perfect example – he has noticed patterns in shapes to the extent that he points at his ball, the moon and clocks and calls them all 'ball'. He automatically like clocks, because he likes his ball, but that is the next step. One day he will realise a clock is not a ball, and will probably go off clocks a bit, but he will still notice that they are round.

This process naturally leads to misunderstandings as extra information arises which doesn't fit with our initial assumptions. I personally try not to get too upset if people get the wrong impression of me first off. It neither offends me nor upsets me if people think I am Danish. I am not Danish and I know that. It also neither upsets or offends me that people think I am a New Zealander, it is after all what it says in my passport. I say 'yes, I am', but really I don't mean it. I personally don't know what it means to be a New Zealander, and I *know* that I don't know. Similarly, when people ask a potentially more loaded question like 'are you gay or straight or bi or what?', what they really want to know is 'What do you identify as?', to which my honest answer is 'I don't'. I may find it strange if my answer confuses them, but at the same time I can understand their desire to categorise, because I have noticed that I have it myself. It's the way I learn new information, it's how I find my way around a tube system in a strange city, it's how I find my boyfriend in a crowd. When dealing with another person's identity though, of course I am not dealing with tidy, fixed data (note to brain: the U2 line is orange) but with a gigantic, shifting phenomenon, which the Other can at best give me hints of, but never convey in its entirety.

So it is lazy of my mind to think it understands someone or the way they think just because it recognises some of the things conveyed to me about their identity. It is silly, but it happens.

Once I realise how irritating or even painful it is when people assume they know everything about me and are thereby in a position to judge me based on superficial assumptions, it makes me want to change my own way of doing things. I can, after all, change myself much quicker than I can change somebody else simply through bringing more conscious awareness to those processes in myself and trying to understand how they work.

If I consciously observe the actions of my thoughts I am in a position to analyse and revise them. If I judge things automatically, without conscious awareness, my prejudices will kick in and I am powerless to choose.

For me, queering is in part encouraging and assisting people to identify their own processes of categorisation and discrimination, and not because I think they should then change their opinions to being something I consider 'better'. My objective is to help people get to the point where they can start to reflect, from which point the option to make choices exists, rather than simply reacting habitually. This can be achieved in many ways – the argument for drag as a useful tool in highlighting gender performativity is well known – but social interventions, dialogical or relational art and the rearticulation of familiar spaces are but a few other tools which can be utilised to create this kind of displacement of habitual thinking which can lead to conscious awareness.

At our current stage, it is worth actively striving to encourage conscious reflection. It is certainly the starting point to understanding how we have internalised societal controls, and is the first step towards acknowledging our own contributions to them. In terms of implementing this kind of shift in awareness on a broad scale, the spaces in which interpersonal bonds and identity assumptions are created *en masse*, namely the spaces of social and cultural life, are environments ripe with possibilities.

So here we are! 'Queering' in social spaces, be they cultural or subcultural. What seems to me a rich and vibrant source of opportunity, waiting to be utilised in the process of opening up and unravelling ourselves and our relationships to those around us, which (when I am feeling especially romantic) could help us understand and thereby begin to change the mechanisms of prejudice and hatred. And here we also land back home in the realities of Berlin's current queer scene.

A quick look through many of the applications of the word 'queer' in the city could leave one very

confused. The Siegessäule magazine¹⁷ up until recently bore the sub-heading 'schwullesbische Berlin', but recently changed it to 'queer in Berlin'. No significant change in its content can be observed, though one does find a column called 'Queer Studies'¹⁸ far towards the back of the publication these days. What was the cause of the magazine's shift in identification? It may well have been an attempt to keep up with the trends being set by Berlin's subculture, but a look at some of the Siegessäule's queer cousins reveals it is not all about open arms and embracing diversity.

Queer-o-matik is a leftist queer party which offers punters the opportunity to dance the night away in spaces where "...you can enjoy yourselves every two weeks away from the Siegessäule mainstream"¹⁹. Hands up anyone from the Siegessäule mainstream, please? We can't enjoy ourselves if you are here, would you mind leaving?

