
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Critical Queer Analysis of Normative Discourse

Dr. Ilham EL MAJDOUBI

Hassan II University (UH2C), Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLSHM), Research Area: Literary and Cultural Studies, Morocco

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ilham EL MAJDOUBI, **E-mail:** ilhamelmajdoubi@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This article presents a preliminary socio-historical reflection on Queer Theory, exploring how this critical perspective challenges conventional notions of sex, gender, desire, identity, discourse, ideology, and power. Moreover, the article considers how Queer Theory offers insights into the study of theater as an art of the margins, in particular discursive dramatic counter-strategies. The study indicates that theater from the Augmented Age draws upon concepts derived from Queer Studies. Modern and contemporary Western plays engage with transgressive sexual topics in innovative ways, challenging traditional stereotypes about sexuality. The study also poses the question of whether theater is still oriented towards societal acceptance and concludes that it is undergoing a revolutionary transformation.

| KEYWORDS

Queer, Gender, Desire, Sexuality, Identity, Western Theater

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 June 2024

PUBLISHED: 13 June 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jgcs.2024.4.1.9

1. Introduction

The term "Queer Studies" is used to describe a body of critical theory that emerged in the 1990s. This article begins by tracing the historical evolution that led from Gay and Lesbian Studies to Queer Theory and the complex acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). The article then turns to the specificities of queer theatre and its dialectical relationship with the analyzed theory.

The term "queer" has become a kind of catchphrase in Anglo-Saxon culture. Its definition is a multifaceted one, reflecting the various meanings it has been ascribed over time and across societies. The concept has become particularly pertinent to Western culture, and, most importantly, American culture. The term's malleability presents a challenge to those seeking to comprehend its nuances: "'Queer' is difficult to define [and] its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics."¹

From an etymological perspective, the term "queer" is derived from the Indo-European root *twerkw*, which also gave rise to the German *Quer* (transversal), the Latin *torquere* (to twist), and the English *athwart*² (across). In the English language, "queer" means odd, unconventional, different, but also suspicious, abnormal, homosexual, and pejoratively queer.

¹ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, New York University Press, 1996, p. 1.

² We concur with the observations of Marie-Hélène Bourcier, as outlined in her article entitled « Foucault et après...Théorie et politiques *queers*, entre contre-politiques discursives et politiques de la performativité », in: Daniel Welzer-Lang (ed.), *Nouvelles approches des hommes et du masculin*, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2000, p. 173.

In defining the term "queer," Annamarie Jagose offers the following definition: "'queer' [is] an umbrella term for coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications."³ In contrast, Frank Browning emphasizes that queer positioning implies a marginal relationship to power, a refusal of power. He posits that to be queer is to reject the heterosexual conventions that prescribe what is feminine or masculine, what a man or woman should look like, and how a body should be presented, displayed, and outfitted.⁴

The pejorative connotations associated with the term "queer" have rendered it virtually untranslatable in French. Rather than attempting a definitional approach, Marie-Hélène Bourcier⁵ recommends tracing the evolution of this dynamic concept. Beatriz Preciado posits that the term "queer" underwent a transformation from an insult to a form of reactive and productive autonomy.⁶

As observed by Didier Eribon, the appropriation of the term by English-speaking gays was a gradual process. During the interwar period, queer encompassed all freaks. The new generation of post-war homosexuals favored the term "gay," which carried a more positive connotation and lacked any medical implication. In the late 1980s, the re-adoption of the epithet "queer" transformed the stigma associated with it into an emblem of pride. The act of appropriating a slur *per se* negates its deleterious effects.⁷

The term "queer" has come to designate both activist groups (queer politics), of which Act Up remains the most high-profile, and a 20th-century academic movement (queer theory). The establishment of the Gay Academic Union in New York in 1973 and the Gay Studies Department at the University of San Francisco in 1989 marked the inception of Lesbian and Gay Studies within the US academic community. This field has expanded to become LGBTQ Studies, which now includes Queer Studies.

