

Queer Theory

QUEER THEORY
A Play by John Fisher

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QUEER THEORY
A Play

Characters

JEFF, a Queer Theory professor

JEFFREY, the gender inverse of JEFF

RENÉE, transgendered sister to JEFF and a Gender Studies professor

DAVIS, a professor from Harvard

DR. FRANKLIN MORRISON, a research physician, friend of JEFF's

CONCEPCION, a university student

DANNY, another university student

Time

The Present

Place

Berkeley, Harvard, Oxford

SCENE ONE

A lecture hall. JEFF stands at a podium delivering a lecture to the audience.

JEFF

Queer is not gay and lesbian. It is not male or female. Queer resists oppositional definitions such as these. Queer emphasizes the body's slipperiness, its resistance to stability, its refusal to knuckle under and be defined. And queer theorists such as myself are not the first to think this. Let's take an example from history, shall we? An example of queer thinking? A lot has been made of the Boy Actresses on the Elizabethan stage. Women, of course, were not allowed to perform in the plays of Shakespeare so boys played the great heroines. Why? Why were the English so determined to keep women offstage that they would allow boys to run around in drag partaking of sexual situations with fully grown men? (Pause.) It arises from seventeenth-century anxieties about what might happen to a woman in a sexual situation, especially a public one. The fact is the Elizabethans were barely hanging on to their gender. They believed, basing their beliefs on Aristotle, Galen, Pythagoras, Hippocritus and the rest of that crowd, that men and women shared the same genitalia except that men's were extroverted while women's were introverted. They saw in the penis, in the scrotum the external manifestation of the clitoris, the vagina. Elizabethan anatomy believed that in the womb all feti were female with internalized genitals. But at some point enough heat was generated, or not, to make the scrotum fall thus creating from a female a male, or not. Thus a female was an incomplete male. An uncooked male. An unheated biscuit. A raw, unsavory, incomplete man. This explains Aristotle's contempt for women. A contempt shared by the Elizabethans. Women were unfinished men! But the danger of heat remains. Even after the womb, post birth. A physician reported in this period that a woman who over-exerted herself, who over-heated herself by chasing a pig, actually dropped her scrotum, actually altered her gender. She worked herself up into such a state that she became a man. How is this possible? I must digress briefly. The Elizabethans further believed that a woman must orgasm, must generate semen, just as a man must, to create a baby. Ergo, women's orgasms were as key to procreation as men's. Therefore sex was about mutual orgasms without which a baby could not be created. Thus not just "yes, yes, yes, I'm coming." But "Yes, yes, yes, I'm coming." "Me too." That's what would make a baby. What happens then in unsatisfactory or simulated sex, as you would have onstage, if the women didn't orgasm? If she didn't release her heat via semen? If she did not dispense her sexual heat in the procreation of a baby? She'd drop her balls. She'd pop her dick. And right there, onstage, you would have created a man. Imagine the great love scene from *Romeo and Juliet* with a man and woman playing the roles. What starts out with a lot of steamy adolescent sex talk between a man and woman would have ended up with the woman overheating and becoming a man. But what would happen to the man? Take this thinking to its logical conclusion and what happens to the man who doesn't orgasm as the woman who doesn't orgasm becomes male. He becomes female. As her balls fall, his retract. As her vagina pops out forming a pp, his pp beats a hasty retreat forming a vagina. She convexes as he concaves. It's madness! What's the solution? They both have sex onstage to release their heat and maintain their gender. Live hardcore pornography was the only

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solution. And failing that, because Queen Elizabeth - the Virgin Queen - would never condone onstage copulation, they had to bring on the boys in skirts.

(CONCEPCION, a student sitting in the audience, has raised her hand.)

CONCEPCION

Dr. Webster.

JEFF

Yes, Concepcion.

CONCEPCION

Wouldn't the boy and the man, in this rubric, both get overheated in the seduction scene and turn into women?

JEFF

No. Maybe if the boy was playing boy, but his very gender confusion, the fact that he was got up as a woman, would so confuse the older actor that he couldn't finally settle on a stable lust-object and therefore could not get sufficiently aroused.

CONCEPCION

But what if the older actor was a tranny chaser?

JEFF

A what?

CONCEPCION

What if he was into transsexuals? Shemales? Transgenders?

JEFF

Nobody's really into shemales, Concepcion. That's something sick you've picked up on the Internet. Transvestities, transsexauls, transgenders are all freaks. Just because our culture is so pretentious we refuse to recognize that, doesn't mean the Elizabethans were so sick and twisted. It's important to remember that surgery to the Elizabethans was still a practical science. It hadn't yet become the creative tool for self-mutilation it has become for us. The Elizabethans hadn't discovered the self-loathing certain deviants in our society take as an inspiration for slicing off their dicks. It's like cutting off an arm or leg, Concepcion. It just wouldn't occur to them. Nobody's really into people who cut off their cocks, Concepcion. Most people just don't get it. They think, rightly, that it's sick. Does that answer your question?

CONCEPCION

I guess.

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JEFF

Do you know any transgenders?

CONCEPCION

No.

JEFF

Well I suggest you meet a few. Then you'll understand. Are there any other questions?

DANNY

(Another student in the audience)

Is it true you're going to Harvard?

JEFF

Now who told you that?

DANNY

Gossip.

JEFF

Well, remember gossip is femininizing. It's a little too much heat on your balls. But yes, I am being courted very seriously by Harvard and if the deal's sweet enough I fully intend to go.

DANNY

But what about us?

JEFF

Well, Berkeley is a public school and Harvard is private. And you know what that means kids. More money for this honey.

(We hear a bell chime.)

That's one o'clock. I have office hours till two.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Lights up immediately on CONCEPCION and DANNY talking in the aisle.

CONCEPCION

He's an arrogant fuck.

DANNY

He's the most popular teacher on campus.

CONCEPCION

I can't believe what he just said.

DANNY

About trannies?

CONCEPCION

About gossip is feminizing.

DANNY

He doesn't believe in a lot of p.c. bullshit.

CONCEPCION

You think he's hot.

DANNY

So what if I do?

CONCEPCION

He'd probably be really into you.

DANNY

Jealous?

CONCEPCION

He fucks anything. So long as it's young. And male.

DANNY

Is that the gossip?

CONCEPCION

I just think anyone's who's gay should be a hell of a lot more sympathetic to women and trannies.

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Why? Because he's gay?
DANNY

Yeah.
CONCEPCION

Freaks should stick together?
DANNY

I don't consider women freaks.
CONCEPCION

A lot of fags do.
DANNY

Well, that's really sad.
CONCEPCION

I don't.
DANNY

You're not a fag. You're bisexual.
CONCEPCION

I'm probably a fag. Bisexuality's just a phase.
DANNY

I don't think that.
CONCEPCION

Everybody's queer?
DANNY

Yeah, and I bet I can prove it.
CONCEPCION

Really?
DANNY

Yes, everybody's queer.
CONCEPCION

I'll take that bet.
DANNY

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

Lights up on FRANKLIN and DAVIS chatting in another place.

FRANKLIN

Yes, yes, he's innovative all right.

DAVIS

He did put you down as a reference.

FRANKLIN

And I support him.

DAVIS

You think he's radical?

FRANKLIN

Yes, he has some radical ideas about Renaissance anatomy and he has a no bullshit way of lecturing, But I think that's his style. He likes to stir things up.

DAVIS

It's um... It's a little unusual for a PhD to have an MD recommend him.

FRANKLIN

Well, I'm a researcher more than I am a doctor.

DAVIS

Did you two do research together?

FRANKLIN

He was one of my teachers. He initiated me.

DAVIS

Into what?

FRANKLIN

The expanded reality of queer theory. Into a broader understanding of what the body is capable. The infinity of possibilities.

DAVIS

Sounds more like weird science than queer theory.

FRANKLIN

Weird Science is of our favorite movies.

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DAVIS

Is it sound theory?

FRANKLIN

You're considering him seriously for this appointment.

DAVIS

Yes, very seriously.

FRANKLIN

He's pretty far out there. Harvard will just have to decide how far out it wants to go.

DAVIS

I'm attending his lecture on Wednesday.

FRANKLIN

(With meaning)

There are more intimate ways of reviewing his ideas.

DAVIS

Thank you for your recommendation, Doctor Franklin.

FRANKLIN

A pleasure, Dr. Davis.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR

Lights up on JEFF's office. A desk and a door upstage. DANNY, naked, sits on the desk facing upstage. He climaxes and JEFF surfaces from between his legs.

DANNY

Wow. That was... that was really intense.

JEFF

Now, do you want to talk about your paper?

DANNY

Jesus...

JEFF

Your thesis is strong but the supporting sections are pure fiction.

DANNY

Where's my underwear?

JEFF

Here. If you don't have the evidence you should change your thesis.

DANNY

But that's the point I want to make.

JEFF

An essay is not about making a point, it's about proving a point. Your proofs are non-existent.

DANNY

So I should change my thesis?

JEFF

Or manipulate your evidence.

DANNY

Like you do.

JEFF

Like I do?

DANNY

The Elizabethans were afraid of scrota popping out onstage.

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JEFF

Put your underpants on.

DANNY

You don't really believe that? About Elizabethan anatomy.

JEFF

Read Greenblatt. Read Orgel. Read Maclean. Read Laqueur...

DANNY

But that's not their conclusion.

JEFF

No, it's mine. A thesis is not where anyone else has started and it's not where anyone else has been, it's where you end up, and it is both surprising and unique.

DANNY

And creative.

JEFF

But not fiction.

DANNY

I have a friend who has a thesis.

JEFF

Well, let's hope he ends up some place surprising and unique.

DANNY

She.

JEFF

Ok.

DANNY

And she's hoping for a fellow traveler.

JEFF

You know the great thing about this university it doesn't have a non-fraternization code.

DANNY

Which means you can blow your students.

JEFF

Which means I can throw them out of my office when I'm done. That's two.

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(We hear a knock.)

JEFF

Come in.

(The door opens. CONCEPCION sticks her head in. She sees DANNY.)

CONCEPCION

Hey.

DANNY

Hey.

JEFF

(Exiting to bathroom.)

Excuse me.

DANNY

Came by to test your theory?

CONCEPCION

Nobody's all gay.

DANNY

He's more than all gay. He's a bottom.

CONCEPCION

You have a nice penis, Danny.

DANNY

Thank you, Concepcion.

(JEFF reenters drying his hands on a towel.)

JEFF

Thanks for dropping by, Danny.

DANNY

Thank you, Dr. Webster.

JEFF

Don't forget your paper.

DANNY

Thank you, Dr. Webster.

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(He exits.)

	CONCEPCION (Moving in)
Hello.	
	JEFF
Hello.	
	CONCEPCION
How are you?	
	JEFF
Great. How are you?	
	CONCEPCION
Maybe this isn't the moment.	
	JEFF
No, I'm free now.	
	CONCEPCION
I meant, maybe you need to relax. For what I have to say to you.	
	JEFF
What do you have to say to me?	
	CONCEPCION
Well...	
	JEFF
Well...	
	CONCEPCION
When was the last time you were this close...	
	JEFF
This close...	
	CONCEPCION
To a woman.	
	JEFF
You'd be surprised.	

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I'd like to be. CONCEPCION

I'm a chivalrous man, Ms. Juarez. JEFF

Oh, really? CONCEPCION

It's the nice side of being a chauvinist pig. JEFF

Ok... CONCEPCION

I think... JEFF

Yes... CONCEPCION

While it's culturally acceptable to copulate casually with another man... JEFF

Yes... CONCEPCION

A woman... JEFF

A woman? CONCEPCION

A lady... JEFF

Yes... CONCEPCION

Should have some dinner in her. JEFF

So take me... CONCEPCION

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Yes? JEFF

To dinner. CONCEPCION

Ok. It'll give me a chance to catch my breath. JEFF

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIVE

DAVIS and DANNY talking in the aisle.