The Schwarzer Kanal, the infamous (and still regrettably threatened) women-lesbian-transgender wagon project squatting on the banks of the Spree ran a series of workshops in September this year under the title "Live Queer and Rebel!". The use of queer in this instance also refers to something different to the one in the 'queer in Berlin' of the Siegessäule – the primary focus of the event was to encourage people in the fight against the restructuring of the city and the eviction of non-commercial, left-wing projects²⁰. Another regular event at the Schwarzer Kanal is Queer Varieté – where reportedly anyone is allowed onto the open stage as long as their act is politically correct. The hostess of the evening, Phyllis Mephista, explains "queer doesn't mean 'gay-lesbian', but 'against the flow'. Not some two-bit culture with a shelf life to dumb people down, rather one which jolts you awake"^{21,22}.

To go into just one instance in detail, I would like to highlight a point on the manifesto of the Berlin Queer Festival²³. The Berlin Queer Festival was a three day event featuring kabarets, film showings, performance and parties which took place for the first time in April this year.

At the top of their homepage²⁴;

"THE BERLIN QUEER FESTIVAL WANTS TO CREATE A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE OPEN STAGE (sic) WHERE EVERYONE CAN EXPRESS THEMSELVES!"

and then further down;

"4. Any form of racism or sexism will be not accepted (sic)."

Which, on first impressions, seems a completely sensible statement, and one which the organisers are naturally free to make. However, queering the sentence makes things less cut-and-dry. The organisers of the Berlin Queer Festival are hereby making active assertions about which forms of expression will be considered valid in their queer space, and which will not. They say that racism

17 The most widely circulated gay, lesbian and trans-oriented magazine in Berlin at the time of publication.

18 You need to specify what this column actually does, as it is certainly not what "queer studies" usually refers to
It's not terribly important for my purposes here to talk about what the column does. That you feel it has been misused or misappropriated in the context of the Siegessäule is really the point – which application is more authentic?

19 <http://www.myspace.com/queeromatik>

20 <http://www.schwarzerkanal.squat.net>

21 http://www.yorck59.net/presse/sk_siegessaule.html, translation by the author

22 Clearly, people who identify as gay or lesbian must be going with the flow. To be fair they can't have much choice in the matter, being naturally as dumbed-down as they are by the sadly lacking cultural lives they have in their spare time. I would imagine they must be too exhausted to even think about the political implications of their television viewing while they train forkfuls of microwaved meals into their exhausted little mouths after a hard day repressing everybody in the world and laughing like maniacs about it. Pink pen moment #2.

23 The point on this particular manifesto is certainly not unique – statements like this one can be found in a lot of queer spaces in Berlin. I have just opted for one specific example here.

24 <http://www.berlinqueerfestival.net/index2.html>

and sexism *in any form* will not be accepted. There is no attempt to define what they mean by racism or sexism, meaning we are left to guess (behaviour? conversation? thought?) and avoid it. We also are left to guess at what is meant by 'being accepted' – does it mean racism and sexism can happen at the event, but the organisers won't agree with it? Won't support it? Won't permit it? The rule is simultaneously strict and imprecise.

Everyone visiting the festival is going to have a different take on what constitutes sexism, and what constitutes racism – so who gets to play judge on the day? How will justice be dealt out? Will there be a hearing?

Left without any better information, guests have to assume that the best way to avoid problems is to err on the side of safety and try not to offend anybody at all. In this case 'queer' is interchangeable with 'politically correct', whereas - at least from a theoretical perspective - these are two separate issues. That is not to say political correctness is not valid or important, it is just not automatically the same thing as queer²⁵.

What is created by writing up queer charters of the kind I highlight here is a sort of anti-heteronormativity, perpetuating the notion that a (sub)cultural 'norm' exists, should be agreed with, and must be enforced. It also implies that queerness is invariably tied to these political philosophies – at which point I also begin to be excluded, since I can't understand the Queer Festival Berlin's manifesto. Is it that I am too dumb to be queer? Apparently nobody else coming to the Berlin Queer Festival requires further information, have I missed something? Am I supposed to have assumed something?

Let's say a fully-costumed, braces-and-white-laces skinhead came to the Berlin Queer Festival. What will happen if someone present decides that the wearing of the clothing in itself constitutes racism? That it fetishises neoNazis? That they are offended by it? How will this conflict over the 'expression of self' be dealt with by the organisers of the event? They do say after all in their manifesto that *everyone* is encouraged to express themselves the safe and comfortable space they offer.²⁶

From a deconstructionalist perspective - if someone were to show up at the Berlin Queer Festival with a T-shirt that read 'Women Are Stupid', where the notion of 'Women' is a socially constructed myth - what difference would it make?²⁷

If someone happened to point out that drag (a staple of Berlin's queer scene) is considered deeply sexist by some people, would all of those in drag be asked to change into something more appropriate? Would it be treated differently if a woman complained about a drag queen? A man about a drag king? Why?