The term "Queer Theory" first appeared on the cover of *Differences*⁸ in 1991. Teresa De Lauretis associated it with the catch-all title of "Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." For Bourcier, "queer" serves as a means of critiquing the term "gay and lesbian", allowing subjects to dissociate themselves from any identity that becomes hegemonic, monolithic, essentialist, or naturalized.⁹ De Lauretis sought to introduce a problem of multiple differences into the homogenizing discourse on sexuality, while insisting on "everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual pleasure and desire."¹⁰ Bourcier describes this as politically and theoretically perverse.¹¹

The terms "lesbian" and "gay," linked to liberation movements, are a positive self-designation of the homosexual community. They are ideologically more neutral than the word "homosexual," which is part of heteronormative discourse. The terms "Lesbian and Gay Studies" and "Queer Studies" are not interchangeable. Queer studies have come to fill certain gaps in the gay and lesbian field.

In contrast to gay studies, which focused on the absence of representation, exclusion, and dominant norms, the new theory is more concerned with the limitations of gay studies, the unanswered questions of the previous discourse, and its critical evaluation.¹²

Queer Studies is less a new discipline than a new critical approach to the study of gender and sexuality that incorporates the perspectives of marginalized communities and sexual minorities: "From a queer perspective, the deconstruction of the margin becomes a central concern. It represents a distinct category of analysis that challenges the prevailing stability of the subject of the human sciences."¹³

Queer Studies have benefited from institutional recognition in Anglo-Saxon countries, which has afforded it an advantage over traditional Lesbian and Gay Studies "undoubtedly because the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' remain more disturbing for heterosexuals—

³ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, p. 1.

⁴ Frank Browning, *La culture du désir*, Paris, Éditions DLM, 1997, p. 28.

⁵ Bourcier served as President of the Zoo Association, which was established in Paris in 1996, and as a proponent for the recognition of queer culture in France.

⁶ Beatriz Preciado, *Manifeste contra-sexuel*, Paris, Balland, 2000, p. 26.

⁷ Daniel Welzer-Lang et al. *Un mouvement gai dans la lutte contre le sida. Les Sœurs de la Perpétuelle Indulgence*, L'Harmattan, 2000, p. 197.

⁸ *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 3, 2, Summer 1991.

⁹ Marie-Hélène Bourcier, « Le Queer Savoir », in: *Queer Zones. Politiques des identités sexuelles, des représentations et des savoirs*, Paris, Balland, 2001, p. 199.

¹⁰ David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault. Towards a Gay Hagiography*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 113.

¹¹ Marie-Hélène Bourcier, « Trafic queer », *Rue Descartes*, 40, Paris, PUF, 2003, p. 98.

¹² François Cusset, « Intérieur queer. Plaisir sans corps, politique sans sujet », *Rue Descartes*, 40, p. 10. My translation.

¹³ Marie-Hélène Bourcier, *Queer Zones. Politiques des identités sexuelles, des représentations et des savoirs*, p. 211. My translation.

and therefore for institutions—than ‘queer,’ which ultimately seems more welcoming to them, insofar as it makes room for them when they see themselves as non-normative.”¹⁴ Leo Bersani admits that “the preference for the term ‘queer’ over ‘gay’ is largely due to the sexual indeterminacy of its referent. The latter becomes a universal political category, encompassing anyone who resists the ‘regimes of normality.’”¹⁵

Queer Studies take a stand against the notion of sexual and/or cultural “normality,” and are more broadly concerned with the blurring of conventional boundaries between feminine and masculine, homosexuality and heterosexuality. They promote uncertainty over the polarities proposed by the essentialism of Gay and Lesbian Studies. As F. Cusset points out:

Queer studies applied to literary history is intended to be more questioning, and thus more transgressive, than the well-defined approach characteristic of “gay studies.” Where the latter seek to establish a gay counter-corpus, ultimately as canonical as the official corpus (and running in parallel through literary history, from Shakespeare to Oscar Wilde, from Virginia Woolf to Proust), the former limit their field of investigation to no pre-established criteria, explicit themes or author biography. Instead of celebrating difference, they prefer the insinuation of constant doubt, the insatiable, playful and political erosion of agreed-upon boundaries between homo and hetero.¹⁶

Queer Studies are predicated on the idea that “identities—whether gendered, racial, ethnic, national, or sexual—are fluid and created, not fixed and stable.”¹⁷ As such, they provide a far more inclusive and representative approach to the plurality of bodies, desires, sexualities, and identities.

