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"Sissy that walk": The queer kinaesthetics of mobility-through-difference

Orlando WOODS
Singapore Management University, orlandowoods@smu.edu.sg

Citation

"SISSY THAT WALK":

THE QUEER KINAESTHETICS OF MOBILITY-THROUGH-DIFFERENCE

By Orlando Woods, Singapore Management University

Abstract

This article advances the idea of "queer kinaesthetics" to show how moving through difference can enable disaggregated individuals to realize a new sense of becoming. Doing so involves rejecting the categories of identity that lead to disaggregation in the first place, and reorienting the self by developing a distinctly and radically (dis)embodied subject position. I illustrate these ideas by exploring the queer kinaesthetics of drag. Drag is most commonly associated with queer, cisgender males embodying otherness in order to come to terms with the disaggregation that many experience in heteronormative society, and through the heterological norms of representation. By learning how to "sissy that walk" they transcend the cultural codes of social life by embracing a process-oriented ontology that involves moving through difference in search of a more autonomous sense of self-realization.

Keywords

This article explores the ways in which the body, the self and the performative dimensions of self-representation are interlinked constructs that can be mobilized to forge new ways of being in the world. When these constructs are disaggregated, they cause the subject to be marginalized by society and the self. At the same time, however, the disaggregated subject might also mobilize these differences as part of an emancipatory move to establish 'new ways of being, and new methods of becoming' (Woods 2020, 2). These "new" ways are the theoretical focus of this article, whilst the performativity of gender and gendered transgression provides the empirical focus. Taking Grosz's (1994, 120) observation that 'social values and requirements are not so much inculcated into the subject as etched on the subject's body' as a point of departure, we can begin to see both the potential for disaggregation, but also the possibilities for the performative body to become the locus of (non-)representational meaning, value-creation, and capture (after Thrift 1997, 1999).

I develop the term "queer kinaesthetics" to argue that the presentation and performativity of the body can lead to a reimagination of the subject in ways that go beyond social prescription. Through queer kinaesthetics, the subject might reveal itself in ways that go against, or beyond, normative conceptions of the gendered body. In turn, they highlight the potentiality of the body in driving self-realization and broader societal change. Put simply, by taking control of the body, individuals can regain control of the self, thus decoupling it from the heteronormative expectations of society. Avilez (2019, 61) articulates the power of queer kinaesthetics in his assertion that:

> One should find power in what makes you susceptible to criticism. One must surrender to the assumed weakness and redefine it. This musical call to surrender is about refusing to acquiesce to the social command of denying feminine expressivity

for male-embodied individuals. One should sissy that walk or surrender to the sissy as a source of creativity and self-definition.

Avilez's call for men to "sissy that walk" is evoked in the title of this article and speaks to the need to subvert the gendered expectations that are embodied in the most mundane practice of mobility: walking. To "sissy" one's walk is to reject the notion of masculine strength that is often encoded in physical movement, and to embrace alternative codes instead. Doing so is often complemented by patterns of speech, with the use of particular words, phrasing and exaggeratedly feminized intonation giving way to parallel practices of "sissying that talk". Through these parallel patterns of rejection and embrace, the distinctions between gendered expectation and embodied performance are brought into radical contrast, triggering a queer kinaesthetics of how the self is realized by moving through these categorical distinctions.

With this in mind, we can begin to appreciate the queering *potential* of kinaesthetics as an embodied practice of resistance. It encapsulates that which 'does not align with hegemonic structures and orientations' (Heller 2020b, 6), and embraces instead alternative forms of self-mobilization that work *in* and *through* the interstices of difference. It is a process-oriented ontology of becoming, a form of "difference-in-itself" that is 'conceptually prior to the construction of identity categories' and can therefore expose the 'often violent work that representation and identity accomplish, while also opening up possibilities for new methods of creation and escape that can evade political capture' (Cockayne et al. 2017, 582; after Deleuze 1994). Indeed, it is this "violent work" that causes disaggregation to be felt in the first place, and to thus pave the way for reconciliation. Reconciliation is often a first step towards the subject knowing themself and feeling comfortable with who they are. By

working through different registers of feeling, experience, and expectation, they can redefine the boundaries of the self, and in turn work towards a sense of peace and purpose.