DANNY

He gave you my name?

DAVIS

Yes. Do you enjoy his class?

DANNY

Yeah, sure. You know, he has sex with his students.

DAVIS

I didn't know that.

DANNY

His male students.

DAVIS

That's not as much of a problem.

DANNY

It's practically part of the curriculum.

DAVIS

If you're cute, I assume.

DANNY

Well, that helps.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SIX

Lights up on JEFF's apartment. There is a couch and a table with phone. A door with a light switch on the wall beside it is upstage. CONCEPCION and JEFF have just entered.

It's a nice place.

CONCEPCION

Thank you.

JEFF

Dinner was lovely.

CONCEPCION

You were lovely eating it.

JEFF

The clams were delish.

CONCEPCION

So were the mussels.

JEFF

You act so gay in class.

CONCEPCION

And you act like a prick.

JEFF

I'm nervous in your class.

CONCEPCION

Now why would that be?

JEFF

My mother hassles me about the courses I take.

CONCEPCION

She wants you to take business courses.

JEFF

How did you guess?

CONCEPCION

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JEFF

Parents of ethnic students. It's an old story.

CONCEPCION

You really are something.

(They kiss.)

CONCEPCION

Do I kiss like a boy?

JEFF

I don't kiss boys.

CONCEPCION

No?

JEFF

Not on the mouth.

CONCEPCION

Oh.

(More kissing. He breaks away.)

JEFF

I'm feeling sick.

CONCEPCION

Really?

JEFF

Look, this isn't working.

CONCEPCION

It seems to be.

JEFF

I just don't believe in it – politically.

CONCEPCION

How about physically?

JEFF

(Holding his stomach)

No, I'm sorry. Maybe if we were both women. Excuse me.

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(He exits to bathroom. She smiles and then looks towards bathroom concerned.)

CONCEPCION

Are you all right?

JEFF

Yes, yes I'm fine. Just looking for a Tums.

(JEFFREY, a woman, enters from bathroom dressed exactly like JEFF. Her clothes are a bit big for her. She is shorter and has longer hair than JEFF.)

JEFFREY

They're around here somewhere.

(On seeing her, CONCEPCION jumps.)

CONCEPCION

Who...?

JEFFREY

What happened to you?

CONCEPCION

What happened to me?

JEFFREY

You look taller.

CONCEPCION

Who the hell are you?

JEFFREY

What?

CONCEPCION

Who the hell...

JEFFREY

You look gigantic. What happened to you?

CONCEPCION

Don't touch me.

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Your hands are huge. JEFFREY

Where's... CONCEPCION

Come here. JEFFREY

I... I... CONCEPCION

Come over here. JEFFREY

Is he... Is he... CONCEPCION

I said come here... JEFFREY

Don't boss me around. CONCEPCION

Where are you going? JEFFREY

Where's Dr. Webster? CONCEPCION

JEFFREY
(Sarcastic)

Gee, I don't know. Where is Dr. Webster? You're very oddly proportioned.

What are you talking about? CONCEPCION

You're like a foot taller. JEFFREY

I... I don't know... CONCEPCION

What's the hell's wrong with you? JEFFREY

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CONCEPCION
I... Listen if Dr. Webster has left I'm leaving too.

JEFFREY
Stop acting like such a weirdo.

CONCEPCION
Don't talk to me like that.

JEFFREY
Don't talk to *me* like that.

CONCEPCION
I'm leaving.

JEFFREY
Concepcion-

CONCEPCION
Are you like Dr. Webster's sister or something?

JEFFREY
My sister? What the fuck is going on with my pants?

CONCEPCION
I'm leaving.

JEFFREY
Ahhh!!! What the hell's up with my hair?

CONCEPCION
Your hair.

JEFFREY
What happened to my hair? And why are my clothes so big?

CONCEPCION
Could you stop it? You're really freaking me out. Why is this door locked?

JEFFREY
(Feeling chest)
Ahhhh! What... What the hell have you done to me?

CONCEPCION
Me?

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You... You mutilated me.

JEFFREY

What?

CONCEPCION

What did you do to me?

JEFFREY

Nothing. I don't even know you.

CONCEPCION

What?

JEFFREY

Could you open this door please?

CONCEPCION

No.

JEFFREY

I want to leave.

CONCEPCION

JEFFREY
(Grabbing hold of her)
Come here. Now what did you do to me?

CONCEPCION
Let go of me.

(The lights go black.)
Ahhh!! Turn the lights on.

JEFFREY
I didn't turn them off. You bumped the switch.

COCNEPCION
Turn the lights on! Help! Help!

JEFF
Stop that. Stop yelling.

(Lights up. JEFF is now holding CONCEPCION. JEFFREY has disappeared.)

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What? Where...
CONCEPCION

Calm down.
JEFF

Where's that woman?
CONCEPCION

What woman?
JEFF

The one that attacked me.
CONCEPCION

Nobody attacked you.
JEFF

Where did you go?
CONCEPCION

What's going on?
JEFF

What do you mean?
CONCEPCION

My clothes fit.
JEFF

Yes.
CONCEPCION

They didn't before.
JEFF

You're very strange.
CONCEPCION

Of course I'm strange. I just lost a foot and then gained it back again.
JEFF

Where's that woman?
CONCEPCION

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What is going on?
JEFF

I don't know but you're scaring me.
CONCEPCION

I'm scaring you. You're scaring me.
JEFF

I'm shaking.
CONCEPCION

Stay away from me.
JEFF

(The phone rings – loud. Both scream. She jumps and holds him.)

It's just the phone.
JEFF

Answer it.
CONCEPCION

It goes to voice mail.
JEFF

It does?
CONCEPCION

I don't answer my phone.
JEFF

So why do you let it ring?
CONCEPCION

So I know when I'm getting a call.
JEFF

But you don't have caller id.
CONCEPCION

I wouldn't answer it anyway.
JEFF

Interesting.
CONCEPCION

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That was odd. JEFF

Yes. CONCEPCION

Very odd. JEFF

I... I must be seeing things. CONCEPCION

Me too. JEFF

Weird. CONCEPCION

It was. JEFF

Are you on medication? CONCEPCION

No. Are you? JEFF

Just recreational things. CONCEPCION

You want to kiss me again? JEFF

I'm not sure that's such a good idea. CONCEPCION

I don't know. It felt good before. Till I got a little queasy. Just rusty I guess. JEFF

(She smiles. They kiss and fall romantically behind the sofa.
CONCEPCION screams and stands up. JEFFREY stands beside her.)

What's wrong? JEFFREY

Queer Theory

This is sick shit!

CONCEPCION

Jesus my clothes.

JEFFREY

What are you?

CONCEPCION

I don't know.

JEFFREY

The door's still locked.

CONCEPCION

I'm ... I'm flipping out.

JEFFREY

Open the door.

CONCEPCION

Agh!!!!

JEFFREY

(She crouches down behind sofa, yelling in agony, and re-emerges as JEFF.)

Oh, my God.

JEFF

You're a monster.

CONCEPCION

I can't be a monster. I'm human. The definition of monstrous is unnatural. Look it up!

JEFF

Unlock the door.

CONCEPCION

You have to help me.

JEFF

Let me out.

CONCEPCION

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JEFF

Watch the light switch!

(The lights go out.)

CONCEPCION

Take your hands off me.

JEFF

I'm just trying to turn on the light. There!

(The lights go on. JEFFREY stands in JEFF's place.)

CONCEPCION

Oh, God.

JEFFREY

What?

CONCEPCION

Guess what just happened.

JEFFREY

Oh, shit.

CONCEPCION

Please let me go.

JEFFREY

You have to stay and help me.

CONCEPCION

Just open the door. Please, Dr. Webster.

JEFFREY

Has this ever happened to you before?

CONCEPCION

I've only had one boyfriend and his gender was very stable.

JEFFREY

(Pleading on her knees)

Help me.

CONCEPCION

I can't.

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I'm begging you.

JEFFREY

Get off your knees.

CONCEPCION

Please help me.

JEFFREY

(JEFFREY, on her hands and knees pleading, backs CONCEPCION behind the couch. JEFFREY disappears from view.)

Oh my God. I saw it happen.

CONCEPCION

(JEFF stands up behind the couch.)

What?

JEFF

I saw it happen.

CONCEPCION

You did?

JEFF

Ah, don't touch me! (She pushes him and he falls behind the couch.) It happened again!

CONCEPCION

I...

JEFFREY
(Standing)

Your hair grew like Barbie's when you press her tummy.

CONCEPCION

That's not all that happened.

JEFFREY

Oh, oh my.

CONCEPCION

This boyfriend of yours...

JEFFREY

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CONCEPCION

Yes...

JEFFREY

Did his scrotum and testicles retract when you touched him?

CONCEPCION

Dr. Webster, please open the door.

JEFFREY

I'm going to let you leave because I suddenly have a tremendous sympathy for you as a woman and I don't want you to feel trapped.

CONCEPCION

That's very empathetic of you. Please open the door

JEFFREY

But I want to hold onto you.

CONCEPCION

Fine but open the door.

JEFFREY

I'm afraid if I let you go my frank and beans will remain retracted.

CONCEPCION

You'll get used to it.

(The door is open. CONCEPCION exits quickly. JEFFREY stands and makes a tremendous "effort" to change back. Nothing happens.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights up on JEFFREY talking on the phone to FRANKLIN. JEFFREY is in his apartment. FRANKLIN stands in his apartment wearing a bathrobe. During the scene DAVIS, also wearing a bathrobe, enters unseen behind FRANKLIN and eavesdrops.

JEFFREY

It has something to do with heat.

FRANKLIN

Yes... Yes...

JEFFREY

Heat makes my... Well, it restores my masculinity. Or takes it away.

FRANKLIN

This is incredible. I want to come over. I want to get this down on video.

JEFFREY

I'm not a lab rat.

FRANKLIN

Of course you aren't. But this is phenomenal.

JEFFREY

I'm hanging up.

FRANKLIN

Ok... Ok... I'm sorry. Listen.

JEFFREY

Is someone there with you?

FRANKLIN

Um, yeah. (To DAVIS) Go back to bed, sweetie.

JEFFREY

Who's there with you?

FRANKLIN

The guy from Harvard. He want's to know everything about you.

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JEFFREY

You called him “sweetie.”

FRANKLIN

I’m trying to get you this job.

JEFFREY

Oh, God.

FRANKLIN

He’s coming on to your lecture tomorrow.

JEFFREY

Oh, Jesus. This isn’t happening.

FRANKLIN

You need to speak to someone you can trust. Personally. Someone sympathetic.

JEFFREY

I thought you were sympathetic.

FRANKLIN

I’m too jaded. All I can think about is the Nobel Prize. Can you talk to your parents?

JEFFREY

Please, they haven’t gotten over the fact that I’m gay.

FRANKLIN

Don’t you have a brother?

JEFFREY

I have to go.

FRANKLIN

Jeffrey, listen to me. Tomorrow’s a very important lecture. You must stabilize your gender.

(JEFFREY hangs up and rubs her head tensely. Suddenly she begins to groan. Blackout on her. FRANKLIN looks at his phone. DAVIS crosses and holds FRANKLIN.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE EIGHT

Lights up on JEFF's apartment. JEFF on phone.

