'Bodies that Stutter': Impersonality, Desire, *Jouissance* and the Gay Male Subject in Contemporary Media

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Abstract

This thesis examines the formation of 'Bodies that Stutter' in instances of gay male photographic, pornographic, and networked online media. It argues that these bodies can be understood through the concepts of metonymy and impersonality allied to *jouissance* in the work of Jacques Lacan, which is informed by earlier Freudian approaches to homosexual identity and desire. It also uses post-Lacanian and queer theory to argue that when the representational exchanges between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other intersect they facilitate impersonal desire through how 'Bodies that Stutter' and the processes of Symbolic-stuttering aligned to them. The thesis draws upon close analytical readings of three contextual instances: representational practices and uses of the website *dudesnude.com*; pornographic output produced by *Triga* Films; and sexually explicit representation primarily connected to 'selfie's' posted in micro-blogs on the website *tumblr.com*. The analysis of these examples closely engage with Lacan's concept of *jouissance* alongside of the Symbolic as a way of demonstrating that personal, metaphoric, and identity based models of gay desire are formed on the basis of how metonymic and impersonal modes of identification simultaneously facilitate and operate as *jouissance*. This close analysis claims that impersonal desire is formed through the Symbolic Other and Imaginary other in the formation of *jouissance*. More specifically it argues that recent critical and cultural studies use of Lacanian analysis misrecognises the dynamics of an impersonality of male gay desire and the ways in which it Symbolically-stutters. This thesis also illustrates that the convergence of metaphoric identity in the Imaginary and its metonymic displacement in the Symbolic intersect to facilitate the emergence of this form of *jouissance* which also stutters. This pursuit of *jouissance* through the rhetoric of visual representation results in 'Bodies that Stutter' impersonally. Yet this impersonality is also connected to the potentials of enigmatic signification and self-shattering of the ego as ways of expressing desire. By locating gay sex, sexuality, and masculinity outside of this Imaginary ego or that which is imagined as uniquely gay it illustrates that it is the gay subjects loss of Imaginary identity that energises them as 'Bodies that Stutter' and informs their *jouissance* through processes of Symbolic-stuttering. Through these interventions and in the concluding parts of the thesis it is claimed that Symbolic-stuttering may form a way for gay male sexual desire to be articulated

through an intangible form of impersonal desire. It is here that the loss of *jouissance* in the Symbolic is the force for sexual desire, a desire which is ultimately impersonal.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction explores the ways in which this thesis seeks to make an intervention and will do so by addressing five key areas of enquiry. It firstly discusses the overall objective of the thesis and the background to the project, this links to the aims section which attempts to organise a clear line of intent around the key purposes of the project, what it hopes to accomplish, and its relation to the key themes and issues being addressed. These aims will then feed into the key research questions and allow for the theoretical and conceptual arguments in Chapter 2 and the methodological and ethical in chapter 3 to be clearly positioned in terms of the contexts examined in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Finally an overview of all chapters will frame how the research questions and argument are going to be addressed in the thesis itself. In the final part of this introduction to the thesis, some conclusions will be drawn around the key issues at stake and are linked to the next chapter which examines the key concept of *jouissance* alongside of the work of Jacques Lacan, my own concept of 'Bodies that Stutter', as well as the dyads of metaphor / metonymy, and personality / impersonality which all guide the thesis' key intervention and argument. At this opening stage it is also important to state that alongside of Lacan a vital aspect of this project is derived from Tim Dean's intervention into psychoanalysis and queer theory in *Beyond Sexuality* (2000). Using Dean's critique of Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993) into bodies that now 'mutter' (2000, p.202-05) it seeks to advance and explore the conflict between 'mattering' in Dean and 'muttering' in Butler as the catalysts that have enabled 'Bodies that Stutter' to be theorised and analysed.

1.1 Objective of the Thesis

In a thesis which examines gay male desire it may be pertinent to briefly discuss my own subjectivity and identity as a gay man. A lot like the central issues allied to *jouissance* and 'Bodies that Stutter' which are then unpacked through modes of Symbolic-stuttering I have used gay personals, watched gay pornography, and self-captured sexually explicit images of my own body (and the bodies of others) using a mobile phone. As I performed and embodied these practices I began to ask myself 'how' and indeed 'why' (along with millions of other men) I was doing/do this, and what did/do I want to get from these practices. In turn this heightened both my desires and anxieties around how these modes of representation, communication, and pleasure

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operated. Since I began this thesis the tensions between these practices as both anxious and desirable have increased through my own use the use of social media and its connectivity to discourses of gay male blogging, pornography and forms of sexual communication. I have also noticed that gay male desire and the gay male body has become a much more complicated site of desire as it is filtered through online and networked mediations such as dating sites and apps, web-caming, and micro-blogging. Who were / are these gay men? How were / are they identified as gay? What was / is gay identity? What was / is gay desire? This curiosity initially brought me towards modes of academic enquiry that broached feminism and post-feminism, queer theory, gay male studies, porn studies, and aspects of media, new media theory and work which addressed SNS and sexual identity. Whilst these interventions established a clearer sense of the ontological and epistemological intricacies of gay male history, strategy, and sensibility, they also confounded my thinking in terms of how these practices were allied to gay male sexual desire. The main reason for this sense of perplexity related to questions that I had in relation to the visual representation of gay desire, and more so, the ways in which it was both possible but also potentially difficult to express and connect gay sexual desire to gay identity in a visual image. It seemed that whilst a lot of the early work I had engaged with offered rigorous accounts of gay identity, they were also diluted, quashed, and somehow resolute in terms of an identity politics and/or an ethical identity that was compliantly signified as 'gay' in visual culture.

This brought me to the work of Tim Dean in *Beyond Sexuality (*2000) which sets out to queer the psychoanalytic work of Jacques Lacan and cultivate an impersonality of sexual desire using Lacan and psychoanalysis more broadly. As a foundation to the discussions of gay male sexual representation that this thesis is concerned with, it is one of the main goals (and also challenges) of this project to re-engage with Dean, Lacan, and theorists working with psychoanalysis to examine how popular modes of gay male representation across networks of digital and social media such as personal profiles, pornography, and selfies initially express 'gay' sexual identity and desire at an Imaginary level. Yet it is also this Imaginary mode of expression that acts as the projects point of departure, in that this is a thesis that attempts to discuss modes and layers of sexual desire in terms of the Symbolic and forms of *jouissance* that are difficult and perhaps impossible to express in the Imaginary or through an Imaginary

other. In turn, this informs the central critical claim and trajectory of the thesis associated with the 'Bodies that Stutter'. More specifically, the main objective of this project is to shift the locus of gay desire away from the politics of gay identity and personality in the Imaginary towards modes of identification and impersonality in the Symbolic. Through this move, the thesis seeks to suggest that when gay desire is understood outside of an Imaginary other and Imaginary-ego, it may find forms of expression elsewhere or through alternative means. In this introduction these are explored and positioned in light of jouissance and stuttering and as we shall see this alternative may be through a Symbolic Other and also through types of *jouissance* connected to the concepts of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering.

Whilst this thesis aims to make a contribution to a number of existent fields within the arts and humanities, it is important to realise that a psychoanalytic and Lacanian critique of identity lies at its core. Using this and more specifically the concept of *jouissance* as its starting point, its line of argument and the intervention it strives to make closely follows the work of Dean, who states that a purely historicist or rhetorical account of identity, desire, and, also, Lacan yields the danger of employing texts and, more so, textual analysis that generate 'an account of Lacan that is not only inimical to the history of his work but also profoundly ahistorical with respect to psychoanalytic concepts' (2000, p.26). Lacan, as Dean goes on to state (and arguably legitimate), is so useful to the study of issues like impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* because, like these forms, his work allows for a theoretical 'model that has the flexibility of allowing for its own disintegration under the pressure of individual readings of specific texts' (ibid). As a consequence, and in line with the purpose of a project that is attempting to reconsider and re-evaluate how gay male sexual desire is articulated and represented, it is psychoanalysis and the possibilities that lie in tapping into it that allow for a unique way of conceptualising the self, which has the capacity to traverse and negate the limits of sexual identity politics, the ego, and personality in ways that other disciplines cannot reach.

Saying that it is also interesting to note that Dean's work in *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (2009) fails to fully address or utilise the possibilities of queering Lacan promised in *Beyond Sexuality* (2000). Dean avoids a Lacanian approach and instead favours an observational and self-reflexive method to

explore a controversial aspect of gay male sexual behaviour. Dean attempts to participate in the subcultural practice of gay men having unprotected anal sex 'by drawing on a range of methodological approaches, including feminist anthropology, Freudian psychoanalysis, disability theory, and queer critique' (p.xii), but never fully manages to locate and provoke 'the ethnography of subcultures, the anthropology of kinship, cultural studies of pornography, and the philosophy of the stranger' (ibid) that his earlier work suggests is possible. This is rather disappointing in that he fails to manage and combine the potentials of Lacanian psychoanalysis with very specific aspects of contemporary gay male sexual desire. In the thesis this is something I have set out to address through the concept of *jouissance* and the bearing it has in relation to the gay male 'Bodies that Stutter'. The job of managing a project such as this, which deals with the politics of gay male intimacy, ethics, and desire is to emphasise and unpack the potentiality and complexity of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the conceptual possibilities of *jouissance* in terms of my own self-reflection and subjective investment as a gay man with the research subject/subjects, and the methodological process. This is amplified when a predominantly Lacanian approach is used in an attempt to methodologically reposition and reconceptualise through empirical visual contexts gay male sexual desire.

Still, Dean's observations in his own introduction to *Beyond Sexuality* (2000) also serve as a useful starting point to situate the key objectives and aims of a thesis that uses his work and that of Lacan to discuss and understand how gay male impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* are articulated in contemporary media through an index of gay masculinity and sexual explicitness. This also forms a foundation to the 'Bodies that Stutter' and their potentiality in terms of analysing gay desire visually. Dean asserts that Lacanian psychoanalysis is useful in attempts to analyse sexuality and its problematic relation to impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* because it pushes cultural analyses 'beyond the couch – that is, beyond a framework comprising specific interactions between persons' (ibid, p.2). Yet, moving beyond either a psychoanalytic and/or a cultural analysis of persons does not necessarily mean that the person is eradicated from the analysis (or the text) per se. On the contrary, it indicates that critically focusing on the vulnerability of the sexual representation as an identity, a personality, and, thus, an individual will allow for a shift towards a way of unpacking

the potentials of impersonality, identification, and Symbolic displacement in relation to that image and identity.

In this thesis and at the crux of its empirical / analytic focus it is important to focus on the formation of these means of exchange through a clear account of the aims. In a project which addresses the tensions between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other a set of aims are helpful because these tensions are often ambiguous, ambivalent, and multi-layered. To have a set of guiding principles which address the nuances of what the project seeks to accomplish will also connect to the broader problems of *jouissance* and the ways in which it can be used to reposition how we understand gay desire and identity in light of the two prevailing paradigms of 'Bodies that Stutter' and *jouissance* as non-definitional, non-representational, metonymic, and impersonal. At this stage it is also important to note that this thesis seeks to use the tensions between *jouissance* and 'Bodies that Stutter' as concepts that will bring to bear potentially new ways of reading gay male desire contextually.

In terms of the contexts, it is also important to assert that the personals website, pornography, and self-representation addressed here are all allied to digital and networked media. In this setting the 'Bodies that Stutter' do so in ways which rely upon the Symbolic-Other of the online / digitally networked mediation. That is, the images of gay male sexuality and desire are produced and consumed through a Symbolic-Other which underpins the bodies and their alignment to *jouissance* and stuttering as medium-specific.   Still, it is also essential to point out that this work does not claim that bodies only stutter if they are specifically 'gay male' bodies online. Rather, the gay male body and the setting of digital and networked mediation may also indicate that stuttering bodies can and do exist elsewhere. Through the analytics of the chapters and the detailed examination of practices of gay male sexual representation it also becomes apparent that stuttering can also be articulated in non-digital / networked spaces through bodies that are in no way 'gay' or 'male'. Taking these initial contentions into account, the main aims of the thesis are listed below and are elaborated upon so they make clear what the project seeks to accomplish and how the overall aspirations and expectations of the project connect to both the intent of its objectives and later the key research questions and argument.

1.2 Aims of the Thesis

The thesis has four key aims. These are listed below and elaborated upon. Whilst they are presented in terms of their ascendency it is also important to grasp that they are linked together and in some instances they overlap. In many ways this correspondence between the aims of the thesis, as well as what it is hoping to achieve, reflects the nature of the project and the ways in which an examination of gay male sexual desire and the development of its potentials allied to 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering requires receptiveness to their shifting and contingent qualities. This is also something that I have also attempted to pull through and work into how and why conceptual ideas such as stuttering and *jouissance* may prove useful in an empirical analysis of the cultural representations and visual practices allied to gay male desire.

1.   The main aim of the thesis is to address and evaluate the tension that occurs when gay male 'identity' and gay male 'sexual desire' converge and are signified in visual representation. Through this tension it also seeks to identify how gay male desire is signified in light of both gay *and* straight identity and desire. These exchanges and paradoxes between gay and straight male sexual desire and identity are also embedded in the broader shaping of the thesis's argument and its examination of gay male *jouissance* and its affiliation to how both gay and straight representational bodies stutter. At this stage, it is also useful to suggest that whilst the first aim seeks to examine the relationship between how *jouissance* and 'Bodies that Stutter' are aligned to gay sexual desire and identity it requires a rubric and means to do so. This relates to the next aim and the need for a vocabulary to articulate the key concept of 'bodies that stutter' in the project and how this occurs in relation to gay sexual desire via impersonality, desire, and *jouissance.*

2.   The second aim sets out to establish the most appropriate terms / lexicon to investigate gay identity and its associations with 'Bodies that Stutter' via impersonality, desire, and *jouissance.* This aim of the thesis is allied to Chapters 2 and 3 and the ways in which a psychoanalytic lexicon and a vocabulary connected to strands of queer theory, porn studies, and more broadly critical theory and cultural studies will contribute to the analysis of gay desire set out in the first aim. At this stage it is also important note that the central themes of the project which are circulated around gay male identity and desire are established through the lexicon in three ways.

a.   The first is through the psychoanalytic focus of the thesis that allows for gay identity and desire to be unpacked and investigated in terms of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary, the 'other' and Other' dynamic which is developed around the key paradigm of *jouissance* and its association with 'Bodies that Stutter'.

b.   The next is reliant on the tensions that occur between the binaries of gay and straight masculinity, identity and identification, personality and impersonality and as Chapter 2 details the nuances of metaphoric and metonymic representation in language. In Chapters 2 and 3 it is particularly important to situate these binary formations so they can be deconstructed and analysed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

c.   Building on this, the key themes of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* are refined so there is a specific focus on 'Bodies that Stutter' and how they are formed through an Imaginary other and a Symbolic Other. Finally it is through this sophistication that metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* are allied to the key concepts of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. In turn, this allows for the concepts to be developed and discussed in detailed context.

3.   In light of the above, the third aim is to use this vocabulary to discuss the potential advances that this project may make in terms of its development around theories of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. This is addressed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 which both establish and analyse 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering in relation to specific representational styles and practices of gay desire and identity. These are explored through the personal online profile, the pornographic film, and the micro-blog with a particular focus in Chapter 6 on the selfie.

4.   The final aim seeks use the concepts of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering to reposition how *jouissance* deliberately displaces, fragments, and shatters gay identity and gay desire. This is an aim that is addressed in the thesis through the visual and textual analysis of the personal profile, the pornographic film and the selfie discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. It is also one that has the potential to connect to other branches of gay and straight impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* that are not configured or allied to sexuality.

By initiating these aims, it could be suggested that they work towards establishing a theoretical foundation to the project and its intent. As well as the aims, it is also useful to acknowledge that this thesis is focused around four principal research questions or, perhaps more appropriately, indices. Continuing on from the ambitions of the project

these questions are also framed and shaped through the key themes of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* and their alliance to 'Bodies that Stutter'. They also attempt to offer more detailing and critical provocation to the projects intent as well as shaping the argument of the thesis detailed in the next section.

1.3 Research Questions

These questions have been developed in relation to the overall objective of the thesis, the aims of the project, and its attempt to use the themes of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* that inflect to position and map out 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. They are as follows:

1. What do mediated representations and/or signifiers of sexual desire themselves 'represent' in terms of 'sexual desire' as personal ('gay', 'male', straight') and how can these representations and signifiers be discussed and configured in terms of impersonal desire?

2. If gay male sexual desire and desiring identities emerge and re-emerge in terms of a gay and/or a straight male person / personality as an Imaginary-ego / Imaginary other, how does that desire relate to the force of a Symbolic Other and an impersonal identification in language?

3.   On that premise, if the articulation of gay male sexual desire is expressed impersonally what does it look like and how is it signified?

4. Is it possible to account for and thus signify an impersonality of desire which acknowledges the tensions between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other, and if so how do the tensions resolve or antagonise the role of *jouissance* in terms of Imaginary and Symbolic modes of expression.

5. Are the'Bodies that Stutter' addressed in this thesis most effectively conceptualised as signifiers that attempt to express an Imaginary-ego, yet also fail, and by way of that failure instigate a Symbolic form of *jouissance* that could be manifested as Symbolic-stuttering?

6. If Symbolic modes of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* suggest that gay desire (or any sexual desire) cannot be clearly expressed or discussed then in what ways has it, and indeed, can it, be represented as gay desire?

1.4 Positioning the Argument

Whilst accounting for the projects objective, its aims, and key questions it is also crucial to position them in more detailed ways to specifically Lacanian, post-Lacanian and psychoanalytic approaches. It is also important to locate this thesis' intervention through extant literature that assists in locating some of its arguments and claims within the more detailed and emergent fields of queer/post-queer theory, porn studies, and also work that addresses the broader paradigms of online identity, digital cultures, and networked self-representation. It is worth noting that I have engaged with a number of texts that have been published during the course of this thesis and that locate its contribution in line with changing fields of critical and theoretical work concerned with sexual desire, representation, media, and impersonality both on and off-line. In the field of post queer theory recent work by Kevin Floyd (2009), Shaka McGlotten (2013) and James Penney (2014) have informed my conceptual thinking and assisted in the analytical work undertaken in the chapters which examine the nuances of bodies that stutter. In addition to this the work of Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips (2008) and, more so, their concept of impersonal narcissism has proven useful in developing an argument that addresses how gay masculinity and representation can articulate something of the impersonal through a psychoanalytic lexis as well facilitating a 'self-shattering' of the ego. This 'impersonality' is also carried through into the analysis chapters and more specifically the analysis of images of gay male desire that have been constructed 'personally'.

The visual analysis strives towards a mode of analysis that focuses less on the specifics of individual subjects and the specific content of images and more on the ways in which the conceptual potentials of visualising gay male desire is connected to how 'participants present particular aspects of their identities, [which] have a broad appeal as aesthetic cultural artefacts' (Clark, 2012, p.21). Accounting for this and the challenges of attempting to visually scrutinise gay male desire and *jouissance* through the concept of 'Bodies that stutter' the idea of 'shattering' has also catalysed and

assisted in furthering my own claims around 'stuttering' and its alliance to the interventions of Judith Butler (1993) and also Dean (2000). Hector Kollias' work (2013), which engages with Bersani and Phillips, is also an example of how engaging with Lacan and contemporary thinkers on desire and homosexuality can generate new modes of enquiry and analysis around impersonality and desire.

It is also important to note that, beyond the specifics of gay male desire, the aim of this project is to consider how psychoanalysis offers potentials to interpreting other paradigms and sites in contemporary culture. In *Fashion and Psychoanalysis* (2012), Alison Bancroft's recognition that psychoanalysis can be used 'to add layers of meaning to things that, without it, would remain obtuse, intractable' (p.1) is a recent example of how a methodological re-engagement with both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis can unpack and reveal how a cultural discourse, such as fashion, can be methodologically 'read as [and through] paradigms of psychoanalytic concepts themselves' (ibid, p.189). These layers and paradigms are also embedded in how the visual instances selected for this project are read and interpreted and I follow a similar approach to Bancroft in my own visual analysis In addition, the essays gathered in *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory* (Halley and Parker, 2011) have allowed me to develop the issue of impersonality and desire with a stronger level of integrity and accuracy. The prolific output of Slavoj Zizek is also embedded into the work and, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, it is thinkers such as Lee Edelman, John Champagne, and Bruce Fink that have enabled me to develop my ideas around the Symbolic, *jouissance*, and stuttering in ways that are less confined by the rhetoric of a forcefully and empirically visual, post-queer, porn studies, and new media studies approach. In both the analysis, and in the methodological and ethical decisions and choices which were made in terms of how and why these specific areas of analysis were the most appropriate, I followed the rubric that the categories of analysis could not be examined in isolation. On that premise I searched for mediated examples of gay male desire that seemed to speak to one another and overlap in terms of their sexually explicit yet culturally recognisable content. As a result, and as the project has evolved it has become increasingly apparent that the inter-sectional and convergent nature of the personal website, the pornographic film text, and the micro-blog / networked self-representation operate in terms of this overlapping to reflect yet simultaneously dislocate how the gay male subject and their desire can be articulated.

On that, the discipline of porn studies has been useful and provocative. In analyses that implicitly privilege the visual rhetoric of the Imaginary other and the ego (Attwood, ed. 2009; Smith, 2010; Williams, ed. 2004), I have found a way of unpacking impersonality, desire, and *jouissance*, as well as a way of re-reading pornographic imagery via Lacan and my own concept of bodies that stutter. In addition, whilst other works, such as Kelly Dennis' *Art/Porn: A History of Seeing and Touching* (2009), provided some insight into how psychoanalysis inflects sexually explicit imagery, they have done so by privileging an orthodoxy of highly visual concepts and readings which re-historicise the ultimately limit potentials of impersonality, desire, *jouissance,* and stuttering examined here. Whilst I discuss the representational practices and/or visual qualities of the sexually explicit and also exploit a lexicon of psychoanalysis, I attempt to do so in ways that conceptually 'situate' rather than visually 'validate' the pornographic nuances of how impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* are articulated.

Identifying the ethical importance of visual research and its alliance to visual representations is also a focus of concern in that the visual fields of online identity, digital cultures, and networked self-representation form a fundamental part of this thesis. In Chapters 4 and 6, all of the contextual examples are connected to sexual desire and identity online, whilst Chapter 5 addresses sexual identity and in pornographic film which is also available through online and on-demand / streaming content. At this stage, it is also worth acknowledging that, in its early stages, this project had a far more empirical and culturally specific goal and aimed to look at gay male personals on the websites *Gaydar.co.uk, dudesnude.com* and *Grindr.com.* Yet, the psychoanalytic 'layers' and 'paradigms' then enabled me to develop my thinking in line with issues of metonymy, impersonality, desire and *jouissance* and the scope of the project expanded which allowed me to conceptualise the 'Bodies that Stutter' and their location across online personals, pornography, and self-representations. The decision to work beyond the specifics of online gay personals sites reflects the inter-sectional instances assembled in the analysis chapters and this was met in 2011-12 when I began to notice that may of the men using these sites were also networking and linking in images from online pornography sites such as *Triga* Films and emergent platforms such as *tumblr.com*. In doing so an inter-textual and inter-sectional discourse of gay male desire and sexualised mediation also seemed to signal towards how I was

positioning the concept of stuttering and its conceptual potentials. A discussion of how and why I chose to focus on these specific contexts and instances is developed throughout the thesis in both the methodological and ethic sections of chapter 3 and the later analytical aspects.

Work such as Sharif Mowlabocus's *Gaydar Culture: Gay men, Technology and Embodiment in the Digital Age* (2010), where there are acknowledgements of how useful psychoanalysis and Lacan (ibid, p.91-101) may be in a reading of how gay male desire is expressed online, also energised my thinking about the scope of visualising Imaginary others online and the ways in which the non-visibility of the Symbolic Other affected, displaced, or influenced their representation. As Mowlabocus asks in his own approach to gay desire online, 'What discursive frameworks, what representational strategies – are deployed in the fashioning of the gay male body online? (ibid, p.80). If, as I suggest, that impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* may encapsulate these 'frameworks' and 'strategies', I also follow the line that their arrangement is allied to stuttering and, more so, a 'body that stutters' through a Symbolic force that is manifested in ways which are simultaneously multiple and contextual. As well as this, I think it is important to note that Mowlabocus' work allowed me to grasp the ways in which gay male online / networked self-representation 'draws heavily on pornographic structures evoked elsewhere in gay subculture' (ibid) in processes of online and/or self-representational media. Here this concept of an 'elsewhere' is interesting in that it signals towards the idea that the index of gay male desire and its visual representation relies upon a series of disparate, hesitant, and arcane resources which always fail and undercut the desire they attempt to express. In this failure to articulate I would argue that it is through this representational process of seeking to reify desire and amplify *jouissance* that gay desire and bodies stutter.

Susanna Paasonen's *Carnal Resonance* (2011), which examines how affect, resonance, and embodiment are important to the study of online desires, also offers an alternative and contemporary way to engage with the impersonality of desire and online representation. Whilst this is work rooted in theories of affect it was one that allowed me to develop the approach to analysing the contexts in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Paasonen follows Sara Ahmed's work in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and, here, her assimilation of the phenomenological implications of emotion and trauma seem to align themselves to some of the ways I am working with Lacan and psychoanalytic

discourse. Following her lead and, more so, the challenges of working amidst the visual explicitness of pornographic, self-representational, and online signifiers, the visual analysis of gay and straight male sexual desire is alert to the fact that 'analytical approaches and theorisations need to be equally on the move' (2011, p.28), so that 'research needs to try to address the moments in which words fail to grasp what resonates and moves us in our encounters with porn' (ibid). For me, these failures do not necessarily 'fail'; rather, they find their visual expression through flawed Symbolic exchanges between metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* − exchanges, I suggest, are only ever articulated as 'stutters'.

As this thesis develops, I strive to locate some of these approaches to the complexities of how bodies stutter when they are riven by the Imaginary other and Symbolic Other, as well as identity (as ontology and as epistemological knowledge) and desire (as *jouissance*), to productively assert three key lines of argument. At this stage, it is also important to reiterate that, whilst the work of Jacques Lacan and psychoanalytic theory is at the bedrock of this thesis and my suggestions around 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-Stuttering, these interventions are are also attained through an evaluation of gay ontology in cultural studies, queer theory, methodologies of the visual, and the construction of historical, rhetorical, and epistemological discourses of gay identity.

The first line of questioning recognises that the construction and representation of gay desire (and the binary tensions between the constructions of gay men in relation to their straight male counter-parts) is founded on 'an understanding of their irresolvable instability' (Sedgwick, 1990, p.10). This irresolution occurs between the binaries of gay/straight which are always unsteady, and also forms an implicit feature of how gay sexual desire is articulated and signified. In this instance, I assimilate some of the implicit features of Sedgwick's 'axiomatic' or 'axioms' (ibid, pp.1-63), which recognise that sexual identity and desire are governed by 'internal incoherence and mutual contradiction' (ibid, p.1), in contrast to the dangers of 'discursive and institutional "common sense"' (ibid). In this way both poles in the relationship (in this instance gay/straight) are defined by their incoherent and reciprocal paradoxes so that neither is more or less consistent or identifiable. In this way incoherence and contradiction becomes the foundation to how gay/straight relations are cemented. This also guides an argument that is informed by the claim that homosexuality, as a sexual

definition, and gay identity in language have problematically taken on 'as nugatory the distinction between relations of identification and relations of desire' (ibid, p.159). In terms of this thesis, the insignificance or elision between issues of identity and issues of desire has created 'a conceptual knot whose undoing may be said to have been the determinative project, continually frustrated but continuously productive, of psychoanalytic theory from Freud to the present' (ibid, p.160). Within this project, this undoing of the tensions, 'from Freud' (ibid) onwards and associated with the tensions of condensation and displacement, metaphor and metonymy, as well as personal and impersonal modes of identification (and identity) in light of the power of desire forms the foundation to my concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' and is most obviously captured in Lacan and the possibilities that come from engaging with *jouissance* to examine and rethink gay desire. It is also expressed in the analysis of visual contexts and the ways in which they facilitate and sophisticate an argument that attempts to situate 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering as evidence of how gay identity and gay desire may well be distinctive, antagonistic, and even incompatible to other forms of sexual identification.

Through this, the second line of enquiry aims to consider how the cultural and discursive markings of a gendered, male, and gay body that stutters are (de)constructed in light of a psychoanalytic intervention and, specifically, a set of Lacanian approaches to sexual desire and *jouissance*. Using Lacanian psychoanalysis as an underpinning and thus key line of investigation will help towards grasping that, whilst the rhetoric of desire is incongruous and ambiguously impersonal, it is also filtered through a gay body and gay desire in media constructed as consistent and personal. The key concept of *jouissance* informs the analysis of 'Bodies that Stutter' in chapters 4, 5, and 6 whilst acknowledging that the empirical analysis is also connected to the Lacanian concepts of Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary (R,S,I) – all of which inform and constitute a fundamental part of this thesis' argument. Together with my concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' these terms will be embedded and amplified throughout the thesis to introduce and frame some further questions and objectives allied to issues of impersonality and metonymy. It also serves to emphasise that, whilst this thesis does not seek to offer solutions to the questions of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance*, perhaps part of the answer to the problem of how they are articulated as 'personal' is to grasp that historically gender, sexuality, and the body have served as the narrative through

which gay identity has been considered and also understood. Whilst Dean alerts his readers to a bold re-conceptualisation of queer desire and sexuality 'outside of the terms of the ego, the individual, or the self' (Sedgwick, 1990, p.3), this thesis endeavours to frame the complexities of the ego, the individual, and the self as simultaneously 'outside' of, yet intrinsic to gay male desire. By allowing the personal and identity-led ego of the Imaginary other endless attempts at signifying desire, the Symbolic Other repeatedly manages to impersonalise and displace the Imaginary other through the operation of *jouissance* and its alignment to bodies that stutter Here, *jouissance* lies between and also beyond the binary tensions of the Imaginary to Symbolic, the metaphoric to metonymic, and personal to impersonal relation, and in this way it allows bodies to stutter and Symbolic-Stuttering to occur, particularly when those bodies are visually signified through the signifier. Here, I am using the term signified and signifier to refer to the ways in which gay men both self-represent and are represented visually.

The third area of investigation (and the key intervention into the convergent fields of psychoanalysis, cultural theory, and media analysis) claims that, when a gay body is marked and signified as a 'gay body', it begins to stutter. In this way, it is argued that the body that stutters is the gay body of the signifier, which in this context is also tethered to the psychoanalytic context of the Imaginary other and Symbolic Other. In turn, this guides the argument towards the key intervention and my claims that the 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering are close to how *jouissance* is realised and signified in contemporary practices of gay sexual representation. The line of critical enquiry and the conceptual logic allied to how I am connecting 'Bodies that Stutter' to condensation / displacement, metaphor / metonym personality / and impersonality are detailed in Chapter 2. In this chapter I begin by discussing Lacan's Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (R,S,I) and do so in relation to *jouissance* to situate my main conceptual idea allied to 'Bodies that Stutter' using the powerful critique that Tim Dean stages of Judith Butler's 'Bodies that Matter', through 'Bodies that Mutter' (2000, pp.174-215) as my critical stimulus. Dean boldly asserts that post-structural and post-modern 'rhetorical machines' (ibid, pp.174-75) are 'faulty' (ibid) and this flaw is connected to a 'readiness to be persuaded that sex is fully mediated, our eagerness to think of sex as constructed in – or materialised through – the imaginary and symbolic systems that permeate mass culture (ibid). In his critique, Dean goes to the

psychoanalytic 'Real' as that 'which interrupts every symbolic trajectory, spoiling our imaginary view of things' (2000, p.18). This also goes some way to positioning my own claims around the body that stutters and stuttering as a broader way to examine the fissures in discursive language practices, representational politics, and the transitional nature of contemporary media. The lines of argument that have been positioned in this section give an overview of how this thesis will go about addressing issues of gay male visual representations of sex and sexual identity in terms of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance*. It also offers a foundation to the ways in which that investigation and the lines of argument will be followed. In this next section this is expanded upon and detailed in relation to the each of the thesis' chapters.

1.5 Chapter Synopses

1.5.1 Chapter Two

The first part of this chapter specifically addresses the work of Jacques Lacan and uses several of the essays gathered in the *Ecrits* (2003, [1977]), as well as his controversial and perplexing contributions in *Seminar XX Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1999) to situate and conceptualise *jouissance*. This part of the thesis aims to clearly map out the terms and locate it within, what I have termed, 'a Lacanian trajectory of Desire'. Here, I also assert my position as a post-Lacanian scholar by following the work of Tim Dean in *Beyond Sexuality* (2000), which sets out to use Lacan's own notion of '"subjective foundations"' (ibid, p.23) to reassess and re-examine 'that while concepts have a history through which they come into being, their conceptual value exceeds the conditions and processes of their historical emergence' (ibid). In this chapter and throughout the thesis, it is my aim to work with this 'conceptual value', *qua* Lacan and Dean, to sophisticate the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' and thus acknowledge that impersonality and gay male desire 'involves pointing to Lacan's [and also Dean's] insistence that subjectivity must be theorised in several dimensions at once' (Dean, 2000, pp.31-32). The extent to which these 'dimensions' can be used involves a close engagement with Lacan's work to offer bedrock to the methodological and analytic chapters which follow.

The next part of this chapter builds on the interventions primarily allied to *jouissance* and begins with a critical consideration of both Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and Dean's concept of 'Bodies that Mutter' (2000) to position 'Bodies

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that Stutter'. It is through the contextualisation of a 'body that stutters' that impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* challenge the antithetical dyad of the muttering and mattering body in Butler and Dean. This chapter exploits the tension between these terms and how they are expressed to conceptualise the claims around 'stuttering' and its relation to both *jouissance* and the Symbolic. In turn, this suggests that the stuttering body is the one that may exist between the bodies which matter and mutter, because it relies upon and, in some instances, enjoys the processes of subjugation and impersonality in the Symbolic, shattering in the Imaginary, and also mutability in the Real in its incessant pursuit of *jouissance*. Alongside of this assertion there is a detailed exploration of the function and relationship between metaphor and metonymy in Lacan which are situated using the concepts of condensation and displacement in Freud and their importance in positioning how the strains between personal and impersonal desires are Symbolically permeated by language and discourse. These foundational concepts and their impersonal features are then linked to a much closer consideration of how narcissism and the construction of gay masculinity in language are allied to the Imaginary other, the Imaginary-ego, and the arguments around Symbolic Other and Symbolic forms of *jouissance* and stuttering. This also goes some way to emphasising the foundation to the 'Bodies that Stutter' of the thesis and the claim that gay male desire 'Symbolically-stutters' when it is Symbolically expressed as *jouissance* in relation to a gay male subject by engaging with Sigmund Freud's theory of Narcissism (1914) and its alignment to the efficacy of Dean's concept of 'the impersonality of desire' (2000), Lee Edelman's *'Narci-schism'* (1994), and homo-ness, self-shattering, and 'impersonal narcissism' in the work of Leo Bersani (1986, 1987, 1995, 2008).

1.5.2 Chapter Three

Chapter 3 is an attempt to methodologically consolidate and acknowledge the claims made in the previous chapter. This is achieved by engaging with the philosophical tropes of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros*, in the work of Aristotle and Plato, as a way to reconsider how gay male ontological and epistemological meaning has been constructed in light of a discourse such as psychoanalysis, a concept such as *jouissanc*e, and more specifically 'Bodies that Stutter'. This is also considered by re-thinking Rene Descartes' claims around what it means to 'be' a subject and how this relates to the pursuit of *jouissance* and the signification of Symbolic-stuttering. Here, considerations linked to the philosophical, ethical, and moral dimensions of looking at

sexually explicit material, pornographic media, online identity and identification, and the self-reflexive and auto-biographical nature of the thesis are also discussed. This section also acknowledges the practical implications and ethical anxieties of working on a project that involves examining sexually explicit material online, as well as addressing the issues related to informed consent and the problems that this raises in terms of 'gaining agreement to produce visual material but also to reproduce or display it among different audiences and in different contexts' (Clark, 2012, p.19). In light of this there is also a discussion of the methodological decision not to use a lot of visual material in a thesis which addresses visual representation. Here the paradoxes that are allied the use of psychoanalysis in analysing the representation of gay male sexual desire as hyper-visible, impersonal, and public productively conflicts with the ethical dimensions of examining men who utilise these hyper-visible platforms to personalise and in some cases privatise their identities and desires.

This, then, allows for the next three chapters and the contextual and analytical argument that focuses on the conceptual application of how bodies stutter on the personal website of *dudesnude.com,* the pornographic features in *Triga* Films, and also instances of blogging and self-representation on the online social network of *tumblr.com*. More specifically, the three contextual chapters explore instances in online, pornographic, and networked self-representational media by using both the methodological and 'theoretical potential of psychoanalysis' (Dean, 2000, p.36). In turn, this also helps to overcome some of the ethical and practical barriers aligned to 'epistemological approaches, specific research contexts, […] and researchers' and participants' own moral frameworks' (Clark, 2012, pp. 17-18) in visual research. It is the aim in these contextual parts of the thesis to develop the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' by using the lexis of psychoanalytical concepts and approaches detailed in the earlier chapters and, in so doing, consider how 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering may offer ways of reading and positioning impersonality, metonymy, desire, and *jouissance*. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are outlined in the final part of Chapter 3. However, at this stage, it is also necessary to position them in terms of how *jouissance*, 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-Stuttering operate in each instance.

1.5.3 Chapter Four

Chapter 4 examines signifiers of desire on the gay male personals website, *dudesnude.com*, and how they stutter in relation to tensions that occur between an Imaginary other and a Symbolic Other. This also ensues in relation to the ways in which personal and sexual imagery on the site may be impersonally exchanged and circulated between the users who are also the subjects of the personal profile and users or browsers of the site who do not have a profile. Here, work allied to the fields of queer theory and paradigms of online identity and digital culture are used to discuss how specific aspects of the site (homepage, welcome/search page) and users and groups on *dudesnude*.com use the Imaginary other as a way to fallaciously personalise desire through a 'personal profile'. It does this by merging theorisations of the Imaginary gay / queer subject, and notions of online identity as 'speaking' or 'personalising sexual desire', with those of Lacan and theorists, such as Dean, who work with a sceptical approach to the Imaginary other and identity politics. I suggest that the 'Dudes' we see 'Nude' can only be signified and understood through the dimensions of the Symbolic Other, and it is through this that any trace of personality is rendered impersonal. In this way the site itself and the significations therein function as the Symbolic Other. I also suggest that personal and ego-driven desire are only ever expressed through an impersonal website, profile, or homepage, as 'Bodies that Stutter which gives way to the force of Symbolic-stuttering.

1.5.4 Chapter Five

This notion of slippage links into the next chapter, which examines pornography, 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-Stuttering in the output of UK Company *Triga* Films. In this instance, stuttering and impersonality are addressed as forms that converge when straight and gay male sexual desires combine. In *Triga* Films, the Imaginary-ego of a straight male 'other' is signified through pornographic representation and, via this process, I suggest that both straight male-egos and gay male *jouissance* begin to Symbolically-stutter. The chapter suggests that, within porn and porn studies, there may also be a shift towards the 'impersonal' as a Symbolic way out of the binds and traps of gay and/or straight masculinity and its representation *as* pornographic. By analysing several scenes from *Triga* Films, *Triga's* own website, and some of the actors/participants in the films, I argue that the encounters and

exchanges between men who are neither identified as straight or gay stutter. They also produce 'triggers' of *jouissance*, which seem to be most clearly catalysed and signified through the figure of the straight chav in several of *Triga*'s most popular productions. By commodifying the hyper-masculine and 'disgusting' ego of the 'chav', for gay men to visually consume, *Triga* forms a dialogue of impersonal identification with the chav, which relies on both the straight Imaginary other and its gay Symbolically-stuttering Other. In turn, this signals that modes of gay Symbolic identification are often ensnared by the straight Imaginary-ego in their pursuit of *jouissance*. This suggests that, whilst an impersonality of gay desire is indeed 'desirable', it may also come at a cost – here, that cost is the regression of the gay Symbolic back into the straight Imaginary.

1.5.5 Chapter Six

In the final contextual chapter, the issues developed in Chapters 4 and 5 are positioned in relation to the social network *tumblr.com*. Here, Symbolic-stuttering and 'Bodies that Stutter' are used to suggest that in processes of self-representation and, more crucially in the production and exchange of the 'selfie', gay desire is also articulated through notions of the impersonal and the metonymic so that self-signifying sexual desire only ever stutters. I argue that it is within the uncertainty, hesitancy, frustration, and repetitiveness allied to capturing the self in a selfie that not only allows, but also forces, the subject to stutter. Here, the issues connected to gay and straight masculinity in *Triga* Films, as well as to online personality and identity on *dudesnude*.com, are unpacked through an analysis of how images are assembled and exchanged on *tumblr.com*.. These contexts are also considered in relation to the concepts of the anamorphic gaze and mise-en-abyme and their alignment to Symbolic-stuttering and *jouissance*. The selfie seems to condense and capture many of the issues I have raised in relation to stuttering and its application and, as such, it works well as a way into the conclusion of the thesis. In this conclusion, I acknowledge several concepts and arguments that may have been left unaddressed as well as the ways in which 'Bodies that Stutter' may be applied to non-digital / networked representations and/or non-gay and non-male bodies and those areas that can be developed beyond those that were examined in this thesis.

1.6 Conclusion

The synopses that are discussed above go some way towards positioning the overall intent and ambition of this thesis to the reader. This introduction has attempted to present a logical outline of a thesis and a series of discussions aligned to its objective and aims to open up and capture how metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* relate to 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. The introduction has also addressed how elements of stuttering may be connected to the broader social and cultural consequences of living with gay sexuality in contemporary media and culture. The main intervention to make at this early stage has been to identify and account for some of the ways in which the modes of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* which inflect the intervention that this thesis is striving to make are manifested in relation to the tensions between gay identity and gay desire and the associated ways of both representing and analysing them.

Lacan's emphasis on language renders (homo)sexual desire an 'effect of representation' (Dean and Lane, 2001b, p.26) and as a consequence much of Lacanian thought and discourse surmises that homosexuality cannot be coherently thought, spoken or written about. As a link to Chapter 2 which locates and examines 'Bodies that Stutter' in more critical detail and establishes a psychoanalytic lexicon for the thesis, this brings up a fundamental concern associated with representation and the ways in which the subject distinguishes between conscious representation itself and the effect of the representation on the unconscious. In his reconsideration of Freudian discourse and in particularly in his reworking and reconsideration of Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement in 'The agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud' (2003 [1957]) Lacan addressed the ways in which Freud had struggled to situate the paradoxical divisions and overlaps between the conscious and unconscious and their association with language and the subjective self. Aligned to this, Lacan relies upon the tensions and operations that occur between metaphor and metonymy in the unconscious and their origins from Freud's notions of condensation and displacement to understand and situate the Imaginary and Symbolic. This twinned with the impossibility of representing *jouissance* and the gay subjects' attempts to do so are something that this thesis and more so the next chapter will address.

It could be argued that it is through these conflicts that bodies stutter and perhaps that Symbolic-stuttering is the result of them. In this way the introduction has also

attempted to position a gay male subject of desire that is seen and heard to be contingent and conditional, always tempted by *jouissance* and predisposed to Symbolic operations in which manifest (conscious) and latent (unconscious) content articulate conflict, desire, and pleasure. Whilst psychoanalysis deals primarily with the (continuous) analysing of the psyche, this analysing is not governed by straightforward beginnings, middles, or ends: psychoanalysis, like identity, is not teleological in any linear sense but operates always on the basis of frustration, contingency and ambiguity. Just as psychoanalysis allows the subject to 'break with [a] safe reliance on the enigmatic master signifier' (Zizek, 2002 p. 58) we also see that this lies at the foundation of this project and how psychoanalysis may allow gay male representation to 'stutter'. Problematically, and for a thesis that addresses the pressures between the centrality and fragility of the metaphoric to metonymic, personal to impersonal relation via the Imaginary and the Symbolic we also see in Zizek's reading of Lacanian analysis, there 'is no "big Other", no master identity or narrative, guaranteeing the consistency of the symbolic space within which we dwell: there are just contingent, punctual, and fragile points of stability' (ibid, p.59).

It is this 'fragile stability' that signals in the process of stuttering which is central not only to the key line of argument but also to the elements of how the thesis is structured and presented. Just as the master signifier (in this case the thesis), as in Zizek's account, is 'enigmatic' or unstable, it also has the potential to stabilise meaning. Here Symbolic enigmas, desires, and ultimately *jouissance* – because of their uncertainty and mystery – remain pleasurable, powerful and determining forces of discourse and knowledge. Yet it needs to be stressed that Zizek acknowledges, that despite the fragile and conditional characteristics which underpin apparent consistencies in, for example, the epistemology and ontology of gay male sexual desire, historical and cultural (con)texts suggest that gay male subjects 'do' live with the enigma of coherence and identity, 'as if' there is a consistent representational space in which subjects 'are' (perform, enact, represent, signify) sexual desire.

Building on this, the thesis suggests that gender and sexual identities can be most prolifically understood at the level of the Symbolic. They aim to do so not on the basis of an identity which simply awaits its symbolisation; so much as the Symbolic domain serves to anticipate *how* the enigma of identity will be instated in (gay male) human cultural relations and texts explored in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. However, and as discussed

in these three contextual chapters, perhaps what is more in doubt is the extent to which the space of the Symbolic itself is never consistent: signifiers only ever point to other signifiers and not to a final position, identity, or sexual orientation. On a Symbolic and thus impersonal and/or metonymic plane, desire points to yet more signifiers and not a hetero or homosexual body (in the sense that there are no sexed or gendered bodies with any fixed Symbolic dimensions). In this setting how are gay male subjects to live with such contradiction and uncertainty? and are fixed and intelligible identities allied to gay masculinity more useful and indeed inevitable than the fractured unconscious and divergent subjectivity described by Lacan? It is these points and the foundations of the project that have been outlined in this introduction that now lead us to the following chapter which on the one hand frames a discussion that takes place with and within the grain of Lacanian inquiry. Whilst on the other, the dialogue goes against the grain of some of the traditions in Lacanian criticism and psychoanalytic thinking.

The work undertaken in the name of Lacan is often written in a language which betrays indebtedness to identity, ego, and instinct rather than subjective formation, drives and desires, and the unconscious. These tensions and how they are are essential in terms of using and understanding how his work can be productive and valuable in an interpretation of impersonality, desire, *jouissance* and how the 'Bodies that Stutter' in this project do so. In light of this, *jouissance* and *objet a* both cause and complicate modes of signification which, as the next chapter will demonstrate, allow for the tensions between identity as personal and identification as impersonal to be expressed. In the next section, the terms discussed here will also contribute to the sophistication of the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter'. This, then, allows for a consideration of stuttering in terms of a Symbolic Other and, later, a way to theorise and consider gay male sexuality and the signification of desire in networked and online, pornographic, and photographic media and culture. More so, this next part seeks to add a further layer to the lines of psychoanalytic enquiry presented so far via a critical consideration of the way in which exchanges between impersonality and metonymy open up the scope of how desire and *jouissance* can and, indeed, will 'stutter' if they are psychoanalytically enunciated and conveyed through the rhetoric of gay personality and metaphor.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising *Jouissance*, 'Bodies that Stutter', and Identifying the Psychoanalytic Trajectories of Desire

2.1 Introduction

To begin to tackle issues of the impersonality of desire and the nuances of 'Bodies that Stutter' through Lacan, there are four key areas and/or concepts that need to be discussed and detailed in this section. They first involve the close theorisation of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (R, S, I) which offer a bedrock to the conceptualisation of *jouissance*. Next, this enables a detailed conceptual account of 'Bodies that Stutter'. As well as this there is also consideration of how condensation and displacement inflect the metaphoric and metonymic dimensions of desire and finally an account of how the rhetoric of impersonality relates to the above areas. It then goes on to consider how impersonality can be conceptualised in relation to a gay male subject, using Freud's theory of Narcissism and its application in the work of Dean, which discusses 'the impersonality of desire' (2000), '"narci-schism"' in the work of Lee Edelman (1994), and homo-ness, self-shattering, and 'impersonal narcissism' in Leo Bersani (1986, 1987, 1995, 2008). These concepts and their impersonal features are then linked to tropes of metaphor and metonymy to position how the tensions between personal and impersonal subjectivities are imbued by language and discourse.

As well as this it is important to remind the reader that the thesis is primarily informed by Lacanian psychoanalysis and at this stage it is important to foreground his work and its relevance to the project. The argument is attached to several of the essays gathered and translated by Alan Sheridan in the *Ecrits* (2003, [1977]) and *Seminar XX Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge* 1972-73 (1999) translated by Bruce Fink. The efficacy of these works will allow for they key terms of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (R, S, I) and *jouissance* to be situated for the pivotal lines of argument. In this part of the thesis, the extent to which a gay male subject is able to articulate his desire as personal, and how his *jouissance* is caused and realised as impersonal will be examined. It also develops the idea that gay male desire stutters when it is attempts to express *jouissance*. It is also important to note that the personalisation of a subject's 'gay' and 'masculine' desire is predicated by this stuttering. This occurs through the Symbolic Other and the impersonality of identification that the subject mistakes for the personal identity of the Imaginary other.

Another decisive starting point for this approach to the impersonality of gay male desire and 'Bodies that Stutter' is through in the work of Tim Dean in *Beyond Sexuality* (2000). Dean is a key (queer) theorist of Lacan, who boldly asserts that Lacanian modes of thought have become so pervasive and persuasive that we now all too easily assume that desire and sexuality are products of 'rhetoric, discourse, culture, history, and social relations' (2000, p.176) because this seems the only viable and convincing alternative to the biological argument that sex is derived from nature. This widely accepted version of desire and sexuality as socially and culturally rhetorical has become so ubiquitous that it has, in effect, 'naturalised itself in contemporary theory' (ibid). Dean suggests that a re-engagement or queering of psychoanalysis, and particularly the work of Lacan, may be where a new method or, indeed, a new discipline is located. He also points out that the very action of asking 'How?' to move beyond rhetorical versions of sexuality and desire forms an ambiguity, in that the frameworks, methodologies, and academic literature for such an inquiry are themselves rhetorical. Therefore, the task of this chapter and the broader claims of the thesis may be in abstracting how we use Lacan (and psychoanalysis more generally) to read gay male desire in a cultural context, so that we may be able to begin to interpret gay male desire outside the terms that ensnare it as '*gay male desire*'.

This approach is fundamental to how the research project has been formed and is useful because both Lacan and Dean initiate and complicate established discursive and rhetorical meanings of desire and gay masculinity. Critics such as Leo Bersani (1995), Ellie Ragland (1986, 2004), and Bruce Fink (1995, 1999), working within the Lacanian tradition, in the spirit of *Seminar XX* and the writings that discuss desire gathered in the *Ecrits*, have made attempts to shift sexuality and desire away from the field of the psychoanalytic Imaginary and identity-based models of the other and into a realm that takes into account the operations of *jouissance* in relation to identifications with the Symbolic Other. Yet other summaries and synopses of Lacan's work, as well as more detailed studies that engage with Lacanian concepts (Butler, 1990, 1993; Edelman, 1994), seem to rely on notions of sexual difference rooted in rhetoric of the body, ego, identity, and gender.

In this chapter, the discussion considers how *jouissance* catalyses and underpins the 'Bodies that Stutter' and how the trajectories of metonymic impersonality are both informed and antagonised by metaphoric personality. More specifically this chapter

sets up a critical foundation to the thesis and its argument by asking how 'Bodies that Stutter' can energise an impersonality of desire conceptualised through Symbolic-stuttering as a marker of *jouissance*. Just as a clear grasp of Lacanian approaches are crucial to understanding how *jouissance* and Symbolic modes of the Other are expressed through impersonal representation and the impersonality of language, it is also important to consider these cultural and theoretical concepts and techniques to trace the lines of argument contextually in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. This chapter will also acknowledge how gay male identity and the gay male body form a way for the gay male subject to metaphorically personalise and, thus, articulate his desire in relation to his own and an 'other's' sexual identity. Yet this form of recognition and the subject's self-recognition and/or egotism are antagonised by the impersonal capacities of metonymy and its configuration through the Symbolic Other, which is formed in relation to precarious modes of *jouissance* and stuttering.

By addressing these areas of concern, this chapter explores the divergent ways in which gay desire may be understood as metonymically impersonal when it is expressed through a series of 'Other' sexual representations and identifications. This is opposed to an understanding of identities that are made to metaphorically reflect, cohere, or conform through the 'other' as a person and/or personality. Yet it is also through metaphoric forms of the personal that modes of metonymic impersonality and the stuttering body as a manifestation of impersonal desire are facilitated. This reinforces the assertion of the thesis that gay male desire 'stutters' when it is expressed through Symbolic forms of *jouissance*. Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1990) situates how, by definition, the 'homosexual' in language naturalises and denaturalises the locus of a personal identification with 'homosexuals' in culture and, in so doing, defines and locates the locus of gay male desire. This is also embedded in the Symbolic impersonality of language we see in Lacan, in that it is the homosexual who remains crucial to the construction of the Others' dominance through the very fact that he is marginalised by discursive forms in language. These Symbolic forms are also outside of his subjective sense of self-identity, self-control, and agency as the Imaginary other. His body and its desires are also riven through this paradox; they are formed on the basis of an impersonality that is epistemologically read as embodied exclusion, secrecy, and mystery yet, in the contextual instances discussed later in the thesis, articulated on the basis of disembodied spectacle, self-exposure, and the relentless

jouissance of the other as a stranger. In the next section something of this enigmatic yet impenetrable tension is extracted through an initial consideration of Lacan's Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (R,S,I) and their facilitation of this project prevailing paradigm - *jouissance.*

2.2 Theorising *Jouissance*

Before a discussion of *jouissance* can take place it is necessary to account for the ways in which the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (R, S, I) are assembled in relation to identity and desire and how they originate in Lacan's essay, 'The agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud' (2003 [1957]). Here, the core features of the R,S,I as a triadic assemblage are developed through the unconscious' alignment to both language and desire to highlight the effects that 'subject to other' relations in the Imaginary and 'subject to Other' relations in the Symbolic have on the signifier and the signified. The subject to other relation in the Imaginary positions the relation of 'spoken' language to another human being at a personal level because it is spoken by a speaker and heard by a listener. The subject to Other relation riven through the Symbolic depersonalises language so it is spoken by many and heard by more in an infinite numbers of ways. Understanding how these shifts and intersections occur needs to begin by considering the relationship between the 'other' of the Imaginary register and 'Other' of the Symbolic. This association is outlined by Slavoj Zizek and his initial understanding of all three of the registers. He observes that 'First there is the Imaginary other – other people "like me"' (2002, p.70) and 'with whom I am engaged in the mirror-like relationships of competition' (ibid); next 'there is the Symbolic "big Other" – the "substance" of our social existence' (ibid) and, interestingly, 'the impersonal set of rules that coordinate our coexistence' (ibid). Finally, Zizek discusses the 'Other qua Real, the impossible Thing, the "inhuman partner"' (ibid) or, more specifically, 'the Other with whom no symmetrical dialogue, mediated by the Symbolic Order, is possible' (ibid).

