

MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

**The Teaches of Peaches: Rethinking the Sex Hierarchy and the Limits of Gender
Discourse**

by

Christina Bonner

Supervised by Dr. Jennifer Brayton

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The Teaches of Peaches: Rethinking the Sex Hierarchy and the Limits of Gender Discourse

Christina Bonner

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Abstract: The goal of this Major Research paper is an exploration detailing how Canadian Electro-Pop artist Peaches Nisker transcends normative gender and sex politics through performance and frames the female erotic experience in a way that not only disempowers heterosexuality but also provides a broader more inclusive sexual politics. Through this analysis I focus specifically on three distinct spheres; performance, fandom and use of technology to argue that her critique of sexual conventions provides an expansive and transgressive new definition of female sexuality. Musical performances by female artists, particularly icons such as Madonna and Britney Spears, have demonstrated popular culture's inability to legitimize queer and non-compulsory heterosexual practices. These performances often function as limiting representations of the sexual female. Queerness in popular music culture is often showcased as non-traditional and used as a form of spectacle. The appropriation of homoerotic imagery has traditionally served the purpose of appeasing the mass patriarchal pornographic gaze. I argue that Peaches embodies the essential queer spirit, presenting a politics that builds upon a more fluid sexuality. She reconfigures queer and heterosexual imagery using the language and framework that has been provided by compulsory heterosexuality, to shatter the foundation so often used against women and thereby presenting a new female erotic.

Table of Contents

List of Images.....	v
List of Appendices.....	vi
Introduction	1
Theoretical Introduction	5
Chapter One: Beyond Bowie: Performances, Performativity and Peaches.....	18
Chapter Two: Fandom and Peaches	34
Chapter Three: The Third, the Hybrid and Technology	54
Conclusion	73
Appendixes	75
Works Cited	78
Discography	81

List of Images

Image 1: Peaches at Live Show during <i>I Feel Cream Tour 2009</i>	7
Image 2: “ <i>Boys Wanna Be Her</i> ” - The Flaming Lips Eat Peaches Album cover single. Amazon.com. Released November 6th, 2006, XL Recording.	25
Image 3: Peaches with her fans post show, <i>I Feel Cream</i> tour 2009	45
Image 4: Peaches in Her Cave of Underpants	47
Image 5: Peaches crowd surfing during <i>I Feel Cream</i> tour	52
Image 6: Peaches wearing ‘Pussy Light’ at live show, 6 November, 2009: Miami, FL	58
Image 7: Peaches playing the wanker rod, Tour Album Peachesrocks.com	63
Image 8: Peaches playing laser theremin at a live show, Tour Album peachesrocks.com	69

List of Appendices

Appendix One: “Fuck the Pain Away” Lyrics from <i>The Teaches of Peaches</i> (2000)	75
Appendix Two: “Boys Wanna Be Her” Lyrics from the <i>Impeach my Bush</i> (2005)	76
Appendix Three: “Diddle My Skittle” Lyrics from <i>The Teaches of Peaches</i> (2000)	77

Introduction

*The boys wanna be her
The girls wanna be her
I wanna be her, yes I do.*
"Boys Wanna Be Her" (Peaches *Impeach My Bush*)

As the house lights darken and the background music begins to gradually fade away, four furry creatures take their positions on stage to a roaring audience of 20- and 30-something Torontonians. Clad in what appears to be black human hair, the kick drum and electric bass begins to rhythmically drone in unison, bellowing low undertones, cueing the largest creature to begin moving to the beat. With little indication of human form, the hair blob begins to sing as the electric guitar and custom electronic beats begin to play the remaining elements of the song "Mud" from Peaches' recently released fourth album *I Feel Cream*. The stage lights brighten, revealing Peaches and her band Sweet Machine dressed head to toe in black human hair costumes. All faces are masked and as the beat begins to quicken Peaches climactically removes her mask to the beat of her second song "Talk to Me". Peaches' sexy, raw lyrics resonate through the Phoenix concert venue as the energy from her home crowd escalates. The temperature mounts, the dancing quickens and, as one reviewer cites, "the sex pours out of the room" (Scriver 2009). As the show continues, Peaches crowd surfs, spits blood, plays a variety of instruments, coaxes the audience to take off their shirts and changes her costumes as many times as Madonna.

Reflecting back on November 18th, 2009, it is hard to believe that this artist, once named Merrill Nisker, started as a home-grown project, promoting after-school arts and culture programs. She herself cites that it was only after the age of nineteen that music became a part of her life. Since her debut album in 2000, *The Teaches of Peaches*, this Canadian born artist has travelled internationally, using her music to question sexuality and gender. The essence of

Peaches, as she cites in an interview with *Spinner* magazine, is to “break down the stereotypical sexual clichés” furthermore “breaking down what you’re used to seeing a woman onstage doing -- and for that matter, used to anyone doing” (White “Peaches Flattered by Imitators like Lady Gaga”). Performances by other sexualized female artists--such as Madonna, Debbie Harry, Joan Jett and many others--couch their transgressive sexualized content within a heterosexist framework. These artists, while undeniably transgressive, do not adequately address the need for a more fluid representation of female sexuality posed by today’s radically different sexual landscape.

In the moment when Peaches stands on top of her hundreds of adoring fans, donning a hot pink unitard, mullet and screaming about sex at the top of her lungs, her fans unify, physically supporting her as she moves through the crowd. Although this performance is but one element of what comprises Peaches’ artistry, her sexually charged music also lyrically and musically argues primarily for non-linear gender and sexuality identification. Through her lyrics and performance tactics, she appropriates constructs that are traditionally used to exert power over non-traditional sexualities, reclaims them and re-contextualizes them in a way that creates space for gender role transcendences.

The essence of my Major Research Paper will be to explore the concepts of sexual fluidity, performativity, gender and identity as they relate to the transgressive nature of Peaches’ music. Methodologically I will be looking at three distinct spheres: lyrical analysis, performances (both live and edited) and technological components (creative props and musical instruments). Through the lens of feminist, queer and musical theory, it is easy to understand how Peaches becomes entrenched within a discourse of body politics that provides a significant commentary on the

current representation of female sexuality in popular music culture. Through a combination of direct sexual lyrics, disregard for performance binaries and normalizing of fringe sexual behaviors as available to women, she is able, as I will argue, to successfully redefine the gendered realm of music and society.

The texts that I will be evaluating include material drawn primarily from Peaches' discography. These albums include her debut album *The Teaches of Peaches* (2000), *Fatherfucker* (2003), *Impeach My Bush* (2006) and her most recent album *I Feel Cream* (2009). In an interview with Toronto newspaper *Xtra*, Peaches describes each of these albums as a sexual act: the first album as masturbation, the second as role-playing, the third as an orgy and the last as "going out for a really nice dinner with someone [...] eating and flirting and then you jump on the table, ripping each others' fancy clothes and just taking everything off" (Peaches 2009). This analogy proves to be significantly useful in understanding the creative process and thematic underpinnings of each of the albums. Musically, each album seems to also follow a theme with the final disc taking on a more electronic dance feel. *Fatherfucker*, as an example, is an album that is heavily focused on deep bass undertones paired with lyrical content focused primarily towards male themes. Her albums as a whole each play into the themes that she describes and present themselves as concept albums linked together musically, lyrically or thematically.

The lyrical analysis section of this investigation springs exclusively from the recorded elements of her work. Particularly in terms of research questions, I will focus on two primary elements within this section. First to consider the themes discussed within a sampling of songs from Peaches discography as they fit into my larger theoretical framework. Secondly, I will consider the role of these lyrics paired with performance elements from her 2009 *I Feel Cream*

Tour. Additionally, I will be looking at three technological props used during this tour to discuss their role within a larger context concerning hybridity and cyborg feminism. What is important to consider during this analysis is that although many of the elements, lyrics, performance and technology exist exclusively, it is their occurrence in unison that allows Peaches' performances to be both extravagant and transgressive. Her ability to manipulate and push the boundaries within all of these spheres not only mimics the excess and ornamentations typical of gay music icons, but also, as I believe, makes Peaches' work unique. She is constantly challenging the limits of heteronormativity and, as I will demonstrate through the use of lyrical analysis, performance theory and a variety of other theoretical backings to illuminate the ways in which the aforementioned elements contribute to the creation of new and exciting queer identities. Through the combination of an analysis of both Peaches' performance and lyrical content, this essay will argue that Peaches re-articulates the concept of a woman-identified-woman through the appropriation of gender and sexual performatives that normally exist outside of the realm of female identifiers. The result is a reconfiguration of the female subject due to her subversive performances within the context of her audience and furthermore popular culture. The result is a narrative not defined by compulsory heterosexuality, but one that renders a whole host of sexual behaviors available to a broader range of gender identifiers.



(Image 1: Peaches at Live Show during *I Feel Cream Tour 2000*)

Theoretical Introduction

*"People think when I'm playing live it's all about my machismo.
But it's just me giving 200%. I can't do it any other way.
Joan Jett also scared people. So did Pat Benatar in her own way.
And let's get one thing straight: I love Pat and Joan."
(Peaches Billboard Interview)*

What marks Peaches' as different from various other female musicians is her positioning of fringe sexualities existing in tandem with a heterosexual viewpoint. A common criticism and case study of famous singer songwriter Madonna points directly towards this discrepancy. Same sex sexuality in this particular case is displayed through the lens of heterosexuality and, as bell hooks described, is coded through Madonna's dominant image of heterosexism (hooks 73). Her videography lacks a critical interrogation of the way in which gay culture, particularly in the context of Madonna, is still linked and controlled by a system of patriarchal heterosexist pornographic gaze. Michael Warner echoes this sentiment describing his interaction with Madonna's publication of the coffee table book *Sex*.

This is one of the things that bugs me about the queerness of this book. I get the feeling that all these queer guys are not doing what they want to do. They're being told, "OK, stand here, do this to Madonna [...] their [desires] being shoved aside so that the guys can serve as signifiers of something else. (Warner 95)

In this passage, Warner is clearly at odds with the depiction of queerness as an appendage to Madonna's performance of sex. Conversely, as one critic described Peaches live performances, she seeks not to offend or shock for the sake of the performance. As Peaches' described in the opening quotation of this section, people often mistake her enthusiasm for something deeper. Although spectacle is a large portion of her performance style, what this study will also explore

is the overarching desire for her cultural power to preside in a space where audience members are not only to be entertained but can think while dancing.

Turning towards Adrienne Rich's text *Compulsory Sexuality and the Lesbian Existence*, she discusses the ideological privileging of heterosexuality with the context of lesbian desire. This essay on sexual politics unhinges the term lesbian from its sexual connotation and gives way for individuals like Peaches to spark a feminist political movement that is based on a shared gender rather than on divisive sexualities. Rich provides an excellent launching point for this research in her primary assertion that encourages "heterosexual feminists to examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women - and to change it [...] to bridge the gap between lesbian and feminist" (227). Essentially Rich's work helps unpack universal understandings of sexuality, often manifested as false consciousnesses through which heterosexual women sometime do not question their own sexuality or sexual practices. As Rich suggests in her text, audiences must examine the "privileges and solipsism of heterosexuality" (249). As previously discussed Madonna's positioning of queerness to her own sexuality serves as an excellent example of exactly the struggle Rich describes, the position of lesbian and an alternate lifestyle to the heterosexual norm.

Particularly within the context of music, I will ask the question concerning the tradition that positions sexualities as either-or, in contention with each other, rebelling against something. This questioning of deviance is where my research plants its roots. It aspires for a world where, as I believe both Gayle Rubin and Peaches' are advocating, heterosexuality is neither compulsory nor central. Behaviors and practices are no longer limited to specific spheres of identification and one can begin to address the sexual, racial, cultural and economic disenfranchisements as a unified

body, rather than a separate one founded in the very things sex, role and gender stereotyping seek to eradicate.

Gayle Rubin, in her text *Thinking Sex*, describes the way in which popular culture is typically accused of setting out the limits of sexuality and permissible sexual behavior.

Popular culture is permeated with the idea that erotic variety is dangerous, unhealthy, depraved, and a menace to everything from small children to national security. Popular sexual ideology is a noxious stew made up of ideas of sexual sin, concepts of psychological inferiority [...] (Rubin 12).

This quotation provides an excellent launching point for the highly sexualized subject matter that Peaches has chosen to address. Not only does Rubin demonstrate the fundamental problem regarding the portrayal of sexualities within popular culture, but, as music sociologist Simon Frith expresses, popular culture provides a way in which group values are mediated through society. Furthermore, to understand the importance of music acknowledging its social function and prevalence as a disseminator of dominant ideology within contemporary society (Frith 134). Rubin and Frith enable a consideration of Peaches as a mass media artifact required to conform to the political economic model entrenched within music production structures, who, despite these requirements, effectively disseminates a transformative popular sexual ideology beyond her subcultural sphere. Her live performances are fraught with full frontal addresses of gender performatives and effectively provides spectators with a model of unconventional female sexuality. Through extravagant parodic costuming, explicit lyrical content and manipulation of technology, Peaches is able to provide women with an example of acting out discourse against compulsory heterosexist behaviors.