I illustrate these ideas through an empirical exploration of queer, cisgender males who participate in drag. Whilst the 'generative and rich potential' (Heller 2020b, 3) of drag has been embraced by scholars for many decades (Newton 1972; Butler 1990), it has only relatively recently attracted mainstream interest and appeal. One of the best indicators of this is the popularity of reality TV show, *RuPaul's Drag Race* (*RPDR*), which first aired in 2009 on LogoTV (a channel dedicated to LGBTQ+ audiences) but has since branched out to Netflix and VH1 as well. Whilst the scholarly potential of drag stems from the subversive interplay between 'anatomical sex (contingent maleness), gender performance (the feminine figure displayed in the impersonation), and gender identity (heterosexuality versus homosexuality)' (Lloyd 1999, 198), *RPDR* also grants audiences and researchers an almost ethnographic level of insight into the personal lives of drag queens, and the struggles of competing for the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar". Whilst these struggles are idiosyncratic, there are commonalities that unite them. Consistent is the fact that drag queens first struggle to come to terms with their sexual identities, but also their gendered identities, their experimentation with alternative forms of gendered being and representation, asserting who they are with confidence, and finally the redefinition of the subject as a drag persona. Through dress and movement, drag queens literally embody the empowering potential of "sissying that walk". Through speech, language and intonation they embrace the vulnerabilities that stem from "sissying that talk". The combined effect of these processes is to forge a new way of being in the world.

Drag involves the deliberate transgression of socially defined gender categories. It is a resolutely embodied way of embracing "otherness" and, in doing so, of both encountering, but also realizing, the self. Drag is not about the permanent transformation of one's gender, but about the ephemeral, and deeply performative embrace of a gendered – and by extension sexual – sense of otherness. This embrace is one of drag's hallmarks, with drag performers 'conceiv[ing] of sex, gender and sexuality as separate but inextricably linked categories' (Bailey 2013, 5). Not only do male drag queens seek to look and act like women, but so too do they strive to perfect, enhance, exaggerate, or satirize the categorization of what exactly femininity is, or is assumed to be, through the adoption of typically *hyper*-feminine personas. This is all part of the act, as 'the queen will out-woman women, and in the process confuse and seduce an audience whose gaze must to some degree be structured through those hegemonic [categories of difference]', the aim being to allow the audience to be 'drawn into the abjection it wants to both resist and overcome' (Butler 1993, 91).

In many respects, the appeal of drag – for performers and audiences alike – is that it not only facilitates intimate encounters with the other, but also enables the self to become recalibrated in ways that are more ontologically open, vulnerable and thus accepting of these differences. One of the best examples of this is RuPaul Charles himself – a drag pioneer and the host and namesake of *RPDR*. As Avilez (2019, 58) explains:

> For RuPaul, there is something cathartic about pushing against the conceived restraints on masculine expression through his drag: it allows him to embody manhood and womanhood at the same time, which he feels is the best way to communicate his interiority. Part of the reason that his illusion is "truer" is that it creates the possibility for a feeling of freedom of movement between identities.

Drag reveals how movement and speech can be imbued with ontological potential, as it promises freedom from pre-existing frameworks of understanding. Kinaesthetic bodies are those that express a heightened degree of self-awareness and control, whilst *queer* kinaesthetic bodies are those that use such characteristics for the conjoined purposes of subversion and emancipation. Or, for the purpose of queer world-making (Woods 2023). In RuPaul's words, "it's all nudge, nudge, wink, wink. We never believe this is who we are. That is why drag is a revolution, because we're mocking identity. We're mocking *everyone*" (cited in Upadhyay 2019, 481, emphasis added). Drag satirizes gender (and sexuality therein), whilst *RPDR* satirizes television as a mainstream medium of family and personal entertainment. It takes drag out of the club and places it firmly in the living room, thus embedding some of RuPaul's defining tropes, including the instruction for drag queens, but also viewers and everyone else, to "sissy that walk", into homes throughout the world. Recorded as a song by RuPaul, Avilez (2019, 61) observes how it 'can be thought of as a command to embrace vulnerability and surrender' and to open oneself up to the unscripted freedoms of the body-in-motion.