The line of argument that the thesis follows uses the above as a way to consider the provenance of Lacan's Imaginary and its power to affirm how desire can be understood through intersubjectivity, which remains an Imaginary as opposed to a Symbolic form of communication. The key way of positioning this is to understand Imaginary

intersubjectivity through a subject-to-subject relation. Symbolic intersubjectivity occurs through a subject-to-Other relation, where the 'Other' differs from the 'other' in that it occupies the space of impersonality, a space that is 'strictly divested of subjective status' (Dean, p.43). If this is considered through the context of the psychoanalytical exchange between Analyst and Analysand, or Analysand and Analyst, we can see that desire may be 'spoken' in a psychoanalytic session, which facilitates intersubjective communication between self and other. This form of speech and of speaking one-to-one is primarily formed as an Imaginary ego-to-ego schema, where the expression of sexual desire itself may be or may have been understood through subjects 'speaking' and, more abstractly, representing to 'others' in the Imaginary. It is this intersubjectivity of speaking of one's sexual desire that remains an Imaginary rather than a Symbolic concept (Dean, 2000, p.43) because subjects and egos are seduced into an intersubjective relation with the other through processes of sexual desire connected to that subject 'speaking' of their own and the other's imagined identity, personality, and sexuality. Yet through this act of 'speaking' one's desire, we see that speech is always subject to the power of the Symbolic 'Other'. It is this 'Other' which has the power to reduce the Imaginary 'other' to something that (or indeed someone who) can only be identified impersonally, and can identify impersonally with desire through language.

Although desire is formed through the unconscious desire of the Other (that is the Symbolic force of language beyond my control), it is done so because the Imaginary other is often visualised and signified as coherent. For instance in a discourse such as pornography we are seduced into 'seeing' gay others engaging in gay sex; in turn, this acts as a potent way of repetitively enhancing and affirming an Imaginary rhetoric of gay desire. Leonardo Rodriguez writes that the operation of desire is always 'over and above the others who are concrete incarnations of the Other' (in Glowinski, *et al*, 2001, p.57). Here, we see that the Imaginary other is ensnared by the big Symbolic Other and vice-versa. Just as Rodriguez suggests that this desire is not some ' "natural", endogenous' (ibid) appetite or proclivity 'that would push the subject in one direction or another irrespective of his/her relations with the Other; desire is always inscribed in and mediated by language' (ibid), we see that the need or demand a subject may articulate for sexual pleasure or a sexual relation will always be filtered through the mediating figures of the Other and the Symbolic strains of a language and/or desire the

other will never be able to fully grasp or express. Yet to articulate a 'need' (for sex, for desire, for the other) is to engage language and to be engaged by language. However, to engage and to be engaged at the level of language is to also make strange the body and desire (the body is *not* language); rather, the seduction of the Imaginary and the constraints of the Symbolic converge to displace the body and depersonalise the subject *through* language. At the same time, language has the effect of making the body appear familiar and personal. For instance, the terms 'gay desire' and 'male desire' locate the Imaginary other through modes of recognition that are imagined and even understood to be desires that are both identifiably 'gay' and 'male'. Yet, when these terms are considered as Symbolic through an 'Other', and the underlying power of the Symbolic 'rules that I follow [and] meanings that haunt me' (Zizek, 2006a, p.9), we see that the 'Big' (ibid) Symbolic Other allows and even encourages me to (mis)recognise and doubt what 'gay' and 'male' desire may mean in language.

Accounting for these tensions between the Imaginary to Symbolic and other to Other relation we begin to see some of the fundamental ways in which 'Bodies that Stutter' begin to form through *jouissance*. We also see that desire can only be manifested *as* desire through complex and precarious inter-relations which falter. Yet, when these abstract exchanges are turned 'into signifying form' (Lacan, 2003, p.316), and, in this instance, sexual and sexually explicit images of gay men, they begin to form a language of signification that constructs gay desire. For Lacan, the 'phenomenology that emerges from analytic experience is certainly of a kind to demonstrate in desire the paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric, even scandalous character by which it is distinguished from need' (ibid, pp.317-18). These tensions between the Imaginary-Symbolic can also be understood by positioning the Real. The Real is 'that which resists meaning' (Dean, 2002a, pp.33-34). Particularly in the work of Slavoj Zizek (1989, 1991, 1994, 2005, 2006a, 2006b), we see how the Real both catalyses and disrupts the Symbolic. Here the Symbolic is constituted through its insistence on excluding the Real. Zizek understands the Real as impudently ahistorical to language and representation; it is 'both the hard, impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization *and* a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency' (1989, p.190). As Dean suggests, this 'unsymbolizable Real' (2002a, p.25) is at the root of the Symbolic and may even form its 'founding instance and that which fuels Symbolic machinery even as it threatens to disrupt it' (ibid). The Real also establishes 'the gap

that separates us from the image' (Lewis, 2008, p.194) and, in so doing, convinces the subject that 'the Symbolic needs the Imaginary (the fantasy) because it is not complete, and the Imaginary needs the Symbolic […] because it is not complete' (Lewis, 2008, p.195). Through the Real, the tensions we see in the Imaginary-Symbolic relation and their implicit incompleteness is necessary because 'the Symbolic would be otherwise infinite and meaningless, and the Imaginary would be so disorderly that the human species would die out' (ibid).

In the diagram Figure 2.1 I have provided the dimensions of how the Imaginary and Symbolic function to assist in understanding this implicit paradox of neither being complete entities. Whilst the terms are confined to fields and thus aligned to binaries, they are, in fact, constitutive of an oppositional tension, which is also reciprocal. This is important to the thesis because it sets out a way to grasp the tensions and reciprocities related to 'Bodies that Stutter' in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. It also illustrates that for bodies to stutter there is the necessity for exchange between these formations. Here, the 'Imaginary-Symbolic scheme' (Dean, 2000, p.45) seems to systematise and create a clearly defined way of understanding their functions in language and culture. Yet, if the Real and, more importantly for the forthcoming discussion, *jouissance* are aligned to any strand of the diagram, then each element of the chart is vulnerable to asymmetry, slippage, and fragmentation which incites 'Bodies that Stutter'. In particular, *jouissance* interrupts the intentions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic by inscrutably diverting the subject to a liminal space between these terms below. The Imaginary-Symbolic relation is both a mutual tryst and a rutted conflict, in that it begins to displace and reposition the subject somewhere between the positions of their Symbolic and Imaginary *jouissance,* close to the Real gap or '*faille'* within language and desire that Lacan refers to in *Seminar XX* (1999, p.4) and that will be discussed in later in the thesis.

Between the Imaginary and Symbolic, the subject is ensnared by this *jouissance* and its startling and thrilling mutability. Yet, because the Imaginary register is misguidedly singled out as the most important element of Lacan's work, it is clear that theoretical inquiry will remain limited for as long as this constituent is stressed above the Symbolic and the Real. Commenting on weaknesses in a number of critical commentaries on desire that look to the work of Lacan, Dean states how the *objet a,* as the cause of desire and the object of unconscious fantasy, 'designates that which

escapes the Imaginary and the domain of the ego' (2000, p.34). He goes on to claim that for 'as long as the other remains captive to the status of the subject, one is stuck in the Imaginary domain of psychologized relations' (ibid). More specifically, and as this thesis will examine, this traps the gay subject in the realm of the Imaginary and his intersubjective reflection through representation. It is only with Lacan that moves beyond this bind of intersubjectivity are possible. By theorising the other and otherness 'impersonally' and 'in terms of the Symbolic Other, rather than the Imaginary other' (ibid), a way to re-position and re-negotiate desire may eventually be possible. I suggest that in this setting desire and the gay male subject should to be read through 'Bodies that Stutter' and more specifically via the operational unravelling pre-empted by *objet a* and wrought by *jouissance's* relation to the Symbolic rather than the Imaginary,

This approach is further endorsed by Dean in relation to how he positions and identifies *jouissance*. He observes that, to grasp *jouissance*, one must understand that 'it is [the] barriers or limits to *jouissance* that "permit the full spectrum of desire" ' (2000, p.91) and that in terms of a gay (or, in Dean's instance, a queer) subject, it is this barrier and 'not unlimited access to *jouissance* that permits queer desire to flourish' (ibid). This limit is often understood through the Real register and its position as 'a zone of impossibility' (p.88), which actually 'renders it constitutive' (ibid). The Real is that which seems to resist, fall outside of, or fails to articulate signification in the Imaginary and Symbolic. As Dean succinctly argues, 'the real is not an effect of symbolic and imaginary orders; at most it is a theoretical construct that explains negatively the function and limits of these two orders' (ibid). Whilst it is in the limits of these two orders that *jouissance* seems to return (to that which *is* the Real), it seems that to begin to articulate something, indeed anything, of *jouissance* as impersonal desire, we need to return to the Symbolic and the ways in which language always instils a limit to the subject's *jouissance* and also allows us to access and gain (temporary) pleasure from it. This temporary pleasure is crucial in that it enables the subject's desire for excessive *jouissance* to be contained, but also to be circulated and consumed within the limits of signification and the boundaries of the Other's *jouissance* and also the other's *jouissance*. Within this matrix of *jouissance* we also find the *objet a* or, as Lacan suggests, the element, which causes *jouissance*. This cause or stimulant of *jouissance* has its most obvious or explicit grounding in a materiality connected to *jouissance's*

cause. In other words, the *objet a* is a trigger for sexual pleasure that occurs prior to that pleasure. In some cases, this is more pleasurable than the pleasure itself, in that the pursuit of it only ever reaches a particular point. This is also the point that brings *jouissance* to an end.

Lacan positions the concept of *jouissance* in 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious' (2003 [1960]). In his early claims, he associates *jouissance* with the phallus and states that 'the erectile organ comes to symbolise the place of *jouissance*, not in itself or even in the form of an image, but as a part lacking in the desired image' (ibid, p.353). This lack riven into the phallus is relevant to the development of a thesis which addresses gay male representation because it is signified in sexually explicit gay imagery as 'the Symbolic phallus that cannot be negated, the signifier of *jouissance*' (ibid, p.354). Crucially, Lacan also sees *jouissance* embedded in the 'function of desire in the man, insofar as he sets up dominance in the privileged place of *jouissance*' (ibid). Here and as we will see in the analyses of bodies that stutter, the attempts that gay male subjects make at articulating their privileged and phallic *jouissance* begin to fail because their *jouissance* is lost to the Symbolic Other or more specifically, and in representational practices that attempt to display the sexual-self 'the instrument for the Other's *jouissance*' (Lacan, 1999, p.3). This underpins how *jouissance* is positioned in the project as a form of desire that impersonally shifts and sways between its phallic and 'Otherly' pleasures, excesses, and, ultimately, limits.

Aspects of how gay desire is articulated and complicated by *jouissance* are also discussed in Lacan's *Seminar XX*, which was delivered in Paris from November 1972 to June 1973. The core themes of the seminar are composed around issues to do with sexual difference, knowledge, love, and the ways in which the pursuit of *jouissance* is implicit in how we theorise and act out desire. This is also discussed in terms of *objet a*, as that which the subject seeks beyond and outside their own auto-erotic desire, and also as that which acts as the energiser of *jouissance*. The *objet a* is an object or abstraction that sets desire in motion, especially the partial objects that fortify sexual desires. Yet desire does not seek to attain the *objet a*, rather, desires are assembled around it in a continuous and retroactive cycle of *jouissance*. Within the thesis, the shifting nature of *jouissance* acts as a device to discuss how the attempts that gay men

make at signifying it are preceded by a Symbolic and impersonal object, and allied to modes of metonymic identification. Indeed, these modes of enquiry also allow the argument to be developed in relation to the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' to consider how the nuances of *jouissance* around them bear upon the ways in which impersonal identifications and a 'radical impersonality of desire' (Dean, 2000) can or cannot be represented.

At this stage, it is also important to note that Lacan's concept of *jouissance* is subject to a later reworking in his untranslated 1974 seminar, *Troisieme* (The Third) as *"jouis-sens"* (see Patsalides and Ror Malone, 2000, pp. 123-134). This could be most usefully interpreted as 'the *jouissance* of meaning which is the *jouissance* of the unconscious' and that 'retro-actively we could say that Freud invented psychoanalysis in order to deal with this mysterious third *jouissance*' (ibid, p.125). This *"jouis-sens"* has the potential to align *jouissance* to the Symbolic and could be identified as *jouissance*'s place in language. This is important to the way in which *jouissance* is situated and developed in the thesis because the tensions between *"jouis-sens"* and *jouissance* may work together, so that each 'utters itself' (Chiesa, 2007, p.185). In turn, this opens up the potential to read the gay male subject as a 'stuttering' one, whilst also indicating that it may be in the utterances of *"jouis-sens"* and its 'linguistic lack of sense' (ibid) that the Symbolic as 'a means of *jouissance*' (ibid) can be expressed. *"Jouis-sens",* also carries an emotional intensity that connects the paradoxes of language and desire to one another in attempts to speak, write, and represent *jouissance;* attempts that both excite and fail to express gay masculine desire, and ones that ultimately falter and stutter. As this project evolves, the 'Bodies that Stutter' implicitly draw upon *"jouis-sens"* because it allows for something of *jouissance* to be articulated through language without confining it to modes of the metaphoric, Imaginary, and personal.

By this point it is clear that *jouissance* does not function in relation to a specific or singular mode of desire. Rather, it is formed and reformed in relation to plurality and multiplicity. The word *'jouissance'* resists and subverts; it does not translate into one English term and, as a result, it is balanced on the threshold of signification and meaning. For example, 'In French *jouissance* is judicially defined and spelled out as the subject's use and enjoyment of all of the advantages of a specific object of

privilege' (Patsalides and Ror Malone, 2000, p.126). It has ideological, political, and subjective interpretations and, in this way, *jouissance* becomes difficult and unruly. It is often discussed through the signification of the phallus and phallic *jouissance* but it is also here that it begins to resist definition or representation, and the subsequent ways in which it is theorised call into question the critical nature of what *jouissance* may be in relation to desire. In this way *jouissance* is also relevant to the development of the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' because both are reliant upon yet remain difficult to translate and interpret in the Symbolic field.

Lacan also posits a *jouissance* that is articulated in terms of a sexual relation or topography of two sexed polarities: 1. *jouissance* is defined by the hole, slit, or opening that he states 'revolves around phallic *jouissance*' (1999, p.7) and 2. for the other pole of *jouissance*, Lacan is uncertain of its nature or how it manifests itself. He asks if 'something can be attained that would tell us how that which up until now has only been a fault (*faille*) or gap in *jouissance*' (ibid, p.4) we may begin to ask in what ways *jouissance* could be identified, signified, and articulated? If we could locate the slip, gap, break, and defect in *jouissance*, we may be able to conceptualise and then mark *jouissance* in a way that does not rely on the *objet a*; that being the inanimate and impersonal object located in the unconscious fantasy that, as Dean suggests, 'escapes the Imaginary and the domain of the ego' (2000, p.34).

In light of this, what *jouissance* alerts us to are the gap[s] (*faille*[*s*]) that Lacan claims exist between self and Other. These gaps can be identified as a form of desire that demands. That is, a desire which is never exacting or sufficient but, rather, a one that acts as a ceaseless and selfish cathexis; never giving up in its *jouissance* or, as Lacan states, 'demanding it (*ne cesse pas*)' (1999, p.5). Here, *jouissance* literally demands *jouissance* in retro-active cycles of repetitive demands that continually rise and fall at uneven gaps so that the gaps in desire generate an insight into desire itself. What also needs to be emphasised here is the split or slipping between the Other's desire and the subject's own sense of *jouissance*. We could suggest that it is in through this gap that bodies stutter. As Philippe Julien states, 'in psychoanalysis […] establishing this gap permits desire […] to recognise as its law, the other's desire and not the Other's *jouissance*' (1994, p.106). The gay subjects of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are riven by this notion in that they pursue the desire of the other through the Other's *jouissance* and as

a result stutter. In turn and at this stage of the thesis this stuttering may be allied to what Lacan identifies as the "*Encore*" (1999, p.4) within the gap (*faille*), going so far as to suggest that it is the proper name of the gap itself. In this instance 'Bodies that Stutter' and Lacan's "*Encore*" may well be understood as forms of continuous and incessantly demanding desire for the other that are simultaneously subjugated and perpetuated through the *jouissance* of the Other.

In *Seminar XX*, Lacan also cites the *objet a*, by building on his own suggestions that desire is not configured in relation to the body itself but rather that which is concealed and revealed as the remainder (*reste*) thereof (1999, p.6). Desire, as the residual or excessive object that lingers in the space of that which is left over, is the key to *jouissance*; it haunts both the subject and language in visual representation. Lacan positions desire that locates itself as object-like (*objectal*) as 'a bunch of bull' (ibid) – in other words, the founding and locating of desire at the level of coherent objectivity and identity is jettisoned by that fact that at the essence of desire is the concept of 'that which constitutes a remainder in desire, namely, its cause, and sustains desire through its lack of satisfaction (*insatisfaction*), and even its impossibility' (ibid) may be closer to what desire actually is. Dean (2000) sees Lacan's emphasis on *jouissance* and the *objet a* as a development of notions aligned to 'othering' implicit in Freud's work. If the sexual 'instinct' is independent of its object, as Freud argues, then there is no axiomatic connection between erotic desire and the opposite (or other) sex. Moreover, the *objet a* and *jouissance* move with some degree of gender neutrality in that they can be arbitrarily triggered by a sound, a smell, the Gaze, the voice, the lips, etc. For Dean, a key psychoanalytic insight is that 'many sexual pleasures do not necessarily involve the genitals' (p.195), just as Lacan's work underlines that, whilst there is sex per se, there is no sexuality outside or without the unconscious. It is this last point that Dean seeks to underline more than most throughout his book. Steering a way through the nature-nurture controversy or essentialist and constructionist debates that have beset recent studies (elements of which are examined in the next chapter), Dean argues that, in Lacan's work, sexuality is explicable in terms of:

neither nature nor nurture, since the unconscious cannot be considered biological – it isn't part of my body and yet it isn't exactly constructed either. Instead the unconscious may be grasped as an index of how both biology and culture fail to

determine subjectivity and sexual desire. Thinking of the unconscious as neither biological nor cultural allows us to distinguish (among other things) a properly psychoanalytic account from a merely psychological notion of the unconscious. (p.221)

Of course, to move beyond any categories by and through which experience is made intelligible is no easy manoeuvre. However, if the continuing emphasis in some theories of sexuality also entails a commitment to bodily or gender coherence, subjective interiority, and the Imaginary-ego, then, despite problems in the work of Lacan, his stress on the operations of the unconscious through the Symbolic Other via the *jouissance* and *objet a* is a way of moving beyond a theory of sexuality in which the Imaginary and the 'other' continue to inhibit and restrict the movements of desire which cause bodies to stutter.

2.3 Bodies that Matter, Bodies that Mutter, Bodies that Stutter

To understand the relevance of 'Bodies that Stutter' and stuttering in this thesis it is essential to account for the point that many feminist and queer scholars have taken up Freud's concept of the ego as a 'bodily ego' aligned to conscious, anatomical, and biological sexual difference and, as a result, have neglected the ways in which egos 'occlude - rather than manifest - desire' (Dean, 2000, p.200). Through this occlusion, the Imaginary gay male body that is represented, read, looked at, and thus embodied can only be re-represented, re-read, interpreted, and positioned through its own Symbolic disembodiment that stutters. This stuttering involves processes of bodily and egotistical representation that falter, stammer, and hesitate to express the nature of *jouissance* and the meaning of sexual identity.

Stuttering involves impersonal processes of association between the signifiers within an image, the user and the viewer, the impersonality of representation itself as the locale of where desire is signified, and the inexorable quality of the images transience. In the image the subject can only express themselves through a series of identifications that rely upon impersonal and metonymic contiguity and in so doing they begin their own practices of stuttering. Through this process, the ego and the associations that it

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has with an Imaginary other fails to articulate desire and, in so doing, shifts the potentiality of how *jouissance* can be realised to the Symbolic. It is in images that attempt to instil and represent the personal dimensions of the body via the amplification of sexual desire that the signifier and the user's bodies begin to stutter.

Dean's work (2000) is alert to some of these issues in its critical dismantling of the work of Judith Butler (1993) and Lee Edelman (1994). Dean effectively states that in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* Butler has misread Freud and circumvented Lacan through her failure to investigate the ways in which desire and the subject are in fact *'predicated on the incommensurability of body and subject'* (ibid, p.200). In Dean's intervention he transforms Butler's bodies that matter into bodies that now 'mutter' (ibid, p.202-05). He also suggest that there is an implicit failure in Butler to recognise that *jouissance* is limitless because it cannot be rationalised or totalised and, therefore, it cannot be clearly defined through an ego or a body that 'matters'. What is central to Dean's critique of both Butler and Edelman is hinged on the restrictive ways in which we, as desiring subjects, misconstrue and, in many ways, misrepresent desire in terms of an identifiable, personalised, and bodily 'other' as opposed to a Symbolic Other and also the third register of the Real. For instance, Butler sees desire in terms of a materiality that she accounts for as both 'prior to signification' as well as 'an effect of signification' (1993, p.30). In turn, she also suggests that there is a paradox associated with this body in that it is bound to 'the insolubility of materiality and signification' whilst also retaining 'materiality as its constitutive condition' (ibid). Here, the body is one that is aware of its 'mattering' and materiality but unaware of the 'muttering' possibility of desire. Or, in other words, the mattering body is one that accounts for 'subjects of the signifier and not subjects of desire' (Dean, 2000, p.187). Here, the mattering body fails to recognise desire and, more so, *jouissance* beyond the constraints of the ego and the materiality of that ego.

The mattering body is contained within the signifier, unwittingly and negligently limiting its *jouissance* to Imaginary othering. This subject of the signifier is indicative of how queer theory and gay identity politics privilege the Imaginary body and neglect to address the potential of the Symbolic, *jouissance*, *objet a*, and also the Real. This is configured through the corporeality of an ontic and social body, which the subject imagines is there to satisfy or fulfil desire. In all of the contexts of this thesis, this mattering body is locked into a materiality by the signification of a bodily ego or, as

Dean's argument claims, a one restrained by the Imaginary and Symbolic registers. For instance, within the contextual chapters, it is clear that the personals website, the pornographic text, and the selfie are all tropes in which an egotistical 'body that matters' attempts, yet also fails, to express *jouissance*. Through this failure to express *jouissance* the body begins to stutter so that the imprudent preservation of narcissism discussed later in this chapter, and instilled through an Imaginary other, gives way to a subject that on the one hand is torn, uncertain, and impatient, and on the other urgent, stimulated, and desirable.

In light of these conditions in which bodies may stutter, Dean's assertion that there are 'bodies that mutter' (2000, pp.202-205) is also useful. These muttering bodies are the ones 'that speak almost inaudibly, unintelligibly' (ibid, p.202) to 'obliquely indicate desire in the form of a failure in the Other's discourse' (ibid). Dean aligns the muttering body to a critique of both Butler and Edelman's work, to suggest that their intervention produce bodies 'bearing egos but devoid of subjective desire' (ibid). Here, *jouissance* is subsumed rather than enabled by the ego, and 'the subject of desire emerges not when an identification ([…]) is made, but when it fails to be made' (ibid). It is in this failure of identification that metonymy and impersonality also work towards carving out new landscapes for desire and *jouissance*. Dean prefers to see the body muttering through the Real and the place of *jouissance* within the Real. He argues that he has an 'objection to critically analysing sex and sexuality in terms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic' (ibid, p.231) because the Real alerts us to 'the specific modes of […] cultural images' and discourses' failure' (ibid). In Dean, the muttering body is that which he views as 'always relational, oppositional, in the subversive sense, rather than substantive' (ibid) and it is the body that, following Lacan, he locates through 'negativity and mutability' with the ego (ibid, p.230). The problem with this muttering and its alliance to the Real is that Dean is reluctant to examine 'the constant media barrage of sexualised imagery' (ibid, p.231) that allows the muttering to occur through the Imaginary-Symbolic relation. Due to this, the body that mutters also remains the body that 'resists assimilation to any Imaginary and Symbolic universe' (ibid, p.232). Whilst recognising that 'this claim may be counterintuitive' (ibid, p.231), Dean also permits the body to continue muttering; lost in the unspecific abstractions of the Real and the ways in which it 'designate[s] everything that *resists* adaption' (ibid, p.230).

This muttering body also serves to emphasise the failures and limits of an ego that 'obscures the subject of desire' (ibid, p.202), to formulate that 'while the ego matters, the body mutters' (ibid). Whilst Dean conveys this in terms of an Imaginary-ego that matters and a Real body that mutters, it is also within this formulation that the notion of Symbolic stuttering is, on the one hand, neglected and, on the other, beckoned in. If this is the case, the alignment of 'Imaginary-Mattering' and 'Real-Muttering' could be furthered in this thesis to suggest that as and when the body operates through *jouissance*, it forms a Symbolic-stuttering. This stuttering relies upon the Symbolic Other and a cultural signifier (the body, an object, an image, a series of images) but also follows Dean's claim that 'the difference between muttering and speaking [mattering] concerns the distinction involved in the notion of desire as something in language but not itself linguistic' (ibid p.203). Stuttering occurs in this gap between mattering and muttering. The body that stutters occupies the space between the body that matters and the body that mutters so that the triadic registers of Imaginary-Symbolic-Real (which in this case would be transformed into I, S, R) may also be understood as Matter-Stutter-Mutter. Here, bodies must stutter through the force and peril of the Symbolic Other before they can even consider the notions of 'mattering' or 'muttering'.

Building on both Butler and Dean, this new construction forms a 'contingent foundation' (ibid p.205) of how to read desire, in that it locates the body and the subject of *jouissance* between bodies that matter and mutter. Whilst muttering is 'struggling to be heard' (ibid p.203), the 'stuttering' I suggest is not necessarily struggling. It is repetitively activating desire *through* the process of stuttering – the stuttering body produces a Symbolic from of *jouissance* that will also stutter because it is torn between a body that matters and a body that mutters. In this case, the subject of the Symbolic is the stutterer, a subject who is both alert and naïve to the constraints and the limits of Imaginary and Real modes of *jouissance*. The body that stutters is located between the mattering and muttering self, and the stuttering that is provoked in this space, between mattering and muttering, is done so hesitantly, indeterminately, and repetitively, like the process of stuttering in language. In this setting, stuttering is always realised retroactively through a gap, an excess, or a slippage between mattering and muttering.

As a result, egos and bodies that matter do not stutter or mutter. As Dean contends, they are so 'completely rhetoricalised that paradoxically they are devoid of desire' (ibid, p.187). In contrast, the body that mutters is akin to the ones that stutter in that its 'desire is [inevitably] enmeshed in the Symbolic order' (ibid, p.203), yet it is a body that 'condenses and carries with it *jouissance* in a way that ordinary language cannot, since *jouissance* and language conventionally are conceived as antithetical' (ibid). The muttering bodies are entirely disembodied and, because Dean does not contextualise them through the Imaginary-Symbolic dynamic, they deliberately continue to mutter. In this thesis it is through the contextualisation of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* that stuttering is challenging the antithetical relationship between the muttering and mattering body. Whilst this remains close to Dean's understanding of muttering as a form of non-verbal and non-representational *jouissance* that through the Real and the symptom 'signify[ies] desire that has not been heard, has not found its signifier' (ibid), the stuttering body requires the signifier by way of attempting to express its *jouissance*. Here, the stutterer is the asinine subject who requires the absurdity of the signifier to articulate his own and relate to the *jouissance* of the Other.

The stuttering body that relies upon the conflicts rather than the failure 'to distinguish others from Others' (ibid, p.187) in its search for *jouissance* can only be a body that stutters; a body that Dean would may describe as 'suave' (ibid). This 'suave body' is positioned as the body that has been rehearsed, smoothed over, repetitively copied and 'so completely rhetoricalised' (ibid), it is effectively 'devoid of desire' (ibid), Yet it is also the body whose devolution of desire is desire itself, a desire activated by its own loss of desire. Through this process of suaveness, which we see in all three of the contextual instances where *jouissance* is always strategised, constructed, and manipulated and 'not in any way liberated or liberating' (ibid), the 'suaveness' becomes an indicative part of how *jouissance* as Symbolic-stuttering is expressed. Here, the personals website, the pornographic film, and the networked selfie initially present us with a suave subject who appears to contain desire and thus 'matter'. Yet this 'mattering' implodes because of its representation *as* suave. This allows the mattering body and Imaginary-ego from within the image to give way to impersonal modes of sexual representation that Symbolically-stutter because they are suave.

Whilst Dean is resolute that *jouissance* ultimately 'remains at the level of the Real' (p.186) and that 'both Butler and Edelman miss the psychoanalytic point by making

sex performative and graphemic' (ibid), he also relies upon the Symbolic and his notion of muttering to do so. Dean focuses his critique on their accounts of the self and subjectivity that 'constantly falls back into the ego' (p.193) because it fails to fully realise or articulate the potential of its own and the other/Other's *jouissance*. As Dean states, 'Lacan theorises sexuality not in terms of gender but in terms of *jouissance*' (ibid) and, more problematically, through the notion of *jouissance* as stuttering, we see that the sexual pleasures of the stuttering subject are embedded in something that is lacking, missing, or which remains frustratingly disavowed in both the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Through the Real, a muttering body is inaudible whilst a stuttering body is one that can be partially understood through Imaginary-mattering and Symbolic-stuttering. For example, if we consider the millions of images that are circulated online as 'personal' and thus masquerade as metaphorical reflections of the subject's Imaginary-ego that 'matters', we see that they do something to position that subject as a subject. Yet is through this subjectivisation that gay male identity, personality, and sexual desire remain tethered to Symbolic 'meaning as a substitute for sexuality' (ibid, p.188) that stutters. In turn, and as this section will go on to demonstrate, this is configured through the metonymic and impersonal potential of a *jouissance* that stutters and the stimulating impossibility and impersonality of a 'body that stutters' as a substitute for that meaning. Whilst the Real may be the limit and the actual place of *jouissance*, we also see in signification and via the signifier that, because the Symbolic 'Other is lacking' (ibid, p.205), the subject's *jouissance* is most powerfully realised as a form of stuttering.

Whereas 'Bodies that Stutter' and processes of Symbolic-stuttering are analytically addressed in Chapters, 4, 5, and 6, at this point in the thesis it is also necessary to examine how the concept of stuttering in language (which also informs the claims made in the thesis associated with impersonality and *jouissance*) may be understood. Work which uses psychoanalysis to consider how and why the 'stutter' disrupts the position of speaking (Coriat, 1943; Fenichel, 1949; Fisher, 1970) attempts to determine and essentialise stuttering as a verbal and linguistic problem. However, for this next section which examines stuttering through *jouissance* and the Symbolic, it is necessary to reposition it through a conceptual approach. Juan-David Nasio (1998) clearly states that 'when speech fails, *jouissance* occurs' (p.16); that is, when desire or (sexual) pleasure manifest themselves, the speech and the position of the speaking subject

falters and fails to express desire clearly and coherently. It is when speech goes astray (ibid) and language is frustrated that stuttering gestures towards a way of a way of speaking *jouissance*. In this way, stuttering is also a way of expressing *jouissance* that can 'signify creativity' in verbal and non-verbal ways (Gunn and Edbauer Rice, 2009, p.215). As a result it is through the body that stutters that the juxtapositions between speech as a verbal manifestation of desire and *jouissance* as a non-verbal trace of desire meet.

Jouissance may also be close to a way of stuttering identified by Gilles Deleuze in his essay 'He Stuttered' (1994). Stuttering forms the place in which the Symbolic Other meets *jouissance* and, as a result, 'puts language in a state of perpetual disequilibrium' (p.27). Here, he claims that 'when stuttering no longer affects preexisting words, but, rather, itself ushers in the words that it affects' (p.107), it presents us with 'an affective and intensive language (langage)' (ibid). This is embedded and expressed through the Symbolic Other and *jouissance*, as opposed to 'an affectation of the one who speaks' (ibid) rooted in the Imaginary. This also links the stuttering subject to the impersonal dimensions of stuttering and its capacity and potential to express desire in ways that jar and shake up the ego and its Imaginary façade. If we locate the idea of stuttering through the Symbolic we also see that, a lot like speech, desire requires a form of writing or representing to occur. In light of stuttering, a way for the speech act or the process of speaking one's desire to stammer, slip, slide, and run together with the representation (the writing) of that desire. Here, the Imaginary and narcissistic divide between the (hetero- or homosexual) 'I' and "other' fails because these 'coherent (id)entities' cut across one another.

Fink (1995) alludes to this notion of non-speech as *jouissance* and speech as non-*jouissance* through a focus on Lacan's search for 'a signifier of the subject [that] could be found in statements, that is, in what is said' (ibid, p.37). Fink examines Lacan's use of Roman Jakobson's theory of "shifters" (1957) and more specifically the complex ways in which Jakobson formulates how 'personal pronouns such as "I," "you," "he,"' (ibid, p.38) etc. 'cannot be defined' (ibid) as such 'without reference to the messages in which they appear' (ibid). Here, the patterns of speech and the exchange of words are dependent on how '"I" designating the message sender and "you" the message receiver or addressee' (ibid) create a reciprocity or shift between what the message means and how it is interpreted. This 'shifting' meaning also goes

some way to initially define the message sender through the Imaginary-ego in that 'the personal pronoun "I" designates the person who identities his or her self with a specific ideal image' (ibid). For example, in Chapter 6 which examines *tumblr.com* in context, we see, through the selfie, an attempt by the subject/'I' to speak the desires of their Imaginary-ego, yet it is through this attempt at 'speaking' (and thus representing) that desire begins to Symbolically stutter towards *jouissance*.

Craig Dworkin also observes that the dysfluency of stuttering 'has such Symbolic force that we tend to forget the extent to which a range of corporeal opacities are in fact a perfectly normal part of speech production' (2009, p.166). In this way the stutter is an implicit component of speech production and coordination. This is echoed in the ways that *jouissance* stutters; it requires the loss of the other and the contingency of speech production to account for its pleasure as *jouissance* of the Symbolic Other. More specifically, Fink also suggests that 'the French word *ne*, literally "not"' (1995, p.38-9) and 'the [English] word "but"' (ibid, p.39) interrupt the certainty of speech and, in so doing, introduce 'a conflict […] played out […] between a conscious or ego discourse, and another "agency" which takes advantage of the "possibility" offered by English grammar (and French grammar in the case of *ne*) to manifest itself' (ibid, p.39). Here, *'ne'* and *'but'* are allied to the disruptive and repetitive patterns of stuttering *as jouissance*. We see, in much the same way that *'ne'* and *'but'* expose the precarious nature of speech and the enunciating Imaginary subject, that the Symbolically-stuttering subject of *jouissance* introduces 'a certain hesitation, ambiguity, or uncertainty into the utterance in which it appears, as if to suggest that the speaker is denying the very thing he is asserting' (ibid). This tension between the denial and assertion of desire locates the stuttering subject as one that refutes and slips through clear and articulate speech patterns. If we think about this in relation to something like the lack of conversational dialogue in *Triga* Films (and pornography more broadly), we see that it is through the muffled groans, the repetition of profanities, and orgasmic moans that *jouissance* is attempting to find a voice. Yet, this signification of desire is not consistent or coherent; it stutters or, as Fink also suggests, 'points to a sort of "no-saying," a saying – "No"' (ibid) that also reflects how *ne* and "but" gesture towards an always 'ambivalent speaker who says yes and no at the same time' (ibid) through a series of Symbolic-stutters.

All of the instances examined in the contextual chapters seem to stutter, repeat, and retroactivate desire in both systematic and arbitrary ways. Following the line that 'the stutter moves from being merely descriptive to becoming an integral part of the formal structure of a text' (Dworkin, 2009, p.167), we can also see how the precarious and restless desire to transform *jouissance* as non-representational into representation results in the stutter; this may be a body that stutters, a subject, or a signification of the two. As a consequence, the images we perceive as gay, as sexual, as arousing, and allied to *jouissance* are connected to the movement between 'the subject of the signifier and the subject of *jouissance*' (ibid). This, in turn, positions the speaking subject (the body) through 'a kind of stuttering or stammering, an inability to settle on one side of the other' (Gunn and Edbauer Rice, 2009, p.217) or, more problematically, the Other. The repetitive syllables that characterise speech as stuttering do so in relation to an Other *jouissance* that always falters *as* speech. It is this faltering both in terms of speech but also its realisation through subjective modes of identity and identification that is used in the next section to examine the modalities of the Symbolic, stuttering, and *jouissance* in relation to the operations of condensation and displacement and metaphor and metonymy.

2.4 Locating Metaphoric Identities and Metonymic Identifications in terms of Impersonality, Desire, and *Jouissance*

In this part of the chapter, it is the intention to consider how impersonality, desire and *jouissance* are shaped by condensation and displacement in the work of Freud and metaphor and metonymy in Lacan, which have, in turn, helped to frame the analysis of identities of 'homosexual/gay/queer' masculinity we see in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. A useful rhetorical tool, in relation to the central claims of this thesis, aligned to impersonality, desire and *jouissance* lies in the functions of how both condensation and displacement in Freud and metaphor and metonymy in Lacan work in relation to the significance of the conscious and unconscious drives. It is widely recognised that the bedrock of a psychoanalytic unconscious is structured around 'the mechanism Freud lays out in *The Interpretation of Dreams* – condensation and displacement, associated by Lacan here with metaphor and metonymy' (Fink, 2004, p.72). Whilst Lacan himself used the linguistic work of Roman Jakobson to position metaphor and metonym he is also attributed these 'two great axes of language' (Ragland-Sullivan,

1986, p.236) to Freud's theories of condensation and displacement. In The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' (2003 [1953]) Lacan 'laid conceptual groundwork to show that the primary-process work of condensation and displacement […] proceeds analogously to secondary-process metaphor and metonymy' (Ragland-Sullivan, ibid). It is the aim of this section to situate these terms in relation to gay male desire, 'Bodies that Stutter' and use these variations as ways to begin to (psycho)analyse them through *jouissance*.

In Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) in which he addresses the tensions allied to conscious and unconscious drives he famously asserts that 'a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish' (in Wollheim,1971, p.66). In his analysis of this dynamic and more so in his conceptualisation of the 'dream-work' Freud begins by extracting several layers of the 'dream' to position its importance. Firstly he asserts that the dream contains both manifest content as 'that which we experience and remember' (ibid, p.68) as well as 'latent content connected to those 'dream-thoughts' that 'gives the dream its sense or meaning' (ibid). In this way he positions latency and manifestation as intersectional rather than binary forms and this goes some way to forming the exchanges developed later in Lacan's work. More specifically in Freud's paper 'The Unconscious' (1915) and the 'discussion of the difference between 'word-presentations' (*Wortvorstellungen*) and 'thing-presentations' (*Sachvorstellungen*) (Bowie, 1991, p.50) he underlines the contention that when 'words' and 'things' as 'presentations' or more specifically 'word-things' (ibid, p.51) converge in the dream-work they are 'intensified and mobilised by desire' only to be pulled apart again through the processes of the preconscious and conscious which are in some ways external to the 'dream'.

Here we see that Freud employs 'such notions as translation, transcription, inscription and paraphrase in describing movements between one mental 'zone' or 'level' and another' (ibid, p.70). In turn, these inform how the 'fundamental mechanisms of the dream-work – *Verichtung* ('condensation') and *Verschiebung* ('displacement')' (ibid) can be aligned to the linguistic modes of metaphor and metonymy in Lacan and more so questions about the nature of *jouissance* and whether or not its unconscious vectors conceptualised in 'Bodies that Stutter' are subject to the Symbolic structures of grammar, language, and syntax in language. This also adds credence to the Lacanian claim that the relationship between these forms indicate 'that the unconscious is

structured like a language' (Grigg, 2008, p.151) whilst also alerting us to the notion that this unconscious 'has no existence outside of language and no structure other than the one language affords' (Bowie, 1991, p.71). In other words the tensions between conscious and unconscious are expressed through the exchanges between condensation / displacement and metaphor / metonymy 'operating without intermission' (ibid) or within a continuum of 'unconscious mechanisms' (Fink, 2002, p.5) that bear down on a subject's *jouissance* and within the context of this project how their body stutters.

A key component of the Freudian 'dream-work' is the initial idea that 'the dream lacks that which is most characteristic of language: grammar or structure' (Wollheim, 1971, p.69) yet as this is developed and more specifically aligned to the operations of condensation and displacement it becomes more apparent how they form a 'complementary axes for the production and transformation of meaning […] to perceive structural regularities in a domain that could otherwise easily appear as an ineffable mental flux' (Bowie, 1991, p.57). In Freud condensation is formed in relation to the dream and relies upon 'the formation of composite or intermediate figures' (Wollheim, 1971, p.69) which 'prevents there being any neat one-one correspondence between the elements of the manifest content and those of the latent content' (ibid). An overarching feature of condensation is its relation to metaphor and its position as 'a trope of resemblance' (ibid) as well as that which is similar or analogous to something or someone. Yet this metaphorical possibility can only be expressed and 'accounted for in terms of […] semantic relations within language' (Grigg, 2008, p.155) which also involve metonymy. In this way metonymy that involves 'the substitution of (the sign of) the part, cause, container' (ibid) is always allied to metaphor and its impact as a semantic and syntactical counterpart.

Displacement is closely allied to metonymy and in Freud it is often positioned as a form of substitution that in the unconscious has the power to veer condensation off-course and within the dream-work a force that may be associated with 'the disguise that the dream wears' (Wollheim, 1971, p. 70). It also has the potency to 'shift [meaning] away from the central point […] to an inversion of emphasis' (Ricoeur, 2008, p.93) towards one that is formed through unpredictable and enigmatic contiguity. Freud's condensation and displacement are permeated with contradiction, but this is also their conceptual strength. Their significance and adaptation by Lacan

into metaphor and metonym can be synthesised in such a way to 'demystify the unconscious itself' (Bowie, 1991, p.71) whilst also serving to reinforce that 'condensation means compression, [and] displacement means transference of forces' (Ricoeur, 2008, p.93) in both the unconscious and in language. Like metaphor and metonym, condensation and displacement function as 'methods of distortion […] which are imposed on thoughts or wishes as the condition of their entry to consciousness' (Wollheim, 1971 p.164), yet also 'can be regarded as inherent characteristics of unconscious mental activity' (ibid). Just as the joke or the slip of the tongue in Freud are something 'dipped momentarily in the unconscious' (ibid), we also see in Lacan's Imaginary-Symbolic relationship and perhaps more so through *jouissance* a simultaneously formal and erratic form of expression. All of these unconscious expressions could be allied to linguistic and/or bodily 'stutters' that rely upon the tensions between condensation / displacement and metaphor / metonymy to articulate something of their desire. More specifically we could suggest that the productive uncertainties of both Freud's and Lacan's dyads are imbued in 'Bodies that Stutter' and their relationship to the unconscious.

Lacan, by locating sexuality in relation to language and desire, is able to position sexuality (with its connectedness to desire, language and the unconscious) awry, in light of the potency of metonymic movement and transition, as opposed to metaphoric equivalence and necessity. To the extent that desire is not fixed, so sexuality is less about the essence of the subject or ego and more about how the subject's relations to desire are never fixed or wholly static. It is within 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' (2003 [1953]) that Lacan writes that 'man's desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognised by the other' (2003, p.64). Now, whilst this notion of specifically homosexual recognition and intersubjective communication is problematic (i.e. the metonymic axis to which desire is linked can never finalise itself), Lacan implies, nonetheless, that any desire might be my specific desire, but that it ceases to be specific when it connects to the desire of the 'other'. Here, the subject's explicit desire to this other is more to do with a series of Imaginary identifications rather than one coherent identity. For example, in all three of the contextual instances discussed in this thesis, the gay male subject

identifies with a potentially infinite number of sexual representations through the photographic signifier, online and in pornography, which are similar to constructed and condensed as metaphorical images of gay desire.

As Lacan states, 'I shall designate as metonymy, then, the one side (*versant*) of the effective field constituted by the signifier, so that meaning can emerge there' (2003, p.173). For example, in the sexual imagery examined in the later chapters we see this in the ways that an image metonymically seduces the other into taking the part (of an object, a body) for the whole identity of the subject. They exist outside of the image because they are 'Symbolically Other' to all of the men who chose to click on the image, yet they also remain precariously personal to the other who lives with them and possesses them. Whilst capturing the image of himself in the mirror for the other to 'see', the subject also manages to photograph a number of contrasting objects and body parts through a series of misaligned angles that metonymically Other him and embed his *jouissance* in the Symbolic. He remains something ('it') rather than someone ('I') and his personality is silenced through the impersonality of the image he has just captured.

Building on this dialogue between Freud and Lacan queer theorists like Edelman (1994) as the feature of language that imparts 'a powerful tropological imperative that needs to produce a visual emblem […] for the "singular nature" that now defines or identifies a specifically homosexual type of person' (p. 8). In this way metaphor can be formulated in relation to an equation whereby one entity or 'emblem' (e.g. x) is compared or likened to a separate identity (e.g. y) as a tactic to locate 'the arbitrary slippages characteristic of metonymy into units of "meaning" that register as identities or representational presences' (ibid, p.9). In this way metonymy 'can only generate "meaning" in the context of a logocentric tradition that privileges metaphor as the name of the relationship of essence, the paradigmatic relationship that invests language with "meaning"' (ibid, p.8) Yet, it is metonymy that makes clear that the identity is always displaced and formed on the basis of combinations that never terminate (e.g. x could be *a, b, c…*). A metaphor assumes in essential terms that $x = y$, so that one thing is literally another; 'I am like you' therefore 'I am the same as you'. In obstruction to this, a metonym is where a part stands in for the whole and, as a consequence, displaces the thing it is actually referring to ($x = a, b, c…$). In this rhetorical 'turn', the tensions

between metonym and metaphor can be affiliated to notions of impersonality, identification, and the Symbolic Other's alignment to *jouissance*, all of which disrupt the assumption that gay male desire is tangible and reducible to an object, an 'other', or a series of signifiers that represent that desire.

For example, to appear as a selfie / self-representational post on *tumblr.com*, and for the subject to post it with the other's *jouissance* in mind (having momentarily fulfilled his own), this image relies upon the Symbolic impersonality of an Other to position (for the Imaginary other) how desire is assumed and located in language. This Other remains impersonal because 'it' cannot be seen as a metaphoric substance or an identity, rather 'it' remains a metonymic part of a vast discursive language of gay male desire and its relation in language to semen and mirrors. Yet, alongside of this, there is a sense that the metaphoric also challenges the metonymic because there is mutual anticipation and understanding that the other also ejaculates and also feels aroused by the image. However, this veil of intimacy and empathy are only ever encountered through the metonymic Other of an image which is assembled through a chain of signifiers in language that both connect and displace via the discourse of *tumblr.com*. The images rely upon the ways in which these objects and identities converge in relation to an Other that is always outside of the frame and beyond the metaphoric power the other feels when he encounters the image. In this case, selfies do not reflect gay identity through metaphor. Rather, they metonymically displace and stand in the place of an Imaginary other that has been constructed in the Symbolic.

Building on this we can also see that a screenshot from the *Triga* Films homepage (Figure 2.2) demonstrates some of the tensions between metaphoric and metonymic approaches to desire and *jouissance*. In the image, the advertisement for *Screws: Extra Time* (2013) appears along the top of the screen yet, after five seconds, dissolves into another advert for similar features, such as *Builders Piss-Up* (2013) and *Blokes down the Boozer* (2013). In contrast to this, there are two static images, below, which promote *The Cock Inn* (2013) and *Gangland Cock* (2013). Here, the facilitators of gay male *jouissance* are provided through metaphors associated with tropes of straight and working class masculinity which range from organised crime and violence, the pub, manual labour, and the prison. In the image and text for *Screws: Extra Time* (2013),

we read and see that 'These Bad Lads get banged up…right up the arse!' Here, the notion of a prisoner being 'banged up' in jail is metaphorically equated with them also being 'banged up the arse'. The panorama of a young chav behind bars, with two prison guards ('screws') holding him down, and another smoking and tensing his muscular arm as another guard stands beside him, also compares the identity of the guard and the relationality between guard and prisoner to the metaphor of the 'screw' and 'screwing'. Here, the notion of the 'screw' (prison guard) and the transposition of him 'screwing' the prisoner in 'Extra-Time' is condensed down further via the slang term 'screwing', associated with sexual penetration. Yet, we also see that the metaphoric association between the guard and a screw is defined by a metonymic relation. That is one where a fragment (a 'screw') stands in for the discourse of *Screws: Extra Time* and the polysemic signification of sex and *jouissance* between men in prison, the discourse of the prison, and its inter-textual alignment to the cultural production of gay pornography. Here, the metaphors of personality and identity allied to 'screws' and screwing' are transformed by metonymic identification into a series of impersonal identifications that displace what is actually being referring to.

We can also see, on the homepage, that this works in terms of the *The Cock Inn*, where the allusion to the name of a pub is displaced by the signification of a cock entering 'into' somebody, and also in the tagline for *Gangland Cock*, whereby 'Bringin' in 2014 with a proper good bang' both associates and shifts the slang meaning of anal sex as 'banging' to the notion of the bang of a gangster's gun. Furthermore, the typography of the film's title, within the image, has transposed the letter 'L' in 'GANGLAND' with an upright gun and, through the letter 'O' of 'COCK', we get to see an erect cock. Here, it is argued that it is not the metaphoric similarity between the cock and the gun that triggers meaning but rather the metonymic contiguity of both; here the partial object (the cock, the gun, and, at a broader level, even the production itself) stands in for infinite scope of gay male desire and *jouissance.*

When desire works in this way and functions through metonymy and at the level of the Symbolic rather than the Imaginary, it is always something the subject strives for but can never grasp. As a result, desire is 'written' and codified onto objects and

bodies through a series of displaced metonymic shifts which are reliant on the metaphor. Through this we see that 'it is only within the logic of metaphor that metonymy as such can be "identified" and retroactively recognised as having "been" there from the start' (ibid, pp. 8-9). David Halperin (1995) proposes that inherent problems emerge from metaphorically assigning gay/homosexual desire *only* as a binary resistance or subjugate to heterosexuality. He suggests that homosexual identity should be wary of an ontological and metaphoric 'mirror reversal' or 'pure one to one inversion' of heterosexuality, and that a metonymically fuelled 'reversal that takes us in a new direction' (p.59-60) could mean that oppositional forms of identity subversively implode, so that the homosexual is somehow already integral to dominant power rather in direct conflict with it.

This tension is dramatised within and across representations of male sexual desire, where there is an interplay between the metaphorical subject who imagines he 'sees' and the unseen metonymic Other who is unseen, seen askew, or misaligned to the other. Once again, this is clear in Figure 2.2 where the gay porn consumer may well engage with the commodity of *Triga* and the commodification of an identity such as the chav through metaphor. For instance, the metaphoric comparisons and alignments that may be made between hetero- and homosexual desire, in light of the relations between 'dads and lads' or 'bad lads and screws', are pornographically signified so that they appear to equate gay desire through straight male scenarios and signifiers that can be seen. Yet, the key to desire and, more so, *jouissance* lies in how it is blocked and scuppered by metonymy. Here, we do not actually 'see' the full depth and discursive scope of dads and lads or prisoners and guards having sex, of gay and/or straight identity and desire, and the subversion or assimilation of these forms within the young offenders home/prison; rather, we see '3 hours of classic *Triga* action', which works as both a pornographic and metonymic substitute for this much broader aspect of gay and straight *jouissance*.

The metaphors of both straight masculinity and the chav embedded in Figure 2.2 are positioned as the ones that accept, assume, and thus, strive to present and resolve the complexity of gay male desire. Yet, what emerges from reading these images as metonymic, and via Lacan's Symbolic Other, is that there is no personal resolution (of my desire as the 'I') because the impersonal ('it') can never finalise/complete that

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desire. Attempts to think of desire outside of the field of the 'other' are almost impossible to conceive because representations are inhibited by the Symbolic Other. This Other remains the metonymically 'unseen' index of desire in the sexual image; yet, it is through this Symbolic invisibility that the image falls prey to a metaphoric identity in which the subject envisages they can 'see' the Symbolic 'it', as the Imaginary 'I'.