Following Peaches' discography, her early albums are praised as blurring the lines between

male and female, playing the “field” between the sexes. This kind of practice resonates with the work of feminist theorist Judith Butler. Through her work deconstructing gender, sexuality and performativity, Butler similarly sets out to destabilize traditionally gendered subjects. Peaches has arguably, through her art, looked to launch her politics from Butler’s work and is quoted as thinking of gender/sex in a parallel fashion. Her assertion that gender identity is created through the set of cultural meanings that a sexed body adopts helps problematize the traditional notion that there is one existing unified female identity. In analyzing Peaches, both Butler and Rubin help to illuminate the context by which Peaches’ work is immediately relevant to changing social understanding of sexual fluidity, particularly as it is presented within the context of popular music culture.

Rewinding to the early days of Peaches, her transition away from Merrill provides an essential foundational reading of the roots of the *Teaches of Peaches*. Drawing and citing significant influence from blues artist Nina Simone, Peaches’ transformation relies on female artists like her who have paved the way with their own transgressive subject matter. Simone’s track “Four Women”, cited as an integral element of Peaches’ identity, (Cizek, 14) profiles the struggles of four different women who reclaim their struggles through identification concluding with announcement of their names. The final verse of the song reads:

My skin is brown, And my manner is tough,
I’ll kill the first mother I see, My life has to be rough,
I’m awfully bitter these days, Because my parents were slaves
What do they call me, My name is PEACHES. (Simone “Four Women”)

In addition to these lyrics, Peaches was quoted in an interview regarding her role in changing society’s conception of gender as:

My music figures in the same way as the theories of Judith Butler. I think she has a really good attitude toward gender. I hope people see my work in that kind of way. It's supposed to be fun and questioning for a reason. We aren't just this way or that way. We should always been adjusting and figuring out ourselves. We shouldn't just accept "the way it's supposed to be" because there had to be a time when someone didn't accept it in the first place and we need to figure that out for ourselves. (Peaches "Peaches opens up")

Considering Simone's lyrics in combination with this Peaches quote, it is safe to assert that her politics spring strongly from a place of questioning the position of women not only in music culture but also within society. Peaches' contribution to the current notions of sexuality and gender springs from a call for the reconfiguration of the historical sexual models that have attempted to broaden the concept of sexuality and gender. The space of pop culture has played an integral role in providing a single heterosexual narrative, dictating what behavior is appropriate to individuals of all sexualities. Her own constantly evolving discourse regarding the body and sexual practices creates a space within pop culture that provides an alternative dialogue for women.

Glancing over her discography, Peaches' work aims to transcend gender and cultural norms through her music. Music culture has a long history of pushing sexual expression beyond the cultural conventions of "appropriate" sexual behavior. Sexual values are often disseminated through ideological systems and, as Rubin writes, protest and ideology in music often works to politicizes fundamental attributes in many other aspects of human life, except sexual ethics (15). Peaches encourages this sexual variation and uses Rubin's call to move beyond purely feminist thinking to broaden the scope of socially acceptable sexual practices, particularly as it relates to female sexuality. Through performance, Peaches arguably provides an articulation of what

Rubin was envisioning: an expanded theoretical gender transcendence that includes female sexual plurality. Examples of this transcendence can be seen even within her album titles. Most notable of the four is *Fatherfucker*, released in 2003. Peaches cites the title for this album as an effort to reconfigure the term “motherfucker”. Often used in a derogatory nature, the word motherfucker not only connotes the idea that having sexual relations with one’s mother as negative, but also expresses disrespect towards another individual in a frustrating situation. In this context, the term is relying on the subordination of female sexual practices to provide an insult, in addition to its ironic and funny nature. Through the title *Fatherfucker*, Peaches asks listeners to consider the context in which individuals have normalized the term motherfucker and provides the counter term. Furthermore, the album cover features a facial portrait of Niska wearing a beard. Her use of drag, both in terms of acting female and male, also works to create a broader definition of female identification.

Music evokes a variety of emotional responses; it is a complete bodily experience. The intensity of a rhythm combined with the pleasure derived from listening links the mind and the body in a similar way that one experiences sex. Beyond the visceral response, music evokes a similar totalizing effect. Sexuality, like music, is understood subjectively as a constructed personal identity, intertwined within cultural influences and lived experiences (Frith 123). Music as a manifestation of popular ideology, like the reconfiguration of everyday erotic values, requires a transformative politics. The reconstruction necessitates an “erasure of erotic differences between straight, bisexual and lesbian desire to promote a creative force for revolutionary change” (Lorde 343). What is critical in Peaches’ performances is her ability to use the female erotic as a mechanism to neutralize the power of dualisms and provide an example of creative force

reconstructing sexual ideology similar to the shared ideology of queer culture. The first two chapters of this study engage with an analysis of these dualisms (male/female, right/wrong, sexual/asexual, etc...) in Chapter 1 through an engagement with lyrical content of Peaches' music. Thereafter, Chapter 2 focuses on performance analysis, particularly within the context of fan engagement with these performances. Simultaneously the chapter seeks to unpack the tactics used within particular musical event case studies to describe the uniqueness of Peaches' dynamic politics. In the final chapter concerning technology and hybridity, I explore how Peaches' transcends normative gender and sex politics through the use of performance props, and frames the female erotic experience in a way that not only works to disempower heterosexuality but also provides a broader, more inclusive, sexual politics.

Chapter 1 - Performance and Gender-Bending

The electronic music scene is a cutting-edge experimental movement known for its proliferation of sexuality, excess and various gender-bending personalities. Within its sub-genres, "electroclash" specifically manifests one of the most recent developments within the movement. Arguably experiencing a downturn in popularity, one of the most interesting aspects of electroclash are the themes of media ambivalence, consumptive practices and performance of societal clichés. Electroclash artists critique the media through their exaggerated performances combined with edgy lyrical commentary (Roberts 56). Peaches-- with her gender bending, hot pant wearing, glam rocking, no apologies attitude-- comments on and challenges the traditional idea of female musical artists. Glancing through her videos, performances, visual and musical texts, Peaches provides an interesting case study in regards to Laura Mulvy's gaze theory. She

provides a hybridized transformative relationship with the various gazes that she engenders. Not only is the sonic text of her music cutting-edge, her music videos are also an excellent representation of her exaggerated social stereotype.

Music videos are one of the most recent extensions of musical expression. Women, in particular, have had a complicated relationship with the music video industry. Simon Frith demonstrates through his work *Performing Rites*, the beauty of video, in a pop context, is its openness to various interpretations, challenging the viewers to make meaning. Music videos express both obvious and subtextual analysis meaning whilst furthering the notion that no poststructuralist narrative is monolithic. Music videos never speak in a unified voice and through Peaches' repertoire of avant-garde videos; gaining insight into the gaze. Taking on a multitude of persona, she employs a wide variety of qualities that are both signature to electroclash culture and challenging to the traditional notions of the female role in music videos (Roberts 78).

The electroclash genre is characteristically known for being both musically and ideologically experimental. Artists, through their live/visual performances, attempt to render dominant ideologies absurd vis-à-vis exaggerated performance, cliché lyrics and popular culture parodies. Musically, electroclash is technology-based, heavily focused on synthesized instrumentation. Not only are the performances campy, but they also serve as a vehicle for analysis of contemporary popular culture. Sonically, elements of the music are frequently co-opted from commercial mass media and employ techniques rooted in sample culture (Gunkle, 2008). One of the additional characteristics of electroclash is the affinity for artists to continually challenge gender stereotypes. Through performance they engage with a traditional male gazes and work to subvert cultural norms through a combination of elaborate glam style dress, exaggerated

stage presences and edgy lyrics. Music videos address varying gender stereotypes, challenging what Mulvey calls the scopophilic gaze (Mulvey 25). In her famous essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey describes this gaze as deriving pleasure from looking, particularly within the context of taking people as objects and using the gaze as a mechanism of control.

This chapter addresses the role of performativity and the body as a methodology for conveying transgressive ideology. In particular, this chapter highlights, using music video imagery, successful instances where male/female gender binaries are questioned, subverted resulting in a broader understanding of sexual identity.

Chapter 2 - Fandom and Lyrical Analysis

As suggested by Sara Cohen in *Ethnography and Popular Music Studies*, audiences and fans choose music as a pathway to represent their own identities. A fan's relationship to music is not only a means of personal expression but, like the creation of personal identity, is an assembled process constantly negotiated and invented (Benjamin 23 & Cohen 132). As Pattacini describes in *Deadheads Yesterday and Today*, understanding historical fan attachment to a certain act, similar to organized religion, spans beyond the immediate relationship of fan to artist (1). Although content and music is an important element of the artist-fan relationship, what echoes primarily throughout the journey of a fan is the collective environment created through meaning, interdependence and social and cultural factors that comprise what Costello calls the "interpretive community" (126).

Fandom, as it occurs across multi-platform media, has refuted the Frankfurt School's idea that audiences are passive actors. Although the power of the viewer has been limited in some

cases, the ability for audiences to negotiate meaning out of programming and content is what primarily binds fans together (125). The interpretive community, most strongly felt in such examples as Deadheads following the Grateful Dead, is born out of the need for fans to reaffirm their collective experiences together (Pattacini 12). This shared understanding of knowledge and common themes propels individuals towards spaces with other fans in efforts to gather free of judgment and strengthen these communities (Costello 136). Deadheads have proven to be one of many strong examples within the music community of a fan culture that has remained united and cohesive even beyond the life cycle of the artists.

Particularly as it relates to musical analysis, the collaboration of ethnographic work and fandom studies works to significantly enrich the understanding of fandom within the context of music. As both Cohen and Middleton express, the study of human nature within musical spaces cannot be considered without a complete understanding of all elements of social and cultural interaction. These “insider” perspectives gained through ethnographic methods provide a more well-rounded understanding of popular culture that pair theoretical rigor with lived experiences. Music in particular seems to lack a complete analysis accounting for the inter-connectivity of audiences alongside the cultural effects of the performer. As Middleton later suggests, listeners feel music in a corporal sense. He states that “our skin resonates with it [music] as with a rhythm” (179). The freewheeling nature of Deadheads collecting, bonding and dancing at live events, powerfully exemplifies the notion that heightened fan experience is also felt in a bodily sense. One can understand this fan-artist interaction best through the way in which dancers interact with the rhythmic intonations of a track. Body movement not only helps to reveal music structure but also, like the inclusion of audience studies within the context of popular music,

allows for a holistic kinetically oriented mode of analysis.

Chapter 3 - Technological Components and Hybridity

The heart of the Peaches transgressive politics lies in her hybridity. Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that, like bisexuality, the hybrid or “outside” body is rarely transgressive in that it is also positions itself within a dualism against nature, or the inside (18). However, thinking about Peaches’ performances purely in terms of this binary negates its other essential elements, such as the use of technology, employment of musical experimentation, manipulation of campy performances and manipulation of instrumentation. The technological influences acting with the erotic elements of her stage presence add a multiplicity to the binaries in questioning, thereby undermining this relationship. The hybridization of nature and machine creates a space of hybrid identity, potentially opening the door for neutralizing the privileged position within the historical binaries of male/female, passive/active, heterosexual/homosexual. As Butler further critiques, theory that presumes an ordering, “locates priority as the sources of pre-discursive subversion, [and] effectively forbids from within the terms of the culture the very subversion that it ambivalently defends against” similar to the way one considers same sex relationships secondary (105). The problem of hierarchy, particularly sexual hierarchy is commented on again by Rubin, as a way in which Western society rationalizes the well-being of the sexually privileged. As she speculates, sexual morality shares ideological similarities with racism in the sense that what is normal, good and natural should ideally be “heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial” (13).

The notion of compulsory heterosexuality is dependent on performances of gender and

sexuality which individuals understand and use to naturalize their comprehension of normalized gender/sex behaviors (Butler 317). Donna Haraway's approach to this idea, as written about in her text *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, the addition of fragmented and assembled identities is helpful in unpacking Peaches' work. Through this theoretical understanding, the idea of what comprised female identity is not only challenged but also expanded. As Adrienne Rich argues through her theoretical work and Peaches' conveys within her music, the notion of a single ideal sexuality limits human interaction and confines the erotic and pleasure with a predominately patriarchal ethical framework (Rubin 15). Haraway's cyborg theory forces feminist thinking to revisit the questions posed within modernity concerning the idea of a universal human and the fear of technological infiltration within the body. Shifting away from modernity to postmodernism, the understanding of body as surface of inscription helped women to question the notion of an essential universal body.

Conclusion

Identity as Cohen asserts is, like fandom, not a fixed essence. Identity is something that is always being achieved, negotiated and invented. Sexuality, as I argue, through this case study, should be understood in the same sense an assembled, fluid definition, continually evolving. As Judith Halberstam asserts positioning queer individuals and desires as a backdrop for heterosexuality serves to further marginalizes outside groups. This paper hopes to demonstrate that through Peaches and her music one can begin to understand sexuality as fluid and changing, similar to the understanding of identity construction. As this exploration draws to a close I will prove, as Peaches states in her song "Serpentine", that people are "never straight lines,

serpentine” (Peaches *I Feel Cream*)

Chapter 1

Beyond Bowie: Performances, Performativity and Peaches

*I, you, he together, come on, baby let's go,
I, you, she together, come on, baby let's go.
"I U She", (Peaches Fatherfucker)*

Meanings associated with the body, as site of identification, inscription and, as Judith Butler asserts in *Gender Trouble*, are continually contentious. Performativity, Butler argues, is entrenched in power, inseparable and vital to its ability to be politicized (xxv). Categorical understandings, essentially language, has shaped an understanding of the world. It is used to identify each other's characteristics, nuances and traits through specific but discrete terms that often bind people to certain absolute qualities. During casual conversations people describe each other as tall, skinny, ugly, gay or "you know the lesbian, the one with the short hair". The subject is then limited when depoliticization or pacification of terms act as universal understandings of particular traits. Sexuality, particularly female sexuality, endlessly battles against what Butler identifies as categories of "true" sex and gender or absolutes described through language that destroys difference and diversity (176). Lisa Diamond, in her book *Sexual Fluidity*, further addresses the problem of "being", fixed by "a variable boundary, a surface [. . .] a signifying practice" a site of enactment - of identity (Butler 9). Like Butler, Diamond asserts that sexuality is in a constant state of flux and influenced by sociocultural factors, which interact with real bodies. Her study of female erotic experiences complements the work of Butler, and many other feminist thinkers, in asserting that sexuality and sexual experiences need to be simultaneously understood alongside cultural influences (22). Assuming there is one fixed identity through which all women relate is not only false but this assumption fails to account for

the diversity of erotic desires experienced by both men and women.