Defining “Queer Theater” is a challenge, given the recent emergence of the phenomenon and the ambiguity inherent in queer identity. The polysemy of the term is problematic, as it gives rise to a wide range of interpretations. Aware of the complexity inherent in conceptualization, Laurence Senelick offers only a tentative definition:

Queer theatre is in the making. Identifying its antecedents means first identifying its characteristics, and the phenomenon is still too recent, too much in flux, for any simple definition to serve. . . . To speak in general terms, queer theatre is grounded in and expressive of unorthodox sexuality or gender identity, antiestablishment and confrontational in tone, experimental and unconventional in format, with stronger links to performance art and what the Germans call *Kleinkunst*, that is, revue, cabaret, and variety, than to traditional forms of drama.¹⁸

Queer theater is, without a doubt, the theater of the margins. In her 1994 book, *Gender Outlaw*¹⁹, Kate Bornstein refers to this phenomenon as “third space” and “freak space.” Don Shewey posits that the term “queer theatre” first appeared in 1978 in Stefan Brecht’s book of the same name:

Brecht’s loving, fanatical chronicle...focused on a handful of phenomena from the gay artistic demimonde of the sixties and seventies...These creatures were sophisticated, ironic, prickly, highly cultured, eccentric—a far cry from any definition of queer theatre that centers on such heartfelt but essentially white-bread plays like *Love! Valour! Compassion!* Or one-man shows like *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*.²⁰

In his 1978 book, *Queer Theatre: The Original Theater of the City of New York. From the Mid-60s to the Mid-70s*²¹, Stefan Brecht cites George Denniston’s essay on his initial experience with “queer theater.” This seminal experience was first encountered in a performance named *Whores of the Apostles*, where the performance belonged neither to the masculine nor to the feminine world, but to the world of the imagination captured by desire:

¹⁴ Didier Eribon, *Dictionnaire des cultures gays et lesbiennes*, p. 396. My translation.

¹⁵ Léo Bersani, « Trahisons Gaies », in: D. Eribon, *Les études gay et lesbiennes*, Éditions du Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1998, p. 65-72. My translation.

¹⁶ François Cusset, *Queer Critics : La littérature française déshabillée par ses homo-lecteurs*, Paris, PUF, 2002, pp. 9-10. My translation.

¹⁷ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition, 1998, p. 255.

¹⁸ Laurence Senelick, “The Queer Root of Theatre,” in: Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla, editors, *The Queerest Art. Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theatre*, New York University Press, 2002, p. 21.

¹⁹ Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*, Routledge, New York, 1994.

²⁰ Don Shewey, “Be True to Yearning: Notes on the Pioneers of Queer Theatre,” in: *The Queerest Art*, p. 125.

²¹ Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978.

Their play-acting was like the make-believe of children, who with a few gestures and rags of costumes, skate as it were over sunlit ice, a ground of infinite possibility; with this difference, of course: that the grown-up actors had chosen a ground of the impossible, one would say the eternal impossible. Their blasphemy, their outrageous egotism, their sense of magic may have seemed demonic, but in fact they were priestly figures, they were acting out for us the wilderness of lust and crime against which we experience our social cohesion. In the biblical sense, they enacted the scapegoat. Their method: be true to impulse and delight, be true to yearning. It leads to catastrophe, of course, but that was already behind them, for these were not ordinary people. Or put it another way: the catastrophe, already, is behind us all. It is the death of the heart to deny it.²²

This unconventional production seeks to illuminate aspects of pre-Stonewall plays that are only alluded to, unlike post-Stonewall works. Pre-liberation theater cultivates a penchant for silence and secrecy. Nevertheless, it provokes disturbing reflections on the question of identity, even to the point of questioning the legitimacy of the symbolic or sexual order—and of norms in general. Critics tend to naturally associate theater with queer, such as Alan Sinfield, who asserts that “theater and theatricality have been experienced throughout the twentieth century as queer—though not simply so, since until recently almost nowhere has been that. Theatre has been a particular site for the formation of dissident sexual identities.”²³