By now, we can see that the strains between condensation and displacement and metaphor and metonymy are delineated by what can be named as an 'Otherly' seduction in sexually explicit imagery. In the next part of this section, this is discussed through interventions which examine how discursive and cultural constructions of both hetero- and homosexuality rely upon an implicitly Symbolic impersonality and metonymy, as opposed to a series of metaphoric associations with a sexual self/personality. This reinforces Lacan's claims that 'the creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualised' (2003, ibid). Rather, the metaphor relies on a form of metonymy that can take 'the place of the other in the signifying chain' (2003, ibid) because of 'its metonymic connexion with the rest of the chain' (2003, ibid). Lacan aligns (sexual) desire and *jouissance* with metonymy whilst also recognising that it is often (mis)recognised and (mis)understood as metaphor. As Edelman also points out, 'sexuality cannot be identified with the metonymic without acknowledging that the very act of identification, through which it is constituted *as* sexuality, is already a positing of its meaning in terms of a metaphoric coherence and necessity' (1994, p.8). Metonymic meaning is produced through the metaphoric essence of the signifier, which only produces meaning in 'reference to a signified imagined as somewhere present to itself' (ibid). This indicates that the signification of desire points us in the direction of something that attempts to present a metaphorical subject as someone that reflects and is analogous to the other. Yet, this signification is impossible in that the metonymic fragments render the metaphor an associative and displaced figure of Symbolic speech or inadequate component of the 'Other' representation. Just as Lacan sees the metaphor as something that metonymically 'flashes between two signifiers' (2003, p.173) we can suggest that this 'flash between' inaugurates something of the representational space of gay desire. In turn, this becomes the space where ancillary and impersonal forms of *jouissance* assemble metonymically to

produce misleadingly metaphoric and 'personal' identities we both construct and sustain as gay.

At this stage it is important to note that this thesis does not seek to dialectically position homosexual or heterosexual desire as metaphorically condensed *or* metonymically displaced, personal *or* impersonal, and also Imaginary *or* Symbolic. Rather it seeks to recognise that it is through the exchanges, dependencies, and ambiguities between these forms that bodies stutter. As the first two sections of this chapter have demonstrated this is because the Imaginary and personalising metaphors of gay identity are riven by metonymic features in the Symbolic that can only be realised through a series of impersonal identifications. Whilst this particular section has outlined the ways in which metaphors and metonymy are important to the formations of the Symbolic Other and Imaginary other, it is in the final section of this chapter that the impersonal nature of desire and *jouissiance* will be considered and conceptualised through the 'bodies that stutter' which have been referred to so far. Through the conceptualisation of 'Bodies that Stutter' in relation to those that 'matter' and 'mutter' the intervention that this thesis is attempting to make is also developed in relation to the concept of 'Symbolic-stuttering'. As well as this and in the next section, there is an inference on how *jouissance* may 'stutter' and signal towards an impersonality of language in the Symbolic that cannot define or foreclose an Imaginary or personal form of coherence and therefore cogent way of categorising or naming gay sexuality, identity, and desire because of this stuttering.

2.5 Positioning Impersonality/Re-Positioning Gay Personality

In *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymological origins of 'impersonal' as an adjective are derived from the late Latin word *impersonalis*, which combines the forms of '*in'* (not, opposite to) and '*personalis'* (personal). In terms of grammar, it can be traced back to 1520, when it is cited as 'if it be a verbe impersonal' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014 [Online] Available from: http://tinyurl.com/nkz7hda [Accessed 31/01/14]). By 1620, 'impersonal' is also defined and 'applied to other parts of speech which have no inflexions' (ibid), as well as 'not pertaining to or connected with any particular person or persons; having no personal reference or connection' (ibid). For

instance, in 1880, The Daily Telegraph reported that 'the jewels and other appointments of the harem are quite impersonal, belonging to the establishment and not to any of their successive wearers' (ibid). Here the ways that the impersonal is 'not possessing or endowed with personality; not existing or manifested as a person' (ibid) begins to demonstrate that there is a Symbolic and, thus, definitional limit in language to the term 'personal'; this being the 'impersonal' adjective as 'an impersonal thing or creature' (ibid).

Impersonality, as a noun, is a variant of impersonal, and refers to the feature described by the adjective. Here, there is a linguistic paradox in that the expression of a subject's impersonality is enabled through a personalising trope of identification with that subject. It is also in the grammatical and semantic tensions between personality and impersonality that the terms themselves are expressed or reverberated as 'words' (Riley, 2005, p.25). That is, as Symbolically impersonal words that can only be understood through their 'truly impersonal quality' (ibid) as words. In so doing, the impersonality of the term itself in the Symbolic can be 'return[ed] to the generality of utterance from whence it came […] to acknowledge its superb and sublime capacity to take me or leave me' (ibid). This directs the countenance of impersonality towards a psychoanalytic expression of an impersonal subject as 'it' rather than 'I'. In so doing, this also locates that subject as a Symbolic rather than an Imaginary concern within psychoanalysis. This occurs because 'it' does not have a clear subject, which alerts us to its Symbolic impersonality both in, and of language. Whereas 'I' seems to address and refer to a subject that is 'personal' and thus configured as Imaginary. However if both 'it' and 'I' are considered through the Symbolic force of language and articulated in ways which are impersonal we begin to see that 'I' also has the capacity position the subject impersonally in language.

Deploying a formal use of the impersonal in language also depersonalises the characteristics of the writer's personality. Here, the seduction of personal pronouns, such as 'I', 'you', and 'our', are replaced by impersonal objects and, in English more specifically, impersonal verbs. Impersonal verbs, which use the impersonal pronoun of 'it' (as in 'it's raining', it's sunny', it's windy'), are also those verbs in English that do not indicate any direct individual actions or personal incidences specific to a personalised grammatical subject. They 'have the subject *it* […and] do not form a sharply defined class' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014 [Online] Available from:

http://tinyurl.com/nkz7hda [Accessed 31/01/14]). Rather, the impersonal verb lacks a coherent subject, and in so doing, alerts us through language to the impersonality of that to which it refers. Here, the subject remains distant and implied rather than subjective and emotive. When a personal pronoun, such as 'I', is displaced by an impersonal pronoun, such as 'it', the subject is once again impersonalised and expressed as something rather than someone. We see the ambiguities in practice when someone ('I') is transposed into something ('it') on a discourse such as the online 'personals' website of *dudesnude.com*. Here the gay male subject may address, refer to, and engage with the other users as 'someone' through the use of personal pronouns ('I think you're hot', 'You are sexy', 'I want to suck your dick'), but these 'I's' are only enabled through the construction of the user as an impersonal 'something' within the broader Symbolic dimensions of the language. This occurs when the subject and the other are more obviously impersonalised with the pronoun of 'it' ('it's a sexy picture', 'it's really turning me on', 'it's so hot'). Whilst 'it' indicates that the personality of the user has the potential to become impersonal, we also see that 'I' relies upon 'it' to personalise the other and desire in language.

The construction of impersonality in language and how it is allied to gay male desire in psychoanalysis can be situated through Freud's paper "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914 [2012]). Here, Freud suggests that the relationship between the processes of personal self-identification and an impersonal identification with the 'same' may be dualistically expressed as homosexual/narcissistic love. This love for the same gender and/or for the self is also mediated through tensions in language. These occur between the Symbolic as an impersonal force and the Imaginary as a personal expression of auto-eroticism with that gender and/or self (Dean, 2001). In turn, this auto-eroticism and the transient satisfaction that the subject feels during a process such as masturbation are experienced as a personal pleasure, both embodied and experienced through the gendered body of that subject. That is, a pleasure experienced as unique, specific, and intensely self-referential to the gay male subject. The notion that a love or desire for the same gender can be also be allied to a love for the subject's own gendered and sexed body (in this case the masculine and the phallus) also positions narcissistic identification as one that occurs through a paradox of self-pleasuring, self-anxiety, and 'otherness'. In the last century and in terms of a personality and/or identity, the homosexual narcissist that Freud is alluding to has also

been epistemologically constructed and ontologically identified as a person who is perverse, deviant, aberrant, or simply 'ill'. Homosexuals have been perceived as tied to, and restricted by, either a psychosexual/psychological stage, a specifically personal and subjectively nuanced narcissistic condition, or series of unresolved Oedipal conflicts (see summaries, for instance, in Lewes 1995; and Dean and Lane 2001a). This personification reflects how much thinking, therapy, and scholarship in the sphere of sexuality is dominated by identity-based models that metaphorically tie homosexuality to a narcissistic personality and thus pathology. Just as the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis is ambiguous, rhetorical (as much as clinical) versions of psychoanalysis have found it difficult to resolve problems and confusions in the theorisation of matters concerning gay male sex, sexuality, gender, and desire in terms of a gay male personality.

Homosexual narcissism and a narcissistic personality are also built around the contradictions riven through narcissistic and anaclitic object-choices (Dean, 2001, p.124). Here the fissures which exist between narcissism and anacliticism are relevant to the ways in which this chapter and the thesis more broadly addresses impersonality, metonymy, and 'Bodies that Stutter' as features of gay desire that through *jouissance* undermine the Imaginary-ego. Dean differentiates between narcissism and anacliticism by stating that whilst 'Anaclisis determines object choice based on parental care […] by contrast narcissistic object-choice entails a person loving (a) what he himself is, (b) what he himself was, (c) what he himself would like to be, or (d) someone who was once part of himself' (ibid). Here, the anaclitic self-discipline of object-choice is positioned in opposition and contrast to narcissistic self-satisfaction. These divisions of the anaclitic and the narcissistic self are supposed to correspond in Freud (1914) to the distinctions between homosexual narcissist and heterosexual anaclist as a personality or identity, yet we see, in every dimension of Lacan, that they begin to implode the moment the distinction is made.

More specifically and in a similar way to the modification of condensation and displacement into metaphor and metonymy, we begin to see this in how Lacan re-works Freud's concept of narcissism in the Imaginary register and the mirror stage. In the specular dimensions of the mirror, the narcissistic ego 'discerns a subjective relation to otherness' through the 'ego's identification with an image outside itself, a reflection' (Dean, 2001, p.126); it is in this reflection that the refracted or shattered

self of the self-absorbed narcissist struggles to identify with and articulate a coherent personality through what is re-presented as an impersonal image of his narcissistic ego. This image becomes a continuous threat to the subject's ego and their understanding of their own personality and the personalisation of the other. This is the foundation to the analyses of 'Bodies that Stutter' in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and the ways in which they have the potential to point the gay ego in the direction of a shattering/stuttering of desire which might be realised beyond the physicality and presence of people.

The potential that a shattered ego and 'Bodies that Stutter' have to undermine the Imaginary-ego is connected to what Bruce Fink identifies as 'that Other kind of talk' (1995, p.3); that is, the stuttering of an ego that is both sustained and disavowed by the Symbolic in language. Here, the 'words that are spoken, blurted out, mumbled, or garbled come from *some other place*, some other agency than the ego' (ibid, p.3-4) and, thus, destabilise the ego. In this thesis it is through this destabilisation of 'words' (and their translation through the signifier) that desire cannot be fully expressed and articulated. These faltering and stuttering significations are the ones that can only be partially expressed via the Symbolic and *jouissance.* They also form the stutters that position the aimless, random, and obtuse slips in language close to how desire is always expressed both metonymically and impersonally. This approach to the impersonality of identity and ego can also be found in the critical reconsiderations of the narcissistic gay man in Edelman's concept of '"narci-schism"' (1994) and Bersani's critical exploration of impersonal narcissism (1986, 1987, 1995, 2008), which push gay masculinity towards practices of narcissism outside of the gay male ego and its Imaginary other.

Edelman's theory of theory of '"narci-schism"' (1994, p.108-110) adds another dimension to what has been developed so far because it suggests that the active (heterosexual) subject differentiates himself from the non-differentiation of the gay narcissist through the process of '"narci-schism"' (ibid, p.110). Edelman understands that there is an Imaginary relation between the narcissistic gay subject and the mirror as constitutive of gay subjectivity, and, in turn, gay desire. Yet, as Edelman argues, this is also the foundation for an alternative notion of gay subjectivity or activism that would involve a self-disciplined depersonalisation of narcissism as "narci-schism", so that 'the luxurious "passivity" derided as "narcissism", that signifies the erotic indulgence of the [gay] self that always threatens to undo the "self"' (1994, p.110) is

either undermined or removed. In this instance, "narci-schism", which is assimilated from the 'erotic mode of the dominant [straight male] subject' (ibid) as self-disciplinary, has the potential to simultaneously reposition the gay male narcissist and his capacity as a 'mirror bound narcissist[s] reviled for a passivity' (ibid, p.108) as a 'narci-schisist'. That is, the gay subject who moves beyond his Imaginary-ego and the metaphors of gay identity towards a way of expressing his subjectivity (and *jouissance*) Symbolically and impersonally. For instance, in the discourse of *Triga* Films, we see how gay masculinity holds the potential for "narci-schism", through its simultaneously ambivalent assimilation and subversion of hyper-straight masculinity. In these productions, the nuances of a narcissistic and Imaginary gay ego jostle with those of the straight anaclist. In this way the films produced by *Triga* shape a representational *'schism'* which allows 'Bodies that Stutter' to sway between straight and gay masculinity. In turn, the tensions between the Symbolic and *jouissance* developed above also allow the subjects and the consumers of the pornographic text to both negate and affirm gay and straight masculinity as 'narci-schisist'. More broadly and in terms of how the argument is being developed this alerts us to the ways in which masculinity is subjugated by an Imaginary narcissism and the ego, but also one that has the potential to use the Symbolic to reposition how desire and *jouissance* *a*re realised and expressed.

In this way, the potential ruptures that the 'narci-schisist' and "narci-schism" instil can also contribute to considerations allied to narcissism and the Imaginary subject of desire seen in Bersani's theory of a 'self-shattering' of the ego and subjectivity (Bersani, 1987, p.222). This shattering can be understood as a conceptualisation of the 'self' that Bersani recognises via Freud's assertions that the narcissistic 'sexualising of the ego is identical to the shattering of the ego' (2008, p.66). In ways which will be developed and embedded in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 we see that this self-shattering can be allied to 'Bodies that Stutter' because both 'bring[s] subjects together only to plunge them into a self-shattering and solipsistic *jouissance* that drives them apart' (ibid, p.96). By aligning a shattering of the ego to a stuttering of the body it is also useful to think about how in his early use of the terms, Bersani used shattering as a device to imagine gay masculinity 'in which […] the self is exuberantly discarded' (1987, p.217-18). Aligning this to how metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* are being positioned in this thesis also emphasises how the personal

nuances of the Imaginary and its narcissism in the mirror stage lead us to claims that it is through the self-shattering of the ego, and through the ego's own struggles with narcissistic and 'narci-schisistic' desire, that something Besrani constitutes as '"impersonal narcissism" begins to make its own insensible sense' (Bersani and Phillips, 2008, p.92). In this setting, impersonal narcissism engages with what Bersani refers to as 'a certain type of failure in Freud's thought' (1986, p.3) and, more specifically, Freud's concept of narcissism. Bersani believes that these failures (in Freud but also in psychoanalysis more generally) can produce 'a process of theoretical collapse' (ibid, p.2-3) that should be embraced '*because of* those errors' (Kollias, 2013, p.992).

Impersonal narcissism also builds upon another of Bersani's earlier concepts of 'homo-ness', in which he suggests a 'redefinition of [gay] sociality so radical that it may appear to require a provisional withdrawal from relationality itself' (1995, p.7). At this point it is possible to position impersonality alongside of a 'homo-ness [that] offers an anti-identitarian identity' (ibid, p.101), in which homosexual desire for the 'same' allies itself to an unconscious 'difference' already riven into the homosexual subject's ego. An impersonality of desire is also close to how homo-ness may well allow for homosexual (and indeed heterosexual) desire to position homo-ness as the 'privileged model of sameness – one that makes manifest not the limits but the inestimable value of relations of sameness, of homo-relations' (ibid, p.6-7). In turn, this also works against the 'narcissism of a securely mapped ego' (ibid, p.125) and the location of a narcissistic homosexual identity. Homo-ness indicates that homosexuality and desire are infused with 'an impersonal sameness ontologically incompatible with analysable egos' (ibid), which both energises and eradicates the possibility of gay male personality, identity, and self-hood. If we once again use *Triga* Films to illustrate this point, we can see that this occurs in terms of how these 'homo-relations' may be articulated.

In the third scene of the production *Dads and Lads Weekender* (2010), a group of five straight young 'lads' are watching straight pornography the night before an important football match. As the narrative of the scene evolves, the lads begin to masturbate in front of one another whilst making reference to how they would fuck the female subjects of the porn film they are watching. Here, the identification with straight lads watching straight porn and the invigoration of *jouissance* is not securely performed

through an anaclitic straight male ego or a narcissistic form of gay identification. Rather, as the scene develops and the 'straight lads' move into a series of sexual encounters with one another, which centre around a straight lad being penetrated by a dildo and sucked off by another lad (Figure 2.3), we see that there is a transition from the personal positions of anaclitic identity and narcissistic desire discussed earlier, towards the nuances of impersonal desire that are more usefully positioned through Edelman's "narci-schism", Bersani's self-shattering and impersonal narcissism, as well as the 'Bodies that Stutter' in this thesis. This occurs because the expression of straight identity and gay desire simultaneously schism, shatter, and stutter when they are realised as *jouissance*. In this instance gay and/or straight desires (as anaclitic, as narcissistic) in the Imaginary are rendered as a series of Symbolic amalgamations which displace and undermine the ego. As a result, *jouissance* is connected to a Symbolic form of relationality that 'require[s] a provisional withdrawal from [both homo and hetero] relationality itself' (ibid, p.7). More so, the scene (and most of the output from *Triga*) disavows discernible gay identities and personalities as anaclitic and/or narcissistic to frame gay desire in terms of a sexual sameness both determined and abstracted by both hetero- and homosexuality yet, ultimately, manifested through series 'of "homo-relations"' (1995, p.7) that find their place in the schism, the shatter, and the stutter of *jouissance*. In this way the impersonal nuances of *jouissance* and the relations of sexual sameness between straight and gay male forms collapse into each other so that 'clearly delimited and coherent identities […] become suspect' (ibid, p.3).

Hector Kollias (2013) suggests that it is within the suspicions between gay and straight masculinities that 'Bersani discovers 'a narcissistic pleasure that sustains human intimacy, that may be the precondition for love of the other' (p.992). This relation between self and other, which Bersani develops out of homo-ness and situates as 'impersonal narcissism', is something that cannot be understood by the self as a narcissistic ego conveyed through personality. Rather, to grasp the impersonality of the ego and, thus, impersonal narcissism, Kollias suggests that narcissism has to be transposed into 'a perfect knowledge of otherness' (ibid). In this instance, that otherness is understood through Bersani's claim that, rather than a love of the self or of persons, the kernel of impersonal narcissism is 'object-love as self-love' (1987, p.53-4). That is, a love or a desire for an impersonal object or identity that can only

be understood outside of 'the formation of the self-congratulatory ego' (ibid, p.34). The couched desire for pornography, the desire for the vast rhetoric of sexual representation on *tumblr.com*, and the desire to engage in 'personal' networks of image and language exchange on *dudesnude*.com go some way towards this because they resituate the gay male narcissist as impersonally narcissistic, and, at their core, they allow and encourage the gay subject to desire impersonally and impersonally desire.

These shifts in the theory and analysis of the narcissistic gay man as a person or a personality are also the result of how we might understand *jouissance* as an attempt to articulate an Imaginary personality through the impersonality of the Symbolic Other. By locating sex and gender outside of the Imaginary-ego or that which is imagined as uniquely individual, Lacan begins to highlight how desire is mediated in terms of the Symbolic (or an impersonal pronoun such as 'it', impersonal tropes, objects, texts etc.) and not on the basis of the subject's personality or the other's 'subjective' identity. As Dean observes, whilst the 'classical, poetic Figure' of the mirror and 'its seductive lure' (2000, p.38) are useful tropes connected to narcissism, it is also vital to remember that mirrors and the Imaginary identifications associated with them are understood by what we *do not* see in them (ibid). In Lacan, the gay male narcissist is prevented from fully seeing himself as a person and thus personalising his own reflection by 'fact of the ambivalence proper to the 'partial drives'' (2003, p.27), which are connected to homosexuality. The Symbolic ensures that the subject can never freely or fully personalise their identity, and, even if they attempt to, it is inevitable that the process of self-capturing or self-representing the identity will always remain incomplete. Lacan understands narcissism through its vacillation of the reflection in the mirror, as well as the dangers of reading a narcissistic identity as subject to 'the stereotyped, ceremonial formalism of the aggressivity that is manifested in them' (ibid). In this thesis, this stereotypical formation of gay identity, which is often presented as gay desire, is reiterated and repeated in the construction of the identity as personal, as opposed to impersonal. It is also examined through the possibilities that *jouissance* can bring to the 'Bodies that Stutter' and the potentiality of a fractured "narci-schism", and shattered Imaginary-ego.

As well as this, it is the Symbolic impersonality of *jouissance* in language and its relation to the Imaginary-ego of the other that yields the power to overcome the

narcissistic ego. So far, the interventions of both Edelman and Bersani have suggested that the gay male subject is capable of new formations of identity by rupturing this narcissistic-ego of the self and the other via impersonality and *jouissance*. At this point, it is also useful to understand the potential of this breach through Dean's notion of the 'impersonality of desire' (2000, p.240). Here, Dean links the psychoanalytic unconscious and its 'loss of mastery or decentring' (ibid) to Guy Hocquenghem's notion of (homosexual) desire as dehumanising (1972 [1993]). Hocquenghem suggests that gay culture (or more specifically the gay movement) 'pushes capitalist decoding to the limit and corresponds to the dissolution of the human; from this point of view, the gay movement undertakes the necessary gay dehumanisation' (1993, p.145).

These dehumanising practices are riven through capitalism's drive to depersonalise gay identity to the extent that it is 'condensed into a cultural signifier', so that 'the [gay-self] as commodity remains securely fetishised' (Hennessey, 2000, p.128) and reduced through repetition and signification to an image of itself. When the gay male body as signifier is signified as a sign of gay personality, then gay identity, itself, is assembled as an impersonal trace of that person and their personality. The broader and instantaneous processes of pornographic and/or self-representation examined in this project add to this when they position desire in terms of a *'de-ego-ization'* (Dean, 2000, p.241), occurring between self and ego through the construction of such representations. By way of this, the 'speculative formation of the ego', as produced through identifications that, as a consequence of their illusoriness, are bound to be frustrating' (ibid, p.39), begin to collapse. Just as Lacan himself maintains that "[T]he unconscious is the unknown subject of the ego" (ibid), it also acts as a space in which the formation of the ego as both a seductive and deceptive personality is shaped through its own impersonality.

The Freudian and Lacanian theories discussed here, and 'queered' by scholars such as Dean, Edelman, and Bersani, demonstrate how the gay subject as a subject of desire is torn between personal and impersonal paradigms in the search of *jouissance*. Accounting for the ways in which narcissism, impersonality, and *jouissance* have been positioned in this chapter, we also see that all three contextual instances are problematic when they are identified as personalising spaces where desires are

represented and expressed impersonally. Personal websites, pornographic media, and social networks all promote and espouse the line that there is such a thing as an identifiable gay man with subjective and common desires. Yet, they also produce and facilitate a cultural space where the men who do not conform or recognise themselves in terms of a gay personality, identity, and/or 'gay object choice' can pursue sexual pleasure impersonally.

This index of impersonal anonymity remediated through earlier gay male sexual practices, such as cruising, is also intrinsic to the clandestine and enigmatic pursuit and signification of desire online. In work that examines cruising and gay sex as impersonal in social spaces, such as bath-houses, saunas, public parks, and tearooms (men's public bathrooms where gay sex occurs), there is clear evidence of this anonymity (Humphreys, 1970; Weinberg and Williams, 1975; Gove, 2000). Humphrey's work is particularly well known for recognising that impersonal sex in tearooms involves sex for 'a *minority* of whom are active in the homosexual subculture' (1970, p.11) as well as 'a large group [...] who have no homosexual identity at all' (ibid). In these often silent and transient spaces, gay and straight identities understood through personality and/or recognisability have the capacity to disintegrate and impersonalise themselves. Weinberg and Williams also identify 'a basic model of the social organisation of impersonal sex' (1975, p.125), which sets out a core of ideas around the characteristics of impersonal sex and how it destabilises sexual desire as personal. They state that;

a pure case of impersonal sex would be sexual activity without any personal involvement whatsoever between sexual partners. In effect none of the aspects of a primary relationship would appear. The inter-change would be easily transferable from one partner to another and narrowly confined in its social depth and breadth; the partner would be a means to an impersonal, purely sexual, objective (ibid)

This earlier rhetoric of impersonal sex that involves 'sex without commitment, obligation or a long-term social relationship' (Weinberg and Williams, ibid), as well as sex that is pursued impersonally 'as an end in itself' (ibid), can be allied to the earlier claims around the schisms, shatters, and stutters that shape how an impersonality of (gay) desire antagonises and undercuts the ego. These impersonal cruising practices

of gay men could also be aligned to how the 'mirroring machismo […] specific to a particular sex/gender dynamic frequently' (ibid) is '(not always) at work when […] gay men cruise one another' (Gove, 2000, p.109). In other words, cruising can also be understood as something that is not 'exotically specific to, or originating from, gay men' (ibid). If something like cruising is considered in this way, and narcissism is repositioned through 'Bodies that Stutter' in light of "narci-schism", homo-ness, self-shattering, and impersonal narcissism, older gay practices, such as cruising, may also be understood as fundamental to the displacement of a gay ego and personality. A lack of personal knowledge of the 'other' through an impersonal sexual encounter, such as cruising, and the identification with an impersonal sexual partner shatters the narcissistic self (as gay, as straight) and undermines the discursive and strategic social practices associated with a gay sexual identity and ego.

Dean suggests that it is online or, more broadly, through the private consumption of pornography and sexual communication that 'everyone's pleasure diminishes' (2009, p.193). Just as 'the privatisation of public space *homogenises* pleasure' (ibid), gay male processes of cruising, notions of the stranger, and paradigms of silence and anonymity also 'narrow[ed] into more-privatised spaces' (ibid) and transformed 'the erotic possibilities latent in an encounter with otherness' (ibid, p.179). In the detailed discussions of *dudesnude.com*, *Triga* Films, and *tumblr.com*, gay men often rely upon the impersonal signification (which can only occur through the impersonality of the signifier itself) of 'straightness' and the ambivalence attached to both the straight 'other' and 'Other' in an attempt to locate and enunciate *jouissance*. We also see, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is no definable narrative or clear way in linguistics and language to locate homosexuality. Rather, the 'self' as both subjective and subordinate is 'dominated by a [Symbolic] law which he does not create but which creates him' (Weeks, 1993, p.27).

Yet, in relation to this, there is also the notion the Symbolic fortifies discourses linked to masculine/feminine and gay/straight which seem to entangle the subject in tropes aligned to the personal nature of sexual role, identity, citizenship, marriage, and civil rights (Bawer, 1993; Adam, 1995; Warner, 1999; Bell and Binnie; 2000, Rimmerman; Wald and Wilcox (eds.), 2000; Rimmerman and Wilcox (eds.), 2007). This is how erroneous versions of gay epistemology and ontology continue to be perpetuated,

developed, and sustained as hetero- (straight) and homo- (gay) sexual bodies and identities. As we will also see in the contextual chapters, whilst the return to psychic and social identifications have the potential to undermine and question the kernel of identity and desire, they also possess the power to continue the project of (sub) cultural/queer identity politics, which suggests sustain '(gay) sexualities which participate in the logic of the commodity and help support neo-liberalisms mystifications' (Hennessey, 2000, p.109). The contexts of online profiles, pornography, blogging, and self-representational photography all connect to this way of expressing 'gay desire', also identified by Hocquenghem, which relies upon capitalism 'in a multiple form' and renders *jouissance* 'only divisible a posteriori, according to how we manipulate it' (1993, p.50). Also, terms that have emerged out of the queer moment, like 'post-gay' (Sinfield, 1998), 'anti-gay' (Simpson, 1999) or 'post-queer' (Ruffolo, 2009; Halley and Parker, 2011), may also offer a way of grouping these relational, differentiated and excluded identities in conventional and coherent ways; ways that function perfectly in capitalist societies of consumption that 'manufacture[s] homosexuals' (Hocquenghem, 1993, p.50) as personalities through impersonal modes of representation.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which 'Bodies that Stutter'do so through forms of *jouissance* and the relationship that this has to the metonymy and impersonality of a Symbolic Other. These are the bodies that have been developed out of Butler's ones that matter and Dean's ones that mutter to suggest that there may be a way to conceive of a body that involves both because it stutters. Whilst the bodies that matter are allied to the Imaginary and the bodies that mutter gravitate towards the Real, the 'Bodies that Stutter' are most productively understood through the Symbolic and the Symbolic Other that allows and encourages them to falter when they are signified through a convergence of explicit sexual imagery, limitless clicks of a mouse, uncertain re-bloggings of imagery, and the hesitant coordination of self-capturing, cropping and posting examined later. These 'Bodies that Stutter' are also reliant on the personality of the subject that is displaced by the impersonality of the signifier. In this way, the Imaginary 'signifier takes the subject's place, standing in for the subject who has now vanished' (Fink, 1995, p.41) in the Symbolic. As a result, we may well suggest that

when desire is constructed as an Imaginary other of desire, there is the potential that the Symbolic Other of *jouissance* has already been eliminated. Yet, when bodies stutter and 'the subject appears only as a pulsation, an occasional impulse or interruption that immediately dies away or is extinguished' (ibid), then there is also the possibility that speech, language, and the operations of the personal/impersonal and the metaphoric/metonymic reenergise *jouissance*'s pleasurable self-destruction through stuttering.

For 'Bodies that Stutter' *to stutter* there needs to be a particular set of tensions in place. These are reliant upon the dynamics between personal and impersonal modes and metaphorically condensed and metonymically displaced tropes in both language and representation. Also in this chapter the example of Narcissism derived from Freud and then resituated in light of Edelman's concept of "narci-schism" and an amalgamation of Bersani's homo-ness, self-shattering and impersonal narcissism prove a useful way to firstly reposition gay male desire, but also to connect to the potential of gay 'Bodies that Stutter' which may well find pleasure and *jouissance* in their own disintegration. These interventions and the implications that are developed in relation to the effects that the schism, shattering, and stuttering have on an Imaginary other, an Imaginary ego, and also a gay identity have also shaped an argument that locates schism, shattering, and stuttering via the Symbolic Other and its capacities to impersonalise and metonymically displace gay desire in various ways.

This chapter has set out to position a theoretical body of work and a conceptual framework in which the key issues of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* can be understood and analysed through the nuances of personal and impersonal desire and metaphoric and metonymic positions in language. This also sets up a framework in which the 'Bodies that Stutter' can be placed and as we shall see analysed in detail. In some ways, the third chapter turns the issues allied to impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* and the Symbolic 'Bodies that Stutter' in on themselves as it moves towards a methodological and ethical interpretation of epistemological and (non)ontological accounts of gay masculinity, impersonality, and desire and *jouissance*. Through this approach, it also goes on to discuss issues of gay subjectivity and identity in ways which may stutter when they are aligned to the Symbolic and *jouissance* in terms of a methodological, ethical, and analytical line of investigation.

Imaginary	Subject-Subject (other)	Personal	Condensation	Metaphoric	Identity
Symbolic	Subject-Other	Impersonal	Displacement	Metonymic	Identification

Figure 2.1 – The Imaginary-Symbolic Scheme

Figure 2.2 – Triga Homepage - http://www.trigafilms.com/

Figure 2.3

Chapter 3: Mapping Modalities of *Jouissance*, 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-Stuttering

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers a methodological approach to the questions of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* discussed in the previous chapter. Here, these issues and their alignment to the concepts of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering will be discussed in relation to the construction of gay male ontological and epistemological meaning. It firstly considers how the ancient philosophical tropes of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* relate to *jouissance.* By doing so, this allows the psychoanalytic argument aligned to why gay male desire 'stutters' when it is Symbolically expressed as *jouissance* to problematise how the philosophical subject of ontological and epistemological discourse is established. These considerations then allow the methodological approach to turn notions of epistemological truth and ontological validity in on themselves. As the chapter oscillates between the psychoanalytical concept of *jouissance* and methodological claims of how such an abstract and difficult term can be subject to methodological justification and pragmatism, the methodology itself may begin to 'methodologically stutter'. This is because its aim is to present a way of resolutely disrupting ontological and epistemological instances of reason, actuality, and logic to facilitate a reading of impersonality and gay masculinity in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 that follow.

In the next sections of this chapter, which link the work of Freud and Descartes to 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering, it is argued that the gay male subject/subjects of visual representation, psychoanalysis, or within the conceptual tropes of philosophical discourse are riven by a paradox that unites them through the contradictory paradigms of metaphor and metonymy, personality and impersonality, identity and identification, sameness and difference. This paradox also informs an argument that explores the tensions of singularity and universality through the exchanges between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other that are always diffident and hesitant when met with questions of a perceptible gay ontological identity and/or gay epistemological truth. At this stage it is useful to position this ontological identity

as something that has been cultivated via 'an ethos of lesbian and gay identity [as] […] a basis for a political ontology and epistemology' (Blasius, 2001, p.62). In this setting gay ontology relies upon forms of 'self-disclosure, a public creation of the self in coming out, and also the identification of ones freedom to do so' (ibid). This alliance of freedom to gay ontology may also be positioned (and undermined) in light of what Sedgwick (1990) identifies an epistemological 'crisis of homo/heterosexual definition [that] has affected our culture through its ineffaceable marking particularly of the categories secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority, […] [etc.]' (p. 11).

At this stage and in dialogue with the binary foundations of ontology and epistemology listed above a more precarious and doubtful ontology and epistemology of gay male identity may be initially situated as that which Sedgwick goes on to identify as a 'nonce taxonomy' (ibid, p.23). This undercuts the notion of gay ontology and epistemology as coherent or consistent in that it asks for ontological and epistemological locations to be shifted and reshaped. A nonce taxonomy, as a predicate for queer identity and queer theory involves 'the making and unmaking and *re*making and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorical imaginings concerning all the kinds it may take to make up the world' (ibid). Through this, ontological identities yield the potential to collapse into an ongoing series of identifications, whilst epistemological systems of knowledge that count as personal are broken down through impersonal markers that are difficult to account for. We see that when alternative ontological and epistemological approaches such as the nonce taxonomy are marked out, the nuances of 'Bodies that Stutter' detailed in Chapter 2 and the modes metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* that inflect and locate them may be explored in more detail.

In addition to this standpoint, this chapter and the thesis as a whole takes an often contradictory application of social scientific, arts and humanities, cultural and media studies, and clinical knowledge regimes to provides a justification of how a methodology that visually examines non-ontological and indefinite epistemes of 'gay' knowledge allied to the body and desire can work. Central to this approach are the 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering, which allow for the ontological dimensions of the gay male subject and, in turn, the epistemological strategies that are used to map out visual representations of subjectivity and desire to be reconsidered. Whilst addressing ethical and methodological concerns allied to an analysis of gay

male desire this project also recognises how ontologically positioned identities facilitate the epistemological possibilities of understanding the gay male-self in relation to the key psychoanalytic paradigms previously discussed in Chapter 2, as well as those that underpin the analytical approach used in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

This allows psychoanalysis and philosophy to align closely but antagonistically. The final sections of the chapter develop these philosophical insights in relation to the detailed exploration of key contextual practices of online 'personals' communication on *dudesnude.com*, pornographic representation in *Triga* Films, and networked self-representation online on *tumblr.com*. Through each, it is argued that the connections and contradictions intrinsic to the visualisation of an Imaginary other and ego are embedded in the epistemological and ontological dimensions of a Symbolic Other. This 'Other' renders both gay and straight masculinity more diverse and difficult to locate than they may have been or still are in alternative historical and cultural contexts. It is suggested that, whilst the signifying practices at work in the representation of gay male identity, desire, and sexuality are bound to metaphor and personality, they also manifest an ambivalent index of metonymic impersonality. In turn, this alerts us to the potential of reconsidering ontological and epistemological positions and methodological approaches to investigating gay (and straight) male desire and sexuality.

3.2 Ontologies of Analysis: Positioning *Thumos, Logos*, *Eros*, and *Jouissance*

This section provides a consideration of the philosophical foundations that underpin the thesis. Just as the work presents a psychoanalytical intervention that explores the mediation and expression of gay male desire through *jouissance*, this chapter identifies the three key areas of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* that connect to and underpin how the subject of gay desire has been constructed. It also discusses the tensions between epistemological and ontological positions of gay sexuality and identity that ensue when psychoanalysis is used as a methodological tool. The epistemological and ontological dimensions of the thesis are imperative because they provide the philosophical basis for the methodological purpose and analytical engagement of the thesis. The three tropes of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* have been formed and discursively interpreted through the epistemology of ancient Greek philosophy and the centrality of meaning in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Assembling them in relation

to *jouissance* offers a way to proceed and potentially to affirm that this project strives towards a process of 'replacing, or reconceiving the ground or the place of the thus preserved activity of philosophising' (Cavell, 1987, p.388), which Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalyses also suggest is possible. More specifically, the consideration of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* will inform the historical and methodological framing of how a psychoanalytic approach to gay male desire and subjectivity is informed by other dimensions of ontology and self-hood in epistemes of philosophical discourse.

In the next three sub-sections, each of the terms is explored through the paradigms of *jouissance* outlined in Chapter 2. It is the aim of this part of the chapter to provide a basis for later methodological considerations allied to the impersonality of desire, the ethics of engaging with sexually explicit imagery, and the potentials of using online, pornographic, and 'personal' contexts that may happen 'unsystematically and serendipitously' (Adams, 2011, p.162). It is anticipated that this approach, along with psychoanalysis, will energise and guide issues of gay male desire both through and beyond the ethnographic, qualitative, and empirical contexts of research in the field.

In the Platonic model, the ontological and epistemological dimensions of reason and desire's association to identity and selfhood are primarily underpinned and dominated by *Thumos*, which, in *Phaedrus* (2009 [c 370 BC]) and, later, in *The Republic* (2008) [c 370 BC]), can be interpreted and positioned as both spiritedness or physical and bodily desire. In relation to *Logos* and *Eros*, this also begins to suggest a triadic way to situate the ontological dimensions of desire that psychoanalysis attempts to excavate and examine through the unconscious. The passions, urges, and drives bound up in the relationship between *Eros* and *Thumos* also attempt to articulate and locate themselves in the *Logos*; in other words, language attempts to hold and locate the conditionality, ambivalence, and impersonality implicit in desire, reason, and subjectivity. Here, philosophy's insistence on the 'priority of grammar [...] over both what we call mind and what we call the world' (Cavell, 1987, p.388) positions *Logos* at its core, and 'if we call grammar the Logos' (ibid) then we may begin to unpack how both philosophy and *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* serve to reiterate the chasm between displacement and condensation, and conscious and unconscious life, whilst acknowledging why the conditional, contradictory, and (im)personal contexts of sex, gender, and identity command further analysis and philosophical thought.

For example, the 'untying' of the tongue in response to a particularly traumatic experience or arousing dream during an individual's psychoanalysis may produce yet more speech and yet more writing. In other words, and in relation to the three contextual instances of visual and online representation in photography, pornography, and networked media, we will see in each how the (gay male) bodily and psychological processes of schism, shattering, and stuttering, instigate an excessive form of displacement and metonymic desire in pursuit of *jouissance*. A desire also underpinned by moments of waiting, anticipating, and lacking. Here, any attempts at an articulation of *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* are dependent on speech and grammar which can be related back to Lacan's assertion that the unconscious is structured like language. At this stage it is also important to note that in this way the Lacanian line of argument undertaken in the thesis follows that 'language is that which makes up the unconscious' (Fink, 1995, p.8) and that 'language, as it operates at an unconscious level, obeys a kind of grammar, that is, a set of rules that governs the transformation and slippage that goes on therein' (ibid, pp.8-9). As in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical methods, the refinements to the potentially interminable meanings of the unconscious and language, desire, and reason, are made within the context of the speech of the clinic. To the degree that sexuality and the attendant problems of personal/social identity have always occupied a central place in the speech of the analysand, so psychoanalysis in its earliest clinics sees Freud listening to speech (*Logos*) that is marked by the complex rhetorics of sex, gender, and identity (*Thumos* and *Eros*). However, these methodological conditions of subjectivity and identity and, more specifically, ontological and epistemological ambiguity and irresolution are not in themselves a discourse to indulge in. Nor are they evidence that both Plato and Aristotle's, or Freud and Lacan's concepts are applicable or relevant to methodological approaches that deem to be queer, innovative, *avant la lettre*, poststructuralist, or postmodern.

3.2.1 *Thumos* and *Jouissance*

To position these interventions, it is useful to illustrate how Barbara Koziak summarises Platonic *Thumos* as 'the first philosophical treatment of spiritedness as the middle part of the human soul between reason and appetite' (1999, p.1069). This chiasmic '*middle-part*' or 'between' state may well be where *jouissance* stutters to be recognised in the Imaginary or where the Symbolic desire to desire is attempted in

language. She also identifies *Thumos* via a Homeric pattern that precedes the *Logos* and *Eros* in Aristotle and Plato, and manages to suggest that, whilst 'sometimes an emotion or a drive appropriately translates *Thumos*, more often *Thumos* is the site, location, the interior mental but quasi-physical part where emotions happen' (ibid, p.1073). Here, we could suggest that *Thumos* is in some ways quasi-corporeal – in other words, it 'matters' (Butler, 1993) – and because it matters it is connected to a body and ego that seem to practise and sustain how desire is rhetorically expressed. This notion of *Thumos* as a compound of both objective and subjective elements, and material and abstract forms, also aligns it to an ontological self who, as Koziak goes on to suggest, consists of 'three important features' (Koziak, p.1080). In summary, these features of *Thumos* could be seen as firstly, 'the place in which most emotions occur'; secondly, *Thumos* is positioned as 'more an organ than a disposition', yet also with 'an indeterminate status, somewhere between flesh and air'; thirdly, it is 'a medium of human motivation, desire and movement' (ibid, p.1080). Here, *Thumos* connects to the ways in which *jouissance* defies signification and meaning because it also exists and remains as 'the part that has effects without signifying' (Fink, 1995, p.119). In turn, this causes 'jouissance effects' (ibid, p.119), which relate to a '"jouissing" substance that gets off and enjoys' (ibid). This intangibility of *jouissance*, alongside the fact that its signification 'exceeds its significatory role' (ibid), allows the subject of *Thumos* and of *jouissance* to 'stutter' between forms of spoken/non-spoken, condensed/displaced, metaphoric/metonymic, and personal/impersonal desires.

Aligning this approach to the formulation of (gay male) subjectivity, reason and desire are also revealed in the id, ego, and super-ego in the Freudian unconscious and the Lacanian registers of the R,S,I. Within this topography of desire, we also see that *Thumos*, like *jouissance*, begins to (mis)guide and navigate the ontological gay male subject as a persistently transitional and impermanent form. It is also important to note here that the use of these triadic formulas (and more specifically the R,S,I) align themselves to the ways in which the contexts of pornography, photography, and online media converge and intersect. In all of these conceptual and visual paradigms, how desire is configured as both a useless and useful construct is always underpinned by Lacan's emphasis on 'the nonsensical nature of the signifier' (Fink, 1995, p.119) and how it 'exceeds its symbolic function' (ibid). In particular, Lacan sees the relationship between this claim balanced precariously between language (speech) and *jouissance*

(non-speech) or, as he also suggests, between law (*droit*) and *jouissance*, or utility and pleasure (Lacan, 1999, p.3).

By situating desire between these locales, Lacan begins to question the claim that desire has no utilitarian or fully practical function or purpose of "Usufruct" – the law. As he states, 'you can enjoy (*jouir de*) your means [your desires] but do not waste them' (1999, ibid). Through the contexts of this thesis, there is an underlying sense that, if desire in the Imaginary is signified egotistically, used too readily, or wasted unnecessarily, it slips into the excesses of *jouissance*, where pleasure overcomes pragmatism and the urgent stutters and aimless surpluses of desire have to be shored up and attributed to some form of Symbolic law, regulatory practice, or signifying purpose. For instance, if heterosexual sex between a man and a woman has the capacity to be both (re)productive and pleasure bound, where does *jouissance* situate itself in this act? Is it that heterosexual desire is concerned with the anaclitic *jouissance* of an Imaginary other; whilst the homosexual desire for non-reproductive pleasure or expenditure (Dyer, 1985, Champagne, 1995) is allied to how the *jouissance* of the Symbolic Other is articulated? Within this thesis the remits of what Lacan sees as "Usufruct" are relevant because they emphasise that the potentiality for perversity and transgression are elided and reconciled through the Symbolic discourses of heterosexuality and reproductive sex. For example, and in this way, we see in a medium such as gay pornography, that counter-reproductive forms of *jouissance* are articulated as 'anti-interpretations, [that function as] attempts to thwart the lack that makes signification possible' (Champagne, 1995, p.38). Whilst *Thumos* and *jouissance* offer frameworks of unconscious subjectivity that attempt to express, repress, and subjugate this lack, they also present us with what Lacan terms 'all sorts of affects that remain enigmatic' (1999, p.139) – that is, ways of signifying and not signifying tropes of desire through the minds' and bodies' relation to language and representation.

In relation to how *jouissance* may be negotiated through subjugation and lack, we can also see in the dialogue of *Phaedrus* that Plato examines the intersections between anger, love, desire, intimacy, and eroticism in relation to the epistemology of 'real' knowledge such as the 'law' and the possibility of how an ontological self may strive to occupy and subjugate these desiring or emotional states *between* mind and body. In *Phaedrus*, the exchanges and dialogues between the three speakers of Socrates,

Phaedrus, and Lysias serve to position both a discursive and rhetorical space where the ontological subject who desires can only articulate some of how that desire is formed or realised. This space is one in which philosophical discourse has attempted and, more specifically *Phaedrus* has, as Bersani and Phillips (2008) suggest, unknotted 'the opposition between active [lover/self] and passive [loved one/Other] by instituting a kind of reciprocal self-recognition in which the intimate opposition between sameness and difference becomes irrelevant as a structuring category of being' (p.86). As a way to position the contextual dimensions of this project and the significance of 'Bodies that Stutter', this problem of self and other also offers a way to decipher and unpack the visual representations, cultural discourses, and self-representations presented in the later chapters. Issues such as splitting (*ichspaltung*), foreclosure (*verwerfung*), disavowal (*verleugung*), negation (*verneinung*), repression (*verdrängung*), and resistance (*widerstand*) (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, pp.499-504) suggest that, through psychoanalysis, subjects talk (of sex, of sexuality, of the body, of the past, of desire, of anxiety) on the basis of the Other or of what is and what is *not* said, of what is and is *not* made manifest.

It can be argued that this process also goes some way towards illustrating how 'Bodies that Stutter' attempt and fail to express their *jouissance.* This stuttering, which forges a gap (*faille*) in how desire is spoken and manifested, also gives an insight into desire itself. More specifically, a desire that, if we imagine it in relation to a representation, is always located in the split (*ichspaltung*), the temporality of the moment, or exchange (*instant*) between the Symbolic Other's desire and the subject's own Imaginary sense of *jouissance*. In this way, the Other may well be the representational image and/or fantasy the subject can never reach, the distant and intangible Other networked, screened, and contained within the pornographic and photographic image online. It is because they cannot reach one another and because the gap in desire is constituted *as* desire that both the subject and the signifier stutter. In this setting, bodies also stutter through hesitant processes of impersonal representation and recognition that strive to alleviate this Symbolic-stuttering and fill the gap with a binary personalisation of Imaginary 'otherness', which also fails.

This engagement with the failure of an Imaginary other and ego through the impersonality of a Symbolic Other can also be linked to Aristotle, where the conception of *Thumos* is aligned to 'claims that in order to be a good citizen a person

must possess both spiritedness and reason' (Koziak, 1999, p.1069). Here, the 'good' human 'being' (that is, the subject with a personality and an ego) is embedded and ensnared by a Symbolic unravelling linked to desire and pleasure. For example, Aristotle's concept of *eudaemonia*, examined in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (2009 [350 BC]), is related to the Platonic issue of *Thumos* aligned to reason and the ontological question of how to live and to fulfil one's life. The features that are connected to the soul, spirit, and, more specifically, masculine identity also connect to the issues associated with ontological experience seen in Aristotle's *De Anima*, translated as *On the Soul* (1987 [350 BC]). This work offers a way to conceptualise the form, essence, or force of human subjectivity. Here, *Thumos* is allied to the ontological paradigms of manliness and masculinity and how these traits can be figuratively and symbolically positioned and realised through desire. Connecting *Thumos* to the ego in psychoanalysis also begins to form the outline of a subject who is both ontologically and epistemologically bound to simultaneous and overlapping processes of rationality and desire in philosophy, for instance, Angela Hobbs observes that 'the resemblances between the *Thumos* and Freud's (un)conscious and ego-ideal are striking' (2006, p.48). This way of connecting Freud (and Lacan's Imaginary-ego) to other dimensions of philosophic inquiry can be seen in the work of Alfred Tauber (2009), who also recognises that Freud's position and the broader location of psychoanalysis in relation to ontology are rooted in a prior moment of philosophical ambiguity. On the one hand, the ontological in Freud is understood through an epistemological tension between positivist tendencies that he understood as empirical. On the other, it is aligned to a rejection of 'philosophy' or, as Tauber suggests, 'more specifically Kantianism, because of the associated transcendental qualities of its epistemology' (2009, p.1).

This sort of approach indicates that it is necessary, in this thesis, to continue to map out and then unpack these conceptual places of the self, to begin to trace the divergent epistemologies of the gay male self in the contextual instances and, more specifically, their ontological relation to the notions of 'Bodies that Stutter', Symbolic-stuttering, and *jouissance*. As the opening discussions have suggested, the field of philosophical work associated with reason and desire is far-reaching and there are both difficulties and potentials that come from connecting elements of philosophical work on reason, desire, and subjectivity to Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalyses. Yet, as a way to navigate through these problems, it seems that Freud remains the 'significant turning

point in an intellectual culture still committed to Descartes' identification of the self with the rational processes of the conscious mind' (Mansfield, 2000, p.26). This transition is also crucial when accounting for the bias of a psychoanalytic method and its usefulness in reading and deconstructing visual images of gay male desire and sexual identity.

3.2.2 *Logos* **and** *Jouissance*

This navigation and negation of gay masculinity and desire may also be positioned in relation to *Logos* and its alignment in psychoanalysis to 'the symbolic order as structured by the signifier of desire' (Fink, 1995, p.113). In philosophical paradigms, *Logos* originates in the ancient Greek work of Heraclitus and is furthered in Aristotle via the development of a theory and practice of a rationalised, ordered, reasoned, and discursive speech act. To articulate ones desire through *Logos* is central to the ways in which the ontological subject is formed and how he is methodologically located in this thesis. This is also relevant to a thesis which develops the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter' using psychoanalysis, in that *Logos* alerts us to the way in which speech helps to (dis)locate desire around and beyond the patient's stated object (of love, of sexual pleasure) and lay bare something of the polymorphous, perverse, and impersonal characteristics of what drives *jouissance*.

In the psychoanalytic session, the desires, drives, and objects are spoken of in the speech of the analysis, adding further to the contingency and ambiguity of the analysand's sense of reason and subjectivity in relation to their *jouissance*. Writing of the (inverted) speech of the clinic, Lacan suggests that reason and communication in any psychoanalysis has to confront the ways in which 'the sender receives his own message back from the receiver in an inverted form' (2003, p.51). This contention is also something that inflects the tensions between the ontological position of the gay male subject and *jouissance* examined in the contextual chapters. The ontology of navigating through representational space (and, more recently, using and displaying the self through online space) involves processes of clicking the mouse, switching on the webcam, searching for the website, timing, waiting, and posing for a photograph to be captured, scrolling and scrubbing through clips, posting, editing and cropping images, and downloading new software to increase viewing speeds. Here, the stuttering subject of *jouissance* relies upon *Logos* to disobey 'the rules and procedures

of conscious rational thinking' (Bersani, 2011 p.12) so that desire in the Symbolic order and *Logos* can only stutter because 'language comes too late; it depends on distinctions and intervals of which the fundamental subject of psychoanalysis, as well as the psychoanalytic subject, are ignorant' (ibid, p.13).

This is both the ontological trap and pleasure of *jouissance* and its exchanges with both *Thumos* and *Logos*, in which 'delay intensifies the pleasure' (ibid). It is also apparent that the gay male subject who is embedded in this practice could be aligned to the subject of psychoanalysis in that he is interminably ensnared and aroused by displaced, disavowed, and expectant desire. Here, it is important to consider that a *Logos* of ontological reason (in this instance, the notion that we can locate, speak of, and represent a thing called gay desire) is also buttressed by the inherent complexities predicated by Symbolic-stuttering and 'Bodies that Stutter' online. More specifically, Symbolic-stuttering destabilises an ontological self who is enabled *by* desire through the epistemological construction *of* that desire online. This begins to form another theoretical layer in which psychoanalytic approaches to subjectivity and identification can also be situated in terms of how the '"jouissing" substance' (Fink, 1995, p.119) of *Thumos* is articulated in the *Logos* of new media and the inter-sectional discourses of pornography, self-representation and gay (im)personality.

Questions around the contingency of ontological reason inform this methodological position, which suggests that locating a 'reasoned' and 'knowing' ontological subject has, on the one hand, been the central concern of *Logos* in ancient and modern philosophy, while, on the other, the subject has also occupied the space of *jouissance* that is inherently 'unreasonable' and 'unknowing' in an attempt to traverse and move beyond rational mappings of ontological reason. Also, questions that consider the relationship that *Logos* and *jouissance* have in terms of the ontology of individual and collective human experience, subjectivity, and otherness have been formed through the notion that a discourse such as 'psychoanalysis is *not* an ontology' (Zupancic, 2012, p.3) defined by reasoned and rationalised speech acts, bodies, and personalities. As a non-ontological trope that rejects coherent identity, *Logos* is also subject to the unconfined potentials of *jouissance*, which has the capacity to steer the subjective individual towards an impersonal space where a transcendental ontology is possible or even permitted.