Peaches' performances force spectators to revisit an understanding of the body and sexuality. The idea of a universal human is challenged in her performances, particularly through multimedia. The history of sexual identity and, in particular, the concept of sexual fluidity provokes essentialist attitudes towards a unified definition of female. Butler argues apart from the foundationalist fictions that support the notion of the subject, however, there is the political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term woman denotes a common identity" (4). At the core of this search for "common identity" rests the assumption that there can be a coherent gender. Furthermore, as Diamond asserts, and I argue Peaches performs, a theory of sexuality and gender is best understood as a combination biological disposition and cultural influences (253). In addition, this concept of gender, Butler later elaborates, embraces the idea that an intersection with race, class, ethnicity and popular culture is essential. Newly imagined bodies, particularly female bodies, are established through discourses that serve to untangle appropriate limits and historical presumptions guiding the contemporary understanding of the female body.

Music has traditionally hidden female sexual experiences and has packaged sexuality in a limited and repressive way. Women in rock have battled to reclaim not only music but the power exerted over them regarding their own sexuality. Leslie Rankin of the London band Silverfish wrote: "People expect women to fit into these little slots of what girlies are supposed to be and if you step outside those barriers then you obviously want to be a man" (Evans 257). Peaches' work moves beyond the project of asserting female power and addressing the inadequacies that the patriarchal system of sex has offered to women. Instead, her work seeks to broaden accepted

sexual behaviors and blur the lines between male and female while as she cites “mak[ing] people think and make them dance” (Paoletta 2).

In an analysis pertaining to the performance of ambiguous sexualities, Allison McGuffie highlights that performatives used by authentic fringe sexualities allow audiences to mobilize around social models of sexuality not constrained by the natural hegemonic forces within society. Her analysis “tease[s] out the discursive resistance present in certain musical performances” and identifies a rising trend amongst male electro and punk artists to use gender bending practices within performance (McGuffie 12). McGuffie argues that understanding non-normative sexuality is a method for social resistance. In efforts to undercut hegemonic forces, queer theory critiques the norms of articulated dominated sexuality and, through music, politically agitates against the patriarchal structure of rock and roll. Although McGuffie’s work is focused on masculinities and the visual deconstruction of the signifiers within these male artists, her framework focuses on analyzing how the intersection of a sex/gender ambiguous performance works within the context of performance (14). Peaches’ work operates in a similar fashion and through an analysis of themes addressed within specific lyrical and video case studies, I aim to address how queer performativity acts to challenge the rigid patriarchal structure of music and compulsory heterosexuality.

Performativity acts both in McGuffie’s work and Butler’s, as a theory that is continually changing and evolving, just like the performance of gender. What is essential about a theory of performativity involves in the first instance, acting out a gender or rather the commonly understood tropes that connote a particular gender. Secondly, a theory of performativity engages with the repeated acts that naturalize assumptions, stereotypes and understandings of a

particular body. The idea that gender is performative immediately garners the question concerning the validity of the language surrounding gender. If gender is in fact performative than it is possible that an individual of any biological sex could perform a gender of their choosing. Analyzing Peaches, using a theory of performative acts, allowed on to see how power is used to turn against itself providing alternate readings of the gender(s) in question (Butler 7). Accounting for female related gender bending, as it occurs in Peaches' style, is, glaringly absent from McGuffie's analysis. The female centered performative, considering the typical male performing the female gender during drag, gleams a different analysis when thinking of the same ideas applied to a woman performing a hyperbolic version of female non-compulsory sexuality (Butler 76).

"Fuck the Pain Away" and Fuck Rock and Roll

Rock and rap music genres, both of which are at the heart of Peaches' musical influences, are two notably homophobic, misogynistic styles. As a female, Peaches concedes no linguistic or performative tactics that would be expected of a female entering the genre. In various early personal interviews, Peaches conveys that the tracks on her first album the *Teaches of Peaches* address the very issue of a male-centered genre specific music. Her sound and lyrical content is based on an approach that uses the words and visual signifiers typically used by males to discuss heterosexual pleasures of pursuing women. In addition, her performance behavior is nothing short of raw. Through a combination of clear ability to perform musically alongside her male counterparts she is able to point towards the typically male sexual elements of rock performance, re-organize them and eroticize them from her own subject position. The first single of this album, "Fuck the Pain Away", features lyrical content that outlines the theme of *Teaches of Peaches*

album by describing a sexual interaction with a neither male or female partner who is instructed to “check out [her] chrissy1 behind” all the time. Furthermore, the overarching lyric in the song is clearly “fuck the pain away” which is where the transcendence of gender occurs most overtly. The thick distorted guitar, heavy crash cymbal emphasis and low tone synthesizer bass track are reminiscent of stadium rock anthem. These musical components, paired with her lyrical content, parallel, in a less political sense, the way in which certain sexual practices are associated with a particular gender. Making the leap that music operates in a similar fashion, certain lyrical content and musical techniques have historically been seen in a gendered context therefore gaining a better insight to what Peaches is trying to accomplish with songs like “Fuck the Pain Away”. Through a reordering of these “male” signifiers, Peaches is problematizing the way in which certain behaviors are assigned as masculine.

Language, as described by Freya Jarmen - Ivens in the chapter *Queer(ing) Masculinities in Heterosexist Rap Music*, is fundamental to an understanding of patriarchy. The rhythmic structure that underscores rap song construction is argued, in this case, as an example of a gendered conflict. Jarmen - Ivens is referencing the moments where words become incomprehensible and where utterances that undermine the typical rock and roll music formula appear. Like Peaches, this perspective advocates that the musical construction of rap texts disrupts a commonly held understanding of “male music” (207). Again, the parallel becomes more evident when considering the performances that occur in rap as campy, and hyper-masculine providing an interesting paradox of rapper Eminem who, as the author cites “hate fags” yet focus so much attention on same sex behavior.

Nature, gender, materiality, body and language have become reoccurring key words in the

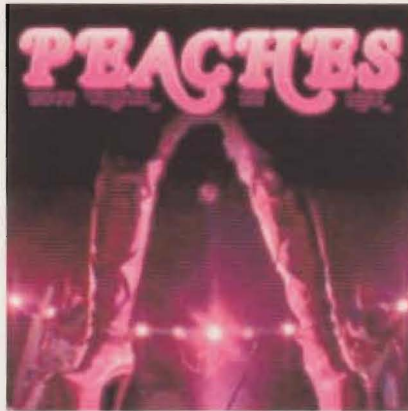
critique of compulsory heterosexuality. Signifying practices that spring from these absolutes have helped construct an understanding of biological sex. Butler's *Bodies that Matter* begins to question why the attribution of certain practice to these categories occurs. Peaches builds on this notion through "Fuck the Pain Away" and uses the signifiers of male heterosexuality (ie: lyrics such as, sucking on my titties and fuck the pain away) to construct new norms of sexuality. Although these acts cannot exist alone to reconfigure the power of compulsory heterosexuality, the repetition critical to performativity "undoes the very effect by which "sex" is stabilized" (65). What is critical about Peaches is the consistent undoing and challenging of norms throughout her work. Uniformity exists purely within the critical questioning of sex hierarchies, however, the myriad of issues addressed and performance elements used varies throughout her work. If "Fuck the Pain Away" is the launching point for her political agenda it becomes clear that her sexually charged content re-articulating the conventional boundaries of sex in rock, only become more elaborate and unconventional over the course of her next albums.

Masculinity and "Boys Wanna be Her"

Masculine imagery, as used by Peaches, becomes intertwined in her performances both onstage and in her music videos. Looking at the musical construction of Peaches' material one can easily see how she draws on the glam rock genre. Rock -- traditionally a site of masculinity and female sexual subordination -- laid the foundation of musical masculine ideology; however, it was through glam that articulations of alternative ways of imagining gender first emerged (McGuffie 13). Peaches utilizes the performatives of glam: highly stylized costuming and make-up reminiscent of a David Bowie-esque genre. What is important within this construction is that it

represents her ability to adapt masculine traits, however sexually ambiguous, from other genres and uses them for other purposes. The use of masculine aesthetics is often used to challenge the subject position of women, or rather to expand the definition of Monique Wittig's notion of the heterosexual contract and compulsory heterosexuality. Peaches articulates a disregard for the naturalization of bodies, genders and desires available within a 'patriarchal' framework, again, as I argue broadening female sexual and gender practices through a non- compulsory heterosexist framework (Rubin 16 & Wittig 254).

Masculine aesthetics and sexual plurality are easily seen in an analysis of Peaches' video and lyrics for the song "Boys Wanna Be Her". Released in 2006 as the single from her album *Impeach My Bush*, "Boys Wanna Be Her" describes a woman, indifferent, masculine and sought after by both sexes. The accompanying music video depicts Peaches and her band in full glam rock attire. The opening scene provides a close-up scan of a female crotch with a microphone dangling between female legs. At this point, spectators are left to question the sex of the character. The audience is left wondering if this is a male in drag performance or a kitsch glam female using the traditional tropes of glam performance to "demand the freedom to explore and construct one's identity in terms of gender, sexuality or any other terms" as is the legacy of the genre (McGuffie, 19). Immediately, the performance aspect of the video reveals itself as Peaches flashes the audience one of her token hand gestures, the shocker: a raised index, middle and pinky finger. "The Shocker", typically known as a sexual act performed by a male to a female, is usually associated with unwanted sexual contact. The appearance of this gesture in this video -- in lieu of the lyrical content, costuming and narrative-- provides an excellent example of performatives being used to articulate gender transcendence.



(Image 2: Album Cover for “Boys Wanna be Her” Single)

Simon Frith critiques music television as often conforming to a narrative faithful to “the dominant conceptions of rock cultures’ politics”. He argues how music videos as a text often focus on an homogenous performer image that, at times, can engage a discourse that is more about creating a rock star persona uniform with dominant ideology (Frith 132). “Boys Wanna Be Her” represents Peaches’ ability to act contrary to this homogenous, heteronormative, narrative. The story line of this video, in particular, effectively deconstructs its own aesthetics as it concludes with Peaches and her band literally playing themselves until they bleed. Blood begins to emerge from the band members as the suggestive gestures become much more apparent and parodic. The use of masculine aesthetics not only contributes to the performance elements of the video but it also reiterates the concept that there is no one femininity with which one can identify. Thus, the possible permutations can include a definition not contingent on compulsory heterosexuality. In addition, this video mocks the very essence of masculinity. As Bradby describes in her text *Gender, Technology and Dance Music*, the very image of masculinity portrayed by rock music is both outdated and unattainable. She points to the rise of disco, dance and punk as counter genres to the “monolith of rock masculinity” (158).

Looking back at Butler, she points to a key element critical to understanding not only Peaches' politics but also the political aspirations of a whole history of female musicians.

Heterosexuality doesn't belong exclusively to heterosexuals. Moreover heterosexual practices are not the same as heterosexual norms; heterosexual normativity worries me and becomes the occasion of my critique. (Butler 199)

Masculinity, in the same sense, is not the heart of the issue but, rather, the element of power and control that often exists within its manifestation. The problem with the history of the body is, that like heterosexuality, the element of agency and instrumentality dominates history rather than acknowledging explicit female desire. The expression of masculinity has been at the expense of female corporality (Grosz 50). However, the reconfiguration of this sexual hierarchy requires that, like Peaches, people begin to think of the body as a medium through which to bring the private thoughts and political views of queer theory into the public sphere. Corporeality in a physical sense must be free of assumptions and labels, and as Diamond expresses act as an integrative threshold between social and natural conditions (101).

Performativity, understood through this exploration, springs from Judith Butler's assertion that identity and gender are constructed through specific acts and gestures that produce dominant meanings of gender (187). Drag and cross dressing, in particular, are excellent examples of this understanding of originality and relationship between the original and the imitation. With regards to an understanding of women drag helps as it simultaneously attempts to create a unified picture of women whilst revealing that "those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as unity (188). Interestingly, the use of drag and parodic costuming is an essential element in Peaches' performances. Much of her political force comes from the emphasis that she places on utilizing the tool of drag to convey gender transcendence. Butler writes that the

becoming of gender, with regards to its naturalization, is a laborious process (Butler, 1999).

Bodily pleasures are, thus, based on the gendered meanings that are naturalized through gender specificity.