JEFF

(Into the phone)

Could I have the Department of Gender Studies? (Pause.) Hello I'm trying to reach Renée Webster. No, I'd like his home number. He's my brother... I mean he's my sister. Yes, *she's* my sister. Well I don't have it. We're not on speaking terms. That's none of your business. Could you please just give me the number? Well then could you please call him and have him call me. Thank you. My number is (415) 456-8928. It's an emergency.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINE

Lights up on DAVIS and FRANKLIN still in their embrace.

DAVIS

I feel like you're keeping things from me.

FRANKLIN

I've only known you for four hours.

DAVIS

I was straight until tonight. I'm very vulnerable. Tell me the big secret. Please.

FRANKLIN

I can't. Sorry.

(DAVIS suddenly twists FRANKLIN's arm behind him.)

DAVIS

I need to know everything about Dr. Webster! Everything!

FRANKLIN

(In pain)

Ahhhh!!!

DAVIS

Am I hurting you?

FRANKLIN

I like it

DAVIS

Who was on the phone?

FRANKLIN

Yes, that was just Jeff. Webster. Dr. Webster.

JEFF

This time of night?

FRANKLIN

Oh, yes, he's, he's onto something. Something big.

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DAVIS

Tell me about it.

FRANKLIN

It's um... it's a surprise. Tighter please.

CROSS TO...

SCENE TEN

JEFF's Apartment. Lights up on RENÉE, a transsexual (very well dressed), and JEFF.

RENÉE

Well, isn't that interesting.

JEFF

You're my brother. You could be a little sympathetic.

RENÉE

Could I?

JEFF

Please. This is completely different from what you did to yourself.

RENÉE

Is it?

JEFF

Yes, you mutilated your body. I am a victim.

RENÉE

Please don't excite yourself.

JEFF

I'm not exciting myself-

RENÉE

I don't want your gender to slip.

JEFF

Henry-

RENÉE
(Correcting him)

Renée.

JEFF

Henry-

RENÉE

Renée. I haven't been Henry for ten years.

Queer Theory

Oh, Jesus. JEFF

You always get his name right. RENÉE

Henry- JEFF

So why exactly am I here? RENÉE

I don't need your help. JEFF

Then why did ya call me? RENÉE
(Fixing her shoe)

Oh, please. Please don't do that. JEFF

What? RENÉE

All that feminine bullshit of fixing your ankle straps. JEFF

They're twisted. RENÉE

Please. JEFF

They are. RENÉE

It's a performance. JEFF

My ankle straps? RENÉE

You're performing femininity. JEFF

Queer Theory

RENÉE

Performing femininity?

JEFF

Yes, all that primping and adjusting of the clothing.

RENÉE

I'm wearing ankle straps. They twist.

JEFF

Please.

RENÉE

What am I supposed to do?

JEFF

Wear practical shoes.

RENÉE

Practical shoes are ugly.

JEFF

They don't serve as props.

RENÉE

Props?

JEFF

For your performance.

RENÉE

They don't flex my calf.

JEFF

Oh, honestly.

RENÉE

I have very nice legs in heels.

JEFF

Jesus-

RENÉE

(Moving in on him, seductively)

Even before the surgery I had very nice legs in heels.

Queer Theory

Stop it. JEFF

Didn't I? RENÉE

Just stop it. JEFF

It's ok. Nobody cares about incest at our age. RENÉE

Please. JEFF

Come on. RENÉE

What are you trying to do? JEFF

Heat you up. I want to see your organs retract. RENNE

CROSS TO...

SCENE ELEVEN

CONCEPCION and DANNY in another place.

CONCEPCION

It was horrible!

DANNY

Calm down.

CONCEPCION

Scary and horrible and terrifying.

DANNY

Concepcion.

CONCEPCION

He accused me of doing it to him. Of emasculating him. Of making his boobs grow.

DANNY

Concepcion.

(She kisses him wildly. He enjoys it.)

CONCEPCION

Oh, yeah baby. Oh yeah.

(She suddenly pulls back. She stares at him. She feels his chest. She looks at his hair. She puts her hand on his crotch – clinically.)

CONCEPCION

Good. It wasn't me.

(She resumes kissing him.)

CROSS TO...

SCENE TWELVE

JEFF'S apartment. JEFFREY sits on couch.
RENÉE looks horrified.

What happened?
RENÉE

Oh, my-
JEFFREY

Oh, my God! What happened?
RENNE

I... I...
JEFFREY

You... What are you?
RENÉE

Henry, please.
JEFFREY

Renée.
RENÉE
(Correcting him)

Renée, please.
JEFFREY

Oh, my God! You... You freak. Get your hands off me.
RENÉE

Renée...
JEFFREY

Get away from the door.
RENÉE

I'm not standing in front of the door.
JEFFREY

Get away from the door.
RENÉE

Queer Theory

Ok... JEFFREY

You're sick. You're a weird sick freak. RENÉE

I don't have any control- JEFFREY

Jekyll, Hyde. Jekyll. Hyde. RENÉE

You said you wanted to see it. JEFFREY

I thought you were faking it. I thought it was a scam. RENÉE

Renée- JEFFREY

Another one of your academic scams. RENÉE

Another one of my... JEFFREY

Like when you plagiarized your dissertation. RENÉE

I didn't plagiarize my dissertation- JEFFREY

Oh please, Greenblatt, Orgel, Laqueur, they all wrote about genital inversion decades before you stole it. RENÉE

They didn't contextualize it in a teleological analysis based strictly on Freudian Oedipal subversion and intersexuality discourse- JEFFREY

Get your hands off me you sick demented freak! RENÉE

Renée... JEFFREY

Queer Theory

RENÉE

I'm sorry. That was... Uncharitable.

JEFFREY

Henry-

RENÉE

Renée.

JEFFREY

Renée, I called you because I thought you might understand.

RENÉE

What?

JEFFREY

I thought, if it happened again, as it has, I thought you might understand.

RENNE

Oh, no, no...

JEFFREY

What?

RENÉE

No...

JEFFREY

What?

RENÉE

Don't you dare...

JEFFREY

What?

RENÉE

Don't you dare compare whatever this grotesque sickness is to me.

JEFFREY

I just thought...

RENÉE

You sick fuck! I went through twelve years of therapy, two years of living as a woman, eight horrific surgeries and two decades of disapproval to win my pumps! To win my

Queer Theory

right, yes my right, to fiddle with my ankle straps! Don't you dare compare whatever twisted shit you're going through now to my life-long battle against my family, the U.S. government, the sex Nazis, the homofascists, the dykecommies, and every gender slave on this planet to get where I am today. What is this? Drugs? Some kind of perverted experimental surgery? A pact with the Devil? This is sick, sick, sick, primally, ontologically, biblically sick shit!

JEFFREY
(Offended)

Well.

RENÉE

Get away from that door.

JEFFREY

No.

RENÉE

I said, get your fiendish, hormonally twisted, psychopathically abnormal, physiologically monstrous ass away from that door.

JEFFREY

No.

(RENÉE removes a heel and holds it as a weapon.)

JEFFREY

I'm just a girl now. It should be easy to brush me aside as you trample me underfoot.

RENÉE

Don't appeal to me as a woman. The feminists rejected me long ago.

JEFFREY

I'm not a feminist.

RENÉE

No, you're a sick freak.

JEFFREY

Yes.

RENÉE

Get away from that door.

JEFFREY

As one sick freak to another.

Queer Theory

Oh. You bitch. RENÉE

How does it feel? JEFFREY

You worm. RENÉE

Finally you're the gender Nazi. JEFFREY

You slug. RENÉE

You get to feel genetically superior. JEFFREY

Filth. RENÉE

You get to feel- JEFFREY

Don't say it- RENÉE

Relatively- JEFFREY

Don't say it- RENÉE

Sequentially- JEFFREY

Don't you dare say it- RENÉE

Essentially- JEFFREY

No, no, no- RENÉE

Queer Theory

Normal. JEFFREY

Oh... you... cunt. RENÉE

That word, to me now, is offensive. JEFFREY

(RENÉE lights a cigarette.)

So what are we going to do? RENÉE

Excuse me, I feel my balls dropping. JEFFREY

CROSS TO...

SCENE THIRTEEN

FRANKLIN's. DAVIS and FRANKLIN are necking.

FRANKLIN

How's your arm feel?

DAVIS

Exquisitely sore.

DAVIS

If he's up to something, you should tell me about it.

FRANKLIN

I'm sure he'd want me to keep it a secret.

DAVIS

It's not bad is it?

FRANKLIN

Bad is a relative term.

DAVIS

Harvard has standards.

FRANKLIN

And I'm sure he will comport to them. In his creative way.

DAVIS

I'll find out tomorrow.

FRANKLIN

Yes, his lecture should be very interesting.

DAVIS

I'd like to have more sex if you're up to it.

FRANKLIN

I have a little left in me.

DAVIS

But first I want you to tie me up and shove me down a flight of stairs.

CROSS TO...

SCENE FOURTEEN

JEFF's. JEFF sits on the couch drinking a cocktail.
RENÉE enters and jumps with fright.

JEFF

Oh, yes. It happened when you opened the oven.

RENÉE

Wha... wha... wha...

JEFF

You'll have to start using the microwave.

RENÉE

Ok, how you doing? Better? Stop drinking that. (Takes drink away from him.) Soon we'll have homemade soup and fresh baked bread and I'm even making you my famous apple truffle.

JEFF

I wish you'd stop it.

RENÉE

You have to eat.

JEFF

No, I mean I wish you'd stop fussing.

RENÉE

I like to fuss.

JEFF

I mean I wish you'd stop fussing in that way.

RENÉE

What way?

JEFF

That way. All that movement.

RENÉE

That's the way I move.

JEFF

It's artificial.

Queer Theory

It's my body.

RENÉE

It's gratuitous.

JEFF

Jeffrey-

RENÉE

Forget it-

JEFF

Jeffrey-

RENÉE

I'm sorry-

JEFF

RENÉE
Jeffrey, you seem to have a hard time accepting that this is the way I move because this is how my body's constructed. It's not a performance. It just is. That's why I'm a transgender not a transvestite. I didn't want to have to fake it.

Ok.

JEFF

RENÉE
And don't talk to me in that condescending manner. I'm a college professor just like you-

Oh, come on-

JEFF

Jeffrey-

RENÉE

Please-

JEFF

RENÉE
Jeffrey, City College is an accredited school just like Berkeley-

JEFF
Please, you have a PhD from Yale and you teach at that... that trade school because you're too wrapped up in your own shit to get a proper job.

Queer Theory

I have a proper job. RENÉE

Oh, never mind. JEFF

And my own shit is my life- RENÉE

Oh really- JEFF

For which I receive no support from my family- RENÉE

Oh, oh, and they support me? JEFF

I support you. RENÉE

I don't want your support. JEFF

That's your choice. RENÉE

I never have. JEFF

I know. RENÉE

You are... you are antithetical to me. You're antipodal. You're converse. JEFF

Yes, yes, fine... RENÉE

I'm a fag and you're homophobic. How can you support me? JEFF

How am I homophobic? RENÉE

Queer Theory

JEFF

Please-

RENÉE

Please stop saying please and tell me where this outrageous comment comes from.

JEFF

You hate fags.

RENÉE

I do?

JEFF

You do.

RENÉE

And how's that?

JEFF

Because you won't let yourself become one.

RENÉE

I won't let myself become one?

JEFF

No. Every famous tranny in the book hates fags. Jan Morris, Renée Richards, Christine Jorgenson. They all deny they're fags and make a big point of declaring they're not homosexual. Even Kate Bornstein, the self-confessed freak, denies she's gay or ever was gay. They all brag about their marriages and their kids and how they're straight-

RENÉE

What's your point?