Yet, the representation of ontology (through signifiers that deem an identity to *'be'* gay or straight) is fundamental to the issue of reason and reasoning in mind (*Psyche*) and/or speech (*Logos*). *Logos* is also referred to by Carl Jung in his re-conceptualisation of *Eros* and *Logos* in *Aspects of the Masculine* (1989). In Jung, the foundation of *Logos* assigns its rational and structured character to the masculine, whilst *Eros* is assigned to the looser intuition of the feminine. Naomi Goldenberg observes that, in Jung's surmising of *Logos* and *Eros*, he was 'forcing a mirror image where there was none' (Goldenberg, 1976, p. 447) via the problems of using the 'verbal handmaidens' (ibid) of both to position an archetypal form of gendered and/or sexual desire. The problems of using *Eros* and *Logos* to position an ontological gay self are evident because masculine and feminine subject positions combine and criss-cross.

To support this, it is important to return to Lacan and note that, when he is discussing 'sex', he is not discussing the processes and structures concerned with the biological and gendered nature of the 'sexed' person. Rather, Lacan is concerned with the ways in which subjects can overlap and sway between sexual identities and orientations to attain *jouissance* via positions he conceptualises through his theory of Sexuation. In this theory, 'Lacan does not divide the sexes as homosexual or heterosexual, but in terms of epistemological places built up as masculine or feminine responses to lack and loss' (Ragland, 2004, p.42). This occupation of an 'epistemological place' happens at the level of gendered and sexed culture and is, thus, an issue of the Symbolic. For Lacan, as for Ragland, the term Sexuation is a way of understanding men and women, and not sexuality per se. Indeed, sexuality, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and gender are terms that Lacan does not really deploy – either in his essays or in the seminars. Lacan himself speaks of these terms both confusingly (to the extent that they are confusing), and complexly (to the extent that sex, sexuality, and gender are terms which are not reducible to easily intelligible discourse). In Lacan's theory of Sexuation, the notion of sexuality and the subject's experience of sexual difference is less to do with the ontological function of a *Logos* that 'speaks' of the materiality, corporeality, and biological functions of the subject, and more concerned with what lies in the meaning of the subject's relation to both the other and the Other through *jouissance*. Lacan is emphasising the ways in which there is nothing essential in human sexual subjectivity by which the sexual subjects can coherently situate themselves as masculine or feminine. Here, the processes and formulation of

male and female are less connected with the signifiers of gender and sex, and, more so, constructed in terms of complexity, through exchanges and functions that distance and obscure any form of direct and unmediated exchange between gendered and sexed subjects (Barnard, 2002, p.10).

By taking this into account, we see that methodological variables allied to a research subject, a respondent, a quantitative test, or even a qualitative sample collapse. This is because the foundation of psychoanalytic research is grounded in an implicit ambiguity. In this case, Barnard observes the ways in which any ontological notions of sex and gender are rarely used in Lacan's own vernacular. Sex is often referred to as 'an Imaginary-Symbolic construct [….] to mark the subject as sexed or else to refer to concrete sexual acts' (ibid) and gender is nothing more than 'a function of identification with idealised norms regarding sex' (ibid). Thus, the notion that anatomical difference is only a contributory factor to the ways in which sex and gender are represented becomes an implicit feature of Lacan's theories around sexual difference. Taking into account the implication that sexual difference is configured via the subject's relation to the other, Lacan designates this territory of 'difference' in terms of the signifier and, more specifically, the phallic signifier. It is worth noting here that the use of 'phallic' has often been misconstrued as something that pertains to distinctly masculine, patriarchal, and dominant tropes. In fact, the critical point, which Lacan was striving to emphasise, was that the phallic and the phallus are fragile and fallible (Fink, 2002, p.38). As Fink observes, 'one cannot take the failure out of the phallus' (ibid, p.39), so that when this notion is plugged into how the signifier and *jouissance* are both theorised and articulated in terms of gay male ontology, something like the provisional and precarious nature of phallic ontology is exposed.

It is also problematic when, prior to psychoanalytic discourse, philosophical interventions concerned with the interchanges and transmutations of reason, desire, speech, and subjectivity navigate towards a longing for ontological satisfaction and fulfilment. Whilst Jungian analysis and psychology claims that it 'use[s] Eros and Logos merely as conceptual aids to de-scribe the fact that woman's consciousness is characterised more by the connective quality of Eros than by the discrimination and cognition associated with Logos' (Jung cited in Goldenberg, 1976, p.445), we also see how Jungian binaries render the sexual subject as one who has particular, and thus

archetypal, personality and identity qualities associated with a specifically ontological position. In contrast, Freudian and Lacanian interventions, related to desire, re-negotiate the oppositional binaries of Logos/Eros and Masculine/Feminine through the collapse of the Imaginary-ego and the proliferation of *jouissance.* This indicates that, in Jung's analytical psychology, when the subjective *Eros* is situated as 'the great binder and loosener' (ibid) in relation to the ordered and structured *Logos*, there is a space opened up for a desiring subject who is placed *between* these two polarities.

Yet, as Zupancic (2012) suggests, the subject positions of male and female share 'contradiction, or antagonism', in fact, this is 'what the two positions have in common' (p.9). Clear lines and categorisations are denied here and it could be claimed that the 'de-sexualisation of ontology (it is no longer being conceived of two "masculine" and "feminine" principles) coincides with the sexual appearing as the real/disruptive point of being' (ibid); in turn, this disruptive point is also the Symbolic space of stuttering, which this thesis is attempting to examine. If *jouissance* is allied to *Thumos* and *Logos*, we begin to see that it is always riven by Symbolic speech and Imaginary signifiers that attempt to facilitate it as *Eros*. Lacan argues there is nothing in the psyche that allows the subject to situate him- or herself as male or female, and, in Freud, maleness and masculinity, and femaleness and femininity are psychical as much as they are physical attributes. For Lacan, there is no ontology and no signifier that marks *jouissance*. However, at the level of the Symbolic, *Logos* seems to allow *jouissance* to be realised. In the next section, this concern is examined through *jouissance's* relation to *Eros* and the ways in which psychoanalytic theory and praxis 'further their analysands' *Eros*' (Fink, 1995, p.146), rather than containing and restricting it in terms of gender, sexuality and personality.

3.2.3 *Eros* and *Jouissance* (and Freud)

In *The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis* (1925), Freud aligns his view of sex and sexuality to Plato's understanding of *Eros* in the *Symposium* (2008 [385-380 BC]). Here, Freud refers to sex and sexual instincts and drives through the myth of *Eros*, as it is articulated by Aristophanes, and recognises that, ultimately, the expression and representation of sex and sexuality bears a 'resemblance to the all-inclusive and all-preserving Eros of Plato's *Symposium'* (1925, p.218) Here Freud's alignment of sex

to instincts and drives is connected to *Eros*, yet not the *Eros* we have come to associate with love in the conventional sense. In terms of how *Eros* is being positioned and how it may connect to issues of *jouissance* and desire in this thesis it is useful to grasp that in Plato, the philosophical concept of *Eros* is positioned as a rhetorical and/or abstract trope, or a way to negotiate and strive towards a reasoned truth through desire or, more importantly, love of the other. Moreover, K.J Dover (1966) identifies how Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* locates the centrality and reciprocity of sexual desire, affection, and preference (p.48-49) through self and other, with allusions to homosexual love, desire, and relationships between men. Judith Butler identifies the *Eros* myth in Plato, using Lacan, and states that 'the primary separation or loss figured in Lacan recalls the loss of wings in Plato, the loss that inaugurates embodied desire. And such a founding separation, a structuring lack, can be found as well in the Aristophanic myth introduced in the Symposium' (Butler, 1995, p.379). This sense of lack or loss is also central to the location of ontological reason, which both defines and subjugates the desiring subject and the subject of desire. Something of this loss also resonates through the process of Symbolic-stuttering and its attempts to grasp and express *jouissance* through the impersonal signifier. Some of the more recent commentators in the field of Freudian and Lacanian criticism and analysis, among them Bersani (1986, 1987, 1995, 2008, 2011) and Dean (2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b), and also Genevieve Morel (2002), Ellie Ragland (2004), and Colette Soler (2002), have underlined the importance attached to the intersectional operation of these philosophical, psychic, linguistic, and social paradigms of sexuality as impersonality and *jouissance,* and the shift towards gender and sexuality defined through loss of an identity and departure from a coherent sense of self and other.

Whilst Freud does not abandon an interest in the biological and the anatomical, he convincingly evidences the ways sex and sexuality inform/are informed by and inflect/are inflected by speech, dialogue, the ordinary activities of urban life, and artistic and cultural representation. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), alongside *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and, more so, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), demonstrate just how far the process of being and existing through the mundane and the everyday were both sexualised and sensualised. *Dudesnude.com*, *Triga* Films and *tumblr.com* are also examples of how ordinary social realities and extraordinary sexual fantasies intersect and potentially reposition established

meanings and interpretations of seemingly 'ordinary' self-representations and significations of sexual identity. More specially, it is worth noting that I selected these specific websites for investigation because they each deal with indexes of visual desire that conflate everyday identity with sexual identity, personal life, and pornographic performance, and ordinary and extraordinary tensions related to the precarious *jouissance* of self and other. As well as this they a connected to one another through simultaneously Symbolic and practical inter-sections allied to networked and digital media which fosters an emotive yet ephemeral dialogue of desire specific to its representational contingency as sexually explicit.

The 'sexualisation' of everyday life, write Brown and Richards (1999), is the 'most famous result of the psychoanalytic use of associative links to explore the underlying matrix of experience' (p. 239). Freud's work with his patients also exposes how the precarious ontology of desire operates at a linguistic (in Lacan, this is allied to the Symbolic) as much as a bodily (and also Imaginary) level. Moreover, Freud's work serves to complicate, if not displace, any model of the intensity of human ontology and sexuality structured around the ideology of hetero- and homosexual desire and representation. In *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Freud considers how the movements of desire (understood now in relation to erotogenic zones) are connected to fantasies beyond the realm of the genital. These may both supplement and exceed a theory of sexuality whose sole focus is centred on the range of coital relations between men and women or, more specifically, men and men. This shift towards the erotogenic also fits with the nuances of a sexual subject that can only experience erotogenic stimulation *as* a series of erotogenic stutters that rely on a metonymic impersonality of desire to experience *jouissance*.

How these ontological positions on reason, subjectivity, and desire pre-ordain and connect to psychoanalysis is most explicit in the 'Three Essays'. This is Freud's most important and possibly most original contribution to the understanding of the psyche in relation to the study and theorisation of human sexualities. Together with *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), 'Three Essays' has been viewed as one of the most far-reaching, innovative, and contentious of Freud's early writings. However, the text, which is nuanced with philosophical observations on reason, subjectivity, and desire, was written on the threefold-basis of, and in relation to, (a) Freud's own meta-psychological and theoretical speculations; (b) existing sexological research; and (c)

Freud's work with patients. This triangulated methodological approach toward the study of human sexuality is a tendency that runs through psychoanalytic praxis and also allows Freud to connect to, and move away from, the continuous problem of an ontological (sexual) identity. For example, illness (usually considered in relation to psycho-somatic disorder, obsession, hysteria, and neurosis), sex, sexuality, and human relations were viewed as radical, ground-breaking, and if not precarious then certainly controversial ways to conceive of an ontological subject.

At this point, what is interesting for the broader scope of the thesis is Freud's attention to masculinity. It is described as a characteristic, something that is associated with male bodies; but note how the work of Lacan, discussed earlier, and the associated concepts of psychoanalysis allied to desire and particularly *jouissance* can affirm that masculinity is not the defining substance which makes one a man. Freud is forced to address the degree to which masculinity and femininity are characteristics that are available to male and female bodies, yet he argues about a 'compromise' (Freud, 1905, p.56), in that 'there is, as it were, a compromise between an impulse that seeks for a man and one that seeks for a woman, while it remains a paramount condition that the object's body (i.e. its *genitals*) shall be *masculine'* (ibid). Here, Freud is surely imprecise or incorrect because he metaphorically positions the genitals (masculine) of the object to the body. If we think about this metonymically through the three terms 'masculine', 'man', and 'male', we see that they are *not* terms which are inter-changeable and they are not synonyms. For instance, the term masculinity 'extend[s] far beyond the male body' (Halberstam, 1998, p.13) to position masculinity as 'multiple, and that "far from being about men, the idea of masculinity engages, inflects and shapes everyone"' (Berger, Wallis, and Watson p.7, cited in ibid, p.14). To the degree that masculine and feminine, male and female, can pre-modify or post-modify the other term (as in 'female masculinity' or 'male femininity'), then *male* or *man*'s, as opposed to *masculine* genitals would be a far more accurate and, in many ways, offer a 'Lacanian' classification of the point Freud is trying to make.

The footnotes added to a section of the 'Three Essays' in 1910, 1915 and 1920 (pp.56-59) see Freud both qualify and modify his terms; 'man' is no longer used to denote 'masculine' in the same way as 1905 (p.56); and homosexuals are not to be understood as separate from 'the rest of mankind' (pp.56-7). Radically and controversially, Freud actually suggests that the unconscious is the location of the metonymic impersonality

discussed in this thesis and it knows no final sexual position or ontological reason. 'All human beings', contends Freud, 'are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious' (p.56). With Sandor Ferenczi, Freud insists that homosexuality and inversion concern two different theoretical trajectories; and he refuses to homogenise or categorise as rigidly as some of his contemporaries what homosexuality might mean. Radically, he also distinguishes between homoeroticism and homosexuality, something of an advance, for the time, on theories of sexuality, identity, and desire.

Freud also conceives that the social construction of homosexual desire is something that is understood as metaphoric, that is equivalent or comparative to something or someone. In Freud's discussion, this concerns morality and perversion. Both of these terms have become synonymous with the discourse of homosexuality as a starting point for empirical and identity-led methodologies that rely upon the gay male subject having to 'be' interpreted, instated, and understood through the powerful trope of the metaphor. Yet note, too, how the notion of a metaphorically condensed, essential, or congenital sexual instinct also marks, for Freud, a new point of departure, problematised by the suggestion that 'the sexual instinct itself must be something put together from various factors, and that in the perversions it falls apart … into its components' (p.156). Here the powerful and disruptive nature of metonymic identification *as* perversion abates the metaphoric identity of homosexuality *as* perverse. Moving away from a metaphoric focus on the body and, specifically, the genitals – and thus complicating how we might figure the sexual relation away from an over-reliance on gender or binary thinking – Freud insists that the metonymic excitation, pleasure, and displaced satisfaction relate to the 'erotogenic zones' and, thus, to 'any part of the skin and…*any* organ. […], the sexual instinct is *not unified* [it] is at first without an object, that is, *auto-erotic'* (ibid, p.157; emphasis original).

In his work on sexuality, Freud objectifies various arguments in a language that distances itself from his own psychoanalytic terms and direction. This is a writer who is careful but also uncertain. As a way to position what is salient about images of contemporary gay masculinity, sexuality, and desire in relation to Freud's work, it is necessary to consider the level of contradiction and complication – if not deconstruction – of the specificity of identity and sexual ontology in the images. In all of the contextual instances discussed later, we see that gay and straight male

paradigms continually intersect and overlap and, at some points, even seem to obliterate and shatter any claims of 'gay' or 'straight' sexual recognition, identity, and personality. Alongside his commitment to something that is both complexly universal and subject to possibility and limitation, Freud's argument is also one that does not posit (homo)sexuality as a fixed category of methodological enquiry, but something that, akin to drives and desires, is never consistent and stabilised. Just as Freud is singularly unable to define quite what sex and sexuality are, it is within this implicit ambivalence that sex and sexuality and thus sexual desire must be positioned and considered as contingent, ambiguous, and even incoherent.

More broadly, psychoanalysis lays bare desire through the ambivalence and disruptive influence of sexual pleasure and *jouissance*, so that idealistic notions of wisdom, reason, truth and enlightenment through *Eros* are disrupted and dispersed by the desire for sexual satisfaction and gratification. If *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros* offer a way to position *jouissance*, they do so in relation to speech/language and their relation to desire and subjectivity. These crucial features are also part of how the sexual self in psychoanalysis opens up a space in which philosophical interventions that pre-date Freudian thought are useful in positioning how the ontological dimensions of contemporary gay male desire owes some degree of epistemological and ontological specificity to the philosophical subject of both ancient and enlightenment philosophy.

The key methodological approach that informs the how and why of using Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis to read gay male representation and self-representation may come from a re-consolidation of the ontological fault-lines, which, at their most extreme, eschew in a 'non-ontology' of psychoanalytic theory and the psychoanalytic subject. As Zupancic (2012) observes, the tensions between Freudian and Lacanian approaches to ontology reveal 'the point of ontological inconsistency, which as such, is irreducible' to the essentialist politics of a body or an identity (p.3). It is also psychoanalysis that enables a non-ontological reading of desire 'as the out-of-beingness of being' (ibid, p.8). More so, this is what 'psychoanalysis brings out and insists upon' rather than 'falling in the trap of providing grounds for ontological consistency' (ibid). This drive towards alternatives to ontology and/or non-ontological positions are both methodologically and theoretically problematised when psychoanalysis through Freud and Lacan is aligned to the work of Descartes. In the next section, the modes of philosophic enquiry understood as Cartesian, which are

related to questions of reason and desire, are examined. This also allows for an opportunity to discuss how Cartesian approaches to the inter-sectionality of mind and body intersect with one another to proliferate the 'Bodies that Stutter' of this project which are formed through the operations of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* in psychoanalysis.

3.3 'I' think therefore 'I am n-n-n-not'

The philosophical importance of how ontological reason is both inflected and abstracted by epistemology is implicit to forming and situating the ontological position and argument within the thesis. Situating reason in relation to desire and the philosophy of desire is also foundational in attempting to position the ontological and epistemological traps, ambiguities, and paradoxes inherent in taking on a psychoanalytic critique of how gay male desire is visually represented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Psychoanalysis and the intricate tensions between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other dramatise how and why reason and sexuality are subject to complex exchanges of self-reflexive, self-effacing, self-disciplinary, and also self-analysing forms of identification and desire. The ontological and/or psychological problem that the positions of the analyst and the analysand are transferable and, thus, intersectional also goes towards identifying how there is a rupture or gap which overarches the ontology of the gay male sexual subject not only in psychoanalysis but more importantly through the contextual examples of 'Bodies that Stutter' examined in the next three chapters.

To help understand and to situate the arcane and disparate range of ontological positions available to both Freud and Lacan, and relate them to the 'Bodies that Stutter' in the thesis, it may be useful to think of psychoanalysis as in some way "replacing" (Cavell, 1987, p.388) philosophy as a way to position and interpret subjectivity and sexuality. In turn, this also seems to reflect how the unconscious and those operations of impersonality, displacement, and metonymy in psychoanalysis can be used as a backdrop to position how *jouissance* is tacitly scupperedand exasperated. Using the (dis)connections between psychoanalysis and its available relation to rationalism, empiricism, the enlightenment, idealism/transcendental idealism, and modernism is a way to unwrap and unpack how philosophical discourse can (and cannot) be used to examine how 'the fate to philosophise to undo philosophising are located as radical,

twin features of the human' (p.389). As this thesis continues to evolve it also allows for the potential to unpack questions of how an ontological (sexual) subject is conceptualised using philosophy but, more importantly, displaced through the ethics of a non-ontological psychoanalysis.

The metaphysical and teleological tensions between the rhetoric of reason and desire in philosophy can be located in Western discourse and cultural practice through Descartes' claim of 'Cogito Ergo Sum' or 'I think, therefore I am' (1998 [1637]). In Descartes, the ontological self, who 'thinks', 'reasons', and 'desires', is always influenced by self-doubt when that self is thought to be a 'thinking-thing'. At the root of the *'Cogito'* formula is the issue of selfhood and self-definition via the Cartesian notion that to think is to offer a degree of certainty and proof *to* and *of* the self in relation to others and the representations of those others. In this way, and following a Cartesian line of enquiry that privileges 'the conscious processes of thought over every other impulse or sensation' (Mansfield, 2000, p.15), the subject is positioned *as* a subject through the fact that he has a level of self-awareness. In Descartes, consciousness is aligned to reason and its power to decipher, choose, control, know, and judge; 'I think, therefore I am' is bound to consciously realising and reasoning with your own sense of selfhood and the world around you.

Psychoanalysis, and its connections to Symbolic structures and topographies of *jouissance*, yields the power to destabilise Descartes reason and reasoning so that they slip into spheres of the unfathomable, vacillating, uncontrollable, unknowing, and mistaken. Just as Freud suggests in both his structural differentiations between conscious and unconscious, condensation and displacement, and in his topography of id, ego, and superego, it is the unreasonable nature of the unconscious that maps the consciousness. At this point, an inverted view of subjectivity, reason, and desire, which embeds itself in a specifically Freudian approach, also points to the potentiality of considering that 'certain forms of human thought and behaviour' (Deigh, 2001, p.1248). and, in this case, desire and reason can be 'explained by unconscious emotions' (ibid). As a consequence of this rejection of 'conscious states of mind as the model for all unconscious states' (ibid), both an epistemological and ontological 'break […] with the Cartesian conception' (ibid) allows the unconscious to subvert and topple the dependability of conscious reason and self-hood, self-reason, and self-

control. This 'toppling' of reason also helps to locate the 'Bodies that Stutter' of this thesis as well as frame to what extent impersonality and *jouissance* simultaneously allow and impede how subjects articulate and realise those desires.

In his attempt to critique the essential nature of the Cartesian 'I' and the ontology of 'being', Lacan resituates existence and language so that the speech act or act of speaking (*dire*) "ex-sists" (*ex-sister au dit*) as opposed to "exists" (1999, pp. 21-22). In the English translation, the hyphenation and additional 's' implies that this existing is partial and that, whilst something has been interjected into the word, this has also caused a form of displacement or Symbolic-stuttering to occur. In his dense footnote to Lacan's French expression, Fink identifies that the word does not have a root meaning and that Lacan has appropriated from incongruent sources, such as Greek and German translations, and also Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which questioned the clear meaning of the word itself. Fink interprets Heidegger's use of the word to mean *"standing outside"* or *"stepping outside of oneself"* (Lacan, 1999, p.22), and suggests that Lacan uses it to situate existence as something aside or apart; rather than being intimate and close to the subject, it is impersonally distanced or *"extimate"* (ibid). Fink also identifies that, in Greek, it relates to 'the removal or displacement of something' (ibid). This removal may also be applied to 'states of mind we would now call "ecstatic"' (ibid). Here, the act of taking something away or to stand outside of the body may be allied to the precarious ontological processes of *jouissance*, stuttering, and "ex-sisting" which allow the subject to learn more of desire because it cannot speak or enunciate itself as an 'I'. In a thesis which uses psychoanalytic approaches to desire, any attempts to use Descartes' *Cogito* to locate and position homosexuality as an ontological fact of existing or existence are almost impossible from the outset. Lacan's "Ex-sisting" guarantees that any individual consciously stating that, 'I am gay', does so through hesitancy and uncertainty. Here, self-definition and self-hood, as ways to contain, possess, and secure a 'gay' identity, are also condemned to failure. In this way, if only epistemological traces of reason and of desire are left through the unconscious and 'to think is to not know', then both the (homo)sexual and the psychoanalytic subject invert and allow the Cartesian 'I' to "ex-sist" and stutter (as in "I-I-I-I…, a-a-a-am, n-n-n-not").

More recently, Bersani (2011) has appropriated Foucault's term, 'The Cartesian Moment', as the historical marker that prioritises 'knowledge to the detriment of what Foucault designates as "care of the self" or spirituality' (p.2). This suggests that, in Descartes, the interrelatedness of thinking, reflecting, and being strives towards an ontological and epistemological moment 'of willed identity of knowledge and being' (ibid, p.8). More so, in an examination of the correlation between Descartes, Proust, and Freud, Bersani goes on to suggest that the aim of all three is not only knowledge but, more pertinently, 'introspection itself, both in its procedures and as an adventure' (ibid). Through the convergence of psychoanalysis, language, and philosophy, the active pursuit, processes, and procedures of subjective solitude, isolation, and seclusion are realised. Ruses of the 'I', the mind, the ego, and the unconscious transect and overlap with one another so that, in Bersani's troika, the paradoxical gaps between these forms are where an 'absolutely unique individuality is, at the same time, the key to a universal being: the thinking thing that is all men in Descartes, the shared singularity that art reveals and that is hidden behind particular singularities in Proust, and the universal mental functions obscured by the subterfuges of everyday conscious life in Freud' (ibid). In this thesis' consideration and application of Lacan, we see that this 'space' may also be realised through 'Bodies that Stutter' which displace any assurance in thinking and knowing the self as an ontology, identity, and ego. In the next section of this chapter, this stuttering is repositioned through a discussion of the ethical and methodological approaches (and challenges) allied to the three key contextual and analytical chapters of the thesis. This section explores some of the ethical contentions that have to be methodologically considered in light of using Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine online, publicly available, yet, often anonymously posted visual images which may be considered sexually explicit and/or pornographic. It also goes some way to justifying the decision in chapters 4 and 6 to excise the inclusion of many of the personal profiles and the selfies I had examined in my visual research and to construct and present the analysis of gay male desire as 'psychoanalytically textual'. In this way the analytical methods I have employed in the thesis are allied to and complimented by the key concepts I am using to scrutinise gay male desire and *jouissance*. It could also be claimed that the analytical chapters as empirical evidence of 'Bodies that Stutter' also stutter, hesitate, displace, and impersonalise the Imaginary and/or metaphoric dimensions of visual representation

through the Symbolic thrust of metonymy and its power to underpin and undermine desire.

3.4 Locating an ethics and a method to investigate Impersonality, Desire, and *Jouissance*

Whilst the last sections have demonstrated how both philosophical and Freudian approaches form a useful methodological basis to this thesis, it is the predominance of Lacanian theory to interrogate aspects of the contemporary gay male subject that implies there is 'an on-going construction of a reflective/constructive/disruptive layer that feeds while growing alongside the life it seeks to portray' (Brown and Heggs, 2010, p.295). This also reflects something of the challenges allied to engaging with empirical contexts in the analysis chapters that deal with online and networked representations of gay desire and identity that 'inevitably involve[s] the renegotiation of the boundaries between personal and public' (Chambers, 2013, p.62) as well as recognising that the significance of these networked publics utilise networks to share information with imagined others and to display their bodies in ways which demand that they be looked at and seen. From the outset and by using these objective approaches alongside of philosophical concepts and psychoanalysis as methodological tools to participate in reflecting, (de)constructing, and disrupting the gay sexual self proves challenging in that it raises questions allied to how to proceed as a theoretical researcher. Using theory as the foundation meant that there was no point in the thesis where I felt the need to embark on a method to analyse this networked and representational 'self' through qualitatively defined samples or ethnographic pieces of data using specific respondents and/or demographically selected research subjects. Rather, and as the next part of this section considers the key was in locating an appropriate ethical and methodological bedrock whilst allowing the conceptual tools and vocabulary of psychoanalysis and philosophical enquiry to position how *jouissance* and its alliance to 'Bodies that Stutter' informed and permeated the analytical elements.

Recent work in the field of psychoanalysis, such as Justin Clemens *Psychoanalysis is an Antiphilosophy* (2013), positions its analytical power as 'an impossible practice […] to catch something that would otherwise be indiscernible' (p.42). Through this

type of assertion the constraints of methodological and ethical approaches that accept or attempt to capture tropes of identity, desire, and representation as categorical and identifiable serve to limit the potentials of psychoanalysis as an anti-methodology 'dedicated to creating ever-renovated means of […] a subject's relation to their own speech, and the reinventing of new ways to enable the subject to transform that relationship through speech itself' (ibid, p.43). Just as a methodological orthodoxy allied to psychoanalysis remains both impossible and injurious, we also see that working within the field of visual analysis something like an ethics of Lacanian psychoanalysis is just as problematic to pinpoint and articulate. Fink (1995) asserts this problem and emphasises that psychoanalysis 'is not pragmatic in its [ethical] aims' (p.146), in that it defies and subverts 'compliance with social, economic, and political norms and realities' (ibid). In a thesis that undertakes a psychoanalytic study of gay masculinity and representations of gay male desire, a conceptually inflected '(un)ethical ethics' and '(non)methodological method' allied to a 'praxis of jouissance' (ibid) has to be assembled alongside of far more regulated and practical issues of ethics and methods per se. In turn, this also repositions and attempts to address the dyadic relationship between the 'adherence to' and 'transgression of' accepted ethical and methodological frameworks related to how sexual desires are represented and read using psychoanalysis. For instance the politics of using and analysing specific images such as the selfie and the personals profile had to acknowledge the fact that 'once in the public realm, participants and researchers have no control over how images are read and will struggle to prevent them being used for different purposes by others'(Clark, 2012, p.23).

In other words the informed consent and willing contribution / permission to the use of a specific users profile and/or selfie created a set of 'visual and ethical anxieties' (ibid, p.18) which in the end only the concepts allied to psychoanalysis could address and arguably overcome. At this stage it is important to underline that within this project the only visual material that was visually included was allied to officially copyrighted material (for example the browsing pages on *dudesnude.com*, the images from *Triga* films) and that the anonymity and/or confidentiality of gay men using personal sites and/or posting selfies was guaranteed. This was possible because the exploration of the empirical contexts was undertaken by using a psychoanalytic lexicon *as* a methodology which allowed for the 'Bodies that Stutter' to be conceptualised rather

than ethnographically and qualitatively scrutinised. In this way, the research uses the conceptual vitality of psychoanalysis and the rhetoric of 'representational practices' to examine gay male desire in online personals, pornography and selfies. In turn, this meant that rather than having to pursue an extended process of informed consent connected to the regulation and legality of the ownership and display of sexually explicit images online through contextual codes of online practice (ibid, p.22-30) no formal consent had to be sought and a conceptual analysis in lieu of specific images formed the crux of the analytical argument.

For instance, it is through a concept such as *jouissance* and the potentials in re-conceptualising how ethical and methodological positions are realised and carried forward that the ways in which 'jouissance is anything but practical' (Fink, 1995, p.146) can be used prolifically. It is because 'the techniques that psychoanalysts must use to deal with jouissance wreak havoc' (ibid) that psychoanalysis is able continually to re-evaluate and re-position the discursive rubric of methodological and ethical approaches to sexual desire and signification. Bersani (2011) sums this up in the stately claim that 'the heroically impossible project of psychoanalysis is to theorise an untheorisable psyche' (p.13), which, through both Freud and Lacan, allows 'unreadable pressures to infiltrate the readable, thus creating a type of readability at odds with how we have been taught to read' (ibid). Here, the impossibility of psychoanalysis as a methodological or ethical doxa is expressed in how it 'performs the blockages, the mergings, the incoherence inherent in the discipline Freud invented' (ibid). It is also through these impasses in language, and through the Symbolic-stuttering that psychoanalysis makes possible, that some of the problems allied to working with sexually explicit and graphic images are raised. Rather than extinguishing the possibilities of an effective visual analysis the tensions between the non-methodological and the methodological as well as the 'unethical' issue of ethics navigate the research in a new direction.

John Champagne's (1995) examination of gay ethics, marginality, and pornography, and his formation of an ethical/methodological identity as a *'bricoleur'* side-steps Lacanian and Freudian approaches by assimilating Derrida, but still goes some way towards opening 'up the possibility of thinking differently about pornography' (p.36). It does so because Champagne 'uses 'the means at hand' – that is 'the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been

especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them' (p.36). As a gay man who has worked on this thesis between the ages of 27 and 35, these means at hand constitute forms of media I have used and incorporated into my own daily life. They also reflect my position as a Symbolic subject of a neo-liberal and capitalist economy in which the commodification of an Imaginary gay ego/identity has been both consolidated and complicated through pornography, online media, and online systems of personal and social communication. During the course of this research project, the contextual instances as 'representational practices' have evolved and emerged as the 'means at hand', whilst also impelling both my own subjectivity and reflexivity towards the constitutive nature and contingency of sexually explicit / gay male signification. Since this research project began the visual barrage of online sexual imagery that is self-submitted and self-captured on social networks of exchange and commodity, such as *dudesnude.com* and *tumblr.com*, have realigned how methodological and ethical conventions allied to pornographic material are considered. In other words many online researchers working with 'visual images of unknowing individuals in public' (Clark, 2012, p.20) find that they are 'reliant on consent being obtained by participants acting as ethical mediators, as well as data–producers' (ibid) and this this in itself proliferates questions allied to 'the recognition of agency in our own [research-led] 'mediators', but also the need to understand mediation and immediacy in the everyday life of the people we study' (Ardevol, 2012, p.87).

Whilst this is something that researchers as visual ethnographers and/or social-scientists may face I have already discussed that this is something that psychoanalysis as a methodological tool has allowed me to overcome. Some broader concerns about methodological approaches such as these, and the ethics of how they are associated with pornographic representation, also raise questions that need to be addressed. Susanna Paasonen (2011) suggests that, within the academic study of sexually explicit imagery and pornography, 'by choosing particular examples to study, it is possible to justify one's premises concerning the meanings, forms, and implications of things pornographic' (p, 4). More specifically, and definitely in chapter 5 where officially copyrighted visual images from *Triga* films are used to investigate gay pornography that often uses straight male tropes as a vehicle for *jouissance*, the ethical dimensions of this project attempts to 'focus on the freely and openly accessible' (ibid, p.6)

nuances of pornographic representation and the potential of 'seeing' pornography as an integral part of gay (and straight) male ethics, through both Imaginary and Symbolic forms. For instance, and in addition to the politics of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality allied to sexually explicit imagery that we might see the sexual subject of the selfie through, we can also position them as one that has the potential to reposition an Imaginary ethics of pornographic representation and, more so, personal representation online, into [a Symbolic] ethics that 'implies [the] consideration of others' feelings and wishes as well as one's own' (Albury, 2003, p.208) impersonally. Just as the personalities and selves of the personals profile, pornographic film, and selfies may want to be seen beyond the unethical 'notions of risk and filth' (Paasonen, 2011, p.234), they are (a lot like the researcher) also ensnared as subjects who have to be ethically positioned through these tropes because they are sexualised.

3.5 Contextual Instances

A substitution or re-engagement with some of these ethical terms and methodological concepts also serves to provide an insight into how the visual politics of gay male desire has been perceived in relation to the methodological possibilities of psychoanalysis and the formation of *jouissance*. As a result, the ancient philosophical terms, such as *Thumos*, *Logos*, and *Eros*, need to be relocated to understand how and why the gay male subject of contemporary representation and self-expression has also evolved and can be contextualised as a psychoanalytic subject of desire. The three key visual and representational instances of the personals website, *dudesnude.com*, in Chapter 4; the porn studio, *Triga* Films, in Chapter 5; and the social network / blogging site, *tumblr.com*, in Chapter 6, have been selected due to the conditionality, vacillation, and impersonality embedded in their visual rhetoric of gay male sexual and erotic desire. The emergence of new regimes of visuality and, in particular, the democratisation of self-representation due to innovations in new media, such as digital cameras, web-cams, and mobile phones, has enabled the discourse of same-sex desire to be produced, represented, and consumed in a way that realigns how all representations of same-sex desire are subject to definition through the epistemological and ontological discourses of identity and personality. As a researcher, the dialogue that I had with the contexts and the justification for selecting them relied upon the dialectic between the conceptual nature of the research project and practical issues

allied to ethics and methods discussed in the previous section. I have attempted to consider and position both approaches and the processes of elimination and justification to offer an insight into my choices detailed below.

These contexts have been chosen because they suggest that, when an identity is subject to multiple identifications through a process of representation, then the personal desires of the Imaginary-ego are destabilised through the impersonality of that Symbolic representation. In all of the instances, it is neither sexual difference nor sameness that can be used to ground sexual desire and identity. When this is subject to sexual representation in the output I have selected, attempts to both contain and negate sexuality (and gender) are raised through identifications in the gap between this similarity and differentiation. It is also important to note that I am isolating several 'instances' within each contextual chapter to position critically and analytically in relation to broader trends aligned to gay male culture, desire, and representation examined throughout the thesis. On *tumblr.com*, three key blogs and their key visual features / representational pratices are utilised in the contextual analysis; several key films produced by *Triga* and scenes from within those films are examined; and, on *dudesnude.com* several features of the website are examined and discussed analytically to shape and frame the key points raised. In the next three sub-sections, each contextual instance is configured and defined to illustrate both how and why they may be useful in a psychoanalytic reading of the gay male subject of desire and the move towards 'Bodies that Stutter' that are expressed through the *jouissance* of the 'Other'. They also continue to account for methodological and ethical concerns which have assisted in the evolution of the thesis's conceptual and analytical argument based on the claim that conflicts and contrasts between metaphoric/metonymic and personal/impersonal modes of identity/identification eventually allow for something of *jouissance* to be articulated and represented in the dissonance of 'Bodies that Stutter'.

In addition to these concerns and approaches, it is also important to the research to emphasise that the three contextual chapters are not positioned and read as qualitative case studies or conventional visual analyses that 'seek to identify and describe before trying to analyse and theorise' (Stark and Torrance in Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p.33). Additionally, this thesis is neither a self-reflective nor a self-reflexive process of visual research, in that it follows a methodological approach that critically addresses the

pragmatics of an ethical approach whilst critically developing ontology and psychoanalysis to address 'an on-going dialectic based on the tension between inter-subjectivity and individuality in relational life (and therefore in thinking and action)' (Holloway, 2008, p, 4-5). If the gay male self (myself) holds as a critical self, then that self is also framed in 'an evolving perspective, resulting from successive encapsulations […] created within the research process' (Brown and Teggs, 2010, p.296). This methodological and the ethical approach also acknowledges the issue of gay male self-reflexivity in the research and, more specifically in this instance, the problems of the research becoming an explicit exercise in psychoanalytic meta-analysis, obscure theoretical rhetoric, or anecdotal deconstruction. This also indicates that there needs to be distancing of the researcher from this excessive form of methodological reflexivity, in terms of how an epistemological and ontological gay male self and gay male desire are captured and expressed.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1996 [1781]), which underline 'a complete, uninhibited and unapologetic representation of himself' (Mansfield, 2000, p.16), highlight this contention. The confessional or diaristic space through which the individual writes, speaks, and represents allows for the anecdotal, abstract, and ultimately subjective expression of desire to occur. Using this line of enquiry, a gay male researcher, like Tony E. Adams (2011), positions his work as 'auto-ethnography'. This is work that is intentionally nuanced and interrupted with personal recollection, interviews, oral histories and analytical observation related to same-sex attraction in media representation. This approach is too close to a process of self-analysis and the use of *jouissance* emphasised throughout the thesis and, thus, connected to identity and identification, personality and impersonality, and metaphor and metonym are evidence for this.

Mary Thomas' work examines the use of psychoanalysis in the qualitative data analysis of interviews and practically suggests how Freudian approaches may transform what she sees as 'the ontology of psychoanalysis for approaching identification processes' (Thomas, 2007, p.539). Yet, if the unconscious processes of desire are in some way brought to bear in the research process, they need to be aligned to how the ambivalences riven through gay masculinity are ontologically displayed and displaced through regulated modes of gendered and sexualised identification.

Yet, as a researcher using methodological approaches that may offend or shock, the potential originality of the research is also its trap or limitation, in that philosophical, psychoanalytical, ethical, and cultural enquiry 'is full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails as researchers negotiate the swamp of interminable deconstructions, self-analysis and self-disclosure' (Finlay, 2002, p.209). Freud's and Lacan's writings achieve a great deal through psychoanalysis in 'positing' and 'returning' the opaque and murky to a field in which the vacillation of personal and impersonal practices of desire and politics are made clearer yet never established as an orthodoxy. Yet the ongoing dialogues

3.5.1 *Personal Websites and Jouissance - dudesnude.com*

The first contextual instance is the website *dudesnude.com*. Established in 2002, it currently has in the region of 510,000 members and ranks 12,240 in the Alexa global online traffic rankings, having received 72 million hits in 2012 (March, 2013). Whilst it is owned and operated by the London based software company Invades Ltd, it holds a fairly unique position in terms of its global market in that it facilitates global searches of men and is used and interfaced in ways that differentiate it from more popular sites, such as *gaydar.com*, and applications (apps), such as *Grindr.com*. Yet, the logic of selecting *dudesnude.com* lies in the way it prescribes that its users adhere to a specific personality/identity (straight-acting, young, old, muscular, chubby, etc.) through a series of self-representations. Identities are compartmentalised into designated 'groups' that are intended to signify and characterise the nature of gay male desire, yetas a result, perpetuate an illusory politics bound to both gayness and maleness. Identities that seem to be coherent are open to an endless process of disruption and displacement via how they are posted and viewed. Users also have to upload photographs of themselves and at least one of these must be unclothed (the site rules there is a requirement to have the user's 'shirt off'). It presents and shifts gay sex and sexuality as *the* key factor of gay male desire and, thus, gay male identity. In Figure 3.1, 'our (un)dress code', and Figure 3.2, 'about *dudesnude*', the discourse of the website is framed and presented to its users. Thus, *dudesnude.com* poses a central ambiguity in that it both assumes there is a type of gay man who uses and accesses the site, whilst producing and facilitating a space where all types of men who do not

conform or recognise themselves in terms of 'gay' can communicate anonymously with other men from all over the world.

The politics that circulate around all identity claims make the metaphorical assertions and the metonymic potentials, also embedded in this thesis, all the more resonant and problematic. This strand of the thesis will examine *dudesnude.com* to position how and why impersonal forms of representation and desire are formed on the basis of a personal identity politics; in this instance, secured and validated through identification and intimacy at a distance with other users. For example, on *dudesnude.com*, 'I' can freely (without subscribing and without having a profile myself) begin my search by finding guys who are rated the 'most viewed', 'most hot listed', 'newest' or 'recently updated'. Also, and by navigating and selecting through a series of check-lists and fields, I am asked;

To search the database and to choose whether I am looking for profiles, pictures, or video clips.

I then have to select the content type 'I want to see' – the choices here can be left unticked to bring back everything, all ticked, or ticked in a series of ways. The choices the user is given are 'face', 'body (clothes on)', 'body (clothes off)', 'underwear', 'butt', cock, "action", 'Duo/Group'.

Next, I choose a location from a drop down box – here I am asked to select from every country in the world and, once I have done this, I get to select the state, province, territory, county etc. and then city/town/village. If I leave this field blank, it searches all locations.

I am then asked to tick who I want to look at and 'to show guys belonging to' groups I am asked to tick. At present, there are ten groups 1. Dude next door, 2. Fit Jock Dude, 3. Big Muscle Dude, 4. Bear, 5. Chub, 6. Leatherman, 7. Daddy Men, 8. SexPig, 9. Couples, 10. POZ dude (designates an HIV+ user).

This is followed by being asked to choose an age range – this is down to me, as the user, to type in a minimum and then a maximum.

The site gives me the option to search for key words – this allows me to enter any word that I might want to associate with another potential user.

Then, I can limit the results to guys online now, guys with VERIFIED profiles and supporters (guys who support the site).

I can also decide if I want to find new 'stuff' and show 'stuff' added.

Finally, I can order results in terms of a 'hotlist' and/or most viewed' – this enables me to see 'stuff' first that I most desire.

By investigating online personals websites, the ways in which gay male identities are represented through image and text attend to how 'gay sexuality', 'identity', and 'desire' 'stutter' when they function as evidence and/or markers for the impersonality of these terms. *Dudesnude.com* is also ambiguous in terms of how it presents itself. On the one hand it functions as a gay social network/porn/personals website that is part of a vast body of online traffic that emphasises the agency and autonomy of gay male desire and the gay male body in representation. On the other, the scope and breadth of images that are added, cropped, edited, and taken away on these sites means that the representations shift and move in incongruous ways. This is also a feature of *tumblr.com*, in which links embedded in the other user's blog name redirect to a particular post, so that image/text/link can then be re-blogged. Explicitly defined and desire-led profiles and images contain an 'open mesh of possibilities, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning' (Sedgwick, 1994, pp.8-9) and, within all of these visual spaces, the politics and scopic regimes of vision and visuality squabble, falter, and oscillate, so there is a perpetual rift in representations of desire. This thesis suggests that the rift, the fissure, or the aperture in the representation is defined by an impersonality embedded in psychoanalytic discourse and the unconscious desires that destabilise the personal and ontologically 'certain' constructions of desire. The thesis argues that all three instances encapsulate 'Bodies that Stutter' because they uneasily navigate their subjects, users, and audiences into a cathexis of 'muttering' personalities, sexualities, genders, identities, geographies, and lifestyles whilst also aligning them to particular epistemological paradigms of bodies that 'matter' (Butler, 1993). These 'Bodies that Stutter' are formed through a 'combination-axis' of muttering/metonymic, and mattering/metaphorical (Dean, 2000, p.184) representations and desires that occur in an endless circulation of imagined realities manifested as Symbolic and 'Otherly'. Here, both identity and identification (dis)embody the tensions seen in personal and impersonal, conscious and unconscious expressions of *jouissance.*

3.5.2 *Pornographic Jouissance - Triga Films*

London based *Triga* Films was established in 1997 by Jamie Carlyle to strategically brand and market an alternative to mainstream instances of US studio pornography. All releases are rated 'R' and are mainly available to the consumer via *Triga*'s website, which markets itself as 'The original British filth factory since 1997'. For example, the DVD cover notes for *British Bad Lads UK* (2009) state: 'Only *Triga* finds British Bad Lads like these. But be warned, they might cum a lot but they certainly do not come easy! We have done all the hard work for you, chatted the lads up, got 'em pissed and paid 'em some cash and then served them up on a plate! 8 choice prime scenes of British meat, featuring real British Bad Lads from local street style Scallies, Sports fuckin' Slags, Horned Up Squaddies hard at it, and fuckin' filthy decorators pasting up more than wallpaper up each other's arses!'. Whilst much of gay male pornography uses a 'trenchant version of heterosexual masculinity' (Nixon, 2003. p.6), to elicit gay desire, the dominant rhetoric and discursive feature of *Triga* is the construction of identities based on an abstruse form of heterosexual and homosexual desire and identity. These are marketed and produced in line with the specificity of gay sexual desires and fantasies, branded and endorsed by *Triga* Films as a pornographic commodity and niche commodity. Here, the combination of the orgy or group sex scenario and the 'straight' or hyper-male participants also form an ontological and epistemological feature of gay male desire, representation, and sexually explicit output. The key feature and index of desire in all of these productions are formulated and constructed on the premise of what may happen if straight masculinity/men are encouraged, subverted, tempted, and seduced into performing, displaying, and enjoying sex with both 'straight' and 'gay' men.

In the gay pornography that *Triga* Films produce, the constructions associated with problems of identity and identification, personal and impersonal modes of desire, and hetero/homo masculinity both distort and serve to emphasise how binaries and polarities between the two collapse through the construction of the representations. Alternatively phrased: In a discourse like *Triga*, how do we see the psychoanalytic difference, which is a difference of/in sexuality, in that which is the same? Pornography refers to the social and cultural representations and performances associated with sexual bodies and seditious bodily acts and representations, even though, as the work of Lacan shows, there is never a simple (expressive or gestural)

truth to the body. It is neither difference nor sameness, therefore, that can be used to ground sexual identity; and when this is subject to sexual representation in pornographic output such as this, which attempts to both contain and negate gay, straight, and masculine sexuality (and gender), the complexities are raised through identifications in the gap between similarity and differentiation.

These inconsistencies and dense debates seem to culminate more in *Triga*, with its desire to present close-up, raw, and authentic sex, and, more broadly, in pornography, than in any other discourse. This is reflected in the way that the pornographic image, scene, actor, and act spans and connects across photographic, filmic, and online media. Due to developments through the Internet and digital technology, gay men are producing and using pornography more than at any other time in history. A number of American and European porn studios and companies similar to *Triga* have also been set up with the aim of constructing, marketing and dealing in the 'real' homo-sexualisation of sub-cultural, working class, and homophobic male identities for gay male consumption. These often refer to the geographical, cultural, and visual specificity of desire in a particular context, so that, in Germany, Cazzo-Films use neo-fascism, sex orgies in straight techno clubs, and manual workers fucking on the subway as central motifs of their films, whilst the French company, Citebeur.com, take 'beur raciaille' or thuggish Arab boys, living in the working class suburbs around Paris and Marseille, as the central objects of desire. In the USA, pornography studios and websites, such as Fratmen.tv and realmenexposed.com are aligned to a similar index of gay male representation and identification that *Triga* Films evidences. Yet, the resolution to use *Triga* Films is justified in that they offer an insight into ways in which gay male desire is reliant on impersonal identifications. This shows how simultaneously restrictive and diverse gay male sexuality can be, as 'an alibi for gay labour, a set of discursive gambits that mark cultural production as wrought by homosexual hands even while that mark is strenuously concealed' (Villarejo, 2004, p.88). *Triga* nuances this technique by using low quality camera equipment and pornographic actors who are often uncredited and unnamed, as well as self-consciously represented through a series of class-based, gender-based, and sexuality-based stereo/archetypes. For example, Joanna Brewis and Gavin Jack (2010) suggest that the identity (and identification) of the chav in porn is something that involves 'a commodification of same-sex desire via a particular articulation of working-class

identity' (p.253). They also link it, in this instance, to Slavoj Zizek's notion of multiculturalism (ibid) and the appropriation of difference as a commodified form of otherness, *Triga* is central to the notion that pornography both symbolically 'generates a surplus value' or, more pertinently, 'becomes an ultimately unattainable commodity' (ibid, p.261) through its initiating and presentation of desire as a form of voyeuristic consumerism.

3.5.3 *Social Media and Jouissance – tumblr.com*

Tumblr.com was launched in February 2007 by David Karp and Marco Arment. It is branded and marketed as a micro-blog platform and/or social networking website. As this, it enables its users to post and view multi-media text, image, and sound files through the process of blogging. This practice also allows users to post content, view other users' content, inter-connect images and text, and, thus, navigate, combine, and link them to others users' pages where their blog-posts can also appear. As a vast global platform and mode of visual communication and representation, as of January 31st 2014, *tumblr.com* contains 169.1 million blogs and 75.2 billion posts. Each blog is centrally routed from the users' personalised 'dashboard' and a user's name/identity is traced and, thus, embedded in other users' profiles when they view, like, or re-blog visual and textual information. From the central dashboard, they can navigate through a series of conventional functions, such as mail, help, and settings and, beneath that, on their interface, seven ways of uploading content are also available. Here, the user can summit 'text', 'photo', 'quote', link', 'chat', 'audio' and 'video'. *Tumblr.com* offers a similar platform to other global social networks or 'sharing' communities, such as *YouTube* (launched February 2005), *Facebook* (launched February 2004), *Twitter* (launched July 2006), and *Instagram* (launched October 2010), in that it allows for small fragments (or micro-posts) to be micro-blogged from within a larger conventional blog and blogging site. In this thesis, *tumblr.com* was selected as an analytic context because it was the SNS / networked platform where the most sexually explicit and pornographically driven visual material was produced, shared, and consumed. The gradual emergence and popularity of how micro-blogs allied to gay male desire appeared and indicated that in line with the other two contexts *tumblr.com* would be a particularly useful discourse in terms of its methodological and analytical potential because its users have the agency to post images of gay male identity, desire,

and sexuality that they subjectively connect to broader personal, pornographic, and, thus, cultural associations and dislocations, posted online by fellow users of the site and/or user account.

By considering how and why both heterosexuality and homosexuality have been historically and culturally constructed and regulated, the research uses and positions *tumblr.com* to critique the epistemology and, in turn, the ontology and, therefore, ontic nature of a definitively gay and male sexual identity online. The analysis of *tumblr.com* identifies the impersonality of gay male desire manifested through a process of seemingly personal user-posts and, thus, user-identifications. By addressing how the vast landscape of blogs in which both 'gay' and 'straight' men construct modes of identification linked to a simultaneously consistent and inconsistent index of visual desire and pleasure, this chapter also aims to position how, and in what ways, both homo- and heterosexual object-choice and desire are problematic when configured via the psychoanalytical unconscious. The social and cultural representations of gender and sexuality that have been coherently, yet mistakenly, positioned as masculine/feminine, gay/straight will be critically discussed in relation to the ways in which these subjects are continually and perpetually displaced, disavowed, and attached through *dudesnude.com*, *Triga* Films, and *tumblr.com* and how these empirical instances relate to and problematise the concept of 'Bodies that Stutter'

Tumblr.com also links to the two other key visual examples of used in this thesis, of *dudesnude.com* and *Triga* Films, in that it appears to facilitate (through the representational space of the website as a social network/micro-blog) an online discourse of identity and personality that articulates and represents identifiable strands of gay male history, desire, community, and sensibility. However, this level of identification with symbolically personalising texts, images, and tropes is always underpinned by impersonalising modes of engagement, recognition, and desire. Accounting for this, the *tumblr.com* blogs that have been selected to examine are;

http://homo-magazine.*tumblr*.com/ also available as http://homo-online.com/

http://actionrigger.*tumblr*.com/

http://nakedgayguys.*tumblr*.com/

The imagery that is continuously posted and re-blogged through *tumblr.com* is formed and assembled via a potentially limitless ebb and flow of representations. In turn, these images reiterate and reinscribe established meanings and boundaries of pornographic, photographic, reality, and mediated discourse. The interdependency of sexual and/or erotic 'self-representation' and 'representation as construction' which predominates through the selfie on *tumblr.com* also positions the gay and straight male body as one that stutters because it can only partially express its *jouissance* in terms of a Symbolic Other. For example, the ontological potentials of how a self-representational image or 'selfie' is 'cropped' and how the gay male body is (re)presented, using imagery which has been discovered and is then inter-connected to other *tumblr.com* accounts, blogs, and users through prior searches, is also evidence of both the personal and impersonal dimensions of desire. The huge increase in the number of images of men taking self-objectifying photographs of themselves, using the iPhone/android phone to capture their image in the mirror, or reversing the lens of the camera-phone so they see the lens as a mirror image is a key analytic aspect of this chapter. In this way, the 'selfie' as an image-making practice instils an incoherence and transposition of meaning, and also offers up a new potential whereby the signifier unfetters itself from its significatory meaning and, quite literally, 'exceeds its symbolic function, to signify' (Fink in Lacan, 1999, p, 19, n12).