“Downtown” and Drag

Gender performativity is inextricably linked to drag. Peaches has applied this connection frequently in efforts to reiterate Butler’s thesis that gender is merely impersonation. Applying Butler’s theory of using drag in its subversive form, “by which heterosexuality ideal genders are performed and naturalized and undermines their power by virtue of effecting that exposure” (Butler, 1993), then one can see how Peaches’ use of this element within the visual representations of her music is relevant. Her citation of gender norms which provides her spectators with an alternate readings, builds on what Butler was unable to accomplish: a use of the performative to convey gender questioning.

“Downtown”, Peaches’ most clear drag performance, provides an excellent example of the way in which she not only uses drag as a subversive political action, but also her ability to take the concept one step further and blur boundaries. The video profiles one male character and one female character -- both acted by Peaches -- who eventually engage in a sexual relationship. The ending of the video depicts Peaches taking on both characters as the two ultimately become one. Each version clearly reveals the conventional gender identity via typical gender performatives of each binary and in the end combines the two to make the statement that the two are interchangeable. Butler argues “that heterosexual norms produce inapproximable ideals that operate through the hyperbolic versions of man and women” (Butler 45); however, combining the

two versions, as Peaches has done in this video, it becomes apparent that the definition of woman can include both binaries. Lyrically, the song conveys a gender ambiguity surrounding the sexual content.

Come with me come with me come with me come with me there
Cause I wanna take you down town / Show you my thing show you my thing
Cause I wanna take you down town / Show you my thing show you my thing (Peaches
“Downtown”).

The metaphor of “going downtown” is alluding to an oral sex interaction anticipated between the two parties; however, as the lyrics are sung by both of Peaches’ personas, it becomes clear that the goal of the video is less about the sexual act and more about the ability for all elements of the narrative to be interchangeable between both genders and sexual practices. Ultimately this is the political statement that is being pushed forward through her music: a new gender politics, a feminism that is predicated on sexual plurality and the blurring of discourses that surrounding the proliferation of gender binaries.

Elizabeth Grosz’s writings concerning the role of Cartesianism as it exists as a discourse on the body helps explain the way in which one can use the body in new ways to question the assumptions of patriarchal history. As *Volatile Bodies* suggests Cartesian dualism established the body as a vessel through which little meaning is engaged. Furthermore, as she suggests if the “body is to have any chance of making itself understood by others, or to be effective in the world [...] the body must be seen as an unresisting pliability which minimally distorts information (51)”. Essentially, this assertion advocates for the idea that the individual body speaks where language does not. Corporeal inscription allows a material body to express its interiority and, thus, when connecting with others uses these interactions like a mirror to define ourselves and

others. The question of identity has been historically based on the inscription of the body. Butler points out that the body, in this context, has traditionally served as a passive medium and as Cartesian precedents have proliferated, the body became a signifier of a profane void that anticipated meaning and cultural signifiers. Similarly, the mind/body, male/female split has meant that an attempt at cultural coherence based on unattainable beauty myths and binary structures have limited female corporality. As will later be explored, the blurred distinction between the material world and corporality helps to conceive of new ways not only to understand the body, but also sexuality. Donna Haraway asks “Why should our body end at our skin?” (178) and furthermore elaborated that in the struggle to define woman, corporality should not be encased in a singular form.

“Two Guys” and Same Sex Desire

Understanding sexuality and gender within the context of Peaches involves not only analyzing identity? Realness depicted through performance as argued by Erving Goffman is important, as performance “delude[s] the audience for the good of the community” (18). In this sense, the performer is able to sincerely convert the reality of the stage to a more culturally accepted version of reality. Peaches’ performatives act in this way. The motivation for her gender bending as Goffman describes is an effort to change consciousness and social fronts. Mulvy utilizes the concept scopophilia to describe the process by which individuals are subject to curious but controlling gazes, often which are sexual (835). This “pleasure in looking” draws upon the patriarchal conventions which contrast an active male gaze and the passive female object. Traditionally, as it is related to the gaze, women and lesbians have found themselves at the

bottom of the hierarchy, positioned in particular for the pleasure of men, the pornographic male gaze. However, women play a critical role within the context of film as their positioning is often passive yet integral to the male protagonist's ability to further the story. The woman as icon, also in Peaches work, is essential as her castration must be exaggerated in efforts to give power to the male as he visually assert his dominance (842). Peaches interrogates this notion of the beautiful contradiction of dominance and passivity as she sets the stage for a critical retort to the scopophilic gaze.

In efforts to interrogate the concepts of the body, gaze and public sphere Peaches' song "Two Guys for Every Girl" provides an excellent case study. This particular song works to contest the heterosexual hierarchy of appropriate behaviors. Narratively, it addresses a sexual situation through which the concept that lesbian sexuality is designed for consumption by heterosexual males is inverted. The song documents a situation in which a female, arguably Peaches, desires a threesome composed of two males and one female. As Rubin describes in her sex hierarchy found in the essay *Thinking Sex* she outlines a value system discerning between good versus bad sexual behavior (20). Sexual morality has been organized into a similar system of power that rewards and encourages individuals similar to the capitalist system of power and repression. "Two Guys for Every Girl", following Rubin's model, encourages a model of new erotic activity through subverting a traditional heterosexist model of oppression and disempowerment of lesbian sexuality and opening up a the broader system.

Lyrically, "Two Guys for Every Girl" attempts to normalize erotic diversity through addressing the erotic stigma of prejudice that supports male heterosexual behavior as dominant.

I wanna see you boys get down with each other/ I wanna see you do your lil' nasty

brother, Just one thing i can't compromise/ I wanna see you work it guy on guy.
Two Guys for Every Girl.

(Peaches *Impeach My Bush*)

Adrienne Rich in *Compulsory Heterosexuality* expands on this notion through the understanding of heterosexuality as a dominant force suppressing legitimate lesbian desires (227). As she asserts the total neglect of a lesbian existence has perpetuated the economic and societal imperative for individuals to suppress their innate desires and follow dominant ideology.

An additional helpful example for understanding the role of same sex desire is rooted in the emergence of Russian duo t.A.T.u. Lena Katine and Yulia Volkove caught the mass media by storm with their presentation of a lesbian existence that challenging popular music's tradition of a covert understanding of same sex sexuality. As Kerton describes in her text, *Too Much, t.A.T.u Young: Queering Politics in the World of t.A.T.u*, t.A.T.u presented same sex female sexuality in both an indirect and limited way. Turning to Judith Butler, Kerton makes a clear point that the term queer connotes no consistent image of what it means to be either gay or lesbian. She continues that the term queer is an argument against specificity and abolishing what a singular lesbian or gay identity is (163). Prior to t.A.T.u, popular music, in particular, had a very limiting idea of what lesbian love should look like. The women of t.A.T.u proved that, through the use of stereotypical feminine imagery, they could confront patriarchal fantasies of childhood sexuality and vulnerability. "Two Guys for Every Girl" works in a similar fashion but extends this subversion and adoption through a full reversal of roles from the typical understanding of lesbian desire, substituting male same sex desire.

Readings of these musical moments have been highly criticized as pandering to the voyeuristic pornographic gaze of male fantasies. However, what is important within a reading of

this group and Peaches are their voices for a select section of the lesbian community, particularly in terms of their ironic portrayals. Media representations of same-sex desire, particularly within the social situation surrounding t.A.T.u, were narrow and limited. Their sexuality, immediately dismissed and trivialized by their critics, provides further support for the obvious hierarchy of permissible sexualities. Particularly, as it relates to women, exploring sexuality is often exclusively understood as a provocation of male titillation. Peaches works in the opposite fashion, taking the same tropes designed for male heterosexuality and making them available to women. Arguably, “Two Guys”, is designed both for female and male titillation, particularly for sexual subversives, a subgroup of individuals who rarely experience sexual importance. However, these constructions of sexuality further represent queer desires as mindless fantasies explored by the undereducated and innocent. t.A.T.u. disproved this belief in many senses as they were highly educated women vocal about lesbian sexuality. As Kerton suggests, “these are not the actions of the bubblegum pop movement” (165). What is of particular interest from this text is the broader question of lived sexuality. Do those who advocate for the politics of queer sexuality through their gender performances and music necessarily have to engage in such practices in their actual lives? t.A.T.u. revealed the constraints placed on all expressions of female sexuality in addition to performing a re-negotiation of the conventional gendered position expected of female performers. They asked individuals to question the role of labeling and uniformity undermining the notion that all individuals must be placed in a box, even within the queer community. Peaches provides a response to these questions through a rejection of the process of labeling. She brings deviant and private sexual behaviors into the public sphere, changing the understanding of “bad sex” (Rich 14). In essence, one can understand t.A.T.u. and Peaches’ in a similar framework of

questioning sexual morality, asking audiences to reconsider the ways in which one positions the hierarchies of sexual value.

Chapter 2

Fandom and Peaches: A Magical Cave of Underpants

*Stop you've got nowhere to go.
No blame, no shame, this ain't a Peaches show.
It's just me and you, it's just me and you.
"Talk to Me" (Peaches I Feel Cream)*

During the thirty-minute Drums of Death remix of Peaches three title songs "Lose You", "Billionaire" and "Downtown" and various fan interviews are remixed intermittently between each track. Notable about this remix is a male voice who recounts attending Peaches' first *Teaches of Peaches* tour in 2000, an experience which gave him a "rude awakening". As the bass beat begins to align itself with the rhythm of "Lose You" this fan remembered that this concert finally made him realize that he should "talk to girls about things he has never talked to them about". Elaborating further, he begins to outline how Peaches' work has helped him understand female sexuality and to ask questions to women that were once un-askable. The voice begins to fade into to the background as the treble component of "Lose You" becomes juggled in with the other base beats from Peaches tracks. This musical moment serves as an excellent launching point in a broader discussion of the importance and experiences of fans within Peaches' work.

As David Cavacchi argues in his work *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning among Springsteen Fans* music has typically has a role in composing identities, particularly through fan mediated self awareness. As suggested by Sara Cohen in *Ethnography and Popular Music Studies*, audiences and fans choose music as a pathway to represent their own identities. A fan's relationship to music is not only a means of personal expression, but, like the creation of personal identity, is an assembled process constantly being negotiated and invented with regards to evolving historical moments (Benjamin 23 & Cohen 132).

Throughout this section analysis will be devoted to three spheres of fan interaction. As described by Fiske in *The Cultural Economy of Fandom*, the development or understanding of fan culture is based on the idea put forward by Pierre Bourdieu that the cultural system works much like an economic system through which resources, investments and accumulation of capital occur in a way that distinguishes an individual as either privileged or deprived. This model emphasizes the role of economics and class as a mechanism to determine social distinction. However, Fiske adds two key elements to the discussion. Firstly, he addresses the influence of age and gender occurring simultaneously in both high and low culture. Bourdieu's model underestimates the creativity of popular culture and the role of other factors in mapping a social hierarchy. However, Fiske attempts to address this issue through the interrogation of production and participation.

Fans, as he describes them represent an excellent example of his "autodidacts", self taught individuals who use their self acquired knowledge to compensate for the perceived gap between their actual and official cultural capital. This cultural knowledge, although unofficial, reworks certain values through which the official cultural capital is often opposed. In addition, fans derive an intense amount of immeasurable self-esteem and confidence through acquisition of knowledge within this social sphere. Fiske looks at three particular elements within his model which impact the understanding of how fan culture fits in with the capitalist model of accumulation and investment. As he later describes in his text:

Official culture likes to see its texts (or commodities) as the creation of special individuals or artists; such as reverence for the artists and, therefore the text necessarily places its readers in a subordinate relationship to the artist. Popular culture, however, is well aware that its commodities are industrially produced and thus do not have the status of a uniquely crafted art-object. (47)

This "culture of the people" as he references it, springs from the very notion that high cultural

society fuels the very products that propel popular ideology. Essentially he is suggesting that the co-existence of high and low culture is what allows for their existence. Fandom, Fiske asserts, exists under three main characteristics: Discrimination and Distinction, Productivity and Participation and Capital Accumulation (Fiske, 33). The first element represents the power derived from texts that individuals use to make meaning of their social identities. Cultural tastes and practices both within the high and low cultural sphere are expressed within this fashion. Secondly, he discusses Productivity and Participation through which he explores cultural products from both culture industries and fan production. He sees fan production as three things, semiotic, enunciative and textual. Semiotic references the meanings made pertaining to social identity from a particular text such as the ability of individuals to use cultural texts to fashion their sexuality. Enunciative productivity refers to dialogue, the shared stories and face-to-face oral culture that occurs amongst fans. Finally, textual production references the circulation of texts, and is integral to the growth of fan culture.

Capital Accumulation references the specific values between fan and official cultural capital. Fan culture lies in the appreciation of the knowledge of texts, performance and events which often are distinguished from the dominant culture. However, it is the original production that distinguishes them from the high culture. Within fan communities, knowledge is also seen as distinguishing amongst fans often creating a hierarchy even within these particular spaces.

In essence, fandom is a heightened form of popular culture that relies on a combination of romantic experience, identity construction and cultural understanding. What stands out, however, through all of this discussion is the continually complex relationship that exists between fan culture and dominant ideology, at times a combative but also at time co-operative relationship.