Don Shewey, for his part, maintains that “queerness and theater seem inextricably linked, twined around each other like flesh and spirit.”²⁴ Laurence Senelick corroborates this idea, stating that “theatre is most truly itself when it is most queer.”²⁵ The analysis of theater can benefit from the insights of Queer Theory. By focusing on the often overlooked aspects of theater—such as the unspoken words and ellipses, polysemy, censorship, and taboo subjects—Queer Theory helps us better understand the limitations of theater. It provides a valuable tool for analyzing theatrical productions of the past and for capturing contemporary developments:

Above all, it allows us to take account of shifts in categories, of theatrical genre disorders that challenge the idea of a monolithic theater, and attests to the diverse branches from street performance to the most enthroned plays. The contribution of queer theory makes it possible to approach the limits confronting the field of performing arts, to highlight the exploration of the unspeakable, the unrepresentable without losing all political-aesthetic valence.²⁶

Xavier Lemoine then proceeds to make the following assertion:

Queer theory enables the uncovering of some of the most persistent preoccupations of theatre (the construction of corporeality, the shifting of identities, the creation of genres, etc.), as well as some of its most vulnerable aspects, given that this involves the revelation of what has been hitherto concealed. Moreover, it enables us to approach the “proper” theatrical act (plot, language, acting, staging) with the greatest possible proximity, while also examining its socio-historical configuration from the most distant perspective.²⁷

Queer Theory aims to “expose the text to the light of day, where it has been long hidden from view by the academy,”²⁸ with the objective of identifying the gay subtext in the canonized work and uncovering the homosexuality concealed beneath heterosexuality. Moreover, it contributes to the aesthetic dimension that is central to homosexual expression, yet often overshadowed by ideological and political considerations.

In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the specific contribution of Queer Theory to the understanding of sexual differences and identities, it is necessary to retrace the evolution of notions of sex and gender. In his 1992 work, *La Fabrique du sexe*, American historian Thomas Laqueur posits that the human model of the two sexes is relatively recent. Prior to the end of the eighteenth century, the unisex model inherited from antiquity reigned, with men considered more accomplished than women.²⁹

²² Don Shewey, “Be True to Yearning: Notes on the Pionners of Queer Theatre,” in: *The Queerest Art*, pp. 125-126. George Denniston's full essay was previously published in *American Review* in 1973.

²³ Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage. Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1999, p. 1.

²⁴ Don Shewey, “Be True to Yearning,” in: *The Queerest Art*, p. 126.

²⁵ As cited by Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla in the preface to *The Queerest Art*.

²⁶ Xavier Lemoine, « Explorer l'innommable, l'irreprésentable », in: *Rue Descartes*, 40, 2003, pp.109-110 ; p. 110. My translation.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Mark Hawthorne, *Making it Ours. Queering the Canon*, New Orleans, University Press of the South, 1988, pp. 23-26.

²⁹ Thomas Laqueur, *La fabrique du sexe. Essai sur le corps et le genre en Occident*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992, p. 19.

American psychoanalyst Robert J. Stoller, in his book *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity*³⁰, and British sociologist Ann Oakley, in her book *Sex, Gender and Society*³¹, were among the first to highlight the distinction between sex and gender. Sex is defined as the biological differences between men and women, while gender is understood to be the social construction of sexual difference, in which cultural conditioning plays a role. In Stoller's view, gender identity encompasses the coexistence of masculinity and femininity in all beings:

Gender is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are "male" and "female," the corresponding terms for gender are "masculine" and "feminine"; these latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex...Gender is the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person, and obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity.³²

In the 1970s, the distinction of sex and gender permitted the assertion that gender was a more significant factor than sex. Prior to this, sex was regarded as a primary and immutable biological fact, upon which the social and cultural construction of gender was based. Feminism has thus made considerable progress in its fight against biological determinism and in its re-conceptualization of the distribution of social roles.