Using Lacan, it could be is argued that a cultural paradigm such as the 'selfie' indicates that there is no truth or meaning except that which the subject attempts to structure in the associated chains of signifiers; in this instance, the continuous self-representations, bloggings and re-bloggings of gay male imagery aligned to sexual desire. Saying that, the signifier still needs to be emphasised and examined (hence the three specific blogs that have been listed) because it underpins the Symbolic order, which, in turn, is a foundational aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Yet, just as Lacan remains uneasy and sceptical about the importance of the signifier, and just as discourses of ethics and more so informed consent underpin a project such as this, all of the visual instances examined in all three chapters attempt to dismantle the cogent signification of gay male personality, identity and desire. This also unseats the signifier as a possessive form, and the Cartesian axiom of 'I think, therefore, I am' discussed earlier continues to splinter because of the signifier's place in the Symbolic unconscious of psychoanalytic discourse. Thus, the ontological and/or ethical subject of a master discourse that seeks

to claim their space in the social and hierarchical order of that discourse is displaced; as Lacan states, 'this formulation totally changes the function of the subject as existing' (1999, p.21) and, thus, exposes the subject as a 'Body that Stutters' through a setting which remains impersonal and vulnerable to the influence of *jouissance.*

In all three of the following chapaters, the configuration and positioning of the gay male subject is constructed via the Symbolic space of language, where language is not a natural or innate feature but an unstable discourse that simultaneously binds and separates self and other. Thus, language reflects how the representational contexts are inflected by the unconscious in that it does not form a logical and clearly stated way of communicating; rather the subject (whether he is self-represented or representationally manipulated) is the one who stammers, hesitates, makes slips of the tongue, speaks out of turn, and, as Lacan goes onto state, 'utters stupidities' (1999, p.22). This is reinforced when desire forms as a series of sexual or erotic representations through language and vice versa and, in the Lacanian clinic, we see that the analyst himself must acknowledge that the analytic session is a spoken set of subjective stupidities, which are metonymically formed and structured in the Symbolic unconscious. Through this approach, the displaced visual formations of gay male desire, personality/impersonality and identity/identification that are represented also go some way to reflecting the exigent nature of *tumblr.com's* temporal and spatial fluidity. Each of the blogs are presented as ambiguous spaces in which images of the gay male body, sexuality, and desire are simultaneously identifiable and visible because their subjective and discursive meanings and interpretation continually shift and converge at all times. They also represent a broader trend across millions of *tumblr.com* blogs, pornographic productions, and gay male personals/self-representations in that they rely upon established ontological and epistemological concepts of gay/straight identity and personality. The ways in which all three of the contextual instances traverse is clear when they are considered in relation to one another and, more specifically, through the ontological dimensions of the personal/impersonal and the epistemological constructions of identity/identification. A working example of this could be identified through the fact that *Triga* Films has an officially endorsed 'unseen picture' blog on *tumblr.com* (http://Trigafilms.tumblr.com/), which is connected to many of the profiles that appear on *dudesnude.com* and, in turn, many of the users on *dudesnude.com* state that you can

connect to them in more 'personal' ways through their own individual *tumblr.com* blogs.

3.6 Conclusion

The potentiality that comes from ethically and methodologically 'plugging in' and 'connecting' psychoanalytic approaches to other philosophical traditions, such as the ones presented here, emphasises how 'the relationship of psychoanalysis [an non-ontology] to philosophy (as ontology) remains much more interesting and intricate' (Zupancic, 2012, p.3) when it is used to (re)think desire, sexuality and (gay) subjectivity. By mapping out psychoanalysis' relationship to aspects of ancient Greek and enlightenment philosophy in Aristotle, Plato, and Descartes, the methodology and ethical challenges of the project have underscored the ambiguities and contingencies of what it means to 'be' a subject and how this relates empirically to 'Bodies that Stutter' in pursuit of *jouissance* and the subsequent signification of Symbolic-stuttering. Just as features of the Freudian and Lacanian unconscious allied to the roles of condensation and displacement and metaphor and metonymy have their ontological roots in enlightenment notions of autonomy, subjectivity, and reason, we also see that the subject who is formed under these conditions is a one transformed further through the concept of stuttering. It is in the next chapters and through the analysis of 'Bodies that Stutter' that this stuttering is repositioned and examined as a core feature of gay male representation.

It is clear that, as pornographic, photographic, and online media converge through SNS, they present to gay men visual documents *as* visual evidence of a sexual self who is both self-represented and subject to a complex process of representational practices that represent him. Each of the instances selected considers how and why a potentially endless combination of sexual identities and identifications manage to determine gay male desire through cultural signifiers that are associated with a Symbolic 'pornography of male masculinity' (Rambuss, 2011, p.202). Just as Linda Williams specifically recognised that pornography was, in some way, linked to 'the principle of maximum visibility' (1989, p.48), there is also space here to suggest that discourses of online representation such as *dudesnude.com, Triga* Films, and *tumblr.com are* Symbolically bound to particular aspects of gay male fantasy and lived experience that involve volitionally revealing, displaying, and strategising sexual desires and

identifications to an unknown audience. Pornography satisfies the urge and desire 'to show and see what cannot be shown and seen' (Dyer, 2002, p.191) and it seems that these three interconnected spaces allow for this 'pornography' of looking and being looked at to inflect, sustain, and undermine various scenarios in which images of gay/homosexual desire are constructed within the conventions of a 'mythology of homosexual desire' (Mercer, 2004, p.156). These are often based on the subversion and assimilation of heterosexual and hyper-masculine sexual stereotypes engaged in sexual and/or erotic exchange. In many of the instances, the aspiration to reiterate, embody, or encapsulate heterosexuality also occurs through the signification of a 'straight' identification or a 'straight-acting' Imaginary-ego and other.

Each of the three instances emphasises the representation of gay masculinity as a form of 'performatively enacted signification' (Butler, 1990, p.33) but, more specifically, they also align gay male representation to the Symbolic forms of *jouissance* linked to practices of imitating straight men, self-representing the body, and reifying the sexual self as other. In turn, this suggests that gay desire and gay identity stutter in relation to 'the myth of a stable [straight male] self [as] pre-existing cultural codes or signifying systems' (Hennessy, 2000. p.117). It is through the three inter-related visual indices, and the ways in which they triangulate, overlap, and contradict one another, that the representation of a conscious gay body and metaphoric personality will be considered as inseparable from a subjective, unconscious, and metonymically impersonal one. Whilst countless images in gay male pornography, photography, and online discourse subvert these epistemological constructs and ontological conventions of how to depict gay sex, gay culture, gay life, and gay identity as recognisably 'gay' or 'straight', it is perhaps when the visual forms that attempt to represent both intersect that new links and disjuncture between established boundaries of 'gay' and 'straight' male signification are extracted and revealed through Symbolic-stuttering. In the next chapter which examines *dudesnude.com* these interventions are presented and contextualised so that 'Bodies that Stutter' become more apparent and connect to the lines of argument and investigation presented here.

Figure 3.1 - 'our (un)dress code' - http://dudesnude.com/#undresscode

Figure 3.2 - 'about *dudesnude* - http://dudesnude.com/about.php

Figure 3.2 - 'about *dudesnude* - http://dudesnude.com/about.php

Chapter 4: *DudesNude.com*: *Jouissance*, 'Bodies that Stutter' and Impersonal Identification Online

4.1 Introduction

Building on the terminology and concepts developed in chapters 2 and 3 the 'Bodies that Stutter' examined in this thesis have so far been located through exchanges that occur between the Imaginary other and Symbolic Other of metonymy, desire, impersonality, and *jouissance*. These bodies and their role as signifiers of gay desire have also been positioned in relation to the tensions that are amplified when the operations of personal and impersonal / metaphor and metonym converge. These conceptual instances will now be repositioned in context and applied to a reading of the gay subject online, and in this chapter gay male subjects both using and viewing the social networking/personals website *dudesnude.com*. *Dudenude.com* is marketed as an online '*personals*' space that facilitates 'picture, video, and profile sharing' for 'men who like sex with men'. On this premise, this site presents the visual discourses of the pornographic and the photographic as fundamental to a gay subject's 'personal' male subjectivity and the pursuit of sexual representation and gratification through the metaphors of an Imaginary other. Yet, and as this chapter argues, this process of men seeking out other men 'personally' relies on the power of a Symbolic Other allied to modes of metonymic impersonality.

This is played out through the Symbolic structure of *dudesnude.com* and in this chapter it is examined in relation to the key contexts of the *dudesnude.com* homepage, welcome/search page, users, groups and the contexts of how it users post and exchange sexually explicit imagery. The chapter also engages with strands of queer theory and paradigms of the post-queer or 'after-queer' (see Ruffolo, 2009; Halley and Parker, 2011), as well as theories of gay masculinity and online media (O'Riordan and Phillips 2007; Mowlabocus, 2010; Cooper and Pullen 2012) which are allied to but may also jar with the psychoanalytic terms set out in the previous chapter. This jarring also emphasises how psychoanalysis, like the 'Bodies that Stutter' in this thesis, is not

governed by straightforward beginnings, middles, or ends. In this way it is suggested that psychoanalysis, stuttering, and the complex representational formations explored later in this chapter which relate to *jouissance* on *dudesnude.com* operate and proceed on the basis of hesitation, anticipation, exigency, and abstruseness.

The first part of this chapter examines how the user primarily encounters *dudesnude.com* as an online space that seems to allow them to construct and control how gay desire is presented both by them and to them. It discusses the notion of identity construction and what this means in light of queer and online theorisations around desire. It also examines how the homepage and the welcome/search page offer a way of navigating the site so that both the users and groups of *dudesnude.com* and the site itself alert us to the Imaginary and Symbolic strains that give way to bodies that stutter. The next section probes deeper into the complex nuances of the website by examining how it is used to generate representational practices that users position as 'personal' through their construction of gay identity in relation to an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other. It then uses this construction of gay identity which manipulates aspects of metaphoric association to analyse the website in terms of its impersonal and Symbolic content. This will also allow for the practices of members/users (i.e. the 'dudes' who are 'nude') to be discussed in relation to designated communities and groups that attempt to schematise something of their gay male ego, body, identity, desire, and subjectivity online. Through this the implications of positioning, networking, and self-presenting pornographic and photographic images and information through personal profiles as impersonal forms of *jouissance* can also be situated and explored.

In all of the examples that are addressed here, it is suggested that the dimensions of how Imaginary and Symbolic relations are realised on a gay male *personals* site can be better understood through their *impersonal* dimensions. The extant literature allied to critical trajectories of queer theory and theories dealing with gay/queer identity in cyber, digital, new media, and online cultures strive simultaneously to present and displace specifically 'gay male' identities, which are (self) represented online as having the capacity to ideologically 'open [...] up spaces through which to view, through which to pass, and through which to encounter and enact fluid sexualities' (Pramaggiore, 1996, p.3). Yet, this traversal of sexual identity often works through

the centrality of the Imaginary other as both body and ego, and thus fails to account for the dimensions of what queer studies and cyber, digital, new media, and online cultural theory can explore if they are connected to a Symbolic Other. In this context it is useful to refer back to the Symbolic Other discussed as that force which makes the 'rules that I follow [and] meanings that haunt me' (Zizek, 2006a, p.9). In this way and on *dudesnude.com* we see that the Symbolic Other could be understood as the scope and the constraints of language and representation that locates gay desire through the discourse of gay personals. In this way *dudesnude.com* may be allied to, or positioned as a Symbolic Other that allows and encourages gay men to (mis)recognise and doubt what 'gay' and 'male' desire may mean in language. In the following section, which looks at the homepage and the welcome/search page on *dudesnude.com*, we see that it is through the metaphorical construction of gay identity as a deceptive essence of gay desire that this occurs. Here, we see that, on the one hand, there are tensions between significations of the Imaginary other presented in terms of a metaphorically gay personality and/or identity, and on the other, the power of the Symbolic Other and its capacity to position gay male identity as an impersonal and metonymic signifier of *jouissance* through displaced identifications with an Imaginary counterpart.

4.2 Homepage, Welcome/Search Page, Users, and Groups on *dudesnude.com*

Both queer theory and the discourse of online media are, in part, concerned with the contradictory, obtuse, or eccentric dimensions of identity and sexuality. Yet, in this chapter it is not within queer or online media theory itself, but rather, via an engagement with psychoanalysis where the possibilities of querying desire and exploring *jouissance* is revealed. More specifically, and in a strand of the thesis that examines how gay male personals and, thus, gay male personalities and 'personal' sexual desires are both constructed and represented online, psychoanalysis productively fails to resolve the problem of gay identity, sexual or otherwise, yet continues to open up the possibilities of new identifications every time we re-engage with it. In furthering how we understand Imaginary and Symbolic exchanges, desire, and stuttering in relation to *jouissance* and how it is used to closely analyse several aspects of *dudesnude.com,* we might also suggest that it is in the coming together of work in queer, online, and psychoanalytic theory that sexual identity may be pulled apart. In this chapter and more so this project, this may also allow for an analysis of

jouissance that underscores and captures its Symbolically impersonal, oblique, but also futural dimensions.

Output that has dealt with the analysis of specifically gay male sexuality and online media either emphasises and/or valorises how identity and the body are marked by fluidity, ambiguity, and confusion. Sherry Turkle's work (1984, 1995, 2005, 2011) is nuanced with elements of psychoanalysis and is, perhaps, the closest to a psychoanalytic examination of online and queer identity; whilst David F. Shaw's 'Gay Men and Computer Communication' (1997) offers the first scholarly examination of how gay desire and identity are articulated online. Along with John Edward Campbell's *Getting it Online* (2004), a study of three gay internet relay chat (ICR) communities (namely 'gaymuscle', 'gaymusclebears' and 'gaychub'), these texts suggest several critical issues related to the formation of gay male bodies, identities, and communities online but, in the end, they seem prone to accounts of online desire in which identities are reciprocated and not complicated through the Symbolic Other and *jouissance* addressed in the first three chapters of the thesis.

More recent work specific to queer/LGBT media, by Kate O'Riordan and David Phillips (2007), Sharif Mowlabocus (2010), and Margaret Cooper and Christopher Pullen (2012), combine sociological approaches and thematic deconstructions to explore specifically queer and/or gay male subcultures online. These works detail particular practices and do so in rigorous ways, but they do not fully address how the psychoanalytic dimensions of identity, sexuality, and desire are called into question through the Symbolic Other in language rather than transgressively expressed in the Imaginary. O'Riordan and Philips' edited collection, *Queer Online* (2007), engages with a structure that seeks to rethink, reformulate, and relocate queer identity and the queer subject online, yet does so on the basis of the earlier premises of queer theory, which privilege 'the centrality of the question of identity' (Phelan, 1997, p.2) and the Imaginary body over the Symbolic unconscious and the processes of identification which seem to underpin online communication and representation addressed here. In this way this chapter uses identity and the above work as a point of departure. By accounting for the approaches to issues of gay male desire posed in the first three chapters it may be more apt to locate its argument in line with post-queer theorists (Dean, 2009; Esteban Munoz, 2009; Halley and Parker, 2011; Halperin and Traub,

2010) who seek a way out of the bind of identity and queer identity politics. In so doing they attempt to draw on a vocabulary which allows for a way to move beyond a politics of identity, gender, and the body as 'other'. Locating desire through the Symbolic 'Other' may also allow for a mode of (queer) theorising that continually que(e)ries the terms that seem to locate, define, and confine it *as* queer.

In *Gaydar Culture: Gay Men, Technology and Embodiment in the Digital Age* Mowlabocus (2010) observes that users and members of the gay personals website *Gaydar* 'are involved in complex processes of identity construction' (p.102), aligning this to those metaphoric processes of building an online identity and profile that seem to unify the user to their sexual identity, selfhood, and specific desires. Yet, Mowlabocus goes on to state that the processes of constructing an identity are insecure and also 'dismantle the body of the user and create a fragmented and unbounded sexual "body-in-bits"' (ibid). In light of this and as a way into the investigation of *dudenude.com* we begin to see that the construction of an online sexual identity (both in dialogue with other users and through the edifice of a personal profile) can only constitute and humanise the other through depersonalised and dehumanised processes of impersonality expedited by the Other. It is here that the metaphoric body is riven by the Symbolic and the 'Bodies that Stutter' discussed in the previous chapters begin to find their signification in the splits, ruptures, and jerks of metonymic identification online. In this way, it could be argued that the construction of an online sexual identity is established and sustained through the users metonymic stuttering or 'bittiness' (ibid). If this is the main constituent of how sexual desire expresses itself online then we can also suggest that from the outset the user's desire and pursuit of *jouissance* may well be staged through the Imaginary other, but can only occur because the Symbolic Other has located it for them.

Through the power of the Symbolic, the website *dudesnude.com* organises, personalises, and identifies for the user the dimensions and scope of how their *jouissance* can be Symbolically exercised. The Symbolic Other of *dudesnude.com* is transformed into the Imaginary other of a 'dude' who is 'nude'. Here, the ontological (dude) and corporeal (nude) tropes of identity metaphorically personalise and momentarily dislodge the Symbolic Other and the metonymy that allows the website to function as '*dudesnude.com*'. Through the personalisation and possession of a

profile, and because others also have profiles, it is suggested that whilst the user feels an inordinate sense of their identity in the Imaginary they also feel as if they get to control who sees their image in the Symbolic. However, it is might also be the case that the Imaginary register allows the user a lack of control and signals towards the potential of letting go and a proliferation of possibilities in the Symbolic. To add complexity to this exchange between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, it could be further argued that the Symbolic Other is undermined by the power of the Imaginary other, yet, in a defiant twist of fate, it is still the Symbolic (functioning as *dudesnude.com*) that remains the chief agent of *jouissance* because the Imaginary other, as both the user with a personal profile and the viewer looking at other personal profiles on *dudesnude.com*, requires the Symbolic Other of *dudesnude.com* the website to be in place for that *jouissance* to be expressed or, rather, for it to Symbolically-stutter something of what has formed it as *jouissance.*

Of course and via a first encounter with *dudesnude.com* this is not immediately clear because it presents gay identity and desire at the level of the Imaginary. We see this when we first come to encounter the site via the homepage (Figure 4.1), where the signification of desire is expressed through an image of a slim and toned young gay man, in the most literal and intersubjective of terms – i.e. a 'dude' we see as 'nude'. His head is tilted back and the image is cropped so that his chest is the key marker of identification. Yet, immediately, the young, toned, defined, muscular, and Caucasian gay male body is presented as a fragment, something and someone we do not fully see and, more specifically, a representation that we can only view as a metonymic piece of desire. Within this image, the pleasure that comes from looking is derived from the image's metonymic power. It yields this power by way of the model standing in the Symbolic place of all the other users and viewers of the site who both have and do not have personal profiles. Yet, in this image, the construction of metonymic desire is also metaphorically facilitated, in that the subject's chest is displayed as a marker and index of the Imaginary user's *jouissance*. Thus, the image both contains and displaces what it is claiming to signify. The body is signified through a duplicitous index of similarity and difference, which, in turn, allies it to the problem of how gay male desire is expressed through the Imaginary-ego and sexual representations that rely on the body. If this body on *dudesnude.com* is the first signifier that the user of the website sees, they have to deal with the tensions between a body, that is simultaneously positioned

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as 'some-body', 'any-body', 'every-body', and 'no-body', vis-à-vis its location as *'the'* Imaginary body, as well as a Symbolic 'body that stutters', because it remains beyond and outside of the user's control and understanding.

This body as someone ('I') is photographed as something ('it') that the user is meant to sexually desire and presumably be familiar with. However, his sexual organs or an excessively sexual pose are elided in favour of an image that aligns itself to an index of homo-eroticism that lends itself to aesthetic tropes of gay male youth, muscularity, and desire. At this level, we see that, whilst his identity as the Imaginary other is seductively metaphoric, it is also undercut by the metonymic part (the chest) that stands in for the metaphoric whole (a desirable, sexual, loveable, gay man). More specifically, the image itself is connected to the impersonal Othering of *jouissance*, which the site both instigates and sustains. This is an image that has been positioned on the homepage for thousands of gay men to identify with, personally and individually, on the basis of cultural conventions, markers, and signifiers aligned to (gay) masculinity, desire, and the body. Yet, the construction of it does not speak personally to the user as other; instead, it uses the Other's impersonality and the imperceptible or anonymous eroticism of the signifier to imagine how gay male desire and its *jouissance* should be expressed. This is emphasised further in the sites '(un)dress code' disclaimer (Figure 4.2 and also Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3) and the language of an 'Other' who both speaks for and prescribes how desire is perceived, expressed, and realised. As a feature and rule of joining the online communities within the site identified as 'Fit Jock dude' and/or 'Big Muscle dude', it states that: 'a fit and muscular body will need to be visible in the picture. As a yardstick, the bod on the front page of the site is 'fit jock dude'. Appreciably less fit? Select another community. (Big muscle dude needs to be *bigger*)'.

Here, the model in Figure 4.1 is referred to as a 'bod', who is then displaced to become the 'fit jock dude' and, on this, we are instructed that the model in the photograph '*is*' this identity and that this 'yardstick' is an indicative rule and, thus, the implicit essence within the groups, communities, members, and users of what gay men allied to those categories ought to 'be'. Slavoj Zizek uses this term 'yardstick' to discuss the Symbolic Other by stating that, 'the symbolic space acts like a yardstick against which I measure myself. This is why the big Other can be personified or reified as a single

agent: the 'God' who watches over me from beyond, and over all real individual[s]' (2006, p.9). Here, this 'God' is the invisible, impenetrable, and always distant Other who, in this instance, is impersonally dictating and deciding in what ways gay desire and *jouissance* are positioned. This 'yardstick', both as a rhetorical concept and a discursive way of maintaining impersonal control through language, advocates that a Symbolic Other undercuts the Imaginary other from the outset. In so doing, we see that the *dudesnude.com* user and his desires are both negotiated and negated by the Symbolic and its power over the Imaginary. This occurs in ways that simultaneously allow and obstruct desire, ways that may also be allied to Symbolic-stuttering and the stutter *of* language discussed later in this chapter.

The welcome/search page (Figure 4.3) of *dudesnude.com* is also good example of how these issues and the articulation of Symbolic-stuttering occur in response to a set of pre-defined and designated sexual and social practices, associated with the gay sexual body and its Imaginary location in relation to gay male history, ontology, epistemology, and community. On the *dudesnude.com* welcome/search page users are 'welcomed' and 'introduced' to the website, signposted by attractive content and persuasive language, such as, 'check out 1 click hotstuff if you can't be bothered to fill in search forms'. As of January 2014, the site itself had '*155,088* member profiles containing *1,261,802* pictures and *43,196* videoclips!'. This is significantly less than its market competitors, *Gaydar.co.uk* and *Grindr.com*, yet it categorises and filters gay masculinity in specific ways that adapt to and enable its users and viewers to consider that they are 'in control' of navigating the website as a sexual image bank, forum, network, and social space. As users actively move the mouse to click, grab, save, copy, paste, and scroll through each page and each profile, processes of Symbolic access and obstruction also have to be negotiated and understood. This relates to the notion of the personal profile or website as a paradoxical space for 'identity play and multiple identities' (Gudelunas, 2005, p. 22) as well as concerns that 'personal ads online do their best to solidify, via questionnaires and profiles, the very identities that are thought to be fluid' (ibid). These processes of personalising and constructing an online identity are most usefully addressed in work of Mowlabocus (2010) although several other studies related to language and love (Groom and Pennebaker, 2005), risk and disease (Bolding *et al,* 2005) and self-generated sexual content (Van Doorn, 2009) examine elements of gay male identity in the personal profile or advertisement online.

The language of the site wavers between tropes of Imaginary inclusion and Symbolic exclusion in that to 'belong' to one of the designated user groups discussed later in this section you have to conform, prove, and demonstrate particular types of corporeal, masculine, and sexual credentials. In this way, *jouissance* and the desire to expose, display, and validate power and auto-erotic pleasure as *jouissance*, is a key part of the site's popularity. The site encourages its users to post pictures and construct their profiles on the basis of 'checking out guys and/or showing themselves off' and that 'at the very least you should have your shirt off'. Whilst these instructional elements of *dudesnude.com* are again allied to the Symbolic Other, it is through the subterfuge of language that users are able to continue constructing, signifying, and interpreting desire at the level of the Imaginary other. We also see that, whilst the construction of an identity online involves the personal and metaphoric 'choice of username, the images selected, the selection of information to be included (and excluded)' (Mowlabocus, 2010, p.90), it also 'raise[s] questions regarding the representation of subjectivity online' (ibid) expressed through metonymic impersonality and Symbolic-stuttering.

However, the capacity to control your identity online and, thus, to restrict what is available to the other users is partnered with the possibility and desire to engage with those users. On *dudesnude.com*, one of the central features is that 'all member pictures are categorised according to what they contain', so that 'using the site's powerful search facilities you can locate not just the kind of guys you like but also the type of content you'd like to see in their pics'. As a result of this scope and availability of other gay men, the searches for the content of the image are allied to the type of gay man the user is searching for. In this way, and in pursuit of the metaphoric other he hopes will fulfil his *jouissance*, the user finds only the metonymic Other that impels him to keep on searching for that *jouissance*. When and if the search for content and user is fulfilled, then *jouissance* is extinguished and desire ceases to be *desire* because it has been temporarily satisfied. This is neither preferable for the Imaginary other or the Symbolic Other, so we find that online 'we move in never ending circles; [so that] we construct our technologies, and our technologies construct us' (Turkle, 1995, p.46).

At this stage it can also be argued that *dudesnude.com* Symbolically-stutters on the basis of amateur photographic (and video) media that the users upload. Alongside

elements of pornography, we see that desire is circulated through an interminable rhetoric of 'gay' and/or 'queer' personality and identity representation. This occurs because the Symbolic Other sanctions and maintains personal identity and ensures that the users who are simultaneously posting, watching, downloading and sharing do not have to be overly concerned about transferential, non-verbal, and unconscious behaviour in the same way as they would in a tangible or 'real-life' encounter. Here, these users become 'bodies that stutter' because they can present and manage *jouissance* through signifiers. Whilst this process seems to allow the user and the viewer a fluid way of enacting and pursuing *jouissance* it does so it ways which may also be subject to hesitancy and delay. Managing an online identity and viewing gay men on gay personals sites also involves processes and practices of waiting (Kielty, 2012, p.5) allied to the crux that 'while the Internet promises immediate gratification, the interface […] necessitates delays: logging on, […] scrolling up and down/left and right, opening and closing windows, clicking, forward/backward, and pushing the refresh button' (ibid).

Personal profiles also allow their users to manage and perform an Imaginary identity in more strategic and ostensibly impersonal ways than they might be able to in a personal face-to-face encounter, where bodies often speak yet, also, fail to communicate their desires. Mowlabocus also observes that the fundamental way of gay men using online media involves the initial process of creating a gay personals profile that 'is reassuringly simple' (2010, p.88), and that, on *Gaydar.com* 'you do not need to act or speak gay, you can simply *be* gay' (ibid, p.93). This also applies to the construction of a profile on *dudesnude.com*, yet when this 'being gay' (which could be located at the level of the Imaginary other) is undercut by the Symbolic Other, it is also met with some problems. Just as the Imaginary other lures us into believing that 'to look at a profile, is to see the subject *from his own position'* (ibid, p.92), the Symbolic blocks something of this 'seeing'. It does so as the user attempts to engage in processes of *jouissance* that involve processes of 'looking and being looked at – of identification and objectification' (ibid, p.91), which never fully articulate who that user is, where he is, and how his 'being' (gay or otherwise) is expressed. In this instance, we see that users are seduced and duped by the Imaginary other into believing that, because they are 'both the producer and consumer of the text' (ibid, p.92), they

have the agency to post, self-represent, share, or block the texts and images that establish 'an externalising of the interior' (ibid) of their Imaginary-ego.

Here, the online formation of an external identity functions through the precarious nature of internal subjectivities that traverse across the welcome/search page to locate a range of communities, groups, members, users, and search fields on *dudesnude.com* (Figure 5.4). This also forms a central feature of how Imaginary and Symbolic, metaphoric and metonymic, and personal and impersonal tensions are displayed on *dudesnude.com*. Its users must check a series of tick boxes to search for profiles, images, and clips and, to do so, they must also 'belong' to at least one of these gay groups or communities. Just as Mowlabocus states that the user on *Gaydar.com* is positioned as 'an object to be browsed' (ibid, p.90), it is through this objectification that the user is also situated as the browser or, more specifically, 'the discerning consumer, whose ideal image we as browsers must fit in order to succeed' (ibid, p.91). This dynamic between the browser and the browsed or the 'consumer/consumed dichotomy' (ibid) is also allied to the exchanges between the Imaginary other and the Symbolic Other. It is between them that we see 'the multiple acts of spectatorship involved within the user profile' (ibid) expressed through metonymic and impersonal modes of *jouissance* and Symbolic-stuttering.

The personal profile of the user of *dudesnude.com* has to be connected to or searched for through a user-group. This also emphasises the ways in which Imaginary and Symbolic tensions are threaded into the user's identity in their personal profiles addressed in section 5.3. Here, the users identity only becomes meaningful on the basis of how it is positioned and thus viewed through prior modes of metonymic identification within these user groups. In the list below (which is also discussed in the Chapter 4) there is a summary of the available identities I can use to search for other users. The ten groups are;

1. Dude next door
2. Fit Jock Dude
3. Big Muscle Dude
4. Bear

5.   Chub

6.   Leatherman

7.   Daddy Men

8.   SexPig

9.   Couples

10.   POZ dude (designates an HIV+ user)

Within the ten groups that are listed the user's sense of agency or volitional participation on the site and their pursuit of *jouissance* are designated for them in the Symbolic. However, Imaginary forms of representation and designation seem to sustain an unambiguous sense of gay male ego, desire, and identity as an identity type. When users are searching and constructing their own profiles they are asked to tick, or leave un-ticked, men from these ten groups. Yet, this means that when they are searching for other users, and when other users see their profile, their subjective ideas represented through Imaginary and otherly *jouissance* will only be grasped as impersonal because they are located as a Symbolic Other.

It is interesting to note that these ten groups are presented in an order that ascends in relation to the metaphoric conventions of desirability in line with the gay male body or body type that the site legitimates in Figure 4.1. The 'Dude next door', 'Fit Jock Dude', and 'Big Muscle Dude' are the first types to be listed, whilst the 'POZ dude' is the last. The searches that users can perform via the welcome/search page, which will return the 'most viewed' or 'the most hot-listed' users of the site, consistently return back the first three categories, so its most popular profiles (and thus users) are configured through the metaphoric notion that the user is an Imaginary other associated with fitness, muscularity, and youth. In broad searches, where boxes remain un-ticked, this predominates and indicates that here, the kernel of gay desire and identity is manifested through signifiers that attempt to locate and validate *jouissance* as something we can rate and recognise. Yet we also see that *jouissance* is difficult (if not impossible) to locate or rate as 'desirable' because online 'desire is fundamentally caught up in a dialectical movement of one signifier to the next and is diametrically opposed to fixation' (Fink, 1995, p.90). Nonetheless, and from this point on, and as 'I' continue to search through the groups, 'I' am confronted and become aware of the fact there are now associations with the gay male user as less muscular (Bear, Chub),

sexually perverse or deviant (Leatherman, Sex Pig), older (Daddy men), and infected (POZ dude).

These divergent groupings demonstrate something of the breadth of how gay male *jouissance* can be represented when these men are organised through metaphoric identities and Imaginary identification. Yet, interestingly, these metaphors are also ones that are only understood because of the metonymic capacity of the search method. In effect, the reciprocal or cohesive identities that are 'grouped' have the potential to splinter and overlap through alternative identifications. If I leave all of the groups 'un-ticked' then all of the search results are brought back and my desire is less specific. However, if I select a series of ticks across a number of the search fields then my desire is condensed down and it becomes more preferential and precise. Here, the rule being that the fewer boxes I tick, the broader my search will be and my desires will remain unspecific and expansive. The user is asked to combine ticks and un-ticks to return profiles of men who he imagines are metaphorically aligned to his own identity. Yet, due to the ways in which ticking and un-ticking can be combined, and because search results will vary across content and user type, we find that the process of searching itself is transposed into an exercise in metonymic identification and Symbolic-stuttering bound to indeterminacy and capriciousness.

By ticking and un-ticking, the user feels he is able to identify with the causes of his *jouissance* yet these causes are already in place for him to choose. In the metaphorical pursuit of the Imaginary other, the subject must select (that is tick or untick) and, thus, pre-empt the thrill of *jouissance* at the level of the Symbolic Other. The user must engage with a Symbolic form of *jouissance* and an impersonal Other to begin to articulate desire. The 'subject to other' relationship on *dudesnude.com* (regardless of the 'type' of user) is wrought with uncertainty, yet this is organised through the interface of the Other in ways that manage, categorise, and filter desire in terms of an 'other'. This functions as a way for the' subject to other' dynamic to both placate and entrench desire through a metaphoric relation with that 'other'. In this way the 'user to user' relation on *dudesnude.com* relies on an Imaginary ego to posit the other as a personality and an identity 'I' can fantasise over, contact, communicate with, and also meet and have sex with. Yet, this can only occur on the basis of that other's Symbolic-stuttering of language and imagery. This stuttering relies upon a metonymic axis of identification, which retains an impersonal edge because all of the imagery, ways of

searching, communicating, and verifying are subject to a Symbolic force of Othering which regulates, sanctions, and organises the user's *jouissance* for them. The user is tricked by the Imaginary other into metaphoric relations with bodies and egos they will never fully personalise or identify, whilst also being deceived by the Symbolic Other into thinking that these signifiers of metonymic impersonality are the crux or demonstration of gay male desire and sexual identity.

Within the user content of the thousands of personal profiles on *dudesnude.com*, the tensions between personality and impersonality, metonymy and metaphor, identity and identification, and the Imaginary to Symbolic formation are also evident. More specifically, the personal profile draws attention to the ways in which an interactive presence of online users requires an emphasis on their visibility through self-presentation that relies upon precarious processes of metaphoric recognition. Yet the changing innovations of many online contexts (in-built links to social networks and micro-blogs, the functions of uploading content) also requires the users to work consciously on the self being shared, creating a metonymic barrier between the unconscious patterns and processes that exceed the individual ego, towards a more 'nuanced account of what connects a text to the world beyond itself' (Dean, 2000, pg.184).

4.3 Impersonal Profiles and Personal Desire on *dudesnude.com*

In terms of the networked personal profile on gay personal sites such as *dudesnude.com* the possibilities that could range from the searches and how they can be carried out are potentially immeasurable. The search combinations of 'Who' can be isolated (i.e. 'Couples' and the very broad connotations of what that may mean in terms of non-monogamy, group-sex, sex parties, fidelity/infidelity, orgies etc.) or combined (i.e. 'Chub' and 'Bear' who may be aligned to one another through the metaphors of similarity, signified through the 'Chubby' or 'Bearish' body, facial features (such as a beard), sexual preferences allied to BDSM, sexual fetishes, the construction of a 'straight-acting' identity etc.) can retrieve and return either the same user profile or a type of user profile that is allied through popular content with that type of gay identity and/or personality.

The popularity and 'hotness' stakes on *dudesnude.com* are both arbitrary and systematic. In any of the searches and the combinations of ticking and un-ticking content and/or group preferences, alongside the drop down options of how you find users (most viewed, hot-listed, newest etc.), all of the returns are changeable and irregular and this seems to reflect the nature of online profiles that 'rely on hyperbole, or re-position […] identification regularly' (Gudelunas, 2005, p. 22). This is also due to the fact that user content (that is, the images and text located as desire in the Imaginary other) changes all the time (because the Symbolic Other allows it to do so) and, thus, affects the outcome of how *jouissance* of the user is situated and pursued. Whilst this thesis does not seek to analyse particular trends, demographics, and/or socio-cultural formations of users on *dudesnude.com*, at this stage it is useful to use the table and the hypotheses of the searches carried out to consider them in relation to the more detailed examination of specific profiles and their relation to impersonality and the intricacies of Imaginary other and Symbolic Other on *dudesnude.com*.

If 'I' (in the position of the user) search for the most 'hot-listed' profiles across all of the user-groups, I find profiles that engage the other at the level of the Imaginary-ego and seem to conform to the typicality of a 'fit jock dude' who (as the Symbolic Other informs us both through language and visual representation) is mostly Caucasian, muscular, young, handsome, well-endowed, virile, and sexually confident. Just as the representational practices allied to selfies on *tumblr.com* (examined in Chapter 6) attempt to repeat and reiterate the conformity and recognisability of this type of gay body and identity through the Imaginary-ego, we also begin to see that on *dudesnude.com*, the Symbolic ensures that this other is categorised and available. The gay male other that is privileged, validated, and legitimated as the 'hottest' and the most popular (rated in terms of how many 'others' have been viewing the subject's profile) evidences that, despite the impersonal capabilities of *jouissance*, the gay male body seems to fall back into the ego and the personalisation of desire again. It can be suggested that the users, 'see' these bodies, and are seduced into personalising them to get aroused, to masturbate, to ejaculate, and then, perhaps, return to see them again at a later date and time. Yet, this visibility is staged through an index of seeing that only occurs through the impersonality of the signifier in that desire can only be triggered, expressed, and realised through images and representations of desire which in turn come to both locate and manifest something of that desire itself. The

excitement and jolt of *jouissance* on *dudesnude.com* relies upon illimitable representations that stutter and, as such, permit the Imaginary other to bask in the stimulus of 'seeing' gay male identity, sexuality, and the body in personalised ways. Yet, this personalised index of desire always remains impersonal to us because 'seeing' the other can only be constituted through a series of representations. On *dudesnude.com*, the other will only exist through the signifier and this continually returns them to the place of a Symbolic Other within an impersonal domain irretrievably outside of, and exterior to, our own and the other's personal identity.

Users who choose to construct a profile on *dudesnude.com* have to do so with both text and imagery. They have to conform to visual tropes of the *dudesnude.com* '(un)dress code' (see Figure 4.2), which states that 'membership requires at least 1 picture where your shirt is off (pants/trousers and underwear remain optional)….that's why we're called dudesNUDE, right?', yet, for non-members, there is also the option of looking at all of the images and the profiles anonymously. In the section of the website 'about *dudesnude*' (Figure 4.4 and also available as Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3) it states that 'if you don't want to upload your own pictures, you don't need a profile – just search the database for pictures and video clips instead'. Here, the subjects who do have profiles and appear 'NUDE' volunteer to do so, and whilst there are disclaimers associated with the protection of images, which state that 'you can restrict who sees your pictures' through the fact that the site provides coding and encryption to 'make it difficult for anyone to circumvent the site access mechanism and download your pictures directly' they are publicly available for anyone who has agreed to the terms of the site to see. As well as this, the site also allows users to disable right-clicking on the images they have uploaded and, thus, prevents people from saving images on their computers and devices. Here, we could suggest that *dudesnude.com* occupies the space of a Symbolic Other that both regulates and maintains the user's desires and their anxieties; it acts both as protector and dictator so that *jouissance* can be either restricted or realised through the others personal image/profile.

All individual profiles are contained within and configured through the ten user groups, and the individual identity of the user is reliant upon, and also subsumed by, the impersonal identifications inherent in the groups and their members. Profiles are located through the specific (and unspecific) searches for the other that the subject must participate in and their searches rely upon the pursuit of Symbolic *jouissance*, in

that they are aligned to a pre-existent set of search terms and groupings. They are also assembled in terms of an Imaginary and, thus, bodily ego, which the gay male user or 'dude' is encouraged to believe exists and applies to other 'dudes', their own identity as a 'dude', and how this is in some way represented as 'nude'. The intersubjective illusion of these community groups ambiguously positions the dudes and their pursuit of *jouissance* as complicit and persuasively connected to other dudes as both personal and identity-led. Yet, through a Symbolic Other and the capacity that these groups and groupings have to elide and destabilise Symbolic modes of *jouissance* into any number of arbitrary and convergent groups, we also see how the impersonal dimensions of that *jouissance* can only ever occur through a series of identifications underpinned by the Symbolic.

When the user searches for profiles by browsing the welcome page (see Figure 4.5) and in any of the searches that 'I' participate in, 'I' am able to select and combine the media type (profile, pictures, video clips), content, location, group, age range, associative key words, verification, newest, most hot-listed, and most viewed credentials of the user. This works to seductively personalise other users so the metaphoric dimensions of desire seem to both negotiate and overcome the metonymic dimensions of *dudesnude.com* the website as an impersonal Other that is actually controlling the search. Yet, the isolation of other factors, such as location, group, and age range, would illustrate the complexity of how the profiles and the user content of those profiles is always metonymically realised. They remain outside of the others' control because they are always located and therefore belong within the domain of *dudesnude.com* as the Symbolic Other. The searches are retrieved and returned by the search engine and facility on *dudesnude.com* and, at any one time, a number of unpredictable and even arbitrary results would be returned. In the same way that *tumblr.com* (examined in Chapter 6) constantly evolves and changes its significatory meaning because its users are posting, deleting, sharing, blogging, and re-blogging, we also see these processes of exchange and signification on *dudesnude.com*. Here the vast scope and series of combinations that could be entered into a search for an 'other' indicate that, from the outset, the location of desire is never clear. Whilst the user profiles and the processes of ticking and un-ticking categories and content allow the user and the other to negotiate their desire through the metaphorical and Imaginary other (the other users), it is only the metonymic and Symbolic Other (*dudesnude.com*)

that is both capable and also responsible for how that desire Symbolically-stutters when it is attained, expressed, and momentarily satisfied as a form of *jouissance* in the Symbolic.

Online 'dudes' (users) have the potential to connect, share via other social networks, and verify profiles with other *dudesnude.com* users, whose identities may be revealed or remain anonymous. Many of the users are porn-stars and link or embed their personal profiles with imagery and footage from studio-based productions alongside amateur footage of themselves and, in many cases, selfies they have taken. In this case, the dudes are never affiliated with a coherent 'I', 'we', 'our', or 'us'; rather, the identity ('dude') and the identification ('nude') combine to form an alignment that crosses over the established boundaries of language agreement, Symbolic communication, and Imaginary constructions of identity and ego. Whilst any user can browse the profiles, the level of personal access and communication with other users of *dudesnude.com* requires a case-sensitive password and/or verification code, privileging only certain users from particular online types and communities to 'log on' to see information. If this is not the case, you are told as you click on a member's profile that 'this profile is disabled, the person's web site/profile settings are preventing you from seeing it or you have been logged out of the site'. This introduces an implicit ambivalence that, although we supposedly identify with the potential of other 'dudes nude' and/or 'nude dudes' via the screened interface, we may still remain impersonal – rendered anonymous, blocked, and removed from other users on that network and vice versa. This complex interplay is linked through the relationship between the possibilities, as well as complexities, that arise in relation to Symbolic identification through the displacement and disavowal of Imaginary subjectivities and desires.

Once specific profiles have been located through the complexity of the search options, the Symbolic Other continues its power by urging the Imaginary other to click on that particular personal profile to view the content of the user. In this setting the profile content is always inconsistent and riven by contradiction. In most of the profiles on the site we see that the users sexualise their identity and personalise the profile through the metaphoric discourse of gay sex. Here the sexual interests they might list and the images they post connect their gay identity to a gay Imaginary other that is sexually audacious, available, and stimulating. Often users position the imagery on their profiles with sexually explicit language and statements in an attempt to arrange their

jouissance according to a range of specifically gay and male sexual desires and also preferences that the other must have a prior Symbolic knowledge of to begin to understand and, thus, feel aroused by. The index of sexual desire is condensed down by the user so that his own desire for an intersubjective and Imaginary other is transitorily satisfied and personalised – both for himself and for the user. Yet, because the profile remains outside of the users' control and because anyone can view it, we see that the singular personality of the subject to other (every other user of *dudesnude.com*) relationship is subsumed by a much more potent blend of impersonality, sustained because the nuances of *dudesnude.com* as the Symbolic Other are connected to modes of Symbolic Othering in language. This impersonality occurs on the basis of the user's reliance on *dudesnude.com* as the Symbolic Other as well as the broader dimensions of how the Symbolic Other can be located in relation to gay desire and identity to articulate their *jouissance* as Symbolic-stuttering. In this way the user's bodies stutter because they are formed through modes of representation that simultaneously locate and displace *jouissance*. In the Symbolic domain, the Imaginary other is ripped apart by the user's reliance on the Symbolic and its ability to metonymically rupture his 'personal identity' through a series of 'impersonal identifications' or Symbolic-stutters of the Other.

Still, the profile invites the user into believing that they manage the Symbolic Other to locate their Imaginary other, and that this other will pleasure, fulfil, and reciprocate their own Imaginary *jouissance*. Here, the gay male subject suggests an identity through signification, and both uses and 'controls' the profile as an apparatus in which to express desire through an Imaginary-ego. This is why the profile, which over-states and excessively presents the gay male subject as a signifier of sexual desire, fosters a body that stutters on *dudesnude.com*. In many personal profiles the signification of desire is understood through the rhetoric of sexually explicit language and the centrality of images which present others users engaged in 'sexual action', holding an erect penis, stretching the anus open, the cum-shot etc. Again and in this context the visual rhetoric of these images is utilised and positioned as the substance of the user's sexual identity. For instance many users post video in which they open their sphincter to the camera and play with sex toys and dildos to widen it; self-suck their own penis and/or pose in full naked body shots; suck and fuck other men. Here, the sexual identity of the user overlaps with his personality as a gay man through the power of

metaphor. Yet, the various sexual acts he performs and the sexual interests he lists are only ever established through a metonymic part of his identity and its signification as a profile on *dudesnude.com*. Here these metonymic aspects of his identity are assembled and connected together through condensed signifiers which seem to construct the metaphoric core of him. Yet, when these metonymic pieces are viewed we could also suggest that they displace his identity in the profile so that it now occupies the impersonal place of desire where bodies stutter in their attempts to speak their desire. By using the Symbolic Other to catalyse and stimulate the imaginary other as personal the sexually explicit profile signals in a combination of stutters that falter, vacillate, and, ultimately, fail to encapsulate the users *jouissance*.

The user only comes to detect his Imaginary ego and the Imaginary other through the signifiers that deceive him to act as 'substance [that] is *actual* only in so far as individuals believe in it and act accordingly' (Zizek, 2006, p.10). As well as this, the accordance and association of sexual *jouissance* with the wider dimensions of gay/queer cultural life also serve to humanise and personalise them in the Imaginary. User profiles both repeat and reflect the indices of Symbolic *jouissance* and metonymic impersonality manifested in the visual rhetoric and repetitiveness of of the 'selfie in the mirror' shot, the close up shot of a erect penis, as well as images that locate the user through discourses of leisure and pleasure; namely, shots of them on holiday, in the sunshine, or other settings where they look at their best (at a social event, on a night out etc.). In all of these images, the user only manages to capture metonymically an aspect of the life and lifestyle he metaphorically positions as an essence of himself in the written part of the profile. Yet, between the written and the visual components, the signifiers of his body begin to stutter and energise his identity into Symbolically-stuttering because they fail to fully account for his personality as the Imaginary other. This leaves a gap in the Imaginary-Symbolic, and the signifier to signified relation, through the nuances of how desire online may be interpreted as personal or impersonal.

In *Seminar XX*, Lacan alludes to this gap between the signifier and the signified as something that is 'stupid (*betise*)' (1999, p.20) or, more specifically, he asserts that 'stupidity […] is a way of collectivising the signifier' (ibid) because 'The signifier is stupid' (ibid). This stupidity is also the nub of how the Imaginary ego dupes itself into expressing desire through processes of Symbolic-stuttering. In the personal profile we

see that users succumb to the tricks and repeats that the language of metaphoric desire entices them into repeating. Their repetitively 'stupid' collectivisation of the signifier occurs by way of the image making practices mentioned above (the 'selfie in the mirror' shot, the close up shot of a erect penis, and images that locate the user through discourses of leisure and pleasure) that place him in a conventional position as an Imaginary other and in relation to Imaginary others. Here his Imaginary-ego works towards self-representing and personalising his desire through signifiers of that desire for other users and his own ego to be absorbed by. Yet, because the Imaginary ego fails to see how it has been duped and how its practices of personal representation are formed through impersonal and Symbolic means it begins to stutter. In this way the images that are assembled in his profile function towards Symbolically-stuttering and an abstruse form of *jouissance* rather than a clear expression of desire. On *dudesnude.com*, if all of the users are in some way 'stupid', they fall into the trap of endlessly, repetitively, and unsatisfactorily stuttering their *jouissance* through the impersonality of the other stupid signifiers. It may be argued that it is the personal profiles and the images therein that occupy the place of this stupidity and it is here that bodies stutter. This is because the allure and thrust of *jouissance* at an Imaginary level is made so stupidly palpable and enticing by the user for other users to see.

When these levels of 'stupidity' proliferated by the Imaginary intersect with the paradigms of *jouissance*, Bodies that Stutter and Symbolic-stuttering we could suggest that the Symbolic Other of *dudesnude.com* allows me to indulge my Imaginary ego so that the 'dude' that 'I' search for can be as specific or as indiscriminate as 'I' require it and my *jouissance* to be. For instance, factors, such as location, age, and whether or not the user is verified, may or may not configure in my search. Here, the Symbolic Other gives the Imaginary other who both posts and views profiles and their content some scope and some flexibility. The content of the personal profiles that amount to the most viewed and most hot-listed across the entire site also indicate how the Symbolic impersonality of the website as well as the metonymic dimensions of *jouissance* and stuttering allow for the Imaginary other to resituate itself in an unfixed and transient location.

Some of the most viewed personal profiles on the entire site and the most hot-listed are allied to porn-star users and their representation / self-representation as a commodified brand of gay sexual desire. Many of them also present information on

their profiles using other social networks where they accessible (*Instagram.com, Facebook.com,* and *Twitter.com*). This indicates to other users that they are individually viewing, have the agency to privately message, and, thus, can view the sexually explicit images of a porn-star they may recognise and desire from other representations they have seen in movies and online content. Just as the porn-stars identity is personalised through the profile the user feels a sense of intimacy with the Imaginary other because the Symbolic Other has constructed an identity for them. Yet here, the public appropriation and availability of the porn-star as a signifier of *jouissance* serves to impersonalise him because his identity moves beyond his corporeal and bodily materiality. As a way to maintain and to sustain his Imaginary ego, he has attempted to personalise his identity by stating that this 'verified' profile on the website provides evidence of his true identity, yet he has done so using the tools and the means that are only ever facilitated by the Symbolic Other, in this case *dudesnude.com*. The metaphoric substance of the porn-star as user and the pornographic presentation of his sexual identity will always remain impersonally metonymic because they are contained within a Symbolic structure of signification. The images we see as the 'other' act as traces of *jouissance* and imprudently stutter because they rely upon a Symbolic language that we can never full grasp or maintain.

Images which are positioned as pornographic to stimulate and arouse gay male desire remain fixed and confined to the Symbolic as images because that is all they amount to. Bodies within them stutter because they are confined by the metonymic, impersonal, and Symbolic features of language. Just as non-pornographic actors as users 'stupidly' repeat and reiterate their gay identity those understood as porn-stars do the same. They present themselves as pornographic actors, posed in pornographic ways, and their bodies must be signified in relation to pornographic modes of desire such as movie stills, photo-sets, and also selfies. Yet as markers of personal identity and desire they fail to fully satisfy and metaphorically reflect the personality and identity of their initiator and, thus, function perfectly as' Bodies that Stutter' that coax the Imaginary other into processes of Symbolic-stuttering in light of *jouissance*. Here, the Symbolic manages to trap the Imaginary, in that it allows users who want to masturbate and fantasise over porn-actors, contact them, or, indeed, steal their images and present them as their own to do so. Yet, when the images of the pornographic other have served their purpose for the user as *jouissance* and the Imaginary other's

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jouissance has been momentarily terminated (although there is always the guarantee that he will be back for more), it is the website as a powerful and in some respects persistent Symbolic Other that remains. As a result, porn-stars are only recognisable and only exist through a repetitive set of impersonal signifiers that attempt to condense their personality and identity into significations of those signifiers. In this way we see that Symbolic-stuttering and 'Bodies that Stutter' operate on two planes. On the first the porn-star as the user stutters because he fails to articulate the dimensions of his *jouissance* to other users and on the second the images which are shared and viewed stutter because they fail to fully articulate that user as an identity to the viewers who engage with them.

These profiles and the images within them are riven by the power that the website yields when it is positioned as the Symbolic Other. Through this power it has the capacity to persuade its users that by adopting a personal identity online via a profile their Imaginary ego and the Imaginary other relation will fulfil their desire. In this way the users of *dudesnude.com* who post images and text to their own profiles, yet also view the profiles of users doing the similar things are both seduced and ensnared in an on-going tension with the Symbolic Other that oversees how their desire is articulated. In this way the Symbolic Other is the force that gives rise to 'Bodies that Stutter' and more so Symbolic-stuttering. As we have seen, elements of the site offer inclusion and exclusion from groups and personalised searches through a vast rhetoric of signifiers allied to how *jouissance* can and cannot be articulated. This paradox of being able to self-represent your sexual identity and your personality as a gay man can only be achieved through the technicalities and/or systematics of the site (and the internet more generally), and it is this fact that tethers the personalisation of desire and *jouissance* to the metonymic and impersonal identification with a functional device that the user must grasp to be involved, embedded, and, thus, interpreted from within *dudesnude.com*. Here the proliferation and construction of an impersonality of desire is facilitated by the Symbolic apparatus of the website itself and the ways in which it enables users to personalise their desire vis-à-vis impersonal tools of use. In this way the website as a Symbolic Other becomes more complex in that it is consolidated as this Symbolic Other via of a series of Imaginary others and Imaginary relations. Here the Symbolic authority of the Other and in this case the Symbolic language of the website are reliant on the processes of Imaginary transference that occur through the

construction and viewing of profiles and the dynamics of the user to viewer / viewer to user relationship within.