JEFF

You once told me you wanted to feel like a woman. You want to feel what a woman feels when you have sex. When you have sex with a man.

RENÉE

Yes.

JEFF

You wanted to feel a man inside you.

RENÉE

Yes.

Queer Theory

JEFF

Well then why couldn't you roll over and take up the ass like a fag? You're not a woman trapped in man's body. You're a bottom. A bottom trapped in a homophobe's body.

RENÉE

Hmmm...

JEFF

You couldn't deal with sex with men because that meant fag so you changed your gender so you could fuck men and remain straight.

RENÉE

I see.

JEFF

You think you pass? You think everyone doesn't know you're gay? With that mug and that voice? You're a faggot without a dick. You ever look at the porn sites – trannies are in the fetish category. With the amputees, midgets, small breasted, three testicles, and the bears – you want to know the difference between them and you? They can't help it.

RENÉE

You know, I gave up many male attributes to become what I am today. One of those attributes was cruelty. Cruelty for cruelty's sake. That, I think, is a distinctly masculine characteristic. And clearly, judging from my brother, not the exclusive province of heterosexual males.

JEFF

You said some very cruel things to me earlier. When my sex changed.

RENÉE

I felt trapped and confused and scared. As soon as I realized what was happening I regained my composure. You've known about me for twenty years and you've only grown nastier.

JEFF

Renée...

RENÉE

I hope this predicament passes or that you adjust positively to your new self.

JEFF

Renée, come on...

RENÉE

Good night...

Queer Theory

Oh, for Christ sake... JEFF

Goodbye. RENÉE

God damn it, Henry... JEFF

Did you read *You Just Don't Understand*? RENÉE

What? JEFF

The book *You Just Don't Understand*. Did you read it? The author teaches at your university. RENÉE

Of course, it was populist crap- JEFF

Did you understand it? RENÉE

No, yes, frankly, I'm not sure. JEFF

And what was her point? RENÉE

(Pause.)

Renée, I'm sorry. JEFF

There, you see. All is forgiven. RENÉE

CROSS TO...

SCENE FIFTEEN

Another place. DAVIS, in a trench coat, talks on a phone.

DAVIS

There's something weird going on out here. Something very... California. I don't know what it is yet, but I'm going to find out. No, Mr. Chancellor, I left my wife in Boston. I thought she might get in the way of my research. I'm adopting the broadest possible investigative techniques on this candidate. I understand, Mr. Chancellor. We want the hottest queer theorist in the country. Not a charlatan.

CROSS TO...

SCENE SIXTEEN

JEFF's apartment. JEFFREY sitting back on couch with dinner tray in front of her. RENÉE looks startled.

Ahhh... What happened?
RENÉE

I think it was the soup.
JEFFREY

Oh, dear. Well...
RENÉE

Maybe I should stick to cold food.
JEFFREY

No, you'll get hemorrhoids. I just have to get used to your... mood swings.
RENÉE

How are you?
JEFFREY

What?
RENÉE

How are you?
JEFFREY

I... I'm in shock.
RENÉE

Why?
JEFFREY

You've never asked me that.
RENÉE

That's a very pretty blouse you have on.
JEFFREY

This old thing?
RENÉE

Queer Theory

JEFFREY

Yes, and I like your pumps.

RENÉE

Would you like to borrow them?

JEFFREY

Yes. The soup was delicious. Even if it did make my balls rise.

RENÉE

Please...

JEFFREY

Sorry.

RENÉE

You're shorter as a woman. We're going to have to dress you in something that can adjust. Maybe a warm-up suit.

JEFFREY

Oh God, then I'll look like those people at theme parks.

RENÉE

The problem is in his clothes you just look like a badly dressed lesbian.

JEFFREY

That's redundant. The bread was delicious.

RENÉE

Thank you. I'm sorry but-

JEFFREY

What?

RENÉE

I mean, forgive me, but an hour ago you were screaming at me about how I was a surgically self-mutilating homophobe, now you like my bread.

JEFFREY

The thoughts aren't mutually exclusive. But some things are better left unsaid.

(RENÉE smiles.)

JEFFREY

Do you think I'm fat?

Queer Theory

RENÉE

Don't ever ask that question. It means you are. Fat is a state of mind. And don't diet. It's the first sign of defeat. Now, let's get you organized. We have to figure out how we're going to get you through the day. Number one: work.

JEFFREY

Yes, work.

RENÉE

Have you told anyone?

JEFFREY

No.

RENÉE

Ok, you have to. Everyone. No sense hiding it. The closet is a dark, scary place.

JEFFREY

I can't.

RENÉE

Why not?

JEFFREY

I'm trying to get a job at Harvard. They'd never hire an intersexed.

RENÉE

Well, you are an intersexed and if they don't want you it's not a job worth having.

JEFFREY

Renée-

RENÉE

I'm sorry, Jeffrey, but it's not.

JEFFREY

Renée...

RENÉE

Oh come on...

JEFFREY

Renée, I'm ambitious. You know that about me. And I don't think that's a distinctly male feature. Half my competition is female and they're all hungry for this position. I have an inside track, as a male, and I want this job.

Queer Theory

RENÉE

Do you have an interview coming up?

JEFFREY

I have an observer coming to my lecture.

RENÉE

Who?

JEFFREY

Giles Davis. Do you know him?

RENÉE

I know of him. Ok, we'll have to induce a sex change. Before class. We'll have to make sure you're male.

JEFFREY

What if I revert during lecture?

RENÉE

Team teaching. We'll say you're sharing the lecture with a noted lesbian who will drop by to make some comments.

JEFFREY

Oh, how is that going to work? Suppose I get caught in some midpoint between the two. What do I do for the transition moments?

RENÉE

I'll cover.

CROSS TO...

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Lecture Hall. DANNY and CONCEPCION kissing in the aisle. DAVIS enters.

DAVIS

Hello Danny.

DANNY

Hello Dr. Davis.

(DAVIS sits in audience. DANNY and CONCEPCION sit in another place. JEFF enters and commences his lecture.)

JEFF

Today we will be talking about monstrosity and its impact in English literature. There are of course two streaks of monstrosity. That which is born and that which is created. Thus Prospero describes Caliban: “A devil, a born devil, on whose nature nurture can never stick.” Caliban is not a monster but a devil – he is evil by birth, not by nurture or postnatal human agency. Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein is very much a monster, human created, and we find Dr. Frankenstein hesitating on the brink of creating him because he knows that that which is created unnaturally is monstrous: (Reading) “When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a human being like myself... but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as a man. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as an argument of its impracticality. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being.” Here we see the arrogance of nineteenth century medicine and surgery foisting itself upon the natural processes of creation. Shakespeare’s Prospero is confronted by a natural devil, he would never think to create such a thing, he merely must, in colloquial parlance, “deal with it.” Dr. Frankenstein, at the dawn of what I call “The Surgical Era,” is so arrogantly bored by the possibilities of emergency surgery that he embarks on experimental and creative surgery, surgery as plastic art, surgery as Jackson Pollack spatter painting self-indulgence. And, unlike the Elizabethans’ acceptance of the complexity and therefore respect of the natural in anatomy, the Surgical Era embarks on the reordering of the natural. And what do people like Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll, who both claim to be in the pursuit of human perfection, create in the end? The monstrous. The horrific. It is my claim that we have inherited this obsession with the monstrous and distorted it into the fashioning of the transgendered, Ms. Juarez’s “shemales.” With all manner of natural devils under the sun, why must our culture fashion the synthetic monstrosity? Don’t we, like Prospero, have enough Calibans to deal with? The retarded, the alzheimered, the oversexed mutilated by disease? (He claps his hands and rubs them together. Something begins happening. He looks panicked.) Here then, to offer a different perspective, is visiting scholar Renée Webster.

Queer Theory

(JEFF exits hurriedly as RENÉE makes a grand entrance.)

RENÉE

(To the audience)

Hard to believe we're brother and sister, isn't it? I mean he's such a snob. Gender is not "constructed" by surgery. That's just simplistic and mean. But "difference" can be released by surgery. Transgenders are very confused about their physiology. They don't necessarily believe they are women, they just believe they are in the wrong body. They shed that body and often times come out the other side not women but something else entirely. A third gender some say.

JEFFREY

(Entering)

And you don't believe there is an essential gender.

RENÉE

Oh, hello. Here is Dr. Heliotrope, distinguished professor of Rhetoric from the New College of Social and Justice Research in Des Moines.

JEFFREY

I'm from Princeton.

RENÉE

No, I think you're from Des Moines. Now you're a hermaphrodite, correct? An intersexed?

JEFFREY

No, I'm a woman.

RENÉE

Someone told me you were born with one boob, two ovaries, a testicle and an obscenely large clitoris.

JEFFREY

Excuse me.

RENÉE

(To audience)

The intersexed are what Dr. Webster would call devils because they are natural as opposed to monsters, like me, who are man made.

JEFFREY

I am not intersexed.

Queer Theory

RENÉE

(To audience)

Dr. Heliotrope, with her one boob and penis sized clitoris, is a devil.

JEFFREY

The question stands: you don't believe in an essentialized woman?

RENÉE

What would that be? A person who can have babies? Lots of women can't have babies. A person with breasts? Lots of women have no breasts.

JEFFREY

Even Judith Butler recognizes the material body.

RENÉE

Yes, but there are an infinite number of types, not two – male and female.

JEFFREY

The transgendered is not one of those types.

RENÉE

Why? Because the body is rearranged by request not need. How is a combat amputation more needful? Isn't war a cultural reconfiguration of the body – politics written onto flesh? Combat victims are as much victims of society and politics as transgenders.

JEFFREY

That's pure sophistry. A combat amputation saves a life.

RENÉE

As does gender reassignment surgery.

JEFFREY

Only in a post therapeutic and surgery saturated age. The ancients didn't need gender reassignment because it wasn't an option. It's a self-indulgent, capitalist construct. We can afford it therefore it seems our right-

(She groans, grabs tummy and falls behind podium.)

RENÉE

(To audience)

There you see the cost of sublimating desire and mental health. I don't know Dr. Heliotrope's problem but she is clearly suppressing something.

JEFF

(Standing)

The issues are getting clouded. You're letting the discourse drift.

RENÉE

Like gender. Gender can drift and slip.

JEFF

We were talking about Caliban and Frankenstein. Stick to the literature.

(RENÉE kisses JEFF on the lips and he falls behind the podium.)

RENÉE

Thus we see that a kiss can be as physically altering as a scalpel. Where once he was standing now he is on the floor.

JEFFREY

(Standing)

Transgenderism is unstable, it's not gender reassignment because it's not stable. The surgeries continue, the hormones must be maintained.

RENÉE

And who said natural gender is stable? (Aside to audience, commenting on JEFFREY's clothes.) Clearly fashion sense is not an inbred female trait. (To audience) Hysterectomies, mastectomies, circumcision, all of them remove or alter tropes of gender. (JEFFREY collapses and re-emerges as JEFF.) Does a woman who loses her breasts to cancer surrender her right to womanhood. What about the mother who surrenders her ovaries to cancer, is she no longer a mother? (JEFF has collapsed and re-emerged as JEFFREY.) Stand much? (JEFFREY collapses again.) One might more rightly question the generation of surgery, a profession historically dominated by men, and its tendency to solve all female problems by hacking away at the female anatomy. (JEFF has re-emerged.) It's the colonization of the female body. Male anatomists define the tropes of femininity – breasts, ovaries – and then male surgeons spend their lives hacking them away. (JEFF has fallen and been replaced by JEFFREY.) It seems only just that transgenders pick up the fallen pieces and recycle them through reassignment surgery – if only to keep a balance of cocks and clits in the world!