In the 1980s, the reconsideration of the relationship between sex and gender was prompted by a re-evaluation of identities. The dichotomous divisions of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual were subjected to criticism for their tendency to naturalize and oppress. The question of nature *versus* culture, which pits essentialists against constructivists, has led to the use of gender as a "fundamental theoretical tool for conceptualizing the social construction, historical, and cultural fabrication of sexual difference. This is in the face of claims to 'femininity' as a natural substratum, as a form of ontological truth."³³

The debate between essentialism and constructivism has brought Gay Theory to a major turning point. For essentialists, in the tradition of John Boswell, homosexuality is a universal constant. For constructivists, now queers, in the wake of Foucault, homosexuality and heterosexuality are the product of social and historical construction. Since the second half of the 1980s, the concept of gender has been increasingly contested for inducing a cleavage and hierarchization of the human race, thereby reproducing the heterosexual schema. Conversely, the concept of gender focuses on the social relations between the sexes but tends to overlook other crucial aspects, such as the political dimension that governs class relations. This is when the term "queer" begins to supersede "gay" and "lesbian" in usage.

Since the early 1990s, Queer Theory has proposed a broadening of Gender Theory. It aims to eliminate boundaries, including the very notion of gender, which it denounces as a mechanism for the production of sexual difference. Queer Theory has tended to merge the concepts of sex and gender by describing the relationship between them "as both the arbitrary and cultural effect of a particular discursive apparatus."³⁴ This has resulted in the conflation of the two concepts. Queer Theory challenges the categories on which the bipolar heterosexual order is based, thereby working towards a politics of recognition of sexual diversity and identity.

Queer Theory aims to rehabilitate those who do not recognize themselves within the confines of the heterosexual and homosexual categories that are presumed to be obligatory. Such individuals may be transgender or bisexual. The theory seeks to challenge the gender binary and the heteronormative assumptions that underpin it. While it is challenging to evade the gender system, queer is nevertheless proving to be an effective instrument of resistance against oppression through the dissolution of identities. "To be queer is to blur boundaries, to mix genders, and to promote the instability and undecidability of identities."³⁵

Queer Theory rejects any categorical system and dissociates gender and identity from sexual orientation, thus challenging the conceptualization of both homosexuality and feminism. Bourcier notes that "the queer approach should not be reduced to confusionism or an apology for sexual ambiguity."³⁶ This has not stopped Bersani from criticizing the displacement of sexuality

³⁰ Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and femininity*, New York, Science House, 1968.

³¹ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, London, Maurice Temple Smith, 1972.

³² Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender*, pp. 9-10.

³³ Beatriz Preciado, « Multitudes queer : notes pour une politique des 'anormaux' », in: *Multitudes*, 12, Paris, Exils editions, Spring 2003, p. 20. My translation.

³⁴ Beatriz Preciado in preface to *Queer Zones. Politiques des représentations sexuelles, des représentations et des savoirs*, pp. 15-16. My translation.

³⁵ Colette Saint-Hilaire, « Planète queer et politique de la multitude », in: *Conjonctures*, 41/42, Winter/Spring 2006, p. 22. My translation.

³⁶ Marie-Hélène Bourcier, « Trafic queer », p. 99. My translation.

toward "desexualization,"³⁷ which, in his view, contradicts the goal of Queer Theory to make sexuality "a primary category of social analysis."³⁸ Bersani is reluctant to endorse the queer approach, to the extent of warning that the dissolution of the concept of identity and the erasure of the word 'homosexuality'³⁹ could, as he asserts, compromise the gay cause.

Queer thinking questions the monolithic model of sexuality and identity. It examines the norm and the institution that sets it, and creates new gendered positions that subvert the norm and the concept of normality. Daniel Welzer-Lang notes that transgression is not confined to religion; rather, it integrates gender, sex, socio-sexual identity, and sexual choices.⁴⁰ Queer discourse was forged as an alternative to the institutionalization of homosexuality⁴¹, which in the 1980s fostered the emergence of homo-centric politics and a hegemonic white, bourgeois, consumerist gay identity. Excluded from this were "identities more queer than homosexual or gay: SM, queer, Latino, trans and other minorities, including lesbians."⁴² Those who identify as queer reject the idea of using homosexual identity as a means of maintaining heterosexual identity. Eribon suggests that "gay identity is both a homophobic identity that seeks to totalize and normalize homosexuality and an identity that is equally homophobic in its negation."⁴³ Queer Theory refutes the notion of identity fixity and instead bases itself on the postmodern concept of identity as a fluid and ever-changing phenomenon. Sexuality is not a static entity, and sexual orientation is not a fixed concept.