Two sections follow. The first reviews recent literature on gender-defined difference, and the roles of embodied performance and representation therein. It also explains the methodology employed. The second offers an empirical analysis of *RPDR* and illustrates how disaggregated selves are drawn to drag because of the freedoms associated with embodied becoming. Contestant's speech is analysed to show the conceptual crossovers between sissying that *talk* and sissying that *walk*. It briefly concludes by calling for any subject – male or female, "queer" or otherwise – to embrace the ontological potential of "sissying that walk".

Embodying the Subject, Rejecting the Category

Many social groups exert pressure to conform to prescribed ideas of how one should look and behave, with these pressures often originating from the socially defined categories that are used to frame the subject, and to determine the extent to which an individual either "fits in" or "stands out" (Butler 1990, 1993; Grosz 1994). Whilst these pressures are more acutely felt by some than others, understanding where such pressure originates from is the focus of this section. However, the problem goes beyond categories. Also important are the feelings and "rightness" of the body, the expectations of family and friends, and the often-unthinking embrace of how we are brought up to look and behave. Where these factors diverge, problems arise as 'ideally, representation should give back what has already been given... [it] is bound to a specific form of repetition: the repetition of the same' (Doel 2010, 117).

The rejection of representational categories can, then, be indexed to *non*-representation as 'a refusal of representation yoked to the problematic of a repetition of the same' (Doel 2010, 118). If representational categories are understood as hierarchical structures of meaning that are defined, forged, and accepted over time, then non-representations are their more ontologically open counterparts. As Butler (1993, xiii, original emphasis) put it three decades ago, the 'persistence of *dis*identification is equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation'. There are many means through which disidentification can occur, but the body – and the *performative* body in particular – offers a vector through which the subject can be forged outside of pre-existing categories (after Butler 1990). The two subsections that follow explore these ideas further.

Difference-in-Itself and the Deconstruction of the Heterologic

One of the most important characteristics of gender categories is that they bleed into other categories of representation, causing gender's influence on the social structuring of the world to be both pervasive, and often primary. The distinctions of gender are based on what Lloyd (1999, 196) terms a 'heterologic', which binds together male and female subject positions so that 'male assumes female; female assumes male'. These assumptions pervade many aspects of everyday life and comportment, and are noticeable through 'appearance (postures, gestures, clothing makeup)' but also 'erotic behavior, ways of speaking, discursive positioning' as well as 'interests, activities, education, and profession… legal, political and economic status' (Berger 2013, 16). All these characteristics can be learnt or adopted. Complementing them, however, are more "substantial" or "fundamental" feminine traits that exist *prior* to the engendering of the subject – things like 'a maternal nature, a specific mode of reasoning, natural passivity' (Lloyd 1999, 196), and so on. These traits can come from within, and can be seen to align, or create ruptures with, the outwardly gendered representation of the body.

Defining the terms of these alignments and ruptures is what Butler (1993, 24) calls the "cultural matrix" – one that is socially prescribed, and which dictates that 'certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist" – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex, and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender'. Breaking the cultural matrix is to break the heterologic into which we are born. This foregrounds a politics of gendered difference that determines "natural" or "unnatural" ways of being. That said,

a political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will *deconstruct* the

substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for

those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the

social appearance of gender (Butler 1990, 25, emphasis added).