25 After the presentation, a question was raised about the importance of safe spaces within the queer scene, and Mister Hans' response was similar – that while he did not want to downplay the importance of having safe spaces, a safe space and a queer space are not necessarily always going to be the same thing. I think it is also important to consider *who* the space is safe for.

26 An interesting thing happened the other night at Queer-o-matic (12.12.07) which illustrates this conundrum pretty well. My friend Dan, a New Zealand artist who was visiting the city, brought along a 'female' blow-up doll dressed as a 'man' who was insisting people address him as 'Hank'. Before we left the house I had suggested that he might have problems at the venue, since they were pretty conservative in their approaches. Initially I was thinking that they would probably have a problem with the presence of a sexualised object in the space at all, recontextualised as it may have been. Dan was eventually thrown out of the venue, ironically not because of the reason I thought of, but because the doll was black. That aspect hadn't even occurred to us prior to someone (a white woman, if we're playing that game) screaming it at us „He's *black*, and you are white men“. The fact that Dan is part Maori, and that calling him a white man was fairly uninformed, incorrect and arguably racist was evidently not a problem.

27 I think I could safely guess now, after my experiences since this paper was presented, that anyone wearing a 'women are stupid' t-shirt probably would be asked to change their clothes or leave a lot of the events I mention in this text. There seems to be almost no room for satire, irony or genuine parody in the current scene which I think is a shame since, in terms of highlighting power structures, they are three of the best tools I have found.

Queering this situation does not provide answers to these questions, it raises them.

The point I think is being missed is that setting up 'queer' happenings which define themselves through discriminatory and fixed rules is unlikely to 'queer' anything at all. Actively exposing systems of exclusion and discrimination – prompting critical observation and, if need be, revision of the way in which all of us (yes, even those who identify as 'queer') engage in judging perceived identities as 'good' and 'bad', 'healthy' and 'unhealthy', 'valid' and 'invalid' is central to a queer approach²⁸.

At the moment, the use of 'queer' is resulting in a lot of contradictory situations, many of which simply encourage further divisions and prejudices. I am particularly cautious of the prevalent moral-high ground disdain for some fictional gay mainstream, which is turning into a kind of prejudice in itself. Why are people so keen to treat the word 'queer' like it is a cult religion which you have to be pure enough to belong to? Why do they insist on talking about 'queer solidarity'? Surely 'queer solidarity' is an oxymoron²⁹.

You can set yourself apart from a perceived system and fight against it, certainly. You can identify behaviours you don't like and philosophies you don't want to hear about, you can identify groups of people who are the natural enemies of 'you' and 'your people', I have no problem with any of it, do what you like. Just don't kid yourself that by breaking the world down into us and them, good and bad, right and wrong that you are thereby 'being queer'. You are being the opposite. You are doing precisely what this big, bad heteronormative society has been doing all along, you have just turned the coin over. To go back to my original definition – for me, queer is not a process about working out how other people are wrong, or why I am smarter than they are, it is about consciously trying to be aware of who I am excluding, and challenging my reasons for doing so.

The real strength of queering something, rather than outright opposing it, is that it offers unlimited possibilities – it is not binary, not simply presenting the flipside of the rule. Worse than simply providing a heterotopia in a bubble, these negative rules actually strengthen the validity of the original rule, since they only have agency in relation to it. This negation of one thing in favour of another – the 'world on its head' of the carnival for example, has never been transformative. In fact, as Umberto Eco notes in *Frames of Comic Freedom*, this approach creates “a paramount example of law enforcement”. So what *could* make Berlin's queer scene into something truly transformative in its working methods?