Queer Theory is "a hypercritical relationship to identity and the politics of identity, whether homo/heterosexual, national, gender, class, race, intersection of identity traits included."⁴⁴ It resists polarization through an ongoing process of deconstructing norms and constructing multiple identities. As F. Cusset puts it: "Queer thought is not so much counter-identitarian as multi-identitarian, not trans-identitarian...but rather post-identitarian."⁴⁵ Bourcier adds: "The politics of differences for some, of multitudes for others, what is certain is that queer thoughts and practices are to be located on the side of the multiplication of identities and post-identities, and even of the appropriation of the mechanisms of production and de-production of identities."⁴⁶

Bourcier advocates the practice of multiple registers of identity and identification, arguing that it would be "more productive to identify and claim a changing identity card."⁴⁷ The multiplicity and irreducible complexity of genders and sexualities enables identity to escape an assigned hierarchy. This generates a queer identity that is shifting, multiple and paradoxical: "To speak of queer identities or queer essence is a contradiction in terms, as queer positioning results from a deconstruction of sexual identities... Accordingly, there would only be positional identities or queer positions."⁴⁸

In contrast, Preciado advocates for the politics of the queer multitude, "which is predicated on the notion of a multiplicity of bodies (and sexualities) that challenge the norms and standards that define them as either 'normal' or 'abnormal'."⁴⁹ Consequently, sexual desires, attractions, behaviors, and relationships become manifold and diversified. "There is no sexual difference, but a multitude of differences,"⁵⁰ she asserts.

"In the queer universe, being queer implies that not everyone is queer in the same way."⁵¹ Consequently, the concept of "queerness" cannot be reduced to a single, universal definition. Rather, it is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a spectrum of experiences. Those who identify as sexual minorities assert their singular status as abnormal or social freaks, and challenge the

³⁷ Desexualization refers to Foucault's "degenitalization" of pleasure.

³⁸ Léo Bersani, « Trahisons gaies », in: *Les études gay et lesbiennes*, p. 68. My translation.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-72.

⁴⁰ Daniel Welzer-Lang, *Un mouvement gai dans la lutte contre le sida*, p. 161.

⁴¹ See the article by Guillaume Marche, "L'arc-en-ciel et le mouvement gai et lesbien : réfraction, dispersion et instrumentalisation des identités collectives," in: *Transatlantica*, 2005, [On line]. Published online March 24, 2006, referenced February 25, 2007. URL : <http://transatlantica.revues.org/document321.htm>

⁴² Bourcier, « Queer Move/mements », in: *Mouvements*, 20, La Découverte, 2002, p. 41.

⁴³ Eribon, « L'identité gay après Foucault », *Les études gay et lesbiennes*, p. 118. My translation.

⁴⁴ Bourcier, « Queer Move/mements », in: *Mouvements*, p. 37. My translation.

⁴⁵ Cusset, « Intérieur queer. Plaisir sans corps, politique sans sujet », p. 16. My translation.

⁴⁶ Bourcier, « Trafic queer », p. 98. My translation.

⁴⁷ Bourcier, *Q comme Queer*, published by Zoo, under the direction of M.H. Bourcier, Les Cahiers Gai-Kitsch-Camp, 1998, p. 116. My translation.

⁴⁸ Bourcier, « Foucault et après... Théorie et politiques queer », *Nouvelles approches des hommes et du masculin*, p. 174. My translation.

⁴⁹ Beatriz Preciado, « Multitudes queer : notes pour une politique des anormaux », *Multitudes*, p. 23. My translation.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25. My translation.