CONCEPCION

(Standing up in the audience)

I know what's happening!

RENÉE

Yes, child, what's happening?

CONCEPCION

Dr. Webster is sick. He needs medical help. He shouldn't be here today.

RENÉE

Dr. Webster is not sick. Nor is Dr. Heliotrope. (To JEFFREY) Are you dear? They are healthy. They are natural. They are neither devil nor monster. They are learning to stand up for difference. That even the most intellectually twisted soul has the right to express itself regardless of its body's slipperiness, its resistance to stability, its refusal to knuckle under and be defined. For Dr. Webster is Dr. Heliotrope. Both genders in a single package! (RENÉE knocks over the podium to reveal there is no JEFF behind it.) And the package is out of the closet! (RENÉE embraces JEFFREY.) Dr. Heliotrope-Webster was right. There is a material body. Just as there is a material river. Or a material weather. And the river flows. And the weather changes. It is not different with us!

DAVIS

(Standing in audience)

And this is exactly what we need at Harvard!

BLACKOUT

SCENE EIGHTEEN

RENÉE appears behind the lectern in a spotlight.
She holds a microphone.

RENÉE

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Queer Theory 101. This is my first course at Harvard and I'd like to start off the semester by expressing myself in my native language: song. Hit it!

(Music. She sings "Queer Theory," words and lyrics by James Dudek.)

RENÉE

*WHEN YOUR EX
WITH BIG PECS
CHANGES SEX
IT'S QUEER THEORY.*

*WHEN HIS CHEST,
SWELLS WITH BREASTS
YOU'RE OBSESSED
WITH QUEER THEORY!*

*NOW YOU'RE SNEAKING A PEAK AT THINGS FEW WOULD
YOU REMEMBER YOUR GENDER IS FLU-ID
AND THE BEST LOVER YOU'VE GOT
IS IN SOME WAYS LACKING A LOT
QUEER THEORY, QUEER THEORY!*

RENÉE

Ladies and gentlemen, my team teacher, Dr. Webster.

(During the following the spot light shifts back and forth between RENÉE and JEFF/JEFFREY whichever one is singing at the moment.)

JEFF

*WHEN YOUR CHICK
WHO WAS SLICK
GETS A DICK
IT'S QUEER THEORY.*

RENÉE

*WHEN YOUR MAN
WHO'S A STAN
IS NOW A FRAN
QUEER THEORY.*

JEFFREY

*SO YOU NEED TO READ THOSE WHO KNOW
TRY SOME BUTLER, FRIEDAN AND FOUCAULT
BUT IT'S ALL JUST DUSTY OLD TEXT
IN THE END YOU'RE ALONE AND INTERSEXED.
QUEER THEORY, QUEER THEORY*

RENÉE

*PLEASE DON'T TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK SEX IS,
OR HOW YOU WISH THAT I COULD BE MORE NORMAL
I'LL IGNORE THE SOCIAL MORAL NEXUS
WHAT I FEEL IS FAR BEYOND HORMONAL.*

JEFF

WHEN YOUR CURVES

RENÉE

AND YOUR NERVES

JEFFREY

START TO SWERVE

JEFFREY/RENÉE

IT'S QUEER THEORY!

JEFFREY

AND NEW HAIR

RENÉE

GROWS EVERYWHERE

JEFF

EVEN THERE!

RENÉE/JEFF

QUEER THEORY!

JEFFREY

YOU PERUSE WHEN YOU CHOOSE WHERE TO PEE

RENÉE

IS THE MEN'S ROOM THE RIGHT ROOM FOR ME?

JEFF

SO YOU JUST BUST THROUGH THE DOOR,

RENÉE
A TRANSCENDER OF GENDER ONCE MORE

RENÉE/JEFF
QUEER THEORY! QUEER THEORY!
QUEER THEORY! QUEER THEORY!

BLACKOUT

SCENE NINETEEN

RENÉE and JEFF's office at Harvard. RENÉE is removing make-up at a mirror. There is also a desk and a phone.

We were brilliant.

RENÉE

It was humiliating.

JEFF

Didn't you hear them cheering?

RENÉE

I feel like a circus freak.

JEFF

Showbiz.

RENÉE

Most professors have an office, we have a dressing room.

JEFF

A dressing room at Harvard. We're playing *The Palace of Academia*.

RENÉE

And I wish you hadn't outed me as intersexed.

JEFF

Why not?

RENÉE

Because now I only pull one salary.

JEFF

Our salaries are generous.

RENÉE

For you. I have to shop for two.

JEFF

I don't think you're actually intersexed.

RENÉE

JEFF

What?

RENÉE

Well, the intersexed have bits and pieces of both genders, you have all genders contained in one body. We need a new term. *Intrasexed*. Yes, all contained within one unit and all available for the currency of heat. Or maybe we could get rid of the sex all together. *Intragendered*? No, it loses something without the sex. *Intragendersexed*? *Intrasexergen*? *Gintragendergined* – no, that sounds like one of those silly gay cocktails. I think just *intrasexed*-

JEFF

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! I'm sick to death of my gender and my sexuality and my politico-sexual-societal positioning in the language and the uniqueness of my biology and my anatomy and the ontology of my gonads. Jesus Christ, can we please talk about something else? There're wars being fought in distant lands, economies collapsing, seismic catastrophes that bring down cities, revolutions, racial-religious conflicts of potentially holocaustal proportions and all we can talk about, all we care about is our gender and our sex and the position of our genitals. It's madness. Arcane, outrageously petty, insidiously trivial madness.

RENÉE

All you ever dreamed of was teaching at Harvard. Well, here you are.

JEFF

Not like this. I never dreamed of it like this.

RENÉE

And do you think anyone's ever satisfied with the route they took to celebrity. Richard Burton wanted to be a movie star – you think he liked becoming consort to the cow to do it? No. Did Liza want to claw up the wreckage of Judy to get to the top? No. But it made them stars. The point is to enjoy it while you've got it.

JEFF

As an *intrasexed*?

RENÉE

Yes, you're a role model.

JEFF

Jesus.

RENÉE

The campus looks up to you.

Queer Theory

They laugh. JEFF

They emulate. RENÉE

They don't. JEFF

They do. RENÉE

(DAVIS enters dressed as a woman.)

Hello. DAVIS

Dr. Davis. RENÉE

Trish. DAVIS
(Correcting her)

Sorry, Trish. RENÉE

Oh, God. JEFF

Do open toes make me look fat? DAVIS

Don't ever ask if you look fat. RENÉE/JEFF

Yes, right. Sorry. DAVIS

Don't ever apologize. RENÉE/JEFF

Yes. DAVIS

Queer Theory

Soprano. Soprano.

RENÉE

Yes.

DAVIS
(Higher pitched)

How are the hormone shots?

RENÉE

Oh, Renée. I don't know how I made it this far in life without them. My face feels like a baby's bottom. Feel.

DAVIS

Ooooo... Nice and soft.

RENÉE

I can't stop rubbing my cheeks.

DAVIS

I just want to put a diaper on them.

RENÉE

And I've gotten so kind to the students. They just don't bother me that much anymore.

DAVIS

Life's too short.

RENÉE

And my boobs are growing.

DAVIS

Oh, puberty in a day.

RENÉE

They're still quite small.

DAVIS

Keep feeding them, they'll bloom.

RENÉE

Oh, I know. But I don't know whether to shop for now or plan ahead.

DAVIS

What do you mean?

RENÉE

Queer Theory

DAVIS

Well I could probably fill a trainer or, planning ahead – because, you see, I’m very ambitious – I could buy a double D and stuff it.

RENÉE

Or you could be a hippy chick for a while and let it all hang out.

DAVIS

Wear silk so my nipples show.

RENÉE

Wicked!

JEFF

How’s your wife?

DAVIS

Oh, she just loves it. We knit, we plant, we swap eyeshadow, we both keep the toilet seat down. It’s lovely.

JEFF

When are you going to divorce her?

DAVIS

What?

JEFF

The slit. When are you going to dump her?

RENÉE

Jeffrey.

DAVIS

She’s my wife.

JEFF

She’s your beard.

DAVIS

Oh, and I haven’t shaved in a week.

RENÉE

Can’t tell.

Queer Theory

DAVIS

But my ass is still hairy.

RENÉE

You might just be a hairy assed female.

DAVIS

That happens?

RENÉE

Yes, but you can wax or pluck.

DAVIS

Which is better?

RENÉE

I always say wax the whiskers, pluck the pubes.

JEFF

Would you answer my question? When are you going to get rid of your wife?

DAVIS

I don't intend to.

JEFF

Then you're a liar. You're a closet case.

DAVIS

I'm living as a woman.

JEFF

When are you going to have your dick removed?

RENÉE

Jeffrey!

JEFF

You're defending *him*? He's mocking *you*.

RENÉE

This is rude. Your better half would never say these things.

JEFF

You're living as a woman?

Queer Theory

DAVIS

Yes.

JEFF

Which means one day you'll make the change.

DAVIS

Yes, when my therapist says I'm ready.

JEFF

He'll say it. In two years. To the day.

DAVIS

Hopefully.

JEFF

He will. That's what the Harry Benjamin test requires. Two years.

DAVIS

That doesn't mean it will happen.

JEFF

It will. Therapist gets a kick back from the surgeon.

RENÉE

I'm not listening to any more of this.

JEFF

Don't worry. He won't go through with it. He's a transvestite, not a transsexual. He likes having that dick under the skirt to remind him of his masculinity. To always remind him of his superiority to women and his difference from the dickless trannies like yourself. Just like he's straight at Harvard but a fag away from home. His wife reminds him of his superiority to real gay men. Of his entitlement as a straight male American.

DAVIS

(Making an exit)

You can take the professor out of the public school but you can't take the public school out of the professor.

JEFF

(Shouting after him)

And you can pluck the pube off the faggot but you can't erase the faggot with a boob.

RENÉE

That one belongs in Bartlett's.

Queer Theory

(DANNY, naked, enters.)

DANNY
Hey guys.

JEFF
Hey, Danny.

(JEFF exits to bathroom.)

RENÉE
How are your classes?

DANNY
Ok.

RENÉE
Good professors?

DANNY
I have two Nobel Prize winners, a Pulitzer Prize winner and a MacArthur Fellow.

RENÉE
Wow.

DANNY
Profs are away on book tours. Classes are all taught by graduate students.

JEFFREY
(Entering from bathroom)
Danny, can I loan you a hundred bucks?

DANNY
Nah, I'm fine.

JEFFREY
You sure?

DANNY
Yeah. Why?

JEFFREY
I just thought you could use some money to buy clothes.

RENÉE
Jeffrey.

Queer Theory

JEFFREY

Henry.

RENÉE

You know Danny's making a statement to the campus about the gender-branding nature of clothing.

JEFFREY

He's been naked for a month.

DANNY

People are beginning to notice.

JEFFREY

I knew it was a mistake to bring him.

RENÉE

We didn't bring him. He arrived on his own merits.

JEFFREY

And our recommendations.

RENÉE

Jeffrey, honestly.

JEFFREY

We arrived in Cambridge like a freak show from California – the belting castrato, the slipping hermaphrodite and the slacker exhibitionist. It's like we're living confirmation of everything the Ivy League has ever thought about West Coast education – paranormal druggies who've never heard of Plato or Socrates they're so warped by hormones, Prozac and show tunes.

RENÉE

We are dragging this campus into the new millennium.

JEFFREY

We're a midway attraction – the Queer Theory zoo.

DANNY

I agree. They do treat us like freaks. People keep hitting on me like it's all about sex. They treat me like I'm a slut because I walk around naked.