Fans have power in the sense that they chose what to adopt and as previously asserted, they are often discriminating and selective. However, what is important within the case study of Peaches is the meaning that fans derive from her music. As Simon Frith argues in his chapter *Songs as Text*, the historical analysis of music and meaning has relied specifically on lyrics. However, although traditional content analysis has merit the inclusion of rhythm/music plays an integral role providing individuals with the tools to identify with the emotions and feelings of the song (164). Elvis Costello, quoted within the same chapter, asserts that:

Most people, I think, are confused regarding their identities, or how they feel, particularly about love. They're confused because they're not given a voice, they don't have many songs written about them. (163)

Frith establishes that this is an important argument, further enhancing the idea that songs are mostly sociological or psychological truths. Furthermore, to assert that lyrics stand alone is to equate their power to that of lyrical poetry. For the purpose of this case study on Peaches, the understanding of the power of popular music lies in the integration of verbal and musical rhetoric (182) and as Fiske's model punctuates, the inclusion of social circumstances. Costello touches on an integral point within this foregrounding, that the voice of popular music texts provides individuals with the language to address their identities. Fans imagine Peaches' voice as their own, the "I", as they are continually in a state of identity formation particularly due to the expansive sexual identities discussed within her work.

Discrimination and Distinction

The role of discrimination and distinction in an understanding of Peaches' fan culture serves

to unravel the concept in two ways; firstly, contributing towards the larger framework of fan identity evolution and secondly in terms of Fiske's identification of the empowering social behavior derived from particular fan followings. As Costello and Moore suggest in their text *Cultural Outlaws*, the foundational caricature of audiences put forward by the Frankfurt School that audience are passive actors, helpless victims to media production is immediately and essentially refuted. Key to this notion is the practice of cultural discernment. Just as individuals compose their own personal identities so does cultural consumption play a role within the selection of texts. However, drawing upon Stuart Hall's interpretation of media as understood by consumers as dominant, negotiated or oppositional, his ultimate conclusion is that audiences are inactive (129). Costello then turns to Fiske's model to reassert that although audiences are active, viewer power is limited in many senses. As the focus of the text pertains primarily to the use of the internet fans can negotiate meaning out of programming, collaborate and discuss but are limited in their ability to re-conceptualize and effect this programming.

What is key concerning Costello's work, as it relates to music, is an understanding of how meaning is determined by a large extent through audience interpretation. Conceptualizing how these media texts play a significant role within the everyday lives of consumers, furthermore the individual experiences of each fan, plays a larger role in interpreting how viewing and listening impacts the larger media environment. The term "interpretive community" is used to describe this multifaceted audience, which has proven to be a unique characteristic of Peaches' audiences. Peaches herself reports in various interviews that fans speak of their personal stories relating to their own sexual discovery and liberation taking place via her music. As discussed in the opening example of this exploration, fans have been noted to derive confidence and empowerment to, as

Fiske states, “have the confidence to stand up for themselves better in a variety of social situations” (35). Participating in cultural communities, as will be elaborated on later, offer spaces for individuals to self-identify social difference.

As argued by Robin James in her text *Autonomy, Universality, and Playing the Guitar* Peaches’ view is that everyone will learn from her music. She cites that “straight guys will learn to, you know, just loosen up a little like women and gay men do”. In essence, she hopes that her fans experiences a demystification surrounding the sexual topics discussed in her music (90). Reviews of her live performances, beginning after the emergence of *The Teaches of Peaches*, cite her fans as “fervent followers on the battleground of sexual politics” (Billboard 2003). Furthermore, *Rolling Stone* reporter Tommy Lee references his experiences at her 2006 *Impeach my Bush* tour as “un-fucking believable”. Most importantly, he writes that “the dudes playing guitar were totally cool”, later to discover that in fact the Hermes, Peaches’ backing band at the time, were all women. As Lee reports, his experience at a Peaches show exemplifies how the audience encounters her subversion of the gender paradigm. Not only does Peaches use the tropes of heterosexual masculinity but she continually undermines these systems in ways that renders inconsistent the foundation of binary gender presumptions. Lee’s experience is an excellent example of Peaches’ ability to adopt both masculine and feminine roles through her performances.

Productivity and Participation

Economic participation propels popular culture. As Fiske asserts, his framework attempts to address fan production not only via capital gains but also via a negotiation between “industrial

productivity and capital gains” (37). In Cavicchi’s text *Loving Music* he traces capital accumulation and fandom back to eighteenth century operatic performances. Although the financial transaction of goods and services is important in this conversation, as Cavaicchi describes:

While fandom is often characterized in media studies as a product of mass consumer culture in the twentieth century, the basic practices associated with fandom - idealized connection with a star, strong feelings of memory and nostalgia, use of collecting to develop a sense of self - precede the development of electronic mass communication technologies. (236)

Fiske’s sub-categories of semiotic, enunciative and textual productivity attempt to capture the outputs and fruitfulness of fan culture that is simultaneously measurable and immeasurable within current capitalist frameworks. Cavacchi’s text on Bruce Springsteen described four primary ways in which fans come together: fanzines, computer discussion groups, concert events, and social events. These four elements not only relate to the social interconnectivity of fan based groups but simultaneously act as means for fan production. Furthermore Cavicchi’s argument that the “experience of sound creates a new social space [through which] a common language builds the similarities” (161) helps to position the importance of connection within fan communities. Commonality and shared experience are what bind these individuals together and set them apart from other fans. Their shared sense of identity creates a commonality that underlies the community and is an important consideration when examining fan production.

Specifically with relation to Peaches’ fans, production occurs in a combination of aforementioned frameworks. Undeniably, her focus and importance on performances has proven to be the paramount element of fan interaction. However, Peaches’ fans are not strangers to creating fan videos, producing texts, adopting modes of dress and professing their admiration via

various means. Peaches' own focus on interacting with her crowd arguably propels fans to engage with her. As one reporter professed after the 2009 *I Feel Cream* tour: "Without a doubt one of the most engaging and dynamic shows I have seen all year" (Mason 2009). A quick browse of YouTube and the Internet reveals a plethora of fan made music videos. Most often these videos include setting Peaches' tracks to such favorites as Andy Griffith shows, Jim Henson's Muppet reruns and many other mashed-up combinations. What remains a common theme throughout these videos is the position of women within a position of sexual power. The narrative, particularly in the context of fan videos for "Fuck the Pain Away" do not provide alternate readings to Peaches' songs but rather pair them with visuals that one would not typically associate with the sexual nature of her work.

Turning to Fiske's subcategory of enuciative productivity, the role of verbal interactions among fans also place a significant role within fan participation. Included within this category are elements of social identity including mimicking mode of dress, hairstyles etc. of the particular star (38). Enuciative productivity exists in the role of popular culture capital, it addresses the possession of certain knowledge by certain fans. In terms of measurable capital, what is essential about this category is the immediate pay off. The validation that is achieved either through conversation or through reaction to social identity can be both limiting and exclusive to individual fan communities. However, the importance of this production offers a different type of perceived value typical reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's perception of exhibition value (107). According to Benjamin, perceived value is that which is imposed on capital accumulation based on the individual conception and meaning. Although the Arcades project differs substantially from fan social construction, the ideology and understanding of the Arcades, the concepts of market value

and private personal values, offer important elements to understanding of textual value. Fandom offers a logical linkage between these two values as it accounts for the social elements that underpin perceived and exhibition value. Furthermore it ensures that there is an understanding of how individuals create personal value, an element that is often lacking within Fiske's analysis of capital accumulation.

As Henry Jenkins puts forth in his book, *Textual Poachers*, fan interpretations of music videos have the potential to capitalize on the element of subplots and subtexts that were not primarily put forth within the original text. As a “hodge podge” of narrative, meaning and influence, music videos do not often follow linear narratives and are, thus, open to ideology that is more progressive and experiences conveyed within these texts (223). Poached culture, as he describes, allows fans to gain power via appropriation in places where they once did not. Susan Driver's work elaborates further on this notion of meaning, as it is understood amongst fans. In her book *Queer Girls and Popular Culture*, Driver explores the critical role of music within the formation of identity of queer women. Immediately within this chapter, she provides the reader with an assertion that reminds one of the importance of alternative texts within queer culture. Historically, popular texts have failed to directly speak to the queer community and provide a sense of understanding of the realities that they face. She speaks to music as a vital tool in shaping queer youth self in terms of their perceptions, imaginative longings and political commitments (196). Popular music, Driver argues, has been historical known as a tool that transcends hierarchical institutional power regulation and formalization. An appreciation for Peaches' work presides within this framework and as she continues to discuss serves as a ground for a dialogue to disengage with the manufactured images of sexuality and desire. “Fuck the Pain

Away” is significant as there is no official music video for, arguably, Peaches’ most popular song. As an early experimental videographer herself, this songs was intentionally designed to invite fan interpretations.

Peaches, mentioned within this text as a queer idol, acts contrarily to what McRobbie describes in her text. Although music as Driver expresses exists within a heterosexual framework and is critiqued as ignoring individuals who use this frameworks as a way to defy heterosexual expectations. Women’s musical movements posses unique characteristics regardless of the way in which they traditionally acted as a method to inscribe gender difference leaving little room for resistant voices. Driver’s text is particularly useful as she outlines how which queer women are able to connect with music without lumping it together as “for queers”.

Specifically in terms of artistry, what sets Peaches apart within the context of queer fans is her ability to maintain openness and ambiguity more akin to queer politics. As Driver argues this political position has been absent within other artist. Peaches’ sense of sexuality does not stem from a heterosexual understanding of mainstream music but rather transcends the understanding of compulsory heterosexuality. By this, both Driver and Peaches understand the importance of media and expansive political understandings within these platforms to the queer community. As Judith Halberstam further elaborates, the importance of sub cultural texts is paramount to minority groups with regards to their relevance in identity formation (7). Pointing to queer sub cultural texts, she addresses the tendency of subcultures to seek mainstream status in efforts to continue their transgressive artistry. Her work on drag kings provides an excellent example concerning the struggles that queer groups often face. The example of drag kings appearing on daytime television is used, as kings and queens are selected for their fantastical appeal further

alienating this subculture from heterosexuality. In addition she speaks to examples in popular television texts such as *Sex and the City* through which drag kings are positioned as crazy or even as straight individuals (28).

Queer subcultures offer us an opportunity to redefine the binary of adolescence and adulthood that structure so many inquiries into subculture - precisely because many queers refuse and resist the heteronormative imperative of home and family, they also prolong the period of their life devoted to sub cultural participation (8).

This quotation not only underlines the importance of queer subculture within mainstream culture but also points to a secondary element of queer subculture consumerism. As fans or individuals who are not following the traditional life path, their role within sub cultural groups is not only longer but also more committed.

Halberstam then proceeds to discuss Judith Butler's assertion that ritual, as a practice, can work either to reinforce or disrupt cultural norms. Alluding here to her theory of performativity, Halberstam is calling upon Butler to show how individuals like Peaches work towards changing perceptions of sexuality. However, queer subcultures are often positioned at the bottom of the "hierarchy of subcultures" due to adherence traditional methods of research and understanding of these texts that assumes a deviant and delinquent relationship between culture and subculture. Particularly in terms of female subcultures, women often find themselves at the bottom of the sexual hierarchy. However, men who play around with femininity are often treated with the ability and power to choose, while gender experimentation, sexual ambiguity and queerness among women is viewed differently (15).

Participatory culture of fans plays an integral role within perpetuating and legitimizing fandom. Textual productivity, the final elements of fan production, described as texts created by

fans for other fans, often circulate amongst fans. These “texts” are unique in the sense that they do not frequently engage with the broader economic system. Important to Peaches is the textual participation that mimics fan cultures like the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* or *Star Trek* through which fan participation is integral to the success of the culture.



(Image 3: Peaches with her fans post show, I Feel Cream tour 2009)

Fiske cites that fan texts need to be “open, to contain gaps, irresolution, contradiction, which both allow and invited fan productivity [...] who by such activity produce their own popular cultural capital” (42). This phenomenon described in Chapter 1 through which fan engagement with Peaches’ song “Fuck the Pain Away” played an integral role in its ability to go viral and be ultimately successful.

Capital Accumulation

The role of capital accumulation, as described within Fiske’s definition of fandom, involves an understanding and often contentious relationship between fan culture and capital

accumulation. Fan appreciation of cultural texts and participation is essentially excluded from mainstream cultural activity. However, in the same vein prowess in fan culture can often times be based on attending shows, purchasing albums and collecting memorabilia. Fan productivity often exists continually negotiating within cultural capital and sub cultural spheres. What is essential about this element of analysis is the notion of the fan as both a producer of cultural capital and consumer.

Collecting in particular is considered a huge component of fandom. The term collecting can reference not only material goods but as previously expressed knowledge, experiences and relationships. With regards to translating this understanding to an evaluation of Peaches, Cavicchi continues to describe the process of fan self-awareness, which includes composing identities through practices such as collecting, listening and universal identification. Identification through these methods, particularly as it relates to the Boss occurs across masculine gender lines. Essentially the case study of Springsteen outlines how masculinity is performed and validated through the music. Interestingly, this particular fan group has defined and collected around Bruce's ability to convey an ideal of American masculinity that has spoken intimately to his fans and their self-identification journey. Looking towards Peaches' framework, particularly within the context of composing identities and communities around these ideals, various shared similarities appear to the way Cavicchi describes Springsteen fandom. This to say that through her work fans are able to access a broader realm of gender identification. Just as Peaches describes an expansive sexual politics within her music, Cavicchi's focus on identification processes proves useful in understanding the "mediated self" as described by David Hume (Cavicchi 136). Again, the emphasis is places on the individual who is embedded within many social relationships.