One of my favourite manifestos is that of the dunst collective, some of the queerest queered queers³⁰ I have ever come across. The point I like the most is;

28 If exposing systems of discrimination is central to a queer approach, then this exposing necessarily in itself is a categorisation of certain behaviours in (sic) bad. Queer arised (sic) out of a critique of dominant politics and behaviours, and this wouldn't have been possible without ruling out certain behaviours. You neglect the background of the manifesto; your argument is based on the cutting of the experiences that lead to those manifestos. This cutting off is certainly pretty unqueer. These kind of rules are not exposing a system of discrimination, they are just banning it on a very superficial level, as if it would just disappear if you told it to go away. By working in this way, they are in fact strengthening the validity of dictating behaviour because you are the boss. Assuming that a critique of dominant politics and behaviour automatically means a removal of those same systems is a weird jump, if you ask me. Isn't Queer Theory an expansive model? Otherwise what would be the ultimate outcome of what you are talking about, if you followed it through? All of the power away from Them (who are, exactly?) and all of it to Us (who are, exactly?) - you just wind up with the same situation in reverse. What I think no one is owning up to is how they are using their power when sitting down and deciding what things they are going to keep out of their event – being in the position to deny things they don't like for a change. My argument is quite the opposite of suggesting the cutting off of experiences leading to these manifestos – you have touched on the point in fact. The experiences that lead up to these manifestos all took place within heteronormative society, so the power dynamics of the manifestos invariably reflect and even recreate that.

29 Why? Fill in your own answer here:.....

30 some pages above, you argued in favor of using “queer” as a verb, not an adjective or a noun. Why do you call dunst queer, then? Pink pen moment #3.

“dunst is for those who think everyone, including themselves, should be under constant cultural attack.”³¹

When the Spicy Tigers on Speed³², bless them, question gender roles in front of the crowd who have assembled to see them at Wigstöckel, while it is lovely to see you friends on stage and enjoy their performance, we're not surprised by what we see. Where they become truly challenging and thereby transformative is when they move into spaces where one is not expecting the questions being raised by the work they do. Where one is confronted with the expected, one reacts easily in a predetermined, habitual fashion.

When on the Transgenialer CSD someone shouts through the megaphone that having a binary two-gendered system is bullshit, nobody shouts back 'No it isn't, it's wonderful'. We know.

These examples start to reach their full potential to 'queer' once out of the familiar framework of a queer context.

For people organising cultural or social events with aim of creating queer space, it would be worthwhile to think about how the event *itself* could be queered. This is not about setting up an heterotopia in direct reaction against the normative spaces of society - the aim is to begin dialogues that will spill out of the space at the end of the night and transform the people themselves, and the normative spaces they inhabit. What do people expect to see when they come to a queer party? What dynamics of power would one expect to encounter in a queer space, and how could they be utilised to create a queered space?

A Queer Film Festival is one thing, but what would a Queered Film Festival entail? What are the elements that we expect from a Film Festival? What power structures are at play within a film festival? How can those preconceptions be exposed and played with in order to provide a displacement, a realising of the set of givens with which we enter the situation?

If you are planning a queered event, my suggestion would be to drop the word – don't put it in the title, the manifesto, don't assume that by invoking it you will find a mass of people who agree with your world view – queer *doesn't actually teach us anything as an adjective or a noun*. Aside from which, as soon as you call something a 'queer' anything, you lose the element of surprise. How about starting a knitting circle and advertising it as a military-themed sex party? Try running a *vokii* where the guests have to cook for you. Offer to drive the Spicy Tigers on Speed to Pirna for the day and try to find new friends on the street to come on a picnic with you all. Why limit yourself to just rebelling against the norm? If you want to rebel then you are tied to needing something to rebel against. As soon as you start assuming there is something worth rebelling against, you are endowing something with power that it probably doesn't deserve any more of.

Left-wing extremists don't like right-wing extremists, understandably. They have opposing viewpoints on many political issues. Liberals won't like racists. Feminists won't like sexists. Fair enough and, just personally, I don't much agree with the ideologies of neoNazis, racists, sexists, homophobes or transphobes either. *But* I love to get into dialogue with people who insist on defending those viewpoints. It can be hard work putting aside my prejudices to be able to listen, but I certainly never leave the conversation less informed than I go into it. Generally, we have more in common than either of us would probably like to admit.

By attaching the word 'queer' to something without bothering with the activity of queering the

31 <http://dunst.dk/>

32 <http://www.spicytigersonspeed.net/>

expression becomes elitist, commodified and neutralised. Any possibility for genuine transformation is slowly stripped away from it. By providing lists of things that you are against, nothing is being queered. But, by analysing the power structure at work, trying to understand how it functions, one is in the position to queer it. That means the way to queer racism is not to go 'No no no! Not here!' - all that happens then is that an opportunity to come into dialogue and, through that, to better understand ourselves and those around us is lost.

Queering causes questions to arise, it provokes assessment or even reassessment of things habitually taken as 'givens'. It is a challenge to keep examining and, most of all, it is a challenge to keep moving.

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