The deconstruction of the heterologic that Butler suggests underpins a politically generative project of understanding difference in new ways. Cockayne et al. (2017, 582; after Deleuze 1994) responded to this opportunity through their articulation of difference-in-itself, which starts from the premise that difference is "ontological" and is, therefore, an 'irreducible, affirmative difference that swarms within being itself, relating itself to its own differences within'. By focussing on what is within, it provides a theoretical position from which ruptures with the cultural matrix can explored and understood. Through this focus, difference-in-itself 'pronounces the failure of representation' by highlighting the fact that representation is the 'appearance of superficiality, it is… that which is *given to experience*, an empirical reality' (Cockayne et al. 2017, 588, original emphasis). The repetitious behaviours that give rise to the cultural matrix have the potential to trigger inauthentic self-understandings, as the matrix itself is based on the logic of conformity through recitation. Instead, difference-in-itself turns within, embracing the contingency of representational categories and attuning the subject to the 'matter of in- or out-of-place-ness' (Cockayne et al. 2020, 195). These ideas find meaning when understood in relation to the body, as gendered bodies can be both sources of disorientation, but also of reorientation and empowerment as well.

Moving from Disoriented to Reoriented Bodies

The idea of difference-in-itself is rooted in the body, and thus establishes the primacy of the body in enforcing, rejecting, or otherwise redefining hitherto stable categories of representational meaning and value. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 277), bodies are processes of transformation that are 'never ceasing to become' and are, therefore, ontologically distinct from the relatively more static – and thus *dis*embodied – notion of "being". The problem, however, lies in what is "outside". Humans are social creatures, and it can be a struggle to reconcile the autonomous becomings of the body with a socially defined sense of being. Coleman (2011, 151, emphasis added) explains how 'becoming… is not a derivative process that involves identifying with or imitating something else in order to become like it… Becoming is instead a process or a force of transformation *in itself*'. Given that the body is 'indeterminate and indeterminable outside its social constitution as a body of a particular type' it is often *assumed* that the body 'is an open-ended, pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other terms than those that mark it' (Grosz 1994, 60). What Grosz describes here are the morphings of the body in response to outside pressures – its "social constitutions" – and its shaping into a source of social value in return. Yet, the becomings of Deleuze and Guattari reverse this position: they see the body as responding to *internal* pressures, which, in and of themselves, foreground a process first of *dis*orientation and then, ideally, of *re*orientation that follows.

With these theoretical ideas in mind, we can begin to appreciate the importance of drag in providing a window onto the performance of carefully constructed and curated, and thus deliberate, gendered disorientation. Drag can therefore be understood as a practice of mobility through which the subject is disorientated and then reorientated *through* the differential categorizations of gendered representation. Ahmed (2006, 157) emphasizes the importance of disorientation on the formation of the subject when she asserts that 'moments

of disorientation are vital' as disorientations themselves are 'bodily experiences that throw the world up or throw the body from its ground'. Ahmed emphasizes here the fear and uncertainty, but also the transformative and resilient potential of becoming disoriented and then reoriented again. Whilst choosing to dress or speak like a person of the opposite sex might come from within, it is realized from without, which in turn can reach back and reorient what is within towards a more ontologically stable, and self-defined subject position. This recursiveness can be seen as 'the effect and outcome of a complex process that opens up an "internal space" within the subject' which can lead, in turn, to the 'phantasmatic internalization of the subject' (Berger 2013, 38). Drag is a practice of mobility-through-difference, and thus provides rich insight into what is arguably one of the most democratic means by which individuals can participate in society.

Methodology

The empirical section that follows explores how an embrace of queer kinaesthetics is a method by which the self becomes a more mobile construct. As a mobile construct, it is empowered to leverage and traverse multiple categories of difference, the outcome of which blends ideas of freedom and empowerment *through* constraint. To illustrate these ideas, I offer an analysis of the exchanges made between contestants in *RPDR* over six seasons (Seasons 2-7, inclusive). This amounts to 82 episodes yielding insight into the lives and experiences of 80 different drag queens/contestants. Adopting such broad parameters for the sampling frame was intentional, as discourses and debates concerning contestants' personal lives take a relatively small amount of screen time overall, meaning the corpus of usable data that was generated through the analysis was considerably smaller than the sampling frame might suggest.