4.4 Conclusion

Just as 'Bodies that Stutter', Symbolic-stuttering, and *jouissance* may offer a way to dismantle the Imaginary-ego of the subject of a personal profile and/or the viewer of that profile, and potentially the confines of gay identity, this way of reading desire online is not intended to undermine, celebrate, or legitimate either a psychoanalytic or, indeed, a post-queer trajectory of these concepts and their theoretical potential. Yet, what is clear is that, by using this approach, the Symbolic features of *dudesnude.com* convey and construct users and viewers who are not possessed of a liberated identity and/or empowered egos and bodies of much recent queer and online media theory. Rather, the problematisation of gay identity when it is configured through the user as viewer, and the viewer as user, and when it is positioned in terms of a body and/or ego, allows for an examination of how *jouissance* splinters both the user and viewer through identifications that both rely on language for an identity and are rendered metonymically impersonal because of it and its stuttering. It is in the very fault-lines or gaps that productive and critical inquiry can continue to work with these fissures to investigate the gay male subject and, more precisely, the gay male subject online. It is also through the convergence of pornographic, photographic, and online media that these tensions appear; identities become more mobile, problematic, cathartic, antithetical, and antagonistic through their egotistic sexual presentation. Aspects of queer and online discourse seemingly position the user/viewer subject as an agent of sexual expression, possibility, and desire; yet, in so doing, the articulation of sex and sexuality fails, and, in many instances across online social and personals media (and the individual profiles therein), we see the subject shored up by impersonalising systems that attempt to contain their *jouissance* but always fail to do so.

Joan Copjec states that, 'Everything implied by the psychoanalytic engagement with human behaviour indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual, but that it makes up for it. Sex is the stumbling-block of sense…Sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification' (Copjec, 1994, p.18). Gay sex online is, then, the impossibility of language completing meaning, not a meaning that is incomplete or unstable in language. Alternatively, it could be argued that online sex and the 'Bodies that Stutter'

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and Symbolically-stutter both form and are formed through the structural gap (*faille*) and incompleteness of language; not that sex is itself incomplete, for sex is not an *incomplete* entity here, but a totally empty one – i.e. it is one to which no predicate can be attached. As Copjec continues, 'Sex serves no other function than to limit reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding' (ibid, p.20-21). Surely queer and online discourse allows this (gay) subject to realise, but also to reach, its limits in this breach, due to its failure to make coherent the unconscious expressions of *jouissance* through language and in representation.

Lacanian theorisations of sexuality are interesting in terms of their gaps or points at which the formulas and the theories seem unable to resolve some of the key problems of sex, sexuality, gender, and identity. On that premise, Lacan either complicates, refuses, or coaxes the reader, listener, or, in this instance, the user into the application of sexual or representational context. Whilst queer work that engages with Lacan has traditionally been understood in terms of a pluralisation of sexual identities, there is no analysis of photographic, pornographic, or, indeed, online identity by Lacan himself. Thus, from the outset, his work is better understood in terms of its signalling of metonymic and impersonal modes of sexual identification. This stress on impersonal identification attempts to underline the processes and routes of desires via *jouissance* rather than through the instincts or identities from which *jouissance* is thought to result. Thus, as the internet has evolved, our sexually personalising and corporeally alienating relationship with an Imaginary other has been transformed through ambivalently personal and impersonal experiences and interactions associated with sex and sexuality that catalyse 'Bodies that Stutter' to do so symbolically. In the next chapter, which examines pornography and *jouissance* in the output of UK Company *Triga* Films, the stuttering and impersonality discussed here are resituated through the convergence of straight and gay male identity in gay pornography.

Triga Films is the most pertinent example of British gay porn that combines techniques associated with amateurism and discourses of self-representation also prevalent on personals websites, such as *dudesnude.com.* This captures something of how a gay male audiences desire for 'real' or 'authentic' paradigms of an Imaginary heterosexual 'other' are allied to a working class or under-classed 'other', elements of race, and more specifically the resonances of how a 'dirty whiteness' circulates Symbolically. By analysing several scenes and aspects of *Triga* Films, Chapter 5 argues that when

encounters and exchanges between men who are identified as neither 'straight' nor 'gay' slide into one another they are embedded in modes of Symbolic-stuttering, 'Bodies that Stutter', and *jouissance* specific to gay pornography but, more so, an index of impersonal identification that is particular to *Triga* Films. Alongside this, the next chapter aims to address the commodification of the 'disgusting' figure of the chav which gay men visually desire and consume in terms of 'Bodies that Stutter'. It also argues that *Triga* Films forms an ambivalent dialogue of identification with the chav, which relies on this straight, under-classed, and 'dirty white other' as a simultaneously abject and desirable figure. Just as Joanna Brewis and Gavin Jack (2010) understand this through the discursive construction of 'gay chavinism', which, in its broadest form, relates to 'a growing appetite amongst gay men for seemingly downwardly mobile sexual experiences' (ibid, p.252), the next chapter suggests that it is also a key mode of Symbolic-stuttering and 'Bodies that Stutter'in *Triga* Films but also gay pornography more generally.

Figure 4.1 - http://dudesnude.com/

Figure 4.2 - 'our (un)dress code' http://dudesnude.com/#undresscode

Figure 4.3 - http://dudesnude.com/search

Figure 4.4 - 'about *dudesnude* - http://dudesnude.com/about.php

Figure 4.5 - The Browser / Welcome Page - http://dudesnude.com/browse.php

Chapter 5: *Triga* Films: Impersonality, *Jouissance* and 'Bodies that Stutter' in Gay Pornography

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on gay pornography and representations which are positioned and understood as 'pornographic' and 'gay'. Yet this positioning is problematised by the chapters' contextual focus on UK gay pornography company *Triga* films where the signifiers associated with gay sex and desire are allied to straight masculinity. There is scope to suggest that it is within the paradox of straight men having gay sex, and its signification as pornographic, that bodies stutter. It is argued here that they stutter through processes of *jouissance* that can only occur within Symbolic representations of sex which both enable and antagonise the ways in which a gay and/or straight identity, personality, and subjectivity are articulated as Imaginary. By examining the discourse of gay pornography and evaluating how gay and straight male identities are constructed in porn and *as* pornographic this chapter suggests that the body that stutters is an integral element of gay pornography that represents straight men engaging and participating in homosexual sex. It does this through a close analysis of *Triga* Films, and in the later sections of the chapter, through an analysis of the commodification of the straight chav as a marker of gay male *jouissance* and 'Bodies that Stutter'.

In its analysis of *Triga* Films this part of the thesis will continue to explore the tensions that are traded between the Imaginary other and the Symbolic Other, and more specifically will examine how the construction of representations built around the notion of straight men having gay sex move towards a way of articulating 'Bodies that Stutter'. The chapter will suggest that straight male identity acts as both a catalyst and container for gay male desire and in so doing cultivates a form of *jouissance* that Symbolically stutters. This intervention also focuses on the paradoxes between heterosexual identity and homosexual identification to suggest that the personalising metaphors associated with straight identity in gay pornography are displaced by contiguous forms of metonymic *jouissance* that stutter when they are revealed as gay. In turn, this renders them as impersonal and metonymic traces of

jouissance which only partially account for gay and straight identity and/or personality through a shifting chain of signifiers.

The first section of this chapter contextualises both the discourse of pornography and porn studies and allows for the key themes of gay desire, straight masculinity, and the chav to be positioned in relation to the 'Bodies that Stutter' in the next sections. These sections of the chapter look at several aspects of *Triga* films in detail and do so by examining the material and cultural tropes allied to gay desire via an Imaginary other, as well as an 'othering' that relies upon and commodifies forms of straight masculinity associated with violence, homophobia, hyper-masculinity, and British working class identity. Reflecting on this¸ pornography such as *Triga* which is consumed by gay men allows the homo-sexualisation of heterosexual tropes to function in terms of a double-take. Here, *Triga* depends upon and positions the binaries of straight and gay masculinity as oppositional whilst producing films which subvert, displace, and realign systems of heterosexual/heterosexist patriarchy, homophobia, and ultimately hetero/homo-normativity. In this way, gay desire and the spurs of gay male *jouissance* in *Triga* Films are also subject to systematic images of straight and homophobic hegemony that are embedded in consumer capitalism and commodification. This suggests that straight men in gay porn are visually represented according to conventional mass and sub-cultural models connected to the notion that straight male identity is both threatening and desirable to gay men. Yet the 'threat' of straight identity as an Imaginary other and 'personality' in porn is simultaneously appropriated, assimilated, and subverted through the lens of gay male *jouissance* which holds the capacity to render it far more inviting than it initially seems. In light of this, the chapter remains alert to the ways in which the Imaginary register of identity can only occur under conditions tethered to a Symbolic Other, and the issue that both straight and gay bodies stutter and continue to shift when they are sexualised and signified in relation to *jouissance.*

In this way the Symbolic Other holds the power to cultivate an impersonality of desire via images allied to masculine identities such as the chav and associated forms of heterosexual masculinity in gay pornography. On that premise this part of the thesis continues to build on the contextual analyses in Chapter 4 to reinforce the idea that it is only when sexual identity falters in its search for *jouissance* that identity in the Imaginary is questioned and an impersonality of identifications in the Symbolic draw

us closer to the ways in which contemporary gay desire is expressed. This chapter also suggests that as *jouissance* is precariously articulated across a continuum of 'gay' *and* 'straight' signifiers in *Triga* Films (and in gay pornography more generally) we see that it reveals an insecure and impersonal representational space where neither gay or straight identity and/or identification are attached to representational, psychic, and ideological systems which are coherent. It is therefore the aim of this part of the thesis to examine theoretical and contextual instances which complicate the exchanges between these gay/straight binaries to understand how the personal and impersonal dimensions of gay male desire can be re-read through the construction of straight masculinity as both a metaphor of identity and metonymic form of identification in pornography. In turn, this chapter will also suggest that meaning in gay pornography lies in the axis of impersonality that continuously dislodges the subject of desire and more specifically the subject of pornographic desire through Symbolic-stuttering.

5.2 Contextualising Gay Pornography and Porn Studies

Interventions in porn studies which address the specific questions of straight desire in gay pornography remain less prevalent than work which addresses gay identity per se. Much of the work in the field also seems to circumvent the question of impersonal identification with a Symbolic Other in favour of the analysis of an Imaginary other constituted through specifically gay male bodies, stereotypes, and identities. In other words, the emphasis on identity, the body, and the egotism of gay masculinity in gay porn seems to do away with the potentiality of desire and more specifically *jouissance* which can work beyond these Imaginary forms of representation. Work which examines the history of gay male pornography such as Thomas Waugh's *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from their Beginnings to Stonewall* (1996) accounts for the role that pornographic representation played in relation to gay culture, the body, and identity in the period before 1969 understood as pre-Stonewall. It is however, work published in the period after Stonewall that has positioned how and why gay pornography has been shaped and informed by the cultural, historical, and political circumstances associated with the nature of its construction and interpretation, and why this has conditioned how gay male sexuality is represented and read in relation to gay male self-hood and personality.

Output such as this uses theoretical work on sexuality and desire expressed through

gay studies and queer theory to deliberately question the stability and/or specificity of gay male identity. John Stoltenberg writing as a gay man within the paradigm of feminist anti-porn in 'Pornography, Homophobia and Male Supremacy' (1992) argues that the world of gay male pornography is comprised of close-ups of erect penises, sex between strangers, isolation in terms of how an orgasm feels and 'a studied impassivity that goes beyond amateur acting' (p.157), and asserts that 'The blankness of the faces...suggests an unrelatedess not only between partners but also within each partner's body' (ibid). Stoltenberg alludes to the juxtaposition of personal and impersonal features in gay male pornography in that he asks what satisfaction and/or pleasure gay men watching pornography are deriving from a 'disembodied spurt of fluid to certify the sex is real' (ibid). This illustrates that just as there is a tendency to read gay male pornography via the gay male body and the embodiment of gay male identity, there is also a way of considering pornography through the disembodiment of identity and the disconnected modes of impersonality that only pornography can contain.

Richard Dyer also addresses some of these concerns in his essay 'Coming to Terms' (1985) by stating that gay male pornography has a narrative structure which corresponds to the Imaginary construction of male sexuality, identity, and gay male sexual practice per se. Examining a 'conventional' fuck-scene between two men Dyer presupposes that what is structured in the text is transferred to the viewer via six stages in the scenario – 1. the arrival on the scene of the fuck; 2. establishing contact (through greetings and recognition, or through a quickly established eye-contact agreement to fuck); 3. Undressing; 4. Exploring various parts of the body; 5. Coming; 6. Parting (p.28). Yet amidst the metaphoric expectations and excessive spectacle of the Imaginary-ego in gay male pornography the 'porn-scene' is in fact formed through a more significant Symbolic Other which oversees the conventional narrative so that the moments of revelation, ejaculation, orgasm, erection, and extreme close-up only ever offer metonymic displacement through the ways in which they articulate a need for the metaphorical whole of desire through an expression of the metonymic part as *jouissance*.

Addressing these paradoxes within pornography more broadly we may suggest that pornography is both an 'exceptionally ambiguous yet emotive term' (Weeks, 1985, p.232). Using Rosalind Cowards claims that 'pornography can have no intrinsic

meaning' and that it is fundamentally 'a regime of representations' (1982, p.11) pornography is also a 'contradictory phenomenon, riven by ambiguities' (ibid, p.235). This in turn positions the producer, participant, and consumer of gay male porn (or any type of porn) as ultimately subjective and unpredictable in terms of what sexually explicit representation, meaning, and interpretation constitute in relation to sexual desire. This precarious contingency can also be seen in the tensions played out between Imaginary and Symbolic forms of representation in pornography. The strains between them shape a gap between what we imagine the sexual identity or act *is* (an identification with the other at an Imaginary level), and the Other indices of representations that come to both bear (hold, contain) and lay bare (expose, reveal) sexual desire *as* pornographic desire in Symbolic ways. These claims associated with the Imaginary to Symbolic relation alongside of the issue that 'we are still learning a proper pedagogy of pornography' (Williams, 2004a, p.21) are also allied to the advance of pornography as a scholarly discourse and particularly how porn studies within academia has been circulated, linked, and exchanged as something that 'addresses a veritable explosion of sexually explicit materials that cry out for better understanding' (ibid, p.1).

The study of porn may be best understood through three spheres of enquiry; 1. The radical feminist anti-porn debates which critically use both Marxism and psychoanalysis to situate male dominance and female subordination. 2. Porn studies and the popularisation of 'transgressive ontologies' as discursive paradigms. 3. Responses within gay studies / queer theory. Whilst, problematically liked, this critical body examines popular media and capitalism as conditions through which the gay and male pornographic text, pornographic consumer, porn-star, and pornographer as commodity come to ambiguously construct gay and/or straight masculinity as desirable. In the 1970's responses from radical second wave feminism / anti-pornography feminists and their political use of Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalytic terms carved out a position for the (anti) pornographic in terms of a feminist identity. Yet, within epistemological notions of the pornographic that have polarised ontologies as feminine/masculine, dominant/subordinate, active/passive as well as personal/impersonal there is an indication of something not revealed in the binary. In this gap the production and consumption of pornography opens up new ways of interpreting its prurience. Just as psychoanalytical discourse complicates desire, we

also see that the arbitrary discourse of pornography offers no coherent epistemology or chronological history to its own meaning. Joseph W. Slade's *Pornography and Sexual Representation: A Reference Guide* (2001) is a vast contemporary resource which determines and locates pornographic discourse but issues allied to pornographic desire are chronologically and thematically organised as a reference book / encyclopaedic resource biased to American definitions of pornography. Whereas Foucault's three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (2002) proficiently deals with sexuality as a discourse it does not address the epistemological discourse of pornography in any clear detail.

Over the last 25 years scholars in queer, gay, gender, and sexuality studies (Burston and Richardson 1995; Feasey, 2008; McNair, 2002; Medhurst and Munt, 1997; Sanderson, 1995; Sinfield, 1994, 1998) have examined how intersections and ambiguities in mass and sub-cultural representation have both facilitated and problematised the meaning of gay male identity in media. Recent work in the field of porn studies has also scrutinised the potential overlaps between the construction of subversive gay male identities and identifications (Attwood, 2009; Boyle, 2010; Cante and Restivo, 2004; Escoffier, 2003; Mowlabocus, 2010), whilst work related to documenting how tropes of gay male identity such as coming out (Plummer, 1995; Weeks, 1977) effeminacy (Bergling, 2001; Sinfield, 1994, 1998;), and camp (Cleto 1999; Meyer, 1994) are ambiguously linked to mediated images of gay desire and identity. In turn, the discourse of gay visibility and sociality seems to distance politically affirmative, public, subversive, and manifestly 'gay' modes of identity and identification from those associated with aspects of gay male sexual desire reliant on straight masculinity in pornographic representation such as *Triga* Films. Paradoxically, this also suggests that whilst sexual desire has intensified in terms of how it is expressed, it has also become less dissident and itinerant through paradigms of pornographic representation in capitalism (Hennessey, 2000, p.109). This, in turn, may also be a significant feature of porn studies itself which has to deal with the tensions between pornography as conventional and subversive, articulate and inarticulate, personal and impersonal.

Some of these concerns aligned to pornography as a part of 'capitals insidious and relentless expansion' (ibid), are emblematic of some radical second wave feminist work often referred to as 'anti-porn' which investigates the nature of pornography as

a violation of women's civil rights in capitalist societies. The work of Andrea Dworkin in *Woman Hating: A Radical Look at Sexuality* (1974) *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1981) and *Intercourse* (1987) critiques pornographic output through the production of masculine power and discourse. Dworkin argues that it is only in the fundamental abjuration and disavowal of masculine power, oppression, and dominance (disguised as the eroticisation of capitalist and patriarchal power in pornography) that women can realise their own subjective sexual liberation. Whilst the output allied to these issues is vast it is Dworkin's stance on feminine subordination read through hierarchy, objectification, submission, and violence (1987, pp. 29-32) which is provocative when considering how the articulation of a Symbolic impersonality in porn and also porn studies, alongside of gay identifications undermine the anti-porn standpoint. As Dworkin positions these concerns as central to masculine domination over women, what becomes clear is that if they are transposed and re-positioned in terms of a heterosexual masculine dominance over homosexuality these elements collapse and reform as intrinsic to the representational complexities of impersonal desire discussed in this chapter.

Work which moves beyond the confines of Dworkin's resistance such as Lynne Segal's and Mary McIntosh's *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate*, (1992) Pamela Church Gibson's two volume *Dirty Looks* (1993) and *More Dirty Looks* (2004) and Linda William's *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the "frenzy" of the visible* (1989) and *Porn Studies* (2004) realign many of the debates put forward by this earlier feminist effort in the field. It does so by using an epistemological identity politics connected to transgression and insubordination, yet it also struggles to move beyond the reiteration of discursive norms *within* the discourse and the identity bound ontological constraints of the body, gender, and sexuality which an engagement with a discourse such as psychoanalysis, or more precisely the Imaginary and Symbolic, may have the capacity to fragment. Collections such as Lyn Hunt's *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity 1500-1800* (1996) also use cultural materialism, essentialist / constructionist debates, and ontological theories of the body, desire and sexuality to position pornography as a historical discourse and in turn implicate 'a history of porn'. Other critical exegesis dealing with pornographic identities and representations in media have addressed the 'pornographication' of culture (Esch and Mayer, 2008; Nikunen, et al. 2008; Smith 2010) and the implication

that this has on the production of sexual epistemology and ontological distinctions between the metonymy of impersonality and the metaphors of porn as a personalised experience. These tensions between the personality and the impersonality both 'in' and 'of' pornography draws us closer to how 'the trajectory of pornography has always been towards the vanishing point of this distinction' (Hardy, 2009, p.3). In this instance porn is once more positioned in the discursive gap between personal identities and impersonal identifications. Yet we also see that when the inversions and inconsistencies in pornographic representation engage with the possibility of the impersonal they are also ensnared by the commodification of pornography and identity politics in capitalism, which in turn, becomes a defining feature of pornography and potentially porn studies itself.

In McNair's *Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratisation of Desire* (2002) this is determined through the normalisation of gay transgression and resistance. He discusses the mainstreaming of gayness by locating it chronologically and also by assuming that there is an operational legitimacy and evolution of gay identity in media and culture. In other words gay sexual identity is only validated in a discourse like pornography so gay desire can be imagined as both 'speaking to' and 'for' gay male identity. Yet porn also offers up a space in which gay identity is transformed through the ontological categories intimately associated with straight male identity and personality into far more indistinct and difficult paradigms of impersonal identification. In this way pornography is also a discourse allied to the motivation for 'gay visibility aimed at producing new and potentially lucrative markets' (Hennessey, 2000, p.112), and it is argued that gay desire is ultimately defined and produced as both a niche and impersonal commodity. For example, the Imaginary signification of something like a straight working class man is only enabled in porn because the pornographic text has been created through processes of impersonal and Symbolic cultural productions. This is a practice that Hennessey also suggests can be linked to the broader commodification of sexual identity and 'a process that invariably depends on the lives and labour of invisible others' (ibid, p.111).

For instance, in *Triga* Films the ideological paradigms of heterosexuality associated with geography, race, class, and work based identities are assembled to privilege the Imaginary identity of the straight male other through metaphors of personality associated with that other. Yet, this also positions the discourse of heterosexuality in

Triga (and any other gay pornographic output that espouses heterosexual power and straight masculinity as the key facilitator of *jouissance*) Symbolically and impersonally. This is because straight (and gay) masculinity is always mediated through the Symbolic Other and the impersonal dimensions of identification allied to that Other. In gay pornography which advocates straight men having gay sex, the signification of straight masculinity relies upon the Imaginary other, but can only do so through 'the symbolic efficiency of the big Other' (Taylor, 2010, p.71) and its ability to produce and sustain 'an ultra-efficient transmission of hyper-real signs' (ibid).

We see in Figure 5.1 that the *Triga* porn-star Danny Evans is represented in terms of this efficacy. Here his identity has been assembled and signified through a series of associations rooted in Imaginary metaphors of personality. His tracksuit bottoms and erect cock casually revealed from just beneath their waistband, his heavy gold necklace, tattoo, bottle of Budweiser, the Union-Jack flag, and the way in which he 'gives the finger' to the viewer all work toward guaranteeing his personality as a straight working class subject. Yet this construction of an identity and its appeal to gay desire can only occur through the Symbolic nuances of signification which work at an impersonal level. When we begin to identify with him as a straight 'lad' or 'chav' in gay porn and when the Imaginary metaphors are read through the lens of gay desire the image of Evans can only appear through metonymic modes of transposition and his alliance to objects and images that construct him as 'Danny Evans'. At the level of an Imaginary other this image may seem to locate the signifiers as in some way personal and associative to Evans and his 'laddish' or 'chavvy' persona, yet these are only possible because the Symbolic Other has located them as markers of gay desire that are situated in a prior moment of impersonal identification that occurs through its signification.

In an image like this the visual index of how Evans is signified takes on a series of meanings in light of gay male desire and it's relation to straight masculinity. In this way, one of the key ways that gay desire is articulated is through the pursuit of *jouissance* for straight masculine identities and tropes of straight male identification. Here the politics of a gendered / sexual difference contained through straight / gay binaries also needs to be understood as both contextual and contingent because both gay and straight sexual identities complicate and buttress the rhetoric of gay and

straight representation via the dynamics of an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other. Nonetheless, this visual effectiveness also intercedes and governs how *jouissance* is expressed *as* desire through the intrinsically Symbolic dimensions of porn and its impersonal nature as a metonym and commodity. Here the over-arching presence of the Symbolic commodity of pornography itself ensures that the subject (in this case Danny Evans, but any producer, actor, or user / consumer) of porn can never realise their *jouissance* and personalise their identity in relation to that desire. As detailed in the analysis of stars, scenarios, and screen-shots from *Triga* Films in the next parts of this chapter, it is often in the Imaginary others attempt to do so (by way of participating in pornography and also consuming it) that pornographic representations only ever endure as Symbolic traces of desire which never sustain or fulfil the urgency of the *jouissance* allied to them. We initially see this in Figure 5.1 but it is also something that haunts the other representational instances of this chapter and arguably this thesis.

5.3 Gay *and* Straight? Locating Identity in *Triga* Films

John Mercer's work claims that one of the central features in gay pornography is the discourse of the 'heterosexual scenario' (2004, p.157-8). He suggests that the construction of situations in which straight men succumb or accede to gay sex involve 'straight men being inducted into the joys of gay sex' (ibid, p.157) or straight men 'using the opportunity of gay sex as an outlet for […] uncontrollable sexual urges' (ibid). Whilst Mercer claims that the homophobic specificity of these sorts of representations 'celebrate[s] and affirm hegemonic masculinity by eroticising the heterosexual male and his milieu' (ibid), they also have the power to Symbolically construct representations of straight men having gay sex that are disruptive to this hegemony. Still, this disruptive element and its subversive and/or transgressive capacities also create new boundaries of desire because porn is situated as 'a genre within the capitalist system of production and consumption' (ibid, p.155) which paradoxically 'challenges the dominant, heterosexual ideology that underpins capitalism, through its celebration and articulation of desires and sexualities that are widely regarded as taboo' (ibid). This conflict is also connected to the idea that gay porn is 'normative and concerned with repetition' (ibid, p.154), in that it seduces consumers and users into identifying recognisably gay and straight identities whilst also containing the potential to express desire through ambiguous identifications.

Richard Rambuss (2011) has also observed that '...whether it's for better or worse, gay men learn a lot about gay desire from gay porn – it's that the indicatively male forms its core' (p.202). Here he suggests that the signifiers associated with an essential and unwavering heterosexuality are part of the Symbolic 'pornography of male masculinity' (ibid) and the 'Otherly' power of porn which is representationally intensified through the Imaginary other of straight masculinity and the Imaginary metaphors of gay pornography itself; He states,

Gay male porn is dick and muscles; it's hairy or shaved chests and butts. It's jockstraps, briefs, and boxers. It's a male fantasia of desirable and desiring men, some staged solo, most in couples, still others as multiples erotically charged erotically choreographed into group scenes. [....] the gym and the locker room, the barnyard and the construction site remain classic situational turn-ons. So do law enforcement and military scenes... (ibid)

Here there is an emphasis placed on issues such as 'transgression, the eroticisation of inequality and a valorisation of masculinity' (Edwards, 1994, p.86). In gay porn, and especially in *Triga* Films these are organised and produced as repetitive metaphors of heterosexuality and/or hyper-masculinity. As Mercer also suggests this discourse of the heterosexual or hyper-male in gay pornography is concerned with 'the all male environment [that] posits scenarios where the restrictions of the heterosexual world no longer apply, where, in absence of females as objects of sexual desire and release, men are compelled to use each other as substitutes, or where men's *true* sexual desires for each other can be articulated' (2004, p.156). This becomes the central metaphor in gay pornography understood as 'normative and concerned with repetition' (ibid, p.154) because the Imaginary-ego of both the gay and the straight subject relies upon and is embedded in Symbolic systems of consumer-capital.

In gay porn such as *Triga* films which utilises this ambivalence we see that the subjects and objects of gay porn are effectively compartmentalised into designated 'groups' which are meant to epistemologically signify and characterise the ontological thrust of both gay and straight male desire but as a result only perpetuate an erroneous refraction of desire, gayness and maleness. In this way then, the (mis)use of signifiers manipulated and re-represented by gay men that have been culturally positioned, sexualised, and signified as 'straight' such as army uniforms, scally boys, hooligans,

skinheads, bouncers, and working men, metonymically stand in for desire. In Figure 5.2 which is taken from the feature *The Sparky's Apprentice* (2011) the notion of a straight male identity is connected to discourses of manual work and the impersonal objects that ally straight men to an Imaginary identity as both a 'Sparky' and 'Apprentice'. In this case the four men in the image are positioned as electricians or more specifically 'Sparky's'. Here the dynamics between the apprentice electricians and the electricians that are instructing them are allied to metaphors of manual work and/or hyper-masculinity. Yet, the four actors identities as 'Sparky's' are assembled in relation a system of impersonal objects and settings. The torn and paint splattered overalls, drills, tool-boxes, protective masks, and spaces such as the basement or the cellar initially catalyse an Imaginary space of masculine labour and the associations that are metaphorically potent in light of the electricians identities as both straight and working class. However, the personalities of the electricians are only consistent or indeed recognisable on the basis of metonymic impersonality. Their bodies are only understood as those of electricians and 'Sparky's' because they have been constructed and in some ways excessively signified as 'Sparky's. Here a series of Imaginary metaphors are reliant on a set of Symbolic cues that tether the Sparky's to the impersonal objects they are surrounded with and within this homosocial situation. As a consequence, the pornographic nature of the image and the broader discourse of the film itself seduce, stimulate, and dupe its audience into a rhetoric of what straight electricians would look like if they engaged in gay sex.

Examples such as this indicate that it is through the affirmation of heterosexuality as a key catalyst for gay male *jouissance* that heterosexuality and its representation in 'heterosexual scenario's' (Mercer, 2004, pp.157-8) act as a central energiser of gay male desire. As these examples suggest, the transposition, adaption, or conversion of heterosexual masculinity into forms of homosexual desire rely upon the ways in which both straight and gay male identities stutter when they are expressed through the modes of the Symbolic and *jouissance*. In any instance of pornographic output understood through the Symbolic and the associations of metonymy and impersonality it is also through metonymic modes of a 'gay and/or straight personality' that desire is expressed. Yet, *Triga* Films are organised through the metaphorical 'logic' of straight male typicality associated with homosocial and homophobic paradigms which are then subverted, slip beyond, or chaotically develop into atypical sex acts between men who

are either labelled as straight or curious but very rarely positioned and identified as gay. Most of *Triga's* productions follow aspects of an amateur aesthetic and do not credit the actors, reveal the locations, and in some cases the date of production. At this level we see that tropes of both identification and impersonality may underpin *Triga* in multiple ways. Despite *Triga's* appearance on social media platforms such as *tumblr.com* (http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/), *Twitter.com* (http://Trigafilms.twitter.com/), and *Facebook.com* (https://www.facebook.com/#!/Trigafilms) most of the personnel and the actors remain anonymous and nameless, which serves to impersonalise them as Imaginary others and as a result add to their enigmatic presence as Symbolic reagents of *jouissance* .

In *Triga* Films this index of anonymity is a key visual and discursive motif and it serves to displace the notion of a coherent gay ego / identity. The emphasis on identifications with sports kit, workman's tools and overalls, institutional uniforms, sub-cultural dress-codes, binge-drinking of particular drinks, smoking, taking recreational drugs, manual labour, criminality, regional dialect, and social class are all used to identify an Imaginary hetero-sexed subject so that he can then be Symbolically homo-sexed and thus displaced and disembodied through *jouissance.* This happens because both homo and hetero sexuality are always tethered to the Symbolic order which facilitates the 'depersonalising' of how sexual identity is expressed. For instance the advert and DVD sleeve for *Triga's Banging Builders* (2013) (Figure 5.3) combines metaphor and metonym to articulate and symbolise gay male builders having anal sex. The tagline to the film is *'Time to hammer that dirty nail….get your hard hat on'* which uses the impersonalising notion of the builder's tools and protective clothing to facilitate the image of hard-core penetrative sex. Here the problem of identity, read in and through the lens of metaphor, is in effect the problem of metonymy to the extent that the signification and realisation of gay male desire is always incomplete and in many ways oblique.

It is in the re-organisation or inter-sectioning of this homo/hetero binary in *Triga* Films and through the identity of the chav examined later that desire Symbolically-stutters as *jouissance* because it can only be expressed as an impersonality of desire. Just as Hennessy suggests that elements of same-sex desire are configured in terms of an

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asymmetry or tension that she calls 'heteropolarity' (ibid) it is evident in *Triga* Films that Symbolic tropes and practices aligned to British, straight, working-class and ultimately chav masculinity serve as both the metaphor which defines and the metonym that displaces *jouissance* . This also positions how the index of gay male desire and masculinity are interpreted in sexual representation by *Triga* which strategically manipulates a construction of the working class subject as a Symbolic Other vis-à-vis his construction in the Imaginary realm. Here the rupture between hetero and homo is reconfigured as a duplicitous 'homo-hetero' identity signified as both obstinate yet complicit with the heterosexual and heterosexist politics and logic of gender and sexuality. From here we see that gay desire and more specifically desire for a certain type of straight masculinity 'turns around a particular kind of masculinity; pugnacious, violent, but above all *straight*' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.261). More so, this form of gay desire relies upon Symbolic forms of *jouissance* that construct gay desire in terms of 'a heterosexual male aggressor, pivoting ambiguously on the promise of rough sex and the threat of violence' (ibid). This 'desirable threat' is something gay pornography contains efficiently and repetitively, and also something that the Symbolic Other guarantees distance from in that it can be consumed impersonally *as* pornography without the personal threat of violence and homophobic aggression.

An example of this index of gay identification can be seen in Figure 5.4 where straight male identity and the nuances of homophobic threat are signified as desire. In an image such as this, but in *Triga* more generally, the central index and catalyst of gay sexual identification is articulated through the Imaginary devices of male heterosexual desire as ambivalently violent, virile, detached, powerful, and also menacing. A screen-shot like this is allied to a bodily rhetoric of threat and the notion of straight masculinity as frightening, intimidating, and unapproachable. In this instance the impersonality of desire works through this notion of the hyper-straight Imaginary other as one that must be threatening to trigger gay male *jouissance*. This image does not explicitly address or explain to the viewer that they are threatening; rather the bodily poses and gestures are constructed through ruptures of sexual threat and allure. The tensed muscular arms, tattooed skin, and menacing stare are exaggerated as fragments of straight masculinity that can only be allied to straight male identity and personality through their impersonal signification and exchange as gay pornography. Here a straight male threat

is contained as a Symbolic signifier of risk and as a result the threat is in some extinguished as gay desire. It is done so through representational guises of a straight masculine body that would harm, exclude, and violently disavow gay identity that are now contained as an Imaginary deception and Symbolic trace of their real threat. In this way the images and the representation of bodies in them stutter but we could also suggest that the gay male responses to them Symbolically-stutter because they can only be understood and formed in terms of gay desire through an impersonal distance from it.

In John Champagne's *The Ethics of Marginality: A New Approach to Gay Studies* (1995) it is through the impersonality of the signifier and the impersonality of pornography more generally that desire as personal is perpetually blocked. If we connect these tensions between personal and impersonal modes of desire to *Triga* Films we see that it is constructed and sustained on the basis of 'epistemological traps' (p. xvi) that a work like Champagne's has 'designed his [new] ethical practices to evade' (ibid). Yet this drive towards a new ethics of gay-straight relationality and indeed a new ethics of impersonality in pornography is difficult to instigate and more so to sustain when gay desire is formed in relation to, and in terms of straight masculinity. On the one hand, this realtionality between gay and straight male identity and desire in *Triga* Films is indicative of what Champagne see as 'monovocal' (ibid, p.34), in that it is defined by relations that 'cannot adequately acknowledge the heterogeneous weaving of the porno text[s], as themselves contested spaces of and for the production of cultural explanations'(ibid). Yet, on the other, this monovocality allows the convergence of gay-straight identity and desire to open up the possibilities of reinterpretation and incomprehension (ibid) that imprecision's in the discourse of porn can only themselves reveal. It can also be argued that in gay pornography such as *Triga* Films and its emphasis on homosexual sex between straight men, there may be a move towards a space where 'homosexuals will not have the same sort of discontinuous perceptions of themselves, that by definition constitute the subject of mass publicity in straight representation' (Cante and Restivo, 2004, p.153). This also relates to claims that the broader Symbolic aesthetics of gay male pornography are subject to a very different set of political and ideological constructions (and thus interpretations) than that of its straight equivalent.

If gay porn such as *Triga* intentionally attempts to subvert and transgress heterosexual masculinity, it has the capacity to reposition heterosexual masculinity and the ways in which it contains a series of 'socially pervasive, [and] underlying myriad[s] [of] taken-for-granted norms that shape what can be seen, said and valued' (Hennessey, 2000, p.114). Gay porn which is constructed through discourses of male heterosexuality is also located within a much broader Symbolic system of heterosexual representational and cultural signification which Edelman (1994) suggests is located through 'the critical force of homosexuality at the very point of discrimination between sameness and difference as cognitive landmarks governing the discursive field of social symbolic meanings' (p.20). In *Triga* there is a notion that these pulls between sameness and difference both threaten and fascinate the Imaginary other and Imaginary order of heterosexual masculinity because heterosexual desire can only be expressed through the Symbolic Other's *jouissance* allied to gay desire within gay pornography. In *Triga* when heterosexuality succumbs to gay desire then unseen, unsaid, and unconscious modes of straight masculine desire are expressed so that 'the excluded difference' (Bersani, 1995, p.36) of homosexuality 'that cements heterosexual identity' (ibid) also becomes a constituent part of it. This capitulation of straight desire towards gay *jouissance* also reveals that perhaps 'lurking behind heterosexuality is a more original homosexuality, a same-sex sex drive that the invention of homosexuality helps to repress' (ibid.).

Here the Imaginary-ego of the heterosexual and his 'otherness' becomes a constituent part of how gay male desire is constructed. Yet the metaphoric power of this other is only permitted by the metonymic capacity of the Symbolic Other insofar as this Imaginary other is only ever expressed and understood as a pornographic image which Symbolically stutters. Paradoxically, this occurs because violence, virility, detachment, power and disgust are constructed through Symbolic identifications and associations that can only be personified through the seductive identity of an Imaginary other. Stuttering occurs in this way because the gay consumer of pornography attempts to identify with an Imaginary other that has been constructed via signifiers that have come to be associated with straight masculinity. We most obviously see this in the metaphors allied to straight (and gay male) masculinity as an Imaginary identity.

In *Triga* this problem is instilled in a production like *Saturday Nite Special* (2010) which uses the notion of *'Straight lads out of Control'* as its narrative device and tagline. In the screen shots (Figures 5.5 and 5.6) metaphorical tropes allied to heterosexual masculinity are understood through 'laddish' forms of boisterousness and horseplay and underpinned by a 'mosaics of homosociality' (Waugh, 2004, p.139) that has spiralled 'out of control'. Here the straight lads are initially understood through aspects of '"male bonding"' (Sedgwick, 1985, p.1) inasmuch as there relations are built around the processes of socialising, drinking, watching straight pornography, and play-fighting together. Yet it is not long until this level of straight 'male friendship, mentorship, entitlement [and] rivalry' (ibid) which may be understood as 'homosocial' (ibid) is transformed into homo-erotic and then homosexual sex. Here there is a 'discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds' (ibid, p.5) that can also be connected to the tensions between an Imaginary other and a Symbolic Other. We see that the lure of homosexual desire is facilitated by a Symbolic Other that allows the sex to take place yet also guarantees that the lads do not 'become gay'. Here homosexual sex undercuts their legitimately straight identities but also affirms the ways in which these lads are positioned as Imaginary others with heterosexual egos and heterosexual bodies.

In *Saturday Nite Special* one of the straight 'stars' Andy Lee slaps the bottom of one of his 'straight' co-stars (Figure 5.5) and also pisses on the other lads (Figure 5.6) as a 'guarantee' of his Imaginary heterosexuality. Lee is a self-identified 'gay-for-pay' porn-star and in all of the *Triga* productions in which he appears he has no 'sexual' contact with his co-stars. However through these processes of slapping other lads, pissing on them, and also masturbating whilst surrounded by several other lads having gay sex the question of what constitutes his 'sexual' personality and how that is expressed as impersonal *jouissance* is puzzling. Whereas Lee's Imaginary identity (straight lad / 'gay-for-pay' porn-star) seems to legitimate his heterosexuality we see that this Imaginary identity also begins to stutter through the force of the Symbolic Other. This occurs because the Symbolic requires Lee to shed something of his heterosexual ego to account for his pleasure and the signification of pornographic desire as *jouissance* of the Other. Here his metaphorical persona as a 'straight lad' is subsumed by a much broader metonymic contiguity allied to his being 'out of control' in that the Symbolic modes of *jouissance* (as an intrinsic feature of pornography) are

the only way for Lee to articulate his own, and relate to, the *jouissance* of the Other. This representation of Lee slapping his mates arse and pissing on the other lads serves as a visual marker and Symbolic sign of his straightness yet it fails to fully signify him as 'straight'. In this way it stutters, and through this stuttering we see that the identities and personalities of the straight lads begin to lose their Imaginary credence as 'straight' when they slip into sex acts understood as 'gay'. In this way the Symbolic Other and the Imaginary signifiers of straight masculinity contained therein ensure that the personality of the pornographic actor or star (in this case Lee) as well as the actions which serve to identify him as straight are only ever manifested as impersonal signifiers of his straightness.

When straight male sexual identities like this are signified as gay porn they are also commodified and interpreted *as* gay porn. Through this process they become, as Hennessey observes, subject to the ways in which 'gay […] images in consumer culture [have] the effect of consolidating an imaginary […] gay subjectivity for both straight and gay audiences' (2000, p.112). For instance, the reliance on straight masculinity as both a trigger and affirmation of gay *jouissance* in pornography presents that masculinity as 'the fiction of a coherent identity […] inevitably vulnerable to exposure as a representation' and its 'deliberate enactment of this fiction as a fiction' (ibid, p.116). If both gay and straight masculinity and thus desire in pornography are performed through 'knowledges, discourses, significations, [and] modes of intelligibility – by which identity is constituted' (ibid) we see that this constitution is always fictitious and as the latter half of this chapter suggests vulnerable to forms of Symbolic-stuttering in pursuit of *jouissance*.

Pornography also nurtures a Symbolic space where the Imaginary nuances of self-hood and identity are (re)presented precariously and ambivalently. If pornography is a discourse in which gay bodies attempt to speak and represent gay desire we see in *Triga* that this representation either fails or works paradoxically. The bodies which are difficult to identify as gay and/or homosexual in *Triga* stutter, and in so doing serve to underline the problems of personality and impersonality also embedded in both Dean's and Butler's bodies that mutter and matter detailed and outlined in Chapter 2. As previously discussed, if bodies are never 'whole' (coherent, unified, definitive), always living with the deferral of desire then it is impossible for the Imaginary other

and a gay or straight body to be understood as personal. Thus it is processes of impersonal identification rooted in the Symbolic Other as much as identity and personality which serve to facilitate and sustain processes such as stuttering and *jouissance*. Identification with a body is also a metonymic and thus plural undertaking, at once subject- and object-forming, both personal and impersonal at the same time. In the subject-forming sense, then a subject's identifications with another person (other) or object (other) serve to structure the perception of the person and object as 'Other' through language and representation. In the object-forming sense, a subject only locates a particular object in relation to its own metaphoric sense of 'I'. In gay pornography such as *Triga* Films the associated displacing and condensing of these operations via straight masculine identity is expressed as stuttering. We see this in the ways that the signification of straight masculinity in gay pornography relies upon a series of impersonal symbols and fantasies, and not a coherent dialogue at the level of interpersonal or intersubjective exchange. Here pornographic representation guarantees that the metaphoric and personal meaning of an identity is displaced by the metonymic impersonality of the Symbolic Other. It is also here that desire as *jouissance* is expressed as a stutter as opposed to being clearly enunciated and thus contained within an Imaginary desire for wholeness or mastery. This concern is detailed in the next section which attempts to situate a body that stutters in several *Triga* Films and identify how the ways in which Symbolic-stuttering is demonstrated and expressed.

5.4 Positioning the 'Body that Stutters' in *Triga* Films

In *Triga* the subversion of heterosexuality is affirmed through the impersonality of desire and the metonymic dimensions of how it is stutters. The transgression of straight masculinity into sex acts and scenarios understood through the Imaginary-ego of both straight and gay masculinity repositions that masculinity in terms of *jouissance* and its Symbolic representation as pornographic. It is only through the Symbolic specificity of pornography and the convergence of sexual urgency and sexual hesitancy that *jouissance* is able to represent desire at all. In all of the instances examined in this chapter the central feature that defines this is the alignment of straight masculinity to a series of gay male sex acts. The ways in which the film DVD's are displayed and categorised on *Triga's* website (http://www.Trigafilms.com) gives an indication of

how the studio positions its brand as one that uses the Imaginary-ego of a heterosexual alongside of the broader dimensions of how hyper-masculinity is constructed Symbolically.

The tagline of *Triga* is 'The original British Filth Factory since 1997'. Here 'filth' and the dynamics of disgust and desire examined in more detail later in this chapter are the central locus of how *jouissance* is pursued. The 'factory' like production of filth reflects the mode of 'technical reproduction' (Benjamin, 1936 [1999], p.214) identified by Walter Benjamin and also resonates as a metonymic symbol of working class masculinity that connects to factory work and labour as something 'that sustains particular masculine beliefs and values' (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003, p.29) whilst also positioning the factory as a space 'of deep alienation […] also characterised by dependence' (ibid). This systematic production of 'a factory of filth' and its alignment to a straight working class other also refers to the ways in which *Triga* relies upon this Imaginary other to profit from a 'commodification of same-sex desire via a particular articulation of working-class identity and the mapping of that desire in public culture in highly visible and organised ways' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.253). This commodification can also be seen through the film and online downloads that 'put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself' (1936, ibid) whilst also ensuring that *Triga* films as a metonymic 'filth factory' retains the Symbolic capacity and economic power to reproduce and repeat gay desire as impersonal traces of the original exchanges that occurred between the actors captured by the camera.

Films are available to order as DVD or to download according to production date or filmic theme. 'Latest' include titles such as *Gangland Cock – Extra Fuckin Swag* (2013) *Builders Piss Up* (2013) *Blokes down the Boozer* (2012) and *Job Seekers Allowance – Extra Benefits* (2012). Alongside of this other productions are organised according to the metonymic contiguity of 'British', 'Sport', 'Scally', 'Audition', 'Wet', and 'Skinhead' where the partiality of an identity, desire or discourse are used as its entity. On their website the founder and also director of most *Triga* films Jamie Carlyle states 'we're not into buffed up bods, white satin sheets and lilies on the floor…*Triga* is about British council estate lads fresh from a football game, builders and decorators stealing a quick fuck on the job, hod carrying labourers getting down

and dirty together' which seems to reinforce and offer an insight into the ways in which gay male *jouissance* is reliant upon the Symbolic and metonymic signification of predominantly working class and heterosexual identities to motivate and trigger sexual desire.

Triga productions are knowingly filmed in an amateur way. They utilise jerky and erratic camera-work, overdubbed sound, unprofessional actors, cheap non-studio sets, overexposed shots, shoddy editing, and obtuse camera angles. These techniques work at constructing an aesthetic of 'truth' and 'authenticity' so that the homosexual sex acts between straight men are signified through 'a sense of presence guaranteed by what is perceived as a privileged relationship to the real' (Patterson, 2004, p.113). It is as if the men in *Triga* have been 'caught' on camera, as if the person filming the sexual action has stumbled upon it and entered into a scenario in which bodies and identities stammer, hesitate, and frustrate. For instance the close-up camera-work and levels of intimacy seduces both viewers and actors into the positions of Imaginary others. This initially works because the signification of football supporters, rugby-players, and drunken lads indulging in gay sex seems to metaphorically reflect and personalise an identity that moves towards *jouissance*. Yet, the camera techniques and modes of signification that *Triga* use also ensure a sense of metonymic displacement in so far as these men are performing in a porn film, the scene has been strategized and structured, and they are being paid to have sex. In this way, and within pornography, we see that these sexual bodies are riven by a Symbolic Other that undermines the Imaginary aspects of their ordinary, authentic, and amateurish identities. This Other also serves to impersonalise and displace their identities through *jouissance* so that what remains is a remnant of identity the viewer of the text can never reach and one that remains impersonal.

Here the extreme close-up's and jerky hand-held camerawork strive towards representing gay sex so that 'proximity [is] even more proximate' (ibid, p.111) and in so doing offers the representational promise of a seemingly personal and therefore intense form of *jouissance*. Yet this visual intimacy with straight male bodies is precarious because it allies them to an Imaginary other that is always impaired by its Symbolic counterpart. These representational techniques that are used across all *Triga* productions are the deceptive guarantee that these 'real' men can and indeed have

'really' been captured doing this together. However, these sexual encounters are only enabled via impersonal modes of pornographic representation and ultimately identification. The camera serves to seductively personalise them but their signification as pornographic renders them impersonal. As a result the bodies within the *Triga* productions begin to stutter in that they are only capable of expressing *jouissance* via a representational image that the subject can never tangibly reach. Here the visual techniques which are strategically utilised by *Triga* to construct a personal and tangible body only ever cultivate an intangible one that stutters because it has been constructed as pornographic. This also ensures that the immediacy, urgency, and thrill of seeing straight men having gay sex is achieved through technical ways of signifying intimacy, liveness, and rawness. In turn, this works towards the signification and staging of impersonality as 'personal' through productions that present seductively 'live' and seemingly unrehearsed action alongside of the intensity of close up's of arse-holes, cocks dripping with cum, and piss-soaked bodies identified as straight.

This visual rhetoric of closeness, intimacy and the tensions between modes of personal and impersonal representation can also be understood as part of 'a broad postmodern taste for 'authentica'' (Attwood, 2007, p.448) which includes webcam culture, public nudity, and amateur porn focused on new displays of 'the ordinary' (ibid). In *Triga* this commodification of the ordinary serves to impersonalise it and intensify how an ordinary personality is signified. For instance, in the *Triga* 'auditions' the gay porn-star as an ordinary lad / man is presented through moments that signify them as 'personal'. These 'auditions' are filmed in ways which seem to 'personalise' the auditioned. The subject of the audition is captured by a camera which retains a shaky and grainy aesthetic and closely interrogates their body in intimate detail. In Figure 5.7 which is a screen-shot taken of a lad auditioning to be in a *Triga* 'Wankers' feature we see this occurring. In these scenes *Triga* allows for experimentation, mistakes, and new interventions from the actors. We also see them watching straight pornography to get aroused, masturbate and ejaculate in real unedited time. This subject is filmed for 23 minutes and whilst he remains unnamed and silent he seduces the viewer into personalising and identifying with him as an Imaginary other through impersonality formed in the Symbolic.

His chiselled and muscular body, unkempt pubic hair, the cap that he wears, his arrogant smirks and winks at the camera, and the way he holds his cigarette and skilfully blows smoke rings with the smoke are allied to a visual index of capturing straight masculine sexuality for a gay male audience. This lad masturbates and eventually cums on the floor to initially affirm that these particular scenes operate within the '"documentary illusion"' (Escoffier, 2003, p.537) inasmuch that 'the erections and the orgasms putatively "prove" to a gay male spectator that these "sexually desirable, masculine, and energetic performers" are really gay' (ibid). Yet this notion of the lad 'really being gay' is also allied to his 'being straight'. Here the affirmation of gay desire and *jouissance* requires the construction of his straightness and its production through a Symbolic signifier that does not coherently exist as 'straight'. These tropes constructed in *Triga* through the 'straight' and/or 'straight acting' men who commodify that 'straightness' as the main object of gay male desire is subsumed by the impersonalising or 'Othering' of *jouissance* and how it stutters. This issue of stuttering and the body that stutters is also aligned to a jerky and asymmetrical aesthetic which positions the chav / chav's as an Imaginary identity via their Symbolic displacement in pornographic representation. In light of this and even in scenarios where the porn-actor is alone the metaphoric personality of straight men are susceptible to a Symbolic Other that positions the gay consumer / viewer as a metonymic part of the scene. As a result the impersonal dimensions of that desire and how it stutters become the central way of constructing it.

By now it is clear that *Triga* is defined by a visual rhetoric based on a set of pre-defined and designated sexual and social practices associated with straight male identity and the construction and consumption of straight maleness by gay men. In many of the *Triga* productions the Imaginary other and associated metaphors of the chav are used to express gay desire as impersonal. Within this context the term 'chav' as 'a commonplace socio-economic signifier in the British cultural lexicon' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.257) is demarcated 'by its apparently distinctive demographic, attitudes, behaviours, consumption patterns and language' (ibid). This is particularly relevant to the Symbolic and impersonal eroticisation of the chav in *Triga* in that their identity is always represented as a personality and one which seems to be identifiable. Brewis and Jack (2010) understand this through the discursive construction of 'gay chavinism' which is reliant upon a 'commonality of themes used in selling the 'chav experience''

(ibid, p.260). This identification and personalisation of the chav are stylised and configured through identity and personality traits such as 'hypersexuality […]; drug and alcohol abuse; aggression and violence; unemployment; poverty and living on benefits; the council estate; and dress and appearance (ibid).

In the next section these practices of representation will be discussed in more depth by examining the identity of the chav in *Triga* Films. Here it is suggested that the metaphors associated with this Imaginary other are Symbolically displaced via modes of *jouissance* which stutter. On the one hand this Symbolic stuttering is constructed through 'amateur' and seductively authentic camera-work, and on the other it is signified through the sexual representation and/or gay subversion of straight working class masculinity. In so doing the straight chav engaging in gay sex suggests there is a tension between *Triga* as a pornographic commodity which holds the 'symbolic power of those who create representation' (Johnson, 2008, p.76) and the signifiers it produces which 'allow[s] for both the plundering of working-class culture and for its use as a marketable commodity' (ibid). In gay pornography such as this the metaphoric identities of chav's and the working-class signifiers associated with them 'create and mark the chav body with characteristics which become a detachable resource for non-chav consumers' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.258). This suggests that it is through detached and thus impersonal modes of Symbolic Othering that *jouissance* for and identification with the chav is expressed as series of stutters.