RENÉE

You are kind of a slut.

Queer Theory

DANNY

Yes, but there's a theoretical underpinning to my sluttiness.

JEFFREY

Would you two shut up!

DANNY

What's wrong with her?

RENÉE

That time of the month.

JEFFREY

You know when I'm a man you say it's a "testosterone outburst." When I'm a woman it's "that time of the month." Both comments are reductively sexist. Maybe I'm just annoyed. Maybe, regardless of my gender, I'm just pissed off. Maybe I'm just tired of being a walking social studies carnival attraction. (Exits.)

RENÉE

I'm afraid he's having a rough time of it.

DANNY

I am too. I miss California.

RENÉE

Is that all?

DANNY

I miss Concepcion.

RENÉE

Hmmm...

DANNY

I didn't realize it until I got here.

FRANKLIN
(Entering)

Hello.

DANNY

Dr. Morrison.

RENÉE

Franklin, look at you!

Queer Theory

FRANKLIN
Am I interrupting?

RENÉE
Oh, no, Danny's making a statement. It's nonsexual.

FRANKLIN
Of course.

DANNY
(Standing)
I have a class.

RENÉE
Aren't you going to be cold this winter?

DANNY
I have a scarf. (He exits.)

RENÉE
How is Berkeley?

FRANKLIN
Lovely.

RENÉE
What brings you east?

FRANKLIN
I'm presenting a paper on Jeff – my theory of what's happened to him.

RENÉE
Does he know?

FRANKLIN
No, he still won't cooperate.

RENÉE
What's your theory?

FRANKLIN
Superfluidity.

RENÉE
Superfluidity. Isn't that like a chemistry term?

FRANKLIN

Yes, but it serves as a perfect analogy for queer theory and the ebb and flow of gender and sexuality.

RENÉE

Tell me about it.

FRANKLIN

Helium becomes a liquid when it is sufficiently cooled. When it's further cooled, it is able to flow upward like a zero-gravity sphere. The transition temperature is known as the lambda point because a graph of the properties of helium takes a sharp turn at this temperature and resembles the Greek letter lambda (λ). It's so appropriate. Jeff has discovered the lambda effect. At least, that's my theory.

RENÉE

It's all too technical. Too subtle. It has to be something more. I have a theory. A theory of empathy. I think my brother just felt such great empathy for women, such sympathy that he had to become one, at least part of the time.

FRANKLIN

But he talks like he hates women.

RENÉE

His love makes him insecure so he falls back on hate. He always loved me best in our family, but he made my life a living hell. And yet we spent all our time together. It was like the Stockholm syndrome. He held me captive and we grew attached. I think it's the same with him and women. He's not straight because he doesn't want to love them. He just wants to be them.

FRANKLIN

And *you* had the sex change.

RENÉE

Well, I'm not sure now I wanted to be a woman. I just wanted to feel comfortable in my body. More comfortable. And this is the only other body available. I don't know. You know that feeling in Spring. When the world is so lush, so beautiful. You just feel connected to every bit of it. You could become anyone and that would be all right. The bodies are just shells, you flit about as if you were ultimately shell-less. I think that's the next step for us. I think that must explain sex – the attempt to enter another shell. And there have to be more than two shell types, there have to be as many genders as there are people. And that's what we ultimately want, to experience everyone. Not sexually, that's where the Sixties got it wrong, but habitually.

FRANKLIN

Maybe in death. Maybe that's when we finally escape our shell.

Queer Theory

RENÉE
The undiscovered country.

FRANKLIN
But will we ever be satisfied?

RENÉE
Hmmm...

FRANKLIN
Are you?

RENÉE
Satisfied? I'm in bliss.

FRANKLIN
But not satisfied.

RENÉE
Oh, I suppose Jeff and I had the same dream growing up, when we realized we were going to be teachers – we would teach at the greatest university on earth.

FRANKLIN
Harvard?

RENÉE
Oh, please. Oxford. That would satisfy me. (She sneezes.)

FRANKLIN
Bless you.

RENÉE
(Exiting to bathroom)
Excuse me while I get some Kleenex.

FRANKLIN
Why Oxford?

RENÉE
It's the greatest. It just is. I wasn't sure until *Brideshead Revisited* – then when I heard Jeremy Irons dulcet tones waxing rhapsodic about that fantasy, that Xanadu, that Valhalla of Academe-

Queer Theory

JEFF

(Entering from bathroom – dressed as RENÉE)

I just knew it was Oxford for me.

FRANKLIN

Hey, Jeff.

JEFF

(Ignoring him)

So, when I graduated from college I took myself on a European tour. And I went to Sebastian Flyte's College – Christ Church. And I saw the fountain where Antony Blanche sported attitudes and the quad at Magdalen where Charles lived. And Bodleian Library and the Radcliffe Camera and I thought – Oxford, dear Oxford, it is here where I must alight.

FRANKLIN

Jeff, you're not serious.

JEFF

What?

FRANKLIN

You could at least wear falsies.

JEFF

Falsies?

FRANKLIN

And you know Renée is wearing the same outfit today.

JEFF

Franklin, what are you on about?

FRANKLIN

I just thought you should know.

JEFF

Ahhhh!!!

FRANKLIN

What?

JEFF

Where are my breasts!

Queer Theory

FRANKLIN

What?

JEFF

Where the hell are my breasts?

FRANKLIN

You don't have breasts.

JEFF

What do you mean I don't have breasts. I paid thousands for my breasts.

FRANKLIN

You have breasts when you're a female.

JEFF

Goddamn it I can question my gender assignment but you can't. I *am* a female.

FRANKLIN

What?

JEFF

Oh, my hair, my hair. And my (touches his crotch) Ahhhhh!!!! That thing! That thing!

FRANKLIN

What thing!

JEFF

It's back.

FRANKLIN

What the hell are you talking about?

JEFF

What have you done to me?

FRANKLIN

Nothing. I swear.

JEFF

Is this more of that superfluidity. That Lambda Effect. Am I now Lambdaing?

FRANKLIN

Lambdaing?

Queer Theory

JEFF

Franklin. Franklin. Calmly tell me. Have I reverted to masculinity?

FRANKLIN

I...

JEFF

Is what happened to Jeff happened to me?

FRANKLIN

I...

JEFF

Have I dropped a new dick?

FRANKLIN

I...

JEFF

There's something grotesque and obscene and rude between my legs. Something I spent half my life getting rid of and now it's back. Don't tell me I'm going to spend my life going through Jeff's sick gender inversions.

FRANKLIN

I'm sorry, I don't know what you're taking about.

JEFF

Franklin, who am I?

FRANKLIN

What?

JEFF

What's my name?

FRANKLIN

Jeff, you're Jeff.

(JEFF runs into bathroom. We hear a cry off-stage. RENÉE enters.)

RENÉE

I'm Jeff.

FRANKLIN

What?

Queer Theory

I'm Jeff. I've morphed into Jeff.

RENÉE

No you haven't.

FRANKLIN

What?

RENÉE

Jeff's in the bathroom.

FRANKLIN

He is?

RENÉE

(RENNE runs into the bathroom.)

Ahhhh!

RENÉE
(Off)

(JEFF enters.)

I've reverted.

JEFF

What?

FRANKLIN

I've reverted to Renée.

JEFF

What?

FRANKLIN

Stop saying what.

JEFF

What?

FRANKLIN

My identity's slipping.

JEFF

Well then it slipped again.

FRANKLIN

Queer Theory

JEFF

What? Stop saying that. What do you mean?

FRANKLIN

You're Jeff.

JEFF

Again?

FRANKLIN

Yes.

(JEFF runs into bathroom.)

JEFF

(Off)

Ahhhh!!! This is awful. I've become the person I most hate in the world.

FRANKLIN

You were just saying you loved him.

JEFF

(Off)

That was words. Words. Words. Words. This is limbs and hair and, and, and...

FRANKLIN

(Looking into bathroom)

Jeff, Renée, Jeff, Renée, Jeff, Renée-

RENÉE

(Entering)

Stop it! Stop it! You boob. My family has some weird chromosome. The double helix is triple and it doesn't twist it loop-di-loops like some customer killing roller coaster at Magic Mountain. (Runs into bathroom. Off.) Oh Gawwwwd. Ah!

DAVIS

(Entering from bathroom – dressed as RENÉE)

I saw it happen. I saw it happen in the mirror.

FRANKLIN

Dr. Davis.

Queer Theory

DAVIS

You know damn well I'm not Dr. Davis. In this wardrobe – he doesn't have the taste. His tits are coming along nicely though. (Crawling on his hands and knees towards FRANKLIN, pleading.) Help me, Franklin, Help me.

(DAVIS disappears behind the desk. JEFFREY surfaces in his place.)

JEFFREY

Help me! Help me!

FRANKLIN

I can't help you!

JEFFREY

You must. Help me.

(The lights go black.)

FRANKLIN

Turn on the lights.

JEFFREY

You bumped the switch. Here.

(The lights come back on. DANNY, dressed like RENÉE, stands with FRANKLIN.)

FRANKLIN

Ahhh!!!

DANNY

What is it?

FRANKLIN

You're Danny.

DANNY

Danny?

FRANKLIN

I think.

DANNY

What do you mean?

Queer Theory

I've never seen him dressed.

FRANKLIN

How does Danny look in drag?

DANNY

Awful.

FRANKLIN

You're a scientist.

DANNY
(Pleading on his knees)

Am I?

FRANKLIN

Help me.

DANNY

No.

FRANKLIN

(DANNY has disappeared behind the desk, CONCEPCION – dressed like RENÉE -surfaces.)

You're Concepcion.

FRANKLIN

I am?

CONCEPCION

I...

FRANKLIN

What?

CONCEPCION

I always had a thing for Concepcion.

FRANKLIN

Kiss me.

CONCEPCION

(They kiss and fall behind the couch. RENÉE surfaces.)

Queer Theory

I don't believe this is happening.

RENÉE

I believe it.

FRANKLIN

You do?

RENÉE

Yes, I want to tape it.

FRANKLIN

Don't you dare.

RENÉE

We'll win the Nobel Prize.

FRANKLIN

Not before I have my hair done.

RENÉE

(They struggle and disappear behind the couch. They reappear on opposite sides – FRANKLIN now dressed like RENÉE, RENÉE like FRANKLIN.)

What happened?

RENÉE/FRANKLIN

You look like me.

RENÉE/FRANKLIN

Ahhhhh!

RENÉE/FRANKLIN

It's catching.

RENÉE

(Blackout.)

What happened to the lights?

FRANKLIN

I kicked the cord.

RENÉE

(Lights on. DAVIS, dressed as RENÉE, and JEFFREY, dressed as FRANKLIN, stand looking at each other.)

Queer Theory

Franklin. DAVIS

Renée. JEFFREY

Ok. We can calmly talk about this? DAVIS

Yes. JEFFREY

Some weird shit is going to happen. DAVIS

But we're going to calmly talk about it. JEFFREY

Ok. DAVIS

What are we going to do? JEFFREY

I don't know. DAVIS

Our identities are unstable. JEFFREY

Yes. DAVIS

Was any heat or cooling involved in your transformation? JEFFREY

No. DAVIS

Nor in mine. So it can't be superfluidity. JEFFREY

(RENÉE enters excited. She is dressed like DAVIS.)

Queer Theory

My tits grew. They grew.

RENÉE

Oh no.

RENÉE
(Seeing DAVIS)

Ahhh... Meeeee. Meee... What are you doing over there?

It's Davis.

DAVIS

Oh, my.

JEFFREY

Davis, calm down.

DAVIS

Trish.