Each season was watched, fully transcribed, analysed using a discourse analysis approach, and then coded for themes. Whilst the performative elements of *RPDR* clearly manifest with contestants "sissying that walk/talk", of particular interest was the reality TV part of the programme. This involves contestants having spontaneous and unscripted conversations with each other that span a range of topics. These include their childhood, upbringing, and family lives; experiences of, and philosophy towards, drag; personal transformations as drag queens; competitive rivalry, and their struggles and insecurities in the show. Whilst most of these conversations are between contestants, some also involve RuPaul. The dialogue presented below identifies the contestant, and the season and episode from which the quote is taken. Italicized and bracketed dialogue indicates that it was filmed as a separate commentary on issues that arose during the show and was edited into the episode.

The Queer Kinaesthetics of Mobility-Through-Difference

Reconciling the Disaggregated Self Through Drag

Coming to know and identify oneself as gay often leads to disaggregation, as it immediately positions the individual outside the heterologic through which the cultural matrix is reproduced. Taking up drag is a logical extension of this positioning: it is an agentic act that enables them to regain control of their self-presentation, albeit in a way that subverts socio-familial expectations of what it means to be a cisgender male. The point, then, is that whilst they cannot deny the "truth" of their homosexuality, or of society's perceptions thereof, they *can* control the gendered representation of themselves (Ahmed 2006; Coleman 2011). Put differently, they cannot change their sexual orientation, but they can change the gendered

representation of themselves in ways that makes their sexuality "right" in the eyes of society. But, to return to the point of this subsection, all these subsequent acts of becoming are triggered by the knowledge that the self is disaggregated in the first place.

For Carmen Carrera (S2:E12), disaggregation is equivalent to feeling "wrong", with her recalling how "you feel wrong for most of your life, and then you don't know *why* you feel wrong, and then you just get mad at people, like, 'why do you make me feel wrong?'". "Feeling wrong" is an emotional response to the self being non-aligned with the cultural matrix; a state of being that can be confusing, and which can trigger both outward and inward aggressions. Whilst Carmen Carrera's aggression was directed outwards, for Pandora Boxx (S2:E7) it was directed inwards, resulting in a suicide attempt:

> I tried to kill myself. I didn't understand, I didn't know what gay was. I knew I was totally different. I felt totally different. I felt totally alone. I hated myself for, like, years. And I thought that, you know, well, I'll just take these pills because I can't deal with it anymore… But there is still once in a while that little voice that says 'oh no, no-one likes you' or 'you're not good enough', and it's tough. I mean, I don't think it ever goes away.

Rather than trying to ignore the causes of these aggressions, or hide or run away from them, they are embraced head-on. This reveals the ontological power of difference-in-itself: because it comes from within, it cannot be ignored or changed. The aggressions that Carmen Carrera and Pandora Boxx share are not 'simply reactive; they are creative responses to histories that are unfinished' (Ahmed 2010, 217). The idea of unfinished histories speaks to the legacy of the cultural matrix that queer subjects seek to detach themselves from. Most

immediately this includes the subject's family, and the stultifying role of parents especially. Beyond that, it would also include the social environment within which they grew up. Latrice Royale (S4:E6), for example, shared how growing up in Compton, Los Angeles, imposed a rigidly defined code of heteronormative expectation upon her:

> You don't even think about saying the word 'gay' or that you're gay, it's straight up 'hood there, you know what I mean? So, I was threatened and beat up and told if I was ever… turned out gay, I would get killed. It was rough. So, I just kept all that to myself until I was big enough and bold enough and grown enough to move.

From Latrice Royale's experiences, we can see how her homosexuality was a mobilizing force in her life, with movement being equated to the search for a more aggregated sense of becoming. For others, mobility is forced, and often determined by the family. The Princess (S4:E3) shared that when her father found out that she was a drag queen, he "wrote me a letter and said 'you're an embarrassment to the family. Change your name. Move far away'. He basically didn't want any contact with me whatsoever". A similar experience was shared by Honey Mahogany (S5:E4), whose parents sent her overseas to *re*aggregate herself:

> When I came back from college, my parents actually found a picture of me in drag, and that's how they found out. They basically sent me out of the country, because they were, like, 'you need to get away from your negative influence', they sent me to Africa. [*We, as gay people, we go through things that I think enable us to grow in a way that straight people don't get to experience*].