5.5 Commodifying and Impersonalising the Chav in *Triga* Films

In order to explore the importance of stuttering and its alliance to an impersonality of desire we need to examine in greater detail the use of chav in *Triga* Films. More specifically, we can see the chav's in *Triga* Films as visual examples of Symbolic-stuttering that are reliant on Imaginary metaphors of identity yet displaced through metonymic identifications in the Symbolic. Chav is a discursive identity category that relies upon a 'new terminology in which socially marginal groups are characterised, classified, and understood' (Hayward and Yar, 2006, p. 10) and does so through the construction of 'pathological class dispositions in relation to the sphere of *consumption*' (ibid). Here the chav as a working-class and consumer subject can also be 'identified on the grounds of the taste and style that inform their consumer choices' (ibid, p.14). In turn this allows for a Symbolic 'Othering' of the chav occurring on the

basis of their aesthetic and representational appearance. Another form of Symbolic Othering that is transformed into Symbolic-stuttering is the notion of the chav as a bad or 'dirty' form of whiteness. Imogen Tyler suggests that this is indicative of chavs as 'hypervisible "filthy whites"' (2008, p.25) in that they signify and also 'foreground[s] a dirty whiteness – a whiteness contaminated with poverty' (ibid). This is something that is both connected to 'gay chavinism' and the ways in which *Triga* instils elements of chav into gay pornography through the excessively sexual and invasive images of not only the chav but more broadly the Symbolic Other of the 'the straight lad out of control'. In so doing we see that 'metaphors of invasion […] invoked in white racist responses to immigrants and ethnic minorities are mobilised in white middle class accounts of chavs as a way of differentiating their "respectable whiteness"' (Nayak, 2003, p.84 in Tyler, 2008, p.26). Yet, in gay pornography the mobilisation of these tropes are displaced into metonymic forms of sexual desire that transform the chav into a Symbolic site of *jouissance*. In part this is due to the fact that in *Triga* the chav's dirty whiteness is transformed into a desirable whiteness, yet one which must be contained and located by the Symbolic Other for it to function as such.

This desire for the 'dirty' chav in *Triga* is also allied to Mary Douglas's concept of 'dirt-affirming and dirt-rejecting philosophies' (2002 [1966], p.203) and the ways in which desire for the unclean heterosexual chav repositions gay desire as 'out of place' (ibid, p.50). As Douglas claims 'uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained' (ibid). If it is included then 'patterns' and ways of understanding gay desire are disrupted. Here the dirty white chav as a marker of gay *jouissance* avows that dirtiness is included, incorporated, and realised as gay desire. In turn, this is the 'first step towards insight into pollution' (ibid) and a form of gay desire connected to modes of disgust and dirtiness enabled through the pornographic representation of the straight white chav. The dichotomy between whiteness and dirt is addressed in *White* (1997) by Richard Dyer. In his reading of Joel Kovel's *White Racism* (1970) Dyers claim that 'to be white is to have expunged all dirt […], to look white is to look clean' (p.76) functions paradoxically because whiteness also 'shows the dirt with unique clarity and certainty. In particular the dirt of the body' (ibid). The chav in pornography encapsulates some of this contention in that his cleanliness gives way to dirt, yet dirt that must remain sexually desirable so it can catalyse *jouissance* through the Symbolic. Here this dirtiness of the chav is also allied to how this dirt is

displayed and/or 'comes out of the body' (ibid). Here the body that stutters in the Symbolic realm of the pornographic text is the body that pisses, cums, rims, spits, and sweats. The 'dirty' ejaculations and secretions of the Imaginary other are contained by the Symbolic as evidence of gay desire which relies upon dirty whiteness to express *jouissance* at a Symbolic distance.

In *Triga* the metaphors of white dirtiness, abjection and contamination are riven through the discourse of metonymy in that they are construed and constructed through an impersonality; that is a Symbolic way that the chav as a pornographic commodity allows gay subjects in the Symbolic realm a number of 'safe ways of temporarily venturing into dangerous terrain' (ibid, p.264). For instance in an image like Figure 5.8 the chavs are constructed around the tensions between them as both a threatening identity and a sexually desirable fantasy for gay men. Here Symbolic Othering is also built around chav's as Imaginary other's that have 'become commodities for others' consumption' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.252). This image relies on the chav as sexually intimidating and violent via 'established associations with notions of marginalisation and social exclusion' (Hayward and Yar, 2006, p. 16). Yet it is this way of excluding and positioning the chav as an 'other' that becomes a way of triggering *jouissance* and sustaining them as a signifier of 'Bodies that Stutter'.

These chav's are understood through systematic and repetitive tropes such as binge-drinking, racism, nationalism, and discourses of sport such as football, all of which are also used to position and construct identities within the remit of what gay culture and the gay porn industry require the commodity of a chav to be. Here the chav and more specifically the chav as an object of desire and a catalyst for jouissance is also formed in terms of an assurance that he is 'kept in its place' (Brewis and Jack, 2010, p.258). This is assured because the Symbolic impersonality of the pornographic text contains the chav somewhere else. In these images the boisterous groups of lads and the inflections of homophobic intimidation, disgust, and dirty whiteness allied to their representation are now reinscribed as *jouissance* because they are signified as gay pornography. In this way the chav as a gay pornographic desire allows aversion and distaste to be Symbolically transformed into *jouissance*. Yet this transformation can only to happen through the need to signify that *jouissance*. In this way both the identity of, and a personal desire for the chav fails and thus ensures that the chav's identity stutters. It does so as it moves towards an impersonality of desire reliant upon the

Symbolic Other and an identification that never attains or clearly expresses a *jouissance* of the chav.

Tyler builds on broader notions of the term 'chav' to suggest that it is not only 'a ubiquitous term of abuse for white working class-subjects' (2008, p.17) but also that its signification in popular British culture is central to 'the role played by disgust reactions in the generation and the circulation of the chav figure' (ibid). This disgust is also linked to the Symbolic construction of the chav as an emotional and affective commodity of desire. In this way the pursuit of a *jouissance* of the chav is aligned to representations which rely on a demonised (Jones, 2011) and disgusting (Skeggs, 2005; Tyler 2006, 2008) social identity and personality. Some of these issues are put into context by Dyer in his analysis of the movie star Rock Hudson's private homosexuality in light of his public death from AIDS in 1985. He examines how Hudson's metaphorically 'desirable' / heterosexual 'antiseptic machismo' (2002, p.159) concealed his 'disgusting' / homosexual identity through an Imaginary lexicon of heterosexual traits such as virility, muscularity, and the square-jawed heart-throb linked to goodness and likeability. All of these qualities were reiterated and sustained as representations through 'a performance style […] expressing the security of heterosexuality' (ibid, p.162) against ones which contain the potential to expose the insecurity of homosexuality.

The paradox of Hudson's identity and stardom can also be seen in what Dyer refers to as 'press and television coverage before and after AIDS' (ibid, p.170). The polarisation of Hudson as healthy, strong and handsome act as a metonymic marker to metaphorically other him as 'tired, haggard, tragic' but rather than an opposition of a before/after they form a 'simultaneity' or 'two images of the same thing, two aspects of the condition of homosexuality' (ibid, pp.171-72). This reflects the ways in which the chav in *Triga* functions. He is Symbolically and duplicitously disgusting and desirable and his positionality in pornography assure that he remains Symbolically impersonal because porn allows for disgust to 'always bear[s] the imprint of desire' (Dollimore, 2001, p. 374). In the case of Hudson the concerns associated with the 'exquisite surface, masking depraved reality' (Dyer, 2002, p.172) also highlight another aspect of how chav and heterosexual male representations of gay desire may intersperse to allow the personality and identity of each to be re-read through

prolifically impersonal identifications with Symbolic forms of *jouissance* and not through Imaginary ego's or bodies.

Yet in *Triga* the chav and corresponding identities such as the 'scally' and the 'lad' are constructed *as* identities. This appeal is also examined by Paul Johnson (2008) and the dialectic between 'sexual desire and sexual disgust' (p.73). In this double-aspect *jouissance* acts as both the energiser and the site of conflict and allows Symbolic disgust for the chav to be transformed into Imaginary desire. Yet this transformation is not one in which the disgusting subject is empowered by the Imaginary desire, rather that Symbolic disgust becomes the central catalyst *of* that desire. If as Johnson claims the chav represents 'a margin, and potential transgression of bourgeois civility' (ibid) then this margin is the index in which Chav's 'are attractive to those who are differentiated from [them]' (ibid.). The consumer of *Triga* has to Symbolically understand and position the chav as an 'other' and one that is configured as impersonal to realise how their *jouissance* is being Symbolically expressed through stutters.

This construction of the chav discussed in terms of disgust is particularly relevant to the contextual discussions in the final part of this chapter. In his essay 'Sexual Disgust' (2001) Dollimore claims that for Freud 'there is, in the individuals continuing struggle between desire and disgust […] the larger struggle between instinct and civilisation' (2001, p.378). The Symbolic-Imaginary tensions and their struggle for dominance which are filtered through Lacan also encapsulate the dialectic that Dollimore suggests lies at the root of how desire finds in disgust 'a pleasure whose intensity it could never have known without the history of disgust; at another moment desire gives way to a revulsion the more intense because its history is grounded in the very desire it displaces' (ibid.). Here the abject relationship that desire has to disgust is also 'the very same bodily orifices that disgust because of their excretions – vomit, urine and shit […] – also excite sexually' (ibid). In *Triga* there is a reliance on this dialectic whereby the sweating, piss-soaked, and 'gobbed-on' chav is a representational image of desire that the spectator desires. Also *Triga* offer a full collection of films metonymically grouped together as 'Piss' which also express the construction of a chav as a 'disgusting' identity transformed by the desire for disgust. In Figures, 5.9 and 5.10 the chav and other straight masculine identities are signified as desirable in light of their predilection for drinking, basking in, and pissing on other men. Here these men as 'disgusted subject[s]' (Lawler, 2005) are the key facilitator of and for *jouissance*.

The de-personalisation of that disgust and its association with piss is enabled through its Symbolic representation. This works through multiple forms of identification with the text. For instance in these screen shots the 'dirty' desires and pursuits of drinking piss or having someone piss on (and in some cases up you) can be aligned to the ways in which Tim Dean analyses bare-back sex as a sexual act with '"No Limits!"' (2009, p.137). That is sex which 'can function as an arena in which the most basic barriers – including those of disgust and shame – may be negotiated or overcome' (ibid).

Positioning this through the pleasure of having someone piss on you it is also clear that for sexual desire to be connected to disgust it also has to be 'satisfied only by exceeding a limit, specifically, a boundary of one's own psychic constitution' (ibid). In *Triga* as groups of straight men piss on one another in their pursuit of *jouissance* they ensure that crossing or transgressing the disgusting or the desirable sexual act involves 'the challenge of locating new limits to repel' (ibid) for a gay audience. This seductive form of repulsion can be seen in the ways in which *Triga* allows for gay sexual fantasies to occur on the basis of images and acts that re-position the chav and in this instance chav's that piss and are pissed on via paradigms of disgust which hold an aversive appeal and impersonal seduction. The Symbolic power of the pornographic feature both sustains and reinscribes the piss-ridden chav in the name of gay desire as something which represents an intense form of 'intimacy at a distance' (ibid, p.138). Here the politics of disgust and the abject stench of piss are not realised through the Imaginary other rather they are contained by the Symbolic Other. This keeps them at a safe distance and assures that a more vital and urgent sense of *jouissance* and/or desire to be contaminated by the disgusting and abject stench of bodily fluid is sanctioned and permitted within the stutters of a pornographic representation.

These practices and processes in *Triga* are also heavily reliant on 'definite classed subject positions' (Tyler, 2006, p.74) and the ways in which their status as 'repulsive, filthy and disgusting' (ibid) are intrinsic to their potent sexual appeal. Here the chav as a working-class, under-classed, and disgusting sexual subject is amplified and so is their appeal to gay male sexual desire and *jouissance*. Through the broader 'role of emotion in the *formation* of class based identities' (Tyler, 2008, p.20) the chav as sexually desirable must remain socially disgusting and is required to function through the tensions of class-based desire and disgust through the distancing effect of the Symbolic Other. Yet metaphors of the abject, repulsive and abhorrent sexual subject

are also signified through the chav as the Imaginary other who is intimately connected to a sexual identity we are enabled to see within the Symbolic mechanisms of pornography. *Triga* maps out and relies upon a visual rhetoric of desire and disgust that partners gay male desire to the ways in which 'gay sexuality and pornography are both theoretically "transgressive" (Champagne, 1995, p.30). Yet this notion of transgression is contained by a limit, in this instance the limit is the Symbolic impersonality of the chav and the production of an Imaginary-ego within pornographic media. In other words, the construction of chav as a transgressive sexual identity and more broadly the subversion of a chav's heterosexual identity in light of homosexual desire fail to transgress the boundaries of desire because it is contained within representation. Here the transgression of these forms (the chav, the heterosexual, the perimeters of gay desire) mirror 'Foucault's use of the term' (ibid) which states that to transgress something is to position it in terms of 'a limits density *as well as necessarily a reinscription of that limit'* (ibid).

This representation of the chav is aligned to how *jouissance* articulated as Symbolic disgust both 'constitutes and reifies sexuality in relation to the organisation of social space to fix a relationship between two subject positions – the devalued working class spectacle and the resourced middle class spectator' (Johnson, 2008, p.76). Here gay men are 'seduced by the style' (ibid) of the chav in the films which *Triga* produce because an Imaginary other is allied to the viewer / consumer of *Triga* features and the actors / participants in them. Whilst the gay man is positioned as 'a universally resourced consumer' (ibid) and the chav as a disgusting, dangerous yet ultimately sexually desirable 'other' it is the Symbolic Other that keeps the chav at a safe distance through his pornographic mediation. In this way the allure of *jouissance* means that if the Imaginary other desires the chav and wants to 'see' them through an intimate and proximate encounter they must look to the Symbolic Other enabled by the pornographic production to do so. In all of the *Triga* features this is facilitated by the use of the camera and the ways in which the close-up is used to film the bodies, genitals, orifices, ejaculations and sexual acts of the participants. The chav and his body are sexually seductive and desirable only if they are viewed as stutters of *jouissance.* If they are viewed as merely 'chav's' and the discourse of pornographic desire is removed or abstracted from the Symbolic encounter then the exchange is very different and they retain something of the 'intense homophobia, fear and hatred of

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homosexuality' (Sedgwick, 1985, p.1) which inflect and haunt male to male homosocial relations when they are abstracted from tropes of homosocial desire (ibid). Outside of gay pornography and *Triga* the chav becomes a figure of resentment, repulsion and disgust once more understood through the discourses of 'deprivation, exclusion and social polarisation to crime and deviance' (Martin, 2009, p.142). Furthermore the disgusting and disillusioned working class subject as a pornographic text expresses the ways in which sexuality is (and continues to be) tied to the impersonal operations of the Symbolic and the discursive. In pornography which uses the personality of the chav and heterosexuality as the central index of gay male desire we see that this can only be articulated through stutters which attempt but never quite attain a form of *jouissance* that both signifies and satisfies desire.

5.6 Conclusion

Triga seems to complicate 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering in several ways. Firstly it is a body stutters when it is torn between modes of straight and gay sexual desire, representation, and identity. It is also a Symbolic body that stutters through the commodity of pornography itself and the impersonal dimensions of its production and consumption. It also stutters when it is captured through camera and film-making techniques that work at rendering the 'straight' subjects of gay desire more ordinary, authentic and in many ways 'personal'. In this way the body that stutters is that which is left after the initiative to personalise *jouissance* and metaphorically position a straight male identity has occurred. Here this body is the signifier located within the Symbolic order where impersonalisation is facilitated by the Symbolic's stresses on language and its power to suggest that coherent homo and/or hetero-sexual identities are not in fact the main points of desire and how *jouissance* is energised. It is also worth noting here that stuttering in *Triga* does not shift identity and desire into an orthodoxy of identifications and impersonality in pornography. Rather 'Bodies that Stutter' and how they stutter continue to shift and relocate themselves somewhere between the modalities of personal and impersonal desires and identifications we see in *Triga*.

The Symbolic problem of terminology and language keeps alerting us to this paradox in that if a signifier refers to someone as, 'straight', 'gay', etc. this positions the identification as personal in the sense that the subject might appear to speak or

represent that particular desire. However, it is also impersonal due to the fact that there is always articulated through a broader Symbolic language or linguistic system of representation which also holds the potential for subversion and negation. In the pornographic setting of *Triga* the subject that attempts to speak or represent either gay or straight desire stutters and falters because of desire. Yet, this trap which is implicit in the rhetoric's and aesthetics of *Triga* is not intended to underline or celebrate a trajectory where gay and/or straight bodies, identities, and subjectivities are nihilistically eradicated and agency is subsumed by impersonality. Neither is a body that stutters (that in this chapter may exist between modes of straight and gay sexual desire, within the commodity of pornography itself, and through particular image making techniques) a one which is identifiable across pornographic representations that work with images of straight men having homosexual sex. Rather, the problematisations of identity which the stuttering body alerts us to ought to be viewed as part of this project's aim to understand the force of *jouissance* and its place in relation to the tensions between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other.

The representations analysed so far seem to be defined by this strain and they draw attention to how sexual identity is (and continues to be) tied to impersonal operations of speech (as non-*jouissance*) and *jouissance* (as non-speech) thorough linguistic, discursive and representational forms which remain out of reach of the sexual subject. Just as Lacan's work demonstrates how *jouissance* is not allied to personal identity so much as it endangers the supposed subjective coherence which identity is thought to manifest, we also see in *Triga* that a unified sexual identity is always frustrated as a result of a conditional and contingent division in the very constitution of the sexual subject. Furthermore, this split or ruptured subject is the subject that stutters. When this subject is positioned as the simultaneously gay *and* straight subject we see that this stuttering and its alliance to sexual desire also makes it more complicated and challenging to identify and locate 'him' as a gay subject.

The representational complexities examined in this thesis are derived from instances in which spoken, written, and visual signifiers combine go some way towards demonstrating this frustration through the indices of Symbolic-stuttering. In the next chapter which addresses how stutters manifest themselves in multiple forms on the social network / online blog *tumblr.com* we also see another strategic and sophisticated form of gay male communication and representation that allows users to personalise

their identity onto the computer screen manifested as the selfie. Here images may have taken the user twenty or thirty re-positioning's and re-clicks of the smart-phone to capture, yet may look as if it were spontaneous and unplanned. These duplicitous representations of identity and personality stutter because they fail to fully articulate something (indeed anything) of the subject trapped inside of them. This form of stuttering also allows *jouissance* to both frustrate and satisfy sexual desire and how it is often pursued, expressed, and realised through sexually explicit media where the subject feels they can manipulate and optimise their self-presentation through this range of possibilities and gaps manifested as 'Bodies that Stutter'

Figure 5.1 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.2 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.3 - http://www.trigafilms.com/shops/info_p.asp?prid=670

Figure 5.4 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.5 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.6 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.7 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.8 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.9 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Figure 5.10 - http://trigafilms.tumblr.com/

Chapter 6: Reflections and Refractions of *Jouissance*:

'Bodies that Stutter' on *tumblr.com*

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines issues of gay male representation, impersonality, and sexual desire on the micro-blog/social networking site *tumblr.com*. The first part of the chapter continues to deal with the implications that an impersonal shattering of desire has on the gay male ego and sexual subject, through the 'Bodies that Stutter'. The hesitancies and frustrations that catalyse this stuttering are also positioned in relation to how gay desire is understood when it is represented metonymically on three micro-blogs. The three main sections of the chapter examine this stuttering through a re-reading and re-evaluation of the gaze, Imaginary-Symbolic relations, and the significance of Lacan's 'The Mirror Stage' ('*Le stade du miroir*'). The practices of representation and contexts of each micro-blog are analysed in response to these concepts and in relation to specific instances of gay male self-representation that are located in the blog because they have been shared online. In this chapter the three key micro-blogs being used to develop and hone in on 'Bodies that Stutter' are http://homo-magazine.tumblr.com/, http://actionrigger.tumblr.com/, and http://nakedgayguys.tumblr.com/.

These contexts have been selected because they are aligned to the paradox that when personal desire, allied to an Imaginary-ego, is signified via online, pornographic, and here socially mediated space, it is always impersonal because it is located in the Symbolic register through the nuances of stuttering. The examination of images that have been posted and organised on the blogs listed above also suggest that gay desire and gay identity in online and self-representational spaces is precarious in light of Symbolic-stuttering and *jouissance*. The chapter also considers much broader nuances of technological and cultural discourse which seem to enable and ensnare 'Bodies that Stutter' through a series of repetitive speech or image-making acts. As this chapter evolves, and moves towards the thesis' conclusion it suggests that the processes of micro-blogging, the proliferation of the selfie, and the discourse of *tumblr.com* itself, may form recognisable and recurrent modes of gay male *jouissance* through methods

of sharing and techniques of image-making. It is these which persistently reproduce how the tensions between an Imaginary other and Symbolic Other are articulated in sexual, online, and self-representation.

Gay male photographic and pornographic representations seen online, and, specifically, on *tumblr.com* offer the paradox of being able to manage and contain gay desire whilst also allowing it to unravel and disperse in limitless ways. Here, the *need* or demand a gay individual may articulate for sexual pleasure, or a sexual relation through identification with an image, will always be filtered through the mediating figures of the Imaginary other and Symbolic Other. As an inevitable result, the subject searches for his *jouissance* in language only to find that he is unable to locate and sustain it. For instance, we see micro-blogs on *tumblr.com* which promote and contain signifiers of gay desire related to straight masculinity that an Imaginary-ego is initially captivated by. *Tumblr.com* and the range of micro-blogs it offers also seem to supply an inexhaustible image bank of sexually explicit, self-representational, and/or pornographic imagery. However, these images and their circulation as markers of gay desire and identity rely upon a far more complex network of Symbolic exchange. This is because gay desire is entrenched in a Symbolic Other capable of extricating it through any combination of enigmatic and capricious identifications spurred on by *jouissance*. On *tumblr.com* we also find that the production, but more so the sharing and circulating of images in line with the metaphorical markers created and sustained around gay and straight male desire are problematic because they can only be expressed as metonymic modes of gay and straight male sexual identification.

As the next sections will demonstrate, this is constructed as a key feature and trigger of desire on http://actionrigger.tumblr.com/, where nine specific categories related to heterosexual masculinity, athletes, and workers are assembled as the foundations and/or objects of gay male *jouissance*. In contrast, http://homo-magazine.tumblr.com/ presents gay culture and desire through a manifesto on its main home-page (see; http://homo-online.com/MANifesto), which proclaims, through twenty-five points, what the blog's intent is. The diverse and divergent scope of posts on this blog come together around an index of pornographic, cultural, historical, and political images associated with gay masculinity. Here, incongruous and analogous signifiers are collaged together through an evolving stream of Symbolic meaning signalled towards *jouissance*. For example, if we attempt to align, interpret, deconstruct, and categorise

the relations that exist between images such as Lee Edelman's *No Future*, Rock Hudson, a photograph of rugby players showering, and a selfie of a guy with a heavy ginger beard we see that the nuances of how they are associated become both exciting and perplexing.

This sense of Symbolic dislocation as *jouissance* is also aligned to the opening and closing points of the manifesto, which claim that, 'WE 1. are not an identity, more a stance or better yet a pose [...] 2. hold manly desire as our fundament […] 23. see a great value in being intentional travellers and strangers, 24. are more of a mood than a movement' (http://homo-online.com/MANifesto). In this way the homo-online blog attempts to construct a sense of subversive and transgressive gay male identity vis-à-vis the representations assembled on it. The final blog, http://nakedgayguys.tumblr.com, is most closely allied to discourses of the gay male body, narcissism, and ego and their propensity to schism, shatter, and stutter in relation to *jouissance*. In this instance, self-representations present both gay and straight male subjects photographing themselves with their mobile phones in the reflection of a mirror. This practice of image making is more commonly known as 'the selfie'. These images, presented as online and networked self-representations, locate the subject of gay desire through tropes of repetition, reproducibility, and duplication and these are examined later in the chapter. Whilst there are thousands, and potentially millions, of similar micro-blogs, and new blogs that are being created every day, (see; nakedguyselfies.tumblr.com,gaymanselfies.tumblr.com,gayphones.Tumblr.com, and majdad-iphone.Tumblr.com) that also emphasise this practice of representation, the divergent nature of 'sharing' and 're-blogging' images discussed in Chapter 3 means that the question of 'where' these images of gay desire originate also becomes an integral part of their meaning and construction *as* images of gay desire.

6.2 Enigmatic Bodies on http://actionrigger.tumblr.com

On *tumblr.com* (and also on social networking sites such as *Facebook.com* and *Twitter.com*) the screen and 'feed' of information acts as both an interface and chasm between whoever speaks and the 'position of speaking' itself (i.e. the tabs that the user is asked to follow). On http://actionrigger.tumblr.com/, there are nine ways that desire is designated, categorised, and controlled. 'I' (the user) am asked to select the nature of my desire from a choice of nine tabs. The options are connected to hyper-masculine

and homosocial discourses of sport ('rugby', 'AFL', 'MMA'), job/identity-types ('grafters', 'forces', 'lads'), the body, and, specifically, tattoos ('ink'd'), and fetish ('smoke', 'shorts'). In all of these categories the signification of straight masculinity and masculine desire are the key emphasis within a signifying chain that enigmatically locates straightness as the energiser of gay desire, and also its causal index. Whilst the images seem to form and construct a discourse of desire specific to 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' they have been re-blogged from multiple online spaces and their origins both as signifiers of gay desire as well as signifiers on *tumblr.com* are unclear. Here, we see how the impersonality of the foundation of desire is metonymically articulated in manifold representations that knowingly misalign tropes of straight masculinity as ones of gay desire. We see this in how the images of 'grafters', 'forces', and 'lads' are connected to the tattooed subjects in the 'ink'd' blog. As they intersect, the metaphorical and Imaginary essence of a tattooed young lad in the army can only be deciphered on the basis of its Symbolic representation as a metonymic Other. It is sexually alluring because it is metonymic, in that it has been dislocated from its origin or context and repositioned as a trope that stands in the place of the big 'Other' and the ideological discourses of young tattooed men in the armed forces.

The power of Lacan's Imaginary register to 'drive toward fusion and agreement – the impossible one ('I') of mirror-stage *jouissance*' (Ragland, 1986, p.141), allows it to uphold the metaphors of visual repetition and recognition aligned to men as either 'ink'd', 'grafters', 'forces', or 'lads'. Yet, these metaphors of straightness, and their slippage into the metonymic of gay desire, render specific characteristics and facets of straight masculinity a consequence of the *objet a* that elicits *jouissance*. Whilst these images depict practices of stereotypical 'straight' maleness, they also attempt to establish and, thus, foreclose gay male desire through the subversion of straight masculinity as the central catalyst of gay desire on *tumblr.com*. Just as the unconscious fails to fully express its own registers, we see (as we did in Chapter 5) that the positioning of straight masculinity as a trigger for gay male desire fails to metaphorically personalise desire because the identities it (re)presents miss the mark of a clear and coherent relation between self and other, gay and straight, user and representation.

The men in the 'forces' section of the blog are represented on the basis of a signification that is always a refraction and distortion of this metaphoric 'force'. In many of the images their taut muscular arms are tattooed, pull at ropes, and brandish weapons, but the arm as both a corporeal and representational fragment, fails to fully reach or articulate the dimensions of the discourse of the army, the military, and/or a soldier's subjective personality and, thus, unconscious desires. This is also captured in the (mis)alignment of the images (in this instance via hyper-masculine images of the army), which are only based on a series of Imaginary identifications filtered through the Symbolic and its attempt to control desire's cause. Also, if I click onto one of the likes for an image on the 'forces' page, it takes me to 'http://ukmilitarymen.tumblr.com/archive', where my *jouissance* can be sophisticated and concentrated down into images that may get closer to my desire and its cause. Here, the potential for locating sexual imagery that seems to connect to the subject's *jouissance* of the other means that the user of *tumblr.com* will inevitably continue, return to, and then traverse 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' and its Symbolic capacity for catalysing *jouissance*.

As images in the 'forces' section are copied, pasted, re-blogged, and shared, they fall out of sequence and slip into other similar blogs, where potentially unlimited significations of masculinity in the army and masculine desire can occur. Jean Laplanche's concept of the 'enigmatic signifier' helps to clarify this point. Laplanche initiates the concept of an enigmatic signifier by invoking Lacan's 'distinction between a signifier *of* – a specific meaning or signified – and a signifier *to* – addressed to and interpellating a specific subject' (Fletcher in Laplanche, 1999, p.12). In this instance, we see that this could well be the subject using 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' who will never be able to determine a specific signifier to the image, but who knows inscrutably, or is seduced into believing, that the image is addressing them (ibid). Particularly when the address is sexualised or eroticised through an image, which is silent, contained and distant, we see that the gaze of the other collapses the subject-object relation. The bloodied and sweating wrestlers, the muddy and muscular rugby players bathing together, or the grafters skillfully using power tools only invite gay *jouissance* to occur on the basis of their impersonal language. From an imperceptible distance, the images allow the other to view the subject as both sexually exhilarating and arousing, as well as traumatically tangible and potentially threatening.

Whilst Laplanche's concept refers to the unconscious or unintentional seduction of the child by the mother and the 'enigmatic message that is perhaps inevitably interpreted as a secret' (Bersani, 2001, p.356), it is suggested by Laplanche that, in adults 'enigmatic messages […] undergo a reorganisation, a dislocation' and most interestingly 'some anamorphic elements […] excluded from the translation', which become unconscious (1999, p.97). On 'actionrigger.tumblr.com', but also in the other two micro-blogs of this chapter, this 'enigmatic signification' symbolically undercuts the power of the enigmatic signifier, in that it controls it, sanctions it and also compels it to behave itself. Just as these images subject desires to repeat and, thus, reiterate *jouissance*, they do so through 'a knowledge they are at once willfully withholding from me and using in order to invade my being' (Bersani, 2001, ibid). To the gay male user these images of straight men are both distant and, somehow, at the kernel of how gay desire is signified. The subjects in the images unfathomably facilitate and resist it. As Laplanche observes:

An enigma, like a riddle, is proposed to the subject by another subject. But the solution of a riddle in theory is completely in the conscious possession of the one who poses it, and thus it is entirely resolved by the answer. An enigma on the contrary, can only be proposed by someone who does not know the answer, because his message is a compromise-formation in which his unconscious takes part (1999, pp. 254-55)

This enigma seduces me because the 'other' straight men in the image stimulate me through their gaze. In turn, I am seduced by gazing at the 'other' straight men, only because the image of them contains the *objet a* of my *jouissance*. Here, the paradox of a straight male enigma possesses 'the very formula of desire of which I myself am ignorant' (Bersani, 2001, ibid), and, thus, shatters both me (the gay male user) but also its own ego (the straight male subject) through a duplicitous pursuit of pleasure. In these hyper-masculine images, this temporarily fulfills and momentarily ends *jouissance* through the impersonal act of gazing at that other. If it is conceptualised that sexually enigmatic signification comes from the other (the 'straight'), that other must be abstract, oblique, and necessarily impersonal for *jouissance* to occur. Here, this impersonality can occur through the metonymy of self-shattering but also through a seduction that the subject feels on the basis of 'a posture of immobility' (Copjec, 2002, p.135). We see this at work on 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' which is both a referent and a result of the historical, political, and cultural tensions between straight

and gay male tropes of desire that seem to reiterate this shattering, which de-personalises both subjects on both 'sides' of the screen.

In this instance, it is the straight male subject that remains mediated and foreclosed by the discourse of 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' as 'a symbolic edifice or […] system of signs' (Gurevitch, 1999, p.527), through which 'the signifiers fit together, combine and concertina' (Lacan, 1999, p.37) and remain closest to what analytic discourse terms 'slips of the tongue (*lapsus*)' (ibid).   This sort of parapraxis on 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' relies on the breaks and stutters in straight male *jouissance* to transform straight male representation into gay male *jouissance*.   These transpositions of meaning through the slips are necessary for this *jouissance* to occur and for the impersonality of desire to continue. If any of these 'straight' male bodies and identity types are examined as paradigms of gay male desire, we see that it is through their 'slips' in replication that the conventions of the Cartesian 'I', with his identity, personality and metaphorical likeness, collapse into modes of Lacanian identification, impersonality, and metonymic correspondence.

The images on 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' also prove that 'I' never exist or fully coincide with the signifier. 'I' do not invent myself; rather, my virtual existence is continually co-founded with other users and their 'other' desires. In this instance, when images are re-blogged from image-banks of official sports photographs, 'selfie' representations, pornographic websites, and photo-sets, we see how they are incessantly interchanged, shared, and exchanged between users, in what Adrian Rifkin, writing on gay male online chat-rooms, describes as both 'lure and gauge, as an offer [of *jouissance*] or in response to a request […] [or as] some other inner utterance that prolongs, ends or concludes' (2010, p.156). Just as the arrangement of images attempts to organise desire in an off-set series of streaming and shifting grids, the grids, themselves, meander and intersect to both arrange and re-arrange the arbitrary chaos of Symbolic desire and the Imaginary ego's attempt to contain it.

It is through this enigmatic form of signification that gay desire is expressed in the slips of straight masculinity, which 'signify something […] and can be read in an infinite number of different ways' (Lacan, 1999, p.37). More generally, it is how the images on 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' are posted, as analogous reproductions and

repetitive representations of straight male identity, lifestyle, work, and pleasure, which allow them to be allied to gay male *jouissance*. Therefore, and in terms of a 'gay' or a 'straight' male representation, we are confronted with the key problem of psychoanalytic discourse, which, as Lacan observes, always 'give[s] a different reading to the signifiers that are enunciated (*ce qui s'enonce de signifiant*) than what they signify' (ibid). There is no corresponding relationship between the person and the desire, between the signifier and referent, and this allows for a particular form of impersonality, *jouissance,* and more so stuttering to manifest itself. This is instilled because the images, the blog, and the dialectics between gay and straight masculinity can only be understood through lapses, stutters, and struggles to make conscious the unconscious and the impersonal personal.

Still, heterosexuality has historically and culturally positioned itself as discursively representative of homosexuality by simultaneously speaking for and, thus, foreclosing its meaning in language (Dollimore, 1991; Edelman, 1994; Foucault, 1998). Yet, and as this thesis suggests, if the dynamics of power could shift, so that neither hetero nor homo were epistemologically coherent and/or ontologically recognisable, the representations on 'actionrigger.tumblr.com' (as well as the other micro-blogs and images in this chapter) could actually be read as 'unrecognisable' because they occupy the space *between* the binaries of metaphor/metonym, personal/impersonal, and identity/identification. In this way the enigmatic distribution and consumption of online images begin to symbolically splice the subject-to-other relation (Dean, p.43, 2000) that upholds an Imaginary ego. In this way we see how homo-to-hetero and gay-to-straight male desires stutter and falter from within language to indicate that desire is articulated *as* a break in desire, which *is* desire. In turn, this renders the desiring subject as a stuttering subject of language, who is absorbed by a simultaneously dysfluent and seductive *jouissance*, always outside of their reach *in* language yet, also, *of* the language through which they are subsumed and constituted.

6.3 Gay Signification and *Jouissance* on http://homo-magazine.tumblr.com

This next section expands on this notion of an enigmatic signifier on the micro-blog http://homo-magazine.tumblr.com and does so by grounding the analysis of it in terms of how difficult it is to signify and to analyse. On 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com', this

is tethered to the fact that there is a potentially endless metonymic sequence of images allied to gay desires, identities, perceptions, and memories that only come to have meaning through the Symbolic impersonality facilitated by the micro-blog itself. As part of the research for this section of the chapter the decision was made to focus on the nature of posts from January 2013 to facilitate the points of argument raised in relation to 'Bodies that Stutter', Symbolic-stuttering, and metonymic impersonality. The images in this blog aesthetically, culturally, and thus symbolically border and traverse one another and in so doing begin to assemble, retro-activate, and resemble close to what Michael Bronski termed, 'a gay sensibility', in which gay men have specifically 'created a separate culture that reflects their attitudes, moods, thoughts and emotions as an oppressed group' (1984, p.11).

As well as this the images in this micro-blog create 'a context for their own feelings and imaginations, both [as] a political movement and an articulated subculture' (ibid, p.13). On one hand, this stands if we literalise and invest in the images on the basis of 'gay culture' and 'the gay male subject' existing through personalising, inclusive, and tangible forms of desire and identity. Yet, on the other, if we approach these images as traces of the depersonalised, exclusionary, and intangible desires they endlessly reproduce, we also begin to see them as close to Bersani's notions of 'homo-ness' as a self-shattering *jouissance*. Once again, this becomes an inherent feature of gay desire and its potential for '"inaccurate self-replication"' (Dean and Lane, p. 2001b, p.25) as 'a type of identification that, by undermining the very terms *self* and *other* [also] pushes psychoanalytic theory to its breaking point' (ibid). This 'breaking-point' is facilitated by the impersonality of the images and their reverberation or recurrence elsewhere on *tumblr.com,* the internet, and within gay culture. It is unclear where the image originates from and where the image is going, what its purpose is and who it is aimed at. In this way, the (homo)sexual subject has no pre-ordained centre of consciousness; he/she is already dominated and subsumed by a prior set of Symbolic laws that define and create 'him/her' as 'gay'. The allure of the images posted on this particular blog also make reference to a gay male aesthetic riven through neo-liberal, nostalgic, post-modern, and art-house representations, allied to strands of masculinity that crisscross the boundaries of gay art, literature, and porn. Here, this ideological approach, which is also enhanced in the blog's 'MANifesto' allow it to 'slip into

becoming an unintended poetic' (Rifkin, 2010 p.156); yet, also seal its fate as an marker and shibboleth of gay male epistemology and ontological signification.

In the rhetoric of images that were observed and archived from January 2013, we see traces of this threshold of *jouissance*, which the unconscious struggles to express. Here, it is in the (sub)cultural strategies of representation that the impersonal shapes to *jouissance* are articulated. Alan Sinfield observes that these sorts of strategies are 'ineluctably marginal' (1998, p.40), whilst also constituting 'partially alternative subjectivities' (ibid). That is, the breadth of images that are assembled, shared, and that intersect proliferate a repetitious process of 'interaction with others who are engaged with compatible preoccupations' (ibid); that is, the others who seem to inhabit a similar subject position to the 'Bodies that Stutter' and the subject's own shattered ego. The images, posted and shared during one month include photographs of book jackets by William Burroughs, Christopher Isherwood, Matthew Stadler, Edmund White, and Samuel R. Delaney. We also see a 'fuck queer assimilation' poster, a photograph of Quentin Crisp, an image of the actor James Franco, numerous images of men showering, bathing, changing and/or having public sex in locker-rooms and also through glory-holes. There are two self-portraits of Andy Warhol and we also see images understood as 'post-modern' or 'queer' by Keith Haring, Tom of Finland, and Barabra Kruger. An original film poster for *Querelle of Brest* starring Brad Davis, a man with cum on his face, an image of cum on a white Nike air-max trainer, a shot-gun inserted into an anus, the logo for gay personals site *Grindr.com*, a 'selfie' of a guy wearing a t-shirt with the slogan 'chubby, single and ready for a pringle', another of a guy saying 'I'm not gay but $20 is $20', a photograph of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, a poster stating '20 reasons why 3 ways rule', a screen grab for the titles of the 1982 movie, *Wild-Style* that is super-imposed over an image of a man penetrating his sexual partner, a screen grab of Michael Foucault with the subtitled caption 'psychiatry is also a way to implement a political power to a particular social group. Justice also'. There is also an image of Michelangelo's David alongside that of a male model imitating his pose, a muscular naked guy playing baseball with an erection, a triptych of 'London, Paris and New York' depicting 'Big Ben, The Empire State Building and the Eiffel Tour', the mask of Agamemnon, and a screen-grabbed caption that states 'the male gaze meets the male gaze and…there's a party!'. As well as numerous images which have been cropped to reveal and conceal corporeal features

of the male body such as the erect penis, the anus, the (hairy) chest, the jaw, the eyes, the back, the legs, the mouth and the arms. Here, this breathless, superfluous, and inscrutable range of signifiers can only be situated and discussed through their capacity to stutter. This is brought about because as signifiers of gay desire, identity, and culture they are connected to Symbolic modes of *jouissance* that render them as 'signifier[s] of signification' (Owens, 1978, p.82).

On 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' this stuttering is not immediately apparent. The visual rhetoric of imagery seems to (re)present, through the simultaneity of intersubjectivity, an eloquent space for the Imaginary other both participant and viewer. What is being shared and exchanged through the subject-to-subject or blogger-to-blogger relation seems to 'speak' gay desire. Yet, within these posts, ways of coherently writing, speaking, and representing gay desire are rendered subjective and imprecise. For instance, the posting, blogging, and/or re-blogging of an image is reliant upon what that image signifies in relation to an Other, who cannot be articulated or positioned 'outside of contingent, partial, inconsistent, [and] symbolic practices' (Zizek, 2002, p.72). Since these images do not clearly articulate, 'write' and/or 'speak' gay desire, we see from the outset that the over-representation of both written and visual language on 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' falters and stutters in relation to a signifier and the Other involved in its signification. Here, the barrage of representations are instantaneously connected to, and dislocated from, a particular group or groups of users, who are seeking out desire through forms of identification they are persuaded into associating with both gay desire and in some instances straight masculinity.

We also see aspects of through Lacan's stress on desire and the object, that is, in part, an attempt to understand sexuality 'outside' the person (hence his frequent deployment of graphs and formal logic). The dimensions of this are complex, in that any representation of desire (a photograph, a video, a song, in fact, any media text) only manages to represent desire on the basis of how that representation has been assembled, caused, and articulated *as* desire in language. To the extent, therefore, that the unconscious is structured, like language, so Lacan's considerations of sex, sexuality, and desire cannot be divorced from the operations of language and the unconscious. To recognise Lacan's move away from egos and persons in his consideration of sexuality involves a return to the notions of metaphor and metonymy.

This stress on language, of course, serves to underline the impersonal and the symbolic far more than simply the personal or the Imaginary. On 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' and in the overexcited visual language of its representation, the Symbolic and metonymic dimensions of gay masculinity and its temptation to seek a reflection in the Imaginary other are everywhere. As these images jostle with one another they seem to do so in ways allied to gay male culture, politics, lifestyle, and desire as metaphorical tropes. Yet, if they are exposed through a Symbolic Other they both betray and display evidence of their impersonal and divergent *jouissance*.

Through these images and the paradox of their strategic and capricious formation on 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com', we see how incoherence and transposition of meaning offers up a new potential, whereby the signifier unfetters itself from its significatory meaning and, quite literally, 'exceeds its symbolic function, to signify' (Fink in Lacan, 1999, p.19, n.12). On this micro-blog there is no truth or meaning in 'gay' or 'masculine' signification except that which the subject attempts to structure in the associated chain of signifiers. Saying that, the signifier still needs to be emphasised and examined because it underpins the Symbolic order, which overhangs the subject of representation as the other. Lacan himself remains uneasy and sceptical about the importance of the signifier and, in doing so, he dismantles its 'substance' or 'substantial dimension' (1999, p.21). This dethrones the signifier as a possessive form and the Cartesian axiom of 'I am thinking, therefore, I am' discussed in Chapter 3 splinters because of the signifier's place in the Symbolic unconscious. This is most evident in the representational hyperbole of the blog, where the posting and sharing of gay male imagery is always vulnerable to the eradication of meaning and the shattering of ego. The ontological 'gay' or even 'homo' subject of a master discourse, which seems to claim his space in the social and hierarchical order of that discourse, is displaced and in the contexts of this thesis stutters. If this is the case, then the subject's location and function in discourse and within 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com', is continuously impersonal, precarious, and anxious.

In light of this, Judith Halberstam observes that, in Lacan's account of sexual difference, 'primacy is granted to the signifier over that which it signifies' or 'in more simple terms naming confers, rather than reflects meaning' (1998, p.25). Since the 'homo' is named in 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com', 'he' is only ever signified, yet the

allure of the signifier and its Imaginary pull also positions 'him' as the signifier of how 'homo' is expressed in signification. If this conferring is encoded, through features such as online usernames (as discussed in Chapter 4 on *dudesnude.com*), or the names of the blogs themselves, it strengthens the claim that it is in the Symbolic order that the signifier fails and never fully personalises or sustains an identity; rather, it uses the powerful thrust of what it can confer to mask its impersonality.

This notion of an impersonal signifier is clarified by Dean who claims that Lacanian psychoanalysis differs from the accounts of sexuality 'churned out of the rhetorical machine' (2000, p.178), which 'evacuate desire from their accounts' (ibid) in favour of bodies who either 'speak' or 'perform' sexuality through constructionist/deconstructionist accounts of a bodily identity. In the same way, post-structural, post-modern, and queer tendencies in rhetorical accounts of gay sexuality have led us 'to a basic misconception' that 'although desire is "in" language, *desire is not itself linguistic'* (ibid). In other words, it is not possible to read the signification of desire as a structural and identifiable trope that is analogous to a mirroring of reality and experience. Rather, desire exceeds or, even, outstrips the signifiers' attempts to duplicate and identify it. Desire actually precedes the signifier itself; it nervously and excitedly anticipates it through 'the rhetoric of the unconscious' (ibid, p.180) and the tropes of metaphor and metonymy.

Dean also warns that 'conceiving unconscious processes linguistically immediately de-individualises the unconscious' (ibid, p.183), so that 'once the unconscious is understood in terms of the discourse of the Other' (ibid) then it 'becomes more readily thinkable as social and cultural (if not "collective" in the Jungian sense)' (ibid). This is the danger inherent in accounts that construct 'bodies bearing egos [which are] devoid of subjective desire' (ibid, p.187). Here, Dean is suggesting that desire antagonises both the model of impersonality which he initiates, as well as the social constructionist, psychological, and formalist accounts and their analysis of bodily practices rather than unconscious desires. This radical shift uses, as its core, the notion that Lacan theorises sexuality in terms not of gender (the bodily ego as metaphor), but of *jouissance* (the unconscious nuances of metonymic displacement). This approach also reminds us of the enigmatic signifier and its potential to open up a new space of desire, which is reliant on 'our inability to read, to symbolise' (Tukhanen, 2002, p.135). It is here that the 'secrets that appear just beyond our reach, behind the mask

of the *objet a*' (ibid) captivate and fail us as subjects. It also in this enigmatic process that a self-shattered ego and stuttering bodies emerge across 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com'; only managing to articulate desire because they are always waiting to realise and release it as *jouissance*.

The demand allied to waiting, posting, networking, and sharing something (love, desire, community, an object, an opinion etc.) on 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' is always precarious when it is signified through an interface that seems to assemble and momentarily unites 'it'. Yet, that demand continues through a process of demanding because its demand for *jouissance* is never fully satisfied or contained. The user of 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' can only pursue desire if combinations of images are accessed, assembled, and reassembled. The subject begins a journey that positions desire as always occurring but never being expressed between self and ego, through simultaneously systematic and arbitrary posts, blogs and re-blogs. This connects the subject back to ego's unconscious and its relation to the symbolic as a way of both marking out and forgetting *jouissance*. These vast territories of imagery on *tumblr.com*, which present a potentially infinite number of ways to view gay male desire, demonstrate how its sexualised representation carries with itself a point of departure that Dean refers to as 'the dignity of the human individual' (2000, p.240) connected to post-Stonewall, queer and (neo) liberal ideologies of gay liberation, equality, freedom, and identity.

The individual choices and agency bound to this dignity are always subject to potentially transgressive or radical acts with liberal origins – specifically the interminable self-representations, by and for gay men that have been discussed and excessively visualised here. Online spaces such as 'homo-magazine.tumblr.com' present the sexual and desiring body through an ambiguously accessible, intimate, immediate, and (dis)satisfying spectacle of desire. For example, if the non-specific, non-gendered, and non-corporeal object (on this blog we see re-blogged copies of paintings, slogans, commodities, items of clothing, book jackets, and logos), which causes desire (*objet a*), is the primary structure of identification, identity formed in the name of desire is based on repetition and is secondary. This is how erroneous versions of epistemology and ontology continue to be perpetuated, developed, and sustained under the gendered forms of hetero- and homosexuality. Often the return to the unconscious psychic identifications, which undermine and question the post-modern,

fluid, and fragmented social-self, are just another way of attempting to create and sustain (under capitalism) the project of (sub) cultural identity politics. In this way, 'the signifier is what brings jouissance to a halt' (ibid, p.24). There is a jerky tension at work in this setting, which locates *jouissance* as both a cause or spur to desire and a stop or terminator of that desire. On *tumblr.com*, the ways in which the representation of the subject's and the 'Other's' sexual desires rise and reinforce this counter-productive track or circuit, relies upon desire always moving and circulating. The blogging and re-blogging, clicking and typing, cutting and pasting indicate that the subject is caught in a symbolic exchange between moments of *stopping-starting* and *starting-stopping*. This is indicative of the subjects and more so the 'Bodies that Stutter' in this thesis but also the next section which examines the representational paradigm of the selfie as a Symbolic mode of *jouissance* and its place in contemporary practices of gay male self-representation.

6.4 The Anamorphic Gaze, Mise-en-Abyme, and the 'Selfie that Stutters' on *tumblr.com*

The significance of the images examined in the next part of the chapter are connected to the concept of a Symbolic and its potential to self-shatter the subject and render desire impersonal, via the online representational trend known as the 'selfie'. The modes of self-representation and self- objectification examined in this section are primarily allied to the micro-blog http://nakedgayguys.tumblr.com/ but, as we have seen on *tumblr.com*, their origins remain precarious. As of 2014, several other blogs, (at the time of writing the most popular are; nakedguyselfies.tumblr.com, gaymanselfies.tumblr.com, gayphones.tumblr.com, and majdad-iphone.tumblr.com), are all devoted to the blogging and sharing of images of men who primarily use android phone technology, but also digital cameras, web-cams and tablets, to capture their own self-image. On the one hand, the technology allows for the lens to be turned towards the subject in a conventional photographic practice of self-portraiture, so the appearance of the device that photographed the image of the subject remains absent; here the camera or phone enables, yet also remains outside, the representation. On the other, when the lens of the phone is turned away from the subject and pointed towards a mirror, the device appears as a part of the image. It exists within the image and is held by the subject as proof of how that image has been captured. By pointing the lens

away from the self and towards the mirror, the subject begins to mark what Lacan suggests are images that are not images, per se; rather, they are only defined as images through intra-subjective processes of the subject creating, and the other looking at, the representation.

According to Susan Sontag (1977), photographs also furnish evidence; something we see but also doubt. The images are familiar; they are located within the private space of the bathroom or the public space of the toilet cubicle, locker/gym changing room, (Gove, 2000; Humphreys, 1970; Rifkin, 2010). They are connected to the Imaginary realms of the other and his ideal-ego, presented as body that is young, muscular, predominantly white, and well-endowed. This other is both 'like us' – his signification appearing through an index of spaces that appear to be recognisable, typical, real, authentic, and aligned to the amateurish tropes in pornography, examined in Chapter 5, which have been read as personal. Yet he is also 'unlike us' – he remains trapped, silent, jarring, distant, anonymous, and impersonal. Here, the technological commodity acts as a way to identify with the stuttering subject of the representation – in these images the viewer sees what the subject sees. Since the lens has been pointed towards the mirror, and since the mirror has reflected back to the producer of the image his reflection, the field of vision and its allure is something that seems to express the *jouissance* of the other. The lens has been simultaneously pointed towards and away from the subject, so that both the subject and photograph fold back upon themselves via a doubling 'generated by an act of internal duplication' and, in so doing, 'the distance – both physical and psychological – that separates them in reality is collapsed' (Owens, 1978, p. 74) and rendered oblique.

In the selfie the predominantly young male subject has volunteers himself to the lens of his phone, the mirror, and the users of *tumblr.com* so that he seems to occupy the Imaginary position of the other at the level of sexual allure and fantasy which are infused on the images surface. Yet in this way the subject can only be seen as desirable through his Symbolic relation to the camera-phone and now the computer-screen. In one version of its utility, the camera lens acts as a visual record that implicates him – it positions and typifies him as something and/or someone. Sontag argued that to photograph people is to violate and potentially frustrate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have. So, when a user like this uploads, crops, and edits his selfies online, they are subject to the

transformative effect and affect between metaphor and metonymy whereby the image itself fails and is exasperated in its articulation of the (gay) identity of the subject. In this way photography, and more so the selfie, which has so many narcissistic uses, is the foundational instrument for depersonalising our relation to the world. It offers, in one easy habit-forming activity, both participation and alienation – much like sexuality and the use of these blogs. We are drawn to participate, whilst our alienation is confirmed (Sontag, 1977, p.167). This is seen in the processes of uploading, observing, and sharing our own, but also the other's, photographs online; we instantaneously write and represent distance between the 'you' in the photograph and the 'you' in reality. In this respect, there is always something uncanny about the photograph; in the freezing of the moment, the moment is lost through its doubling and the unique identity of time and place is rendered 'obsolete'' (Doane, 1999, p.31).

In selfies the male subjects attempt to present themselves to *themselves* as subjects and then, by posting and sharing their self-image, they anticipate a relation to the other. By pointing the camera lens of the smartphone or digital camera at the mirror they are standing in front of, they self-objectify and capture their image both in the lens of the phone or camera and in the mirror. It is here that the gaze is expectantly and immanently assured that others are also capturing their own image, on and in flat empty screens and surfaces, only then to see them remediated and entangled with thousands of other images on blogs such as 'nakedgayguys.tumblr.com', which reproduce *jouissance* through a Symbolic assemblage of impersonal and 'intra-personal' triggers of desire and mediated bodies that stutter when they gaze and are gazed at. When these images are reproduced through android or smartphones, in privatising or personal spaces such as bathrooms and locker-rooms, through the processes of uploading, the practices of sharing and practices of gazing at men on *tumblr.com* connects to what Zizek gleefully sees as 'nothing but confusion' (Zizek, 2006, p.69) and something, 'which acquires a definite shape only when looked at from a standpoint slanted by the subject's desires and fears – as such a mere 'shadow of what it is not' (ibid).