The element of collecting is also given significant attention in terms of considering objects beyond their commodity value but rather as part of the larger journey that is fandom. Cavicchi references the phenomena of collecting live tapings of musical events and their importance in fandom. Although the mediated self is not without problems attaching fandom to this capitalist framework can sometimes mask the journey and importance of collecting within the composition of identity. Peaches herself engages in the practice of collecting fan artifacts. She herself is a fan of her fans, as she is clear during interviews she sings for her fans or “to bring release and/or for people to get laid” (Sullivan 2006). Fostering a space for experimentation and questioning occupies a very different side of capital accumulation. Her fan presence is felt quite strongly through her extensively updated blog, website, and social media outlets. Fiske continues to elaborate on the characteristics of fan collections (46); however, a unique element of Peaches’ fan culture is the reciprocal relationship of her collecting. A notable element of Peaches’ relationship with her fans is the underwear cave that she has created out of under garments thrown onstage during her show. The cave represents not only another facet of the unique fan relationship amongst Peaches’ audiences but also a third element added to Fiske’s cultural accumulation framework; industry, fans and now adding the artist to the equation.



(Image 4: Peaches in Her Cave of Underpants)

The addition of this third variable to Fiske's economic model of fandom helps to debunk the notion that fandom exists purely on an economic sphere. What this model fails to address are the emotional and social ties that are included. As previously discussed, the process of self identification facilitated through fandom, exists beyond official cultural and prioritizes the unique traditionally immeasurable relationship that exists between artists and fans.

Moving beyond Fiske's framework, the addition of social and spiritual relationships as new elements assists in gaining a deeper understanding of the fan/artist connection. As Pattacini describes in *Deadheads Yesterday and Today*, understanding historical fan attachment to a certain act, similar to organized religion, spans beyond the immediate relationship of fan to artist (1). Although content and music is an important element of the artist-fan relationship, what echoes primarily throughout the journey of a fan is the collective environment created through meaning, interdependence and social and cultural factors that comprise what Costello calls the "interpretive community" (126). Peaches stresses this element when discussing the goals of her work, as stated in previous chapters her main objective is for fans to give meaning to her work via

their own self reflexive questioning of standard gender configurations. Furthermore, fans are invited to actively participate not only in her shows but as Cohen asserts to consider a broad range of elements that act in unison to influence the constant flux that is identity. The concept of sexual fluidity and variety, conveyed both in Peaches' lyrical content and the make-up of her audience further substantiates Cohen's claim of social value added to textual understands of music (132). Arguably Peaches, via creation of audience diversity and strong focus on live performances understands that as with creating safe spaces for broader understandings of queer sexuality so should music adapt to create a more collective participatory culture.

Fandom, as it occurs across multi-platform media, has refuted the Frankfurt School's idea that audiences are passive actors. Although the power of the viewer has been limited in some cases, the ability for audiences to negotiate meaning out of programming and content is what primarily binds fans together (Pattacini 125). The interpretive community, most strongly felt in such examples as Deadheads following the Grateful Dead, is born out of the need for fans to reaffirm their collective experiences together (Pattacini 12). This shared understanding of knowledge and common themes propels individuals towards spaces with other fans in efforts to gather free of judgment and strengthen these communities (Costello 136). As with the example of Deadheads, it is evident that a sense of community and participation in fan culture is of immense importance. Arguably it is the most critical element of Fiske's model, as it is through participation that fans accumulate and make capital. Essentially the role of the fan is a consumer and producer. Simultaneously they are creating and producing text most often as a response to items or texts that they have consumed.

Particularly as it relates to musical analysis, the collaboration of ethnographic work and

fandom studies works to significantly enrich the understanding of fandom within the context of music. As both Cohen and Middleton express, the study of human nature within musical spaces cannot be considered without a complete understanding of all elements of social and cultural interaction. These “insider” perspectives gained through ethnographic methods provide a more well rounded understanding of popular culture that pair theoretical rigor with lived experiences. Music in particular seems to lack complete analysis accounting for the inter-relativity of audience support tandem to cultural affect of the performer. As Middleton later expresses, listeners feel music in a corporal sense. He states, “our skin resonates with it [music] as with a rhythm” (179). Peaches’ work operates strongly in coordination with Middleton’s understanding of listener activity. Not only are her performances physical and integrative but her audience are enthusiastic and full of energy. A quick browse of her fan material reveals a new dimension of understanding Peaches. One can understand this fan-artist interaction best through the way in which dancers interact with the rhythmic intonations of a track. Body movement not only helps to reveal music structure but, like the inclusion of audience studies within the context of popular music, allows for a holistic kinetically-oriented mode of analysis. Essentially including an analysis of audience perception helps audiences reach beyond the lyrical and performative elements of her work and truly witness the themes that are being celebrated by others.

On a whole, fandom is not some particular thing one has or does. Fandom is a process of being it is the way one is. (Cavicchi 59)

As Michael Gross expresses in his book *Starstruck* the interaction between fan and artist can often take on a negative spin in the sense that the professional collectors provide a different element to the fan/artist relationship. As Gross elaborates at times fandom can create a sense of

false idol hood that exists in the realm of religious figures that, as he expresses “present impossible standards for the rest of us” (11). The work of Gross helps with a critical understanding of how fandom is important to the creation of identity and further reveals the negative elements that may arise when fans transition to fanatics. Peaches’ fan culture becomes an interesting case study with respects to her distinct separation of Peaches the artist and Peaches Nisker the person. Her personal life, often inaccessible by her fans, seems to be a meager shadow of her self as the artist. Arguably both personas seem interchangeable as one sees very little of Peaches separate from her exuberant stage performance. Much of her personal life reflects the openness conveyed through her musical empire. Her support of the copy left, open sourcing and supplying fans with a significant amount of photo/video footage contrasts with the criticisms of fan culture that Gross has addressed in *Starstruck*.

The detrimental theme of artists as religious icons is underlined through an understanding of Elvis and his fan empire. Rooting itself primarily as a response to Erika Doss’s text *Elvis Culture*, Mark Duffet argues in *False Faith or False Comparison* that the consideration of Elvis in terms of a religious icon and figure provides not only a limited understanding of fandom by presumes that fans are misguided, dumb and unsophisticated consumers (513). He goes on to further argue, that consideration of fandom in a religious context ignores the talent that artists do possess and positions them as saviors. Through this text he explores the validity of this particular comparison, fandom and religion, reverting back to the definitions associated with the theoretical framework of religious based texts. The importance of this assertion is its criticism of considering artists as false idols. Furthermore, one can see through the example of Elvis how this connection can be both dangerous and superficial.

Religion, Duffet argues, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a system of faith or worship of an individual with superhuman power. Furthermore, faith is defined as divine truth that requires no proof associated with said acts of worship. When looking comparatively at different fan based groups how is one to assert that Dead fans are more or less devoted than Elvis fans? Understanding fans purely within a religious context also assumes, as Duffet explains, that individuals listen exclusively to one artist. In addition, most fans do not self-identify themselves as falling into a religious category but rather outsiders provide these labels. Paralleling fan experience to religions also presumes that fan confession and experience is neither honest nor exists within a context of free will.

Duffet hopes that through expanding an understanding of Elvis beyond a religious framework, one can begin to pay attention to these complexities. My understanding of Peaches is that her individualization and music variation accounts for her ability to transcend this dangerous element of fandom. The faith audiences have in Peaches springs from her acceptance of difference rather than grouping individuals together in uniform categories. This is a difference not only felt through her lyric content but also throughout the diversity of her fan base.



(Image 5: Peaches crowd surfing during I Feel Cream tour)

Henry Jenkins often critiques fans as “sitting too close to the text” following Adorno’s evaluation that fans of popular culture are “temple slaves to the shallow fad of popular culture” (Duffet 518). However, Peaches’ content, although entrenched in the format of pop culture seems to be less than shallow. Engagement in semiotic productivity, of varying degrees, or as Fiske labels “shallow cultural economy” encompasses the elements of economic participation that typical analysis of popular culture excludes (30). The ability for fans to preside close to texts allows for alternative methods of art, production, distribution, community and self-identification to emerge outside of a capitalist economic framework. These additions by fans to popular music serve an essential role in creating emotional attachments and legitimization of “low culture” support to bridge the gap between high culture/low culture socio-economic spheres.

Bourdieu’s mapping, described by Fiske (34), concerning the correlation of cultural tastes with economic status only begins to carve out an understanding of the intensity and role of fandom within this model. Essentially the diversity and complexities of constructing identities exists well beyond an economic framework. Through the complexity of Peaches’ fans, it becomes apparent that stringent economic frameworks and theory fail to capture the entirety of the fan experience. Similar to the lack of vocabulary available to describe diverse sexual experiences, a similar struggle exists in capturing the complete characteristics of fan identity. What is important, specifically to Peaches is the essential role her politics has in creating a fan base that is more diverse, transgressive and able to influence the sphere of queer theory through their individualized experiences

Chapter 3

The Third, the Hybrid and Technology

I think you got a little bit more than you asked for!
More, (Peaches I Feel Cream)

“What then is aura?” asks Walter Benjamin in his text *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility* (23). Foreseeing the destruction of aura, exhibition value and the integral role of technology in artistic practice, Benjamin foreshadowed this shift towards mechanical reproducibility at the dawning of postmodern era. The human body, the vehicle through which one understands and inscribes meaning, marks, particularly concerning the modernist project, the essence of human identity. Fragmentation, within the context of artistic process translates to an understanding of the historical, aesthetic and conceptual components that have comprised traditional ideals around the female form. The body as a site of particular contention, Judith Butler suggests in *Gender Trouble* as “being” or fixed by “a variable boundary, a surface [. . .] a signifying practice” that is the site of enactment - of identity, of gender - and is in a constant state of flux (9).

Fragmentation and assembled identities force one to revisit the questions posed within modernity concerning the idea of a universal human and the fear of technological infiltration within this body. As the shift to postmodernism occurred not only did the body become a surface of inscription but also problematized the notion of an essential universal body. Feminist theories after modernity problematize the body and the imagined political myth of a unified definition of female, which serves as the launching point for understanding Peaches’ integration of technological props.

The new subjectivity emerging from this assembled identity, including the cyborg provides, as Donna Haraway suggests, “a fresh source of power and political action” (150). The theory of the cyborg allows one to consider the body as a borderland, or as existing outside of the phallogentric binaries of power. The cyborg body has been argued to act as an answer to the current issues dividing feminist identity politics. The essential theme within this exploration is a deeper consideration of cyborg politics as forms of gender subversion within Peaches’ work. She herself cites that she does not have penis envy but rather “hermaphrodite envy”, disengaging from what Rubin coins “erotic speciation” (17). Unlike her predecessors, Peaches’ hybrid approach affords an expanded scope of available performances. An example of this lies in her ability to simultaneously display her body for consumption by her audience, employing masculine performance tropes such as manually stimulating a phallic wanker rod instrument, wearing a pussy light, singing about postmenopausal sexuality, all while “fulfill[ing] y[our] mommy complex” (Peaches “Mommy Complex”). Although the combinations seem impossible at times, through the spectacle of this text, audiences begin to break down their expectations of sexual practices within the heterosexual matrix. Furthermore, unlike previous artists whose subject matter deals with sexuality and sexually explicit content, Peaches focuses her text on corporal pleasure. She maintains no distance from sex and remains entrenched within experimental desires rather than operating as spectator.

Cyborg theory is useful in this context as it builds upon what has traditionally been the limit of gender and subject configurations. These assumptions were reliant on a discursive analysis of gender that presupposes and preempted the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations. Similar to Butler, Peaches is clear that the constraints materiality are

constructed within patriarchal language and further more extend the bodily understanding to problematize how beauty myths are in fact raw, false and unattainable. Overcoming these obstacles enables a cease for the search for an underscoring definition of what it means to be women and rather engages with the idea of hybridity as the solution. Like the cyborg, Peaches challenges society to re-conceive of women in new ways, hybrids of original selves. Just as the cyborg facilitates a definition of woman that exists beyond the conventional notions of beauty, the use of the technology pertaining to female corporality is of critical importance as it represents the ability to seize the tools traditionally marking oppression and reposition them as empowering, or at least as available for questioning.

As discussed in Chapter 1 the essence of the Haraway's cyborg theory is based on Elisabeth's Grosz's (9) assertion that the body speaks beyond language. Peaches' performances act in a similar context as they ask the spectator to imagine what is on the surface as a manifestation of the true self - the body as a site of identity performance in the same way drag destabilizes the categorical understanding of gender, disrupting its power.

The notion that there might be truth of sex as Foucault ironically terms it is produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms (Butler 24).

Sex appears within the hegemonic language of power and compulsory heterosexuality. Similarly the binaries that comprise the matrix of coherent gender norms exist always within relation to each other. Butler is clear that a myriad of gender possibilities are open but she determines that boundaries of analysis have suggested limits of discursively conditioned experiences. Constraint is built into the language. As Baudrillard suggests in *The Finest Consumer Object*, the body needs to be "re-appropriated", "colonized" and re-imagined as "the functional body" or "the

finest of these psychically possessed, manipulated and consumed objects” in order to meet normative capitalist objectives (278).