Whilst The Princess's parents could not tolerate her disaggregation – her inability to accord with the cultural matrix – and thus asked her to leave, Honey Mahogany's parents thought that sending her away was a solution to her disaggregation by removing her from "negative influence[s]".

The difference between declaring oneself as homosexual and declaring oneself as a drag queen is that of choice. Sexual predisposition is not chosen; performing as a drag queen is. This is important, as it reveals a commitment to not just reaggregating the self, but to challenging the very drivers of disaggregation in the first place. As Manila Luzon (S3:E4) put it, "when I first came out, I was like, 'oh, I guess this is the perfect timing for me to become a drag queen!' If I'm going to be a queer, I might as well be the queeriest". Drag culture is a culture of resistance, and *RPDR* is a medium through which resistance can be mainstreamed. Accordingly, it has received 'hyperbolic praise for its support of the marginalized and outcast within society and in the drag community, preaching a gospel of self-love and self-care' (Ferreday 2020, 467). This "gospel" is highlighted in various ways throughout *RPDR*, and in doing so reveals the potential for drag to help reconcile the disaggregated queer subject.

One example is a challenge during Episode 7 of Season 2, when contestants were asked to develop their own autobiography. The examples of Tyra Sanchez's, Raven's and Pandora Boxx's autobiographies illustrate the role of drag in reconciliation:

> RuPaul: Do you have a title for your book?
> Tyra: The Woman in Me.
> RuPaul: Is this funny? Is this serious?

Tyra: It's more serious. It's like, how the woman, which is Tyra, helped me, like, get

back to loving people and understanding people and allowing people to love me back.

RuPaul: Hey Miss Raven, do you have a title for your book?

Raven: Young, Broke and Fabulous.

RuPaul: I love it.

Raven: My favourite chapter is the LTR, long-term relationship. The long-term

relationship I found was a relationship with myself.

RuPaul: Hey Pandora, so what's the title of your book?

Pandora: Out of the Boxx. It's about discovering myself by dressing up like

somebody else. And really kind of finding your inner strength and not listening to that

voice that says you're not good enough.

Tyra asserts that she has a woman within a man's body, and that her drag is simply an

outward representation of that. For Raven, it is about understanding the self and refusing to

compromise who she is to suit the expectations of the cultural matrix. For Pandora, the

process of becoming another person enables her to understand who she is as a cisgender

queer male, which itself becomes a source of "inner strength". What unites these perspectives

is the development of a sense of non-representational strength from which the reconciled self

can be realized. These realizations comprise 'practices through which we become 'subjects'

decentred, affective, but embodied, relational, expressive and involved with others and

objects in a world continually in process' (Nash 2000, 655). Drag is a method through which

the disaggregated self can become reaggregated: first through a non-representational embrace

of difference-in-itself, and subsequently through a suite of more distinct representational

practices. It is these representational practices that I now turn to by considering how queer kinaesthetics can foreground the freedom of embodied becoming.

The Freedom of Embodied Becoming

Recognition of the disaggregated self is an important trigger that pushes drag queens away from the cultural matrix. Exploring the manifestations of this push away reveals alternative narratives that can be seen to recalibrate the subjective from the position of the emancipated queer subject that is in the process of moving *through* difference. This subsection elaborates this position by illustrating how the queer kinaesthetics of drag foreground the freedom of becoming. This is a sense of freedom that comes from within. Offering a different perspective, Ward (2020, 1) highlights the 'concerning dissonance between this symbolic cultural progress [of *RPDR*], and the reality of queer lives that continue to be marked by discrimination, oppression and violence' and argues that *RPDR* can, even if unintentionally, 'perpetuate specific hierarchies of subjectivity which work to maintain hegemonic power' (Ward 2020, 1). Notwithstanding, the freedoms of queer kinaesthetics are those that exist outside of, and in many respects reject, the cultural grid that Ward evokes in his notion of "hierarchies of subjectivity". It is an intensely personal, and therefore autonomous, form of becoming. Drag reorients disoriented bodies, as Tyra Sanchez (S2:E5) discovered at a young age:

> Doing drag on top of being gay at 14 was kind of an escape. Now I get to be as feminine as I want to be and I don't get pointed out for it, because a lot of people, you know, didn't know I was a boy.