⁵¹ Elisabeth Däumer, "Queer Ethics; Or the Challenge of Bisexuality to Lesbian Ethics," in: *Hypatia*, Vol. 7, Issue 4, 1992, pp. 91-105. As cited by Daniel Welzer-Lang in *Un mouvement gai dans la Lutte contre le sida*, p. 206.

boundaries of the body and sexuality. The proliferation of identifications, the liminal position, and the cult of monstrosity are all strategies all proposed by queer thinkers as strategies of resistance in the face of essentialism and masculine/feminine binarism.

In light of the preceding overview of Queer Theory, it can be argued that contemporary dramatic works of the so-called Augmented Age largely embody the tenets of the queer movement and can be illuminated by these conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The question of the margin and marginality, which is dialectically linked to that of the norm and normativity, is widely explored in non-conventional performance, which dares to address issues on the margins of American theatrical and societal tradition.

In conclusion, issues that were previously considered taboo and only obliquely addressed, such as homosexuality, voyeurism, incest, and adultery, are now being explored more openly and extensively, beyond the constraints of censorship. The non-conventional theater, which challenges the norms of gender and sexuality, is not without the risk of being ostracized. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to speculate whether theatre is still primarily preoccupied with social respectability and cultural assimilation.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Bornstein, K. (1994). *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. New York: Routledge.
- [2] Bourcier, M.H.(2001). *Queer Zones: Politiques des identités sexuelles, des représentations et des savoirs*. Paris : Balland.
- [3] Bourcier, M.H. (2002). Queer Move/mements. *Mouvements*, no. 20, Paris : La Découverte, 2002.
- [4] Bourcier, M.H. (2003). "Trafic queer." *Rue Descartes*, no. 40, Paris : PUF, 2003.
- [5] Bourcier, M.H., editor. (1998). *Q comme Queer*. Lille: Zoo (Association), Cahiers Gai-Kitsch-Camp.
- [6] Browning, F. (1997). *La culture du désir*. Paris : Éditions DLM.
- [7] Saint-Hilaire, C. (2006). Planète queer et politique de la multitude. *Conjonctures*, no. 41/42, Winter/Spring 2006.
- [8] Cusset, F. (2003). Intérieur queer. Plaisir sans corps, politique sans sujet. *Rue Descartes*, no. 40. 8-17.
- [9] Cusset, F. (2002). *Queer Critics: La littérature française déshabillée par ses homo-lecteurs*. Paris : PUF.
- [10] Däumer, E. (1992). Queer Ethics; Or the Challenge of Bisexuality to Lesbian Ethics. *Hypatia*. 91-105.
- [11] *Differences (1991): A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 2, Summer.
- [12] D'Emilio, J. (1998). *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [13] Eribon, D. (2003). editor. *Dictionnaire des cultures gays et lesbiennes*. Paris : Larousse, 2003.
- [14] Eribon, D. (1998). L'identité gay après Foucault." In: *Les Études gays et lesbiennes, Actes du colloque des 21 et 27 juin 1997*, Centre Georges-Pompidou.
- [15] Marche, G. (2007). L'arc-en-ciel et le mouvement gai et lesbien: réfraction, dispersion et instrumentalisation des identités collectives." *Transatlantica*, 2005. Published online March 24, 2006. Accessed February 25, 2007. <http://transatlantica.revues.org/document321.htm>.
- [16] Halperin, D. M. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [17] Hawthorne, M. (1988). *Making it Ours: Queering the Canon*. New Orleans: University Press of the South.
- [18] Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- [19] Laqueur, T. (1992). *La fabrique du sexe: Essai sur le corps et le genre en Occident*. Paris : Gallimard.
- [20] Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Maurice Temple Smith.
- [21] Preciado, B. (2003). Multitudes queer: notes pour une politique des 'anormaux'. *Multitudes*, Paris : Exils, 2003.
- [22] Preciado, B. (2000). *Manifeste contra-sexuel*. Paris : Balland.
- [23] Senelick, L. (2002). The Queer Root of Theatre. In *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theatre*, edited by Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla, New York: New York University Press.
- [24] Sinfield, A. (1999). *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- [25] Stoller, R. J. (1968). *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity*. New York: Science House.
- [26] Welzer-Lang, D (2000). *Un mouvement gai dans la lutte contre le sida*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 2000.