The Power of The Pussy Light

I really feel like I'm close to you
I wanna show you more you me,
You know, its important for you to see the center of me.
Illumination of blinking light on Peaches' vagina.
Peaches, I Feel Cream Tour, 2009-10

Argued by some to be the center of female sexuality, the loci of pleasure and site of castration, the vagina is one of the most misunderstood and historically marginalized elements of human anatomy. The unified definition of woman has been a continual struggle amongst feminist theorists. The serious danger in searching for a unified definition of what it means to be female often engages in a similar exclusionary process that patriarchy proliferates. Furthermore, the search for a unified definition of female neutralizes female sexuality, or rather presupposes a unified sexual identity for all women. Phallogentric thinking has also positioned female desire primarily in terms of its lack. The desire for a phallus often overshadows the nuances of actual female desire, manifested in the general refusal of popular media to make the clitoris visible for pleasure. Peaches' pussy light challenges these widely held beliefs. It functions primarily as a celebration of the female erotic. It celebrates female pleasure in a way typically reserved for male sexuality. In her understanding of the powerful nature of female erotic, Audrey Lord suggests that the erotic functions beyond the confines of the bedroom and furthermore its suppression mimics the characteristics within a racist, patriarchal and anti-erotic society (343). Particularly within the context of music, she describes the erotic as:

The most self responsible source of women's power [...] the way my body stretches to

music and opens into response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms, so every level upon which I sense also opens to the erotically satisfying experience (341)

Frith elaborates on this concept through his assertion that musical performance help audiences place themselves in imaginative cultural narratives (266). The pussy light, for Peaches' audiences, provides an important narrative by which one can understand gendered life and additionally negotiate individual social circumstances that have directed an understanding of sexual hierarchies.

The pussy light, which is placed on Peaches' vagina, is a small blinking L.E.D. described as the center of Peaches. As a stage prop, the pussy light demands attention.



(Image 6: Peaches wearing 'Pussy Light' at live show, 6 November, 2009: Miami, FL)

Within the context of the performance, the pussy light usually appears in particularly high contrast situations. Peaches positions herself on a darkened stage, wearing a nude colored unitard, engaging in a bare bones, raw performance, both audibly and visually. Peaches stands atop the

kick drum, single drum stick in hand, screaming the lyrics to “Fuck the Pain Away” while thrashing the drum kit high hat intermittently to the rhythm throughout the song. Given the nature of this scene, the audience’s gaze--irrespective of one’s sex/gender--is focused towards the typically invisible clitoris. The coding of female genitalia, in this fashion, removes Peaches’ body from a classic passive feminine to an active masculine role. Elizabeth Grosz describes the human body as lying on the “pivotal point of the binary pairs”. It is the “borderland”, the space where one cannot disregard a discussion of the binaries (public/private, natural/cultural, physical/spiritual) (34). The pussy light illustrates how one can hybridize these binaries, creating a trans-identity. The subversive act in this case is the glorification of the female erotic as dominant and confrontational. Audiences are traditionally used to the privileging of the phallus, the opposite of this binary, or rather engaging in a role where female genitalia is colonized or consumed within the framework of heterosexuality. However, it is easy to see that during a performance of the song “Fuck the Pain Away”, Peaches takes on the role of active female in charge of her sexuality, disregarding her castration and appropriating the hyper-male stage persona typical of classic rock anthems or, as Peaches dubs these performances, “rock shows, big gigantic cock shows” (Peaches “Rock Show”).

Frederic Jameson’s work concerning *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* helps one understand this performative element in terms of the concepts of parody and pastiche. Concerning Jameson’s notion of parody, one must consider why Peaches’ work in particular is subversive (120). Appropriation of masculinity alone cannot serve as a way to entirely reconstruct feminine identities as it runs the risk of proliferating the very values that it seeks to transcend. Rock music in particular, as naturally and actively produced as male, has been

critiqued as a space where maleness is not inextricably linked. Women who “make non- sexist music” find it “necessary to use sounds, structures and styles that cannot be hard as rock” (Cohen 28). The music itself does not particularly connote the masculine; however, the spectacle of rock, heavy metal and rap performances offers a musical means through which men can, and historically have, demonstrated their manhood. The transgressive nature of Peaches’ performance presides in its adoption of these masculine conventions through parody and “change what counts as women’s experience” (Haraway 149). Unlike Madonna, Peaches does not convey excess of femininity as a staged aesthetic for fulfillment of spectatorial pleasure, a reconstitution of objection and re-affirmation of female sexuality as the other exotic. What makes her work particularly effective is her ability to problematize the status of the female body. Although mainstream cyborgs are often men Haraway’s work draws upon historical and futuristic images in efforts to reassert female positions of power amidst these binaries.

Returning to Lorde’s theory concerning the female erotic, I argue that the pussy light is an example of a successful subversion of Cartesian dualisms by erotic acts (342). Peaches’ performances suggest that sexuality, irrespective of gender, should avoid an essentialist dialogue. It should privilege neither binary, thus resulting in rendering the self-contained sphere of dualism less powerful. As argued by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, society in essence acts as its own censoring device, mediating institutional standards through self-censorship and state power exerted primarily by its citizens. The threat of shame and embarrassment by the masses alone is enough to coerce subjects into docility and maintain scripts dictated within the heterosexual framework of society (98). This self surveillance has, for many transgressive art forms, been the essential limiting factor constraining a discussion of non-traditional sexualities within music.

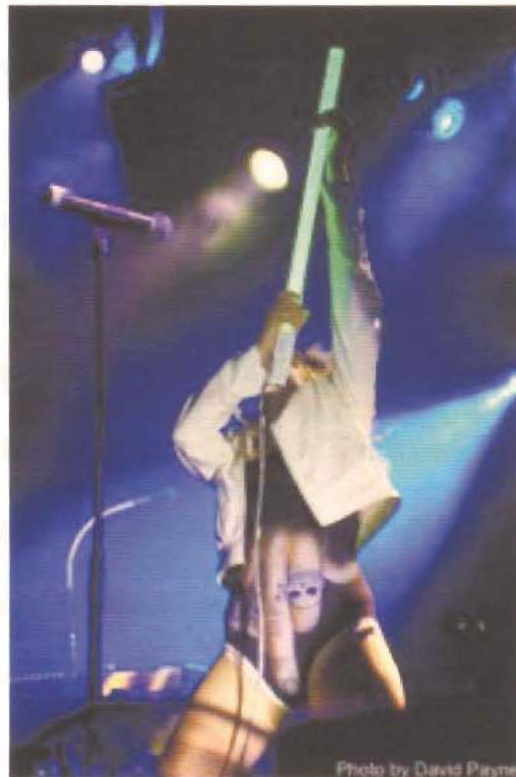
The combination of fiction and reality alluded to by Peaches' use of sexual instrumental technology parallels the way in which cyborg imagery allows one to problematize the myth of the unattainable female orgasm but also extends an understanding of gender into a post-gendered world. This is accomplished through a legitimization of the vagina as the center of desire instead of the phallus. As previously alluded to by Lorde and further elaborated by Butler in *Undoing Gender*, achievable autonomy of gender is actualized through a re-articulation of the hierarchical structure of heterosexuality that has typically been understood to subordinate women (65). This manifests primarily through interpreting gender identity disorder as a phallic lack. Bodily indicators, like the pussy light, force audiences to veer away from their understanding of gender norms established through traditional socio-cultural signifiers. Particularly through the spectacle of this performance--the pussy light in the context of "Fuck the Pain Away"--the combination and communication both of verbal and visual acts in tandem as a vehicle by which to understand Peaches' politics whilst appeasing audience appetite for multiple sensory sexual stimulation. The changing cultural relationship between sound, vision and technology, in addition to conceptualizing the body in new multiplicative ways, requires that individuals shed the constraints of gender possibilities entrenched within language and, as Butler suggests, re-conceive the (female) body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of an inevitable passive heterosexual experience.

More than Just a Disco Stick - The Phallus and the Wanker Rod

Come on hot rod, show me your wad,
Huh, what , show me what you got, rub it against my thigh.
The Teaches of Peaches, "Hot Rod", 2000.

As cited by Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, the relationship between humans and technology can provide a “fresh source of power and political action” (149). Technology, as it relates to the female erotic, is of critical importance as it represents one’s ability to scize the tools traditionally marking oppression and reposition them as empowering. The lack of a phallus has been a historically problematic idea for the emancipation of female sexuality. The paradox of phallocentrism, discussed by Laura Mulvey, delineates the manifestation of woman traditionally eroticized in terms of castration. Mulvey states that “woman’s desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it” (Mulvey 245). The addition of the wanker rod to Peaches’ performance props helps audiences problematize the incongruence that Mulvey’s theory has expressed. The absurdity of the object mocks the very essence of phallogentric thinking, rendering it less powerful.

The wanker rod in Peaches’ performance serves as an artifact of both campy excess and reclamation. The wanker rod is a phallic shaped, touch responsive, sensory driven, electronic musical instrument. As the user strokes the two-foot long device, it emanates reciprocal squeals and vibrations mimicking the speed and strength of the user. Designed to mimic manual stimulation of the penis, the use of this instrument within her performances challenges the problem of female castration. Consideration of this instrument as a physical representation of a cyborg politics, seeking no uniform identity here referring to sexual identity, helps suggest a path outside of the dualisms specific to female sexuality.



(Image 7: Peaches playing the wanker rod, Tour Album Peachesrocks.com)

Bodily transgressions are at the core of a female cyborg politics. I argue that the use of the wanker rod represents this pairing of nature and machine, as the definition of a cyborg indicates, to extend one's physical abilities beyond normal human limitations. Sexually, this instrument reproduces male autoeroticism --a clearly masculine-specific act--as available to female erotic pleasure. Through this performance Peaches pushes towards a space of hybridity, perhaps a third sphere of sexuality that deconstructs powerful dualisms. Cyborg politics is useful here as it affords a conceptual framework beyond natural and socially constructed symbols. Although the concept of sexual images of technology applied to organisms is by no means a new idea, a technology-focused culture reveals a deeper understanding of sexuality uncoupled from the human form. The lexicon of available sexualities, in this particular context, broadens as the host body becomes obsolete and can thus perceive of woman not only enjoying autoerotic male

practices, but furthermore naturalizing it (Haraway 165 & Springer 35).

The re-appropriation of the cyborg phallus serves to restructure the relationship of the woman to castration. Through trivialization of the phallus, Peaches revokes the “power of the penis”, placing male autoerotic practices on the same plane as other elements of female sexuality.

The effect of this performance helps to disempower the phallus and its place in the sexual hierarchy, re-appropriating the male gaze. Instead of a female autoerotic act demanding the male pornographic gaze, Peaches takes the viewer to a place of sexual hybridity. By collapsing the boundary between machine and organism, particularly within the context of popular culture, cyborg imagery invites individuals to experience sexuality coded through consciousness rather than physicality. Technology affords this possibility in this example. More broadly, performance serves to disempower the privileging of male masturbation. Positioning the sex act within a female erotic not only relocates its locus of power, but also disrupts the gaze. Her treatment of the act in excess works to comment on the privilege of male sexuality. Women here are no longer passive actors in the plot of their own sexuality but rather understand their body through a different discourse: a female erotic not influenced by the social construction of the phallic lack, outside of binaries, conducive to experimentation (Grosz 143).

Unlike cyber sexuality, as it appears within science fiction, Peaches’ approach veers away from hyperbolic representations of the sexes. Like Haraway’s inclusion of technology, the cyborg represents a “boundary creature” affording strategic alliance between unexpected, sometimes contradictory groups. Freudian development of female sexuality insists that women are defined primarily concerning their phallic lack. The Oedipus and Electra complexes developed through one’s youth fail to account for a female sexuality that firstly legitimizes same sex desire

and secondly allows this desire to exist beyond a continual effort to recreate a heterosexual sex life (i.e: through the use of penis-shaped sex toys) (Butler 98). Considering this theoretical underpinning, an analytical reading of the wanker rod suggests that women are able to transcend this understanding of compulsory heterosexuality and predicate pleasure on ambiguous gender performances. Essentially, Freud's notion that opposites always attract reaffirms the binaries that perpetuate women as only passive sexual actors. Non-passivity--as audiences are familiar with in performances from Madonna, Annie Lennox, Sinéad O'Connor and many others--has thus far failed as it is constructed primarily for the music moment. The queer themes entrenched within Peaches' work and life corresponds to her body image and sexuality. Although her live performances are reliant on camp, the honesty within them maintains an openness and ambiguity more akin to a queer politics (Driver 200). This feature has been absent with other artists, particularly because they remain rigidly consistent with positioning queer sexuality in opposition to heterosexuality. Although these foundational artists treatment of sexuality is also arguably transgressive, it often still stems from a heterosexual understanding of mainstream music.

Masculinity as a hybrid performance tactic permeates Peaches' performance style in many other ways beyond the use of the wanker rod, though the rod provides one of the most over examples of appropriations of phallic imagery. Within this context, the wanker rod provides an avenue by which to evaluate how both this prop and Peaches' performances appropriate heavy metal music masculine imagery. In the essay *Heavy- Metal Sounds and Images of Gender*, Robert Walser outlines the way in which masculine themes within heavy metal, shaped by patriarchy, perpetuate and delineate the contradictions naturally built into male sex roles.