Tyra subverts the hierarchies of subjectivity that once "pointed" her out for being gay by perfecting her drag to the extent that she passes as a woman. She takes control of the discourse by speaking from a position of intersubjective freedom, not exclusion. Many drag queens express similar sentiment. Jinkx Monsoon (S5:E12), for example, recalled how "even though I was hurting at home, I was living on stage", which emphasizes the spatial contingencies of becoming, and how performing drag leads to an expansion of the self as queens navigate both their "male" and "female" lives.

Developing these ideas even further is Sonique's (S2:E3, E1) assertions that "Sonique is everything that I feel on the inside. When you feel good on the inside, it shows", and that "to be able to change yourself into a completely different person is very empowering". The ability to change is the ability to move through difference and to subsequently rework the very distinctions and boundaries that lead to differences being reproduced and codified in the first place. These movements enable normative interpretations of the 'male/masculine/heterosexual, female/butch/lesbian, male/camp/homosexual' distinction to be 'not reversed but deliberately scrambled' (Butler 1995, 269). The scrambling effect is one of chaotic freedom, and the emergent possibilities that stem from the subsequent need to become something – *any*thing – that is new. In this schema, it is newness that is queerness. The new breaks the patterns of recitation that reenforce the cultural grid that establishes the terms of marginality and disaggregation in the first place. In turn, the power of queerness – and of queer kinaesthetics in particular – stems from the ability to 'transcend boundaries, defy protocols that define identity, buck social regulations, and even liberat[e] desire' (Avilez 2019, 56).

This power stems from the premise of openness from which the queer subject position gains strength. In being open, it has the capacity to incorporate ideas, objects, and interpretations into its way of being. As Grosz (1994, 80) observes, 'the body image is capable of accommodating and incorporating an extremely wide range of objects. Anything that comes into contact with the surface of the body and remains there long enough will be incorporated'. The objects of drag – women's clothing, corsets, make-up, wigs, jewellery and even one's drag name itself – all work to mark and shape the body – how it moves, how it positions itself, how it speaks of itself, how it *knows* itself – through the opening effect of queer kinaesthetics. By going through these processes of dragging up, queer subjects are gradually, yet progressively, becoming free from the expectations of their male selves to the extent that "it all starts to become one person after a while" (Raja, S2:E11). The integrative sense of becoming "one" person was shared by Trixie Mattel (S7:E8), whose own experiences further highlight the freedom of incorporation:

> I had a really hard time with my stepdad. If I was being too sensitive, or acting too feminine, he would call me a Trixie. For years, that was one of the worst words I could think of. So, I took that name Trixie, and it used to have all this hurt to it, and I made it my drag name. And now it's something I celebrate, something I'm so proud of.

In this case a name – just like a way of walking effeminately, or of speaking, or of projecting oneself, or even just *being* – is reappropriated and used as a weapon of subversion against the hierarchies of subjectivity through which she was once oppressed. These appropriations serve to 'frame institutional oppressions as movable roadblocks, intersectional strategies of survival as not very useful, and methods of success that work for some privileged subjects as

operational for all' (Heller 2020a, 144). Evoking the idea that such acts are "operational for all" highlights the wide(r)-ranging potential of queer kinaesthetics to those individuals that do not necessarily identify as "queer", or who do not necessarily participate in drag. In doing so, it also trains attention on the medium – television – through which *RPDR* is presented to audiences. Television – and the stylisation of the subject that occurs throughout production and post-production – can be seen as tool to perfect the idea(l) of the sissy, and to represent the queer kinaesthetics of drag in the most appealing way possible for a generalised, global audience. How these processes might play out in the clubs or on the street can, however, remain a source of marginalisation, exclusion and even violence. Notwithstanding the politics of the medium, queer kinaesthetics can and should be embraced by every body as a way of working through differences, regaining control of ourselves, and thus realising the ontological potential of difference-*in*-itself. The idea, then, is that we all somehow, and in some way, learn how to "sissy that walk".

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