RENÉE
(Correcting him)

Trish, calm down. I'm not you. I'm Renée.

DAVIS

Ahhhhh!!! What happened to it? What happened to it? I'm not a transsexual. I'm a transvestite. I want it back.

RENÉE
(Touching her crotch)

Jeff was right.

JEFFREY

(JEFF enters and sees JEFFREY.)

Hey. Whoa. How? How are you here?

JEFF

I'm not who you think I am.

JEFFREY

Who are you?

JEFF

Queer Theory

Franklin. JEFFREY

Franklin? JEFF

I'm having an out of body experience. JEFFREY

What? JEFF

I'm Franklin. JEFFREY

I'm Renée. DAVIS

I'm distraught. RENÉE

That must be Davis. JEFF

Yep. DAVIS

Are you Jeff? JEFFREY

Yes. JEFF

Are you sure? DAVIS

Yes, I'm sure. JEFF

Where am I? This is hell. RENÉE

Please calm down. DAVIS

Queer Theory

RENÉE
(To DAVIS)

Body snatcher. You body snatcher.

JEFFREY

Davis-

RENÉE

Trish-

JEFFREY

Trish-

RENÉE

I need my wife. I need Carol.

JEFF

Then call her, you big baby.

(RENÉE rushes to phone and dials.)

JEFFREY

It's amazing that you haven't slipped.

JEFF

I've got enough slippage in my life.

RENÉE
(Into phone)

Carol. Carol get down here. I've undergone some hideous transformation.

DAVIS
(Offended)

Excuse me.

RENÉE

Get down here quick. Stoughton Hall, Room 202. I need you. (She hangs up.) Oh, my God, where is it? Where is it?

DAVIS

Calm down.

JEFF

I'm simply flabbergasted.

Queer Theory

RENÉE

You started this.

JEFF

Started what?

RENÉE

This identity slippage. (To DAVIS) And you. You thief. You identity thief.

(DANNY enters, dressed as a girl.)

JEFF

Danny.

DANNY

Yes, where is he?

JEFF

Where is who?

DANNY

Danny. I want my Danny. I just crossed the country on a Greyhound Bus and I want my Danny.

DAVIS

You've become your Danny

(CONCEPCION enters and runs to DAVIS.)

CONCEPCION

Honey, are you all right?

DAVIS

I'm probably not who you think I am. Whoever you are.

DANNY

It's me!

CONCEPCION

What?

DAVIS

Are you four foot eleven with lovely dark skin and gently upcurved breasts?

CONCEPCION

No, I'm five ten, pale flesh, with a slightly drooping but generously fulsome bosom.

Queer Theory

Carol!

RENÉE

Your husband is over there.

DAVIS
(To CONCEPCION)

He... He is... Is this the hideous transformation you've undergone, sweetie?

CONCEPCION
(Crossing to RENÉE)

Yes, isn't it awful?

RENÉE

How rude.

DAVIS

I don't know, uh....

CONCEPCION

Carol, you look terrific.

RENÉE

So do you.

CONCEPCION

Maybe, maybe I'm not a transvestite.

RENÉE

You know, I always had a thing for girls. I was a dyke in college.

CONCEPCION

Oh, my God, what's happened to me?

FRANKLIN
(Entering, naked)

Danny?

DAVIS

Yes.

FRANKLIN

You're over there.

JEFFREY

Queer Theory

FRANKLIN

(Crossing to DANNY)

But, but why am I dressed. (Unbuttoning DANNY's blouse.) Take these clothes off.

DANNY

Oh, Danny. Oh, Danny. Soon, but not here.

JEFF

Folks.

FRANKLIN

I can't stand to look at myself trapped in all this tight polyester.

DANNY

Oh, Danny. Oh, Danny.

JEFF

Folks.

CONCEPCION

Oh, honey... You're so... tall.

RENÉE

Oh, baby... You're so small.

JEFF

Folks.

JEFFREY

Well, the identities seem to be at least stabilized in their new homes.

DAVIS

With some confusing developments.

JEFF

Folks, can we focus here? (They all look at him.) We have some things to sort out.

DANNY

Why is yours the only identity that's stable?

FRANKLIN

I don't know why mine is the only identity that's stable.

JEFFREY

I'm not talking to you.

Queer Theory

Who are you talking to?
DANNY

I'm talking to Jeff.
DAVIS

That's Jeff.
JEFFREY
(Pointing to JEFF)

No, I'm over here.
CONCEPCION

What happened?
RENÉE

We're slipping again.
FRANKLIN

Who is who?
JEFF

I'm Carole.
DAVIS

No, I'm Carole.
RENÉE

No, I'm Carole.
JEFFREY

RENÉE
Carol's on the move. She just flew across the room.

JEFFREY
Ok, this is Renée speaking. Everyone's going to have identify first themselves and then whom they're talking to before they speak.

CONCEPCION
I don't understand.

DANNY
Ok, for instance: "Renée. Jeff, are you still Jeff?"

JEFF
Oh, I get it.

Queer Theory

So answer my question. FRANKLIN

Who are you talking to? JEFF

Jeff. CONCEPCION

Oh, she's Renée now. DAVIS

What? DANNY

She's Renée now. RENÉE

No, actually I'm not. CONCEPCION

Renée. Folks, can we stick to the formula? JEFFREY

Who are you? FRANKLIN

Franklin. JEFFREY

Renée. Folks, can we stick to the formula? DANNY

Wait. Where's Renée? JEFF

Over here. DANNY

Ok. So what's the formula? CONCEPCION

I say my name, then the name of the person I'm speaking to, then I speak. JEFF

Queer Theory

Who are you? DANNY

Concepcion. JEFF

Wait. I'm confused. DAVIS

Where's Renée? FRANKLIN

Over here. Listen, everyone, I'm going to say my name, then the name of the person I'm speaking to, then I'm going to speak. Ok, everyone? JEFF

Ok. DAVIS/FRANKLIN

No, everyone. Everyone say ok. DANNY

Ok. ALL

Renée. Jeff, where are you? JEFF

Over here. CONCEPCION

Renée. Jeff, no, you're supposed to say: "Jeff. Renée, I'm over here." DAVIS

That's so complicated. FRANKLIN

Renée. Jeff, that's the formula. So we know whom we're talking to. DANNY

Yes, yes, fine. JEFF

"Jeff. Renée. Yes, yes, fine." RENÉE

Queer Theory

CONCEPCION

But I'm Jeff.

DAVIS

Renée. Jeff, I was giving that as an example. I was pretending to be you.

RENÉE

Well, I'm confused.

DANNY

Ok, I understand it. I've got what you're after.

FRANKLIN

Renée. Who just spoke?

JEFFREY

Franklin. Renée. Franklin.

DAVIS

Somebody just said three names.

RENÉE

No, I was identifying myself Franklin, then addressing Renée, and then answering her question as to who was speaking which was "Franklin."

CONCEPCION

Well that was strange.

JEFFREY

Renée. Franklin, don't forget to always identify yourself when you speak.

DAVIS

Franklin. Renée. Sorry.

(Silence.)

JEFF

Renée what's happening?

RENÉE

Franklin, who said that?

DANNY

Davis, was that someone asking a question of Franklin or was that Franklin identifying himself and then asking a question?

Queer Theory

CONCEPCION

Franklin. It was Franklin identifying himself and asking a question.

JEFFREY

Was that Franklin who just explained that?

DAVIS

Who just asked that question?

JEFF

People are not identifying themselves.

FRANKLIN

You didn't identify yourself.

RENÉE

Who's talking to me?

DANNY

This is insanity.

CONCEPCION

Who said that?

JEFFREY

Listen everyone, my name is Carol Davis. I live with Dr. Giles Davis, Ph.D. of Harvard University. I am speaking to everyone in the room and all I want to say is I can't take another second of this.

JEFF

Everyone, this is Dr. Giles Davis, my name is Trish.

FRANKLIN

Ok, this is Renée. So we can have a productive conversation and somehow unravel this mess please identify yourself and then the person you're speaking to and then speak. Example. Renée. Carol, don't worry we'll get it all straightened out.

(Pause.)

RENÉE

This is Carol – 10-4

DANNY

Renée. Carol, no, you have to identify the person you're speaking to.

Queer Theory

JEFFREY

Davis. Renée, she's not too bright. She went to Penn.

CONCEPCION

Carol. Giles, you bastard.

DAVIS

Renée. Carol, please don't use first names.

JEFF

Carol. Davis, you bastard.

FRANKLIN

Concepcion. Renée, why does she have to use her first name while he can use his last?

DANNY

Renée. Concepcion, because they're both Davis's, it would be too confusing otherwise.

DAVIS

Concepcion. Renée, why should the woman have to give up the last name?

JEFFREY

Renée. Concepcion, please this is not the moment.

CONCEPCION

Davis. Renée, Carole can use Davis, I'm Trish.

DANNY

Franklin. Davis, who the hell is Trish?

FRANKLIN

Renée. Davis, please don't use Trish, it will only confuse things.

RENÉE

Carol. Renée, who the hell put you in charge of this?

FRANKLIN

Jeff. Carol, leave her alone.

JEFF

Davis. Jeff, don't talk to my wife that way.

DAVIS

Jeff. Davis, don't talk to my sister, my brother, don't talk to Renée that way.

Queer Theory

JEFFREY

Renée. Jeff, thank you.

CONCEPCION

Davis. Jeff, Renée is a controlling bitch.

DANNY

Jeff. Davis, Renée is my sister, don't talk about her like that.

JEFF

Renée. Davis, Jeff, stop it.

DAVIS

Jeff. Renée, Davis is a bastard.

JEFFREY

Renée. Jeff, Davis is in early hormonal therapy, he's bound to be testy

CONCEPCION

Jeff. Renée, Davis was a bastard long before his tits grew.

DAVIS

Carol. Renée, Davis, Jeff, stop arguing!

JEFF

Danny. Carol, Renée, Davis, Jeff can I say something?

FRANKLIN

Carol-

DANNY

Renée-

JEFFREY

Davis-

FRANKLIN/DANNY/JEFFREY

Danny, shut up!

JEFFREY

Concepcion. Carol, Renée, Davis, don't talk to Danny that way!

DAVIS

Renée. Carol, Davis, Danny, Jeff, Concepcion, can we please stop arguing.

Queer Theory

RENÉE

Carol. Davis, Danny, Jeff, Concepcion, I have to say that I am sick to death of this Renée bitch bossing us around.

FRANKLIN

Jeff. Carol, I told you to leave my sister alone. (He hits RENÉE.)

RENÉE

Davis. Jeff, now you're hitting girls?

DANNY

Jeff. Davis, he's a birth male.

CONCEPCION

Davis. Jeff, I meant Carol. You hit Carol you fucker. (She hits DANNY.)

JEFFREY

Concepcion. Davis, you just hit the wrong person. (He hits CONCEPCION.)

CONCEPCION

Danny. Davis, you hit Concepcion again I'll murder you.

DANNY

Davis. Concepcion, Danny, Carole, Renée, Jeff, my name is Trish, not Davis, Trish!

RENÉE

Oh my God, I'm back in my body. I'm back in my own body!

CONCEPCION

No, I've moved.

FRANKLIN

Jeff. Renée, you're not using the correct form of address.

JEFF

Renée. Jeff, shut-up squirt. (Hits FRANKLIN.)

FRANKLIN

Trish. Renée, owwww!

DAVIS

Carol. Renée, Davis, can you please stop fighting.

FRANKLIN

Danny. Franklin, I think Jeff dislocated your arm.

Queer Theory

CONCEPCION

Franklin. Danny, no I'm fine.

FRANKLIN

Jeff. Franklin, no I think he meant that I dislocated this body's arm.