Gender construction in heavy metal music and videos are significant not only because they

reproduce and inflect patriarchal assumption and ideologies, but more importantly because popular music may teach us more than any other cultural form about the conflicts conversations and begs for legitimacy and prestige that comprise cultural activity. (Walser 155)

The corresponding imagery within Peaches' lyrics and performatives to heavy metal imagery helps to again position her politics as it relates to shattering the conventions of musical genres traditionally shaped by patriarchy. Early heavy metal anthems by artists such as Kiss, Guns N' Roses and AC/DC significantly conflate the script of masculine power and eroticism in the sense that pleasure is based on dominance and understood through violence as a metaphor for passion. The fantasies staged within this context have traditionally garnered criticism as being sexist and excessively masculine (Walser 171). What is notable about heavy metal fans, however, is that they are a group generally lacking in social, physical and economic power. The myth of cock rock, as suggested by Frith, is that it presents an ideal world of sex without and physical or emotional difficulties, in which all men are attractive and potent, with endless opportunities to reassert this power (266). Women in this regard are understood to continually conform to male fantasy. The excessively campy performances, within both heavy metal and rock and roll, act as additional underscores of the fantasies of masculinity as they exist both within the genres and popular culture. The contradictions built within male sex performances suggest that both sexes are unable to transcend their prescribed roles. Women should remain as the Rolling Stones band cite, "under the thumb of men" and should continue to understand their sexuality in relation to hegemonic super-ego masculinity.

Peaches' borrowing from heavy metal imagery sheds light on the male anxieties also prevalent within this context. The wanker rod, the song "Hot Rod" and particularly the song

“Boys Wanna Be Her”, all borrow from the use of hyper-masculinity, androgyny, scarves, spandex, leather and “other visually noisy clothing” (Frith 34). Similar to Gene Simmons, Peaches punctuates her performances with the same experiences of power, phallic thrusts, heavy electric guitar and vocal extremes. Her video “Boys Wanna Be Her” from her 2006 album *Impeach my Bush* is reminiscent of a Ziggy Stardust aesthetic. Complete with platform shoes and metallic, tight fitting clothing, and exaggerated space-inspired facial make-up appears as though it could be pulled directly from a David Bowie performance circa 1973.

However, unlike Peaches, acceptance of the queer sexualities embraced by David Bowie, members of Queen and other token glam rock artists were neither overt nor obvious to their audiences. Fans of the two aforementioned artists remained predominately heterosexual, male and heavily focused on the “outing” of Freddie Mercury and Bowie. Particularly within the case of Mercury, it wasn’t until his public acknowledgment of his sexuality and battle with AIDS that the true nature of the oppressed themes within Queen’s work was fully understood (Frith 98 & Whiteley 249).

“Boys Wanna Be Her” lyrically challenges the hetero-normative notion of what it means to be female while borrowing from heavy metal aesthetics. The song is about butch/femme women who are the sexual desire of many sprouting from various orientations. The camera’s gaze in this video opens with a shot of Peaches’ lower half dangling a microphone between her legs, resembling male genitalia. Here one sees a prime example of gender bending in which Peaches uses her body to flexibly move between the temporality of what it means to be male or female (Whiteley 248). The viewer is forced to decide for himself or herself the sex of this artist. As the distinguishable noises of sexual heavy breathing rise over an electric guitar solo, one’s emotions

are pulled between the glam-rock aesthetic and glaringly heterosexual anthem rock acoustics.

This dissonance speaks to Peaches' ability to play with gaze hybridity. Mulvey describes "the glamorous impersonating the ordinary" (14), as accomplished through both subverting space and drawing in both the masculine and feminine. Peaches, through the bricolage characteristic of electroclash, "Boys Wanna Be Her" celebrates the irony of the gaze, gratuitously demanding that viewers dissect and oscillate between various sexualities.

Lesbians and Laser Theremins

You think I'm little
Wanna play me like a fiddle
I'm not so brittle
Come on diddle my skittle, cause there's only one peach
With a hole in the middle
Teaches of Peaches, "Diddle My Skittle", 2000

Power, pressure and control are the skills required to master the laser theremin. Using high frequency oscillators the theremin responds to speed, intensity and proximity of the performer's hand. Similar to moments of sexual intimacy, success is correlated with the combined knowledge of technical skills and subjective experiences. Peaches' laser theremin is a modification of the early 20th century instrument used frequently in science-fiction films to connote alien encounters and later in the electrification of rock and roll. This same frequency response mechanism has been channeled into a single laser that responds like the original instrument. The performer must intercept the laser to create the desired musical effect.



(Image 8: Peaches playing the laser theremin at a live show, Tour Album peachesrocks.com)

The two key elements important in the analysis of the laser theremin presides: first as Monique Wittig suggests, with the need for women to assume the role of an authoritative speaking subject, and secondly within the context of the theremin's role regarding the performance of sexuality (104). This innovation, along with her other creations, speaks to her natural ability as a musician to constantly experiment and reconfigure technical elements. It proves that she is not only pushing musical boundaries but also pairing this experimentation with a provocative sexual politics. The act of playing the laser not only symbolizes her ability to dominate and control sexual acts, but also, as I will also argue, provides a model for other woman that validates fluid sexual identities.

As Frith suggests in an essay featured in *Madonnarama*, he analyzes sexuality within the context of Madonna's performances. It is the composition of her albums, with their musical breaks, melodic repetition and throbbing bass, which makes listeners perceive it as sexual. Moreover, her albums act voyeuristically, positioning her as a tourist within the narrative of sexual fantasies. Specifically as it relates to same-sex female relationships, she uses lesbian

aesthetic taboos to position these relationships as spectacles against her own work. The effect of these performances is that they act as the significant influences of not only popular music representation of female same-sex sexuality, but also as examples for the larger public. Peaches cites influences from artists such as Madonna, although her performances differs in the sense that she embeds herself more authentically in the politics addressed by her lyrical content. The laser theremin in particular serves as an excellent example of this difference as not only does she assert her mastery and domination over the instrument, but in addition, places the act of clitoral stimulation front and center.

An analysis of the song, “Diddle my Skittle”, helps to illustrate the impact of the theremin as it appears most frequently within live performances of this song. The lyrical narrative combined with the instrumental allows one to gain a deeper understanding of the theremin intention. As Butler suggests, fixed identities force one to adopt the practices associated with the configuration of politics assigned to said identity (45). However, the narrative of “Diddle my Skittle” presumes no specific audience. Peaches’ call for personal pleasure could be read as autoerotic, heterosexual, queer, or simply sexual. Similar to Butler’s desires for a subjectless sexuality, this context exemplifies Peaches’ ability to provide a “new configuration of politics” from the emergences of the old. Unlike Madonna, one can read this particular example as legitimizing sexuality rather than manipulating it for spectacle further positioning its importance in society as non-traditional.

Female stimulation and climax has historically taken a secondary position to the male orgasm. Heterosexual society, fueled by sex closely linked to procreation rather than pleasure, is predominately understood as the dominant form of sexual behavior. The binaries of this

biopolitics validate the way individuals assign sexuality to certain gender and thus read sexed bodies in the same fashion. Sex for pleasure veers from assigned gender roles immediately as it problematizes the female role as secondary, positioning female desire as unimportant. The combination of technology complicates the phallus as necessary to create desire, while also disempowering its role as the primary sexual actor. As Peaches herself suggests, “We shouldn’t just accept the way its supposed to be because there had to be a time where someone didn’t accept it in the first place and we need to figure that out” (Peaches *Fatherfucker*). Through these performance moments, one is left questioning how the body is regulated by the conventions imposed by society on gender. Perhaps, as Peaches demonstrates, it is possible to equalize entrenched binaries privileging neither, achieving autonomy no longer allowing individuals to be regulated, in a deterministic way, by their culturally constructed gender roles.

Re-visiting the problems caused by assuming a coherent feminine identity, as described by Butler, takes for granted that there is one unified definition understood throughout the category of women. This definition, as has been previously expressed, relies on the conventions of women as a secondary subject within a sexual sphere. Peaches, particularly within the context of “Diddle my Skittle”, assumes the subject of woman; however, it is a personalized definition exclusively internalized through her own framework. As Erving Goffman suggests, performance of the self evolves towards “the role that we are striving to live up to - this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be, in the end the role becomes an integral part of our personality” (Goffman 14). The everyday performance of women, modeled primarily by pop culture, is the essence of Peaches’ ability to contribute to a deeper use of sexual fluidity. The female erotic, particularly in this case, extends well beyond the confines of entrenched societal assumptions. As a figure in the

public sphere, Peaches' performances allow one to consider a future where individuals reveal the masks of their truer selves, and integrate these drives to think internally about sexual desires rather than adopting patriarchal cultural conventions.

Conclusion

Show stopper, panty dropper, everybody's favorite shocker.
I'm a stage whore, I command the floor,
Rock you harder than a martyr, In a holy war,
Can't help but engage you, Never mind my age,
It's like we're breaking out of a cage.
- Show Stopper, *I Feel Cream*.

After the second encore had finished and Peaches has left the stage of the Phoenix concert theatre, the house lights are turned back on. They are harsh, bright and revealing, pressuring the audience to vacate the venue. As with most live musical experiences, the end of the show marks a unique time, a combination of ending and beginnings. A space where audiences and performers alike must part from the seductive nature of performances and decompress towards translating the experience. Simon Frith suggests that:

Music is not, by its nature, rational or analytic; it offers us not argument but experience, and for a moment - for moments - that experience involves ideal time, an ideal defined by the integration of what is routinely kept separate - the individual and the social, the mind and the body, change and stillness, the different and the same, the already past and the still to come, desire and fulfillment. (156)

This powerful paragraph begins to capture how music, like sexual politics is comprised of a series of moments. Like a song both are comprised of discrete events or notes that come together to suggest that a larger meaning. Like individual notes, movements and fan experiences within this "ideal time" is what affords continual forward motion both politically and musically.

Imagining a world in which the heterosexual matrix and the notion of sexualities based on compulsory heterosexuality seems difficult. Peaches, through her performance, arguably offers a model of life where queerness and sexual fluidity are not longer overborne by assumptions and

limits. She calls attention through the use of gender performatives, parody and drag to the artifice that is the gender binaries entrenched in society and in particular music culture. Identity has always been at the heart of defining a feminist politics and through Peaches, I argue that one can learn that a plurality of representations will serve to deconstruct the very categories that individuals have struggled to overcome. Reclamation of female sexuality, building on Rich's notion of the lesbian continuum and extending it to include all sexual behaviors regardless of their history as subordinate rendering the power they once held ineffective. Peaches asks one to consider, like Rich, Butler and Rubin, a world where sexual practices are separated from gender identification.

Peaches, through the combination of direct sexual lyrics, disregard for performance binaries and normalizing of non-normative sexual behaviors as available to women, is able to successfully redefine the gendered realm of music and society, creating a model for new sexual politics. This politics involves a space where patriarchy and power are addressed and then immediately subverted to be portrayed as incapable of remaining the primary definer of appropriate sexual behavior. Through her work she questions the limits of compulsory heterosexuality and provides an example of a sexuality existing beyond the male phallus as a reference point. The normalization and re-appropriation of sexual behavior normally unattainable to women not only widens the understanding of the female erotic, but, as Peaches often discusses, allows women to explore their deepest desires despite the labels that society has created.

Appendix One: *Fuck the Pain Away* Lyrics from The Teaches of Peaches (2000)

Sucking on my titties like you wanted me
Calling me, all the time like Blondie
Check out my chrissy behind
It's fine all of the time
Like sex on the beaches
What else is in the Teaches of Peaches? Huh? What?
(Repeat)

Huh? Right. What? Uhh
Huh? What? Right. Uhh
Huh? What? Right. Uhh
Huh? What? Right. Uhh

SIS IUD, stay in school 'cause it's the best
IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best
IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best
IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best

Sucking' on my titties like you wanted me
Calling me, all the time like Blondie
Check out my chrissy behind
It's fine all of the time
Like sex on the beaches
What else is in the teaches of peaches? Huh? What?

Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away

Huh? What? Right. Uhh
Huh? What? Right. Uhh
What else in the Teaches of Peaches?
Like sex on the beaches
Huh? What? Right. Uhh
Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away

Appendix Two: “Boys Wanna Be Her” Lyrics from the *Impeach my Bush* (2005)

You've got them all, by the balls
causin' waterfalls
Stone walls
Bar brawls
Common stalls that cause 'em all (?)

To you they crawl, body sprawl
Smokin' Pall Malls
Close call, stand tall

Doll, you make them feel so small
AND THEY LOVE IT!

The boys wanna be her (The boys)
The girls wanna be her (The girls)
I wanna be her

Yes I do

The way you rock, don't stop (or lone star)
Girl, you got the chops
Flip flop
She bop
Self-taught
You lick so hot
Are you conceived
Kids receive
Crawling up the sleeve
Parents bleed
Can't conceive
That indeed we'll never leave

AND WE LOVE IT!

The boys wanna be her (The boys)
The girls wanna be her (The girls)
I wanna be her
So do you

Appendix Three: “Diddle My Skittle” Lyrics from the *Teaches of Peaches* (2000)

You think I’m little
Wanna play me like a fiddle
I’m not so brittle
Come diddle my skittle ‘cause there’s only one peach
With the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle

There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle
You think I’m little
Wanna play me like a fiddle
I’m not so brittle
Come diddle my skittle ‘cause there’s only one peach
With the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle

You think I’m little
Wanna play me like a fiddle
I’m not so brittle
Come diddle my skittle ‘cause there’s only one peach
With the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle
Hole in the middle
Yeah. Huh. Right. Peach. Huh. What? Right. Yeah

You think I’m little
Wanna play me like a fiddle
I’m not so brittle
Come diddle my skittle ‘cause there’s only one peach
With the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle
There’s only one peach with the hole in the middle

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