Zizek also discusses the psychoanalytic 'gaze' as experienced as 'already the gaze of the other' (1991, p.109). These enigmas, of the inside looking out and the outside attempting to look in, are broken down by Zizek as 'the eye viewing the object is on the side of the subject, whilst the gaze is on the side of the object' (ibid, p.109) and, consequently, the object's gaze precedes the subject's from a point that the subject can

and will never be able to see. The eye fails to see that 'when I am looking at the object, the object is already gazing at me' (ibid). As Dean goes on to advocate, the gaze is a 'much-misunderstood Lacanian concept' and he goes as far as to claim that it cannot be used alone to 'theorise scopic dimensions of sexuality' (2000, p.195). It then starts to become clear that the Imaginary and intersubjective dimensions of the ego fail to account for the selfie as a form of gay desire and we have to look beyond the conventions of the gaze to extract new ways of reading the gay male subject.

This approach to the gaze and its alliance to the 'Bodies that Stutter' of the thesis are most obvious in the ways that the selfie both complicates and slants the subject's/other's gaze and desire. In a selfie the reality of the image remains external to it as a result of how the subject has both attempted to capture and displace 'reciprocal visibility' (Foucault, 2002, p.4). The practice of self-representation is captured by a subject who is looking at himself through a camera lens but desires the other to see fully what he can only see partly; this lens is often elevated and angled to point at a mirror and the lens' reflection in the mirror is also reflected at a mirror that forms the screen and frame of the photograph we, the viewers, see. The subject's gaze is both concentrated on himself, yet shattered through his positioning of the camera lens / phone-screen towards the mirror, which acts as a deliberate deflection of this self. In these particularly complex and multi-dimensional images the subject and the other can only see the subject through a series of reduplicated reflections and oblique diagonals. The mirrors are mostly arranged to replicate the subject's body and act as a marker to indicate to the viewer that the subject can be captured and desire can be articulated persuasively. Yet in the selfie it is unclear where photographic, mirrored, and, thus, ego-driven reality, reflection, and refraction occur. In this case, the ego is shattered and both the image and the subject stutter as signifiers of desire collapse into one another. Since this subject attempts to see himself and is then seen by another, this shattering becomes indicative of how his 'seeing' in the Imaginary 'stutters' and, as a result, is displaced by *jouissance* in the Symbolic, which in turn constructs a subject that is distorted by how he and his desire are signified.

Here, this often anonymous masculine subject has used the dimensions of displacement and impersonality to proliferate a form of Symbolic-stuttering and self-shattering that Tim Dean alludes to as 'a different kind of pleasure involved in

violating one's own self-image […] a pleasure in tension with that of secure boundaries and self-recognition' (2009, p.22). This desecration of the self and self-image may guide us towards the notion of self-shattering in the 'selfie' as a new form of *jouissance* in the Symbolic which repositions not only the gay (and straight) male self but also the attendant issues of identity and desire played out through the ego and the unconscious. The selfie also occupies a space between the interplay of eye and gaze, visibility and invisibility, and diverts both subject and other towards the topography of the Symbolic, which equivocates to what Foucault terms 'the unstable play of metamorphoses established [...] between spectator and model' (2002, p.5). Just as the subject chooses to look at himself in the lens of the phone, and not in the mirror, we can suggest that his level of self-identification is in conflict with the ego's alignment to the Imaginary-Symbolic relation. Yet, by choosing to look either through the lens of the phone or towards the mirror, 'the seeing subject can only be inferred, not perceived directly' (Jay, 1994, p.404). The seeing subject does not see – he fails to register and perceive his own reality and personality, and this results in an image that is slashed and riven by a form of impersonality, cultivated in the subject's ego, and its shattered and stuttering relation to a Symbolic Other.

Whilst some of the subjects of 'selfies' look at themselves in the mirror it seems that the majority of the subjects are drawn to their own reflections on the phone-screen, reflected in the camera-phone lens. Here, the mirror becomes less of an Imaginary crossing point and more of a Symbolic obstacle to desire. In this instance, the gaze is understood as Symbolic in that it 'is that which is outside of the subject [and which] 'in a fragmented form […is] *photo-graphed*' (ibid, p.106). These images also express and complicate what Amelia Jones calls 'corporeality-as-surface' (2002, p.967). In selfies the physical tangibility of the body mutates to metonymically become the subject's and the other's gaze, and this gaze, as *objet a*, forms a 'trap for the gaze' (Lacan, 1994, pp.88-89) as *jouissance* through the struggle for desire. Here, modes of reflection and refraction, which have constructed the image, have also catalysed the gaze.

These claims, around the gaze as an Imaginary-Symbolic trap, are also contextualised by Lacan in his reading of Hans Holbein's painting, *The Ambassadors* (1533), (Figure 6.1) (1964, p.93) and his claim that the subject looking at the painting is not the subject of an inter-subjective or recognisable consciousness but, rather, the unconscious

subject of desire (Doy, 2005). It is through the gaze that the 'subject is annihilated' (Lacan, 1964, p.88) and, because the painting 'undermine[s] the illusion of […] homogenous space' (Harari, 2004, p.116), it is in the subject's obliteration that identification is attempted or even re-created. In his reading of the picture, Lacan examines the presence of an anamorphic skull, 'whose natural shape could be restored only by an oblique glance from the painting's edge' (Jay, 1994, p.363). This occurs in, what Lacan consciously terms, 'the geometral field' (1994, p.105) but, more crucially, it also occurs through a desire at work in the unconscious Symbolic region. Just as Holbein, the painter, subverts the phallic gaze 'of the dominant Cartesian perspectivalist scopic regime' (ibid), Lacan, the theorist, uses the skull as an example of desire found in the impersonal gaze and 'its pulsatile, dazzling and spread out function' (Lacan, 1994, p.88-9). When the anamorphosis is seen as a skull, it is a 'distortion of perspective that entails the inverted use of its customariness' (Harari, 2004, p.116) in disjunction with the homogeny of Holbein's subjects.

It is in 'the symbolic realm in which the subject is decentred, split, and comes to terms with its own incompleteness' (Jay, 1994, p. 363) that this illusory form of reciprocity and recognition can be 'seen', via the presence of the selfie on social networked and digital media. For instance, the phone and camera-lens is often responsible for blocking or obliterating of the subjects face and in the moment that the image is captured in that the subject (who is looking at the screen of his phone) can only see himself as he appears to himself – as an identity, a full personality with a recognisable face. It is only after the image is captured by the phone that the subject is able to see how he now appears to the other. The gaze of the other is something that has not yet grasped the place of the subject; it is here that the subject remains stuck in an anamorphic gaze. It is only the subject using the phone who can capture the image in the mirror; desire can only be invigorated by the phone and its power to both cause and capture desire in both a material/technological and unconscious *objet a*, which Zizek refers to as an 'anamorphic blotch' or 'stain' (2006, p.69) or that undercuts the 'seeing subject' through 'the gap between the eye and gaze' (ibid). It is in this instance that the subject is 'always-already gazed at from a point that eludes his eyes' (ibid). Once again, desire is entrapped – it is seen, from one side, by the subject and, from the other, by the 'other'; it only 'belongs' in the image because it has the power to anamorphically capture the subject's, and, thus, distort the other's, gaze and

jouissance. The phone acts as facilitator of representations, which combine the anamorphic blemish, the causal *objet a*, and the *jouissance* of the other triadicially. Here, the phone/digital camera is expressed in a similar way to Holbein's and Lacan's anamorphosis. The commodity, which is in the subject's grasp, is responsible for capturing the image we (the other) see. Yet, it is also a necessary for the subject to distort his coherent image by turning the lens away from himself and pointing it towards a mirror. Whilst the vantage point of the viewer seems to be guaranteed because the subject is there for them to see, they are actually seeing him from within a distortion.

Dean also suggests that the gaze 'connect[s] our bodies to society and culture in a way that suggests the conceptual potential of *objet a* for theorising sexuality as culturally inflected, mediated, even "technologized", without reductively describing sexuality as culturally constructed' (2000, p.196). Just as Lacan claims the gaze as *objet a* is provisional and chaotic, Dean suggests that 'Lacan's characterisation of the gaze […] as *objet* [...] *a* evokes gay practices of cruising and […] video sex, phone sex and virtual sex' (ibid, p.195). If we apprise Dean's suggestions and apply them to the selfie, we can see that these processes of self-representation never involve literal processes of gay men 'seeing' gay desire. Rather, they highlight the conceptual drive of 'Bodies that Stutter' and their 'failure to distinguish between vision and gaze' (ibid, p.195), and how the positions of subject, mirror, and gaze, in any account of gay masculinity and sexuality, may be more usefully understood vis-à-vis 'a fracture, a bi-partition, a splitting of the being to which the being accommodates itself' (Lacan 1994, p.106). This approach to gay desire in these selfies allows us to re-position the practice of photographic, online, and pornographic self-representation as something that, under the gaze transforms the personality of the subject into a permanently impersonal metonym, or more so, and to follow the line of argument that this thesis has developed, a body or 'Bodies that Stutter'.

This impersonality, realised as representational desire, suggests that the 'photograph as mirror' or, indeed, the 'mirror as photograph' continuously attempts to Symbolically capture something of *jouissance* both for the subject *and* for the other. If, as Craig Owens suggests, 'the mirror reflects not only the subjects depicted, but also the entire photograph itself', we see that the selfie also alerts us to how we may see 'in [a] photograph what a photograph is – *en abyme'* (1978, p.75). Owen's work

on photographic imagery and *'en abyme'* (1978) cites Andre Gide, as the originator of the term, as one that addresses 'the very subject of the work transposed to the scale of its characters' and, in so doing, 'illuminates the work better, or establishes its proportions more clearly' (ibid, p.75). if it is allied to the practices of self-representation and the discourses of the selfie discussed in this chapter then mise-en-abyme can also be conceptualised as 'any aspect enclosed within a work that shows a similarity with the work that constrains it' (Dallenbach, 1977, p.8). If the elision of recognition is foundational to what troubles the Gaze, it is also this fractured way of seeing and being seen that constitutes the mise-en-abyme in the selfie. It not only 'thematises […] an internalising duplication, but also, paradoxically, an externalising one' (Minissale, 2009, p.51), so that the mirror shatters, the ego shatters and the body stutters as the reflection refracts.

Mise-en-abyme also connects to Michel Foucault's analysis of Diego Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (1656), (Figure 6.2) examined in *The Order of Things* (2002 [1970]). This is also useful to re-position the subject of the selfie and his relations to the gaze, desire, and the tensions between the Imaginary and Symbolic. In Velasquez's painting, we see a 'representation of a pictorial representation' (Alpers, 1983, p.31) because the painter has, as Foucault observes, 'placed himself to one side of the painting on which he is working' and 'the canvas has its back turned to [the] spectator: he can see nothing of it but the reverse side' (2002, p.3). We see the painter painting a picture of the king and queen, who are reflected back to us as spectators in a mirror. Just as Lacan suggests, Foucault also identifies the gaze as that which is outside and external to the painting, yet also gives meaning to what is inside it. Using this as a rubric we can see in a selfie the subject's gaze does just that; it looks towards the spectator, whilst creating another new self-image in the reflection of the mirror. The subject turns the lens towards himself but turns away from the mirror and, in so doing, he captures a simultaneously anamorphic and duplicitous image of his own reflection. Here, the gaze 'signals from within the picture that the viewer outside the picture is seen and in turn acknowledges the state of being seen' (Alpers, 1983, p.32). In this way the selfie allows us to see a representation from within the image that the subject also sees.

As spectators, we see the anamorphosis of the phone that Symbolically captures our *jouissance* in the mirror and it appears more distant and shattered. Still, the image that is being made in the moment that the image is taken 'remains stubbornly invisible' and

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'prevents the relation of these [G]gazes from ever being discoverable or definitively established' (Foucault, 2002, p.5). Here, the Gaze traverses this form of representation and ambivalently forms the tensions wrought between the Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan. Just as Foucault perceived in *Las Meninas*, we see here that our experience of looking is defined through 'a matter of pure reciprocity: we are looking at a picture in which the painter [the subject of the selfie] is in turn looking out at us' (ibid, p.4). Secondly, the notion that just as we 'are greeted by that gaze we are also dismissed by it' (ibid) reinforces the metonymic 'network of uncertainties, exchanges and feints' (ibid) embedded in the Symbolic. Here, the (sovereign) Gaze of Velasquez [the selfie] occupies the position of a subject who, within his own painting, 'finds in this painting *its* representation' (ibid). As before, and in alignment to Holbein's anamorphic skull, we see that this moment of ambivalence is the moment of identification.

This transmutation of the gaze occurs because these images are located within a locus of image making that presents the spectator with the paradox of 'representations within representations' or 'photographs within photographs'. This also occurs in selfies when 'the visual identification of mirror and photograph establishes a complex play between subject, mirror and camera' in that 'not only is the subject double[d] twice (by mirror and camera), but the mirror image, itself a double, is redoubled by the photograph itself' (Owens, 1978, p.81). Once again within those selfies which an indexed with this visual redoubling subjects capture themselves using the conventions of pointing the lens towards the mirror to capture the self. Yet, because of the position of another mirror or mirrors behind the subjects, the image is made through a process Owens terms 'reduplicative', which both technically and symbolically signifies the reproduction of the ego and the self in reflection. Owen's reading of the abyme is crucial, in that it identifies the importance of language and the Symbolic in relation to the mirror as well as framing some of the claims that have been identified around stuttering, *jouissance,* and the Symbolic in this thesis.

These duplicative reflections, which are then repetitiously re-blogged and, thus, dispersed online, only exist as gay desire through the Imaginary illusions of personalising, networking, blogging, and sharing that, in turn, 'plicate' them *ad infinitum*. As the prefix of reduplication is stripped of its signifying function, it aligns itself to the gaze and *objet a* of desire, so that images are pluralised into endless and depthless mise-en-abymes 'without any corresponding semantic increment [which]

harbors within [their] semantic folds the concepts of tautology, of redundancy' (Owens, 1978, p.81). This convergence of selfies, across the interfaced collage of 'nakedgayguys.tumblr.com' and *tumblr.com* more broadly, is also a further indication that the Imaginary ego in the mirror is not simply a reflection that reflects an image of its viewer. Lacan writes that, 'man's desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognised by the other' (2003, p.64). Now, whilst this notion of recognition through the complexity of shattering, stuttering, mirroring, anamorphosis, and mis-en-abyme are problematic (we know that the metonymic axis to which desire is linked can never finalise itself), Lacan and more so the selfies analysed in this section nonetheless imply that desire might be my specific desire, but that can only come to be desire that moves towards *jouissance* in terms of an Imaginary 'other' preceded and undermined by a Symbolic 'Other'.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to develop and sustain the key lines of this argument of this thesis around 'Bodies that Stutter' and their relationship to metonymy, impersonality, desire and *jouissance* on *tumblr.com.* It has identified the ways in which *tumblr.com* and the key representational practices examined here cultivate an online space that on the one hand seems to nurture and sustain gay desire at an Imaginary level, and on the other Symbolically cuts it down and renders it oblique, enigmatic, and askew. The suggestions put forward in this chapter and the issues around 'Bodies that Stutter' that have also been developed and linked through Chapters 4 and 5 seem to circulate around the overarching notion that there is no resolution (of desire, of identification, of *jouissance*) because the 'other' (him, it, *x*) can never finalise/complete another's desire in the Symbolic. Although desire outside of the field of the 'other' is almost impossible to visualise and conceive, we see on a platform such as *tumblr.com* and particularly through the selfie that a never-ending proliferation of signifiers of desire seems to find a way of moving desire towards a Symbolic form of *jouissance* which is becoming both enigmatic and impossible to pinpoint or categorise. These attempts to situate 'Bodies that Stutter' in relation to a series of impersonal identifications on *tumblr.com* and allied to the selfie discussed in the latter part of this chapter, also serve to inhibit the gay subject as well as fix both gay and straight identity at the level of the Imaginary to the detriment of the Symbolic, desire, and *jouissance.* Perhaps, this remains one of

the underlying problems that galvanises the issue of impersonality and the representation of gay male desire in this thesis and in photographic, pornographic, and online representations, per se. In the case of using Lacan's work to theorise this issue, we see, through the field of language and desire, how unconscious fantasy causes the subject to represent and self-represent and, in so doing, to relate not to another subject, necessarily, but to an 'object' connected to that subject's Symbolic sense of *jouissance* and how it stutters.

As the thesis moves towards it conclusion it important to acknowledge the ways in which 'Bodies that Stutter' are both identifiable but also emergent and capricious. In this chapter it seems as if this divergent appeal is realised in the contemporary practices of self-representation and also the online micro-blogs that have been addressed. As with the bodies that stuttered in Chapters 4 and 5 we may well suggest that there is no sense of resolution to the stuttering and the nuances of what it can encapsulate. This may seem ironic and also disconcerting by way of a link to the conclusion of this work, but it serves to highlight that desire and *jouissance* like these metonymic bodies is never consistent or identifiable. At this point it may seem apt to reflect upon the tensions of an Imaginary other and a Symbolic Other which allows for an entry point into the debates that have been contextualised and developed. It is through these strains that we have asserted that bodies stutter and that desires are articulated through them as metonymic and impersonal, yet it is also important to acknowledge that bodies may stutter in alternative ways and that psychoanalytic concepts and/or approaches that may have remained untapped or under addressed in this project can also be accounted for and explored in its concluding section.

Figure 6.1 - Hans Holbein - *The Ambassadors* (1533)

Figure 6.2 - Diego Velasquez - *Las Meninas* (1656)

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The conclusion to the thesis is going to consolidate and account for the key interventions that have been developed in relation to the themes of metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance, and* how these relate to the concepts of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. As well as this, this final section of this project will account for the terms that were in some way neglected or remain unaddressed in this thesis. These sections will focus on the Real, *objet a*, 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter', and self-shattering to suggest that the argument presented in this work may now shift and reposition 'Bodies that Stutter' beyond the rhetoric of gay identity and the scope of gay desire. Ironically, and in a work that is critical of the process of association that come from metaphorical comparisons it may be that the 'stutter' is in some ways condensed into a metaphorical trope. It is at once reflective of the hesitancy, frustration, exhilaration, and repetition that it contains, as well as remaining vulnerable to metonymic contiguity and transposition of a Symbolic language it cannot control. A lot like desire, stuttering is reliant upon stops and starts, structure and chaos, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. It is also something that cannot be contained or applied to one body above another or indeed one identity and/or identity type. This thesis may have isolated gay male identity and posed its key aims, objectives, questions, and lines of argument in relation to gay masculinity, but it could also be suggested that 'Bodies that Stutter' and the processes of Symbolic-stuttering aligned to them may reach out towards other forms of desire and identity that struggle to resolve the relations between identity and desire, personality and impersonality and self and 'other' / 'Other'.

This thesis has suggested that stuttering might well occur in multiple, ambiguous, and oblique ways. At this point it is useful to assert that 'Bodies that Stutter' may also operate through manifold settings and encapsulations. The specific ways in which they have been conceptualised could be productively and strategically reworked and re-applied to non-digital or networked representations and those bodies that are nether gay or male. In addition, the key to utilising and using this concept responsibly must be alert to the fact that we cannot luxuriate in the conceptual nuances of stuttering and allow it continue stuttering as a concept that cannot be identified beyond the

psychoanalytic unconscious and/or gay male desire. At this stage it may be useful to sum up the dimensions of stuttering and the nuances of 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering in four key points. These points are not intended to be read or positioned as a manifesto of specific gay male bodies that stutter, rather they should be encountered as more as a 'notes towards stuttering' that attend to the ambiguity and contradiction contained within the concept and its broader appeal and efficacy.

1.   'Bodies that Stutter' are bodies that are riven by the Symbolic and they are located there. They are the bodies contained within representation that can only appear *as bodies* through processes of Symbolic power, negotiation, and also subjugation.

2.   As Symbolic bodies, 'Bodies that Stutter' do so because they are lodged between 'bodies that matter' and 'bodies that mutter'. In this way a Symbolic body that stutters comes to stutter in response to the identity-led Imaginary-ego and Imaginary other of the body that matters and through the oblique forms of *jouissance* of the body that mutters in the Real.

3.   'Bodies that Stutter' are also the bodies that attempt to express their *jouissance* through a language of the 'personal' and the metaphorical signifier. Yet, unlike Imaginary bodies that rely upon ego, the 'Bodies that Stutter' are subject to an impersonal Other that underpins how their desire is expressed metonymically – through this process they Symbolically-stutter.

4.   Symbolic-stuttering is the process that occurs when 'Bodies that Stutter' attempt to qualify and articulate their desire. Yet, in the Symbolic this mode of expression falters, hesitates and dysfluently utters desire because it is always expressed impersonally or metonymically. In this way, Symbolic-stuttering may be a form of *jouissance* that can be partially expressed but never fully realised.

Accounting for these principles we can begin to see the breadth of how 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering can be expressed. For example, in Chapter 4 bodies stutter because exchanges of desire happen through an online personals website and the dynamics between the impersonal and personal as well as the Symbolic and Imaginary realms of desire. The 'Bodies that Stutter' in Chapter 5 are manifested differently in that they stutter when the Imaginary-ego of a straight male 'other' is signified through pornographic representation. This stuttering occurs in ways that are expressed metaphorically yet succumb to processes of metonymic displacement which

then results in processes of Symbolic-stuttering. In Chapter 6 the 'Bodies that Stutter' do so through processes of posting and sharing desire and also self-representations that can also be allied to self-shattering in the pursuit of *jouissance*. We see in this way 'Bodies that Stutter' and the associated processes of Symbolic-stuttering are never consistent or coherent. In the section below these concerns are unpacked in more depth to both open up and capture how impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* relate to 'Bodies that Stutter' and their production of a simultaneously frustrated and enigmatic expression of that *jouissance* through Symbolic-stuttering. As well as this the section (and the conclusion more broadly) is now driving towards the assertion that 'Bodies that Stutter' are not specifically gay and male and/or socially networked, rather they have the conceptual potential to navigate and negotiate identity and identification through representation in various cultural settings.

7.2 How Do Bodies Stutter?

The emphasis that this thesis has placed on the body that stutters that has been set out above and how this stuttering is articulated has relied on both the synergies and tensions between an Imaginary other and a Symbolic Other. It has also been dependent on the ways in which Imaginary and Symbolic forms of sexual desire are signified and exchanged between gay men (particularly through the various representational practices / contextual examples that were discussed in Chapters 4,5, and 6). Yet, it could be argued that the signification and exchange of this stuttering is something that always proves difficult due to the nature of stuttering itself. Yet stuttering could also be defined, if not determined, through the fact that stutters are manifested as a response to the power of the Symbolic and its ability to both sanction and undercut the desire of an Imaginary-ego and Imaginary other. As well as this, stuttering is connected to modes of *jouissance* which simultaneously falter, undermine, and enigmatically trigger the representation of desire in divergent and capricious ways. To reflect on this and to suggest the ways in which 'Bodies that Stutter' in representation are allied to processes of Symbolic–stuttering it is once again useful and necessary to look at the bodies that matter in the work of Judith Butler and those that mutter in the work of Tim Dean.

The argument that has been followed in this project has positioned the 'mattering body' as one which 'constantly falls back into the ego' (Dean, 2000, p.193) because it

is allied 'to imaginary and symbolic formations' (ibid, p.187). It is also a body that fails to recognise how *jouissance* may shift identity beyond the constraints of the ego and the limitations of sexual identity and personality. In contrast to this 'muttering bodies' are ones that, because of *jouissance*, are 'struggling to be heard' (p.203) through 'a form of signification that condenses and carries with it *jouissance* in a way that ordinary language cannot, since *jouissance* and language are conceived as antithetical' (ibid). Through this, and particularly in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 we have seen that 'Bodies that Stutter' are not necessarily struggling, rather they are reliant upon a juxtaposition of Butler's rhetorical body with an identity and ego and Dean's impersonal and desiring bodies which are always 'directed towards admitting desire, finding ways to inhabit desire' (ibid). This thesis has suggested that the body that stutters relies upon the interactions that occur between the Symbolic Other and the Imaginary other, and that it is through this that processes of Symbolic-stuttering are revealed and have the potential to move desire towards *jouissance*. In this way, the thesis relies upon the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic that Dean criticises Butler for assimilating and which occupies the space between the bodies that matter and the bodies that mutter so that the grouping of Matter-Stutter-Mutter may be tentatively aligned to that of Imaginary-Symbolic-Real. This is something that the conclusion aims to consider, as well as issues allied to 'Bodies that Stutter' which remain open, contentious, or connect to the nuances of the Real and *objet a*.

In Dean's fraught dialogue with Butler (2000, pp. 174-214) he criticises her bodies that matter because they 'stem from a theory of subjectivity grounded in the ego' (ibid, p.214). Such bodies and their rhetorical nature have been modified in this project by considering the notion 'that language only becomes rhetorical when it produces affects – that is when it is imbued with desire' (ibid, p.204). It is also this exchange between language and desire that has facilitated 'different ways of working within language, different ways of speaking, different ways of relating to the Other, of desiring' (ibid). In this thesis these 'different ways' have been crucial to situating and unpacking a body that stutters inasmuch as it has allowed for the Imaginary others and bodies that matter to unravel, distort, and splinter in the Symbolic. Just as the body that stutters is located between Butler's body as rhetorical and Dean's body as a desiring site of *jouissance*, we may also find the stuttering body somewhere between an Imaginary-ego that 'matters' and the dimensions of what Dean suggests may 'mutter' in the Real.

Here we could go further and now state that a body that stutters as a Symbolic body is torn between Imaginary and Real formations of desire and that is why it most obviously displays itself as a Symbolic body. This is also because it is reliant upon and undermined by ruses of language and desire both inside and outside of its own body and its ego.

In the introduction to Katerina Kolozova's *Cut of the Real – Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (2014) Francois Laurelle discusses the power that desire holds in relation to gendered and sexed bodies. In an emotive and eloquent passage which discusses 'the desiring transformation of bodies' (p. xii) she suggests that desire has 'reduced [bodies] to the state of a quarter or a half of their anterior unity, losing their locality and forming an entanglement […] Bodies floating without the heroism of lovers, before calling for the closure of *jouissance* and the return of institutional harassment' (ibid, p. xiii). These are the sort of 'Bodies that Stutter' and have formed the arguments and concepts examined here. More specifically, they are the gay and straight male bodies we have seen in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 which are riven through discourses of the personal, the pornographic, and the self-representational and always become vulnerable to and yet defined by the signifier. They are also the bodies that are unsuspectingly squeezed between the Imaginary and the Real because the Symbolic is so powerful. Yet these are the bodies that yield the potential to shift their desire towards impersonal and metonymic ways of articulating sexuality *ad infinitum*.

For instance, it may be that websites such as *dudensude.com* but perhaps more so *tumblr.com* provide gay men with the means to do this. They Symbolically act as immense and impersonal image banks of sexually explicit signifiers that masquerade as if they were a personal Imaginary other. It may also be that these Symbolic spaces which offer an endless supply of sexual signifiers are transforming gay men into subjects with the capacity to move towards an impersonality of desire. Yet it is also apparent that in non-gay and/or non-male settings there are millions of online spaces that also operate and function in a very similar way. We see that there is the potential to suggest that all dating apps and websites, all of social media, and the increasingly convergent nature of media platforms with one another are infused with this notion of 'impersonal personalisation'. By engaging with signifiers of desire we could also suggest that spaces like this 'escape an understanding of desire as based on persons' (Dean, 2000, p. 18) and have the potential to transform sexual desire 'beyond the

[I]imaginary diversification and proliferation of sexual norms to which the critique of identity politics has brought us' (ibid). Yet, another element of this thesis has argued and demonstrated that this transformation and move towards impersonality is not something that can be articulated and negotiated effortlessly or in coherent and forthright ways. If an impersonality of desire means finding a way to articulate desire that does not rely upon persons, personality, and identity we see in contemporary practices of gay representation that this may seem like an impossible shift. These gay persons and personalities online may occupy the space of an intangible and in most cases impersonal Symbolic Other but they also have the power to relocate and reconfigure the nuances of what constitutes a tangible and personal exchange or relationship with an Imaginary other. In other words, an impersonality of desire is reliant upon those personalities, identities, and ego's tied to an Imaginary other, yet it also opens up a space in which those others are vulnerable to slippage and enigmatic forms of Symbolic Othering which underpin their representation.

As a result, it also seems appropriate to reflect on the fact that of all the contexts that were examined in this thesis were selected because they *did not* seem to be impersonal. If this is allied to how an Imaginary other and an Imaginary-ego pursue desire and *jouissance*, we see in this project that it does so through the personalising tropes of identity at work via online, pornographic, and self-representational practices. For instance in Chapter 4 the user of *dudesnude.com* is constructed and viewed by other users as through the profile which acts as a personal endorsement of that user's identity as an Imaginary other. In Chapter 5 the straight male subject and more so the chav as an Imaginary other is reliant upon a series of metaphors which construct them as personalities and persons. In this instance and for gay desire to move in the direction of *jouissance,* gay men who are viewing straight men having homosexual sex in *Triga* Films are reliant on the impersonal construction and in this case commodification of a straight male personality. Also, in Chapter 6 the online community of users of *tumblr.com* who post, share, and link to one another through micro-blogs do so in ways they imagine to be personal. Alongside of this the repetitive modes of desire that have proliferated in relation to the selfie evidence that the users who capture, crop, edit, post, share, and link their identity to a selfie do so in light of its power to mark out desire as personal to both satisfy the Imaginary others desire and the Imaginary-ego of the subject. Yet, in all three contextual chapters this personalisation of desire is filtered

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through 'Bodies that Stutter' in light of the Symbolic and the pursuit of *jouissance*. In this way all of them are troubled by an impersonal spectre that yields the power to both catalyse and extinguish desire at any time and in any number of ways.

As I have already raised this has the potential to exceed the specific paradigms of gay male desire and subjectivity. It may be that at the crux of 'Bodies that Stutter' there is a broader theoretical application waiting to occur. For instance if we conceptualise the 'Bodies that Stutter' as ones which are in the first instance allied to networked and digital media, we see that in this setting they already rely upon discourses of the photographic, the public, the gendered, and the sexual. This opens up a wide-ranging set of possibilities in relation to the scope of other representational mediation, cultural discourse, and identity / identity politics as potential areas for the reapplication or new investigation of 'Bodies that Stutter'. For instance, some of these may broach and encompass identities allied to class, race, and belief; the representations we perceive through the discourses of celebrity, neo-liberalism, consumerism, nostalgia, and globalisation; as well as the mediums of reality TV, advertising, film, and video-text. In some ways the contextual specificity of the 'Bodies that Stutter' of the thesis have now began to productively dissipate and through this they to begin to give rise to the potential of other 'Bodies that Stutter' in other cultural, political, economic and more specifically Symbolic settings.

This broader utility and application of the concept is still built around the tensions between the personal and the impersonal as something that alerts us to the power of the Symbolic Other and the ways in which the personalisation of a signifier is always an impersonal practice of exchange. This is evidenced in all three of the chapters and the close analysis of their contexts. For instance, the Symbolic ensures that the process of constructing a personal profile on *dudesnude.com* is done through impersonal methods which are in place for the user to personalise. The Symbolic also guarantees that the 'threat' and 'disgust' discussed in relation to straight male identities such as the chav in *Triga* Films are containable and condensed down into an impersonal text that a gay consumer can also contain and control. In terms of the selfie, we see that whilst it seems to it originate from an Imaginary other, its online location, its repetitive and assimilatory nature in relation to other selfie's, and its attempts at capturing the personality of its subject have all been enabled by a Symbolic Other. In this way the Symbolic is capable of regulating, instilling, and rendering the personal content of the

selfie impersonal because selfie's fail to fully self-represent the subjects that they contain. Once again, this is something that could be applied beyond the specificity of my own contextual and analytical approaches and methods.

In this way we see that it is both within and beyond the gay and male locales of this project that the metonymic impersonality of desire is a far more challenging and oblique exercise which has to account for the impersonal barriers, and more specifically stutters that challenge how personal desire is expressed. Just as this thesis has focussed on gay male desire and the concepts which relate to gay/male 'Bodies that Stutter' we see that these bodies and their stutters are not consistent or in some cases identifiable. In this way 'Bodies that Stutter' are manifested in both Imaginary *and* Symbolic ways because they rely upon metaphoric *and* metonymic modes of representation, and also personal *and* impersonal ways of articulating desire. On *dudesnude.com* we see that this occurs through the paradoxes and modes of exchange between self and other or more specifically viewer and user. In *Triga* films it works through the construction of gay desire that relies on the construction of a straight identity, and on *tumblr.com* it occurs through the enigmatic processes of sharing and re-blogging that both locate and dislocate not only gay desire, but a potentially limitless range of other desires in inestimable ways.

Yet this potentially boundless and uneven way of sharing, representing, and expressing gay desire that we see in these online, pornographic, and photographic discourses of representation and self-representation are also underpinned by the fact that the Imaginary other is the specular force that haunts and seduces the gay male sexual subject into repetitive and conventional practices of bodily representation. Beyond the specific contexts of this thesis it may well be that this is a feature of all social media and networked mediation, and not just the domain of gay male desire. Just as this project argues that these practices are always vulnerable and subject to a Symbolic Other, it also recognises that they are reliant on the tensions that exist between Symbolic *and* Imaginary modes of desire and their broader uses and application beyond gay male desire. For example, in the discussion of selfies in Chapter 6 we see that whilst a gay body may seem to appear within the illusory signifier of an Imaginary other it is the Symbolic Other that allows it to do so. It is through this tension that gay male 'Bodies Stutter', yet it is also apparent that the stuttering produces the potential to do so in relation to *'any'* identity and/or body. In this way, it may also be that when

'Bodies that Stutter' traverse or move beyond the specificity of gay male desire they realign metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance* and move towards a new way of working through and contextualising the original concept.

The diverse ways that a body stutters may also reiterate the issue that the Imaginary-ego is a powerful element of signification. In light of this and to summarise, we can see that the contextual discussions of online personals, pornography, and self-representation in Chapters, 4, 5, and 6 have attempted to demonstrate that bodies stutter when they attempt to express their *jouissance* as personal, pornographic, and self-led. In turn, they illustrate that this stuttering is always embedded in a Symbolic Other that governs how and also why a body stutters. As well as this Chapter 2 establishes how psychoanalytic terms and concepts have helped to build an argument around the paradox of Imaginary and Symbolic exchange, metonymy, impersonality, desire, and *jouissance*. These terms and concepts have also been developed in relation to the 'Bodies that Stutter' and have allowed for instances of Symbolic-stuttering to be analysed. However, and as this work is brought to a close it is also important to consider the concepts that were involved in the project but were not used or utilised in as much detail as those discussed above. In the next sections these areas are addressed and used to provoke and incite a way for this work both to conclude but more so to be developed and sustained in alternative ways. The first will address Lacan's third register of the Real, this will then be followed by a discussion of the *objet a*, and in the final section the assemblage of bodies that may simultaneously 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' will be addressed in relation to self-shattering, *jouissance* and stuttering.

7.3 Engaging with the Real

The line of argument and examination of 'Bodies that Stutter' that is threaded through this work has relied upon the limitations of an Imaginary other. In the close analysis of gay desire we have seen that a discussion of these limitations has been focused on the representational metaphors of identity and personality of that other. In turn, this has allowed the argument of the thesis to suggest that the gay subject is better understood via a Symbolic Other and its impersonal and metonymic capacities. Yet it has also neglected the more radical notion that the body that stutters may also be a body that relies upon, and is positioned in relation to Lacan's Real register. Dean suggests that the Real is where Lacan 'situates negativity and mutability […] rather

than that of appearances' (ibid, p.230) and in this way 'the real has no positive content [and] has more to do with sex and death than does the imaginary and symbolic' (ibid). Yet, as a consequence the task of using and applying the Real to an analysis of 'the images and discourses that construct sex, sexuality and desire in our culture' is both a difficult and challenging task. Whilst Dean has an 'objection to critically analysing sex and sexuality in terms of the imaginary and symbolic' (ibid, p.231) he fails to use the Real to identify 'specific modes of […] cultural images' and discourses'' failure' (ibid) that the Imaginary and Symbolic facilitate. It is also interesting to note that in *Beyond Sexuality* (2000) Dean avoids contextualising his claims so that his bodies continue to mutter and the Real functions as an abstract and subversive term. Interestingly in his later work *Unlimited Intimacy* (2009) where the contexts are similar to the ones addressed here (impersonality, pornography, gay identity, desire, sexuality etc.) he not only neglects the Real and the body that mutters but also the work of Lacan which is only referred to five times.

In many ways the Real is embedded in this thesis but it is discussed through the veil of *jouissance*. More specifically, and if *jouissance* is understood through the Symbolic it manages to account for something of the Real that cannot be reached, attained or satisfied. This also situates the notion of Symbolic-stuttering as that which 'point[s] to the presence within or influence on the symbolic of the real' (Fink, 1995, p.30). Fink characterises the effect that the Real has on the Symbolic as a series of '*kinks in the symbolic order*' (ibid), kinks which could also be transposed as 'Bodies that Stutter' through Symbolic-stuttering. What is also clear is that the Real is difficult to apply and utilise in relation to Imaginary forms of personal visibility and/or appearance and Symbolic forms of impersonality in language and power. Because it remains and retains an oblique and capricious presence it can only be understood through its absence. Yet, in recent work such as Kolozova's the Real is repositioned in light of its potentials to construct and cultivate new forms of impersonal presence and desire. She implies 'that the Real is always grounded in the material, and it is for this reason that the Real is a status that can be assumed by other realities' (p.2). In light of this and in opposition to Dean we see that 'The Real is not an abstraction, an idea that stands independently "out-there" in itself' (ibid). It is something that resonates and absorbs into Imaginary and Symbolic forms of representation and language. In this way it may

be that a reconciliation or affiliation of the Real with both the Symbolic and the Imaginary can result in new ways of conceptualising desire and identity.

Zizek's work has also influenced how the Real is positioned as a 'brute symbolic pre-symbolic reality which always returns to its place' (Zizek, 1989 p.182) and renders both the Imaginary and Symbolic as 'having no real existence' (ibid) only 'a mere structural effect' (ibid). In this way we see that the Real connects to *jouissance* as the thing that 'must be constructed afterwards so that we can account for the distortions of the symbolic structure' (ibid). Whilst the dimensions of Zizek's Real are inevitable, ultimate, and traumatic they are also illustrative of how the Real can be configured in relation its Imaginary and Symbolic counterparts. Zizek's example of a 'MacGuffin' (ibid, pp.183-184) helps to illustrate this claim and also to account for the next part of the conclusion which addresses the *objet a* and some of the difficulties involved in using it in this project and as a result neglecting it in relation to impersonality, desire and *jouissance*. Zizek's 'MacGuffin' is assimilated from the devices that Alfred Hitchcock used to construct suspense in his films. It is 'the pure pretext whose sole role is to set the story in motion but which is in itself 'nothing at all' (ibid, p.183). Its only purpose or relevance is that 'it has some significance for the characters – that it must seem of vital importance to them' (ibid). It could be argued that the MacGuffin is a lot like the exchanges and impersonal significations of desire that gay men use in attempts to capture and personalise desire as 'personal'. It acts as the preceding enigma, the mystery, and also the void that facilitates a dialogue, an exchange, and a desire in both the Imaginary and more aptly the Symbolic realm. In this way, it could be argued that the Real acts as both the predicate and the aftermath of *jouissance* felt by the 'Bodies that Stutter' and the modes of Symbolic-stuttering in this project.

In many ways, and at this final stage of the project it could be argued that this gap is the ambivalent foundation to the body that stutters inasmuch as it is the gap that can only be located, traced, and captured through the signifier. In Zizek the 'MacGuffin' is 'the purest case of what Lacan calls *objet [petit] a*: a pure void which functions as the object cause of desire' (ibid, p.184) yet 'Bodies that Stutter' (in their Symbolic form) are never pure and do not exist within a 'pure void'. Rather, the 'Bodies that Stutter' as Symbolic bodies 'act up' in relation to this void and do so because of, and through, Symbolic-stuttering. Saying that, they also have to acknowledge the prospect that *jouissance* is also 'Real par excellence' (ibid) in that they rely upon 'a cause which

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in itself does not exist – which is present only in a series of effects, but always in a distorted, displaced way' (ibid). As conclusions are drawn it could also be suggested that the body that stutters is perhaps a result of this displacement or void whilst the *objet a* is its cause. As a result, 'Bodies that Stutter' may offer some possibility of identifying desire through the signifier, whilst in marked contrast the *objet a* as cause of desire is impossible to see and in that way impossible to contextualise. We now see that whilst 'Bodies that Stutter' find their signifiers and modes of expressions through Symbolic-stuttering they do so through their hesitant, frustrated, and enigmatic attempts at signifying *objet a*.

7.4 Engaging with *Objet a*

Along with the Real it is apparent that *objet a* and its alliance to *jouissance* has the potential to inform and perhaps even instigate new dimensions to 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering. Like the challenges of the Real, working with the *objet a* in analyses of gay male desire involves knowing how to conceptualise it and being careful not to transform it into orthodoxy has been one of challenges of this project. It has also informed the ways in which Chapters 4, 5, and 6 have attempted to balance and negotiate the analysis of rhetoric and desire whilst remaining alert to the ways in which 'the theoretical potential of psychoanalysis has been diluted' (Dean, 2000, p.36) because strands of queer and cultural studies have essentialised 'a psychoanalysis that emphasises the linguistically structured unconscious' (ibid). This attenuation is something that can be restored by engaging with *jouissance* but also acknowledging the ways in which the *objet a* acts is a trigger for desire that occurs prior to that desire. In some cases, this is more desirable than the desire itself, in that the pursuit of it only ever reaches a particular point. This is also the point that not only brings *jouissance* to a temporary halt but also its critical analysis and investigation.

In *Seminar XX* Lacan suggests that *objet a* 'goes beyond speech without going beyond languages actual effects' (1999, p.93). This results in what he refers to as a 'half-telling (*mi-dire*)' (ibid) of desire that is only ever partially articulated. Through this partiality 'the significance of object [*objet*] *a* lies in its nonspecularity' (Dean, 2000, p.34), and the ways in which it cannot be coherently visualised and/or spoken. In turn, this non-specular aspect to *objet a* draws us closer to how it may be understood whilst also alerting us to its main challenge. In a thesis that has addressed the visual dimensions

of both gay and straight masculinity there is a danger of luxuriating in what the *objet a* may or may not manifest itself as and this makes it difficult to both locate and therefore to use. Saying that, this work has also been attentive to the notion that on the one hand, the *objet a* is 'the object of fantasy, as well as of desire – nowhere to be found in "the field of reality" (ibid, p.57), and on the other compliant to the fact that 'it is […] not be found in the imaginary register' (ibid).

The thesis involved a number of close visual analyses and within the processes of utilising psychoanalysis there is an inherent danger of sidestepping the *objet a* and thereby falling into the imaginary trap of visual recognition. If the *objet a* is 'produced by cutting away something from the subject' (ibid, p.58) in which 'the agent of the cut […] is, of course, language' then the 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolic-stuttering rely upon *objet a* in their attempts to express and contain desire. Attempting to locate and define this *objet a* is both impossible and detrimental to desire because 'the contingent foundation provided by objet a is that of desire' (ibid, p.194). In this way, the visual instances in the thesis may also be regarded as nothing more than a series of 'symbolic networks [that] dissect the human body, producing leftovers that cause desire' (ibid, p.59). This may also act as a point of departure but also a way of incorporating the *objet a* into an analysis of the visual which highlights the dimensions of impersonality, metonymy, and identification prior to those of personality, metaphor, and identity. In this way the *objet a,* and its unpredictability, also draws attention to the ways in which desire is never stable. More so it alerts us to the ways in which the exchange and reconfiguration of how desire may be articulated through all three of Lacans's registers can shift in relation to how it is expressed as *jouissance.* In Chapter 2 of the thesis it was suggested that in its pursuit of *jouissance* the body that stutters may inhabit the space between the Imaginary body that matters and the Real body that mutters so that the triadic register of R,S,I would be transposed into that of I,S,R or Imaginary-Symbolic-Real. In the final section of the conclusion this reconfiguration is considered and allied to the nuances of self-shattering to suggest that the combination of bodies that 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' may also take the analysis of gay desire and desire per se in alternate directions.

7.5 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter'….Shatter…

'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' and how it is assembled may also begin to evolve and shift how the positions of an Imaginary other, a Symbolic Other and the Real can be considered. Bruce Fink uses Lacan's work in *Seminar XXI* to discuss how changing the order of the R,S,I changes its meaning. For instance if the registers are rearranged those which move in 'a clockwise direction (RSI, SIR and IRS) are to be distinguished from those that go around in a counter clockwise direction (RIS, ISR, and SRI)' (1995, p.143). This thesis has worked with the established combination R,S,I in its attempts to conceptualise 'Bodies that Stutter' to 'realise[s] the symbolic of the imaginary' (ibid). Yet it is also important to consider the ways in which psychoanalysis and this project has to account for 'different discourses […] appropriate at different moments and in different historical, social, political, [and] economic […] contexts' (Fink, 1995, p.142). We can then see that if the combination used in the thesis of 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' is mirrored by Lacan's orders they become Imaginary-Symbolic-Real and the original principle of working with R,S,I (which would translate into 'Mutter-Stutter-Matter') needs to be realigned. Also if Fink's own notion of '"imagining the real of the symbolic"' (ibid) were used it would calibrate bodies through a process of 'Matter-Mutter-Stutter' and further complicate how desire is pursued and expressed. This also sheds some light on Symbolic-stuttering and ways in which it might be followed or unpacked beyond the specificity of this work.

Using the arrangement of 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' we may see there is a level of naive desire that comes from an Imaginary body that matters; in contrast the Symbolic body that stutters extinguishes some of this naivety. The Real body that mutters destabilises it all together and what we are left with is 'an impossible kernel, a certain limit which is in itself nothing; it is only to be constructed retroactively, from a series of its effects' (Zizek, 2008, p.184). In this way the gay bodies examined in this project also 'Matter-Mutter-Stutter'. They do so because they pursue desire, repeat desire, and then return to the place of that desire through processes of impersonal *jouissance* they can never attain or fulfil. We see this instilled in the personals website, the pornographic film, and the selfie all of which demonstrate that the gay subject is involved in processes of *jouissance* that not only stutter but also hold the potential to 'shatter' the Imaginary-ego and the tropes of identity and personality connected to it. This shattering and more so 'self-shattering', (primarily derived from the work of Leo Bersani) is reflected upon

and allied to stuttering in Chapter 6. In this way an interaction of shattering and stuttering aims to shift the emphasis from what has been neglected or undeveloped via the Real and *objet a* towards a way of incorporating some of the concepts into other aspects of cultural life. This may also enable alternative ways of conceptualising gay and straight desire that hold the potential to transform how that desire is expressed.

The representations of gay bodies examined in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 were allied to several concepts raised in Chapter 2 which attempted to address how an 'impersonality of desire' (Dean, 2000) could be connected to gay (and queer) paradigms of identity. If we recall Lee Edelman's theory of "narci-schism" (1994) there is a sense that the homosexual / gay subject has the ability to move beyond his Imaginary ego and the metaphors of identity towards a model of desire that can reposition how his desire is realised and conveyed impersonally. Yet this is always problematic to affirm because of the burden of Imaginary representation (re)produced through representations of gay identity. To shatter something of this cycle we need to 'shatter the fantasy of Imaginary unity' (2004, p.22) so that new ways of configuring desire lie within the potentials of Symbolic forms of *jouissance* and a body that stutters.

As well as self-shattering', it is also in Bersani's concepts of homo-ness (1995) and 'impersonal narcissism' (2008) that we have seen the potential for a 'redefinition of [gay] sociality' (1995, p.7) that can only be realised through impersonal modes of desire and identification. These concepts have been embedded into the analytical chapters, but it may be 'self-shattering' which was used to examine the micro-blogs on *tumblr.com* but more so the selfies in Chapter 6 that holds the most potential. The body that stutters allows for *jouissance* to be articulated through Symbolic modes which are also defined in relation to 'the self which the sexual shatters' (1987, p.218) and in so doing 'provides the basis on which sexuality is associated with power' (ibid). For instance, this level of self-shattering is akin to 'Bodies that Stutter' in selfies, in that we see bodies that are self-shattered through practices of sexual representation that undermine 'corporeal integrity' (Dean, 2009, p.22). In so doing we find that those bodies are coaxed and antagonised by impersonal forms of *jouissance* which proliferate their Symbolic-stuttering as sexual arousal, stimulation, and pleasure.

Dean understands this self-shattering *as* jouissance insofar as 'the tensions between the pleasure of recognition and the jouissance of self-shattering is figured by the

conflict between the ego and the unconscious, or, in other words between identity and desire' (ibid). Just as 'Bodies that Stutter' are ones allied to processes of aimless *jouissance*, the dimensions of self-shattering involve processes of impersonal identification that 'generate[s] anxiety' (ibid) whilst also 'generat[ing] something akin to pleasure' (ibid). These tensions between desire and anxiety 'involved in violating one's own self-image' (ibid) are also expressed through 'Bodies that Stutter' and their attempts to represent and encapsulate something of the self through the signifier. For instance in the selfie, the subject deceptively recognises himself as the marker of his own and the others sexual identity. This allows self-shattering to inflect and seduce him into capturing his own image or pursuing images of others like and/or unlike him in his search for *jouissance.* In this way we see that a self-shattering of *jouissance* which is constitutive *of* jouissance also holds the potential to undermine, reshape, and challenge how identity and desire are exchanged and expressed. On those grounds, and as the investigation of gay male representation on online personals, pornography, and social media has attempted to demonstrate, the sexual subject always contains the capacity for self-shattering in that sex, sexuality, and desire rely upon instances of self-loss and self-shattering signified through bodies that stutter. The instances of desire that have been examined in this project have brought me to this point because all of the men in those images seem in some way vulnerable, displaced, and uncertain. Like the concept of stuttering, shattering accounts for some of this uncertainty.

Both self-shattering and stuttering rely upon something of Bersani's earlier concept of 'homo-ness' which was also discussed in Chapters 2 and 6. Here Bersani suggests that if gay subjects knowingly abandon gay identity then we may well see a 'mode of connectedness to the world that it would be absurd to reduce to sexual preference' (1995, p. 10). If the processes of sharing desire impersonally (through personal profiles, pornographic representation and self-representation as overtly sexual) always works through moments of mediated exchange there may grounds for realising 'an anticommunal mode of connectedness we might all share, or a way of coming together' (ibid). Yet this must also be a way of sharing that does not rely on 'assimilation into already constituted communities' (ibid). Whilst this vision resonates with how we should all be using social and personal media and discourses of desire impersonally, it also emphasises the more obvious fact that we are not. The anti-communal tendencies that could reverberate through an impersonality of desire are repetitively personalised,

so that in many of the examples assembled in this project, we see them they fall back into the determinism of sexual preference, identity, and ego that Bersani is encouraging us to avoid.

In Chapter 5 this is evident in the ways that gay men both use pornography in an attempt to assimilate aspects of homophobic, heterosexist, and hyper-masculine identity to catalyse their *jouissance*. It is also evident within online gay communities whereby identifications with identities are designated on the basis of how they are imagined. In Chapter 4 this can be seen through the intricacies of the selection criteria on *dudesnude.com* as well as in Chapter 6 whereby the infinite processes for anti-communal and thus impersonal modes of sharing on *tumblr.com* are regulated in that you are identifiable in terms of the images you are viewing, where they been blogged from, and where those images will re-blog you to. Here the impersonal is located in micro-blogs which metonymically assemble desire but do so through processes we increasingly associate with personal and metaphorical association. In light of this gay bodies begin to blend into straight spaces and straight bodies into gay spaces. Yet, beyond this criss-crossing the vast majority of those bodies seem to constitute the identities and personalities they have the potential to transgress.

During the time it has taken to complete this project alternative ways and alternative 'Bodies that Stutter' and Symbolically-stutter have also contributed to, but remain unaddressed here. In addition to the previous areas of potential investigation, consider how 'Bodies that Stutter' as sexualised bodies may be positioned in terms of non-monogamy, bisexuality, transsexuality, transgender, disability, virginity, trans-national bodies, the desire for the stranger, and the scope of what feminine *jouissance* and feminine desire (both as identities and as identifications) may manifest via modes of impersonality, desire, and *jouissance*. Also, during the life of the project new social networks such as *snapchat.com* and *Instagram.com* have emerged to reposition how visual and sexual desire is expressed. Alongside of this there are gay networks of desire which rely upon GPS such as *Grindr.com* to indicate that there are exciting, challenging, and intricate attempts at impersonally expressing and signifying *jouissance* emerging all of the time. The Symbolic Other, *jouissance*, and' Bodies that Stutter' manifest themselves in ways which attend to these constant shifts and assist in exploring gay desire or indeed any desire.

Accounting for the Real and *objet a*, 'Matter-Stutter-Mutter' and self-shattering has also allowed for the final parts of this thesis to consider alternate directions that stuttering bodies may now move in. It may also allow us to ask if there is a way to transpose the project of gay male identity and consider other patterns of identification that may benefit from the issues raised here. This thesis is not able to fully anticipate or foresee how the impersonality of desire will be articulated in future discourses of sexual and non-sexual representation, neither can it predict how new social and cultural formations will be brought about in relation to changes and evolutions in ideology, technology, and politics. Yet 'Bodies that Stutter', this thesis concludes, help to attend to questions of how desire and identity are marked, whilst also opening up a space where the impersonal identifications which both cause and temporarily fulfil that desire are articulated. An issue that has evolved in this work is the contentious nature of how a 'gay male' or 'straight male' body stutters in relation to the potential limitlessness of other bodies that stutter. It may be that this project forms a way of using metonymy, impersonality, Symbolic-stuttering, and 'Bodies that Stutter' to read into the simultaneous orthodoxy and fragmentation of other bodies torn apart by ideological and political conditions such as class, race, gender, sexuality, belief, nation, or geography. Through this we may find that inter-related yet also marginalised and subordinated discourses of sexual desire understood outside of the rubric of gay and straight male identity can be aligned to 'Bodies that Stutter' as those that are only connected to other bodies through modes of desire that occur impersonally yet are manifested in mediated representation as personal.

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