RENÉE

Franklin. Jeff, oh, yes, that happens. I have a bad arm.

FRANKLIN

Renée. Franklin, you shit, tell us what to do with this body – it hurts like hell.

DAVIS

Franklin. Renée, or whoever's in there, you have to pull on it.

FRANKLIN

Concepcion. Franklin, show us how. It kills.

JEFF

Franklin. Whoever's in Franklin's body, give me your hand.

FRANKLIN

Carole. Franklin, it's me.

CONCEPCION

Franklin. Carole, well I'm over here now but give the bad hand to Jeff.

FRANKLIN

Renée. Franklin, to real Jeff?

DANNY

Franklin. Renée, what do you mean real Jeff?

FRANKLIN

Jeff. Franklin, Jeff body or Jeff soul?

DAVIS

Renée. Jeff, can we please not get metaphysical.

FRANKLIN

Listen to me! Listen to me you insane fucks! This body is in pain! It doesn't matter who is who, this body is in pain and we're all going to have to spend some painful time in it if it doesn't get fixed! Can you please, please, please just fix it and stop with all this fucking Renée, Jeff, Carole, Concepcion bullshit you overeducated motherfuckers!

Queer Theory

RENÉE

Well, I don't think I want to know who said that.

JEFF

It was Franklin's body – that's all that's important. Let's fix it.

FRANKLIN

Hold my arm.

(JEFF takes his bad arm.)

JEFF

Ok.

FRANKLIN

Now three of you take him around the waist.

DANNY

Whose waist?

FRANKLIN

This waist! This body's waist! Franklin's waist! My waist!

DANNY

Ok.

(DANNY, JEFFREY, and CONCEPCION put their arms around FRANKLIN's waist.)

FRANKLIN

On the count of three, everyone pull away from me. One, two, three...

(Everyone pulls. FRANKLIN cries out in pain. He grabs his arms as he falls to the floor. He slowly recovers.)

RENÉE

Well, we accomplished something.

JEFFREY

Who said that?

CONCEPCION

It doesn't matter. We are merely flesh and blood. We live to serve these bodies. There is nothing beyond these bodies.

(Pause.)

DAVIS

This is Carole speaking. Who is serving my body? It's at home. It could be full of trash right now.

JEFFREY

This is Concepcion – I don't want just anybody in my body. That's my right.

JEFF

This is Danny speaking. (He holds onto DANNY.) This body is Vegan. If anybody puts any meat or dairy in it I'll kill 'em.

DANNY

If I have to inhabit this thing I'm going to eat whatever I damn well please.

FRANKLIN

I can't tell who's talking! I'm going insane!

RENÉE

Stop it! Stop it! Everyone stop it! This is madness.

CONCEPCION

Who's speaking?

RENÉE

It doesn't matter who's speaking. It's Renée, but it doesn't matter.

FRANKLIN

It is Renée.

RENÉE

Yes, dammit, I'm back in my body and I'm going to stay here. Listen to me - we have to cling to our bodies, cling to them. I fought damn hard for mine and I'm not going to drift or slip or slide away from it because I don't really believe in gender and sex and sexuality. I'm not going to let superfluidity or empathy or theory tell me I can't have a home.

JEFF

But then we're identity slaves.

RENÉE

Right now we're confusion slaves. I made this body. I thought carefully about how I wanted it to be and I spent a lot of time fashioning it like a sculpture and I'm not going to have it become a motor lodge for all of you. If I am an identity slave I'm a slave to an identity I created. It's like my child and I'm not going to have someone else raising it. If

Queer Theory

you're not happy with yourselves, if you want to change then change, but this identity theft, this pilferage of persona, this treating of anatomy as a truck stop has got to stop!

CONCEPCION

I agree. I *am* Concepcion and I agree.

DANNY

You *are* Concepcion.

CONCEPCION

Yes.

DANNY

And I'm Danny.

CONCEPCION

Hi Danny.

DANNY

What are you doing here?

CONCEPCION

I came to get you.

DANNY

Get me?

CONCEPCION

Take you back.

DANNY

To Berkeley?

CONCEPCION

Yes. You belong where you can be naked and understood.

DANNY

Just naked and understood?

CONCEPCION

Naked and understood with me.

DANNY

But I'm still bisexual. Maybe even gay.

Queer Theory

CONCEPCION
You just haven't met the right girl.

DANNY
I guess not.

JEFF
That's sick twisted shit.

DANNY
Who are you?

CONCEPCION
Jeff. Dr. Webster to you. You're gay. Born gay, die gay. That's the gay way.

CONCEPCION
Then let him find that out for himself Dr. Webster – you homo sapien.

RENÉE
(Correcting her)
Homofascist.

CONCEPCION
Homofascist. (To RENÉE) Don't correct me you male chauvinist pig.

RENÉE
I'm a female chauvinist pig.

DAVIS
You're a born-male female chauvinist pig.

JEFFREY
He's a born male heterosexual female chauvinist pig.

CONCEPCION
Ignore them Danny.

DANNY
Yes punkin.?

DAVIS
Is Franklin here?

JEFFREY
I'm over here.

Queer Theory

DAVIS
(To FRANKLIN)

Who's this?

FRANKLIN

Carole. I like this penis. I want to keep it.

DAVIS

Carole, you have to leave so I can talk to Franklin.

FRANKLIN

No. Ok. I'm Franklin.

DAVIS

Franklin, I've been faithful to Carole my whole life. Since we met as Rhodes Scholars at Cambridge University. You were my first fling. It threw me for a loop. I overreacted

FRANKLIN

I understand. I'm a scientist. It's my job to encourage experimentation.

DAVIS

I need to go back to Carole. I've committed myself to a life as a heterosexual male. I don't regret the experimentation. But for me it's too late to change.

JEFF

I told you.

RENÉE

Silence.

FRANKLIN

That's ok, Trish.

DAVIS
(Correcting him)

Dr. Davis.

FRANKLIN

That's ok, Dr. Davis.

DAVIS

Thanks, Franklin.

FRANKLIN
(Correcting him)

Dr. Morrison.

Queer Theory

DAVIS

Thanks, Dr. Morrison.

FRANKLIN

The fact is, the only man I ever loved was Jeff. Dr. Webster.

JEFF

I know.

FRANKLIN

But he never felt the same.

JEFF

No.

CONCEPCION

Daniel.

DANNY

Yeah, Connie.

CONCEPCION

Can we go?

DANNY

Yes. (They exit quickly.)

JEFF
(To JEFFREY)

I still don't get who you are.

JEFFREY

I'm female you. We've separated.

JEFF

Separated?

JEFFREY

Yes, I can't stand living with you. I need space. To be me.

JEFF

I wasn't a very good host, was I?

JEFFREY

You got us to Harvard.

Queer Theory

JEFF

We got us to Harvard.

JEFFREY

I've got Carole now, but I'll walk her home. See you two later.

DAVIS

How is Carole?

JEFFREY

She's very upset. About the infidelity.

DAVIS

Carole, I'm sorry.

JEFFREY

(As CAROLE) Don't speak to me! (As JEFFREY) Don't speak to her, Dr. Davis. It'll be fine.

(JEFFREY links arms with DAVIS and walks him out.)

FRANKLIN

Well, I have my presentation to give.

RENÉE

Superfluidity? Or empathy?

FRANKLIN

I don't know. Perhaps neither. The important thing is to present my thesis. Somebody will argue an antithesis. One day there'll be synthesis.

(He exits.)

JEFF

God, he's going to make us more famous than we are already.

RENÉE

Isn't it marvelous?

JEFF

I still feel like we've traded on our personal lives to make it as professors.

RENÉE

A lot of people do.

Queer Theory

JEFF

You talked about Richard Burton and Liza. I didn't want to be a Richard Burton. I wanted to be Laurence Olivier. Pure. Famous for my art.

RENÉE

Laurence Olivier had Vivien. That's what got him in the papers. Sex.

JEFF

I wanted to be Foucault or Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, Leo Bersani, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Pure academic. Pure thinker.

RENÉE

Oh, please. Foucault was a cross dresser, Sontag's a lesbian, Bersani's a daddy, and the last time Sedgwick was in *The New York Times* it was to talk about her breast cancer. Everyone uses everything they've got.

JEFF

That's a rumor about Sontag.

RENÉE

Which she defiantly refuses to talk about every time she's interviewed whether or not she's asked the question.

JEFF

What about Judith Butler?

RENÉE

Judith who?

JEFF

Jan Morris was a great writer – long before she came out as a tranny. Why couldn't it have happened before rather than because?

RENÉE

It's what you do with it after it happens that counts.

JEFF

It ruins people.

RENÉE

It doesn't have to.

JEFF

Richard Burton became a lush.

Queer Theory

And Liza made *Cabaret*. RENÉE

Then she became a lush. JEFF

Oh please. You must drive your therapist insane. RENÉE

I don't have a therapist. JEFF

Get one! RENÉE

Renée- JEFF

What? RENÉE

When we were little. JEFF

Yes. RENÉE

Did you hate me? JEFF

Hate you? RENÉE

I teased you. JEFF

Yes. RENÉE

I teased you mercilessly. JEFF

Yes. RENÉE

Queer Theory

JEFF

I mean, I was so bored growing up. I couldn't think of anything to do with my day but tease you.

RENÉE

That's not it.

JEFF

No?

RENÉE

No.

JEFF

Then why did I do it?

RENÉE

Because mom and dad teased you. That was our family.

JEFF

But I didn't mind their teasing.

RENÉE

Yes, yes you did. You hated it.

JEFF

They abused me so I abused you.

RENÉE

No, it wasn't abuse. That was just our family.

JEFF

It must have been hell for you.

RENÉE

When you all noticed me it was hell.

JEFF

But you knew it was all joking.

RENÉE

When I was five. I didn't know what it was.

JEFF

I'm sorry.

Queer Theory

RENÉE

You at least were the youngest. You were just doing what you saw everyone else doing.

JEFF

But I was so persistent.

RENÉE

Yeah, you won the quantity award but quality abuse always came from dad. When dad did it... Oh, God. Remember what he did with my middle name?

JEFF

What?

RENÉE

You remember my middle name?

JEFF

Cotton.

RENÉE

Yeah, so he started calling me cotton balls.

JEFF

I remember that. I could never figure out why that bugged you so much.

RENÉE

Please. From the moment I found out they had a name I hated the sight of them. From that moment. And then my father starts calling me cotton balls. I freaked out. I thought he was on to me.

JEFF

I'm sure he had no idea.

RENÉE

Maybe not. But he knew it bugged me. That was enough for him. He made it my nickname.

JEFF

He at least shortened it.

RENÉE

Yeah, to c-balls. I thought it was an instruction to everyone to look at mine. "Hey, see balls! See balls!" Just thinking about it makes me want to slap him.

(JEFF holds RENÉE's hand.)

Queer Theory

JEFF

You're a terrific teacher.

RENÉE

Are we bonding?

JEFF

The Webster children.

RENÉE

I think... I think Harvard's your school.

JEFF

You thinking of going home.

RENÉE

Mmmmm.... My spiritual home. Now I've got the leverage.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINETEEN

We hear a boy's choir singing triumphantly. Lights up on RENÉE wearing a cap and gown and delivering a lecture.

RENÉE

I've learned not to be a gender or identity slave. I might not know always who I am. What sex, what gender, what name, what ethnicity. But I look at my clothes and I do know my job – I'm a professor at Oxford. And whatever my identity, my duty is to teach you blokes what it is to be queer. What it is to be different. My methodology is queer. Hit it! (Reprise of "Queer Theory" with entire cast leading into the bows.)

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY