Spaces of Male Prostitution:

Tactics, Performativity and Gay Identities in Streets, Go-Go Bars and Magazines in
Contemporary Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

This research explores the spatial practices of male prostitutes meeting gay male clients in various urban environments in Bangkok, Thailand. The research focuses on the male prostitutes' spatial practices in three meeting places: the streets around *Saranrom* park, the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, and the representations of space in local gay newsletters. Examining the male prostitutes' spatial practices through 'tactics', this research suggests that male prostitutes use the meeting places differently as ways of responding to the 'strategies' of gay male clients. This research also suggests that the tactics of male prostitutes can be examined by exploring the relationship between spatial practices and subjectivities. By exploring how specific performative acts constitute male prostitutes' subjectivities, this research suggests that male prostitutes 'perform' homosexuality.

This thesis draws upon Judith Butler's performativity theory as a discursive mode of constituting subjects and Michel de Certeau's theoretical discussion, specifically spatial practices of 'strategies' and 'tactics', as a means of differentiating between 'place' and 'space'. Methodologically, this research works in two directions: the first explores how the spatial practices of male prostitution produce 'gay' subjectivities in the moment of sexual encounter – arguing that male prostitutes actively reposition themselves as 'subjects' rather than 'objects' through spatial and sexual practices; and the second examines the social and sexual constitution of space – arguing that 'places' are produced as 'spaces' through the practices and tactics of male prostitutes.

This research aims to make an original contribution to knowledge in four main ways. The first is an exploration of the relationship between de Certeau's spatial theory of 'tactics' and Butler's concept of 'performativity' as a constitution of subjectivity. The second is the use of de Certeau and Butler's theories to explore three spaces of male prostitution in contemporary Bangkok, Thailand, through observations drawn from interviews, accounts of spatial experience, and discussions of various representations of space. The third is a reconsideration of these theories of performativity and spatial practices in the light of the specific conditions of the case studies in Bangkok. The fourth is the production of new forms of cross-disciplinary knowledge to bring this discussion of tactics, performativity and gay subjectivities in streets, go-go bars and magazines into architectural history and theory, thereby producing new ways of understanding how spaces are produced through encounters and looks.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

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Introduction

The relationship between spaces and male prostitution is an unconventional topic for architectural study. This thesis extends the work of feminists in architectural history and theory through research into spaces of male prostitutes and gay male clients in Bangkok, Thailand. Through critical theories based on identity politics, the study of spaces and male prostitution opens up new ways of questioning what is meant by 'identity' and 'subjectivity' and whether these can be manifested differently depending both on what you are in relation to the others and what you become in different positions, spaces and places. This thesis is based on the question of how to reclaim the space of subjects who are objectified by a regulatory power or, as Judith Butler argues, 'those who are not yet "subjects"'.[1] The study of spaces of male prostitution argues for a rethinking of the dualism between control and resistance, in particular when power operations get played out differently in site-specific locations and against socio-cultural backgrounds. The term 'male prostitutes' in this thesis is used in order to situate the relationships with 'gay male clients' conceptually and dialectically, and the term 'gay men' is used in order to situate the relationships with 'non-prostitution' or other gay men. When the relationships between male prostitutes and gay male clients are examined in relation to specific locations, such as streets, I use 'male streetwalkers' in relation to gay male drivers; in go-go bars I use 'male sex workers' in relation to bar owners and gay male customers; and in representations of space in gay magazines I use 'male models' in relation to magazine editors and gay male readers.

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[1] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

Inspired by contemporary research in the field of architectural history and theory, I became interested in the works of Iain Borden and Jane Rendell, particularly in the way they theorise architecture, or space, both through history and through the interrelation of theories and practices.[2] Borden and Rendell view architecture not as a finished project but as a tool to explore the conditions of social production. For Borden and Rendell, space is socially and materially produced, but the social is spatially produced as well. Their work, for example Borden's study of the relationships between skateboarding and space and Rendell's study of male rambling, female prostitution and the city of London in the early-nineteenth century, appear to challenge conventional ways of thinking and explore architecture, architectural history and theory.

I came across their collaborative work in the MSc Architectural History course at the Bartlett School of Architecture, in a module known as the 'Representation of Cities', which greatly influenced this research. The aims of this module were to challenge our ways of looking at the city, architecture and, most importantly, space, in relation to social production, through representations, such as photographs, maps or travel guides. In short, we learned how to interpret spatial representations. A series of critical theories were also provided for discussion on the course. What the 'Representation of Cities' offered me was a way of understanding cities through spatial and social relations, and in particular through various representations produced and used by the inhabitants of cities.

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[2] Among their work, this research owes much to four particular books: Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds), *InterSections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories* (London: Routledge, 2000); Iain Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (eds), *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (London: Athlone Press, 2002).

I was drawn to study the relationship between male prostitution and space by the documentary '101 Rent Boys', produced by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato.[3] Bailey and Barbato interviewed male streetwalkers on Santa Monica Boulevard, California. Instead of focusing solely on these men's reasons for selling sex, '101 Rent Boys' revealed their lived experience, through story-telling and documenting their meeting of clients in the street. Through '101 Rent Boys', I decided to think both about male prostitutes and their clients and about the relationship between them and the street where the meetings took place. These male streetwalkers' stories and their activities meeting clients allowed me a particular experience of the space of Santa Monica Boulevard. These are the stories of male prostitutes in the street – the stories of urban inhabitants, users of the city. However, '101 Rent Boys' offered me only one view, an illustration of how Bailey and Barbato see these male prostitutes, not views perhaps of male prostitutes themselves, presented from the locations they occupy. Would such spaces be produced and used differently? What I am concerned with then is not the question of who male prostitutes are in the sense that I am not concerned with their essentialised identities, but rather with *what* male prostitution is, that is their constructed identities. Should I think of these men in terms of prostitutes, homosexuals or both? Is every male prostitute homosexual? If not, what do these men think about homosexuality? Does homosexuality mean the same for male prostitutes as it does for me? Are they aware that they might be caught by the police while selling sex? How do they communicate with potential clients? Do they have specific techniques of disguise to prevent themselves from being

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[3] *101 Rent Boys*, produced by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, World of Wonder Production, UK (2001).

recognised by the police, at the same time as signalling to and being recognised by

potential gay male clients? Can the encounters between male prostitutes and gay male

clients in Santa Monica Boulevard be witnessed in other parts of the city, in other

environments or in other socio-cultural conditions? If so, will their encounters be exactly

the same or different? These are some of the questions I intend to explore through this

research.

To investigate the meetings between gay male clients and male prostitutes in urban

environments is not as easy as it seems because such meetings are situated not only in

'gay' spaces, but also in 'public' spaces, where the regulatory power of heterosexual

hegemony already dominates. Yet, the way that these two parties meet raises two

important questions: first, whether the gay spaces in which the meetings take place

should be regarded as 'private' as opposed to 'public'; second, whether meetings situated

in 'gay' spaces operate differently from the ones situated in 'public' spaces.

Rendell discusses the separate spheres of 'public' and 'private' through hetero-normative

sexual practices like this: 'an oppositional and an hierarchical system consisting of a

dominant public male realm of production (the city) and a subordinate private female one

of reproduction (the home)'.[4] However, this thesis emphasises gay spaces. Gay spaces are

produced through male-centred sexual practices 'within' public spaces, but that is not a

reason for gay spaces to be bound up with the paradigm of separate spheres, the 'public'

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[4] Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"' in Rendell, Barbara Penner and Borden (eds), *Gender Space Architecture*, p. 103.

and 'private'. The meetings between gay male clients and male prostitutes in public

spaces suggest different ways of operating public spaces. From this perspective, through

different operations, the meaning of 'public' space needs to be rethought.

To understand public space differently, I draw attention to the way in which spaces are

produced, not through hetero-normative sexual practices but rather through male-centred

sexual practices, or what William Leap calls the 'public sex' of gay men. Through 'public

sex', Leap argues that gay spaces can be produced publicly. For Leap, the public, defined

by given descriptions of a public realm in relation to hetero-normative sexual practices,

can be understood in terms of the realm where 'gay identity has become synonymous

with an unending pursuit of promiscuity, sexual risk-taking and ultimately (given the

realities of the AIDS pandemic) wilful self-destruction'.[5] The sexual practices of gay men

become stigmatic, oppressed and, indeed, excluded because there is no place for gay sex

within the public realm dominated by heterosexual normality. On the contrary, the public,

defined by male-centred sexual practices, can be understood in terms of 'a location

which appears to be "open", "accessible", and "unrestricted" while *private* suggests a

location which seems more "sheltered", "secluded" or "protected from unwanted access

by others"'.[6] From this point, I use the term 'public spaces' to signify the realm already

dominated by hetero-normative sexual practices, and I use the term 'gay spaces' to

signify the realm produced through male-centred sexual practices.

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[5] William L. Leap (ed.), *Public Sex: Gay Space* (New York: Columbia, 1999), p. 2.
[6] Leap, *Public Sex: Gay Space*, p. 9 (original emphasis).

If public spaces are produced differently through the operations of male-centred sexual practices, how can we distinguish another order of difference, the spaces produced through the operations of gay male clients and male prostitutes? I will discuss the spatial practices of male prostitutes and their spaces later in this chapter. But for now, it is useful to emphasise the spatial practices of gay male clients because they can operate in a mode of either resisting the heterosexual-patriarchal notion of public spaces through ways of disguising themselves in such spaces or, dominating the spaces through ways of controlling encounters with, and ways of looking at, male prostitutes.

The assertion of gay male spaces also allows us to think about the status, privilege and social hierarchy operating within male-centred sexual practices. In gay male spaces, according to Leap, gay men when operating in various locations can be recognised by other gay men through male-centred sexual practices. The operations of male-centred sexual practices in each location manifest themselves differently, depending, for example on what you are (young or old gay men, male transvestites, transgendered males and, indeed, male prostitutes); how you express yourself to the other (ways of talking, looking, touching); which position you take in male-centred sexual practices (active, passive or versatile); and where your encounters take place (streets, bars or spatial representations in magazines). It is important to examine carefully the operations of gay men in relation to those whom gay men encounter in various urban environments because the operations can shift from modes of resisting objectification in hetero-normative sexual practices to modes of dominating male prostitutes. If, as I argue, the operation of hetero-normative sexual practices objectifies gay identity in public spaces, then we must think about the

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different operations used by gay men to manipulate public spaces and produce new

spaces.

The visibility of male prostitutes suggests the territories of gay male clients. Ways of

displaying, posing and cruising other men in the streets or in the gay commercial sex

business are used to mark and map gay male spaces.[7] The gay bar can be considered as

one of the gay spaces where male prostitutes expect to meet their potential clients. Evelyn

Hooker, for example, explores gay bars as 'the most common meeting places for the

potential exchange of sexual services and for sex without obligation or commitment'.[8] In

such bars, according to Hooker, 'one may observe one of the most standardised and

characteristic patterns of social interaction in the "gay" world: the meeting of strangers

for the essential purpose of making an agreement to engage in sexual activity known as

the one night stand'.[9]

Unlike Hooker, Michel P. Brown focuses on a specific 'operation' of gay spaces in

relation to the public – the invisibility of gay spaces in public realms. Through the

regulatory power operated by heterosexual hegemony, Brown explores the way in which

gay spaces are concealed and hidden from the public eye. I argue that Brown explores

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[7] See for example, Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow, 1997), pp. 156–61; Joe Binnie, 'Trading Places: Consumption, Sexuality and the Production', in David Bell and Gill Valentine (eds), *Mapping desire: geographies of sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 182–99 at p. 187; George Chauncey, 'Privacy could only be had in Public: Gay Uses of the Streets', in Joel Sanders (ed.), *Stud: Architecture of Masculinity* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 224–61 at p. 240; and Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), p. 66.
[8] Evelyn Hooker, 'The Homosexual Community', in John H. Gagnon and William Simon (eds), *Sexual Deviance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 167–96 at p. 175.
[9] Hooker, 'The Homosexual Community', p. 174.

gay spaces as a mode of resisting heterosexual normality. Gay spaces can be understood

in terms of 'closet' spaces; Brown describes a closet as 'obviously a space, typically

small and dark and bounded'.[10] Closet spaces can be discussed in terms of how to

assimilate gay business in public space. For Brown, closet spaces operate by unmarking

what can be seen publicly as remarkable. As Brown argues, 'there are no signs depicting

male bodies or such signifiers in the central city. For most gay men, this point may seem

so self-evident as to be unremarkable'.[11] The sense of concealment is 'clearly

illustrated'.[12] Depicted by Brown, the end of a narrow gated alleyway on a busy

downtown street, a nondescript doorway and 'ways of disguising the gay commercial sex

business in the city under the sign "Private Club"'; all these suggest how gay men work

out the locations of closet spaces from unremarkable traces.[13] Because Brown's closet

space focuses on the operations of gay men negotiating their territories in a 'straight

geography', it is not surprising that Brown is less concerned with the different operations

'within' gay spaces, which operate through both male-centred sexual practices and acts of

buying and selling sex.[14]

Thus, it is important to emphasise how the operations of gay male clients get played out

differently, from a mode of resisting to a mode of dominating, in particular when they

regulate space, as a place to meet male prostitutes. I argue that the operations of gay male

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[10] Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 7.
[11] Brown, *Closet Space*, p. 70.
[12] Brown, *Closet Space*, p. 70.
[13] Brown, *Closet Space*, pp. 70–7.
[14] Brown, *Closet Space*, p. 79.

clients do not take into account the different subjects of male prostitutes and the ways in which male prostitutes produce spaces. Through the operations of male-centred sexual practices, the bodies and images of male prostitutes are subject to objectification, in particular through the gaze of gay male clients.[15] Mark Turner, for example, describes the possibility that male prostitutes' practices can be used to assume gayness: 'We don't know, but we can guess that he wants to be noticed – he leans nonchalantly, suggesting availability, and the bare flesh sexualises him, suggesting some intent in the pose'.[16] The politics of the gaze between male prostitutes and gay male clients relates explicitly to status and privilege in the hierarchy and class structure of society, which varies according to each socio-cultural background. As mentioned earlier, the ability to exert power through male-centred sexual practices depends upon the position you occupy in society. When exploring the relationship between male prostitutes and gay male clients, it is important to examine the different operations of gay male clients and male prostitutes based on male-centred sexual practices in each gay space, focusing on whether gay male clients and/or male prostitutes adopt a mode of resisting or dominating.

The study of male prostitutes and their ways of meeting gay male clients cannot be reduced to the study of gay spaces *per se* because: first, not every male prostitute is gay and should not be assumed to be gay; and, second, the relationship between male prostitutes and gay male clients can operate differently depending on their status,

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[15] Chauncey, 'Privacy could only be had in Public', in Sanders, *Stud*, p. 239; Lee Edelman, 'Men's Room', in Sanders, *Stud*, pp. 152–61 at p. 154; and Turner, *Backward Glances*, pp. 56–61.
[16] Turner, *Backward Glances*, p. 66.

privilege, social hierarchy and class-based understanding in society. Thus, the study of

male prostitutes and spaces suggests the need to develop this research in two ways: the

first is an investigation of what male prostitutes are in relation to constructed rather than

essentialised identities – they are what they do, and second is an examination of how they

use public spaces and gay spaces differently. It is important to develop a methodology to

help understand this triangular relationship between male prostitutes, gay male clients

and heterosexual men. I also need to develop a way to observe, as much as to engage

with, their activities theoretically and materially in order to know how spaces are

produced differently through gay male clients' operations as well as through male

prostitutes' operations. We must not generalise, stereotype or objectify either clients or

prostitutes. Instead, it is important to understand them through the different positions,

based on 'subject-object' relations, which they adopt.

I gathered information through academic research, historical evidence and urban stories

in gay magazines. As I suggested earlier, gay male subjects can be thought of through the

way in which they use spaces. I suggest that gay subjectivities are produced through the

constitution of gay spaces. Yet, my focus is particularly on the constitution of male

prostitutes' subjectivities – on thinking about male prostitutes not as 'objects' produced

by gay male clients' operations but rather as 'subjects'. I focus on the interview as a way

of recording male prostitutes' 'voices', their spatial experiences and specific ways of

meeting clients. I conducted various interviews with male prostitutes, bar owners and

editors of gay magazines in Thailand between September and December 2002, and

between March and May 2004. In accordance with the Data Protection Acts, for

confidentiality all participants in this research remain anonymous. I aim to understand

male prostitutes as 'subjects', by gathering first-hand observation through conservation,

interview and spatial experience, through interpretation of visual and spatial

representations, through historical and cultural contextualisation, through reading

secondary sources and, most importantly, situating this understanding theoretically.

Before examining the constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities, it is important to

discuss under what conditions male prostitutes are objectified, determined and produced

as 'objects'. Initially, I suggest that two different power relations are imposed on male

prostitutes: the first is the discourse of sexual behaviour produced by hetero-normative

sexual practices, which suggests that male prostitutes are homosexuals because of the

similarity in their sexual behaviour; the second is the operations of gay male clients in

male-centred sexual practices and in the gay commercial sex business, which produces

male prostitutes as objects of desire through gaze.

To relocate male prostitutes from the object to the subject position, it is important to

challenge these power relations. I draw on Michel Foucault's theory of power relations

between subject and object, in particular the relationship between heterosexual hegemony

and the 'objective' reality of homosexuality. It is useful to refer to the terms 'discourse'

and 'discursive formations' coined by Foucault. Through discourse, the forms of analysis

which group subjects, Foucault methodologically positions 'subjects' as 'objects',

following the manner in which they are spoken and written about. In the position of the

objectified subject, gay identity is constructed through a series of legitimising discourses,

such as mental institutions, laws, religious prohibitions and, importantly, norms of sexual

behaviour. This legitimising form of knowledge produces homosexuality as an objective

reality, which then becomes a form for understanding public space. Sexuality or, to be

more specific, sexual behaviour, has been bound up with the norms of heterosexuality, as

opposed to homosexuality. For Foucault, discourse behaves like a 'field', operating by

certain rules. As Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb argue, discourse can be

regarded 'as the means through which the field "speaks" of itself to itself, [and] plays a

major role in the operations of the field'.[17] While Danaher, Schirato and Webb discuss

discourse in terms of a field, Gilles Deleuze, based on a close reading of Foucault's

theory of power relations, theorises discourse behaviour in terms of 'force'. According to

Deleuze, discourse can be understood as 'an action upon an action, on existing actions, or

on those which may arise in the present or future'; it is a set of actions upon other

actions.[18]

To question a legitimising form of knowledge is to examine discourse in a discursive

mode, focusing on how it groups subjects and how it operates through repetitive actions.

As Danaher, Schirato and Webb argue, 'Foucault wants to trace where particular

instances of discourse have occurred, to make connections between these instances, and

to bring them together to identify a particular discursive formation'.[19] According to Mark

Cousins and Athar Hussain, the concept of discursive formation should be understood as

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[17] Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, *Understanding Foucault* (London: Sage, 2000), p. 33.

[18] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1998), p. 70.

[19] Danaher, Schirato and Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, p. 33.

'the central term employed by Foucault to analyse knowledges [and to suspend] "total" history and a realignment of the methodological approach to historical investigation'.[20] In transcribing 'total' to 'general' history, Cousins and Hussain explain, 'The project (of historians) is no longer to make a contribution to the reconstitution of the past in its totality, but to bring particular problems, which intersect with ethnography, linguistics, sociology, to bear upon historical evidence'.[21] In this sense, history should not be regarded as authorised, legitimate or impenetrable, but as 'evidence' or 'discursive formations', enabling us to use it in order to investigate what has been said and written about the subject. In terms of discursive formations, Foucault elaborates:

> Once these immediate forms of continuity are suspended, an entire field is set free. […] Before approaching, with any degree of certainty, a science, or novels, or political speeches, or the oeuvre of an author, or even a single book, the material with which one is dealing is, in its raw neutral state, a population of events in the space of discourse in general. One is led therefore to the project of a pure description of discursive events.[22]

In adopting Foucault's theory of power relations as the point of departure, I am led to think about the discourse on male prostitutes' identities, and the politics forcefully imposed on them. Male prostitutes should not be identified as synonymous with gays

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[20] Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, 'Archaeology of Knowledge', in *Michel Foucault* (London: Macmillan Education, 1984), pp. 76–97 at pp. 77–82.
[21] Cousins and Hussain, 'Archaeology of Knowledge', p. 82.
[22] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of* Knowledge (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), p. 27.

because of the similarity of their sexual behaviour. Male prostitutes who have come to be associated with male-centred sexual practices must undoubtedly experience the objective reality of homosexuality. We need to rethink the sexual practices of male prostitutes, not following discourse but rather challenging it.

I want to suggest possibilities for rethinking male prostitutes' sexual practices through the ways in which male prostitutes produce 'gay' identities. I suggest that we need to think about new ways for male prostitutes to identify themselves through sexual practices, not by thinking through discourses on sexual behaviour – reinforcing categorisation, but through the ways in which male prostitutes determine how their bodies, movements and appearance are either recognised by gay clients or not recognised by other men – self-categorisation. I argue that male prostitutes constitute gay subjectivities through self-identifications and self-presentations.

Can the theoretical proposition adopted from Foucault's theory of power relations help to examine the constitution of subjectivity and space produced by male prostitutes? The question I have encountered through Foucault is not new. Jeremy Ahearne argues that Foucault pays too much attention to investigating the so-called disciplinary mechanisms produced by the operation of power relations which 'invade and colonise all of social space and become gridded, measured and surveyed in an implacable, impersonal light'.[23]

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[23] Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other* (California, Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 146. Foucault began to investigate and rework diagrammatic power relations which appeared in his unfinished project, 'technologies of the self'. See Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), pp. 18-9.

Although Foucault's discursive formations open up a way of understanding how subjects are objectively constructed through power operations and through discourse, he does not provide us with a specific tool to help us empower and reconstitute the subjects. Later in the next chapter, I return to Foucault and his unfinished project, the technologies of the self, regarded as an alternative theoretical approach where he begins to reconstitute those subjects who are produced as objects through power operations and discourse. While Foucault is useful for making an argument concerning a reconstitution of subjects, I need a particular theoretical framework which can help me to explore, on the one hand, the constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities, and on the other, the constitution of male prostitutes' spaces. It is important that this theoretical framework explores male prostitutes' subjectivities and spaces through both public spaces and gay spaces.

Feminist critiques of hegemony and patriarchy offer me methodological approaches to the study of male prostitutes from the position of the subject. Identities in the realm of sexual politics have provided me with a way of thinking through a number of problems in relation to the prohibition on homosexual behaviour and the process of objectification. Working with studies of identity politics derived from feminist theories has led me to examine the social and sexual constitution of the subject.

I employ feminist critiques of sex, gender and sexuality to examine male prostitutes' sexual identities. The feminist scholars whose work I am interested in are those who aim to think about the relationship between gender and sexuality, for example Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler. This study focuses only on Butler's performativity theory and her

critical approach of constituting subjectivity, which can be understood as the 'effect' –

the ontological effect of performativity.[24] For some, sexuality can be understood as a

separate framework used to explore sexual differences as well as sexual practices outside

the intellectual domain of gender studies. However, among feminist scholars, Butler

emphasises the inseparability of the relationship between gender and sexuality. For her,

sexuality is key to broadening feminist thought. She argues that feminists should consider

the social struggles and cultural confinement of women not only in terms of the binary

opposition between 'men' and 'not-men' but as 'the implicit and compulsory

presumption of heterosexuality supporting the normativity and irreversibility of that

binary'.[25] In this sense, Butler aims to critique hetero-normality, which has embedded its

structure at the core of society to govern gender norms and, at the same time, to ensure

the continuity of its legitimating power.

Butler examines the operation of a norm manifested through gender: in other words, how

gender is performed and articulated in relation to a certain kind of norm. By taking

gender performance as the point of departure, Butler explores the relationship between

'gender performance' and the 'sexed body' through the question of how 'sex' can be

materialised. For Butler, the 'body' functions as a supplement by which sex can be

materialised.[26] Butler theorises the relationship between gender performance and the

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[24] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 8–9. See also an extract from 'Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler', by Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal, *Radical Philosophy*, n. 67 (summer, 1994), p. X and published online <http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>, accessed 10 March 2005.
[25] Judith Butler, 'Against Proper Objects', in Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (eds), *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–30 at p. 2.
[26] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 17.

sexed body through the regulatory operation of heterosexual normality. The possibilities of challenging such a legitimising operation can paradoxically be found within this constrained operation – through the concept of inversion – by inverting the relationship between performance and performativity. The relationship can normally be understood like this: the subject performs, whereas performativity contests the very notion of the subject – performativity is a specific mode of constituting subjectivity. Through inverted performance, Butler opens up a possibility for constituting gay subjectivities through a specific form of performative act, which allows gays' self-identifications and self-presentations to challenge heterosexual hegemony. Through Butler's performativity theory, I explore the sexual identities, self-identifications and self-presentations of male prostitutes in the ways that they perform 'gay' subjectivities – arguing that male prostitutes are what they do. I will discuss Butler's performativity theory in relation to male prostitutes' subjectivities and performative acts in more detail in chapter one.

What Butler's performativity theory does not mention explicitly is the assertion of subjectivity in the dialectical relations between space and social relations. To further explore how subjects constituted through Butler's performativity operate in relation to space, I draw on Michel de Certeau's theoretical discussion of the spatial practices of strategy and tactic. De Certeau's strategy and tactic help to explain how subjects produce space and how 'space' can be understood differently from 'place', in particular in relation to particular ways of operating or doing.[27] According to de Certeau, place behaves

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[27] Michel de Certeau, '"Making Do": Uses and Tactics', in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 30.

strategically and can be understood in relation to fixity and stability, while space behaves

tactically in order to challenge and destabilise the strategy in place.

In the light of de Certeau's understanding of strategy and tactic, I realise that the

operations of hetero-normative sexual practices in the public realm can be considered as

strategies aiming to control, fix and impose a certain kind of norm on public spaces and,

at the same time producing a realm of oppressed homosexuality. In response to

heterosexual strategies, gay men behave tactically in order to destabilise hegemony,

negotiating spaces for themselves within the public realm, and producing 'spaces' such as

Brown's 'closet' spaces.[28] Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the operations used by

gay male clients can shift from tactical to strategic when their actions are related to male

prostitutes.

I suggest that the operations of gay male clients get played out differently from gay men

and, as just mentioned, change from resisting actions to dominating actions. I argue that

the operations of gay male clients aim to regulate meeting 'places', that is to produce gay

spaces as gay places. In the establishment of 'places', the bodies and images of male

prostitutes are subject to objectification, in particular through a specific way of looking,

'gazing', at male prostitutes in various urban environments. Thus, it is important to note

that the operations of gay men might be either tactical or strategic, depending on the

status of the men in the social hierarchy, the image of the male prostitutes and, most

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[28] Brown, *Closet Space*, p. 7.

importantly, the location where the encounter takes place. These operations are not static but fluid and contested, played out differently in each site. This study takes the operations of male prostitutes to be tactics when they actively reposition themselves as subjects rather than as objects, and produce places as spaces to meet gay male clients. I will explore in more detail the play of strategy and tactic in relation to gay male clients and male prostitutes in chapter three to five.

Methodologically, I explore the spaces produced by the tactics of male prostitutes in three directions: through the social and spatial constitution of sexuality; through the spatial and sexual constitution of subjectivity; and through the social and sexual constitution of space.

In the first approach, in understanding the social and spatial constitution of sexuality, I focus on the relations between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter. Here, I examine 'sexuality' in terms of how power is distributed through discourse, how such power is challenged, and how the discourse of sexuality is destabilised. To explore ways of distributing power, I question how the discourse of sexuality produces the 'objective' reality of homosexuality and constitutes the homosexual as an objectified subject. To investigate ways of challenging power, I question how such discourse can be destabilised through sexual practices, which can be understood as the acts of a subject or the specific mode of constituting a subject. In this respect, the social and spatial constitution of sexuality is explored through 'subjectivity' and 'space'.

In the second approach, in understanding the spatial and sexual constitution of

subjectivity, Butler's performativity theory provides me with a way of exploring the

constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities, and in particular the constitution of gay

male subjectivities. I focus on the way in which marginalised agencies are able to

reconstitute their subjectivities through the inverted operation of performativity. What

lies within Butler's performativity theory is the practice between 'what is and what is not

constructed'.[29] In this thesis, I argue that this relation – between 'constructed' and

'unconstructed' – is spatial. I explore the relationship between male prostitutes and gay

male clients through this specific practice – arguing that these spatial relations open up

possibilities for male prostitutes to perform gay identities differently. I tend to argue that

male prostitutes can be understood as 'acting' subjects whose sexual practices determine

their bodies, appearance and ways of displaying themselves in spaces and in relation to

the others.

In the third approach, in understanding the social and sexual constitution of the spaces of

male prostitutes, I draw particularly on de Certeau's tactic. I argue that the performative

acts of subjects in Butler's performativity theory can be understood in terms of tactics in

de Certeau's theory. That is to say, the tactics of the acting subjects of male prostitutes

are located in the ways in which they produce space through performing homosexuality.

Although the subjects whom de Certeau discusses in order to illustrate the operation of

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[29] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 11.

strategy and tactic are not discussed as sexual, the way in which he theorises ways of

operating helps me to understand sexual relations between male prostitutes and gay male

clients spatially.[30] That is, gay male clients behave strategically when encountering male

prostitutes, aiming to produce 'places' which visualise and objectify male prostitutes as

objects of desire, or as de Certeau's phrase suggests, 'a mastery of places through

sight'.[31] In contrast, male prostitutes respond and defend themselves tactically, aiming to

manipulate 'places' and produce new 'spaces' in which they choose how they will be

looked at as objects of desire. In the light of de Certeau's tactic, the operations of male

prostitutes can be seen as ways of resisting objectification and, at the same time,

maintaining relationships with the clients.

In sum, de Certeau's spatial theories of strategy and tactic provide me with a way of

understanding, first, the different operations of gay male clients: from resisting actions in

relation to heterosexuals to dominating actions in relation to male prostitutes. Second, the

different operations between gay male clients and male prostitutes suggest that spaces are

produced as 'places' through gay male clients' strategies; and places are produced as

'spaces' through male prostitutes' tactics. Thus, by adopting Butler's performativity and

de Certeau's strategy and tactic, I construct a theoretical framework which helps me to

explore the relationship between male prostitutes and gay male clients in both 'public'

spaces and gay places.

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[30] De Certeau, 'Strategies and Tactics', in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 34–39.
[31] De Certeau, 'Strategies and Tactics', in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 36.

Having discussed the theoretical framework, I will explain the structure of the thesis. The

thesis is divided into six chapters. In chapter one, I explore three directions of

methodological approach, as outlined previously, in more detail. Three main features of

the relationship between male prostitutes and gay male clients – sexualities, subjectivities

and spaces – need to be pulled out into questions: how can sexualities be constituted

socially and spatially? How can subjectivities be constituted spatially and sexually? How

are spaces produced sexually and socially?

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I examine the work of scholars such as

Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson, Peter Davis and Paul Simpson, Debra Boyer and

Eli Coleman, who discuss the sexual behaviour and sexual identity of male prostitutes.[32] I

argue that studies of male prostitutes based solely on sexual behaviour do not address the

most important question: 'how male prostitutes can engage in gay sex without

considering themselves to be gay?' The need here is to examine male prostitutes in

relation to sexual identities, self-identifications, self-presentations and, most importantly,

sexual politics.

Second, to examine male prostitutes through identity politics, I explore the works of three

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[32] Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV: The Male Prostitute', *Journal of Sex Research,* v. 31, n. 1 (1994), pp. 39–46; Peter Davies and Paul Simpson, 'On Male Homosexual Prostitution and HIV', in Peter Aggleton, Peter Davies and Graham Hart (eds), *AIDS: Individual, Cultural and Political Dimension* (London: Falmer Press, 1990), pp. 103–19; Debra Boyer, 'Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), 'Gay and Lesbian Youth: Part I', *Journal of Homosexuality*, v. 17, n. 1/2 (New York: Haworth Press), pp. 153–84; and Eli Coleman, 'The Development of Male Prostitution Activity Among Gay and Bisexual Adolescents', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), 'Gay and Lesbian Youth: Part I', pp. 131–49.

feminists, namely Gayle Rubin, Shannon Bell and Judith Butler, who offer a way of

relating the notion of identity politics to acting subjects.[33] However, this study is focused

particularly on Butler's performativity and her mode of constituting subjectivity, as

mentioned earlier.

The concept of acting subjects allows me both to understand and explain sexual identities

through male prostitutes' use of their bodies and performative acts. It is important to

examine the difference between 'sexual behaviour' and 'performative acts'. Initially, I

argue that discourse on sexual behaviour aims to describe, generalise and reduce various

ways of expressing the body into categories of behaviour, reinforcing categorisation and

objectification. Performative acts, however, operating through the 'effect' and 'inversion'

of Butler's performativity theory, become critical tools both to reconstitute subjectivity

and to challenge hegemony, that is to resist categorisation and objectification.

The concept of acting subjects is then developed into masquerade, and a discussion of the

visibility of the bodies and the operations through which sexual interests can or cannot be

'marked' by others.[34] In this respect, the performative acts of male prostitutes can be

understood in terms of how subjects are prepared to be looked at. Male prostitutes

'choose' to act as objects of desire. To explore the politics of the gaze operating through

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[33] Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); pp. 17–18; Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', in Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3–44 at p. 15; and Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 9 and 12–16; Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in Abelove, Barale and Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, pp. 307–20 at p. 313.

[34] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3–7.

male-centred sexual practices, I draw on scholars such as Alice Friedman, Jane Rendell,

Gillian Rose and Kaja Silverman, whose works focus on a destabilising spectatorship.[35]

In the third and final section, I argue that the performative acts and masquerade operated

by male prostitutes can be examined in the light of de Certeau's tactics. These tactics can

be explored further in terms of how male prostitutes produce spaces differently from the

ones produced by the strategies of gay male clients, as outlined earlier. Spaces which

operate through male prostitutes' tactics can be understood in terms of how male

prostitutes defend their subjectivities against the strategic operations of gay men, which

aim both to objectify male prostitutes through the gaze and to regulate spaces produced as

meeting 'places' in the moment of encounters.

It is important to carefully examine the places and the spaces produced through the

meeting of gay male clients and male prostitutes because they are produced and

manifested culturally and geographically. Thus, in chapter two, I explore the relationship

between gay male clients and male prostitutes outlined in the previous chapter within a

specific socio-cultural context, through the construction of gay identities in Thailand and

in various meeting places of gay male clients and male prostitutes in contemporary

Bangkok. In the light of Butler's performativity theory, I argue that Thai gay identities

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[35] Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House', *Assemblage*, v. 18 (August 1992), pp. 40–61 at p. 42; Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18; Gillian Rose, 'Making Space for the Female Subject of Feminism: the Spatial Subversions of Holzer, Kruger and Sherman', in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 332–54 at p, 337; and Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan : A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56.

have been 'constructed' as 'unconstructed' identities. For Butler, construction operates as 'some obligation to draw the line between what is and is not constructed'.[36] Construction in Butler's terms does not presuppose subjects, but rather, through construction, 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear – get materialised.[37] Butler's understanding of 'construction' allows me to explore Thai gay identities in terms of how they have been constructed, and 'materialisation' in terms of how they get manifest through bodies and the self-presentations of '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*'.

Chapter two is divided into two sections: the first section examines the way in which gay identities are collectively constructed by both academic and public discussion; the second section examines the way in which gay identities are constituted differently through male prostitutes' sexual practices. I draw on the work of several Western scholars, namely Peter A. Jackson, Graeme Storer and Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden, whose aim is to develop a theoretical framework through which gay identities can be reconstituted in non-Western discourses.[38] It is argued that gay identities in Thailand have been collectively

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[36] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 11.
[37] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 9.
[38] Peter Jackson, 'Thailand: The Anti-Homosexual Context' and 'Homosexuality and Masculinity: "Kathoeys"', in *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: An Interpretation of Contemporary Thai Sources* (New York: Global Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 23–44 and pp. 194–238; Peter Jackson, 'Thai Research on Male Homosexuality and Transgenderism and the Cultural Limits of Foucaultian Analysis', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, v. 8 (1997–98), pp.52–85; Peter Jackson, 'Tolerant But Unaccepting: The Myth of a Thai "Gay Paradise"', in Peter Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (eds), *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1999), pp. 226–42; Graeme Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand: Masculinity and Male–Male Sex Behaviours', in Peter Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys: Male and Female Homosexualities in Contemporary Thailand* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1999), pp. 141–59 and Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity: Bar-Based Male Sex Work in Chiang Mai', in Jackson and Sullivan, *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, pp. 187–211.

constructed not only in opposition to the regulatory power operated by hetero-normative sexual practices, but also in opposition to the dominant image of transvestites, known as *kathoeys*. In Thailand, the image, appearance and sexual behaviour of sexed bodies and gender roles are subject to differentiations made between 'male-masculine gays/male-feminine *kathoeys*' and mapped 'higher/lower' according to different positions in social, cultural and class differences.[39]

The figure of the *kathoey* in Thai culture represents gay identity and for this reason constrains possible identities for gay men. There are a number of gay men whose sex role is passive but who do not identify with feminine roles in female bodily features like the *kathoey*. By examining the construction of gay identities through social, cultural and class structures, Wijngaarden, for example, focuses on the terms '*gay king'* and '*gay queen'*, borrowed from the English expressions and used to label gay men as 'masculine-therefore-active' or 'feminine-therefore-passive', respectively.[40] However, if, as I argue, the opposing terms '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' are used to categorise gay men according to their sexual behaviour, they create problems, in particular for the *gay queen* who is still intact with the passivity of the *kathoey*. The aim is to break down this binary opposition and reconstitute gay subjectivities: a *gay king* could present himself as masculine and not necessarily take an active role. Likewise, a *gay queen* could present himself as feminine

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[39] Jackson and Cook (eds), *Genders & Sexualities in Modern Thailand*, p. 9 and Terdsak Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2002), p. 90.
[40] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', pp. 191–4.

and not necessarily take a passive role. I suggest that the terms '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' are rather used in terms of self-categorisation.

From this point, I further explore both the 'new' construction of Thai gay identities and how this construction can be reconsidered, taking into account male prostitutes' ways of performing homosexuality. I suggest that male prostitutes use the term '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' in terms of self-categorisation as '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine', and at the same time, encourage gay male clients to categorise them as, 'masculine-therefore-active' and 'feminine-therefore-passive'. To explain how male prostitutes operate male-centred sexual practices without disrupting their sexual identity, we need to draw attention to the cultural aspects based on existing social, cultural and class structures, 'client/worker as higher/lower'. That is to say, when male prostitutes perform an active role, it reconfirms their masculinity and does not violate their sexual identity; likewise a passive role is not connected with being 'unmasculine', but rather with 'their lower position in the social hierarchy'.[41] Here, I consider such an operation by male prostitutes – using the '*gay king*' and the '*gay queen*' in their sexual practices – as the play of self-presentations and self-identifications or the performative acts of subjects, which male prostitutes use as a tactical economy to constitute subjectivities and spaces.

I also examine work produced by Thai scholars such as Anan Narvilai, Prakop Siwatchana, Duangphon Khamnunwat, Prawit Patlom, Narupon Duangwises and Pichet

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[41] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 193.

Saiphan which focus particularly on the relationships between male prostitutes and gay

men in contemporary Bangkok. This research tends to discuss male prostitutes as social

problems rather than as political subjects.[42] Nevertheless, the research provides me with

ways of exploring how gay identities are assumed and played out differently through

various kinds of gay-related business, for example, through certain types of body image,

appearance and colour of skin, and through gay pornographic magazines, all of which

operate by drawing on symbolic meanings within the Thai cultural context. I argue that

the operations of Thai gay identities – based on the notion of gendered sexual identities –

get played out through the strategies used by gay men, bar owners, or editors of gay

magazines, each of whom aims to produce and maintain power through their different

positions in the existing social hierarchy and class structure. Thus, it is important to

examine the relationship between gay male clients and male prostitutes in contemporary

Thailand through the notion of gendered sexual identities and through the existing system

of social hierarchy and class difference, specifically through the binary oppositions

'gays/male prostitutes', 'clients/workers' and 'higher/lower'.

In the next three chapters, three to five, I focus primarily on how the relationship between

gay male clients' strategies and male prostitutes' tactics is manifested differently in each

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[42] Anan Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution: Case Study of Male Prostitutes and the Gay Client Group in the Bangkok Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1994), pp. 64–76; Prakop Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Health Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in Patpong Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 1994), pp. 1–3 and pp. 141–3; Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua* (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 1996), pp. 69–77; Prawit Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes: The Cycle of Labor Relationship and the Fact of Employment', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1998), pp. 1–4; Narupon Duangwises, 'Naked Man: Pornography and Sexual Life of the Thai Gay Male' (unpublished paper, 2002), pp. 1–21; and Pichet Saiphan, '*Silom*: Gay Life and Gay Place', in Parita Koanantakool (ed.), *Life at the Margin: the Body and Identity* (Bangkok: Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2001), pp. 36–95 at pp. 84–89.

urban location and meeting place: namely streets and public parks, gay go-go bars and

the representations of space in gay newsletters. The aim of these three chapters is to

explore the strategies of gay male clients in each meeting place through developing a

historical and cultural understanding of the contexts with reference to a number of

secondary sources. This understanding is developed in relation to the earlier theoretical

reading around the constitution of gay identities and material gathered first-hand, for

example formal interviews, casual conversations and photographs, notes and drawings

made on site in order to experience and interpret spatial practices. It is also equally

important to discuss how male prostitutes produce 'gay' identities, that is how they

respond to clients' strategies in the moment of encounter in each meeting place. These

three chapters show how strategies and tactics operate through three specific meeting

places in contemporary Bangkok.

In chapter three, I focus particularly on the tactics of male streetwalkers in the streets

around public parks, in particular the centre of old town Bangkok, known as *Sanam

Luang* and *Saranrom*. Male streetwalkers around these public parks have been observed

and documented by a reporter for Thai television.[43] This documentary shows various

meeting places between male prostitutes and clients in the streets around the parks, in

particular around the *Saranrom* park at night. I explore how these meeting places have

been repeatedly constituted.

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[43] Butrat Butprom, *Phu-Chai- Pai-Leung* (or *Men Who Sell Sex* in English). produced by ITV
Public Company Limited (2002).

Initially, I suggest that the cars and the particular ways of driving are vital in allowing

gay men to meet male prostitutes in these locations. I draw on the specific binary

oppositions of clients and workers, constituted through 'gay male clients/male

streetwalkers' and 'cars/streets' as 'higher/lower' positions in the social hierarchy. The

car, a symbol of luxury signifying a higher position in the social hierarchy, driven by gay

men in certain patterns and along certain routes, can be understood in terms of tactical

behaviour which prevents gay men's gazes from being caught by the public eye.

Paradoxically, the operations of gay men change from tactical to strategic when they

begin to regulate spaces, to initiate contact and to look at male prostitutes in the streets. In

this sense, the operations of driving by gay men gets played out differently between

public spaces and gay 'places'. I argue that, on the one hand, gay men drive tactically in

public spaces; on the other hand, the same driving is strategic in gay 'places'. I focus

particularly on the technique of masquerading in relation to the car and the specific

pattern of '*driving-as-cruising*'. In this case, I show how gay men's driving-as-cruising

constitutes 'places' – arguing that these operations aim to establish meeting places and

the locations of encounters with male prostitutes in the streets. Later in the chapter, to

explore how meeting places are used and produced as 'spaces' through male

streetwalkers' performative acts and, indeed, through tactics, I draw on how connections

are made between clients and invisibility-and-mobility, and between male streetwalkers

and visibility-and-immobility.

In chapter four, I explore the strategies of the bar owners and the tactics of male sex

workers in go-go bars. I focus on one particular area in the central business district of

Bangkok, called *Surawong*. Because there are at least twelve go-go bars in this area, it is not surprising that this particular location has become well-known among both locals and tourists as *Surawong's* Boys' Town. To examine the relationship between gay identities and the gay commercial sex business, it is important to discuss how *Surawong's* Boys' Town has been constructed in relation to areas nearby, namely *Patpong*, known as the centre of the heterosexual-oriented sex business in Thailand, and *Silom*, known as the new centre of upper-middle-class local gay men in Bangkok.

Initially, I argue that *Surawong's* Boys' Town has been established not only through the ways in which the gay commercial sex businesses disguise themselves, decorating their premises to look like heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong*, but also through their abandonment by upper-middle-class local gay men, who have created the new centre in *Silom*. I examine the construction of *Surawong's* Boys' Town through two binary oppositions based on the existing social hierarchy and class structure between 'clients/workers' as 'higher/lower' and between 'Western customers/local customers' as 'higher/lower'. It is a strategy of the bar owner to manipulate and highlight these two binary oppositions in their premises, in particular through the spatial arrangement of the interior space in gay go-go bars.

Gay go-go bars should not be regarded as spaces where gay men are allowed to exercise their sexual desires freely, but rather as places where the exteriors and interiors are choreographed and certain materials are used strategically to create customers' sexual fantasies around the bodies of male sex workers. To explore the tactics of male sex

workers in gay go-go bars, I draw attention particularly to the place between a customers'

seating area and the stage. I argue that this place is designed to provide customers with a

chance to encounter and look at male sex workers on stage. Are male sex workers able to

reposition themselves not as 'objects' of the gazes but as 'subjects' of their performative

acts in the moment of encounter? Are they able to use and manipulate the interior space

of gay go-go bars to produce new 'spaces'?

In chapter five, I explore the strategies of the editors and tactics of male prostitutes in

representations of space in gay newsletters. Examining gay newsletters broadens our

investigation into how male models and their spaces are represented. Initially, I examine

the representations of spaces in gay newsletters through specific forms of visual

representation which aim to establish connections among gay men, between gay men and

male prostitutes, between gay men and the gay commercial sex venues and, most

importantly, between sexual imagination and imagined spaces and between real sex and

the city. I argue that gay newsletters can be understood in part as an inherent

development of gay pornographic magazines. Yet, the role of gay newsletters is not to

illustrate gay sex, but rather to establish themselves as 'meeting places' to connect the

models – represented as male sex workers – with the gay commercial sex venues. They

also try to establish themselves as information centres or dominant trendsetters. I argue

that gay newsletters as representations of space operate strategically, influencing choice

of lifestyle and the gay commercial sex business.

By adopting the specific forms of visual representation from gay pornographic
magazines, the models, who are quite often selected from the gay commercial sex venues,
are employed both to promote the venues and used as a medium to stimulate the
pornographic imagination in readers' minds. The image, the appearance and the skin
colour of the models appear to encourage readers to fantasise and connect with them. I
draw on the specific binary oppositions that exist between 'light-skinned colour/dark-
skinned colour' and 'higher class/lower class', or the '*tee*' look and the '*Isan*' look,
respectively. Through male models' body images, I argue that gay newsletters aim
through representations of space to reinforce the existing social hierarchy and class
structure in the construction of Thai gay identities. In Thailand, three gay newsletters,
Thai Guys, Max Magazine and *Bangkok Variety*, currently circulate among local gay men
and gay male foreigners who now live in Thailand. Does each newsletter use different
strategies to manipulate the construction of gay identities through the binary oppositions
between the '*Isan*' look and the '*tee*' look? Might it be possible that the models can resist
being objectified and reposition themselves in the subject position in these specific
representations of space?

In the conclusion, I focus on ways in which this study can contribute to architectural
history and theory and to other disciplines. The research has examined the ways that male
prostitutes are able to actively reposition themselves as acting subjects through
performative acts, through ways of displaying their bodies, and through spaces. To assert
male prostitutes' subjectivities is not to assume they can be understood as synonymous
with other constituting subjects, such as homosexuals. This study opens up possibilities

for exploring how spaces and places are constituted through differing plays of power

operations, tactics or strategies, depending on the positions adopted in subject-object

relations in the social hierarchy, class difference and locations of encounters in specific

contexts. Thus, it is not surprising that the operations of male prostitutes within meeting

places can be read as acts of resistance. Male prostitutes can reposition themselves as

subjects through their performative acts in order to maintain their relationship with clients

– suggesting that male prostitutes can be positioned as both subjects and objects.

This thesis offers a study of the flexibility of 'space' and 'place', something of interest to

architecture. Examining 'space' and 'place' leads us to understand architecture

differently, rather than a backdrop against which meeting scenarios take place,

architecture can be understood as a product of power relations. In this thesis, architecture

can be understood both as gay places and spaces produced by male prostitutes. The study

of spaces and male prostitution suggests the need to cross disciplines; on the one hand to

bring studies of sexuality, performativity and masquerade into architectural research, and

on the other, to bring space, architectural understanding and ways in which power

relations operate spatially into the research of other disciplines, such as anthropology and

sociology.

Chapter One

Male Prostitution: Sexualities, Subjectivities, and Spaces

This chapter explores theoretical discussions around 'sexualities' – discourses on sex, gender and sexuality; 'subjectivities' – a specific mode of constituting 'gay' subjectivities; and 'spaces' – spatial practices and the production of space. It uses these discussions as an interpretative lens to investigate the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter. It is important to note that this thesis draws particularly on Judith Butler's performativity theory to examine gay male clients' objectification and reconstitute male prostitutes' subject positions; and Michel de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices of 'strategy' and 'tactic' to open up the strategies and 'places' of gay male clients and reclaim the 'spaces' of male prostitutes produced through tactics.

How can we begin to explore the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter? If we consider that the locations gay male clients occupy are 'gay' according to their sexual identity and sexual behaviour, how can we consider the same locations when occupied by male prostitutes, who might be gay or be heterosexual? This particular question opens up a possibility for considering whether there are different ways of producing and representing 'space' in accordance with the 'identities' of occupants, and the ways they 'use' space. Jane Rendell suggests that space, when it is constituted through use, should not be understood as 'it has been defined by

architecture – the space of architect-designed buildings – but rather space as it is found, as it is used, occupied and transformed through everyday activities'.[1]

In order to explore how space is produced through use, the work of Henri Lefebvre, in particular his theoretical discussion around 'representation', is useful here. Lefebvre suggests that space is not only produced through representation – representation produces space, but space also produces representation. Lefebvre uses 'spatial practice' to discuss how space is produced through use. The term spatial practices implies a relationship exists between space and the bodies of those who use it, suggesting the origin of the process of how space is produced through use is located from within the body, through the body and then through use. Lefebvre also uses the terms 'representations of space' and 'representational space' to discuss different modes of a production of space.

'Representations of space' emphasises the way in which space is produced differently through representation. Through representation, space is codified. Lefebvre suggests that '[various modes of representation: such as the golden number, modular and canon are used by those who] identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived'.[2] In this sense, representations of space have been used as a means of controlling and dominating those who live in space. Lefebvre's term 'Representational space', on the other hand, emphasises the way in which space is produced through the lived experience of 'inhabitants' and 'users'. Unlike representations of space, 'representational space' is

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[1] Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (eds), *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 101.
[2] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 38.

the space of those who are dominated, and suggests the possibility of spatial practices which challenge and destabilise imposed rules. I suggest, the space of 'representations of space' is 'passive', and the space of 'representational space' is 'active'; and for that reason, I also suggest that representational space leads us to think about those whose lives produce space actively not as objects but as subjects.

Rendell's reading of Lefebvre suggests that Lefebvre is interested in how space is produced conceptually or materially, I would add that, he is also interested in how space actively redefines the social relations. As Lefebvre argues, 'space serves as a tool of thought and of action. […] It is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power'.[3] From this perspective, I suggest that Lefebvre structures the production of space by using the binary opposition of 'representations of space/representational space', as 'controlling/resisting'; and he uses 'spatial practices' to differentiate between the two.

However, how can we distinguish between those spatial practices which are acts of controlling and those which are acts of resisting? Who lives, occupies and uses space in Lefebvre's analysis of spatial production? How might we relate Lefebvre's analysis of spatial production to those whose sexes, genders and sexualities are different? How might we relate Lefebvre's analysis of the production of space to gay male clients and male prostitutes? I argue that in his analysis of spatial production Lefebvre provides us with insufficient information concerning different subjects, identities, subjectivities and positions.

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3 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 26.

In a close reading of Lefebvre's analysis of spatial production, Steve Pile, for example,

suggests that it is important not to assume one and only one body. As Pile suggests, 'The

abstraction [in Lefebvre's analysis] by the visual leads to the failure-to-recognise what

Lefebvre calls the total body; instead, certain body parts are raised up and brutally

prioritised over others'.[4] For Pile, Lefebvre seems to structure his analysis based on the

assumption that social relations are organised by the legitimising form of knowledge. As

Pile points out, 'Space is marked, then, by the phallus, arrogance, the will to power and

masculine brutality'.[5] It also implies that space is occupied by 'male bodies, masculinist

representations and power'.[6] How might we consider the space occupied by women?

How might we relate Pile's critique of Lefebvre's analysis to feminists whose work

concerns the issues of gender and space? Most importantly, how might we relate Pile's

critique of Lefebvre's analysis to the spaces occupied by the bodies of gay male and male

prostitutes? To point out, Lefebvre's spatial production lacks gender and sexuality

analysis.

Feminist scholars, Liz Bondi and Doreen Massey, have argued for the need to rethink the

'identities' of women and the discourse on gender, which produces, and reproduces

women as lower positions in gender hierarchy. Bondi and Massy, as well as Rendell,

have discussed how the binary opposition of male-masculine and female-feminine is

socially constructed in association with the legitimising form of knowledge which aims to

secure the binary opposition. Bondi has argued that the identities of women are politically

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[4] Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 163.
[5] Pile, *The Body and the City*, p. 163.
[6] Pile, *The Body and the City*, p. 164.

constructed. In order to rethink women's identities, and not following hegemonic

discourse, she suggests that we need to think about these constructed identities using the

notion of identity politics. For Bondi, identity politics are about 'the rediscovery of an

already existing identity'.[7]

Rendell draws attention to cultural aspects already existing in the nineteenth-century

United Kingdom based on heterosexual-patriarchal capitalism, which produced and

reproduced the so-called 'already existing' identities of women. To illustrate such

cultural aspects, the paradigm of the 'separate sphere', as Rendell discusses, 'is a term

used by feminists to draw attention to the problematic binary of male-public-city/female-

private-home produced as a prevalent gendering of space in heterosexist patriarchy and

capitalism'.[8] In other words, the paradigm of the 'separate sphere' is the most

problematic gendering space because it reinforces 'male-dominate/female-subordinate'

opposition.

Massey has argued that the construction of masculinity and femininity through the binary

opposition of 'a presence and an absence is a dualism which takes the classic form of

A/Not-A'.[9] Massey's most challenging problem is how to recognise that space has been

used as an instrumental association of power relations to maintain the binary opposition

of 'men' and 'not-men' as 'subject' and 'not-subject' or 'object'.

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[7] Liz Bondi, 'Locating Identity Politics', in Michael Keith and Steve Pile (eds), *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 84–101 at p. 86. See also Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 102.

[8] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 103.

[9] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), p. 255. See also Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 102.

If, as I argue, we think of the 'separate sphere' in terms of Lefebvre's production of space, the way in which it is constructed can be understood as 'representations of space' – suggesting that 'a subordinate private female realm of reproduction' is produced and reproduced through representations; and challenging its construction can be understood as 'representational space' – suggesting that the 'existing' identities of women and their space can be reconsidered through lived experience and use. How might we relate 'lived experience' and 'use' to challenge construction and reclaim subjectivity and space for women?

The aim is to challenge, destabilise and relocate women, from their objectified and subordinate position in association with the binary opposition of 'men-subject' and 'women-object' to the subject position in which they potentially resist dominating power. In other words, women should not be identified as subordinate and should not be bound up with the binary opposition. In her reading of Jacques Derrida, Rendell's discussion of 'the process of deconstruction' helping to reposition women not as objects but as subjects is useful here.[10] Derrida aims to destabilise the legitimising form of knowledge distributing its power through binary oppositions, which secures the positions of things in the binary opposition as only 'like' or 'not like'; instead, he aims to displace and replace such power with new formulations.[11] I discuss in detail the process of displacement and replacement re-occurring in the concept of inversion in Butler's performativity theory.

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[10] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 103.
[11] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 103.

Rendell discusses the process of deconstruction like this: the first step would be 'the

strategic reversal of binary terms, so that the term occupying the negative position in a

binary pair is placed in the positive position and the positive term is placed in the

negative position'.[12] For example, if, by following the binary opposition, the city and

public space are places for men, whereas the house and private space are places for

women, the aim of reversal will claim a space of enjoyment for women in public space in

the city, or 'the importance of the private domestic sphere and family life'.[13]

The second step would be a 'movement of displacement', in which the negative term is

displaced from its dependent position and relocated as the very condition of the positive

term.[14] For example, if 'women's occupation of cities' is considered a negative identity,

to displace it is to examine the patriarchal system in discursive mode in order to open up

the possibility for rethinking how the system has been constructed so that women's

occupation of cities is negative and therefore marginalised.[15] Exploring certain ways of

women using public space in the city can be regarded as ways of empowering women;

and for that reason, it can be seen as a political act.[16] Alternatively, as Rendell also

suggests, to re-evaluate the negative status of the female private sphere of the suburb

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[12] Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p. xv, quoted in Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 104.

[13] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 104.

[14] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 104.

[15] See for example, Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), pp. 7–19.

[16] See for example, Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 40–72.

would be to reconsider 'the activities of production rather than the reproduction which have taken place in domestic sites'.[17]

The third step would be the 'destabilisation of identities', in which the position of women can be understood in terms of '*both* negative *and* positive' or '*neither* negative *nor* positive' – suggesting that women are both 'objects' and 'subjects'. To explain this, I draw on Elisabeth Grosz, whose work examines how the deconstructive process of destabilising identities can be useful for reclaiming women's subject position. Grosz suggests that to destabilise construction that positions women as objectified subjects is important to recognise 'the independent existence of "real" women outside of or before representation'.[18] The term 'real' women refers not to an ontological essentialised identity, but rather, as Grosz argues, 'the consequences or effects of systems of representation and inscription'.[19] Grosz goes on, 'to claim that women *do not* have a subjectivity [would be possible only if] women are ambiguously *both* subjects *and* deprived of a socially recognised subjective position, are *both* speaking beings *and* beings whose words have not been heard'.[20] In this research, I use the notion of the destabilisation of identities to reclaim male prostitutes' subjectivities – suggesting that male prostitutes are *both* objectified subjects *and* acting subjects who can reposition themselves from object position to subject position.

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[17] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 104.
[18] Elizabeth Grosz, 'Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference', in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 59–80 at p. 64.
[19] Grosz, 'Ontology and Equivocation', p. 64.
[20] Grosz, 'Ontology and Equivocation', p. 65 (original emphasis).

Having discussed how feminists assert female subjectivity through the way in which the binary opposition of 'men' and 'not men' as 'subject' and 'object' can be challenged and destabilised leads us to explore the spaces produced differently by women and the constitution of female subjectivity. I suggest that feminists provide us with a useful theoretical framework for exploring new spaces for different subjects. This thesis takes feminism's theoretical framework, in particular the process of deconstruction as a starting point to explore the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes. It is important to note that to investigate the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes in public space in relation only to discourse on sex and gender and the patriarchal system can be problematic because we also need to understand such relationships through the discourse on sexuality and the norms of patriarchal-heterosexuality. Initially, to understand the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes, we need to consider about the term 'gay' by rethinking the binary opposition of 'heterosexual/not heterosexual' as 'subject/object'; and then consider 'male prostitutes' through the binary opposition of 'gay/not gay' as 'subject/object'.

The following investigation first focuses on the literature on relationships between gay men and male prostitutes. I begin to locate objectification and the ways in which power has been exercised through the discourse on sexual behaviour imposed on male prostitutes. Second, I explore the identities of male prostitutes, not as essentialised, but rather as constructed. I suggest that there is a need to displace male prostitutes as a term synonymous with gay according to the similarity of their sexual behaviour, and to think

of them as 'performing' gay. Reading male prostitutes' sexual practices in a different light, then they can be regarded as 'performative acts'. In terms of Butler's performativity theory, such acts can be understood as a specific mode of constituting male prostitutes' subjectivities. In other words, I examine the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes in association with a critique of binary opposition of 'gay/not gay' as 'subject/object'.

In order to reclaim a subject position for male prostitutes, it is important to challenge binary oppositions and relocate 'not gay' in a subject position. Butler's performativity theory opens up the possibility for constituting male prostitutes' subjectivities as 'performing' gay.

In the third and the last section, I look closely at different positions between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter, focusing on how spaces are produced differently through these two positions. This section suggests that their performative acts can also be understood in terms of various forms of spatial practice. I draw particularly on de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices. I suggest that it is the 'strategies' of gay male clients at the moment of encounter which aim to produce 'place' in order to look at male prostitutes, whereas the 'tactics' of male prostitutes operate to respond to gay male clients' strategies and produce 'place' as 'space' in order to look back at gay male clients.

Male Prostitutes and Sexual Behaviours

> To 'commit' a homosexual act is one thing; to *be* a homosexual is something
>
> entirely different.[21]

Those who consider homosexual activities in terms of promiscuity, sex without

obligation or commitment, or unproductive sex within the legitimate presumption of

hetero-normative sexual practices, may connect male prostitution with male

homosexuality. Yet, to regard male prostitutes from such a perspective suggests an

incomplete understanding of the relationship between male prostitution and

homosexuality. It is worth remembering that there are various types of male prostitution;

some male prostitutes have sex with men, some with women, and some with men and

women. This research focuses only on the sexual practices of male prostitutes who sell

sex to gay men. As noted by Robert Padgug, quoted above, the relationship between

sexual behaviour and sexual identity must be explored independently. But some people,

even male prostitutes themselves, seem to misunderstand the situation and tend to choose

sexual behaviour to explain sexual identity. That is to say, male prostitutes often identify

themselves with that are pre-given roles (insertee-insertor) or acts (oral-anal) they take in

male-centred sexual practices without considering other related conditions, such as their

gender identities and ways of displaying themselves. This section argues that these

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[21] Robert Padgug, 'Sexual Matters: On Conceptualising Sexuality in History', in Edward Stein
(ed.), *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (New York:
Routledge, 1992), pp. 43–67 at p. 59 (emphasis added).

related conditions are important and we need to bring them into the discussion, in particular regarding male prostitutes' sexual identities.

As many scholars suggest the task of identifying the sexual identity of male prostitutes is both 'the subject of contradictory findings' and 'extremely difficult'.[22] Many researchers attempt to distinguish between sexual identity and sexual behaviour by urging male prostitutes who take part in their investigations to use a method called 'self-reported sexual identity', comprising interviews and/or the use of the 'Kinsey 7-point scale'.[23] But to discover the sexual identities of male prostitutes is not as easy as it might seem. The methods used, particularly the Kinsey scale, inevitably suggest factors of limitation and determination, which could perhaps influence an individual's decision to reveal their sexual orientation. Debra Boyer argues that the terms used by the Kinsey scale seem to be limited and to lack diversity within each group. As Boyer says, 'These categories function as organising principles for individuals and society in Western culture. They are, in fact, part of the institutionalised reality that confronts individuals and are used in determining one's self and social definition'.[24]

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[22] Debra Boyer, 'Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), 'Gay and Lesbian Youth: Part I', in *Journal of Homosexuality*, v. 17, n. 1/2 (New York: Haworth Press), pp. 151–84 at p. 154 and Eli Coleman, 'The Development of Male Prostitution Activity Among Gay and Bisexual Adolescents', in Herdt (ed.), 'Gay and Lesbian Youth: Part I', pp. 131–49, p. 133.

[23] The Kinsey 7-point scale was developed by the Kinsey Institute to determine the balance of a person's heterosexual to homosexual involvement: Exclusively heterosexual, Mainly heterosexual, Mainly heterosexual/substantial degree of homosexual, As much heterosexual as homosexual, Mainly homosexual/substantial degree of heterosexual, Mainly homosexual and Exclusively homosexual.

[24] Boyer, 'Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity', p. 158.

To identify themselves with homosexual behaviour, male prostitutes must appreciate that they will have to experience the 'objective' reality of homosexuality, constructed through discourses of religion, law, medicine, psychiatry and the norms of sexuality.[25] Boyer defines 'objective' reality as 'sources of stigmatisation that form the individual and collective responses to homosexuality'.[26] It is not surprising that the findings of many researchers show only a small number of homosexual-identified male prostitutes in their focus groups. Although many male prostitutes who participate in research might be homosexuals, the factor that may restrain them from revealing their sexual identities is difficult to discover; it could either be an unavailable category of identity in the Kinsey scale or fears that they would be subject to the 'objective' reality of homosexuality.

Eli Coleman also finds it difficult to identify male prostitutes' sexual identities because 'sexual orientation is not necessarily a stable element throughout one's life, and it certainly cannot be ascertained by behaviour alone'.[27] Coleman tends to use the term 'sexual orientation' to refer to 'sexual identity' – suggesting that there are three categories: 'gay, bisexual or heterosexual'.[28] Coleman believes that male prostitutes' sexual identities should not be considered as fixed, but as flexible and changeable, in particular 'before and after the hustling experience'.[29]

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[25] Boyer, 'Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity', p. 160. See also K. Plummer, *Sexual Stigma: An Interactionist Account* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

[26] Boyer, 'Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity', p. 160.

[27] Coleman, 'The Development of Male Prostitution Activity', p. 133.

[28] Coleman, 'The Development of Male Prostitution Activity', p. 133.

[29] Coleman, 'The Development of Male Prostitution Activity', p. 137. See also R. Furnald, 'Male Juvenile Prostitution', Unpublished Master's Thesis (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1978) and F. Schick, 'Service needs of hustlers', Unpublished manuscript (1978).

The primary aim of Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson's research is the exploration of

male prostitutes' sexual identities. They suggest that sexual identities should not be

examined without discussing other related 'self-identifications'. They describe sexual

identities in terms of 'the components of the self and presented sexual identities: firstly as

self-identified sexual identity; secondly as clothing styles, mannerisms and other

observable signs of self-identified sexual identity; thirdly as sexual role preferences

(insertee–insertor); fourthly as sexual acts (oral–anal sex); and lastly friendship and

association'.[30] As described by Boles and Elifson, 'sexual identity is a cognitive construct

referring to an organised set of characteristics that an individual perceives as representing

the self in situations, real or imagined, defined as sexual or romantic'.[31] For Boles and

Elifson, 'sexual identity is a fundamental component of self-identity, rather than merely a

marker for sexual behaviour'.[32] In this respect, I argue that sexual behaviour becomes a

part of male prostitutes' sexual practices – suggesting that sexual behaviour is a choice

made by individuals according to their sexual identities, rather than as a label to be

assumed into categories of homosexuality.

Boles and Elifson attempt to explain sexual behaviour of male prostitutes constituted

through their self-identification – challenging categorisation, rather than sexual behaviour

constitutes their sexual identities – reinforcing categorisation. Boles and Elifson place an

emphasis on the differences in terms of sex services offered by three categories of male

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[30] Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV: The Male Prostitute', in *Journal of Sex Research,* v. 31, n. 1 (1994), pp. 39–46 at p. 39.
    [31] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 39. See also R. Troiden, *Gays and Lesbian Identity: A Sociological Analysis* (New York: General Hall, 1988).
    [32] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 39.

prostitutes, who identify themselves as 'straight' (heterosexual-identified), 'gay'

(homosexual-identified) and 'bisexual' (bisexual-identified).[33] Boles and Elifson

discovered that those who identified themselves as heterosexual male prostitutes 'often

dominated the sexual situation with their paying partners, limited their sexual activity

with paying partners to masturbation and oral sex, and denied engaging in receptive and

anal sex with either paying or non-paying partners'.[34] Homosexual-identified male

prostitutes in the study 'performed a wide variety of sex acts, including masturbation,

oral sex and receptive anal sex'.[35] Lastly, the Boles and Elifson data indicated that

'bisexuals (male prostitutes) performed a wide variety of sexual acts, including

masturbation and oral sex with paying partners; however, only 23% engaged in receptive

anal sex, more than the heterosexuals but less than the homosexuals'.[36] Boles and Elifson

continued, 'bisexuals preferred the inserter role but would, on occasion, take the insertee

role'.[37]

Boles and Elifson also suggest that male prostitutes are able to present and highlight their

sexual identities through image, appearance and a series of recognisable gestures, and

most importantly, clients must be able to read them, which can be referred to the term

'self-presentation'. For example, most of the heterosexual-identified male prostitutes, as

described by Boles and Elifson, present themselves with 'overt displays of stereotyped

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[33] The terms 'straight', 'gay' and 'bisexual' are used in the investigation by Boles and Elifson. Male prostitutes would be asked, 'Aside from hustling are you gay, straight or bisexual?'; Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 40.
[34] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 43.
[35] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 44.
[36] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 44.
[37] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 44.

masculine traits through their stance, dress and mannerisms'.[38] Like Boles and Elifson,

Peter Davies and Paul Simpson also suggest that heterosexual-identified male prostitutes

'wish to retain the dominant, heterosexual and "masculine self-image"'.[39] For Boles and

Elifson, heterosexual-identified male prostitutes 'wore studded belts; tattoos adorned

their bare arms and their jeans were very tight fitting'.[40]

Boles and Elifson found that homosexual-identified male prostitutes 'were cleaner and

"dressed" somewhat better than the heterosexual-identified prostitutes. […] in the park,

they were all but "indistinguishable" from the non-prostitute men who went there looking

for partners'.[41] Boles and Elifson tend to describe homosexual-identified male prostitutes

as camp, as opposed to presenting a 'stud or masculine self-image'; they suggest that

camp behaviour could be 'exaggerated stereotypical female behaviour'.[42] Boles and

Elifson depict bisexual-identified male prostitutes as being 'not as masculine as the

heterosexuals but not as campy as the homosexuals'.[43] Boles and Elifson continue, 'the

components of sexual identity may help the male prostitute project an erotic image to his

paying partners, portray a recognisable sexual identity to significant others and develop a

self-understanding of his own sexual identity'.[44]

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[38] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 42.
[39] Peter Davies and Paul Simpson, 'On Male Homosexual Prostitution and HIV', in Peter Aggleton, Peter Davies and Graham Hart (eds), *AIDS: Individual, Cultural and Political Dimension* (London: The Falmer Press, 1990), pp. 103–19 at p. 110.
[40] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 42.
[41] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 43.
[42] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 43.
[43] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 44.
[44] Boles and Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV', p. 40.

What derives from Boles and Elifson's ways of exploring male prostitutes' sexual identities – comprised of self-identification and self-presentation – can be understood not only in terms of how male prostitutes make sense of themselves, but also how to make their clients recognise them and their sexual practices. It is useful to clarify that self-identification and self-presentation are key features in Boles and Elifson's analysis of the male prostitute' sexual identity, for here, the term 'self-identification' suggests how male prostitutes prepare their bodies for themselves and the term 'self-presentation' suggest how male prostitutes display their bodies to the others at the moment of encounter.

These questions arise: how do clients know what type of sex services they are after? Can clients expect certain kinds of sex services from men who 'look' and 'present' themselves in a certain way? Do the ways in which male prostitutes present themselves inform clients of what they will or will not do sexually? There is of course no general explanation; these questions need to be explored in specific contexts. Yet, Boles and Elifson at least offer us a way of understanding the relationship between male prostitutes and clients through sexual practices, in particular through self-identifications and the ways in which male prostitutes present themselves to clients. This suggests the play of male prostitutes' sexual identities with their clients, which can be further explored in terms of 'self-identifications' and 'self-presentations'.

Boles and Elifson provide us with an alternative way of examining male prostitutes' sexual identities, not as essentialised, but rather as constructed, in particular through their relations with others. However, it is important to recognise that Boles and Elifson's ways

of examining the interconnected relations between sexual behaviour and sexual identities – self-identifications and self-presentations – are static, or even deterministic, which to some extent becomes problematic. There is also the possibility of a heterosexual-identified male prostitute taking a passive role; or for a homosexual-identified male prostitute taking an active one; and perhaps taking both passive and active roles may have nothing to do with being a bisexual-identified male prostitute. In other words, it is unbelievably difficult to gain certain knowledge about what may determine sexual behaviour or why a male prostitute practises homosexual sex in a certain way, first, because the issue is personal and, second, because it is related directly to differing discourse on male homosexuality connected to specific socio-cultural conditions, this second issue I aim to explore in the next chapter. For these reasons, we should not use their sexual behaviour to explain who male prostitutes are because such a perspective is objective, and forcefully assumes male prostitutes to be gay.

What is needed is to explore the discourse on sexuality – the hegemonic discourse that make 'sex' between two men problematic – by which male prostitutes' sexual practices and sexual identities are determined. But, we have insufficient knowledge to explain male prostitutes' sexual practices and sexual identities only through theories based on sexual behaviour. To explore male prostitutes' sexual practices from a different perspective, I draw on the identity politics of feminists.

Male Prostitutes, Sexual Identities and Sexual Politics

> Sex is presumed guilty until proven innocent. Virtually all erotic behaviour is
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> considered bad unless a specific reason to exempt it has been established. The
>
> most acceptable excuses are marriage, reproduction and love.[45]

According to Boles and Elifson's discussion of male prostitution, the sexual identities of

male prostitutes can be understood as constructed, constituted at the moment of encounter

with gay male clients. They suggest that male prostitutes potentially determine their

bodies, appearance and gestures in order to engage with their clients. But what is missing

from Boles and Elifson's discussion is the condition of society, to be more specific social

discourses on sexuality, which determine both the practices of male prostitutes and the

encounters with their clients in certain ways. As discussed earlier, we need to examine

such conditions through the heterosexual-patriarchal production of public spaces. In the

light of hetero-normative sexual practices, male prostitutes and their male-centred sexual

practices have been objectified by the norm under which 'sex' is confined by the

discourse on sexuality, as quoted above.

This section is not intended to deliberately free 'sex' from the discourse on sexuality, but

rather to bring sexual identities and the sexual practices of male prostitutes into the realm

of sexual politics. In this realm, the sexual practices of male prostitutes can be understood

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[45] Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', in Henry
Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New
York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3–44 at p. 11.

differently, not as a way of reinforcing homosexual categories, but rather as a way of constituting subjectivities. In this section, I discuss the sexual practices of male prostitutes in terms of 'performative acts' – referring to specific ways in which male prostitutes constitute 'gay' subjectivities. I draw on feminists: Gayle Rubin, Shannon Bell and Judith Butler, whose work emphasises ways of constituting subjects through practices, in this case the constitution of 'acting' subjects. I discuss Rubin's work in terms of how 'sex' has been objectified by the discourse on sexuality; I discuss Bell's work in terms of how the bodies and sexual activities of prostitutes can be explored in a discursive mode – suggesting a possibility for challenging discourse. It is important to note that I do not discuss either Rubin or Bell in great detail, at least not to the extent to which I discuss Butler's performativity theory. As mentioned earlier, I focus particularly on Butler's modes of constituting subjects through her theory of performativity. I argue that Butler's theory suggests both how male prostitutes' sexual practices can be theorised differently, in particular through the constitution of gay subjectivities. In short, feminist critiques provide me with a way of exploring the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes from a different perspective, in particular the way in which the discourse on sexuality is itself produced through sexual practices.

In *Thinking Sex,* Rubin suggests that the problem of 'sex' has been confined by the discourse on sexuality. Rubin constructs a methodological approach not to free 'sex' from discourse, but rather to challenge discourse through 'sex'. She suggests the need to rethink the conditions under which a certain kind of 'sex' becomes appropriated while another becomes constrained. Following Michel Foucault, Rubin believes that 'sexuality

has been structured within an extremely punitive social framework and has been subjected to very real formal and informal controls'.[46] What makes sex good or bad, as Rubin argues, is the way in which it is politically constructed by various institutions to confirm the norms of sexuality, ideally heterosexual, monogamous, reproductive and non-commercial.[47] According to Rubin, 'sex' has been continuously constructed through patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony.

For Rubin, to actively reposition 'sex' is to explore sex through sex acts. She suggests that acts of sex emphasise various forms of sexuality regarded as 'something that exists rather than as something to be exterminated'.[48] Examining sexual activities puts forward the notion that sex should not be determined by a dichotomy of order and disorder, but rather considered as a way of engaging with political 'subjects' through sexual activities. For Rubin, the body is key, and should not be regarded only as a supplement for sexual activities, but as the way in which various forms of 'sex' can be materialised by 'acting' subjects. In this sense, Rubin conceptualises sexual activities not as a way of reinforcing identities based on sexual behaviour in the discourse on sexuality, but rather as a way of challenging discourse and criticising those identities that appear as pre-given through sexual activities.

Although Rubin's ways of using sexual activities are useful for constructing an argument concerning the possibility of challenging discourse, her theory does not provide us with

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[46] Rubin, 'Thinking Sex', p. 10.
[47] Rubin, 'Thinking Sex', pp. 13–4.
[48] Rubin, 'Thinking Sex', p. 16.

sufficient flexibility to theorise male prostitutes' sexual practices through homosexual behaviour. Under what conditions do certain acts of male prostitutes become a mode for challenging and not reinforcing identities and following discourse? Can Rubin's mode of constituting subjects still be useful to explore male prostitutes' subjectivities through the subject-object position they adopt in their practices? How can we theorise the sexual practices of male prostitutes in relation to gay male clients and gay subjectivities?

Shannon Bell's discussion of female prostitution in terms of identity politics seems to be useful in answering some parts of these questions. I am interested in the way in which Bell attempts to theorise prostitutes as 'acting subjects' by exploring the bodies and activities of prostitutes. For Bell, the sexual activities of prostitutes can be understood in terms of 'performances'. When prostitutes' performances are examined in the light of identity politics, they are able to 'challenge', as Bell argues:

> Performance artists such as dykes, fags and whores use their marginalised and 'obscene' bodies as sites of resistance to reclaim and remap their own identities, to deconstruct the masculine, feminist and heterosexual inscriptions on their bodies, and as a consequence to destabilise the hegemonic discourse itself.[49]

Like Rubin, Bell analyses the bodily performances of prostitutes both in discursive mode and in a specific way in terms of subjectivity. To understand how Bell constitutes prostitutes' subjectivities, it is perhaps useful to draw attention to Rendell's critique of

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[49] Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 17.

Bell's analysis. Described by Rendell, the positions of prostitutes are derived from Bell's

reading of Luce Irigaray's analysis of the politics of sexual exchange.[50] Rendell suggests

that sexual exchange in Irigaray's work is based on the binary opposition between men

and women. As Rendell argues, 'Within the masculine economy of patriarchy, women

are feminine products of exchange'.[51] Within patriarchal exchange, there are three

variations of 'woman-as-commodity': mother, virgin and prostitute. While the mother is

excluded from exchange, a virgin woman is on the market, but once violated, she is taken

off the market.[52] But prostitutes, as described by Rendell, 'do not fall into the binary

opposition of use or exchange value. […] Instead the prostitutes remain on the market,

both useful and exchangeable'.[53] From this perspective, the bodily performances of the

prostitutes can be considered as ways in which subjects potentially determine their own

movement and perform acts of exchange. As Rendell argues, 'The prostitutes are not

objects of exchange between men, but subjects of exchange; they exchange their own use

value'.[54] For Bell, the bodily performances of prostitutes suggest a possibility for

constituting 'new' identities by repositioning themselves from objects of exchange to

subjects in control of their bodily movements, and ways of challenging and transgressing

hegemonic discourses.[55]

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[50] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 13. See also Luce Irigaray, 'Woman on the Market', *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 170–91 at p. 172.
[51] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 13.
[52] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 14.
[53] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 14.
[54] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 14.
[55] Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 14.

Bell suggests that prostitutes can probably control the way they use their bodies. Yet

many scholars have found it is uncomfortable to support Bell's mode of constituting

subjects of prostitutes because it can be understood to support essentialism rather than

constructivism; in other words, Bell's argument does not necessarily support the notion

of prostitutes' identity as constructed. To argue whether or not Bell's analysis of

prostitutes' subjectivities is essentialist is not the point I want to make here, but rather to

emphasise that Bell provides us with a way of thinking about prostitutes in relation to a

patriarchal system and through the spatial relations between the positions of prostitutes

and clients.[56]

Relationships between prostitutes and clients can be considered spatial when they are

conceptualised through the concept of performance. However, adopting Bell's mode for

constituting subjects to explore male prostitutes' subjectivities is problematic because the

identity politics of male prostitutes are constituted not only through patriarchy but also

through heterosexual patriarchy. We should not simply use theoretical propositions put

forward for analysing female prostitution to explore the political subject of male

prostitution. We must recognise that when such performances become transgressive, the

bodily performances of male prostitutes do not criticise the politics of sexual exchange

within the masculine economy of patriarchy as Bell suggests of female prostitutes' bodily

performances. Rather, male prostitutes' bodily performances challenge the heterosexual

hegemony imposed on homosexual behaviour through the discourse on sexuality. We

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[56] My argument concerning spatial relations in Bell's mode of constituting subjects draws on
Rendell's critique of Bell's reading of Irigaray's woman-as-commodity. As Rendell points out, 'She
[Irigaray] is providing us with the opportunity to imagine new possible relations that women might have
with space'. See Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 15.

must think about the bodily performance of male prostitutes in relation to gay male

clients, but not as synonymous in terms of their gayness. Their performances suggest the

different modes of constituting subjects. At this point, I explore a specific mode of

performance which can help to construct a new identity and way of conceptualising the

constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities. I draw, then, particular attention to

Butler's modes of constituting subjects through her performativity theory.

Performativity Theory

> The theory of performativity was originally a theory of gender, about how gender
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> is performed, how gender is enunciated and articulated and how it is done in
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> relationship to certain kinds of norms. Performativity probably has to do with
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> becoming a man or becoming a woman, or becoming something else, where the
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> norms of man or woman are hegemonic and one has to negotiate them, either
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> through replicating them and resignifying them or by crossing them or confusing
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> them, or vacating them, or posing them many different relations.[57]

Butler's performativity theory provides me with a theoretical framework to engage with

those people whose sexual identities have been constructed by hegemonic discourses.

Butler's performativity theory is useful to help understand the constitution of male

prostitutes' subjectivities in relation to gay male subjectivities. I argue that Butler's

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[57] Judith Butler, 'Judith Butler Quotes', in The European Graduate School EGS, published online 1997 <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/butler-resources.html>, accessed 10th March 2005.

theory opens up a way of exploring male prostitutes' sexual practices through the way in which gay subjectivities are constructed. The specific forms of male prostitutes' sexual practices can be understood not as 'sexual behaviour', but rather as 'performative acts'; in other words, male prostitutes perform 'gay' and produce gay subjectivities. The sexual practices of male prostitutes operate to the construct gay subjectivities.

To situate male prostitutes' sexual practices theoretically, I suggest that two significant conditions in Butler's theory need to be emphasised: the first concerns the 'construction' and 'materialisation' of gay identities; the second concerns the difference between 'performance' and 'performativity'. It is useful to sketch out a brief clarification of these terms. I suggest that Butler uses 'construction' in a conceptual sense in the same way that Foucault uses 'discourse', that is as a form of analysis which groups and positions subjects in the object position, as discussed in the previous chapter. Butler points out, as quoted above, that sex, gender and sexuality are specific constructions which are produced by a legitimising form of knowledge. The term 'materialisation' can be understood as the way in which sex, gender and sexuality get represented through our bodies; in other words, this is the concept by Butler uses to explain how the construction of sex, gender and sexuality is materialised through the body and ways of performing sex and gender roles. Butler explains 'ways of performing' using the concept of 'performance', for here, 'performance', as a discourse, constitutes the subject as the object, whereas 'performativity' as a discursive mode constituting the subject.

If, as Butler argues, a legitimising form of knowledge constitutes heterosexuality as normality and situates heterosexuals as 'constructed' identities, gay identities are constructed as 'unconstructed' and situated 'outside' the norms of heterosexuality. Using concepts of construction and materialisation, performance and performativity, Butler opens up the possibility for rethinking gay identities. As she argues, gay identities can be constituted differently, in particular by examining gays' bodies and the specific forms of their performative acts.

In the following discussion, I explore first the way in which Butler situates the relationship between heterosexual identities and gay identities, dialectically and theoretically, through construction, materialisation, performance and performativity; second, I focus on the way in which Butler begins to reconstitute gay identities through inversion or 'inverted performance'; and third, Butler's understanding of the construction of gay identities leads me to examine the relations of male prostitutes and gay male clients in terms of how male prostitutes 'perform' homosexuality. In other words, I argue that gay subjectivities can be constructed differently and male prostitutes produce gay subjectivities in relation to gay male clients at the moment of their encounter.

Butler's performativity theory is complex; it is useful to explore such complexity in the way that Butler explains 'construction' – the way in which homosexuality is constructed through speech and writing. As she argues, 'being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language. […] One can be "put in one's

place" by such speech, but such a place may be no place'.[58] Like Foucault, Butler points

out that homosexuality is constructed through the discourse on sexuality. For Butler,

homosexuality is constituted through 'exclusionary means', and for that reason it is

situated 'outside' the norms of heterosexuality.[59] To understand what is meant by the

'outside' is to draw attention to Butler's phrase 'what is and is not constructed'.[60] The

'outside' can be understood as 'an ontological there-ness that exceeds or counters the

boundaries of discourse'.[61] From this perspective, heterosexuality is understood as

'constructed' identity in accordance with heterosexual hegemony, whereas

homosexuality is understood as 'unconstructed' identity.

It is worth emphasising the spatial relations implicit in Butler's understanding of the

connection between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The constitution of an 'outside'

entails already a boundaries defining the 'inside' of a discourse. To destabilise discourse

is to question boundaries, that is to move from 'outside' to 'inside'. I will discuss how

specific practices, which are masquerades, which are a form of performative acts, help

gays question the boundaries of normality by 'passing through', later in this section.

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[58] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 2–4.

[59] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 8.

[60] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 11.

[61] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 8.

'Constructed' identity can be understood in accordance with heterosexual hegemony and assumed by 'ontologically consolidated phantasms of "man" and "woman"'.[62] Reading the construction of heterosexuality in a discursive mode, Butler argues that 'the "reality" of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitation'.[63] In other words, there is no 'origin' in the definition of heterosexual identities, but only the imaginative power of heterosexual hegemony, which needs to repeat itself in order to 'establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity' and to sustain the 'normality and irreversibility' of the binary opposition between heterosexual/homosexual as dominant/subordinate.[64] I argue that the materialisation of 'constructed' and 'unconstructed' identities can be distinguished by means of representation, that is the difference between what can be seen and what cannot be seen. To materialise a constructed identity is to present and perform the body by following the legitimising form of knowledge. Those whose sexualities are situated outside this legitimising form of knowledge are identified by 'unconstructed' and 'un-represented' identities and are therefore excluded and marginalised.

Butler argues that 'heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition that can only produce the *effect* of its own originality'.[65] It is worth remembering that Butler examines the construction of heterosexual identities in relation

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[62] Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 307–20 at p. 313.
[63] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 313.
[64] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', pp. 314–5. See also Judith Butler, 'Against Proper Objects', in Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (eds), *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–30 at p. 2.
[65] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 313 (original emphasis).

to questions of how gay identities are unconstructed and excluded, and how sexual

normality is bound up with heterosexual hegemony and the binary opposition of man and

woman. Butler explains that the compulsory repetition in heterosexual identities can be

understood in terms of gender performance, which defines and controls how the body

appears with regard to sexual normality.

To understand the way in which heterosexual hegemony is secured through gender

performance, Butler points out to relations between gender and sexuality. She states that

gender is not a singular act, but a process, produced through the reiteration of a norm or

set of norms.[66] Sexuality is never fully "expressed" in a performance or practices; there

will be passive and butchy femmes, femmy and aggressive butches, and both of those,

and more, will turn out to describe more or less anatomically stable "males" and

"females"'.[67] Butler uses gender performance to explain 'how a norm actually

materialises a body' and 'how we are animated by a norm'.[68] At this point, Butler begins

to draw on the concept of performance and performativity. Performance can be

understood in terms of how heterosexual identities are repeatedly constructed and

materialised, and Butler uses here the phrase 'a copy of a copy'. Performativity is

different and for me allows a specific way of theorising performance as a discursive

mode which constitutes subjects. In other words, when a subject performs performance

already frames the subject, whereas performativity leads us to think about how the

subject is constituted through performance.

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[66] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 9.
[67] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 315.
[68] Butler, 'Judith Butler Quotes'.

Although gender performance tends to frame the 'subject', Butler does not deny that there is a subject, what she denies is the 'priority' of the subject. She argues that the subject's power to freely control its expression has been undermined by a psychic reality which 'exceeds the domain of the conscious subject'.[69] To understand the subject position in Butler's concept of performance, I would make the following analogy: if one considers a performance, there must be a performer. To constitute the subject (of the performer), Butler uses the term 'performativity' to explain the 'essence' of the subject who derives from the compulsory repetition of gender performance. In a close reading of Butler's concept of performance, Sara Salih suggests that the term 'essence' is used to explain the 'idea of a pre-linguistic inner core manifested before the subject, or a stage of the pre-existing subject'.[70] Thus, the 'essence' should not be understood in terms of an ontological approach, but rather in terms of a methodological approach where essence operates through the concept of performance. While performance constitutes the subject as the object, performativity contests the very notion of the subject.[71] In the light of performativity, the subject is the effect of discourse rather than its cause. Salih describes Butler's performativity like this: 'You as a subject do not create or cause institutions, discourses and practices, but they create or cause you by determining your sex, sexuality and gender'.[72]

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[69] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 313.
[70] Sara Salih, 'The Death of the Subject', in *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 63–5.
[71] Salih, 'Performativity', in *Judith Butler*, p. 63.
[72] Salih, 'Performativity', in *Judith Butler*, p. 10.

How can performativity be used for thinking the constitution of gay subjectivities? In Butler's performativity theory, the constitution of gay subjectivities is situated 'within' the 'failure' of the compulsory repetition of heterosexuality in its own 'phantasmatic idealisation'.[73] If, as Butler argues, heterosexual identities need to be instituted again and again, then '[they run] the risk of becoming "de-instituted" at every interval'.[74] Butler uses performativity as a discursive mode to open up the possibility of disrupting the repetition of heterosexual hegemony, that is allowing subjects not to be objectified by gender performance. To relocate those who are in the position of 'not-yet-subjects', Butler uses performativity as modes of inversion and imitation.[75]

Butler claims that 'heterosexual norms reappear within "gay identities" to affirm that gay and lesbian identities are not only structured in part by dominant heterosexual frames, but are *not* for that reason *determined* by them'.[76] The way in which gay subjectivities can be reconstituted needs to be considered through the construction of heterosexual identities.[77] Examining gay identities through performativity, Butler uses the notion of 'inverted performance' to subvert heterosexual hegemony, and opens up a way of relocating gays from object positions to subject positions. I understand the term inverted performance as a specific performance by which gays adopt certain images and performances from heterosexuals in order to disguise their bodies and ways of presenting themselves publicly. Inverted performances can be understood as the performative acts of subjects or,

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[73] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 313.
[74] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 315.
[75] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 3.
[76] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 314 (original emphasis).
[77] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', p. 313.

to be more specific, acts of resistance by gays against heterosexual hegemony. Through

Butler's performativity, gays are able to reconstitute their subjectivities and become what

they 'do'. Later in the next section, I discuss the inverted performances or performative

acts of gay men in relation to gay men's masquerades.

Having discussed the construction of gay subjectivities through Butler's performativity, I

will next discuss how the theory of performativity is useful for exploring male

prostitutes' sexual practices and the constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities.

Initially, I argue that Butler's performativity opens up a possibility for thinking about

male prostitutes' sexual practices through the construction of gay subjectivities. In order

to examine the constitution of male prostitutes' subjectivities, I suggest we need to look

at the bodies of male prostitutes because the body, as the discursive mode constituting the

subject. At the moment of encounter, male prostitutes observe their gay male clients and

imitate the bodies and performative acts of gay male clients into their sexual practices. As

discussed earlier, it is important to distinguish between those sexual practices which as

sexual behaviour follow discourse and those performative acts which resist discourse. In

the light of performativity, the sexual practices of male prostitutes can be regarded as the

performative acts of subjects who consciously choose ways of performing and displaying

their bodies. I suggest that the sexual practices of male prostitutes can be understood

theoretically as a specific mode of constituting male prostitutes' subjectivities. By

observing and adopting certain ways of presenting the bodies and images of gay male

clients, I argue that male prostitutes operate their sexual practices to construct gay

subjectivities. However, this constitution is not exactly the same as the gay male clients, but is rather 'performs' gay subjectivities.

Because, as I argue, male prostitutes' subjectivities are constituted through the way in which they are prepared to encounter gay male clients and perform gay sex, it is important to focus on the construction of gay identities in specific cultural and geographical conditions. The construction of gay identities is materialised differently in each culture and location, and for that reason I draw attention to the construction of gay identities in contemporary Thailand, which I discuss in detail in chapter two. For now, I want to examine the sexual practices of male prostitutes in terms of performative acts and ways of performing and displaying their bodies publicly. How can the sexual practices of male prostitutes be recognised by gay male clients and not by other heterosexual men? To answer this question, I draw on the 'inverted performances' or masquerades of gay men, which I argue, are the specific performative acts which male prostitutes adopt to help them 'pass through' the boundaries of normality and operate sexual practices in public spaces.

Masquerades

I have already discussed the performative acts of gay men in terms of 'inverted performance'. Here, I will discuss the inverted performance of gay men in relation to 'masquerades'. Masquerades are the specific performative acts of gay men which allow them to present themselves in a defensive mode against heterosexual hegemony. To understand gay men's masquerades, it is necessary to draw a connection between Butler's

understanding of sexual identity based on the binary opposition of 'constructed' and 'unconstructed' and Peggy Phelan's discussion of identity-visibility politics based on the binary opposition of 'marked' and 'unmarked'. It is worth emphasising that 'masquerades' are the 'performative acts' of gay men, for here, I will use 'masquerades' to suggest how the sexual practices of gay men and male prostitutes thought to as spatial practices can be employed in a defensive mode against power and domination.

Phelan investigates heterosexual hegemony and the way in which power is distributed through the security of heterosexual identities. Like Butler, Phelan also criticises the 'origin' of heterosexuality; she argues that 'Self-identity needs to be continually reproduced and reassured precisely because it fails to secure belief'.[78] Phelan discusses 'self-identity' as the process by which 'one seeks a self-image within the representational frame'.[79] The process of self-identity 'is a leap into a narrative that employs seeing as a way of knowing'.[80] To secure the continuity of power, heterosexual hegemony propagates the meaning and value of heterosexual identities: sex, gender and sexual norms, and creates the legitimising field of representation in which heterosexuals are 'visible', and gays are 'invisible' or 'under-representable'.[81] Heterosexuals whose identities are marked with value are left 'unmarked', but homosexual identities are 'marked' with the same value.[82]

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[78] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 4.
[79] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 5.
[80] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 5.
[81] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 5.
[82] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 5.

Reading Butler's notion of sex-gender-sexual construction in the light of Phelan's notion of visibility politics, within a legitimising form of representation the 'unconstructed' identities becomes 'under-represented', and therefore 'unknown'; suggesting a lack of measured value and meaning compared to the norms of 'constructed' and 'representable' identities. There is the need to see and know, 'to mark', those under-represented identities in order to control the binary oppositions of 'constructed-visible-unmarked' and 'unconstructed-invisible-marked' and stabilise power.

Although power is distributed through the way in which heterosexual identities are continuously reproduced and reassured, we might argue differently and suggest that real power derives from 'remaining unmarked', as Phelan argues, '[because] there are serious limitations to visual representation'.[83] Masquerades are a specific way of manipulating identities and empowering those who are marked. They are used to unmark marked identities, in particular those whose sexual identities are marked by the norms of heterosexuality. If the norms of heterosexuality aim to secure the binary, masquerades, as Phelan argues, aim to reverse 'the coded power of visible and invisible marking' and, at the same time, suggest 'a potential performative space in which the binary is broken down'.[84] Masquerades can be understood in terms of 'Phelan's passing performances'.[85] Passing performances 'highlight the "normative" and unmarked nature of heterosexuality'; in order words, they suggest the possibility of challenging the secured binary and boundaries, as discussed previously in Butler's theory, of the 'inside' and

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[83] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 6.
[84] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 95–7.
[85] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 96.

'outside' of the discourse of sexuality.[86] In order to pass unnoticed through the

boundaries of discourse, masquerades operate from 'outside' discourse by taking specific

forms of gender performance, constructed identities, and inverting them. To invert, as

Phelan claims, is the way in which 'Gays and lesbians who choose to pass as straight are

employing the (relative) invisibility of the marks of sexual preference'.[87]

How can we distinguish those performances used as masquerades to challenge hegemony

from those used as gender performance to follow hegemony? To answer this question, I

draw particularly on Joan Riviere's discussion of the difference between masquerades

and womanliness. For Riviere, masquerades are specific ways of transgressing the

hierarchy and order inscribed by the hegemonic notion of the so-called 'origin'. Riviere

investigates a specific form of women's masquerade that operates in male-dominated

environments. She examines the particular conditions of women whom she describes as

'excellent in being capable housewives and mothers, as well as in their professions and

social lives'.[88] Riviere suggests that these women somehow seek attention and

compliments from men. Psychologically, as analysed by Riviere, such women seek 'an

indirect reassurance of the nature of sexual attentions from these men'.[89] These women

wish for 'recognition' of their masculinity from men and claim to be the equals of men.[90]

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[86] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 96.
[87] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 96.
[88] Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', in Ernest Jones (ed.), *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, v. 10 (1929), pp. 303–13 at p. 303.
[89] Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', p. 305.
[90] Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', p. 305.

Yet, because of their wishes for and obsession with masculinity, they may 'put on a mask of "womanliness" to avert anxiety and the retribution feared by men'.[91]

Riviere suggests that womanliness can take the form of feminine interests such as behaviour, clothes or mannerisms. What makes 'womanliness as masquerade' different from 'genuine womanliness', I argue, is the different modes of operating self-identity. Womanliness in the former case operates in a defensive mode to criticise the discourse of masculinity, whereas womanliness in the latter case operates by following discourse that agrees with the subordinate position of female-femininity in relation to the superior position of male-masculinity. Riviere claims that womanliness as a masquerade aims to destabilise that binary of masculinity and femininity, which has waked to entrap these women and render their transgressive identities suspect. Womanliness used by masculine women is not only a way of disguising, but also a way of defending themselves against male-masculine superiority. In this sense, masquerades can be understood as what Efrat Tseelon discusses in terms of the 'technology of identity', 'that [what] deals with literal and metaphorical covering for ends as varied as "concealing", "revealing", "highlighting", "protesting", "protecting" and "creating" a space from where one can play out desires, fears, conventions and social practices'.[92]

If we take masquerades as performative acts, as specific modes of constituting subjectivities through practices, then masquerades enable gays to disguise and reposition

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[91] Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', p. 303.
[92] Efrat Tseelon, 'From Fashion to Masquerade: Towards an Ungendered Paradigm', in Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (eds), *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 107.

themselves as subjects, in effect allowing them to defend themselves against heterosexual

hegemony and, most importantly, to pass through the boundaries of sexual normality.

Reading masquerades in this sense, I suggest that they operate spatially; that they are the

specific spatial practices gay men use in public spaces. Masquerades provide us with

ways of understanding how gay men pass through normative levels in 'public spaces' and

constitute 'gay spaces'. From this perspective, masquerades allow gay men to see other

gay men secretly in public spaces. Phelan discusses masquerades like this:

> The "in-jokes", the "secret" codes, the iconography of dress, movement and
>
> speech which can be read by those within the community, but escape the
>
> interpretative power of those external to it, can create another expressive language
>
> which cannot be translated by those who are not familiar with the meanings of
>
> this intimate tongue.[93]

If, as I argue, male prostitutes adopt certain ways of performing the body and presenting

certain images to gay male clients, how can we make a connection between masquerades

of gay men, as discussed above, and those of male prostitutes? In earlier discussion, I

argued that the sexual practices of male prostitutes can be understood in terms of

performative acts, as theorised through Butler's performativity theory. I now suggest that

the performative acts of male prostitutes can also be understood in relation to

masquerades when such acts are understood in relation to the bodies and images – self-

identifications and self-presentations – which male prostitutes adopt from gay men.

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[93] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 97.

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The masquerades of male prostitutes can be understood in Padgug's terms, which are worth emphasising: 'To "commit" a homosexual act is one thing; to be a homosexual is something entirely different'.[94] The masquerades of male prostitutes highlight independent relations between sexual behaviour and sexual identities. Masquerades provide male prostitutes with the ability to produce 'gay' subjectivities: performing gay sex, and displaying bodies for gay male clients, without disturbing their sexual identity. In the light of Phelan's discussion of visibility-identity politics, masquerades are specific forms of spatial practices based on the manipulation of identities. Through masquerades, male prostitutes prepare their bodies in a defensive mode by disguising themselves as heterosexual men in public spaces and, at the same time, presenting their bodies and sexual interests in ways which can be read and recognised as 'gay' by gay men, and perhaps not by others. In order to argue that male prostitutes can be recognised as 'gay' by gay men, I draw particular attention to the particular bodies and images of gay men, which male prostitutes adopt to display to themselves in public spaces and in gay spaces. Location, the site in which the encounter between gay male clients and male prostitutes takes place, is also important to know gay male clients 'where' to look at and recognise male prostitutes' sexual practices, while male prostitutes use location to know 'where' to display their bodies to gay male clients. I will discussion in detail the different uses of location between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter in terms of 'places' and 'spaces' later in the next section.

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[94] Padgug, 'Sexual Matters', p. 59.

Having discussed the sexual practices of male prostitutes in terms of performative acts and masquerades, we move beyond conventional discussions where male prostitutes are objectively identified according to the gay activities they engage in. Instead, I aim to relocate male prostitutes in a subject position, to emphasise that they are what they do and how present themselves to other people. While the self-identifications of male prostitutes are contradictory and difficult to measure, their self-presentations are key to examining how male prostitutes appear to potential gay male clients and how the subject-object relations adopted between the two are constituted spatially. Self-presentations of male prostitutes enable gay male clients to recognise their sexual practices in 'spaces'. In the following discussion, I investigate how masquerades suggest possibilities for gay male clients and male prostitutes to 'pass' through normative levels and 'look' at other men through spaces. I draw on discussions around cruising and looking in male-centred sexual practices.

Cruising, Positioning and Looking

Masquerades provide gay men with the possibility of disguising their sexualities from heterosexual norms and meeting other gay men in public spaces, in order to, as Phelan claims 'to pass as normative and thus unnoticed'.[95] Through masquerades, gay men use a specific way of experiencing the city and enjoy the pleasure of looking at other men in public spaces; this can be regarded as cruising by gay men. The way in which gay men use their bodies and performative acts to pass through public spaces, meet other gay men and constitute gay spaces can be understood spatially, that is masquerades operate

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[95] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 93.

spatially. Cruising by gay men can also be understood as the specific form of gay men's

spatial practices which constitutes gay spaces. For John Hollister, cruising is a spatial

practice and a site-specific technique; it cannot be separated from the locations where it

takes place. Hollister believes, 'it [cruising] may take place anywhere and use any

available props to make a communication and consummation.'[96]

While Hollister starts looking at cruising as a way of making communication in spaces,

Mark W. Turner suggests that cruising provides gay men with a specific way of looking

at other men in spaces. To quote Turner, 'cruising is the moment of visual exchange that

occurs on the streets and in other places in the city, which constitutes an act of mutual

recognition amid the otherwise alienating effects of the anonymous crowd'.[97] Cruising is

about 'how we look at others, how others look at us, the dynamics of the gaze'.[98]

The important features that operate through cruising allow cruisers ways of positioning

themselves and looking at others whom the cruiser encounters. While masquerades

provide gay men with the possibility to meet other men, suggesting that gay men perform

as heterosexual men in order to 'move' and 'cruise' other men in public spaces, cruising

allows gay men to situate themselves in a position where their pleasure of looking at

other men can barely be disrupted. Cruising can then be understood as a specific form of

gay men's spatial practice; when it operates, it constitutes gay spaces, discussed in terms

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[96] John Hollister, 'A Highway Rest Area as a Socially Reproducible Site', in William L. Leap (ed.), *Public Sex: Gay Space* (New York: Columbia, 1999), p. 58.
[97] Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), p. 9.
[98] Turner, *Backward Glances*, pp. 57 and 61.

of 'closet' spaces in the previous chapter.[99] Having argued that public spaces are

produced as gay spaces through gay men's cruising – ways of positioning and looking at

other men – we must ask can space be produced differently through the way in which gay

male clients position themselves and look at male prostitutes?

In order to understand the 'positions' and 'looks' of gay male clients in relation to those

of male prostitutes, it is important to begin by exploring the position of gay men and their

ways of looking at other men in public spaces. I argue that the positions gay men adopt

through their ways of cruising are not fixed but, in fact, flexible and oscillate between

'looking' and 'being-looked-at'. In the following discussion, I will explain this flexibility

of gay men through the relations of 'positioning' and 'looking'; first, I draw on

discussions around the binary opposition of 'looking' and 'being-looked-at', constructed

through sexual relations and gender politics; second, I suggest that there is a need to

break down this binary opposition in order to better understand the positions of gay men

and their ways of looking at other men. In order to better understand the way in which

gay male clients position themselves and look at male prostitutes, the binary

paradoxically becomes useful. I suggest that the relations between gay male clients and

male prostitutes can be understood in two ways: first, gay male clients aim to control and

stabilise the binary oppositions of 'gay male clients-looking' and 'male prostitutes-being

looked at'; second, male prostitutes aim to resist and destabilise the binary.

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[99] Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 7.

Laura Mulvey makes a visual analysis of sexual relations and gender politics in her study

of cinematography.[100] In her analysis, she discusses visual pleasure based on Sigmund

Freud's description of scopophilia, which is the pleasure of looking. She explains that

'pleasure in looking has been split between active-male and passive-female'.[101] Mulvey

points out that 'Freud associated scopophilia with "taking other people as objects, [and]

subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze"'.[102] Based on her reading of Mulvey's

analysis, Rendell discusses the binary opposition of 'looking' and 'being looked at' like

this: 'looking is active and gendered masculine, being looked at is passive and

feminised'.[103] Rendell also suggests that 'voyeurism' is key to the pleasure of looking.

Based on Rendell's reading of Gillian Rose's discussion of the positions of women in the

binary opposition of 'looking' and 'being looked at', voyeurism is a 'controlling and

distanced way of looking in which "gratification is obtained without intimacy" and where

pleasure is derived from looking at a figure as an object'.[104]

To understand power and the way in which it is distributed through voyeurism to stabilise

the binary opposition of 'looking' and 'being looked at'**,** Mulvey suggests that: man

'emerges as the representative of power, as the bearer of the look of the spectator […] he

projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male

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[100] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures*
(London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 14–26.
[101] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 19.
[102] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 16.
[103] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 17.
[104] Gillian Rose, 'Making Space for the Female Subject of Feminism: the Spatial Subversions of
Holzer, Kruger and Sherman', in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of
Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 332–54 at p. 337, quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit
of Pleasure*, p. 18.

protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of erotic looking'.[105]

Woman, however, is bounded by a symbolic order in which 'man can live out his

fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing on the silent image of

woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning'.[106] In accordance with the

male spectator, woman is produced as spectacle, and becomes sex object.[107] As Mulvey

suggests, 'woman is being turned all the time into the object of display, to be looked at

and gazed at and stared at by men'.[108]

Mulvey's analysis suggests men and women are positioned differently in relation to the

look. As Richard Dyer points out, 'women do not so much "look" at men as "watch"

them, [but] men look more at women – men stare at women'.[109] How can we distinguish

between these two looks? To differentiate them, Rendell's discussion is also useful here.

Rendell argues that 'looking as "seeing" allows multiple and different view-points,

whereas looking as "gazing" is a more sustained operation of vision that implies authority

and surveillance'.[110] To emphasise, power is distributed through the male gaze, which

aims to control and stabilise the binary opposition of the male spectator and the female

spectacle.

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[105] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 20.
[106] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 15.
[107] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 19.
[108] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 12.
[109] Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: the Male Pin-up', in Mandy Merck (ed.), *The Sexual Subject: a Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 267.

[110] Rendell's argument here is based on her reading of Alice T. Friedman's understanding of Kaja Silverman's 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image' based on Silverman's close reading of Lacan's 'Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis'. See Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House', *Assemblage*, v. 18 (August 1992), pp. 40–61 at p. 42 and Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan : A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56, two of them quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18.

However, the fixed positions of male-active and female-passive in Mulvey's analysis of the binary opposition of 'looking' and 'being looked at' are problematic and need to be rethought because the relations of positions and looks in the binary are constructed based on a legitimising form of knowledge, situating only men in the subject position and identifying their looks as active, while situating women in the object position and identifying their looks as passive. Yet, there are various kinds of look, such as watching, seeing and gazing, as mentioned previously, and also various positions for those who look and are looked at, such as the female spectator and the male spectacle; in other words, I suggest that we need to destabilise the binary.

For example, Rendell's work investigates the encounter between the male rambler and other male figures in early-nineteenth-century London like this: 'on the ramble [the male rambler] can enjoy looking, but also being looked at'.[111] She argues that, 'the visual distinction made between "looking" and "being-looked-at" can be a false one – more often these are reciprocal positions'.[112] It is not always necessary for the man who looks to be a spectator at the moment of encounter because he might also derive pleasure from being looked at. Likewise, the position of those other men whom one man looks at is not necessary always as spectacle, since they too can look back.

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[111] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure,* p. 18.
[112] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure,* p. 18.

It is important to note here that Rendell discusses the pleasure of looking of the male

rambler. Rendell's discussion is useful for making an argument based on the flexible

positions in the binary opposition and, to some extent, to explore the pleasure of looking

oscillating between men. But this thesis focuses on the encounters of gay male clients and

male prostitutes. I argue that the pleasure of gay male clients in ways of looking is

derived from voyeurism – gay male clients gaze at male prostitutes and enjoy looking at

male prostitutes as objects of desire at a distance.

As I mentioned earlier, the binary opposition of 'looking-active-subject' and 'being

looked-at-passive-object' is useful for discussing the positions, the looks and, most

importantly, the subject-object relations which gay male clients and male prostitutes

adopt at the moment of their encounter. In other words, I explain the relationships

between gay male clients and male prostitutes through the positions they adopt in their

encounters and their ways of looking at each other. Through the gay male clients' gaze,

male prostitutes are passive and produced as objects of desire. But there is no reason for

us to continue to objectify male prostitutes nor to consider them as objects, instead we

need to rethink them as subjects.

In order to relocate male prostitutes in the subject position, the role of their sexual

practices is key: this includes masquerades as performative acts, as already discussed

earlier, as well as the way that their sexual practices allow them to produce 'gay'

subjectivities and to relate in equal terms with gay male clients' subject positions. By

examining male prostitutes' sexual practices, in particular the way in which they are able

to look back at gay male clients at the moment of their encounter, binary distinctions are broken down. The possibility of the reversible look of male prostitutes, allows the 'looking-active-subject' position of gay male clients to become destabilised.

I investigate the encounters between gay male clients and male prostitutes in different positions and through different looks in two particular ways: those which reinforce and those which destabilise the binary opposition of 'looking-active-subject' and 'being looked at-passive-object', helping to situate the understanding of such relations dialectically in space. First, I explore ways in which the binary opposition is reinforced, that is gay male clients' ways of stabilising the looking-active-subject position: in effect, situating male prostitutes in the being looked at-passive-object position. Second, I examine the possibilities for destabilising the binary opposition, in particular how the reversible looks of male prostitutes, lead us to think carefully about the flexible positions of gay male clients and male prostitutes, are bound up with the binary oppositions of 'looking/being looked at', 'active/passive' and, most importantly, 'subject/object'.

The 'positions' and 'looks' defined within the binary oppositions are important because they suggest power relations and spatial relations or, to be more specific, the locations where the encounters between the two take place. Thus, it is necessary to examine the way in which power is distributed through the social hierarchy, privilege and class-based understanding in male-centred sexual practices, which varies according to cultural and geographical background. In the next chapter, I will examine in detail, in particular the relations of gay male clients/male prostitutes as 'subject/object' they adopt are produced

through the binary opposition of 'higher/lower' social status in the existing social hierarchy, cultural and class-based understanding of male-centred sexual practices in contemporary Thailand.

The encounters between gay male clients and male prostitutes also needs to be explored through 'space' because the positions of gay male clients and those of male prostitutes and the ways in which they look at each other in each location gets played out differently: for example, between gay male drivers and male streetwalkers in streets; between gay male customers, bar owners and male sex workers in go-go bars; and between gay male readers, magazine editors and male models in spatial representations in gay magazines. Examining ways of positioning and looking in relation to each other through space helps to explain the various relations of gay male clients and male prostitutes dialectically and spatially. That is, space is useful for broadening the investigation because it draws out various ways of distributing and resisting power.

I suggest that space is produced differently through the positions and looks of gay male clients and male prostitutes. The gaze of gay male clients tends to regulate space, in particular the positions in which male prostitutes stand. Space, in this sense, is controlled and choreographed for gay male clients to enjoy gazing at male prostitutes as objects of desire. By regulating space in such a way, the binary oppositions are reinforced, suggesting the 'looking-active-subject' position of gay male clients can be secured and the voyeuristic pleasure of looking at male prostitutes can hardly be disrupted. But from male prostitutes' positions, space is produced as 'new' not from their object positions but

rather from subject positions they occupy at the moment of encounter. That is, by operating their sexual practices in specific ways, which can help them to look back at gay male clients, male prostitutes are able to challenge the objectification produced through the gay male clients' gaze. In such ways, male prostitutes are able to destabilise binary oppositions, relocating themselves as subjects and, most importantly, producing spaces of subjects.

We have already discussed the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes: through performative acts and masquerades as ways of performing and the public display of their bodies as acting subjects; through cruising as ways of moving and meeting other men in public spaces; and, most importantly, through different positions and looks defined by the binary opposition of 'looking-active-subject' and 'being looked at-passive-object' and ways of critiquing the power and spatial relations between the two. At this point, I draw particular attention to the 'space' of the subject-object relations between gay male clients and male prostitutes adopt at the moment of their encounter. Because space is produced differently through positions and looks, as discussed previously, how can we distinguish the different spaces which are produced by gay male clients and male prostitutes? To examine this, I draw on de Certeau's theoretical discussion of the spatial practices of 'strategies' and 'tactics'. Initially, I suggest that gay male clients behave strategically in order to regulate spaces as 'places', whereas male prostitutes behave tactically in response to gay male clients; and manipulate and produce these places as 'spaces'.

Places and Spaces: Strategies and Tactics

In de Certeau's theoretical discussions, space can be produced differently through spatial practices: strategies and tactics, which can be understood as 'ways of operating' power.[113] I suggest that de Certeau's spatial practices can be either operations of distributing and reinforcing power, or ones of challenging and resisting power. Through 'strategy' and 'tactic', de Certeau defines 'place' and 'space' differently. He claims that 'Strategies are able to produce, tabulate and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces'.[114] De Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices is useful for examining how spaces produced differently between gay male clients and male prostitutes. In particular, his work is also useful for exploring the operations of reinforcing and destabilising the binary opposition of 'looking-active-subject' and 'being looked at-passive-object', which is bound up with the relations between the two, as discussed previously.

According to de Certeau, when space becomes a condition of power, which is dominant over individuals and society, it is strategically produced as 'place'. A place has its 'proper meaning', which is regulated through strategy and the 'calculation (or manipulation) of power relations'.[115] To quote de Certeau, 'a strategy postulates a "place" that can be delimited as its "own" and serve as the base from which relations with an "exteriority"

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[113] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. xix.
[114] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* p. 30.
[115] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 35–6.

composed of targets or threats can be managed'.[116] Every strategy seeks to establish its

own 'proper' place. The term 'proper' can be understood in relation to, for example, the

'geometrical space of urbanists and architects', which is governed by certain rules in

order to establish normative levels and, at the same time, to exclude what is

'improper'.[117] In other words, when space is produced strategically as 'place', it tends to

confine every 'target' to its place, and define it as an 'object', through which the

operations of dominating power get played out. From this perspective, I suggest that the

term 'place' theorised in accordance with de Certeau's strategy, is equivalent to the

'representations of space' in Lefebvre's analysis of space, as discussed earlier.

'Space', however, as opposed to 'place' and the strategy of controlling and objectifying a

subject, is produced tactically. Thus, when 'space' is produced, it does not obey the law

of place, but rather 'plays on and with a terrain imposed on it'.[118] 'Space', in this sense, is

active and tactical, and is produced through the constitution of a 'subject'. As de Certeau

suggests, 'space' is produced tactically through the art of inhabiting everyday practices

such as walking, dwelling, cooking and, as I assert, performing, masquerading,

disguising, cruising and looking. To explain everyday practices in terms of tactics, de

Certeau relates such practices to the notion of resistance. He argues that, '[everyday

practices can be understood as] multiform resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that

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[116] De Certeau refers to 'those targets and threats' as customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research. See De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 36.

[117] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 100.

[118] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 37.

elude discipline without being-outside the field in which [they are] exercised'.[119] From

this perspective, 'place' is used, manipulated and diverted by a subject who acts tactically

against objectification and domination; through a tactic, a subject produces 'place' as

'space'. A tactic can be understood as an act of resistance, so that the space of a tactic is

then the space of resistance. The term 'space', theorised in accordance with de Certeau's

tactic, is equivalent to the 'representational space' in Lefebvre's analysis of space, as

discussed earlier.

De Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices suggests that the play of 'strategy'

and 'tactic' can also be understood dialectically as the play of 'place' and 'space'. To

understand the 'play' between the two, I draw on Jeremy Ahearne's close reading of de

Certeau's theoretical discussion. Ahearne suggests that de Certeau organises his spatial

practices in discursive operations such as 'turn', 'detour', 'diversion', 'inversion',

'conversion' and 'subversion'.[120] The term 'turn' is Ahearne's way of understanding de

Certeau' discussion and suggests a specific form of operation by which the strategic field

can be manipulated and reproduced. Thus, to 'turn' is the way in which people respond

and defend themselves tactically against a strategy and without leaving a place, a tactic

allows those who respond to defend to build up their position and a space. Unlike a

strategy, a tactic operates at the precise instant of an intervention, and de Certeau

describes the difference like this: a tactic is 'the utilisation of time', as opposed to a

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[119] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 96.
[120] Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 159.

strategy, which is 'the establishment of place'.[121] To 'turn', one must be aware of the

rules of a place, which aim to establish the boundaries and normative level, as discussed

previously. Thus, to 'turn' is key in a tactic, which operates by reversing the binary

oppositions of 'place/space', 'proper/improper', 'ordered/disordered'; and, in this thesis, I

argue that to 'turn' is the way in which the binary oppositions of 'looking/being looked

at', 'active/passive' and 'subject/object' relations, which gay male clients and male

prostitutes adopt in the moment of their encounter, are broken down through male

prostitutes' tactics.

From this perspective, a tactic is not something that pre-exists in an essentialist sense, but

is rather constituted in relation to a strategy, regarded as a way of responding and

defending for those whose positions are subject to objectification and domination. A

tactic operates from 'within' a place and works 'against' a strategy. If, as I argue, a place

behaves strategically, and a place is marked with certain values and meanings, a space

behaves tactically, and aims to open up possibilities for unmarking and challenging

power in a place. Thus, as de Certeau argues, space 'appears once more as a practiced

place'.[122]

Places of Gay Male Clients and Spaces of Male Prostitutes

Having outlined de Certeau's theoretical discussion of the spatial practices of 'strategy'

and 'tactic', I will draw together de Certeau's theoretical discussion and Butler's

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[121] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 38.
[122] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 130.

performativity theory in order to investigate the relationships between gay male clients

and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter and their production of space.

It is important to sketch out my investigation: first, I use discussions around power

relations between 'strategy-dominating' and 'tactic-resisting' to explain the difference

between ways of reinforcing and ways of destabilising the binary oppositions of

'looking/being looked at', 'active/passive' and 'subject/object'. Second, I focus the

discussion around 'strategy-place' to examine the places of gay male clients and their

ways of objectifying male prostitutes in places, and those around 'tactic-space' to

examine the spaces of male prostitutes and their ways of resisting gay male clients'

objectification through spaces. Third and most importantly, I emphasise the discussion of

a 'tactic' in relation to everyday practices, which is equivalent to a discursive mode of

constituting the 'subject' in Butler's performativity theory, to explore the constitution of

male prostitutes' subjectivities through ways of reversing order differences in the binary

oppositions, and through ways of producing spaces.

To understand the connection between Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's

theoretical discussion of spatial practices, I suggest that 'performativity' can be

understood in relation to 'ways of operating'. For Butler, performativity operates in a

specific mode, reconstituting subjects for those, as she argues, 'who are not yet

subjects'.[123] Performativity entails the process of deconstruction, as discussed earlier,

which is an ability to reposition oneself from the object position to the subject position, in

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[123] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 3.

particular through practices. By reading of Butler's performativity theory in the light of

Foucault's theory of power relations, which she partly adopts, I suggest that the term

'performance', in relation to sex, gender and sexual discourse in particular, can be

understood as an act of domination, equivalent to Foucault's discussion of 'technologies

of power'.[124] Technologies of power operate by '[determining] the conduct of individuals

and submits them to certain ends or domination and objectification'.[125] The term

performativity, however, can be understood as the acts of a subject, equivalent to

Foucault's discussion of 'technologies of the self':

> Technologies of the self permit individuals to effect by their own means or with
>
> the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls,
>
> thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to *transform* themselves in order to
>
> attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.[126]

I argue that in Foucault's theory of power relations to 'transform' is in Butler's

performativity theory to 'invert', in particular to destabilise heterosexual hegemony,

which distributes its power through sex, gender and sexual discourse. Butler searches for

a possibility to reverse discourse through a different way of theorising the bodies and

performance of gays in a mode both challenging hegemony and reconstituting subjects. I

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[124] Foucault claims that there are four major types of such 'technologies': technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things; technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meaning, symbols or signification; technologies of power; and technologies of the self as elaborated here.
[125] Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), p. 18.
[126] Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p. 18 (emphasis added).

further argue that 'inversion' in Butler's performativity theory is equivalent to the 'tactic' in de Certeau's discussion of spatial practices, which means specific operations empowering subjects both to relate to themselves and to respond and defend themselves against domination and objectification. If, as I argue, the performative acts are tactical, the 'places' in which the subjects are objectified and dominated can then be produced as new 'spaces'.

Reading Butler's performativity theory in the light of de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices, I have adopted the production of 'space' to help explore the specific mode of constituting 'subjectivity' and 'sexuality'. In particular, when I examine how such performative acts operate spatially, I suggest that there are different modes of operating these acts and masquerades, in particular through the ways in which gay men and gay male clients look, which shift from a mode of resisting heterosexual hegemony to a mode of dominating male prostitutes. In other words, gay men use 'tactics' both to defend themselves against heterosexual hegemony in public spaces and constitute gay 'spaces', but they shift to using 'strategies' to objectify male prostitutes (through their gaze) and produce gay 'places' in which the encounters and looks can be controlled. It is important to note that describing the performative acts of gay male clients as 'strategies' does not mean that Butler's performativity theory is undermined. On the contrary, such a discussion opens up a new way of thinking which questions how flexible Butler's performativity theory can be when it is applied to performers in spaces and places.

Reading de Certeau's spatial practices in the light of Butler's performativity theory, I have included the notion of 'subjectivity' and 'sexuality' to broaden my understanding of the discussion around the production of 'space'. That is to say, 'place' and 'space' can be examined in terms of their performative roles, which become a means of differentiating space produced through an encounter: between the positions and looks of gay male clients and male prostitutes. The 'places' of gay male clients, in particular in the gay commercial sex business, are strategically regulated and arranged in specific ways: controlling positions in the encounter and encouraging the voyeuristic pleasure of looking, as gazing, at male prostitutes in the distance. Examining the places of gay male clients in their performative roles suggests the ways in which the binary oppositions of 'looking/being looked at', 'active/passive' and 'subject/object' get reinforced. In contrast, the 'spaces' of male prostitutes are produced whenever male prostitutes choose to act tactically. These spaces are produced as a defence against the strategies and objectification of gay male clients. Such spaces suggest ways in which male prostitutes can actively redefine their positions in order to return the look, to interrupt the voyeuristic pleasure of gay male clients. To interrupt the gaze of gay male clients is to break down the fixed binary opposition. In particular, it enables male prostitutes to reposition themselves not as objects but as subjects at the moment of encounter. The way in which the spaces are produced through the constitution of subjectivities suggests that male prostitutes are subjects who occupy 'spaces', not objects who are produced by gay male clients in their places. Examining the spaces of male prostitutes in their performative roles suggests ways in which we can explore how the binary oppositions of 'looking/being looked at', 'active/passive' and, most importantly, 'subject/object' get

destabilised. Reading place and space in their performative roles questions how flexible de Certeau's spatial practices can be when they are applied to the specific subjects like gay male clients and male prostitutes whose subjectivities and sexualities are constituted through power relations and identity politics.

The connection between Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's spatial theories is useful for constructing an argument for marking the ways in which power in the places of gay male clients is destabilised; for reclaiming male prostitutes' subjectivities and their spaces; and for theoretically framing my empirical investigation into various meeting locations in contemporary Bangkok, Thailand. I will discuss in detail the relations between gay male car drivers and male streetwalkers in streets in chapter three; between gay male customers and bar owners and male sex workers in go-go bars in chapter four; and between gay male readers and magazine editors and male models in spatial representations in gay newsletters in chapter five. Initially, I suggest that the ways in which gay male car drivers gaze at other men in streets; in which the bar owners arrange the interior space of go-go bars; and in which the magazine editors represent the bodies and images of the models, are 'strategies'. These strategies can be referred to as spatial practices by which gay male car drivers, bar owners and magazine editors aim to maximise both voyeuristic pleasure and business profit. These spatial practices produce 'places', in which the bodies and images of male streetwalkers, sex workers and models are subject to objectification. In contrast, I suggest that the ways in which male streetwalkers, sex workers and models respond to such strategies can be understood as 'tactics'.

In summary, this chapter has suggested that male prostitutes are objectified by the norms of sex, gender and sexuality, which are dominated by hetero-normative sexual practices. They are produced as objects of desire by the gaze of gay male clients in male-centred sexual practices. To reposition male prostitutes as subjects, we need to think through the two binary oppositions of 'heterosexual men/gay men' and of 'gay male client/male prostitutes'. The theoretical discussion around the constitution of gay subjectivities is key. It provides us with a way of understanding how the binary of 'heterosexual men/gay men' is challenged, in particular through masquerades in male-centred sexual practices, which are ways of resisting hetero-normative sexual practices. Taking male-centred sexual practices as a point of departure then leads us to reconsider the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes. There is a similarity in their sexual practices, but that is not a reason to identify male prostitutes as synonymous with gay men because such an approach will reinforce categorisation based on discourses on sex, gender and sexuality, that is to categorise as 'gay' and 'not gay' by sexual behaviour alone. Thus, this chapter has offered a different view focusing on the self-categorisation of male prostitutes. The sexual identities – self-identifications and self-presentations – of male prostitutes are understood in terms of performative acts as a specific mode of constituting subjectivities. Male prostitutes 'are' what they 'do', in particular at the moment of encounter with gay male clients. Male prostitutes, in this thesis, are understood as performers not in the context of the conventional stage, but rather in terms of the theoretical discussion around gender and sexual performance; in other words, male prostitutes are subjects by virtue of 'performing' homosexuality.

The production of 'space' has been taken into account to help explain the sexual practices of male prostitutes in relation to gay male clients. It is important to note that the notion of 'space' seems to be overlooked in Butler's theoretical discussion of performativity. I argued that performativity is spatial, in particular when we think about the performative acts of gay men in terms of 'passing-through' or inverted performance; this breaks down the distinction between 'constructed' and 'unconstructed' identities; between 'inside' and 'outside' discourse; and between 'heterosexual' and 'gay'. But the notion of 'space' is even more important for understanding the performative acts of male prostitutes. In particular, when we discuss their performing homosexuality, space suggests that the distinction between 'gay' and 'not gay' is complicated.

Space allows us to understand gay male clients and male prostitutes from different positions. Space here can be understood in terms of a 'spatial metaphor', as Rendell claims: a 'powerful political device for examining the relationship between identity and place. *Where* I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know'.[127] In this respect, space provides us with a way of rethinking the different positions in 'subject' and 'object' opposition which gay male clients and male prostitutes adopt in their encounters. The notion of 'space' leads us to reconsider power operations at the moment of encounter, in particular the different 'positions' and 'looks' of gay male clients and male prostitutes. In particular, the position of male prostitutes can be destabilised, displaced and re-evaluated, that is they are both 'objectified subjects' and 'active subjects'.

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[127] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 16 (original emphasis).

By examining these encounters through different positions and looks, space can be produced differently. On the one hand, space can be regulated in certain ways to influence and control male prostitutes' performative acts; on the other hand, space is produced through performative acts and ways of reconstituting subjects. Thus, the production of space can be used to differentiate ways of operating: between 'place' and 'space'. 'Place' suggests a way of dominating – stabilising the binary oppositions of 'looking/being looked at', 'active/passive' and 'subject/object' positions. 'Space' suggests a way of resisting – to destabilise the binary and to relocate from an object to a subject position.

The discussion in the following chapters will further develop three particular key concepts: 'sexualities', 'subjectivities' and 'spaces' in a specific context. First, I investigate 'sexualities' in terms of power relations, suggesting sexuality is defined through encounters and objectification, in particular between gay male clients and male prostitutes. I draw attention to the way in which power, the objectification of gay male clients, is distributed in each place: how certain strategies arrange space, decorate the interior and use material. The operations of gay men need to be carefully examined because these might be either strategies or tactics: and this means that the location of power is shifted from resisting heterosexual norms to dominating male prostitutes. For that reason, the power of gay male clients needs to be examined in specific locations.

Second, I examine 'subjectivities', in particular those of male prostitutes, and focus on their sexual practices: such as certain ways of standing, walking, positioning and looking in response to gay male clients at the moment of encounter. Observing such practices, and conducting interviews or casual conversations with male prostitutes, leads me to understand them and the various ways in which they respond to gay male clients. Importantly, situating such a understanding theoretically also leads me to interpret such practices as ways of challenging the binary opposition of 'subject-object' relations and to reposition male prostitutes not as 'objects' but as 'subjects'.

Third and finally, I explore 'space', in particular that of male prostitutes. It is worth remembering that the production of space is fluid and dynamic because it is produced differently through positions in the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes at the moment of their encounter. When space is produced as 'place', it is marked with a certain meaning and value, which tends to reinforce the binary opposition – situating gay male clients in subject positions and preventing the voyeuristic pleasure from being interrupted. But when a 'place' is produced as a 'space', this suggests a way of breaking the binary opposition – relocating male prostitutes in subject positions where they can actively respond and look at gay male clients.

How can we explore the various locations in urban environments in which such notions of 'space' and 'place' are manifested? I draw attention to specific locations in urban environments in which the encounters of male prostitutes and gay male clients take place. These locations should not be considered only in terms of gay spaces or resistance to the

norms of heterosexuality, as Michel P. Brown's 'closet' spaces do.[128] Instead, these locations need to be discussed in relation to 'gay places', in particular in the gay commercial sex business, and in the ways that the bodies and images of male prostitutes in magazines are used strategically to encourage sexual desire. Because the relationships between gay male clients and male prostitutes are diverse and vary, depending on the specific conditions in each location, it is important to explore such places and such relations in more detail. For that reason, I focus on the social, sexual and spatial relations between gay male clients and male prostitutes in contemporary Bangkok, Thailand. The following questions arise: under what conditions are local gay subjectivities constructed? What is the discourse of sexuality in contemporary Thailand? What might result when we apply Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices to Thai gay male clients and male prostitutes? Do Thai male prostitutes produce gay subjectivities differently through local contexts? Where are these 'gay places' in contemporary Bangkok where we can explore the encounters of gay male clients and male prostitutes?

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[128] Brown, *Closet Space*, p. 7.

Chapter Two

Male Homosexuality in Thailand: *Phet*, *Kathoey* and Gayness

This chapter explores the performative acts and spatial practices of male prostitutes in relation to the construction of gay identities in contemporary Thailand. It uses the theoretical framework taken from the connection between Judith Butler's performativity theory and Michel de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices, as discussed in the previous chapter, as an interpretative lens to investigate: first, how Thai gay identities have been constructed as 'unconstructed' and how these identities get materialised through bodies; second, how male prostitutes produce gay identities differently from Thai gay men– operating within a social hierarchy rather than a sex-gender hierarchy; and third, how male prostitutes perform homosexuality – operating through their self-identifications and self-presentations in terms of the performative acts and tactics at the moment of encounter with gay male clients. It is useful to note that the term 'identity' will be used in the sense of 'product'; the term 'subjectivity' will be used in the sense of 'process'; the term 'gay identity' is a subset of sexual identity, which consists of self-identification and self-presentation; and the term 'gay subjectivity' refers to the constitution of the subject, in particular through performative acts.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first is a discussion of Thai gay identities in relation to the system of *phet* and the *kathoey*; the second is the investigation of Those identities in terms of gendered sexual identities produced as '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*';

and the third is an exploration of Thai gay identities in relation to the performative acts and spatial practices of male prostitutes.

The first section examines gay identities produced through the historical transformation of discourses on male homosexuality and the *kathoey* in the Thai sex-gender-sexuality system, known as the *phet*. Peter Jackson argues that the construction of Thai gay identities is opposed not solely to heterosexuality, as in the West, but rather to transvestism and transgenderism, represented by the figure of the *kathoey*.[1] In order to understand the way in which Thai gay identities have been constructed, it is necessary to explore both the historical transformation of *phet* and the discourse on the *kathoey* which have been produced through this transformation. In other words, the *kathoey* in the historical transformation of the *phet* system is key in this section. I examine how the *kathoey* has been defined and redefined in the *phet* through the way in which the power distributed through the *phet* has changed.

I will discuss this transformation of power in four stages. The first stage, before 1851, is when the Buddhist patriarchy dominated the system of *phet*. The traditional *kathoey* will be discussed in two ways: the first is based on a sexed body, which can be defined as 'hermaphrodite' or a person who has the characteristics or organs of both female and male; the second is based on social and sexual behaviour, which can be defined as

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[1] Peter A. Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires: A Bio-History of Thailand's Same-Sex and Transgender Cultures', in *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, published online August 2003 <http://www.sshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue9/jackson.html>, accessed 3rd November 2003, pp. 1–39 at p. 32.

'transgendered', or a man, based on cultural aspects, who behaves like a woman and/or has

sex with a man. It is important to note that the traditional *kathoey* will be discussed in the

sense of an ambiguous figure due to limited sources and insufficient information between

'behaving like a woman' and 'having male-male sexual behaviour'.

The second stage, 1851–1932, can be understood as a period of modernisation and

westernisation.[2] The power was distributed through the authorities of the Kings of Siam

and aimed to propagate a Western mode of understanding sex-gender-sexuality through the

phet. I draw on Jackson, Scot Barme and Leslie Ann Jeffery, whose work focuses not only

on how *phet*, in particular sex roles and the gender appearances of the Siamese became a

political intervention used by Western authorities, namely the French and the British to

control Siam national sovereignty, and on how *phet* was modernised and westernised and

used in a mode of self-protection in order to resist the power from colonisers and to secure

national sovereignty from these Western authorities.[3] It is important to note that the way in

which the *phet* was modernised and westernised can be understood as one of Siam's self-

defence, which can be measured, as Thongchai Winichakul suggests, by 'Siamese rulers'

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[2] The second stage is marked by the power exercised by the Kings of Siam in the system of an absolute monarchy, that is the reigns of King Rama IV, Mongkut (1851–1868), Rama V, Chulalongkorn (1868–1910), Rama VI, Vajiravudh (1910–1925) and a part of the reign of King Rama VII, Pokklao (1925–1935). Pokklao was also the first King of Thailand in the system of a constitutional monarchy, published online <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Chakri%20Dynasty>, accessed 6th July 2005.

[3] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', pp. 9–13; Scot Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex and Popular Culture in Thailand* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 158 and Leslie Ann Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders: Gender, National Identity and Prostitution Policy in Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), p. 3.

diplomatic genius, their skill and farsightedness in handing the situation, and their

incomparable statesmanship in domestic affairs'.[4]

Although the *kathoey* in this period began to be produced through the Western discourse

on cross-dressing, it was not produced as transgressive as in the next period – because the

Western understanding of sex-gender-sexuality in the *phet* was propagated in limited

groups of people, in particular among 'elites', specifically, as Jeffery describes, 'those with

links to the more traditional centres of power in the monarchy and upper echelons of

government' and the members of the royal family, but not among commoners.[5]

The third stage, 1932–1962, is marked by the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932,

or the period of nationalism.[6] The power was distributed through the nationalist policy of

the Prime Ministers of Thailand. Unlike the previous stage, the *phet* was marked with the

meaning and value of 'proper' sex-gender roles and sex-gender appearances, based on the

binary opposition of male-masculinity/female-femininity. The self-identification and self-

presentation in the *phet* system became rules and orders in public discourses among the

'middle class', as Jiraporn Witayasakpan describes it, 'the class of government officers

who were educated and often urbanised', and among the 'lower class' or 'peasantry', in

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[4] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: a History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1994), p. 95.

[5] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. xxvi.

[6] Siam was the official name of Thailand until 1938. The third stage is marked by the power exercised by the authorities of Thai Prime Ministers, but I draw particularly attention to the regimes of Field Marshal P. Phibun (1938–1941, 1948–1957) and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1958–1962).

Jeffery's terms, 'the class of those who rely on the land for survival'.[7] In other words, the

phet system in this period can be discussed in relation

to the rulers' nationalist policy of 'how to be a good Thai citizen'.[8] The male-feminine

figure of the *kathoey* was produced as a transgressive or 'improper' male-masculine figure

through the heterosexual-patriarchy.

The fourth and the last stage, the 1960s onwards, is characterised by the rise of 'new'

middle-class men, those who have had a Western-oriented education and identify

themselves with a Western mode of understanding sex-gender-sexuality, and the influence

of Thai psychologists, namely Sut Saengwichian and Arun Parksuwan, pioneers in

psychology who graduated from the United States in 1967. Power has been distributed

through public discourses, which marginalised the figure and sexual behaviour of the

kathoey. Saengwichian and Parksuwan described the *kathoey* as an 'improper' self-

presentation of Thai male masculinity, and as 'sexual misbehaviour', and they categorised

the *kathoey* as 'homosexual' through the discourse on sexuality.[9] But this condemnatory

attitude has recently begun to change. The Department of Mental Health and the Ministry

of Public Health has stated that 'a homosexual person is neither considered a person with

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[7] Jiraporn Witayasakpan, 'Phibun's Nationalist Policy' in Charnvit Kasetsiri, Thamrongsak
Petchlert-anan and Vigal Phongpanitanon (eds), *Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and Modern Thai Politics*
(Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2001),
p. 298 (my translation) and Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. xxvii.

[8] *Pramuan khamprasai lae sunthoraphot khong Phana Than Chomphon Po. Phibunsongkhram* (A
collection of Field Marshal P. Phibun's speeches and addresses), n. 2 (Bangkok: Krom Khotsanakan, 1943),
p. 3 and in Jiraporn Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts: Theatre in
Thailand During the Phibun Period', Ph.D. Dissertation (New York: Cornell University, 1992), p. 124.

[9] Sut Saengwichian, 'A Study of the Body and Hormones of Transvestites', *Jot-mai Het Thang
Phaet Khorng Phaetthayasamakhom Haeng Prathet Thai* (Preliminary Report to The Medical Association of
Thailand) (1961), p. 436 (my translation).

mental problems nor a person with any disease'.[10] In other words, the fourth stage is important because it demonstrates how the *kathoey* was produced in place of homosexuality. As Jackson argues, the *kathoey* inevitably had a negative influence, delaying the rise of male-masculine-identified homosexuals, known as *gays* in Thailand.[11] A number of Thai people still have misconceptions about homosexuality, or perhaps lack the vocabulary and knowledge to explain sexual variation when differentiating between 'gays' and '*kathoeys*'.

In the light of Butler's performativity theory, the *kathoey* in the 1960s was produced through the system of *phet* as 'unconstructed' and situated 'outside' the norms of both sex-gender roles and heterosexuality. The *kathoey* is marked by the meaning and value of the *phet* and yet visible in the male-feminine figure. It is important to discuss how gay identities, which are unseen or invisible in the male-masculine figure, can differentiate themselves from the *kathoey* and the male-masculine heterosexual figure.

The second part of this chapter investigates the way in which Thai gay identities were gendered and produced in the 1970s as 'gendered sexual identities', '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*', through the system of *phet* based on the binary opposition between male/female and masculinity/femininity. The terms '*king*' and '*queen*', borrowed from English expressions, are useful for differentiating male-masculine gays from male-feminine

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[10] Thanu Chattananondh, 'Issuance of an academic certification' endorsed by the Department of Mental Health, Public Health Ministry of Thailand (2002).
[11] Peter A. Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: an Interpretation of Contemporary Thai Sources* (New York: Global Academic, 1989), p. 36.

kathoeys. [12] However, because the terms '*king*' and '*queen*' have been produced through public discourses in order to categorise gay men solely according to their sex roles and sexual behaviour without considering sexual identity, that is '*king*-masculine-therefore-active' and '*queen*-feminine-therefore-passive', they prevent many gay men identifying with the *kathoey*, in particular those '*gay queens*' who share 'passivity'. How might we consider the relations of '*gay queen*' and 'the *kathoey*'? If, as I argue, Thai gay identities are defined in relation to the binary opposition of '*king*-active' and '*queen*-passive', they become reinforcing categorisations. Thus, to understand Thai gay identities in terms of self-categorisation, it is important to discuss how the binary opposition of '*king*-active' and '*queen*-passive' can be destabilised. In other words, to be *king* can be masculine and not necessarily active; likewise, to be *queen* can be feminine and not necessarily passive.

The cultural understanding of Thai gay identities as reinforcing categorisations, which connect 'masculinity' with 'activity' in heterosexual men, and 'femininity' with 'passivity' in the *kathoey*, needs discussion. So, it is important to draw attention to the figures of the *gay king* and *gay queen* in relation to the *phet* system, and to the power derived from different positions in the gender hierarchy in heterosexual-patriarchy. Initially, I suggest that there is a need to recognise the privileging position of 'masculinity' in the existing gender hierarchy in the *phet*. From this perspective, the *gay king* is more masculine than the *gay queen* – suggesting that the *gay king* is situated in a

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[12] Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity: Bar-Based Male Sex Work in Chiang Mai', in Peter Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys: Male and Female Homosexualities in Contemporary Thailand* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1999), pp. 187–211.

higher position than the *gay queen*; the *gay queen* is more masculine than the *kathoey* –

suggesting that the *gay queen* is situated in a higher position than the *kathoey*. As Terdsak

Romjumpa suggests, the terms *gay king, gay queen* and *kathoey* can be understood in

terms of differentiating social status and class, rather than defining the boundaries of sex

roles, in particular between the *gay queen* and the *kathoey*.[13] In a discussion concerning

how the categorisations of '*gay king*-active' and '*gay queen*-passive' become destabilised,

I draw attention to the increasing influence of Western gay liberation and gay tourism in

contemporary Bangkok in the 1980s. Such an influence has led Thai gay men to re-

evaluate the figures of '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*', in terms of challenging rather than

reinforcing categorisations. The figures of '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' are used in terms of

self-presentation, that is '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine', in association

with the flexibility of self-identification, which can be both active and passive. Thai gay

identities can now be discussed in terms of what Nerida M. Cook and Peter Jackson

describe as:

> the desire for a relationship based on masculine equality rather than the enactment
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> of masculine-feminine hierarchies of dominance and subordination that have
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> historically structured male homosexual relations, just as they have heterosexual
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> relations.[14]

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[13] Terdsak Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2002), p. 90 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).
[14] Nerida M. Cook and Peter A. Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs: Transforming Sex/Gender Orders in Twentieth-Century Thailand', in Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (eds), *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1999), p. 9.

The third part of the chapter explores the sexual practices of male prostitutes in relation to a different construction of gay identity. This section discusses how male prostitutes who might identify themselves as homosexual or might identify themselves as heterosexual are able to present themselves publicly, as '*gay king*' or '*gay queen*', and identify themselves with gay sex, as either 'active' or 'passive'. I draw attention to Jan W. De Lind Van Wijngaarden and Graeme Storer, whose work emphasises how Thai gay identities appear to Thai male prostitutes. They attempt to examine how male prostitutes comprehend gay identities, both through their working experiences and through their reflection on and attitude towards gay identities. Wijngaarden and Storer are interested in the cultural aspects around male prostitutes' sexual practices, which help in understanding those male prostitutes who are familiar with homosexual behaviour, but who choose to identify themselves as 'not homosexual'.[15] I suggest that both Wijngaarden and Storer provide us with a way of understanding how male prostitutes perform homosexuality without disturbing their sexual identities.

To understand the gay subjectivities constituted through Thai male prostitutes' sexual practices, we need to pull out three important points. First, we need to discuss the cultural aspects of a model in male-male sex based on the presumption of a heterosexual patriarchy. Second, it is important to understand that male prostitutes constitute gay subjectivities at the moment of their encounter with gay male clients. Such constitution

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[15] Graeme Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand: Masculinity and Male–Male Sex Behaviours', in Jackson and Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, pp. 141–59.

operates not from the different positions of male prostitutes in the gender hierarchy, but

from different age and social statuses in the existing social, culture and class hierarchy in

Thai society. I suggest that we need to draw attention to the notion of the 'client/worker' as

'higher/lower' positions, most importantly in relation to 'active/passive' in the social

hierarchy. Cook and Jackson comment:

> Hierarchy in Thailand is based on a variety of overlapping vertical axes, wherein,
> for example, royalty are considered superordinate to commoners, religious
> specialists have superiority over laity, urban dwellers are thought more advanced
> than rural folk, seniors take precedence over juniors, and males are normatively
> superior to females.[16]

From this perspective, the Thai social hierarchy, which is traditionally defined by a

Buddhist patriarchy and politically re-defined by a heterosexual patriarchy, implies that the

positions of 'higher' and 'lower' are important, in particular at the moment of encounter

between gay male clients and male prostitutes. As Wijngaarden notes, the male who

occupies a 'higher' position will presumably take the 'dominant' role of anally penetrating

the male in the lower position.[17] In other words, when male prostitutes take an active role

in male-centred sexual practices they can be understood as reinforcing their masculinity,

while when they take a passive role they do so as a result of their 'younger' and 'lower'

position in relation to the 'older' and 'higher' position of clients in the existing social

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[16] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 9.
[17] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', pp. 193–4.

hierarchy, and not from a feminine identity. It is not that every male prostitute takes a passive role; but if they do take a passive role it does not mean that they must change their masculine gender identity.

Third, the different ways of using the terms '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' in prostitution-related encounters (gay male clients and male prostitutes) and in non-prostitution-related encounters (gay men and gay men) also need discussion. As mentioned previously, the categorisation of Thai gay men based on '*gay king*-active' and '*gay queen*-passive' has declined since the 1980s. Storer describes the attitude among gay-identified Thai man: '[nowadays] to be gay means exclusive sexual relations with other men and being able "to do everything"'.[18] The terms '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' are used differently between male-male sex in non-prostitution-related encounters and the one in prostitution-related encounters. I suggest that in non-prostitution-related encounters, such terms now refer to self-presentation, that is '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine' but do not necessarily reinforce categorisation in terms of '*gay king*-active' or '*gay queen*-passive'. In prostitution-related encounters, such terms refer to both self-categorisation and, at the same time, encouraging categorisation. Here, I suggest that male prostitutes actively present themselves using the labels '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine' to encourage gay male clients to make a connection between 'masculine-active' and 'feminine-passive'. Those male prostitutes who clearly demonstrate this connection may meet more clients and make more money. It is important to note that some male-

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[18] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 148.

masculine identified prostitutes might take a passive role – if he is unable to maintain an erection or if he views the passive role as something being lived for the moment.[19] Thus, while male prostitutes encourage gay male clients to make a connection between their self-presentations and expected sexual roles, their being 'active' or 'passive' is in fact subject to private negotiation.

Taking Wijngaarden's and Storer's discussions of male prostitutes' sexual practices and the three points which I have discussed, I use Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's spatial practices to reconsider male prostitutes' sexual practices as the tactics of subjects – suggesting that the play of self-presentations and self-identifications of male prostitutes can be understood in terms of performative acts and tactics. I suggest that male prostitutes maintain their self-presentations as masculine males in order to 'pass' through the boundaries of sex-gender norms and, at the same time, 'reveal' their sexual interest in male-centred sexual practices to gay male clients at the moment of encounter. Such an action provides male prostitutes with a way of constituting spaces.

The System of *Phet*

Within Thai academic discourses, a single expression, *ekkalak thang phet*, is used to translate both 'gender identity' and 'sexual identity'. To date, the discourse of

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[19] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', pp. 146 and 205.

phet has remained so powerful that all western discourses of gender and sexuality

have been appropriated and reinscribed within its frame.[20]

Phet has been overtly employed for both the biological and cultural identification of Thais,

focusing particularly on public discourses such as image, appearance, roles and status in

Thai society.[21] If we consider it in relation to the Western terms of sex, gender and

sexuality, *phet* can subsume all these terms in a single system. As Jackson argues, '*phet* is

an exceptionally rich and productive notion in Thai, defying precise definition or

translation as "sex", "gender" or "sexuality"'.[22] For instance, *phet phu* and *phet mia* mean

male and female, *phet chai* and *phet ying* mean masculine and feminine and *rak-tang-phet*

and *rak-ruam-phet* mean heterosexuality and homosexuality in the West.[23] It is important

to emphasise that the system of *phet* was constructed based on a binary opposition of sex-

gender roles between 'male-masculine' and 'female-feminine', aiming to correlate a sexed

body with a particular gender role. That is to say, the norms of sex-gender roles were used

as a tool to determine and govern people at both an individual and a social level. Following

discussion, I investigate the historical transformation of the *phet* in four stages: first, before

1851 – when the *phet* was dominated by the Buddhist patriarchy; second, 1851–1932 –

when the *phet* was modernised and westernised and used as one of Siam's self-defensive

strategies in the period of colonisation; third, 1932–1962 – when the *phet* was regulated

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[20]Peter A. Jackson and Gerard Sullivan, 'A Panoply of Roles: Sexual and Gender Diversity in Contemporary Thailand', in Jackson and Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, p. 6.
[21] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 10.
[22] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 4.
[23] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 4.

and controlled in the period of Thai nationalism; and fourth, from the 1960s onwards –

when the *phet* was redefined through the norms of sex-gender roles and heterosexuality.

First Stage: before 1851

This section examines the traditional system of *phet* prior to the period of colonisation and

the influence of Western authorities on Siamese sex-gender roles. To understand *phet*

before it was modernised and westernised as the fixed sex-gender roles of male-masculine

and female-feminine, it is perhaps useful to draw attention to Thai culture's Buddhist basis.

As mentioned previously, a consideration of the *phet* is helpful in allowing us to examine

how it became dominated by the norms of gender roles in the 1900s, and how gay

identities were constructed as gendered sexual identities through the system of *phet* later

on in the 1960s. It is not my intention to discuss in detail on how the traditional system of

phet was constructed 'before' 1851, but rather to focus on some conditions of *phet*, in

particular in relation to Buddhist patriarchy, polygamy, prostitution and the Siamese sex-

gender roles and sex-gender appearances which caused Westerners to consider the Siamese

to be 'androgynous'.[24] I suggest that these conditions of *phet* will lead us to understand the

transformation of the *kathoey* from someone identified by a sexed body (male/female) to

someone identified by a sex-gender appearance (male-masculine/female-feminine).

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[24] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 10.

Sukanya Hantrakul argues that Thai society was, and still is, a Buddhist patriarchy –

defined as a specific condition in which, according to Buddhist discourses, 'women in

Thailand are viewed as second-class citizens'.[25] As Hantrakul comments:

> Being born a woman in this life means that the woman has an inadequate store of
>
> merit in her previous lives. This situation can, it is believed, be remedied by
>
> engaging in merit-making activities. Women are, however, denied the most
>
> efficient way of altering their balance of merit and demerit to improve their moral
>
> and religious position because they are denied admission to the Buddhist Order. A
>
> mother may, however, redeem her demerit should her son don the saffron robe to
>
> enter monkhood.[26]

For Hantrakul, what constrains Siamese women is the construction of female gender roles,

constituted through the Buddhist Order. Like Hantrakul, Nicola Tannenbaum argues that

women are excluded from high status in religious practices, which are preserved for men.[27]

She argues that through religion the privileged position in relations between the sexes is

given to men.[28] From this perspective, women are seen as 'more worldly' than men.

Tannenbaum refers to the Buddhist discourse on female sexualities, which expects women

to have heightened sexuality and to be more attached to worldly pleasures than men. In this

case, it is important to control women and their sexualities in order not to lure monks away

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[25] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 115.
[26] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 115.
[27] Nicola Tannenbaum, 'Buddhism, Prostitution and Sex: Limits on the Academic Discourse on Gender in Thailand', in Jackson and Cook, *Genders and Sexualities*, pp. 243–60 at p. 246.
[28] Tannenbaum, 'Buddhism, Prostitution and Sex', p. 247.

from their vows.[29] Through religious practices, women are expected to limit themselves,

restraining their sexual expression 'in order to maintain a respectable femininity'.[30] But for

Siamese men, there is a contradictory image. As Tannenbaum argues, 'Men are seen as

having "natural" sexual needs which are proper and acceptable'.[31] That is, while Siamese

women are expected to control their sexual behaviour, Siamese men are allowed to have

more freedom in order to establish their masculine credentials.[32] As Hantrakul comments,

'Thai society still very much flatters men for their promiscuity and polygamy'.[33] For

Hantrakul, 1910, 'when the last polygamous king died', can be marked as a significant

transition in *phet*.

To further discuss patriarchy in relation to promiscuity and polygamy, it is useful to draw

attention to women's sexual behaviour and the way in which the Law of the Three Seals,

Kotmaai traa saam duang, traditional laws of Siam compiled in 1805 by the order of King

Rama I of the reigning Chakri Dynasty, constructed Siamese femininity.[34] Although the

code of conduct was repealed in 1908, it is argued that it continues to affect the position of

women today.[35] In the Law of the Three Seals, Rachel Harrison explores the

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[29] Tannenbaum, 'Buddhism, Prostitution and Sex', p. 247.

[30] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 17.

[31] Tannenbaum, 'Buddhism, Prostitution and Sex', p. 248.

[32] Cook and Jackson, 'Desiring Constructs', p. 17.

[33] Some scholars suggest that the Law of the Three Seals was compiled in the Ayutthaya Dynasty, and 'Thai Database of Three Seals Law' suggests that 'the Ayutthayan royal archives were almost completely destroyed when the old capital was sacked by the invading Burmese army in 1767', quoted in 'Thai Database of Three Seals Law and Plam Leaf Text', published online <http://thaidtp.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/01three_seals/01outline_e.html>, accessed 7th July 2005.

[34] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 116.

[35] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 116 and Rachel Harrison, 'The Disruption of Female Desire and the Thai Literary Tradition of Eroticism, Religion and Aesthetics', in *Tenggara: Journal of Southeast Asian Literature*, v. 41 (2000), pp. 88–125 at p. 89.

construction of Siamese femininity, and discusses in particular the cultural prescription of

'good' and 'bad' behaviour for women. According to the Law of the Three Seals, 'A good

woman should not let more than one man gain access to her body'.[36] As Harrison argues:

Such a law confirmed the cultural division of Thai women into the two distinct

categories which still persist: the morally 'good', who perform their roles as dutiful

daughters and faithful wives and whose concern with sexuality focuses on their

aspirations of motherhood and their fulfilment of their husband's desires; and the

morally 'bad', whose sexual contacts outside the institution of marriage are

automatically equated with prostitution.[37]

The only way then for Siamese women to maintain 'good' behaviour was through

marriage. Yet, at the same time, as Hantrakul argues, such 'good' behaviour for women

inscribed in the Law of the Three Seals was actually 'endorsed polygamy', allowing men

multiple wives.[38] Hantrakul describes the three categories of wives: first, the principle wife

whose parents consented to her marriage; second, the minor wife who was proposed to

marry a married man; and, third, the slave wife.[39] After the abolition of slavery in 1905, the

number of prostitution increased dramatically as a result of 'a large number of former

freshly-freed slave wives [who] became prostitutes'.[40] It is important to emphasise that the

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[36] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', pp. 116–7.
[37] Harrison, 'The Disruption of Female Desire and the Thai Literary Tradition of Eroticism, Religion and Aesthetics', p. 90.
[38] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', pp. 116–7.
[39] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', pp. 116–7.
[40] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 117.

Law of the Three Seals not only restrained women from sexual adventure before and out of

marriage, but also privileged men, in particular in their freedom of sexual behaviour, which

was highly criticised by the French and the British who came to Siam in the reign of King

Rama V, 1868–1910. I discuss how the Siam sex-gender-sexual system was affected by the

intervention of Western authorities in the next section.

According to Terdsak Romjumpa, a number of references about the *kathoey* appear in the

history of Siam, for example in the Law of the Three Seals, Buddhist Canons or folklore.[41]

But the meaning and value of the traditional *kathoey* seems to be different from the modern

kathoey, constructed through the discourses on cross-dressing and homosexuality later in

the twentieth century. In a traditional sense, the *kathoey* was understood as the 'third'

gender, which could be distinguished from the male sex and female gender – the *kathoey*

was considered as both 'not-male' because of his/her feminine appearance and 'not-

female' because of his/her male body, or quite often as 'asexual'.[42] Based on historical

interpretation, Romjumpa suggests that there are two types of traditional *kathoey*, one of

which can be regarded as 'physically disordered' – hermaphrodite and the other as

'socially disordered' – cross-gendered behaviour and/or same-sex sexual behaviour.[43]

However, to define the social and sexual behaviour of the traditional *kathoey* is not as easy

as it seems: first because of a lack of concrete evidence to support the construction of the

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[41] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', pp. 10–25.
[42] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', p. 11.
[43] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', p. 13.

traditional *kathoey*; and second because of a lack of information on the traditional *kathoey*

to distinguish those who cross dressed and/or those who demonstrated same-sex sexual

behaviour. Perhaps the vague figure of the traditional *kathoey* allowed male-masculine

homosexuals, as produced through the discourse on sexuality, to remain undercover.

Romjumpa's discussion of the traditional *kathoey* is useful for constructing an argument

focusing on the historical transformation from the *kathoey* in a traditional sense to the

kathoey in a modern sense. But it is important to argue that, when he examines the figure

of the traditional *kathoey*, Romjumpa's mode of understanding sex-gender-sexuality is not

clear because he seems to base his speculation on a Western model instead of considering

other possibilities.[44] Following discussion, the vague figure of the traditional *kathoey* will

be defined and redefined through the Western discourse on sex-gender roles, sex-gender

appearances in the 1900s and sexual behaviour in the 1960s.

Second Stage: 1851–1932

The start of the second stage is described by Jackson who refers to the connection of

Buddhist patriarchy and polygamy in the comments of Western visitors who came to Siam

in the reign of King Rama IV, Mongkut, 1851–1868. From the Western visitors'

perspective, Jackson points out, there were three critiques: first, the 'nakedness' of the

Siamese body; second, the sexual 'excesses' of polygamy; and, third, the 'similarity of

appearance' of Siamese men and women – suggesting a lack of differentiation between

male and female fashions and hair styles.[45] Like Hantrakul and Harrison, Jackson also

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[44] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', p. 203.
[45] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 9.

argues that looked at from a Western perspective, Siamese gender and sexual practices were regarded as a form of polygamy based on Buddhist patriarchy, which privileged Siamese men and their sexual behaviour. Such an image positioned Siam 'outside the concerns of the self-civilising state'.[46]

At this point, I draw attention to Siamese self-presentation, which Jackson refers to in the critique of Westerner visitors, who regard it as 'similarity of appearance' (between men and women). Sex-gender roles were subsequently imposed on Siam society to clarify such ambiguity. That is, sex-gender roles were used to fix the binary opposition between male-masculine and female-feminine and, most importantly, to constrain sexual behaviour. To further examine the ambiguity of self-presentations, Jackson draws on the work of Suwadee T. Patana, emphasising how Western visitors viewed Siamese women. It is worth quoting at length:

> Westerners felt uneasy with the traditional clothing of Thai women. Normally, women wore *pha sabai* and *pha chongkaben*. Both are rectangular pieces of cloth. The former was worn across the chest and one side over the shoulder. The latter was for the lower part of the body and was wrapped around the waist, passed between the legs and tucked in at the back (looking somewhat like loose trousers).

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[46] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 13.

The way in which Thai women dressed was very similar to the dress of the Thai

males – a concept abhorrent to Europeans of the time.[47]

However, I would argue that Siamese gender differences were clearly marked for local

observers. Because Western visitors viewed Siamese self-presentations from a Western

understanding of sex-gender-sexuality, as Jackson notes, 'the entire population of Siam

was seen as androgynous', and led to their presuming that Siam was 'lack[ing] in the

"civilised" distinctions that separated men from women'.[48] As a result, many authors, such

as Jackson, Barme and Jeffrey, believe that sex-gender-sexual aspects in the *phet* system of

Siam were integrated as a result of the intervention in Siam by Western authorities.

It is worth remembering that the power of Western authorities, namely the French and the

British, was rapidly increased, in particular around Siamese sovereignty.[49] To understand

the political conflicts over national sovereignty, Winichakul's discussion of the different

concepts of 'multiple sovereignty' and 'European concept of sovereignty' is useful here.

Before discussing these concepts, it is important to note that my intention is not to discuss

in detail political conflicts and diplomatic relations between Siam, France and Britain

regarding their possession of the land and the national sovereignty of colonies, but rather to

focus on how the *phet*, in particular sex-gender roles and sex-gender appearances, was

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[47] Suwadee T. Patana, 'The Politics of Women's Dress in Thai Society, 1945-1970', Paper presented to *5th International Conference on Thai Studies*, SOAS, London, 1993, no page numbers in original.
   [48] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 10.
   [49] For example, The French established a sole authority over Cambodia in 1867; The British began establishing fully control over the Malay states in the 1870s; The British established control over Burma in late 1888, quoted in Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 94 and 107.

used as one of several political interventions by these Western authorities to claim control

of Siamese sovereignty. Later, I discuss how Siamese rulers also used the *phet* as one of

their self-defence against Western colonisers in order to secure national sovereignty.

Winichakul suggests that the conflicts between Siam, France and Britain, which, as I

suggest, led the Kings of Siam, in particular Mongkut (1851–1868) and Chulalongkorn

(1868–1910) to modernise Siam, can be discussed in terms of the different concepts of

'sovereignty'. Winichakul points out that the frontiers of several kingdoms around Siam

overlapped due to the obligations of smaller kingdoms; in other words, there was no clear

boundary of national sovereignty between each kingdom, but rather they were ambiguous.

Yet, the concept of the sovereignty of the colonisers, as Winichakul argues, 'must,

formally, be exclusive, not hierarchical or multiple, and it must be unambiguous'.[50] The

conflicts over land and sovereignty occurred between the 'old' established relations of the

kingdom of Siam and those 'small kingdoms', and the 'new' relations between Western

authorities and their 'colonies'. Winichakul argues, 'the root of the troubles [occurred]

when the notion of a modern boundary with absolute and exclusive territorial sovereignty

was applied, since the margins of the major states in the region were ambiguous'.[51]

Jeffrey suggests that, from the Western viewpoint, Siamese sex-gender and sexual

practices, in particular polygamy, were used as evidence of the 'barbarity' of the Siamese.[52]

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[50] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 88.
[51] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 97.
[52] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders,* p. 3.

Siamese men, according to Western understanding, were less disciplined and 'lacking in

proper masculine behaviour and sexual control'.[53] Jeffrey refers to what Westerners

thought in this way: 'only the self-controlled behaviour of Western men could produce

governance'.[54]

Mongkut attempted to change the negative image of Siam in order to construct positive

counter-images of Siamese 'civilisation' and overtly adopted those of Western civilisation,

in particular the norms of the sex-gender system 'civilising' Siamese sex-gender. Jackson

argues that Siamese civilisation can be understood as the way in which Siam 'responded to

Western challenges via multiple processes of mimetic representation and strategic counter-

representation'.[55]

The reign of King Rama V, Chulalongkorn, 1868–1910, was a period of colonisation when

pressure from powerful colonisers, in particular the French and the British, increased. Siam

came to be a target for Western colonisers for its national sovereignty and the independent

status of Siam. As a result of Western political interventions in this period, Siam gradually

lost its boundaries.[56] The political influence of outsiders encouraged Chulalongkorn to

secure the Siamese boundaries and national sovereignty.

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[53] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 8.
[54] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 8.
[55] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 9.
[56] According to Winichakul, there are eight losses, but only six of them, in the reign of
Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), are presented here: first, most of Cambodia was ceded to France in 1867;
second, Sipsong Chuthai was occupied by France in 1888; third, Laos on the left bank of the Mekhong was
ceded to France in 1893; fourth, the Laos regions on the right bank of the Mekhong, opposite Luang
Phrabang and Champasak, were ceded to France in 1904; fifth, the western part of Cambodia (Siamreap,
Sisophon, and Battambang) were ceded to France in 1907; and sixth, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu
were ceded to Britain in 1909, quoted in Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 151.

One of Siam's self-defence is the reformation of domestic affairs included, I suggest, the modernisation and westernisation of sex-gender roles, sex-gender appearances and sexual practices in the Siamese system of *phet*. In this sense, sex, gender and sexuality were discussed in Western terms. According to Chulalongkorn's vision, the Siamese needed to change their sexual practices by adopting a particular sense of rationality, and what was claimed to be the so-called 'civilised' sex-gender-sexuality system, in order to get rid of the 'barbaric' image of the Siamese. Chulalongkorn suggested new ways for the Siamese people, in particular elites and the members of the royal family, to act, behave, dress and present themselves in public according to Western modes. Not only was it necessary to reduce the gap between Siam and Western civilisations, but also to retain Siamese sovereignty.

In this sense, Chulalongkorn aimed to westernise sex-gender-sexuality system, focusing particularly on male sexual behaviour in terms of prohibiting polygamy. It is important to note that the westernisation of the *phet* system proposed by Chulalongkorn interrupted the so-called Siamese tradition and drew heavily on his understanding of the rigid sex-gender roles among Western people. At this point, *phet* became increasingly systematised and strengthened through the adoption of 'new' sex-gender roles and 'new' sexual practices. The system of *phet* can be regarded then as a manifestation of political strategies to modernise and westernise Siam. As Jackson argues, the system of *phet* began by emphasising behaviour, dress codes and manners in order to accommodate gender identity, but it went beyond this to govern the Siamese in a wider sense. The term '*phet*' is

important because it refers particularly to a westernised-Siam, but it was not yet

established in the sense of normality because first, the 'new' sex-gender-sexuality system

was directly applied only to limited groups of the Siamese, as mentioned previously, elites

and the members of the royal family, not to commoners; second, the 'new' system was

propagated to Siamese commoners in the 1940s as a 'suggestion' rather than an 'order' or

'control'. I return to discuss this power transformation later.

The reign of the following King, Rama VI, Vajiravudh, 1910–1925, continued to

consolidate modernisation and westernisation. Compared to the previous reign of

Chulalongkorn, Siamese public life changed substantially because the system of *phet* was

more integrated into the everyday life of commoners. To understand such a change, I draw

attention to the discourse on female prostitution, which leads us to understand how

polygamy was completely outlawed in 1938.

After the abolition of slavery in 1905, former slaves wives who had no access to education

and few opportunities to work in Siamese patriarchal society, were forced to work as

prostitutes in the street.[57] This phenomenon was a negative consequence of polygamy.

Lenore Manderson argues that female street prostitutes at that time included both those

whom polygamy exploited and slave wives sold by their kin.[58] In contrast, Jackson refers to

Siamese public life which was male dominated, and a major concern of modernising and

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[57] Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', p. 117.
[58] Lenore Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in Patpong and Explorations of the Edges of Imagination', *Journal of Sex Research*, v. 29, n. 4 (November 1992), p. 456.

westernising policies was an emphasis on controlling women's social and sexual

behaviour. As Jackson argues, '[while] men may move between wives, minor wives and

prostitutes, and between different living situations with relative ease, women's lives are in

general much more circumscribed, especially in regard to sexual matters'.[59] Like Jackson,

Thamora V. Fishel refers to Vajiravudh's model of modernisation and westernisation and

argues that in such a model 'female behaviour and woman's appearance needed to be

controlled and scrutinised, and had nothing to do with male behaviour'.[60]

Vajiravudh used the system of *phet* to condemn polygamy and to induce 'monogamy,

patterns of socialising, female behaviour and appearance'.[61] That is to say, women's sexual

behaviour was subject to objectification and control. Fishel and Manderson suggest that at

this time, sex, in terms of sex acts, sexual behaviour and the sexual relations of

commoners, was considered to be 'not-yet-civilised'.[62] The Siamese sex-

gender-sexual aspects, which pre-dated the compulsory system of *phet*, were now

systematised and integrated into Siamese society through everyday life. Through the

modernisation and westernisation of Siam, the system of *phet* emphasised a preferred

sexual behaviour, one which measured sex against gender and sexuality.[63] In 1928, the

Siamese government passed a national Anti-Trafficking Act and condemned polygamy.

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[59] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 106.
[60] Thamora V. Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign: Gender, Sexuality and Siamese Nationalism', in Jackson and Cook, *Genders and Sexualities*, p. 158.
[61] Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign', p. 158.
[62] Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign', p. 158.
[63] Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign', p. 158.

During the reign of Vajiravudh (1910–1925), the system of *phet* changed public

perceptions of sex, gender and sexual behaviour, gradually assimilating itself into every

notion of everyday life. The system aimed to produce 'new' figures of Siamese men and

women, based on sexed bodies, gender appearances and preferred sexual behaviour. But

for the traditional *kathoey*, the discourses on sexed bodies, gender appearances and

preferred sexual behaviour began to mark and produce a 'negative' meaning. Such a

meaning was produced through the public discourse of 'proper' male-masculinity, which

gradually marginalised the *kathoey*, as I will discuss in the next stage.

Phet, defined in the second stage, 1851–1932, can be regarded as one of several political

strategies used to gain 'international approval' and bring Siamese lifestyles and customs

more into line with 'Western notions of civilised behaviour'.[64] *Phet*, defined in the third

stage, 1932–1962, was used not in the sense of the rulers' suggestion, but rather in the

sense of an institutionalised system of control and power, which was formulated by

adopting social values from the West and imposing them upon individuals and the ways

they identified themselves in accordance with sexed, gendered and sexualised roles.

Third Stage: 1932–1962

The third stage is marked by the overthrow of the monarchy 24 June 1932, and changing

the country's name from Siam to Thailand in 1938. The third stage refers to the

transformation of power, distributed from the Kings of Siam in the system of absolute

monarchy to the rulers of Thailand in the system of democracy and a constitutional

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[64] Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign', p. 156.

monarchy. In this stage, sex-gender roles and sex-gender appearances in the *phet* were

dramatically increased and gradually established at a normative level.

Field Marshal P. Phibun came to power, 1938–1941 and 1948–1957, in the period of the

Second World War. Thailand was invaded by Japanese troops in 8th December 1941.[65] To

secure the independence of the Thai nation, it was Phibun's military strategies to co-

operate with Japan rather than risk conflict.[66] The most important feature of Phibun's

nationalist policy was to transfer the location of power from the King of Siam to the Prime

Minister in the Thai nation-state. Witayasakpan suggests that Phibun aimed to establish

hegemonic discourses, in particular cultural hegemony. In order to promote a 'new'

cultural pattern after Western models, Phibun's nationalist policy emphasised the

phet, focusing on behaving in a manner appropriate to one's sexed body. The way in which

Thai people identified and presented themselves publicly became fixed in order to build

the Thai nation-state according to Phibun's notion of Thainess. Thus, the *phet* in Phibun's

regime can be discussed around the notion of 'nationalism'.

Witayasakpan comments that Phibun began to integrate the *phet* system into his nationalist

policy in order to 'build the nation'.[67] Phibun announced, 'We have a nation but we need to

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[65] The United States Army Air Force dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945; the United States Army Air Force dropped an atom bomb on Nagasaki on 9th August 1945; and the Japanese surrendered in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September 1945, quoted in 'Chronology of the Second World War', <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWchron.htm>, accessed 7th July 2005.
[66] Khopkua Suwanatad-pien, 'Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun Through Three Decades, 1932–1957', in Kasetsiri, Petchlert-anan and Phongpanitanon (eds), *Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and Modern Thai Politics*, pp. 82–3 (my translation).
[67] Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 150.

improve it so that it is as advanced as Japan or Western countries'.[68] To persuade Thai

people, both 'middle class' – those who were government officers, well-educated and

urbanised, and 'lower class' – those who lived outside the central periphery or those who

relied on the land for survival, to follow his nationalist policy, Phibun used various media,

such as government announcements and the promulgation of laws and state guidelines. For

example:

> Thai people were required to dress properly as prescribed by the government. Men
>
> were told to wear Western-style pants, shirts, jackets, bow-ties, socks and shoes.
>
> Male villagers were allowed to wear Thai-style shirts, with either long or short
>
> western-style pants. Shoes and sandals with straps were required. Women were
>
> recommended to wear wraparound skirts, sandals with straps or shoes. Socks for
>
> women were optional. Both males and females had to wear hats.[69]

According to Witayasakpan, Phibun's intention was to establish new social norms, which

he believed would 'help Thai people achieve a good standard of living and culture'.[70] A

good standard of living for Thais as citizens meant having 'good culture, good ethics, good

health, good dress, good housing and good land to work'.[71] For Witayasakpan, Phibun's

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[68] Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 150.

[69] '*Prakat Krasuang Mahatthai ruang khamnaenam nai kantengkai khong prachakon Thai*' (Announcement of the Ministry of Interior on Advice Regarding the Dress of the Thai People), in Thamrongsak, *Pramuan* (21st February 1942), pp. 47–9, quoted in Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 129.

[70] Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 150.

[71] *Pramuan khamprasai lae sunthoraphot khong Phana Than Chomphon Po. Phibun Songkhram* (A collection of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram's speeches and addresses), n. 2 (Bangkok: Krom Khotsanakan, 1943), p. 3 and in Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 124.

period of government can be considered as an advanced modernisation period and as 'a new theatrical invention of national culture with a hybrid of nationalist content'.[72] Notably, the notion of womanhood, both in terms of virginity and motherhood, featured significantly. As Witayasakpan argues, 'many projects turned out to define the role of women as "good wives" and "good mothers"'.[73] Thai women were encouraged to 'set a party at home (sic)' and to 'do everything they could to present themselves as able homemakers, good cooks, and convivial hosts'.[74] National women's beauty contests, for example, illustrate how feminine beauty featured in Phibun's nationalist policy, as all entrants were required to 'wear only Western-style clothing rather than traditional dress'.[75]

Phibun's nationalist policy attempted to make Thais develop a disciplined body and 'improve' their appearance in Western terms. Certain gendered codes were used as a political means to consolidate national sovereignty or at least to consolidate Phibun's notion of Thainess. Romjumpa argues that Phibun's policy explicitly aimed both to establish a clear boundary between proper and improper images of the 'good Thai citizen', and to demarcate social roles between male and female behaviour. Phibun's nationalist policy could be described as heterosexual patriarchy, the emphasis being on the control of women, both in terms of social and sexual behaviour, and the social appearance and aesthetics of female-femininity.[76]

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[72] Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 110.
[73] Witayasakpan, 'Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts', p. 122.
[74] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 185.
[75] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 235.
[76] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 106.

Within Phibun's nationalist policy homosexual behaviour and 'improper' male masculinity

represented by the figure of male-feminine *kathoey* could be seen as transgressive.[77] But, as

Romjumpa argues, no official record made was condemning the male-feminine *kathoey*.[78]

Yet, I would argue that Phibun's nationalist policy can be seen as 'heterosexual-oriented',

and aimed to establish the cultural hegemony of male-masculine and female-feminine. This

may be the reason why there was no official record concerning the numbers of the male-

feminine *kathoeys*. Thai men might see the *kathoeys* in relation to 'women'. Indeed, the

similarity of their feminine-therefore-passive identity could be seen as 'a pragmatic means

of sexual release in certain situations'.[79] The *kathoeys* might be restrained from identifying

and presenting themselves freely in public because their male-feminine figures are visible

and marked. Most importantly, I argue that Phibun's heterosexual-oriented nationalist

policy made those male-masculine homosexuals keep themselves under cover. As

Romjumpa and Thitikorn Trayaporn suggest, male-masculine homosexuals did not appear

in public until 1965.[80]

The beauty of Thai women was also central to Phibun's nationalist policy. When Phibun

introduced the national beauty contest in 1941, as Barme observes, 'the number of beauty

parlours, hairdressing salons and dressmaking shops was rapidly increasing, and elite and

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[77] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 36.

[78] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 36.

[79] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 38.

[80] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', pp. 55–75 and Thitikorn Trayaporn, 'The Image of Male Homosexuals as Reflected in the Content of Thai Daily Newspaper During 1965-2000', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2000), pp. 97 and 100.

middle-class women were taking on an ever more public role'.[81] Phibun's nationalist policy

established a specific meaning and value for Thai women's social appearance. The policy

also opened up a public arena for modern *kathoeys*, many of whom wanted to have

professions in the beauty industry and who adapted themselves to the beauty of Thai

femininity. At this point, I argue that the more the *kathoey* identify themselves with Thai

femininity, the less ambiguity there is between the *kathoey* and the gay.

It is worth emphasising that the system of *phet* was strengthened in Phibun's regime to

govern sex-gender roles and sex-gender appearances rooted in Buddhist-patriarchal

society. I argue that the power emphasised social and sexual behaviour, not sexual identity.

In other words, the notion of sexual identity (heterosexual/homosexual) in Phibun's period

had not yet been well established or become public discourses. Thai people were

categorised by sex-gender appearances and sex-gender roles based on a heterosexual

model, which was 'male-masculine-active' and 'female-feminine-passive'.

The system of *phet* used sex-gender roles as a means of constituting both a 'proper' sexed

body and a 'proper' gender appearance. The sexed body inscribed in the system of *phet*

aimed to govern image, appearance, manners and sexual behaviour, in short to establish the

performance of gender roles. The meaning and value of a 'proper' sexed body and a

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[81] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 234; see also Suphatra K'opkitsuksakun, *Sen thang nang ngam* (History of Beauty Contests in Thailand) (Bangkok: D'ok bia, 1993), pp. 17–19. For The Term 'elite' women, I refer to those women who 'link to the more traditional centres of power in the monarchy and upper echelons of government', see Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. xxvi. For the term 'middle-class' women, I refer to those women who are government officers or wives of government officers, educated and urbanised, see Witayasakpan, 'Phibun's Nationalist Policy', p. 298.

'proper' gender appearance were also codified in public space to govern Thai people's identity and public presentation. I will return to discuss in detail a 'proper' meaning and value of a sexed body and a gender appearance in relation to 'ordered' public spaces in chapter three.

While definitions of women's sexed bodies and female gender roles were significant in Phibun's nationalist policy, men's sexed bodies, male gender roles and male sexual behaviour came to the fore only during the reign of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, 1958–1962. A number of 'elite' women who accessed the educational opportunities in Western countries began to exert more influence on nationalist policy. They questioned the Thai values relating to male sexual behaviour that were privileged by the leaders' national policy.[82] To be more specific, these elite women particularly critiqued the 'sexual double standard' in Sarit's nationalist policy. Jeffery suggests that Sarit's nationalist policy continuously controlled women's sexual behaviour in favour of male (hetero) sexual freedom, and Sarit himself attempted to revive the traditional practice of polygamy.[83] Sarit's nationalist policy created a 'superficial image of monogamy'.[84]

These elite Thai women successfully called for the sexual behaviour of Thai men to be reconsidered. Jeffery suggests that perhaps the successful negotiations of these women within the dominant male society created, in effect, 'the separation between heterosexual

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[82] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 70.
[83] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 48.
[84] Jackson, 'Performative Genders, Perverse Desires', p. 14.

and homosexual'.[85] It is important to emphasise that these women were not arguing for the

scrutiny of homosexual behaviour, but rather strengthening what should or should not be

'constructed' or 'seen' as 'proper' male sexual behaviour. It is argued that the way in

which these women criticised male sexual behaviour began to constitute the boundaries of

heterosexual norms.

Sarit came to power during the period of the Vietnam War, and here we need to consider

the influence of the United States, mainly through American military aid, upon Sarit's

nationalist policy.[86] Sarit cooperated with the United States, to avoid political sanctions and

to encourage the national economy. In Sarit's regime, Thailand was used as an American

military base. By the end of the 1970s, approximately 60,000 American servicemen,

known as GIs, were stationed in Thailand.[87] It is argued that, for a large number of GIs,

Bangkok, in particular the *Patpong* area, became a 'paradise' of the sex industry. Cleo

Odzer suggests that *Patpong* became '(in)famous' during the Vietnam War. GIs went to

Patpong for 'R&R' or 'rest and relaxation', more popularly known as 'I&I', 'intoxication

and intercourse'.[88] The influx of foreigners at this time was important both as a significant

factor in the increase in sex industry venues for heterosexual men in Thailand, and as a

major influence in establishing gay commercial venues in Bangkok, in particular the area

called '*Surawong's* Boys' Town' later on during the 1970s. I discuss the establishment of

the gay commercial sex business in *Surawong* in more detail in chapter four.

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[85] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 70.
[86] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 24.
[87] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 243.
[88] Cleo Odzer, 'Patpong Prostitution: Its Relationship to, and Effect on, The Position of Women in Thai Society', (unpublished paper: 1990), p. 52.

According to Jeffery, Sarit also attempted to revitalise 'traditional Thai values' because he believed that what Thai people really wanted was strong leadership and progress rather than democracy in the Western sense.[89] But there were major contradictions between Sarit's nationalist policy and his personal life. Sarit's nationalist policy condemned prostitutes as 'icons of cultural decline'.[90] He then launched the Prostitution Prohibition Act of 1960, which defined prostitution as:

> The indiscriminate acceptance of sexual intercourse or acceptance of any other act or the performance of any act for the satisfaction of the sexual desire of another for hire whether the acceptor of the act and the performer of the act are of the same or different sexes.[91]

The definition of prostitution in this act emphasised the promiscuity both in women's sexual behaviour (in male-female sex) and in men's sexual behaviour (in male-male sex), which could imply: first, the cultural aspect of male-male sex based on a heterosexual binary opposition – one takes an active and the other takes a passive role; second, the only notion of male-male sex was based on the male-feminine kathoey, who was expected to takes a passive role (by the time, male-masculine-identified homosexuals were still

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[89] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 24.
[90] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 50.
[91] 'Act for the Abatement of Prostitution B.E. 2503', *Royal Thai Government Gazette 2*, n. 212, 28th November 1960, pp. 562–3, quoted in Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 26.

undercover and not yet produced through public discourses); and third, the lower social

status of the kathoey, which was equivalent to prostitution.[92]

However, the act was used for only a short period of time. Sarit soon endorsed the

Entertainment Places Act of 1966, which replaced the Prostitution Prohibition Act, as a

direct response to the demands of many foreign military officers, who considered

prostitution to be a necessary sexual outlet.[93] According to Jeffrey, although the

Entertainment Places Act attempted to endorse 'heavier punishments for pimps and

owners' than did the laws codified in the Prostitution Prohibition Act, the Act itself was

untrustworthy because it allowed bar owners both 'to hire women under the rubric of

"entertainers" and to make a profit from those entertainers as long as the sexual encounter

occurred off-site'.[94] To quote Manderson, the Entertainment Places Act in fact caused the

'flourishing of places alternative to old style brothels, such as massage parlours,

nightclubs, bars, coffee shops, tea houses and barber shops'.[95] I return to discuss in detail

the Entertainment Places Act in relation to male sex workers and *Surawong's* Boys' Town

in chapter four.

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[92] This assertion is based on: first, my interpretation in relation to the historical transformation of the Thai sex-gender-sexuality system; second, Jeffery's note on the Prostitution Prohibition Act: 'For the first time, legislation on prostitution did not distinguish according to sex: both male and female prostitution are covered in the act; third, Romjumpa's note on forms of male-centred sexual practices in public discourses in relation to prostitution. See Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 160 and Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 89.

[93] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 17.

[94] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 39.

[95] Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in Patpong', p. 456.

Sarit strengthened his legitimacy through 'the traditional Thai practice of polygamy' and

fashioned himself as a *nakleng*.[96] According to Jeffery, the term *nakleng* is used in relation

to 'the gangs of young men who were used to protect villages from elite/administrative

intrusion in the 1890s'.[97] The nakleng can also be considered bandits who demonstrate

power in a 'roguish' manner, stealing money from the rich, risking their lives and

womanising. The traditional image of the leader as a *chai chatri*, or a real man, was

transformed through Sarit's *nakleng* image as a womaniser. As Barme argues, 'the more

conquests or sexual liaisons an individual can claim, the more masculine Sarit is deemed to

be'.[98] It is worth emphasising that Sarit's self-presentation as a *nakleng* and a polygamous

person was criticised by Thai society in general and by many elite Thai women in

particular, as noted earlier.

Sarit's behaviour undermined his own public policies and regulations concerning sex-

gender and his propaganda for 'Thainess'. The emerging criticism was no longer aimed at

women's social and sexual behaviour, but questioned the 'continuity of a sexual double

standard'.[99] As Jeffrey argues, prostitution, instead of being regarded as a vice, was

believed to be caused by 'a number of interrelated factors, including the economic

irresponsibility of *fathers* towards the family, divorce and family violence'.[100] Men's social

and sexual behaviour was increasingly scrutinised, in particular by Thai 'new' middle-class

men, who grew up or studied in Western countries and had overtly adopted the Western

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[96] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 24.
[97] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 24.
[98] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 256.
[99] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 256.
[100] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 112 (original emphasis).

image of masculinity. At this point, I will use the term 'middle-class' to mean the 'new'

middle class of the 1960s. The new middle class men aimed to challenge old-style

masculinity.[101] The criticism of Sarit's sexual behaviour and the negative image of

masculinity suggested the need to refine the representation of masculinity. It was not only

a question of how to be a proper gentlemen in accordance with the new social standard

established by elite and middle-class men, but rather how to revitalise the social values of

marriage, family and reproduction. From the perspective of middle-class men, Thai

masculinity was in crisis and needed to be redefined.

It is important to discuss the difference of Thai masculinity constructed in the second

(1851–1932) and third (1932–1962) stages. The former is constructed through the

discourse on sex-gender role and sex-gender appearance – the fixed relationship of males

and masculinity; the latter is constructed through the discourse on sexual behaviour –

where a new social standard of heterosexual masculinity is set. Middle class men set the

image of monogamy against the old image of the womaniser, and contrasted the warm

family with sexual promiscuity. The reformation of Thai masculinity in the 1960s can be

regarded as a major influence endorsing heterosexual normality in the *phet* system.[102] By

reinforcing the representation of 'proper' Thai masculinity or the 'true gentleman' in a

particular relation to middle-class women, the image of 'real' men became solidified, while

other images of Thai masculinity, such as the exaggerated female behaviour of *kathoeys*,

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[101] The term 'old style masculinity' refers to the image of *nakleng*. To some extent, it can be seen as the way in which Sarit's power became challenged and destabilised.
[102] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 111.

became 'improper' and an aberration.[103] The cultural understanding of the *kathoey* seemed to become increasingly negative. As discussed previously, the social status of those men who had same-sex sexual behaviour appeared, in the Prostitution Prohibition Act of 1960, to be equivalent to prostitution; in other words, the *kathoey*, who presumably takes a 'passive' role in male-male sex, was believed to be of a 'lower' status in Thai society. I will discuss the cultural understanding of the relationship between 'passive' and 'lower' status later in this chapter.

Fourth Stage: the 1960s onwards

'New' middle-class men not only criticised the traditional Thai masculine image of the *nakleng,* 'the old man of Thai politics – the greedy, oversexed, military dictator', but established the new and 'proper' image depicted by Jeffery, 'the rational, efficient, and fatherly defender of women and protector of children'.[104] According to Jeffery, the new man rejuvenated respect for the 'warm family with a helpful committed husband'.[105] Jeffery regards these new presentations of Thai masculinity as a 'fashionable ideology', adopted by the middle-class from Western hegemony. To secure this middle-class ideology, it was necessary for Thai men to claim recognition of their 'membership in international society'. According to Jeffery, 'the new Thai men asserted a "technocratic", "controlled" and "rational" masculinity'.[106] This 'proper' ideology was sustained in contrast to *kathoeys*, 'improper' Thai men who were 'bad' and 'should be "punished" for

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[103] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 182 and Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 111.
[104] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 107.
[105] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 108.
[106] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 109.

their depraved lifestyles'.[107] I suggest that the meaning and value of 'proper' male

masculinity given by middle-class ideology are constituted against 'improper' social rather

than sexual behaviour of the *nakleng*; and 'improper' sexual rather than social behaviour of

the *kathoey*. It is important to recognise that this 'proper' male masculinity still cannot

distinguish male-masculine homosexuals from male-masculine heterosexuals.

As well as the influence of the middle-classes, there is also the influence of Thai

psychologists, in particular Sut Saengwichian and Arun Parksuwan, pioneers in

psychology who graduated from the United States in 1967. Romjumpa suggests that

Saengwichian and Parksuwan attempted to define *kathoeys* in terms of physical

dysfunction, in particular of their sexual organs, which, based on medical observation they

depicted as an ambiguous cross between male and female genitals.[108] From this

perspective, they tended to describe *kathoeys* as what would be termed 'hermaphrodites'

in English. But the figure produced by Thai middle-class men of the modern '*kathoey*' as

an 'improper' male-masculine representation had nothing to do with physical dysfunction.

As Romjumpa points out, after arguing for dysfunction in terms of *kathoeys*' physicality,

Saengwichian and Parksuwan changed their argument and stated that 'the *kathoey* is a

group of mental disorders, which can be categorised as psychosexual orientation,

misbehaviour and sexual deviance like homosexual practices, fetishism, voyeurism,

exhibitionism, sadism and masochism'.[109]

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[107] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 111.
[108] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 43.
[109] Saengwichian, 'A Study of the Body and Hormones of the Transvestites', pp. 44–5.

From physical dysfunction to mental disorder, I argue that *phet* was once again animated

through Thai psychologists' references to the Western discourse on sexuality.

Saengwichian and Parksuwan described modern *kathoeys* as 'homosexuals', who 'dress

and present themselves as women, with exaggerated female behaviour and, importantly,

have same-sex desire'.[110] From this perspective, the 'new' figure of the *kathoey* was

produced both by Thai middle-class men and by Thai psychologists who attempted to

classify *kathoeys* as sexual deviants, using the term 'homosexuals'.[111] Taken together, the

new Thai middle-class and the American-influenced psychologists connected male-

masculine behaviour with male sexuality; so that they produced the negative image of the

kathoey in terms of homosexuality.

It is worth emphasising that the term 'homosexual' in relation to the *kathoey* was

introduced not as opposed to heterosexual, but as opposed to the 'proper' images of

heterosexuality held by Thai middle-class men in the 1960s. Yet, from the heterosexual-

oriented perspective of Thai psychologists, the meaning of the 'proper' image of Thai

middle-class men was animated and gradually became constituted as the norm of

heterosexual patriarchy. Through middle-class culture, 'homosexuality' was defined by the

boundaries separating what is constructed as 'proper' and 'improper', rather than 'seen'

and 'unseen' – suggesting that the 'new' figure of the male-feminine *kathoey* can be

clearly seen and marked. But what is 'unseen' is the figure of the male-masculine

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[110] Saengwichian, 'A Study of the Body and Hormones of the Transvestites', p. 443, quoted in Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 46.
[111] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 48.

homosexual. We need to examine this 'unseen' through the discourse on the 'new' figure of the *kathoey*. In other words, according to the meaning of 'proper' Thai middle class men, the 'gay' is a different kind of transgression, which needs to be differentiated from the transgression of male-feminine *kathoeys*. Jackson argues that 'gayness exists outside the traditional categories of the kathoey'.[112] From this perspective, it is only in relation to the limited place occupied by the 'new' figure of the *kathoey* that gay identities could be 'constructed'. At this point, I will use the term '*kathoey*' to mean the 'new figure of the *kathoey*', which was produced by the 'proper' meaning and value of male masculinity held by Thai middle-class men, and through the discourse on homosexuality introduced by Thai psychologists in 1967.

Kathoeys – Gays

According to Jackson, the *kathoey* was an interesting subject for scholars because 'there is no new Thai term to translate the English terms "hermaphrodite", "transvestite" or "transsexual"'.[113] Saengwichian attempted to limit the denotation of *kathoeys* to 'hermaphrodite' and used the relatively rare term *lakkaphet*, literally translated as 'to take by stealth a sex that has not been given to one', to identify the 'new' figure of the *kathoey*.[114] But because the term *lakkaphet* was derogatory and condemned the *kathoey* instead of describing the *kathoey's* sexual identity, it is not popularly used in public discourses. Thai culture lacks a vocabulary to identify complex sexualities, which may be

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[112] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 231.
[113] Jackson, 'Thai Research on Male Homosexuality and Transgenderism', p. 61
[114] Saengwichian, 'A Study of the Body and Hormones of the Transvestite', pp. 435–41 (my translation).

why the notion of sexual identity in Thai culture is limited and reduced according to the

existing categories controlled by sex-gender roles. Jackson explicitly argues that, 'so many

Thai homosexual men are *kathoeys* or play the *kathoey* role, because the only popular

model of exclusive homosexuality existing in Thailand until the last decade has been that

of the *kathoey*'.[115] In other words, the *kathoey* has become a stereotypical figure for all

homosexuals in Thai society, including gays (see Figure 2.1).

Romjumpa and Trayaporn suggest that the *kathoey* has been constructed through the *phet*

system redefined based on heterosexual-patriarchy. From this perspective, Romjumpa and

Trayaporn have explored the image of *kathoeys* in terms of a transgressive image of sexual

misbehaviour produced by Thai newspapers. Romjumpa in particular explores how the

sexual identities of gay men are constructed through the discourse of the *kathoey*.

[115] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 231.

Fig. 2.1 Images of *kathoeys* depicted by the Thai film, *Phae Sud Thaii* ('The Last Song') (1985), performed by Thai movie stars Somying Daorai and Chalit Fiuangarom.

The 1960s were perhaps the first time that the notion of Thai gay identity was questioned. According to Romjumpa and Trayaporn, the murder in 1965 of Darrel Berrigan, the editor of Bangkok World magazine and a well-known Western gay man in higher-class Thai society, seems to mark the beginning of a separation between *kathoeys* and gays.[116] '*Thairat*', the Thai daily newspaper, reported that 'Berrigan was shot and found naked in the car [...] police allegedly attributed this to Berrigan's deviant sexual behaviour and believed that Berrigan was murdered by one of his sexual partners, either a *kathoey* or a

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[116] *Thairat*, 4 October 1965, p. 16, quoted in Trayaporn, 'The Image of Male Homosexuals', pp. 97 and 100 and Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', pp. 55–75.

local young man'.[117] According to Romjumpa, *Thairat* popularised this murder case by

setting up its own investigation alongside the police investigation. *Thairat* published the

results of its investigation throughout October and discussed Berrigan's sexual behaviour.

Such revelations led to investigations of his local friends with similar patterns of sexual

behaviour.[118] What became intriguing was *Thairat*'s suggestion that there were various

types of homosexual behaviour, which could be depicted by various images, appearances

and clothing styles and which differed entirely from *kathoeys*. As a result of the Berrigan

murder case, *Thairat* invented a new term to identify groups of men who had same-sex

sexual behaviour: '*kathoey-chai*', which literally translates as 'male transvestites'.[119]

Romjumpa says of *Thairat*'s investigation that the appearance of this new group tended to

be more explicitly masculine than the feminine *kathoeys*.[120]

Many local newspapers, especially *Thairat*, were curious about the 'new' identity of the

so-called *kathoey-chai*. This discussion focused on the difference in social appearance

between *kathoeys* and this 'new' group, later known as 'gays'. *Thairat* differentiated the

feminine *kathoey* and the *kathoey-chai* by bluntly classifying *kathoey-chai* as homosexuals

according to their homosexual behaviour. On 11 October 1965, *Thairat* used *kathoey-chai*

or the groups of masculine males who practise homosexual behaviour to mean 'gays' for

the first time. *Thairat* described gays as 'young men who are in good shape and handsome;

they are healthy, physically and mentally; and importantly they

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[117] *Thairat*, 4 October 1965, p. 1 and Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 64.
[118] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 64.
[119] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 64.
[120] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 64.

consciously portray themselves with masculine mannerisms, not like *kathoeys*, and never

dress in women's clothes'.[121] *Thairat* speculated about gays in terms of a new form of

gender role, which seemed to exist beyond the expected male-feminine *kathoey* image and

heterosexuality. To understand gays, *Thairat* began to raise the question of both their

gender and sexual identity. In terms of gender identity, *Thairat* recognised that gays

present themselves with men's bodies and are more masculine than the *kathoey*. In terms

of sexual identity, it is useful to recall here the work of Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W.

Elifson on 'the component of the self and presented sexual identity', as discussed in the

previous chapter.[122] For Boles and Elifson, sexual identity comprises two main

components: self-identified and self-presented sexual identity. But, according to popular

discussions in *Thairat*, the difference between *kathoeys* and gays still emphasised only

self-presentation: images, appearance and clothing styles, while self-identification was not

discussed.

The fact that gays did not want to identify themselves with women's bodies or femininity

as *kathoeys* reflects their negative attitude towards the 'feminine-therefore-passive'

identity, which had culturally been defined and redefined since the 1900s, as discussed

previously. According to Stephen Murray, the stigma attached to the *kathoey* existed not

because it was an 'improper' image of Thai masculinity, but because the image of being

like a woman was associated with female sexual roles. To quote Murray, 'Thai society

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[121] *Thairat*, 11 October 1965, p. 16 (my translation).
[122] Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV: The Male Prostitute', *Journal of Sex Research*, v. 31, n. 1 (1994), p. 39.

perpetuates men's fear of appearing effeminate and the equation between being sexually penetrated and being like women in other ways […] the stigma remains on effeminacy rather than on homosexuality'.[123] From this perspective, the prejudice against *kathoeys* cannot be pinned down solely on the appearance of *kathoeys* as feminine, but is linked to the perception of women's 'feminine-therefore-passive' identity.

However, gays, unlike *kathoeys,* appear to have more possibilities for negotiating with the legitimising power by disguising themselves within the recognisable masculine gender roles. It is important to note that although the construction of gay-identities based on gendered sexual identities, constructed as '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*', allowed gays to differentiate themselves from the *kathoey*, gay identities were still constrained and objectively identified by sexual behaviour. In other words, Thai gay identities were produced through public discourses in the early 1970s based on the heterosexual-oriented binary opposition '*gay king*-masculine-therefore-active' and '*gay queen*-feminine-therefore-passive'. They were constructed in accordance with the ways people understood and categorised them, not according to their own self-categorisations. Later in the 1980s, the increasing influences of Western gay culture and gay tourism in contemporary Bangkok offered a different perspective on Thai gay identities, that is instead of being reinforced by a given categorisation, Thai gay men could actively use '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' as their self-categorisations. I discuss the different ways of using '*gay king*' and

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[123] Stephen O. Murray, 'Increasing Gay Self-Representations of Male–Male Sexual Experiences in Thailand', in Jackson and Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, p. 83.

'*gay queen*' between reinforcing categorisations and challenging categorisations in the next section.

Thai Gay Identities: *Gay King* and *Gay Queen*

In the public media in Thailand, gayness has been discussed in terms of the differences between gay men and the *kathoey*. In an interview with *Thairat* in 1972, Yodsawadee, a transvestite and the owner of an exclusive gay bar, used the term '*gay queen*' for the first time. S/he used the term to signify a gay man who normally takes a passive role in male-centred sexual practices, but prefers not to wear a woman's dress, unlike the *kathoey*.[124] Yodsawadee also claimed that *gay queen* signified a higher social status than the kathoey.[125] This was Yodsawadee's personal opinion, and she does not explain why she believed that the *gay queen* occupies a higher position than the *kathoey*. I would explain such a hierarchy from the fact that the social, cultural and class structures in Thai society have been traditionally defined based on Buddhist patriarchy and later mixed with heterosexual patriarchy. From such a perspective, the image of the *gay queen* can be identified more closely with the image of male masculinity than the *kathoey*. Yodsawadee also referred to his regular clients, who were Western gay men, as '*gay king*s', who presented themselves in a male masculine image and who preferred to have a local *gay queen* as a 'wife'.[126]

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[124] *Thairat*, 29 October 1972, p. 16 (my translation).
[125] *Thairat*, 29 October 1972, p. 16, quoted in Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', pp. 89–90 and 93.
[126] *Thairat*, 29 October 1972, p. 16, quoted in Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 90.

Romjumpa comments that in the 1970s Thai people depicted the difference between gays and *kathoeys* through image, clothing style and manners, in short through gender appearances in relation to sexed bodies, suggesting that there was a lack of discussion on sexual identity. Yet, in the late 1970s, the sexual identities of *gay king* and *gay queen* were marked by sex roles in relation to gender appearances.[127] In other words, to define gay men in such a way, the sexual identity of the *gay king* suggests the similarity of 'activity' in male-masculine heterosexual men, whereas the sexual identity of the *gay queen* remains intact with the *kathoey* because of their similarity in 'passivity' and 'femininity'. Romjumpa refers to a local view on *gay king* and *gay queen*, '[the *gay king* suggested] an image of a homosexual who was no different from any other man, whereas [the *gay queen* suggested] an image of a homosexual man who looked rather like a woman or perhaps a *kathoey*'.[128]

Thai gay identities seemed to be fashioned and applied only on a surface level. They manifested themselves as implied norms about 'proper' *kings* and *queens*, which conformed to sex-gender norms. While the term *gay king* was widely adopted in constructing a new identity among local gay men, the definition of *gay queen* remained rather ambiguous because it shares a certain similarity with the *kathoey*, in particular the prejudice against the notion of a 'feminine-therefore-passive' identity. As argued by Storer, 'the passive male can be condemned as an inferiorised kind of man, while active

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[127] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 114.
[128] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 161.

gay men can be regarded as relatively unstigmatised'.[129] Like Storer, Wijngaarden views

*gay king*s as 'gays who want to keep up a masculine appearance', whereas *gay queen*

'usually denotes being receptive in anal intercourse, feminine-identified or looking

somewhat feminine'.[130]

While non-Thai scholars, Jackson, Murray, Storer and Wijngaarden, explore the

differences between *gay king* and *gay queen* through a historical transition of Thai sex-

gender-sexuality system, Thai scholars investigate such differences through modes of self-

presentations. Such a different approach of Thai scholars is useful because it can reflect

cultural aspects and local perspectives on how Thai gay men present themselves.[131] For

example, Anan Narvilai claims that the *gay king* means masculine behaviour and active,

whereas the *gay queen* means feminine behaviour and passive.[132] Prakop Siwatchana

suggests that the *gay king* has social and sexual roles as masculine-active, whereas the *gay*

queen has social and sexual roles as feminine-passive.[133] Trayaporn believes that there are

four different self-presentations: first, 'looking obviously like a real man'; second, 'looking

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[129] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 150.

[130] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', pp. 191–2.

[131] See the definition of *gay king* and *gay queen* used by non-Thai scholars in Jackson, 'Tolerant But Unaccepting', p. 230; Murray, 'Increasing Gay Self-Representations', p. 83. Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 148 and Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 196. For the definition of *gay king* and *gay queen* used by Thai scholars, see also Kittikun Arnkasai, 'Child Prostitutes: a Case Study of Boy Streetwalkers', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1997), p. 37; Anothai Panmongkong, 'Processing and Developing Homosexuality', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1982), p. 21; and Prawit Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes: the Cycle of Labor Relationship and the Fact of Employment', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1998), p. 79.

[132] Anan Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution: Case Study of Male Prostitutes and the Gay Client Group in the Bangkok Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1994), p. 1 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).

[133] Prakop Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in Patpong Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 1994), p. 22 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).

like a man who acts somewhat like a woman'; third, 'looking like a man who obviously

acts and dresses like a woman'; and fourth, 'obviously looking like a real woman'.[134]

Romjumpa refers to the definition of *gay king* and *gay queen* used in a popular column in

Mittina Junior, a local gay magazine which discussed the appropriate dress for *gay king*

and *gay queen* like this: 'the *gay queen* should wear some makeup to soften the look, but

*gay king*s need do nothing: just wear something nice, clean and trendy'.[135]

The preoccupation with the 'feminine-therefore-passive' identity of the *gay queen* – in

comparison with the 'masculine-therefore-active' identity of the *gay king* – prevents many

gay men who prefer to take a passive role from adopting this gay identity, as discussed

previously: first, the 'feminine-therefore-passive' identity of the *gay queen* is related to

that of the *kathoey*; second, such an identity has been culturally constructed as a 'lower'

social status in the existing social, cultural and class structures in Thai society as

equivalent to 'prostitution'.[136] In this sense, if, as I argue, sexual behaviour is used to define

Thai gay identity, *king*-active/*queen*-passive, the terms '*king*' and '*queen*' are used to

reinforce categorisations based on the presumption of sex-gender norms in a heterosexual-

patriarchal system. In particular, the categorisation of the *gay queen* turns out to be yet

another label of performing gender, prejudiced in association with 'passive-therefore-

feminine' identity. How might we consider the destabilisation of Thai gay identities?

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[134] Trayaporn, 'The Image of Male Homosexuals', p. 51.
[135] Nittinun Prottinyn, 'The Third Way', *Mittina Junior*, v. 5 (September 1984), p. 55, quoted in Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 165.
[136] See note 95 and Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 160 and Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 89.

According to Jackson, during the 1980s and 1990s, together with an increasing growth in business and industrial development promoted by the government's economic strategy, the increasing influence of Western gay liberation and gay tourism was a key feature in helping gay men to destabilise gendered sexual identities. That is, this was the period when the binary opposition of *gay king*-masculine-therefore-active/*gay queen*-feminine-therefore-passive began to dissolve. Unlike the earlier period, the third stage (1932–1962) and the fourth stage (the 1960s onwards), when Western knowledge was used to reinforce gender identities, Western gay culture provided the knowledge to challenge gendered sexual identities, and helped gay men to rejuvenate their gay identities in terms of self-identification. It also made Thai gay men consider the figures of *king* and *queen* as a play of self-presentations. In other words, the *gay king* could present himself as masculine and not necessarily take an active role. Likewise, the *gay queen* could present himself as feminine and not necessarily take a passive role. At this point, I suggest that from the 1980s to the 1990s, Thai gay identities became *gay king*-masculine/*gay queen*-feminine, while activity and passivity were subject to sexual preferences and personal choices. How might we relate the play of self-identifications and self-presentations of Thai gay men to male prostitutes' sexual practices?

Through the impact of Western ideas, films, books, magazines and tourism, the rise of gay urban lifestyles broadened perspectives on gay culture and diversified the establishment of the gay commercial sex business in Bangkok.[137] Due to the large number of foreign

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[137] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 240.

companies coming to Thailand, and in particular to Bangkok, the need for labour dramatically increased, and lured many people from rural areas to the capital city. Many young men went into the entertainment business, including in the 1980s the rising gay commercial sex business in *Surawong*. In the next section, I discuss the way in which Thai male prostitutes, who practise male-male sex without regarding themselves as gays, produce 'gay' subjectivities differently (from Thai gay men) and could be seen as one of the major influences destabilising gendered sexual identities among local gay men.

Gay Identities and Male Prostitutes

Having discussed the construction of Thai gay identities, I now discuss how male prostitutes who might be homosexual-identified or heterosexual-identified produce gay identities differently (from Thai gay men). To understand how male prostitutes perform homosexuality at the moment of their encounter (with gay male clients), we need to remember that: first, the model of male-male sex in Thai society has been produced through a heterosexual-oriented presumption – one takes a masculine-active role and another takes a feminine-passive role.[138] Second, the 'feminine-therefore-passive' identity has been produced in relation to a cultural aspect of the *kathoey* and the *gay queen*. So, I suggest that male prostitutes who present and identify themselves (to gay male clients) only as masculine-active might see their sexual practices as taking place in a mode reinforcing categorisation, as a 'real' man or 'male-masculine-therefore-active' in a heterosexual model. In this respect, Storer suggests that the cultural prejudice against 'homosexuality' is located in the transgressive feminine image of the *kathoey*, so as long as

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[138] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 196.

male prostitutes can preserve their masculine self-image in relation to their clients and friends, they are able 'to avoid categorisation as homosexual'.[139]

How might male prostitutes – who might be gay or heterosexual – relate to a 'passive' role without considering themselves feminine, *kathoey* or *gay queen*? To investigate this particular question, I explore the way in which male prostitutes constitute 'gay' subjectivities at the moment of encounter. Initially, I suggest that male prostitutes actively displace themselves from the cultural aspect of 'passivity' and 'femininity' in male-centred sexual practices. Male prostitutes re-evaluate their subject position in relation to 'passivity' not taking the meaning and value deriving from gender hierarchy but from the social hierarchy. In other words, I would describe it like this: 'it is all right to take a passive role because of its lower position in the existing social status (client-higher/worker-lower as active/passive), and not because of its feminine identity in the gender hierarchy (masculine-higher/feminine-lower as active/passive)'.

In the 1990s, the notion of 'acting' subjects with regard to male prostitutes' sexual practices had not yet caught the interest of Thai scholars. As mentioned previously, Thai academics preferred to focus on pathological conditions to explain for deviant sexual behaviour. Narvilai, for example, considered male prostitutes' sexual practices to be 'sexually deviant' and felt they were 'a disorderly group of people who could corrupt Thai culture and society'.[140] Siwatchana, Duangphon Khamnunwat and Patlom examined male

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[139] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 148.
[140] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', p. 75.

prostitution in relation to the gay commercial sex business in Bangkok.[141] Although they

regard male prostitution in terms of a chosen working identity rather than as condemned

sexual misbehaviour, they still consider male prostitutes' sexual practices to be a social

problem. They argue that the rise of male prostitution in the city of Bangkok was a

consequence of the failure of the government's economic plan demanding an increase in

industrial development rather than human resources.[142] They explain male prostitutes'

sexual practices through certain expected sex acts, sex roles and sexual behaviour, using an

established notion of homosexuals as sexual deviants produced through a discourse around

heterosexuality and gender roles. In this sense, male prostitutes are prejudiced against, both

as prostitutes and as homosexuals. These scholars do not seem to have considered thinking

about male prostitutes as political subjects, let alone imagining the play of gay identities in

male prostitutes' sexual practices.

To understand the sexual practices of male prostitutes, one must recognise that male

prostitutes perform homosexuality, as examined in the previous chapter. Storer and

Wijngaarden have examined the relationship between male prostitutes and gay male clients

through the ways in which gay identities manifest themselves differently in male

prostitutes' sexual practices. Storer argues that male prostitutes seem to be able to 'enjoy

homosexual experience or take on the role of sex worker if it is viewed as something being

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[141] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in Patpong Area', pp. 1–3 and pp. 141–3; Prakop Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua* (Male Prostitution) (Bangkok: Mahawitthayalai Mahidol, 1996), pp. 69–77 and Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes: the Cycle of Labor Relationship and the Fact of Employment', pp. 1–4.
[142] Siwatchana and Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua*, pp. 79–81 and Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 174.

lived at the moment'.[143] Storer continues, 'Thai male bar workers do not readily talk among themselves about sex with their clients and maintaining "image" is paramount'.[144] It is important for male prostitutes who do not want to be categorised as 'homosexual', a category which could be referred to the *kathoey* according solely to sex acts in male-male sex in public discourses, to preserve their masculine self-presentation.[145]

Wijngaarden places an emphasis on the social status of male prostitutes in relation to the existing social, cultural and class structures in Thai society. He asserts that if male prostitutes want to be seen as 'real men' in their social environment, they can do so by 'limiting their sexual script with clients to "masculine" sex acts, at least in their public accounts of their interactions with clients'.[146] By limiting themselves to the 'active' role in anal or oral intercourse and also maintaining an active sex life with women, male prostitutes do not perceive having sex with male clients as 'unmasculine'.[147] To explain male prostitutes who take a passive role, Wijngaarden explains that 'it is a result of their lower position in the Thai social hierarchy, based on the binary opposition of 'client-higher' and 'worker-lower', rather than due to their 'feminine identity'.[148]

The discussions of Storer and Wijngaarden are useful here. I suggest that the way in which Storer places an emphasis on the self-presentation of male prostitutes leads us to reconsider

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[143] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 146.
[144] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 148.
[145] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 148.
[146] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 190.
[147] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 208.
[148] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 193.

how the figures of *gay king* and *gay queen* have been used by male prostitutes at the moment of encounter. There are two ways of using such figures: first, using the figures of *gay king* and *gay queen* in a mode of self-categorisation or self-presentation – '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine'; second, using these figures in a mode of reinforcing categorisation – to encourage gay male clients to make connection 'masculine-active' and 'feminine-passive'. Such a connection is based on a cultural aspect, which is widely understood among Thais, as discussed earlier regarding the cultural perspective of Thai scholars on the figures of *gay king* and *gay queen*.[149]

While Storer provides us with a way of reconsidering the play of self-identifications and self-presentations of male prostitutes, Wijngaarden provides us with a way of understanding how male prostitutes re-evaluate their sexual practices. Following Wijngaarden's discussion, I suggest that Thai male prostitutes produce gay identities based on their view of their social status in the Thai social hierarchy rather than the gender hierarchy – suggesting that male prostitutes operate their 'passive' role through the binary opposition of 'client-higher-therefore-active' and 'worker-lower-therefore-passive'.

Although the sexual practices of male prostitutes in Wijngaarden's discussion are flexible – able to both 'active' and 'passive', not every male prostitutes can appreciate this flexibility. As Wijngaarden states, some of them 'may have left [the sex business] because of a perceived conflict between sex work and their masculine gender identity'.[150]

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[149] See note 136–139.
[150] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 194.

Wijngaarden also discusses the case of a heterosexual-identified male prostitute who chose

to be the receptive partner in anal intercourse with clients because 'he could not maintain

an erection with male sex partners due to lack of erotic interest, and had consequently

decided that the only clients he could satisfy were those who wanted to play the insertive

role'.[151] To support his argument, Wijngaarden asserts that the stigma of feminine identity

attached to the passive role appears to be of less concern to this male prostitute.[152] Taking

an active role does not undermine his masculine identity, and at the same time this male

prostitute views the passive role as an act or role play derived from the contact between

client and worker as more tolerable.[153]

In short, I suggest that there is a play of self-identifications and self-presentations in male

prostitutes' sexual practices. Those male prostitutes who get this connection clear might

encounter more clients – because clients would know what sexual practices they would get,

which would lead them to private negotiations and more money.

Reading the discussions of Storer and Wijngaarden in the light of Butler's performativity

theory, I suggest that the play of self-identifications and self-presentations can be

understood as the acts of male prostitutes in their subject position. That is, male prostitutes

actively control their bodies in order to identify and present to the others. The play of self-

identifications and self-presentations can be understood as the performative acts of male

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[151] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 205.
[152] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 193.
[153] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 193.

prostitutes. To emphasise, gay subjectivity should not be deduced through expected sexual behaviour. In particular, reading Wijngaarden's discussion in the light of de Certeau's spatial practice, the way in which male prostitutes re-evaluate their sexual practices can be understood as a 'tactic' which operates from social mode and not from a gender mode. I argue that by situating their sexual practices in the binary oppositions of 'male-client-higher-active' and 'male-worker-lower-passive', male prostitutes are able to challenge, or perhaps to highlight, gay identities through their performative acts in terms of the tactical economy, which allows the prostitutes both to communicate with clients and to produce space.

I suggest that male prostitutes situate their understanding of gay identities in a 'lower' position based on the existing social hierarchy in order to maintain relations with gay male clients whose position in the social hierarchy is presupposed to be 'higher'. The ability to manipulate gay identities becomes a tactical economy allowing male prostitutes to signal to clients that they are prepared to engage in gay sex. It is not compulsory for male prostitutes to entirely adopt for themselves a stereotypical image of the gay man. But, the image, gesture or appearance used by male prostitutes must be read by gay male clients as signifying an interest in male-centred sexual practices, while reserving the passive or active acts for private negotiation. It is important that the play of their self-identifications and self-presentations should not be generalised because to do so would constitute tactics. We need to observe such play at the moment when male prostitutes encounter gay male clients and, in 'places' where the meeting takes place.

Towards Sites of Enactment

If, as I argue, the figures of '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay queen*-feminine' used by male

prostitutes to encourage gay male clients to make the connection of 'masculine-active' and

'feminine-passive' are performative acts, it is important to examine the way male

prostitutes use these figures in relation to gay male clients at the moment of encounter, and

to the locations where their encounter takes place. I suggest here that we need to draw

attention to the play of self-identifications and self-presentations of male prostitutes in

each location, in the gay male client's meeting 'places'. Where are these places?

It is worth remembering that these meeting 'places' are operated through the strategies of

gay clients, through their gaze, as discussed in the previous chapter. I suggest that these

meeting places are constructed in order to provide gay male clients with the position to

'look as gaze' at the bodies of male prostitutes. In meeting 'places', male prostitutes are

subject to objectification; the places frame them as objects to be looked at. Yet, I argue that

the play self-identifications and self-presentations can be understood as the way in which

male prostitutes respond to gay male clients' gaze and objectification, in short, strategies.

This play of male prostitutes is a performative act and, indeed, a tactic, which allows male

prostitutes to produce 'spaces' in order to reposition themselves, not as objects – whom

gay male clients gaze at and categorise as 'feminine-therefore-passive', but as subjects –

who actively identify and present themselves, which I want to emphasise here, with a

'lower-therefore-passive' identity.[154] In other words, male prostitutes can be both 'subject'

and 'object' at the moment of their encounter.

To explore these meeting places, I draw on discussions of Thai scholars, namely Narvilai,

Patlom and Siwatchana in the 1990s concerning the relationship between male prostitutes

and gay male clients in urban environments. Narvilai has explored *Sanam Luang*, a

significant public park in the old town of Bangkok, and one of the most popular locations

for male prostitutes to meet clients. According to Narvilai, male prostitutes, or to be more

specific, male streetwalkers, can be classified both by their expected social appearance,

and by specific urban locations. As observed by Narvilai, 'male streetwalkers in this area

present themselves in an outfit similar to the one worn by typical teenagers or the uniform

of university students. What they do is to sit, walk or look around to check whether there is

anyone interested in them or looking at them'.[155] In terms of the locations in which male

streetwalkers' activities were observed, Narvilai noted:

Behind the statue of Mother Earth is the location for the boys from the South of

Thailand. They are generally dark skinned, with good figures and handsome looks.

Boys from *Isan*, in north-eastern Thailand, usually occupy the upper part of the

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[154] It is worth remembering that the 'lower-therefore-passive' identity is a way of re-evaluating the 'passivity' of male prostitutes operating through a social mode, and the 'activity' in male-male sex can be seen as a way of reinforcing the sexual and gender identity of a 'real' man – based on a presumption of a model of male-male sex in Thai heterosexual-patriarchy. See Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 196.

[155] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', p. 26.

park, while the lower part is occupied by boys from the northern and central parts

of Thailand.[156]

Narvilai's observation is useful for arguing that *Sanam Luang* is a 'place' in which male

streetwalkers' performative acts, such as ways of using the uniform of university students,

sitting or walking, can easily be scrutinised. However, I argue that these acts were

observed without the presence of gay male clients. Narvilai uses these acts to 'frame' the

relationship between male streetwalkers and gay male clients, instead of considering them

both as subjects performing acts. Not only does Narvilai stereotype and generalise the

relationship between the two, but he also examines them from a conventional view, based

on a presumption of heterosexual patriarchy (one takes a masculine-active role and the

other takes a feminine-passive role). Because his observation implies that male

streetwalkers were recognised in their 'masculine' self-presentations, so the way in which

gay male clients present and identify themselves could imply 'femininity' and 'passivity'.

In other words, there was no 'feminine' self-presentation of male streetwalkers in

Narvilai's observation. I argue that the self-presentations and self-identifications of male

streetwalkers could be different at the moment of their encounter. Importantly, Narvilai

viewed male streetwalkers as being a serious cause of social problems, disease and

pollution, which had to be controlled.[157]

Meetings between male sex workers and gay male clients are also popularly depicted in

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[156] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', p. 25.
[157] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', pp. 75–6.

gay go-go bars. Although Storer mentions that the bars 'can provide a safe haven for the workers and their clients outside the law and beyond the public gaze', to recognise that the bars themselves can turn this safe haven into a strategic field where clients control male prostitutes' ways of performing.[158] Patlom and Siwatchana, for example, have examined the following: the business of gay go-go bars, the structure of the bar management, various positions in gay go-go bars, the process of recruiting male sex workers, the conditions of working contracts, working hours, and the general planning of the bars. Although some sketches of the interiors are presented in Siwatchana's investigation, they depict only the position of Siwatchana as an observer in the bars, with no further information on what he has observed in relation to the interiors, to other clients or to sex workers.[159] Like Patlom, Siwatchana also refers to the rules and regulations that the workers follow. For example, to list only a few, workers must not give clients a private telephone number or ask for clients' numbers; every worker must wear the white uniform provided throughout working hours and is not allowed to get changed until the bar closes; every worker must present himself in a clean manner and is not allowed to wear slippers to work; every worker must dance on stage following a given order from the bar and is not allowed to talk on stage.[160]

I focus only on the rules and regulations aimed at controlling the self-presentations of male sex workers. What results from the process of recruitment is a strategy for the self-promotion of each go-go bar. The bodies, used in relation to gender appearance, of the

[158] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 151.
[159] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in Patpong Area', pp. 36–40.
[160] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in Patpong Area', pp. 46–7.

male sex workers whom they recruit is the key. To quote Storer: 'each bar in Bangkok

projects an image which reflects a particular market niche'.[161] Storer mentioned that some

bars like The Tulip or Big Boy are the 'places' where clients go to find 'real men' and

where watching the workers lift weights is part of the performance, while the boys in Bar

Carousel act more like 'effeminate men'.[162] From this perspective, I suggest that the self-

presentations of male sex workers in gay go-go bars are produced according to the self-

promotion of the bars, the plan of the bar management, and their working conditions. In

other words, Storer's observation suggests that the self-presentations of male sex workers

are animated and objectified by the rules and business apparatuses of each bar, instead of

being considered as the performative acts of male prostitutes in their subject positions. In

this respect, their bodies and self-presentations can be understood only in terms of the site

over which the rules and all the bars' apparatus exercise control, and not in terms of the

performative acts of male prostitutes challenging those rules and repositioning the

prostitutes in subject positions.

Narupon Duangwises examines the meeting between readers and the male models in Thai

gay magazines published since the early 1980s. Duangwises explores the role of gay

magazines, focusing on the representations of Thai gay identities from 1982–2000. In the

past twenty years, the role of gay magazines has changed significantly, from being

'magazines among a group of closeted friends' to becoming popular gay urban lifestyle

manuals. According to Duangwises, 'the purpose of gay magazines is to emphasise what it

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[161] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 147.
[162] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 147.

means to be "gay"'.[163] Duangwises also notes that gay magazines serve as a medium to meet male prostitutes. For the bar owners, having one of their 'boys' on the front cover means attracting more people to the bar and maximising profit.

I argue that gay magazines become a web of connections, serving as a strategy for consolidating a dominant gay culture, and as a strategy for representing models as objects of desire through certain ways of looking at their bodies. I outline my empirical study based on the specific form of gay magazines deriving from Duangwises's discussion. However, I focus particularly on local gay newsletters. I suggest that the newsletters are produced as 'representations of space'; they operate strategically to describe the location of meeting places. Through the information they give, including maps and directions, they attempt to produce sexual desire and to mark and map gay 'sex' in the city. The medium through which such strategies operate is the bodies of the models. So, I draw attention to the way in which the specific bodies are used in different newsletters. Different bodies suggest that there are different strategies used in local gay newsletters. They aim at different target readers. Through de Certeau's description of 'place', I aim to explore whether the models have any possibility of acting tactically to resist their objectification in the representations of space.

To examine the meetings between male prostitutes and gay clients constituted in the various urban locations outlined above: in the street around public parks, go-go bars and

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[163] Narupon Duangwises, 'Naked Man: Pornography and the Sexual Life of the Thai Gay Male' (unpublished paper, 2002), pp. 7–9 (my translation).

gay newsletters, we need to explore these meeting places in a discursive mode – focusing on the way in which these places have been constructed, both socially and sexually. Before examining each meeting place in more detail, it is worth remembering that the play of male prostitutes' self-identifications and self-presentations (based on Thai gay identities) in each place is key. The performative acts are understood as the ways in which male prostitutes both adopt gay men's self-presentations and define their self-identifications in relation to specific cultural conditions and, indeed, in each location. So, to present themselves in such a way, male prostitutes must act tactically in the meeting places – suggesting that they are consciously prepared to be looked at, either as masculine or feminine and engage in gay sex, either active or passive, without disrupting their gender identities and sexual identities.

To outline my empirical investigations, I focus on the way in which each place acts strategically to produce clients as subjects in a higher position, while producing male prostitutes as objects and encouraging them to take a lower position. I am interested in how the meeting places are able to manipulate the subject-object positions which gay male clients and male prostitutes adopt in their encounters. How might we relate the social status of gay male clients and male prostitutes in each meeting place? I am also interested in how Thai male prostitutes potentially use meeting places differently through ways of looking, positioning and encountering to reposition themselves as subjects.

Chapter Three

Places and Spaces in the Streets:
Strategies of the Drivers and Tactics of the Male Streetwalkers

After about 15 minutes drive, we got to a well-known area around Saranrom park. We did the same as we always do. Actually, it is just like a ritual, driving around that place a few times to check out the boys at the familiar locations. I checked out every boy who was standing around. It was quite difficult to see all of them clearly because it was so dark. After a few circuits, I found one who was outstanding and actually quite perfect for what I was looking for. He was young, clean and handsome. He wore a short-sleeved T-shirt, jeans, sneakers and a silver necklace ... I parked the car and he came to talk to me. Before I decided to open the door and let him in, I was already dreaming of being in my room with this boy. He could possibly give me some happiness and make the night less boring. I could not wait for that moment to come.[1]

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[1] Excerpt from an interview with a gay man who prefers to remain anonymous (my translation).

Fig. 3.1 Male streetwalkers around *Saranrom* park, filmed by Butrat Butprom in the documentary, *Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung*.

In this chapter, I discuss public spaces in the old town of Bangkok, *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park. I examine how they have become sites of meeting places between gay men, and between male prostitutes and gay male clients. For here, I suggest that they were regulated as ordered spaces through the process of modernisation and westernisation in particular in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868–1910) and King Vajiravudh (1910–1925), and through nationalist policy in the regime of Field Marshal P. Phibun (1938–1941 and 1948–1957) and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1958–1962) onwards, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The relationship between male prostitutes and gay clients around *Sanam Luang* has recently been observed and redefined by Butrat Butprom, a television reporter for ITV Publication Company Thailand. In contrast to what had previously been spoken and written about male prostitutes and *Sanam Luang*, as we discussed with reference to Anan

Narvilai's research in the previous chapter, Butprom's documentary called, '*Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung*' or 'Rent Boys', aimed to broaden the public view on male prostitution, which categorises male prostitutes as homosexual because of a similarity in their sexual behaviour.[2] I argue that this documentary challenged preconceptions about male prostitutes in terms of their sexual practices – suggesting that these men do not consider themselves as homosexual. Other features, such as their social relations with their clients and their lived experience also need to be considered.

Through a series of interviews and observation, Butprom based this documentary on the notion of lived experience. To rethink the negative identity of male prostitution, Butprom wants us to understand male prostitution as a personal and professional choice, rather than a forced condition. According to Butprom, *Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung* is a stage on which the voices of male prostitutes can be heard. In the documentary, it appears that many of the young men working regularly in the *Sanam Luang* area, in a particular street around *Saranrom* park, consider themselves to be male freelance streetwalkers rather than male prostitutes. It is important to note that most of Butprom's interviewees consider themselves as 'phu-chai', meaning masculine men. In this case, I would add that these men are capable of performing gay sex without disturbing their sexual identities as explained in the previous chapter. Yet, the term '*phu-chai*' signifies only the self-presentation of male streetwalkers based on male gender, not their sexual identity or self-identification. Later on in this chapter, I argue that there are also homosexual-identifying

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[2] *Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung* (Rent Boys) by Butrat Butprom, ITV Public Company Limited, Bangkok, Thailand, (2001).

men working as male streetwalkers around *Saranrom* park, and I discuss in more detail the self-identifications and self-presentations of male streetwalkers in that area.

Butprom aims to explore every aspect of male prostitution, including the question of how they practise gay sex. This documentary transports us to the meeting place by looking through lenses hidden inside cars as if we were clients viewing male streetwalkers. In this sense, Butprom simulates the condition of meeting male streetwalkers in the area of *Sanam Luang*. I was intrigued by the way that Butprom himself pretends to be a client driving a car and looking for male streetwalkers, allowing us to imagine ourselves in the position of clients driving the car. He attempts to show male streetwalkers' activities and movements when the moment of encounter arrives, as in Figure 3.1 shown above. He seems to suggest that male streetwalkers' practices can be understood both through their image, appearance and clothing style, and their gestures and ways of looking as they respond to the mobility of the clients. Through Butprom's technique of observing, which I discuss later on in terms of *driving-as-cruising*, the spaces produced by the oscillation of sexual interest between gay male clients and male streetwalkers can be anticipated and visualised. From this perspective, I focus on the relationship between these two at the moment of their encounter. The aim is to discuss how such an encounter determines how these two people reveal and construct their identities.

Butprom's technique seems to draw on the urban technique of 'cruising', which allows gay men to meet other gay men, as discussed in chapter one. At this point, I suggest that Butprom's technique can be regarded as a *driving-as-cruising* urban practice, in

168

particular when it is employed by gay clients to meet and look at male streetwalkers around *Saranrom* park. The technique of *driving-as-cruising* in relation to the urban practice of gays will be examined later in this chapter. What Butprom's *Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung* offers me is a specific way of exploring the site of *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park.

The technique of *driving-as-cruising* provides me with a way of positioning myself to observe the encounter between gay male clients and male streetwalkers. First, I position myself as a client who drives and looks at these men in streets. As Butprom's *driving-as-cruising* suggests, I believe that many gay men in Bangkok tend to consider driving around *Saranrom* park a ritual. The pleasure is derived from the act of looking at streetwalkers. Second, I position myself as a male streetwalker to stand on the street in the same way as male streetwalkers do, and to experience that moment myself in order to recognise the driving pattern, the response and signal to clients when they drive by.

I began collecting data, observing and interviewing gay male clients and male streetwalkers during my field work in the *Sanam Luang* area from September to December 2002. Not only did I explore male streetwalkers' working territories, but I also had opportunities to interview some gay men who offered me a ride and willingly showed me the route they regularly used to meet male streetwalkers. I went to the site, sat and stood in the same places. But to interview male streetwalkers was not easy because male streetwalkers are afraid of being caught by the police, in particular those who approach male streetwalkers in plain clothes. As I was conducting my fieldwork, *Phu-Chai-Pai-*

Leung was broadcast. It was not surprising that *Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung* stimulated public curiosity and discussion around the discourse on male prostitution, and more importantly, prompted police reinforcements to regulate activities in *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park. The intervention of the police made it difficult for me to complete my fieldwork, and for male streetwalkers to maintain their working environment. Many of the male streetwalkers who worked regularly in the streets around *Saranrom* park were reluctant to cooperate in interviews, and some of them refused outright. At the end of the fieldwork period, only four in-depth interviews had been completed, two of which included recorded conversation. To protect their rights of privacy, streetwalkers' names are anonymised.

This chapter examines the way in which the system of *phet* – based on the norms of sex-gender roles and heterosexuality – gets played out in public space, in particular through disciplined bodies, 'proper' social behaviour and self-presentation. What is constructed as 'proper' behaviour or social appearance 'seen' in public space needs to be teased out into a question concerning the norms of sex-gender roles and sex-gender appearances. The meaning of 'proper' is constructed only in association with the clear boundaries of male-masculinity and female-femininity – suggesting that the figure of male-feminine *kathoeys* becomes transgressive in public space. Further, I argue that the meaning of 'proper' needs to be examined in relation to the Western-oriented middle-class culture based on heterosexual normality. In this respect, I argue that the meaning of 'proper' has been re-constructed and become 'unmarked' through the norms of heterosexuality. To sustain the norms of heterosexual-patriarchy, homosexual behaviour and the self-presentations of

male-masculine homosexuals are constructed as 'improper' and become 'marked' in public space. Thus, to explore *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park in relation to ordered public spaces, it is important to examine both how these locations and the ways in which people present themselves in such locations are regulated through the norms of sex-gender roles and the norms of heterosexuality.

According to the construction of Thai 'public' space, the way in which male-masculine men look at and desire other men is condemned as 'improper' behaviour. To explore how Thai 'gay' men can challenge such discourse, I draw attention to a large number of private cars in the city. The relationship between gay men and the private car is examined through a question of how middle-class culture gets materialised, and how the car increasingly becomes a symbol of luxury as an important condition of the cosmopolitan lifestyle. I argue that the car becomes a condition through which the boundaries of the 'proper' image of the male middle-class heterosexual can be sustained. Thus, I draw particular attention to the car and the specific way of driving – arguing that gay men use the car in relation to urban practices – *driving-as-cruising*. The car, regarded as a 'passing performance', provides gay men with a way of masquerading. That is, the car helps gay men to 'unmark' their remarkable behaviour, and to 'pass' through the boundaries in public space between 'proper' and 'improper' as constituted by middle-class culture.

Reading *driving-as-cruising* in the light of Michel de Certeau's spatial practices of strategy and tactic, Thai gay men behave 'tactically' in order to challenge such norms in *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park and produce these locations as 'gay spaces'. Yet,

171

through *driving-as-cruising*, the spaces in the streets around *Saranrom* park are produced differently. 'Gay spaces' are produced as 'gay places' through the operation of gay male clients in the street and in relation to male streetwalkers. I argue that through *driving-as-cruising* gay male clients behave 'strategically' towards male streetwalkers at the moment of their encounter. Clients establish a strategic field in order to search for and look at male streetwalkers. Through the technique of *driving-as-cruising*, *Saranrom* park becomes a strategic field through the eyes of clients.

In the streets around *Saranrom* park, the tactics of male streetwalkers can be examined through the relationship between the mobility of clients and the immobility of male streetwalkers. I argue that such a relationship is highlighted through ways of looking – the reciprocated positions of looking and being looked at. Through their immobility, the male streetwalkers can potentially determine a client's driving pattern – whether the car slows its speed in order for the driver to look at those men in the streets. In this respect, I argue that male streetwalkers' performative acts can disrupt clients' spectatorship – returning the look becomes the way in which male streetwalkers actively reposition themselves not as 'objects' or spectacles but as 'subjects' who can look back at clients. The hidden identity of clients, who use the car to prevent being publicly scrutinised, can be revealed at the moment of encounter. Likewise, sexual identities of male streetwalkers, who sit and stand in the streets and present themselves in the figures of masculine men, can also be constructed at the moment of encounter. The relationship between the mobility-invisibility of clients and the immobility-visibility of male streetwalkers can only be understood as reinforcing each other.

172

To understand the politics of visibility, it is perhaps useful to draw attention to Laura

Mulvey's visual analyses of sexual relations and sexual politics derived from her study of

cinematography.[3] I discuss briefly Mulvey's analyses, suggesting that the visual relations

between gay male clients and male streetwalkers can be explored in terms of subjects and

objects of sight, or between the spectator and the spectacle. But to explore the tactics of

male prostitutes operated particularly through visual relations, I draw on the concept of

destabilising spectatorship, derived from the work of Kaja Silverman, Alice Friedman,

Gillian Rose and Jane Rendell.[4] They suggest the need to re-think the binary opposition

of spectator and spectacle – arguing that such an opposition can be challenged, be

considering different and specific ways of looking. I argue that the concept of

destabilising spectatorship provides us with a way of exploring male prostitutes' tactics,

in particular at the moment of encounter – focusing on the way in which male

streetwalkers are capable of looking back. I discuss in detail the politics of visibility in

relation to the mobility of clients and the visibility of male streetwalkers later in this

chapter.

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[3] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 14–26.

[4] Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan : A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56, quoted in Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House', *Assemblage*, v. 18 (August 1992), pp. 40–61 at p. 42; Gillian Rose, 'Making Space for the Female Subject of Feminism: the Spatial Subversions of Holzer, Kruger and Sherman', in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 332–54 at pp. 336–7 and Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), p. 18.

To examine the tactics of male streetwalkers in responding to *driving-as-cruising*, it is useful to begin with the relationship between gay men and public space. The need is to examine not the question of why gay men come to the area of *Sanam Luang* in the first place, but rather how they are drawn to new urban practices in public space. So, I first explore the change of function and meaning of public space, in particular as a result of the increasing number of cars in the city. The car provides freedom of movement, and at the same time it reinforces the way in which gay men come to use public space to meet other gay men. As mentioned earlier, through freedom of movement, I argue that the car provides a great opportunity, in particular for middle-class gay men, allowing them to explore the city using new urban practices. In short, I question how the social relations between gay men in *Sanam Luang* have repeatedly been constructed. Further, I explore the specific urban practices of gay male clients who drive-as-cruise in terms of the establishment of a strategic field enabling them to 'gaze' at male streetwalkers in public space. In this respect, the car offers gay male clients both a new freedom of movement, and a new mask enabling them to disguise themselves behind the wheel while still looking at other men in the street. Finally I also explore the performative acts of male streetwalkers – arguing that they constitute an opportunity in 'places' produced by gay male clients' ways of *driving-as-cruising* to respond to the mobility of gay male clients, to interrupt their freedom of movement, to show their sexual interest and, most importantly, to return the look back to gay men.

Sanam Luang

In this section, I examine the conditions under which the area of *Sanam Luang* and

Saranrom park became meeting spaces between gay men and between gay male clients

and male streetwalkers. The transformation of the meaning and ways of using these

public spaces indicate how the gay spaces in *Sanam Luang* and in *Saranrom* park are

constructed. I begin with a historical exploration of *Sanam Luang*, through the notion of

public space. This notion has changed dramatically in the past fifty years, in responding

to the rise of middle-class culture, in particular to the increasing number of private cars in

contemporary Bangkok.

Fig. 3.2 Map of *Sanam Luang* and *Saranrom* park in 1988. Drawn by The Royal Survey Department, Bangkok, Thailand.

The meaning of *Sanam Luang* in terms of public space has been defined and redefined throughout Thai history, in particular since the reign of King Rama V, Chulalongkorn, 1868–1910. According to Sutharin Koonphol, *Sanam Luang* can be regarded as the space in which the political transformation of Thailand, from 1855 to 1990, manifested itself. It is important to examine how *Sanam Luang* has been produced as a public space through political transformation in relation to state as a controlling agency, and through aspects of everyday life where people identify and present themselves in a public realm. I question particularly how the system of *phet* – operating through the norms of sex-gender roles and heterosexuality – is constituted through self-presentations in public space. In other words, I focus on the kind of behaviour and social appearance that is constructed as 'proper' and becomes 'unmarked' and what has been objectified as 'improper', 'marked' and 'under-presentable'.

Traditionally, up until 1855, *Sanam Luang* was known as *Thung Phra Mane* named literally after the site of the Royal Cremation.[5] The function of *Sanam Luang* was to serve the public as 'a witness to the grandeur of the kings as divine beings returning to the celestial realm'.[6] *Sanam Luang* was, however, assigned to be part of the modernised city project proposed by Chulalongkorn, who aimed to re-design *Sanam Luang* as a beautiful landscape. His vision was inspired by 'his impressions of the beauty of European cities'.[7]

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[5] Sutharin Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space" in the City of Bangkok, Thailand: a Case Study Based on *Sanam Luang*', Ph.D. Thesis (University of London, 2001), p. 110.
[6] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 108.
[7] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 111.

Koonphol argues that *Sanam Luang* as it appears today, 'an oval-shaped space lined with double rows of tamarind trees', is mainly the result of the 'city beautiful' project (see Figure 3.2).[8] Throughout this period, *Sanam Luang* was 'the central space in which novelties of the so-called urban culture were first introduced into the city'.[9] Koonphol suggests that this 'urban culture' can be discussed in terms of 'social activities' in association with 'several clubs and associations', such as the Royal Bangkok Sports Club.[10] In this respect, the meaning of 'public' space was created to increase the diversity of social life in the city. But with the assertion of urban culture, the term 'public' was increasingly bound up with class structure. Terdsak Romjumpa argues that although Chulalongkorn encouraged Western ways of living in Siam society, it was only aimed at elites and the members of royal family, and not at so-called commoners.[11]

In the reign of the next King, Rama VI, Vajiravudh, 1910–1925, the processes of moderation and westernisation began to expand from elites and members of the royal family to commoners, which, as Koonphol suggests, can be understood through the way in which *Sanam Luang* functioned for 'state ceremonies' and public recreation rather than solely for 'royal ceremonies'.[12] *Sanam Luang* was redefined according to Vajiravudh's vision of the 'Public Park', which was inspired by his education in England for nine years. According to Thamora V. Fishel, Vajiravudh received special training at Sandhurst

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[8] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 112.
[9] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 116.
[10] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 116.
[11] Terdsak Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2002), p. 30 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).
[12] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 116.

Academy and then attended Oxford University until 1903.[13] Koonphol holds similar

views, as she refers to '[the public park which] was initially designed to be the venue of

the Siamese Kingdom Exhibition, of which the model was the Annual Wembley Winter

Fair in England, to be granted later for public recreation'.[14] The plan of the public park

also suggests the expansion of the city of Bangkok. *Sanam Luang* no longer maintained

its centrality, either as a royal space or the space of novelty, but rather as a new public

park and a space for commoners.

The 'new' meaning of public space was assigned to *Sanam Luang* in 1932. After the

overthrow of the absolute monarchy, *Sanam Luang* was declared a free space where

people could openly criticise the government.[15] *Sanam Luang* became the space for

expressing the new state ideology of constitutional monarchy. The meaning of 'public'

began to change from 'being the subject of the king to the citizen of an emerging civilised

nation'.[16] Again, *Sanam Luang* was reinforced as a space for common usage in the reign

of Field Marshal P. Phibun, 1938–1941 and 1948–1957, through his nationalist policy.

According to Scott Barme, the term 'public' as redefined by Phibun's nationalist policy

was largely determined by the newly proclaimed 'State Convention', which required that,

in the name of 'civilisation' and national progress, the Thai public adopted European

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[13] Thamora V. Fishel, 'Romances of the Sixth Reign: Gender, Sexuality and Siamese Nationalism', in Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (eds), *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1999), p. 158.

[14] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 117.

[15] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 121.

[16] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 117.

modes of dress.[17] As explored in the previous chapter, the term 'public' during Phibun's

period was used in the sense of control and discipline, and imposed proper mannerisms

and social appearances rooted in the separated spheres of male-masculinity and female-

femininity. It is not surprising that the term 'proper' behaviour, appearance or activities

arose in response to the term 'public'. What was 'seen' in public space as 'proper' was

constructed according to the norms of gender roles. Romjumpa argues that there was no

reference to 'improper' *kathoeys* – male-feminine behaviour and appearance – in

Phibun's nationalist policy, but Phibun wanted to solidify the separation of 'men' and

'women' in public space, and this prevented the *kathoey* from expressing themselves

freely.[18] However, the fact is that the self-presentations of the *kathoey* dressing in

women's clothes or exhibiting exaggerated female behaviour can easily be observed in

public space, compared with 'gay' men whose identity and self-presentations – male-

masculine images – are more likely to be unrecognisable. In this sense, I argue that the

conceptualisation of public space produced by Phibun's nationalist policy undermined the

existence of Thai gay men and delayed the construction of Thai gay identities, as

mentioned in the previous chapter.

Phibun introduced many state ceremonies in *Sanam Luang,* such as fancy-dress contests

in traditional costume, beauty pageants, military parades and related military activities,

all of which were arranged through the state. As Koonphol comments, 'most of the

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[17] Scot Barme, *Woman, Man and Bangkok: Love, Sex and Popular Culture in Thailand* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 235.
[18] Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965–1999', p. 36.

ceremonies held there were state-oriented'.[19] In 1949, as part of his weekend market

policy, Phibun suggested that *Sanam Luang* be used as a Sunday Market. This provided a

direct outlet to help the farmers sell their agricultural produce.[20] The weekend market

also encouraged several other outlawed businesses, which still remain today, such as the

renting of mats, the sale of carrier bags, drink vendors and fortune-tellers. As Koonphol

argues, the trading activities were concentrated only around the outer fringe of *Sanam*

Luang, leaving the inner circle empty, as this area was normally reserved for state and

royal ceremonies.[21] After the Sunday Market was moved to *Chatuchak* park in 1982,

conservative urbanists decided to turn *Sanam Luang* into a recreational area for the

public. The government supported efforts to improve *Sanam Luang* as 'a common

recreational space for all'.[22]

It is important to recognise that *Sanam Luang* as a 'public' space has changed, from a

royal space to a state space, through the political transformation of Thai history. After the

reign of Chulalongkorn *Sanam Luang* was conceived as being the subject of the king,

used only in royal ceremonies. After the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, *Sanam*

Luang was gradually transformed into an egalitarian public space. Nonetheless, *Sanam*

Luang should not be understood simply as a public park, but rather as 'public property

designed for people's entertainment, recreation and gathering' and regulated by the

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[19] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 120.
[20] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 123.
[21] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 123.
[22] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 130.

state.[23] *Sanam Luang* has always been defined and redefined through the role of a

legitimising agency, first the king through royal ceremonies and later the state through

the concept of a state convention, which is inseparable from legal, bureaucratic

mechanisms and power relations embedded in and controlling space. *Sanam Luang*

should be understood in terms of government property or the preferred framework for

implementing the social appearance and activities of those who come to use such

property. As Attajak Sattayanuluk suggests, codes produced by the Thai state were

imposed on public space, aimed at controlling people's social appearance and individual

behaviour.[24] Yet, this notion of public space has gradually declined as a result of the

development of a capitalist market economy, an influx of Westerners, in particular of

American servicemen, and, importantly, an influence derived from middle-class culture –

with the private car a manifestation of a middle-class lifestyle and a symbol of class

difference.

A significant change in 'public' space in the city planning of Bangkok was initiated by a

group of American urban planners in 1960. Their projections for the future development

of the city were based on their experience of the city of Los Angeles and the rise of the

private car in the United States.[25] Following national economic development policy, the

number of cars began to increase significantly, in particular in the city of Bangkok. There

was a successful economic policy to industrialise Thailand, and the private car was

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[23] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 231.
[24] Attajak Sattayanuluk, 'Ra-Hut-Maie Bon Phen Tee Satharana' (Codes in Public Space), in *Roy-Tor-Hange-Yuk-Sa-Mai* (Cultural Transition) (Bangkok: Amarin, 1997), pp. 76–80 at p. 77.
[25] Walden Bello, *A Siamese Tragedy: Development & Disintegration in Modern Thailand*, p. 147.

widely understood as the representation of a middle-class urban lifestyle. As Nitti

Aeawsriwong suggests, the separate spheres between the car and the streetwalker,

between urban and rural life, highlighted the social and class difference between the rich

and the poor in Thai modern society.[26] That is to say, people tended to use the car to

highlight middle-class culture as a culture between higher class and lower class. I argue

that the rise of the private car in Bangkok was a major influence on the way people use

Sanam Luang. In the early 1990s, *Sanam Luang* no longer maintained itself as a lively

public space, but became an empty space or just an area to pass through.

To understand social changes revolving around the rise of private car, Peter Wollen, for

example, considers it 'as a creature of the internal-combustion engine which has had the

most wide-ranging impact', and to quote only a few: roads and associated construction

work, parking lots, […] population movements, lifestyle, increased level of travel and

tourism.[27] Wollen also suggests that 'the car itself became the site of choice for romantic

interludes and sexual adventures'.[28] To give an example of sexual adventure offered by

the car, Wollen refers to the moment when 'a teenage girl [sits] on the hood of a car

while a young man makes up to her'.[29] Yet, here, a male-male sexual adventure offered

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[26] Nitti Aeawsriwong, 'Kon, Rotyon and Wittayasat Nai Sangkom Thai' (Man, Car and Science in Thai Society), in *Hitech-KaTar-Patihan: Wa-Deaw Witttayasat-Lae-Technology Nai Sangekom-Thai* (Hi-tech-Magic-Supernatural: The Discourse on Science and Technology in Thai Society) (Bangkok: Matichon, 2003), pp. 139–45 (my translation).
[27] Peter Wollen, 'Introduction, Car and Culture' in Peter Wollen and Joe Kerr (eds) *Autopia: Cars and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2002), pp. 11 and 13.
[28] Wollen, 'Introduction, Car and Culture', p. 13.
[29] Wollen, 'Introduction, Car and Culture', p. 13.

by the car is key. So, how might we relate the car to male-male sexual adventure in

public space?

I draw on the work of Richard Sennett in his discussion of the death of public space.

According to Sennett, the car is an index of social isolation and is responsible for the

emergence of dead public space. Sennett argues that the private car is the condition under

which public space becomes meaningless or under-used.[30] When a public space is no

longer associated with people or social activities, functionally and ideologically, it

gradually becomes 'dead space'.[31] Sennett suggests that there is one important signal

which can be identified as the beginning of dead space, as what he calls it the 'barrier',

aimed to separate 'within' from 'without'.[32] At the same time, the car becomes a barrier

in itself. The car provides a great opportunity for people to isolate themselves, to obtain

freedom of movement and to maintain some distance from intimate observation by

others.[33] The car changes activities and participation in public spaces. By relying heavily

on the car, basic face-to-face contact has become an option rather than a necessity. The

act of movement has changed from walking to driving and passing through without any

participation in the environment or with people. As Sennett argues, 'the real purpose (of

public space, now) is to serve as a pass-through area'.[34]

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[30] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Faber, 1993), p. 14.
[31] Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 12–16.
[32] Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 14.
[33] Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 15.
[34] Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 14.

The growing number of private cars in Bangkok can be referred to as a visible barrier keeping a large number of people away from public space. While the car changes how Thai people frequent *Sanam Luang*, it might also lead people to change the meaning and value of this ordered public space marked by the norms of sex-gender roles and the norms of heterosexuality. Such changes in *Sanam Luang* open up the possibility for gay men and male streetwalkers to use it as a meeting place. The car also provides gay male clients with a 'new' protection, which allows them to isolate themselves from others and still look at these men in the streets, in particular male streetwalkers, from behind the windscreen of the car. For gay male clients, using the car in such a way creates their sexual adventures, looking at and encountering male streetwalkers. I examine in detail in the next section how the car in terms of a 'new' protection allows gay men to look at and meet male streetwalkers.
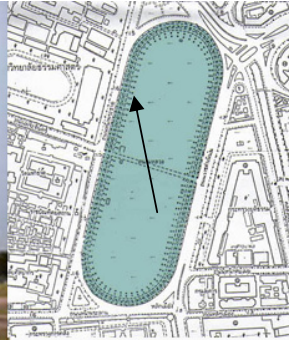
Fig. 3.3 *Sanam Luang*, view from the centre of the park.
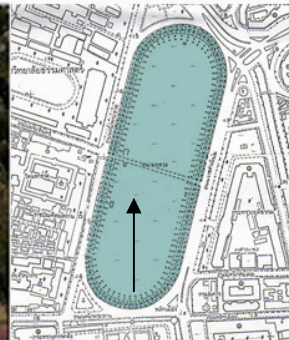
Fig. 3.4 *Sanam Luang*, view from the south at the edge of the park looking towards the centre.
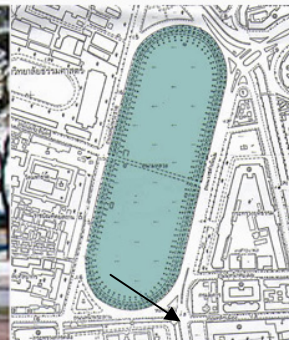
Fig. 3.5 *Sanam Luang*, view from the southern end of the park looking towards the street.

In terms of a lively public space in the city where the residents of Bangkok spend time together, *Sanam Luang* has steadily lost any experiential meaning of its own. Today, the majority of people in Bangkok use it as a pass-through space and an interchange for public transportation. As the photographs of *Sanam Luang* above show, most of the activities occur only at the outer edge of the park, while the large inner space remains unused (see Figures 3.3–3.5). Koonphol notes, '*Sanam Luang* is busy with commuters making their bus connections at the four bus stops around the park, through which 25 bus routes pass'.[35] A large number of private cars also invades *Sanam Luang*, changing the centre of this public space into a large car park. On many occasions, it ends up being used as a parking lot to serve the neighbourhood, such as on graduation day at Thammasat University, or as a starting place for the many tourist buses that visit *Wat Phra Kaew*, known as the Grand Palace. In fact, cars have begun to change the way in which people associate with each other, as well as with *Sanam Luang*. The increasing growth of private cars has become a barrier to separate activities in *Sanam Luang*. The inhabitants of Bangkok no longer come to *Sanam Luang* to enjoy the beautiful landscape which once made it the central space in Bangkok. Following rapid industrial development and the growth of the capitalist market economy, the public space of *Sanam Luang* no longer retains the meaning imposed by the Thai state to govern how individuals expressed themselves publicly.

It is worth remembering that Thai 'public' spaces are regulated by ideologies concerning the 'proper' ways in which people should identify and present themselves publicly –

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[35] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 170.

suggesting that people, their social appearance and individual behaviour are understood

as subjects to be observed and controlled. Because the transformation of *Sanam Luang*

has been created by the number of private cars, it is not surprising that various groups of

people who behave and appear improperly in public space have come to occupy *Sanam*

Luang. As Koonphol observes, people such as drink vendors, fortune-tellers, homeless

people, *kathoeys*, male prostitutes and gay men occupy *Sanam Luang*.[36] For them, *Sanam*

Luang is not just a passing-through space, but rather a space they occupy and in which

they potentially belong. They use it in various ways. As Koonphol notes:

> The [female] prostitutes usually come out to sit at the bus stops in front of the
>
> Criminal Court and the pocket park around Mae Phrathorani during late
>
> afternoon. […] *Khanom chin* stalls line the footpath on the eastern side of *Sanam*
>
> *Luang*. […] After midnight, the homeless come to sleep at this time. Some
>
> fortune-tellers are still there to catch some late customers, most of them are
>
> drunk.[37]

Reading Koonphol's observation, I argue that what has declined is the meaning and value

of public space marked by the norms of sex-gender roles and heterosexuality, and it does

not mean that *Sanam Luang* exists on the outskirts of the law. As Koonphol observes,

Sanam Luang is still under the supervision of *thesakits*, the government officers in blue

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[36] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', pp. 170–4.
[37] The Criminal Court and Mae Phrathorani are located at the southern end of *Sanam Luang*, *Khanom chin* is a noodle dish, here it refers to food vendors. Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', pp. 170–4.

uniforms who carry out regular surveillance to maintain it as an orderly or ordered

space.[38] *Thesakits* are assigned to prevent illegal activities, such as numerous kinds of

street vendors, the mat-renting business and streetwalkers, who are understood as a form

of prostitution.[39]

According to Koonphol, gay men commonly use *Sanam Luang*. She quotes the

observation of Prasert, a frequenter at *Sanam Luang*: 'A gay couple comes to sit at *Sanam*

Luang almost everyday from 6 to 9 p.m.'.[40] Koonphol gives no explanation of how

Prasert distinguished 'a gay couple' from other men who used this space, but Koonphol's

assertion is useful for arguing that *Sanam Luang* is a gay meeting place. I argue further

that gay men use *Sanam Luang* in a way which does not expose their sexual interest

publicly. To explain Prasert's observation, I believe that Prasert might be a drink or food

vendor, for whom this gay couple are regular customers.

Although the way in which gay men meet other gay men is not marked as illegal, yet it is

still culturally unaccepted to express their sexuality publicly.[41] They are aware of the

thesakits and other threats to their ways of meeting other gay men. In particular, because

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[38] Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', pp. 228–30.

[39] Khrikorn Wongkornrawodj describes the mat-renting business in *Sanam Luang*: 'by renting two mats, popularly known as an "instant hotel", one can lie on the ground, and use another mat to cover any activity underneath'. See Khrikorn Wongkornrawodj, 'A Night Tale of *Sanam Luang*', in *Sarakadee*, v. 198 (August 2001), pp. 34–8 at p. 36 (my translation).

[40] No date is indicated for Prasert's observation. Koonphol, 'The Concept and Practice of "Public Space"', p. 172.

[41] The topic concerning 'gay' is cultural unaccepted is an on-going debate and needs further discussion. See, for example, Peter A. Jackson, 'Tolerant But Unaccepting: The Myth of a Thai "Gay Paradise"', in Jackson and Cook (eds), *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*, pp. 226–242.

male streetwalkers in terms of forms of prostitution are illegal, gay men can be caught if

their encounter is seen publicly. In response to the *thesakits* and to mainstream society,

gay men prefer to remain unseen, unrecognised and unknown – in order to remain

'unmarked' – when using *Sanam Luang* as a meeting place. The aim is to question how

gay men pursue their cultural and sexual differences in order to meet other gay men in

Sanam Luang.

To explore the relationship between gay men and public space in *Sanam Luang* in

particular, it is necessary to refer to the large number of American soldiers, GIs, who

came to Bangkok after the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Peter A. Jackson refers to the

influx of American servicemen in this period as the major influence establishing the gay

commercial sex business in Bangkok.[42] The relationship between male prostitution,

manifest in male go-go dancers and gay go-go bars, in the central business district

Patpong–Silom–Surawong, will be explored in the next chapter. What needs to be

emphasised here is that homosexual behaviour began to appear in public space during

this period. As Prakop Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat argue, this homosexual

behaviour was mainly modelled on the way Western gay men came to meet other gay

men in public space.[43] Through declining state power over public space and the influx of

American servicemen, public spaces like *Sanam Luang* began to be used by gay men as a

meeting space in the city. Siwatchana and Khamnunwat quote Lung Nuad, a columnist in

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[42] Peter A. Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: an Interpretation of Contemporary Thai Sources* (New York: Global Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 241.
[43] Prakop Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat, *Phu-chai khai tua* (Male Prostitution) (Krung Thep: Mahawitthayalai Mahidon, 1996), p. 9 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).

a popular Thai magazine: 'After the Second World War, the number of Western gay men

living in Bangkok rapidly increased. Even though there is no record of an exact number,

we saw them more frequently, particularly when they came to use public parks, such as

Sanam Luang, *Suan Lumpini, Sapan Puut* and *Saranrom*, as meeting spaces'.[44]

Gay men in *Sanam Luang* became the subject for analysis among Thai academics in the

1990s, in particular those studying male streetwalkers. Thai scholars, for example

Chaleampon Sattaporn and Narvilai, claimed that the way in which streetwalkers come to

meet Western gay men could be seen as one of crucial features helping scholars to

develop the way of examining gay urban culture.[45] However, as discussed in the previous

chapter, examining only how male streetwalkers present themselves in public space

without considering the presence of gay male clients can lead us to produce an

incomplete understanding of male prostitutes and their sexual practices. If the sexual

practices of male streetwalkers are produced through a presumption of heterosexual

patriarchy – one taking a masculine-active and the other a feminine-passive role, and if

male streetwalkers are categorised only as 'masculine', it might imply that gay male

clients are 'feminine' and 'passive', which could also lead to an assumption that these

clients might be *kathoeys*. Here, I argue that it is important to examine gay male clients

and male streetwalkers at the moment of their encounter because 'masculine' and

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[44] *Suan Lumpini* is another public park in Bangkok, and *Sapan Puut* is a cast-iron bridge which connects Bangkok with Thonburi, another side of *Chao Phraya* River. Siwatchana and Khamnunwat, *Phu-chai khai tua*, p. 3.

[45] Chaleampon Sattaporn, 'The Problem of Prostitution in Thailand', MA Thesis (Thammasat University, 1965), p. 7, quoted in Prawit Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes: the Cycle of Labor Relationship and the Fact of Employment'*,* MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1998), p. 22 (my translation).

'feminine' is a play of self-presentations and self-identifications of male streetwalkers, which is flexible and related to the presence of their clients.

Both Sattaporn and Narvilai give no explanation of self-identification and self-presentation of clients, and they view sexual practices of male streetwalkers as being a serious cause of social problem, disease and pollution.[46] In other words, for Sattaporn and Narvilai, *Sanam Luang* has been established as the strategic field where 'improper' sexual encounters between gay male clients and male streetwalkers are scrutinised. According to an objective view of homosexual behaviour in public space, gay male clients and male prostitutes must be condemned and controlled.[47] From this perspective, by marking gay men and 'improper' homosexual behaviour in specific urban locations, scholars begin to add another meaning to *Sanam Luang* – as a space of exclusion.

David Sibley discusses how the term 'exclusion' has been used to signify spatial division, both literally and metaphorically.[48] Sibley develops his discussion around the notion of 'boundary consciousness', which is 'a characteristic of the mainstream in modern, Western society, or, at least, it is in some kinds of locales and at certain times'.[49] According to Sibley, boundary consciousness is also spatial, aiming to establish not only spatial separations produced by mainstream moral orders, but also '*purifying filters* where

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[46] Sattaporn, 'The Problem of Prostitution in Thailand', p. 10 and Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', pp. 75–6.

[47] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', pp. 75–6.

[48] David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 32–76.

[49] Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, p. 38.

strangers under arrest would be confined to prevent them contaminating civil society'.[50]

Sibley suggests that those excluded or 'strangers' can be seen as 'spatially marginal

minorities', which include 'gays, prostitutes and homeless'.[51] Philip Hubbard also aims to

discover under what conditions spatial exclusion emerges. Like Sibley, he draws

attention to the interaction of different groups of people, not only in physical urban

landscapes but also at a psychic level. Hubbard argues that, 'with psychic spaces mapped

onto social space, people attempt to purify their bodies, their surroundings and their

locale through processes of boundary-erection, whether those boundaries are physical,

symbolic or psychological'.[52] To purify is to prevent 'anxious moments; in some

circumstances it could be fatal, or it might be an exhilarating experience – the thrill of

transgression'.[53] From this perspective, Hubbard argues that the appearance of street

prostitutes can deliberately provoke public awareness of different moralities, and at the

same time, an anxiety about challenging and destabilising legitimising moral order.

Hence prostitution needs to be controlled, purified or excluded.[54] To some extent, the

space of exclusion can also be understood through the spatial metaphors of centre and

margin. By depending on the conditions of mainstream society – the norms of sex-gender

roles and the norms of heterosexuality - the 'proper' sex-gender roles and sex-gender

appearances based on male-masculine/female-feminine oppositions in public space.

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[50] Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, p. 53 (original emphasis).
[51] Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, p. 60.
[52] Philip Hubbard, *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West* (Sydney: Ashgate, 1999), p. 68.
[53] Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, p. 32.
[54] Hubbard, *Sex and the City*, pp. 76, 78 and 81.

Sanam Luang in relation to the self-identifications of gay men appears to be

marginalised.

However, we can examine *Sanam Luang* through de Certeau's spatial practices of

strategy and tactic; tactics of resistance, as discussed in chapter one, are a response to the

map of power controlled by public space. For gay men, *Sanam Luang* can be understood

in terms of 'closet space', as Michael P. Brown describes it.[55] Public space like *Sanam*

Luang is a place for 'cruising' other gay men, not for enjoyable strolling in order to

appreciate the landscape. Cruising as a specific urban practices used by gay men is a

tactic of resisting the heterosexual order of public space. The tactic of cruising enables

gay men to 'find in the passing glances in the streets that person whose gaze returns and

validates his own'.[56] Because cruising is meant to involve ways of communication

unnoticed by heterosexuals, it is not surprising that Thai scholars, namely Sattaporn and

Narvilai, have relied on alternative ways to mark and map gay spaces in *Sanam Luang*:

through the *kathoey* or perhaps through the sexual practices of male streetwalkers.

As far as the new possibility provided by the car is concerned, the territory of meeting

places is not necessarily limited to the boundary of *Sanam Luang*. In fact, nowadays gay

meeting places have arisen in various activities and locations in the city, such as go-go

bars, saunas, massage parlours, clubs and karaoke bars. Through freedom of movement,

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[55] Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3 and 7.
[56] Turner, *Backward Glances*, p. 59.

ways of meeting appear to have changed among gays, and between gay male clients and male prostitutes. According to Butprom's documentary, the meeting locations between gay male clients and male streetwalkers in the area of *Sanam Luang* is also expanding. The spaces occupied by male streetwalkers appear to have moved from *Sanam Luang* towards the south and in particular to the area around *Saranrom* park. I argue that the reason for the change of location from *Sanam Luang* to *Saranrom* park is due not to the meeting locations in *Sanam Luang* becoming too exposed to others, to *thesakits* and to policemen, but rather in response to the mobility of the clients.

Saranrom
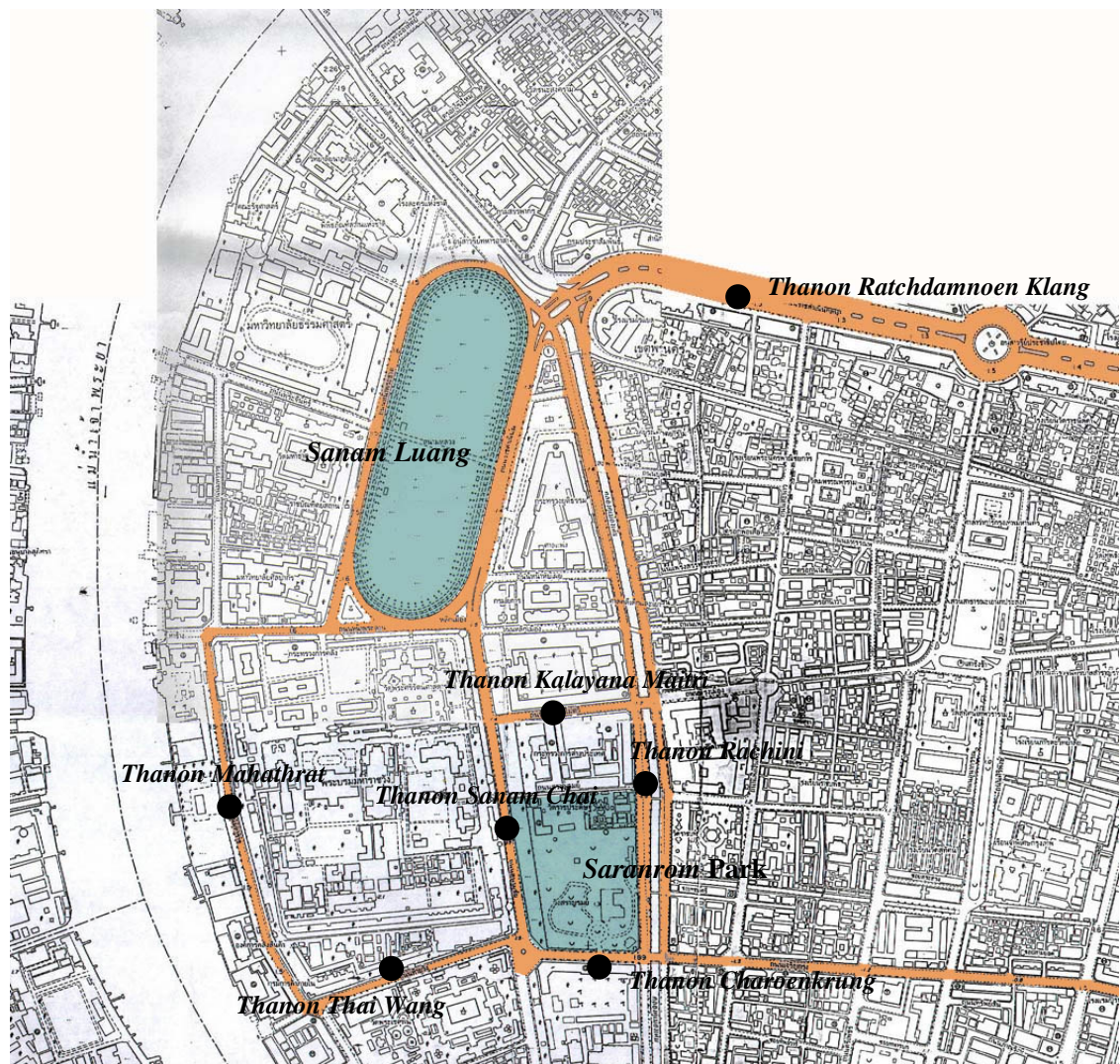
Fig. 3.6 Map of Old Town Bangkok, showing selected routes by interviewees, a group of gay men who
regularly go to *Saranrom* for '*driving-as-cruising*'.

Fig. 3.7 *Thanon Sanam Chai.*

Fig. 3.8 At the corner between *Thanon Sanam Chai* and *Thanon Charoenkrung.*

Fig. 3.9 *Thanon Charoenkrung.*

Fig. 3.10 Bus stop in front of *Saranrom* Park, *Thanon Charoenkrung*.

Fig. 3.11 *Thanon Rachini* and *Khlong Lod.*

Fig. 3.12 *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*.

196

Saranrom park used to be a part of *Saranrom* Palace, begun in the reign of King Rama

IV, Mongkut, 1851–1868, but not finished until the reign of King Rama V,

Chulalongkorn, 1868–1910.[57] *Saranrom* Palace has never been used by the king himself,

but was used to accommodate royal visitors from foreign countries. In 18 June 1885,

Chulalongkorn decided that *Saranrom* Palace would house the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and the Royal Thai Survey.[58] As mentioned earlier, *Saranrom* park was also part

of the beautiful city project through which Chulalongkorn proposed to modernise

Bangkok. As Kanita Lakhakul says, 'inspired by beautiful European cityscapes,

Chulalongkorn wanted *Saranrom* park to be beautifully decorated and well maintained.

In the park, we used to have a section assigned as a small zoo, having three crocodiles,

tigers, bears and monkeys. We also had a beautiful flower garden, including a pond and a

Chinese pavilion which is still in the park today'.[59] In 1960, in the reign of Rama VII,

Pokklao, and in the period of constitutional monarchy, the ownership of *Saranrom* park

was transferred to the state and has been a state property ever since. It appears today as a

public park, allowing people to use it during a limited period of time, between five in the

morning and eight in the evening every day.[60]

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[57] Tavee Watkram, '*Saranrom* Park', in *Mu'am-Rum-Mee-Sing-Nye-Nai-Mueng-Thai* (A Short History of these 'Things' in Thailand) (Bangkok: Medsai, 1994), pp. 109–11 at p. 109.

[58] Kanita Lakhakul, '*Saranrom* Palace', in *Rom-Rien-Nai-Rowl-Wang* (Inside the Palace) (Bangkok: Pukkathat, 2000), pp. 12–28 at p. 23.

[59] Lakhakul, '*Saranrom* Palace', p. 25 (my translation).

[60] Watkram, '*Saranrom* Park', p. 111.

However, after the official closing time, *Saranrom* park opens for gay men. For many

gay men in Bangkok, driving around *Saranrom* park is considered a ritual. For many of

the gay men I interviewed, the area is their favourite route for '*driving-as-cruising*' at

night. One of them insisted on showing me his route (see Figure 3.6). He said, 'normally

we drive from the city to *Saranrom* by using the grand avenue *Thanon Ratchdamnoen*

Klang, passing through the west side of *Sanam Luang* and then going to *Thanon*

Ratchdamnoen Nai. Now we are approaching *Saranrom*, the territory of male

streetwalkers'.[61] 'But there is an alternative route', as he further described: 'by using

Thanon Charoenkrung we can go straight to *Saranrom* park'. As the driver explained the

route to me, we arrived at the park. It does not really matter whether you choose to come

to *Saranrom* park from *Thanon Ratchdamnoen* through *Sanam Luang* or direct from

Thanon Charoenkrung; what is important is that you drive along the boundary of

Saranrom park, where most of the encounters take place.

The same driver began to drive in a circle around *Saranrom*, first using *Thanon Sanam*

Chai and then turning left at *Thanon Charoenkrung*, passing by the main entrance of the

park which, according to what I had been told, is the 'hottest spot' for meeting male

streetwalkers (see Figures 3.7–3.10). At the intersection between *Thanon Charoenkrung*

and *Thanon Rachini*, another well-known street corner, I saw four or five young men

standing there and looking at us as we drove by. Then the driver turned left to *Thanon*

Rachini. This area was scarily dark and not many people use it at night. Because *Thanon*

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[61] Excerpt from an in-depth interview; the interviewee prefers to remain an anonymous.

Rachini is not a main road, it is used as a bus terminal during the daytime and at night it turns into a parking space for buses and nothing else (see Figure 3.11). From *Thanon Rachini*, the car turned left again at *Thanon Kalayana Maitri* where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence are located opposite each other (see Figure 3.12).

At the intersection between *Thanon Rachini* and *Thanon Kalayana Maitri* there seemed to be a smaller number of young men standing compared to the other side. 'Perhaps this side is too bright', said the driver. Later on, it occurred to me that the urban configuration of this street is relatively difficult for male streetwalkers to use; for example, the light is too bright, the street is too wide and it is more crowded in comparison with *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Rachini*. In *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*, there are no bus stops. Bus stops can help male streetwalkers to pretend they are waiting purposefully. I will come back to these points in the section on the tactics of male streetwalkers.

Finally, the circular route was completed when the car turned left again at the corner of *Thanon Kalayana Maitri* and *Thanon Sanam Chai*. 'Let's do it again one more time', insisted the driver. Sometimes, from *Thanon Sanam Chai*, instead of turning left into *Thanon Charoenkrung*, the cars can turn right into *Thanon Thai Wang* and right again at *Thanon Mahathrat*, where they often meet, as my interviewee described, '*phu-chai*' prostitutes, literally meaning male-masculine heterosexual-identified prostitutes. These *phu-chai* prostitutes, according to what I had been told, are believed to be officers in the

Naval Harbour Department located on the opposite side of the river and they come to this area at night when they are off duty.

The streets around *Saranrom* park are transformed into a perfect cruising ground. Potential clients drive to the park with their expectations and sexual fantasies. As a driver recalled when he encountered some male streetwalkers, 'I found one who was outstanding and actually quite perfect for what I was looking for'.[62] They are looking for specific kinds of men. For them, different locations are associated with different kinds of men. The car provides not only a mask to protect themselves and their sexual desires from being seen publicly, but also a private screen so that they can enjoy looking at these young men in the street. The mobility of the car offers gay male clients techniques similar to those of cinematography. By driving along, the car allows them to fantasise encounters with the men they look at. Drawing on an analogy with cinematography, drivers can perhaps be identified both as viewers, and as directors capable of casting, editing and controlling the street scenes. They can give specific messages and translate them in a unique form of non-verbal communication. At the same time, they can also send a message to signal sexual interest with those men in the street. I regard this form of non-verbal communication in the site-specific space of *Saranrom* park as a new gay male clients' urban practice – *driving-as-cruising*. Through *driving-as-cruising*, urban configurations begin to be edited and recomposed through the eyes of the drivers hidden behind the wheel. As they drive-as-cruise, male streetwalkers become objects of the drivers' look – the spectacle.

The Mobility of Gay Men

In this section, I examine *driving-as-cruising* as a specific mode of masquerading, which provides gay men with the ability not only to disguise themselves but also to look at other men in street. Through *driving-as-cruising,* the identity of gay men and their ways of desiring other men can be concealed so that it becomes 'unmarked' in public space. Further, I draw attention to ways in which male streetwalkers respond to gay male clients' ways of *driving-as-cruising*. I argue that the position of gay male clients' spectatorship, which is hidden and secured within the car, can be destabilised through the performative acts of male streetwalkers.

However, the action of *driving-as-cruising* can be changed from 'tactic', one of whose aims is to pass through the eyes of heterosexuals and produce streets as gay spaces – to 'strategic', one of whose aims is to meet, look at male streetwalkers at a distance and produce streets as places of encountering these men. Through the ways in which male streetwalkers respond to gay male clients' *driving-as-cruising*, I further explore how the driving pattern and gay male clients' spectatorship could possibly be disrupted and challenged by the tactics of male streetwalkers. First I examine gay male clients who drive-as-cruise with the car in relation to the act of looking at – the position of the spectator. Then I examine male streetwalkers in a position of 'being-looked at' and in a position where they are capable of destabilising gay male clients' spectatorship and, more importantly, of returning the 'look'. Because the operation of *driving-as-cruising* is spatial as well as temporal, in the case of gay male clients in relation to male

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[62] Excerpt from the interview with a gay-identified man who prefers to remain anonymous.

streetwalkers, the flexible identities of the spectator and the spectacle get played out both through the changing configurations of spatial boundaries and through the changing speed, light, movement and pattern of driving.

To examine the relationship between gay male clients and male streetwalkers constituted at the moment of their encounter, I draw attention to Mulvey's analysis to explore the position of gay male clients as spectator and male streetwalkers as spectacle. I examine the way that gay male clients are situated in the position of spectatorship – suggesting that gay male clients in the car look at other men standing in the street. I further explore the moment when the spectatorship becomes destabilised and flexible, in particular through the performative acts of male streetwalkers. From this perspective, I explore the relationship between gay male clients and male streetwalkers in the street through a discussion on the visual oscillations constituted by the mobility of the clients and the immobility of the male streetwalkers.

Let me recall the moment when I sat inside a car while a particular group of masculine-identified gay men, my interviewees, showed me the route and drove me around *Saranrom* park. I was questioning exactly what these gay men were looking for. How could they distinguish between who were male streetwalkers and who were not? How can gay male clients play out their sexual interest in the way they drive a car to communicate with male streetwalkers? More importantly, it is necessary to identify the act of looking used by gay male clients in this particular spatio-temporal situation. Following Rendell's discussion on the different looks, as discussed in chapter one, I question whether the gay

male clients were looking as 'seeing' or 'gazing' at those men in the street. To examine

the look of gay men, it is important to discuss how the operation of gay men through

driving-as-cruising gets played out differently – changing from a 'tactic', in non-

prostitution-related situation, to protect themselves while looking at other men in public

space to a 'strategy', in prostitution-related situation, to regulate meeting space and the

moment of sexual encounter in the streets. Thus, first I examine *driving-as-cruising* in

terms of the specific mode of gay men's masquerading, which in this context is enhanced

by the new mask provided by the car. I then examine gay men – now discussed in terms

of gay male clients – and the way they look at male streetwalkers as objects of desire

through the windscreen of the car.

Driving-as-cruising and Gay Men's Masquerade

To discuss the operation of *driving-as-cruising* as a gay men's masquerade in non-

prostitution-related situation, it is important to explore such a masquerade through the

problem of displaying and looking at the male body. At this point, I draw on the work of

Jon Stratton and Lee Edelman. As Stratton suggests, 'within heterosexual normality and a

patriarchal society, only women are allowed to present themselves to the male

spectacularising gaze. Men's bodies are hidden from sight and men who desire other

men's bodies are prosecuted for acts of gross indecency'.[63] Like Stratton, Edelman also

argues that a gay appearance can provoke a paranoid anxiety which emerges with great

potential to disturb heterosexual hegemony, a hegemony secured by the logic of

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[63] Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 182. See also Steve Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', in Merck, *The Sexual Subject*, p. 281.

sameness and difference under legitimising social norms and morality.[64] To avoid this paranoid anxiety, heterosexuals must be able to visualise and detect the difference, as Edelman argues, of something 'which is other than heterosexual'.[65] In this sense, the image and appearance of gay men are marked within the system of visualisation, to some extent surveillance, produced by the eyes of the legitimising norms of heterosexual superiority.

Gay men must beware revealing their identity and their desire to look at other men in 'public' space. Reading 'public' space in the light of de Certeau's strategy, I argue that public space in this sense is regulated as an ordered space, already dominated by the norms of heterosexuality. In responding to this strategic field, masquerades are tactics which allow gay men to conceal their identity, thereby 'passing' through heterosexual surveillance. Masquerades provide gay men with an opportunity for meeting other gay men in a heterosexual-oriented society, or to be more specific in public space. They help gay men to present themselves in a way that others cannot recognise. For gay men, while masquerades 'unmark' remarkable images, appearances and behaviours from being publicly exposed, they also help gay men to 'look' at other gay men: the ones who are prepared to be looked at and then look back. The masquerade allows gay men to enact the pleasure of looking at other men as spectacle or objects of sight.[66]

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[64] Lee Edelman, 'Imaging the Homosexual: "Laura" and the Other Face of Gender', in Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 201.
[65] Edelman, 'Imaging the Homosexual', p. 201.
[66] Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze', p. 42, quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18.

As examined in chapter one, gay men's masquerades can also be discussed in relation to gay men's ways of cruising. David Miller suggests that cruising is 'the way a man looks at another man'.[67] Miller continues 'if you look into another man's eyes for even a microsecond longer than it takes to make socially acceptable eye contact, "beware, heterosexual men do not do it"'.[68] Importantly, Miller asks, 'how does any viewer grasp that look except by "looking at it in turn"'.[69] According to Miller, an erotic fascination begins to take over when the look is responded to. Unlike male spectatorship in Mulvey's analyses, looking through cruising by gay men aims to 'make something happen', to 'force a change in another person' and, importantly, involves being prepared to respond.[70] From this perspective, looking through cruising begins to destabilise the dual identities of the spectator and spectacle, and the distinction between 'looking' and 'being-looked-at'; it allows gay men to be 'at once both subjects and objects of sight, both spectator and spectacle'.[71]

Richard Dyer characterises the look used in cruising practices as a 'penetrating look' signifying 'the taboo of male anal eroticism that causes masculine-defined men to find penetration frightening'.[72] The penetrating look aims to get through to an identity underneath a masquerading practice. Edelman argues that the image and appearance of

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[67] David Miller, 'Anal *Rope*', in Diana Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 131.

[68] Miller, 'Anal *Rope*', p. 131.

[69] Miller, 'Anal *Rope*', p. 131.

[70] Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', p. 283.

[71] Sanders, *Stud: Architecture of Masculinity*, p. 24.

[72] Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: the Male Pin-up', in Mandy Merck (ed.), *The Sexual Subject: a Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 268.

the male body potentially motivates gay men to deploy the penetrating look. Edelman claims that it is the body, its every move and every gesture, that induces the look.[73] He argues that gay men begin to look at other men 'as if' their bodies were written and codified by a certain script.[74] As he describes it:

> too pretty or too unattractive, too muscular or too underdeveloped, too masculine or too feminine, the body, once subjected to the necessity of interpretation, becomes suddenly unnatural. […] the body so exposed in its representational force, exposed, indeed, in its representation of desire, is always susceptible to being read as the spectacularised body of a gay man'.[75]

Although image and appearance are important, it is a risk for gay men to assume that those whom they look at must be gay themselves. The image and appearance which can attract gay men needs to be considered in specific socio-cultural conditions. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Thai society, the stereotypical images of the '*gay king*-masculine*'* and the '*gay queen*-feminine' have dominated the way in which Thai gay men identify and present themselves to others. More importantly, such images might encourage gay male clients to look at and categorise male prostitutes based on clients' presumptions of male prostitutes' sex-gender roles in relation to sex-gender appearances. In other words, the term '*gay king*-masculine' adopted by Thai male prostitutes in their

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[73] Edelman, 'Imaging the Homosexual', p. 205.
[74] Edelman, 'Imaging the Homosexual', p. 205.
[75] Edelman, 'Imaging the Homosexual', p. 208.

self-presentations does not mean that they always take an active role. Similarly, male prostitutes adopt '*gay queen*-feminine' does not mean that they always take a passive role. As I argue, activity and passivity are the subjects for personal choice and private negotiation.

At the moment of encounter in prostitution-related situation, the way in which gay male clients drive and look at men in the streets suggests that such a look reinforces the identity of male streetwalkers and categorisation of their sex-gender roles. Through constituting gay subjectivities, the position of male streetwalkers can be understood as both 'objects' who are looked at and 'subjects' who look back in order to communicate and negotiate with gay male clients. Male streetwalkers actively position themselves in a 'lower' position in order to maintain a relation with gay clients, whose position presupposes a 'higher' one in Thai social hierarchy. I argue that these signals are increasingly manipulated and highlighted in relation to the approach of the potential client's car. As I observed, the car and the way in which potential gay male clients drive-as-cruise, such as following a popular route, slowing down in specific locations, using the car's headlights or circling again and again around *Saranrom* park, can be understood as specific signals for those men in the street to be aware that they are being seen and approached. The identities of both the potential clients and the male streetwalkers begin to reveal themselves at the moment of encounter and within the exchange of the look.

Gay male clients deploy the penetrating look while driving. They aim to cruise male streetwalkers and anticipate that their look will be responded to. However, the act of

looking within *driving-as-cruising* practices needs to be identified more specifically.

Following Henning Bech, Turner argues that cruising has its own rewards: pleasure,

excitement and affirmation.[76] For many gay men, what is important is the pleasure of

looking at other men. As stated by Turner, the look in this aspect is 'an end in itself with

its own pleasure'.[77]

In the Thai context, the act of looking as 'gazing' used by gay men in their cars can also

be explained by the social identity they derive from this power hierarchy. Here, it is

worth re-emphasising Jan W. De Lind Van Wijngaarden's investigation of practising gay

sex among Thai male prostitutes. As Wijngaarden suggests, '[because] social hierarchy is

an important factor facilitating sexual contacts between persons of the same sex within

the Thai system [within different power positions, such as client and worker], many male

prostitutes will view their "feminine" sexual behaviour as the result of their weak

position in the social hierarchy, not the result of a "feminine identity"'.[78]

As mentioned earlier, the private car is also bound up with a symbolic order of wealth,

which inevitably enhances the degree of difference in the social hierarchy. Within

driving-as-cruising urban practices, the identity of gay male clients in a higher position

seems to exist prior to the look or the encounter that takes place. The act of looking as

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[76] Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 118, quoted in Turner, *Backward Glances*, p. 60.

[77] Turner, *Backward Glances*, p. 61.

[78] Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity: Bar-Based Male Sex Work in Chiang Mai', in Peter A. Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys: Male and Female Homosexualities in Contemporary Thailand* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1999), pp. 187–211.

'gazing' used by gay male clients encourages male streetwalkers to reveal their identity;

and at the same time to maintain the distance between a higher and a lower position, in

this case between clients and service-providers. In other words, the presumption of a

'higher' position produced by the economic and social contract of prostitution provides

gay male clients with a way of looking at those men in the streets in a 'lower' position as

objects of their gaze.

Following Silverman, the gaze that gay male clients deploy to look at male streetwalkers

is 'only from one point', in particular from the direction determined by the traffic

controlling system.[79] From the view limited by the car's windscreen and from a

presupposing higher position, such conditions allow gay male clients to behave

strategically towards male streetwalkers, as mentioned earlier. Within the strategic field,

driving-as-cruising offers gay male clients not only the pleasure of looking at those men

in the street, but also a way to control meeting scenarios. That is to say, *driving-as-*

cruising offers gay male clients the opportunity to act and to gaze, and to 'create an arena

and a frame for those who inhabit its space'.[80]

The Visibility of Male Streetwalkers

The identity of gay male clients as spectators begins to destabilise particularly as a result

of the visibility of male streetwalkers. Through performative acts, for instance by

returning the look of the gay male clients in the car, male streetwalkers can cause the gay

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[79] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', p. 130.
[80] Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze', p. 43.

male clients to change their driving pattern, for instance slowing the speed of the car. In

this sense, the performative acts of male streetwalkers operating from their immobile

position can be understood as tactics to turn gay male clients' act of gazing into 'seeing'.

According to Rendell, the act of looking as 'seeing' is a way of challenging the fixed

identity of spectatorship in visual relations.[81] Unlike the gaze, which does not invite a

look to be returned, the act of looking as seeing suggests that the gay man in the car is

now prepared to be looked at back. In response to this way of seeing, male streetwalkers

have the potential to look back – as subjects who look as well as are looked at. The look

of male streetwalkers provides us with a way of considering the destabilisation of the

spectatorship of gay male clients. I examine how male prostitutes' subjectivities are

constituted through the spatial relations of male streetwalkers themselves and gay male

clients at the moment of encounter. That is to say, in the streets around *Saranrom* park,

the positions of 'looking at' and 'being looked at' are flexible and are constructed

through the reciprocal visual relations between the clients and the male streetwalkers.

The tactics of male streetwalkers operate in response to the strategies of gay male clients'

ways of *driving-as-cruising*. In the light of Silverman's discussion, male streetwalkers

are in the position of 'seeing oneself being seen – even when no eyes are trained upon

one'.[82] Male streetwalkers behave tactically not through movement, but rather through

immobility and the way they stand or sit. This includes the way they display themselves

in the street, and the way in which they produce 'spaces', making it possible for gay male

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[81] Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18.
[82] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', p. 127.

clients in a car to recognise them. To discuss male streetwalkers' actions as tactical, I

suggest that they perform homosexuality – displaying themselves as '*gay king*-masculine'

or '*gay queen*-feminine' in order to invite clients to look at them in recognisable gay

images, so that the male streetwalkers can look at back.

Reading 'place' and 'space' in the light of de Certeau's 'strategy' and 'tactic', as

examined in chapter one, gay male clients' *driving-as-cruising* operates strategically to

control ways of encountering male streetwalkers – suggesting that gay male clients'

operations establish 'places', whereas male streetwalkers' immobility and specific ways

of looking operate tactically in response to gay male clients – suggesting that male

streetwalkers manipulate 'places' and produce 'spaces'. In this respect, 'spaces' are

produced by male streetwalkers' tactics through their ways of displaying themselves in

order to be looked at, to meet gay male clients and to produce the possibility of returning

the look. I am interested in examining the tactics of male streetwalkers in response to gay

male clients' strategies and how these constitute meeting places. I question how tactics

are used through the performance acts of male streetwalkers, in responding to gay men's

ways of driving, cruising and looking.

In my own observations, at first it was relatively difficult to distinguish men who were

male streetwalkers from those men who were not. It took me some time to figure out

which men were the streetwalkers. The difference which I noticed at first was the way in

which they sat, stood, walked and talked among their group because their behaviour was

noticeably different from that of 'non-streetwalkers'. Worrachai Rattanaduangta similarly

noticed male streetwalkers' behaviour in the ways they used space. Rattanaduangta

observed that 'besides those who sat, some of them stood on the footpath looking at the

cars driving by, without making any attempt to go home (in the sense of waiting for the

public bus)'.[83] Like Rattanaduangta, I noticed that this group of men made no attempt to

move elsewhere, but sat in the same location for quite a long time. I felt that they sat

there expecting something to happen. Otherwise, they looked just like ordinary male-

masculine young men. Once I started talking to these men, some other aspects arose in

the conversation. From what they told me, the streets around *Saranrom* park are

organised by the ways in which each of them determines and selects his working

territory.

Based on my interviewees reports, male streetwalkers in this area can be grouped into

three identities: '*phu-chai*' or male-masculine heterosexual-identified streetwalkers, '*bi*'

or male-masculine bisexual-identified male streetwalkers, and male-feminine

homosexual-identified male streetwalkers whom the other streetwalkers call '*gay*

queens'. When they began to describe these three categories, they started by mentioning

the specific locations these men occupied. First, *Thanon Mahathrat* is known as the

location for *phu-chai* streetwalkers, who are believed to limit their sex service to the

active role. Then several locations, including *Thanon Sanam Chai*, *Thanon Kalayana*

Maitri and *Thanon Rachini*, in particular around *Khlong Lod*, are believed to be the

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[83] Worrachai Rattanaduangta, *Chai-khae-tua: Bar-gay, Ying-cabaret, Ta-lok-ka-fae and Ka-ri-Sanam-Luang* (Male Prostitutes: Bar Gays, Cabaret Girls, Café Comedians and *Sanam Luang's* Female Prostitutes) (Bangkok: Openbooks, 2002), p. 38 (my translation).

territory for bisexual-identified male streetwalkers (see Figures 3.11–3.12). Lastly, the

intersection between *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Sanam Chai* is considered to be

the territory for male-feminine homosexual-identified male streetwalkers, who are

believed to prefer to take the passive role in male-centred sexual practices; my

interviewees called them *'gay queens'* (see Figures 3.7–3.10). As Butprom showed in

Phu-Chai-Pai-Leung, the majority of male streetwalkers working in this area, including

my interviewees, consider themselves *'phu-chai'* by definition of their sex-gender

identity, which is male-masculinity and their sex-gender role, which prefer to have sex

with women more than men and take only an 'active role'.

What strikes me most is the position my interviewees took in order to identify the

difference in their peers' sex-gender identities, in particular those whom they consider to

be '*gay queen*'. How might my interviewees consider the term '*gay queen*'? Do my

interviewees suggest that these '*gay queen*' streetwalkers can be clearly recognised in

their male-feminine self-presentation? How do they know the sex roles of these '*gay

queen*' streetwalkers?

I argue that this positioning is derived from the presumption of the male-masculine image

produced by the norms of sex-gender roles, and the presumption of male-male sex,

'masculine-active' and 'feminine-passive', produced by the norms of heterosexuality. As

elaborated in the previous chapter, I argue that the term '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*' can

be understood as the play of self-presentations (*gay king*-masculine and *gay queen*-

feminine), which encourage clients to make a connection masculine and feminine with an

active role and a passive role, respectively. In short, the terms '*gay king*' and '*gay queen*'

used in sexual practices of Thai male streetwalkers are performative acts of subjects.

Although male streetwalkers invite clients to look at and categorise them with sexual

positions, many streetwalkers regard their sex role, in particular a 'passive' role as a

result of 'lower' positions based on the existing social, cultural and class structures.

For example, 'B', one of my interviewees, identifies himself at first as '*phu-chai'* or

male-masculine heterosexual-identified streetwalkers. He also suggests that 'even though

I prefer to have sex with women, I think I have probably become part homosexual, either

bisexual or *gay king*, otherwise I couldn't really do it'.[84] There are two cultural aspects

which need to be pulled out: first, 'B' does not feel that identifying himself as bisexual or

gay king can disrupt his heterosexual identity; second, because 'B' did not mention his

'homosexual' part is *gay queen*, it could suggest that 'B' might devalue *gay queen* but

revalue bisexual and *gay king* to be closer to *phu-chai* than *gay queen*.

As elaborated in the previous chapter, Graeme Storer notes that male prostitutes avoid

being identified as gays by preserving their masculine self-image.[85] Storer notes that the

'same-sex behaviour among male prostitutes continues to reinforce the imaginings of the

"real-man" as dominant and "on top" of the situation'.[86] In my interview, I am not

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[84] Excerpt from interview with 'B', 2 December 2002 (my translation).
[85] Graeme Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand: Masculinity and Male–Male Sex Behaviours', in Jackson and Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, pp. 141–59 at p. 148.
[86] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 149.

surprised that 'B' preferred to be recognised as either *'phu-chai*, bisexual or *gay king'*, and not *'gay queen'*, because the former identities tend to be recognised as being 'real-men', someone closer to the 'proper' social construction of male masculinity, than the 'improper' construction of male femininity or female femininity. What needs to be considered is not whether or not it is possible for 'B' to take a passive role because, in fact, 'B' appears to depend upon the construction of the 'real-man' which enables him to practise gay sex without disrupting his sexual identity as heterosexual. 'B' seems to be concerned that his self-presentation should not be seen as *gay queen*, who presumably 'always' takes a feminine-therefore-passive role. Male streetwalkers in this area prefer to be recognised as *'phu-chai'*, as Butprom's documentary suggests, because it is the only way to maintain their social status. From this perspective, to consider those men as *'gay queen'*, my interviewees including 'B' perhaps see those men only in their 'feminine' self-presentations, but in order to ensure that those men are *'gay queens'* due to their 'feminine-therefore-passive' role, I believe that my interviewees might get to know them in conversation or perhaps know them in person.

The Spaces and Tactics of Male Streetwalkers

It is important to engage with male streetwalkers from a position where they can reposition themselves, not as objects, but as subjects. It is important to emphasise that the spaces of male streetwalkers are produced through performative acts at the moment of encounter. Using de Certeau's tactics, from the immobile position of male streetwalkers, spaces are produced by manipulating places. I focus on the way in which male streetwalkers behave tactically in order to turn 'places', in this case those regulated by

gay men's *driving-as-cruising*, into 'spaces', from which they are actively able return the look.

When male streetwalkers display their bodies in the street, these meeting places also allow gay male clients to look at them. Yet it is not always the case that male streetwalkers have a particular set of acts, specific gestures or postures to attract clients. 'B' recalled how he and his peer group located themselves in order to be looked at:

> We do not have a uniform as such, we just wear normal clothes like we use in everyday life. We have no trick or any bodily performance to specify our sex service. Even though some do wave their hands, I do not. All we have to do is just stand and wait to be approached. You may know them [prospective clients] by the way they drive quite slowly, and when you look at them, they look back.[87]

The way that male streetwalkers' bodies become spectacles may depend less on how they display their bodies, and more on where the body is displayed. It is now clear how the clients, the gay male clients' *driving-as-cruising*, distinguish male streetwalkers from other men. Those men sitting at the bus-stop, standing on the street corner and walking slowly along the street who return the look are those selling sex. Once a man looks back in return, a message is conveyed that prompts a response, and at that moment the occupation of space by male streetwalkers begins to emerge.

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[87] Excerpt from interview with 'B', 2 December 2000.   .

The efficiency of employing a returned look depends on occupying the correct location, and I go on to investigate how male streetwalkers develop their tactics in specific meeting places. The following discussion is my examination of the tactics of male streetwalkers – ways of displaying their bodies, responding to clients in the cars and, most importantly, looking at back – in three particular locations around *Saranrom* park: at the street corner of *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Rachini*, at the bus-stop in *Thanon Charoenkrung*, and under the small trees in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*. I explore the tactics of male streetwalkers in these locations based on: first, two positions I took in my observation – in one of them I sat inside a car with a group of masculine-identified gay men, and walked, sat and stood in the same locations as male streetwalkers; and second, my interviewees' categorisations of three different groups of male streetwalkers in these areas – *phu-chai,* bisexual and *gay queen*. After experiencing and observing the actions of male streetwalkers, I situate my understanding of male streetwalkers' actions theoretically.

It is important to note that the self-presentations of male streetwalkers I found in these three locations are not related to my interviewees' categorisations. The first reason is perhaps because I cannot distinguish male-masculine bisexual-identified streetwalkers (bisexual) from male-masculine heterosexual-identified streetwalkers (*phu-chai*) by observing only their self-presentations. The second reason is because I found male-feminine streetwalkers (*gay queen*) in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*, which was different from the location my interviewees told me of, in *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Sanam Chai*. But it does not mean that my interviewees' categorisations are irrelevant. Rather, I

suggest that the working territories of these men are flexible and might not be fixed to

specific locations. The third reason is the intervention of the police. As mentioned earlier,

the presence of the police made it difficult to obtain a conversation with each streetwalker

I found. So, there is no reference concerning male streetwalkers' sex roles in the

following discussion.

3.13

3.14   3.15

Fig. 3.13   Bus terminus in *Thanon Rachini*.
Fig. 3.14   *Thanon Rachini* and *Khlong Lod.*
Fig. 3.15   Photograph of a male streetwalker at the street corner between *Thanon Charoenkrung* and
              Thanon Rachini.

According to a group of masculine-identified gay men in the car, the street corner at the

intersection of *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Rachini*, one of the most popular

meeting places (see Figures 3.13–3.15). I observed that at night *Thanon Rachini* is eerily

quiet, isolated and remote from the main street and other 'conventional' activities. Apart

from some private cars, there is only a small bus terminal functioning in this area. There

are also a small number of homeless people who live nearby, either in *Sanam Luang* or

along the canal, *Khlong Lod*. This particular street corner may have been selected

because of its spatial configuration: cars are required to reduce their speed here.

Taking the discussion concerning how to distinguish 'streetwalkers' from 'non-

streetwalkers', as mentioned earlier, there are male-masculine-identified streetwalkers

standing at this particular intersection. These men seem to display themselves

comfortably in the streets because they seek no protection, unlike other groups of male

streetwalkers I observed in other locations, but when they are looked at they look at back

and smile. Some of them come close to the cars when the speed drops, beckoning the cars

to pull up. On many occasions, I observed these male streetwalkers use the vehicles'

headlights from the opposite direction, mainly from *Thanon Charoenkrung* toward

Saranrom's main entrance, to help illuminate their appearance to the drivers.

I suggest that these men at this particular street corner might be *'phu-chai'* prostitutes –

male-masculine heterosexual-identified streetwalkers, because of their play of self-

presentations and self-identifications. The play of their masculine self-presentation and

sexual interest in male-male sex might lead clients to imagine that they might be *gay*

kings taking an active role. To maintain their masculinity and activity, I believe that these

men might regard gay sex, as Storer suggests, '[as] something being lived for the

moment'.[88] Here, male streetwalkers who might feel comfortable engaging in gay sex might regard this particular street corner as the most popular place to be 'looked at', and the place where male streetwalkers can 'look back' at the same time.

3.16   **3.17**

3.18   **3.19**

Fig. 3.16   Photograph of male streetwalkers in *Thanon Charoenkrung*
Fig. 3.17   Photograph of male streetwalkers in *Thanon Rachini*.
Fig. 3.18   Bus-stop in front of *Saranrom* Park.
Fig. 3.19   Bus stop in front of *Saranrom* Park.

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[88] Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand', p. 146.

The bus stop at the side of *Saranrom*'s main entrance in *Thanon Charoenkrung* is another meeting place (see Figures 3.18–3.19). 'B', who regularly works at this location, informed me that 'almost everyone who works around here seems to be so ordinary, if you are not paying enough attention, you may not notice them. Waiting for the bus is one of my tricks.'[89] Not only does the bus stop allow male streetwalkers to participate with the other activities in the street, it also permits them to disguise themselves as if they were waiting for the bus to come while checking out their potential clients. To assume a disguise is preferable for 'B', who went on to say, 'I feel safe here.' He explained, 'I used to stand there [pointing to the street corner at the intersection of *Thanon Charoenkrung* and *Thanon Rachini*, which is the first locations discussed previously] but I didn't like it because it made me feel like there was someone looking at me all the time. Maybe over there it is too bright and too exposed.'[90]

The bus-stop in *Thanon Charoenkrung* provides 'B', and many other male-masculine-identified streetwalkers, with a location to display themselves, and a space to hide themselves through disguise, offering psychological protection and allowing them to feel more comfortable at work. It is not difficult for the clients to distinguish streetwalkers from non-streetwalkers because not many people use this particular bus-stop at night. As mentioned earlier, those men who sit at the bus-stop and make no attempt to go anywhere as several buses pass by can be assumed to be streetwalkers. When the potential clients reduce the car speed at the location of the bus-stop to look at these men, these men look

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[89] Excerpt from interview with 'B', 2 December 2002.
[90] Excerpt from interview with 'B', 2 December 2002.

back but still make no move. After exchanging looks, on many occasions clients stop the car further down the street. According to 'B', such a pattern can be understood as an invitation for these men to go to the cars and negotiate for sex services.[91]

Although 'B' considers himself as '*phu-chai*', he also considers himself partly as a 'bisexual or *gay king*', as mentioned previously. The way in which 'B' presents and identifies himself publicly is different from the other group of '*phu-chai*' I observed in the previous location. Here, it is not my intention to question who are more '*phu-chai*', 'B' or the other group of masculine men, but rather to understand what might make 'B' feel insecure when being looked at in his '*phu-chai*' image, leading him to locate himself in a different location from the other group of '*phu-chai*'. I suggest that 'B' is not marked by the norms of sex-gender roles because of his 'proper' male-masculine self-presentation – suggesting that he 'passes' as a masculine-identified man. However, he might feel that he is marked by the norms of heterosexuality and might be looked at and categorised as homosexual. In this respect, I suggest that 'B' intends to use the bus-stop in order to disguise himself in order to 'pass' as a heterosexual man.

At the third location *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*, I examined different actions of male streetwalkers. As mentioned earlier, I consider these men in this particular street to be '*gay queen*' streetwalkers because of their feminine self-presentation or, as Thitikorn

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[91] Excerpt from interview with 'B', 2 December 2002.

Trayaporn claims, 'looking like a man who acts somewhat like a woman'.[92] I have argued that '*gay queen*-feminine' can be regarded as the play of self-presentation and self-identification – considering that '*gay queen*' can be one of several performative acts of male streetwalkers who are masculine and heterosexual. Because there is no information about these men's sexual identity, for that reason, I examine only how these *'gay queen'* streetwalkers relate themselves to the location they occupy based on self-presentation. I suggest that their male-feminine self-presentation is visible and marked by the norms of sex-gender roles and heterosexuality. These *'gay queen'* streetwalkers either perform as '*phu-chai*' or '*gay king*' in order to 'pass' as male-masculine, or use a darker area in order to make their marked identity invisible or unmarked.

I suggest that these '*gay queen*' streetwalkers use space to disguise themselves, and yet remain approachable for clients in the car. Unlike male-masculine streetwalkers using the bus-stop, these '*gay queen*' streetwalkers use a long row of small trees in these two streets to disguise themselves under a certain shadow. *Gay queen* streetwalkers use the light at the location in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri* not to display their self-presentations, but rather to conceal them from spectators. A long row of small trees lines these two streets creating a perfect covered space through which the street light hardly passes (see Figures 3.20–3.23). The darkness under the trees prompts drivers to slow down to check out those men beneath. The exchange of looks occurs at that moment.

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[92] Thitikorn Trayaporn, 'The Image of Male Homosexuals as Reflected in the Content of Thai Daily Newspaper During 1965-2000', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2000), p. 51.

3.20   **3.21**

3.22   **3.23**

Fig. 3.20   Photograph of male streetwalkers in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*.
Fig. 3.21   Photograph of male streetwalkers in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*.
Fig. 3.22   The space beneath the trees in *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*.
Fig. 3.23   *Thanon Kalayana Maitri*.

In this chapter, I have emphasised how male streetwalkers occupy space following

changes in the use of public space by gay male clients. In *driving-as-cruising*, the private

car becomes an important factor, driving male streetwalkers from *Sanam Luang* to the

streets around *Saranrom* park. It is not my intention to generalise the tactics of every

male streetwalker working around *Saranrom* park, for this might undermine their position

as acting and different subjects. Neither do I attempt to generalise the streets around

Saranrom park as merely a backdrop providing a place for display. Through tactics and

performative acts, each meeting place around *Saranrom* park appears to be a medium through which the acting subjects of male streetwalkers can be constituted. New occupations of space arise through the performative acts and through the way the male streetwalkers actively reposition themselves as subjects. From this perspective, male streetwalkers are not objects of gaze, but subjects of sight – suggesting that they actively look back. The spatial configurations around *Saranrom* park provide male streetwalkers with physical working locations and specific urban conditions through which they operate their performative acts tactically. Spaces produced in various ways by male streetwalkers' tactics enable them to challenge gay male clients' strategies at the moment of their encounter – suggesting that male streetwalkers are both objects who are looked at and subjects who look back in order to communicate and negotiate with gay male clients. In other words, male streetwalkers are prepared to be looked at so that they can look back.

Chapter Four

Places and Spaces in Gay Go-Go Bars:
Strategies of the Bar Owners and Tactics of the Male Sex Workers

'Please come and take a look, the show will begin at any minute'. That night I

heard this sentence more than ten times before we made our way into that bar. I

have to tell you that this trip was arranged two days beforehand by my friends.

When I confessed that I had never been to any gay go-go bars, they decided to put

'my virginity' to an end. Now we were standing in front of Surawong's Boys'

Town, the most prominent gay area in Bangkok. I had to admit I was very excited

and nervous at the same time.

Bouncers were directing us to enter the bar. Beyond that dark red wooden door,

there was a black curtain hanging from the ceiling all the way down to the floor.

It was not too dark, but definitely mysterious. At first glance, I thought it was a

discotheque because the music was so loud and many disco lights hung above all

over the dance floor. But only a few men danced on stage. The dancers were so

strange, maybe because they were almost naked. They looked at me. 'What should

I do?' I murmured to myself. I did not dare to look at them, even though I really

wanted to. I needed a place to sit. I felt so embarrassed, but a moment later I was

amused and delighted. There was a man who ushered us to our seats; people

called him 'Captain'. Now I had a seat, my friends started giggling among

themselves when they looked at me. 'Don't be nervous, everything is going to be

fine', they told me. The lights were dimming; no one was on stage now. A few

minutes later, the show began.[1]

Gay go-go bars are frequently used to illustrate the relationship between gay men and

male sex workers. Thai scholars, namely Prawit Patlom and Prakop Siwatchana, have

examined the setting-up of such establishments, the running of the bar business and, more

importantly, the role of gay go-go bars in relation to customers and male sex workers.[2] I

discuss in detail how Patlom and Siwatchana examine gay go-go bars later in this

chapter. But for me, the first experience of going to a gay go-go bar is unforgettable. As

noted above, it was in 1990 that I first got to know male commercial sex workers. Unlike

the men I met in the street, these men were keen to appear in front of me, as well as many

other customers in the go-go bar that night. For them, prostitution is a professional work

or a paid job; and more importantly, it has nothing to do with being gay.

I argue that within the gay go-go business the men are male prostitutes, or to be more

specific, male sex workers are employed by the businesses. These men agree to work for

gay go-go bars under rules and regulations primarily concerning their bodies, their image

and appearance, which requires that each of them must look as good or as desirable as

possible before performing on stage. It is important to emphasise that my intention is not

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[1] Excerpt from a personal note recalling the memory of my first visit to a gay go-go bar in 1990.

[2] Prawit Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes: the Cycle of Labor Relationship and the Fact of Employment',
MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1998), pp. 56–72 and Prakop Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and
Heath Behaviour of Male Prostitutes in the *Patpong* Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Mahidol University,
1994), pp. 36–40 (all quotations from these papers are my translation).

to define these male sex workers' sexual identities, whether they are heterosexual,

bisexual or gay, but rather to discuss the way in which they produce gay identities

differently from gay men, as discussed in chapter two, operating from their social status

in the existing social, cultural and class structures rather than the gender hierarchy.

How might the relationships between gay male customers and male sex workers in

theoretical discussions in relation to the 'subject' and 'object' relations which they adopt

at the moment of their encounter, be related to the cultural aspects of client/work in terms

of 'higher/lower' position in the existing social hierarchy? How might we consider the

operations of the bar owners, whether they aim to reinforce the binary oppositions of

'client/worker' as 'subject/object' and mapped with a cultural aspect of 'higher/lower'

position or allow such binary oppositions get destabilised? If, as I suggest, the bar owners

operate their gay go-go bars strategically to reinforce these binary oppositions, what are

the 'spatial practices' they adopt? How might we consider Thai male sex workers who

are culturally understood to be in a 'lower' position and produced as 'objects' of desire

through the gaze of gay male customers? Can they respond and actively relocate

themselves in the 'subject' position on equal terms with gay male customers in the

subject position in gay go-go bars? These are questions I aim to explore in this chapter.

This chapter aims to examine the relations of the bar owner, gay male customers and

male sex workers in gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, the centre of the gay

commercial sex business in contemporary Bangkok, in two ways: first, how the bar

owners operate their go-go bars in terms of reinforcing the existing cultural aspects of

gay male customers in a higher position and workers in a lower position and encouraging

gay male customers to look at male sex workers as 'objects' of desire; second, how male

sex workers respond to the operations of the bar owners in gay go-go bars, in particular

by resisting categorisation and objectification through self-categorisation in their

performative acts in terms of the play of self-identifications and self-presentations in gay

go-go bars.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first is an exploration of the history of the

gay commercial sex business in contemporary Bangkok from the 1980s onwards –

focusing on *Surawong's* Boys' town in relation to the mainstream sex industry in

Patpong. I suggest that the gay commercial sex business in *Surawong's* Boys' Town

shares a mutual interest with the heterosexual sex business in *Patpong* – suggesting that

not only do they share business strategies in order to maximise their profit by reinforcing

the cultural relation of 'client/work as higher/lower', but also a certain knowledge of how

to deal with the local authorities, law and regulations. Thus, the first section draws

particular attention to *Surawong's* Boys' Town in terms of 'construction' – how it has

been constructed through the same law and regulations as the heterosexual sex business

in *Patpong*, in particular the Entertainment Places Act of 1966.

The second section is an investigation of *Surawong's* Boys' Town in relation to *Silom* in

terms of historical transformation, focusing on how the centre of the gay business in

Bangkok has changed from the 'old' centre based on sex-business-oriented bars in

Surawong's Boys' Town to the 'new' centre based on lifestyle-oriented bars in *Silom*.

Although the 'new' centre of the gay business in *Silom* is not directly related to the sex-business as much as in *Surawong's* Boys' Town – suggesting that there are freelance male prostitutes working in lifestyle-oriented gay bars in *Silom* – this 'new' centre of gay business is important because it leads us to understand two things. First it leads us to understand why Thai gay men/customers abandoned *Surawong's* Boys' Town, in which many go-go bars *Surawong's* Boys' Town chose to privilege Western gay customers, known as gay *farangs* customers, over Thai gay customers. I suggest that this cultural aspect can be understood in terms of the binary oppositions of '*farang* customers/Thai customers' as 'higher/lower' position.

Second, the 'new' centre in *Silom* leads us to understand the rise of 'upper-middle-class' Thai gay men. I suggest that the term 'upper' can be understood as the term used to 'displace' the position of Thai 'middle-class' gay men/customers, who live and grow up in Western countries, have Western-oriented education and identify themselves with Western self-images, from a dependent position with a 'higher' position for gay *farangs,* and to 're-evaluate' their pre-given 'lower' position, which might be related to the 'lower' position of male sex workers.[3]

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[3] I use the term Thai 'middle-class' gay men based on my historical interpretation, in turn based on Jiraporn Witayasakpan's discussion of the rise of Thai middle-class men in Phibun's period, 1938–1962, as discussed in the third stage in chapter two. See Jiraporn Witayasakpan, 'Phibun's Nationalist Policy' in Charnvit Kasetsiri, Thamrongsak Petchlert-anan and Vigal Phongpanitanon (eds), *Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and Modern Thai Politics* (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2001), p. 298 (my translation).

Thus, the second section draws particular attention to two cultural aspects in terms of two binary oppositions: 'customer/worker as higher/lower' and '*farang* customer/Thai customer as higher/lower'. This section uses such cultural aspects, which is already bound up with the social hierarchy and class structure in Thai society as an interpretative lens to examine the construction of *Surawong's* Boys' Town from a different perspective. How might we relate such destabilisation of the social status of Thai gay men/customers to the social status of male sex workers?

The third section is an examination of the operations of gay go-go bars and the responses of male sex workers in the light of Judith Butler's performativity theory and Michel de Certeau's theoretical discussion of spatial practices: strategy and tactic. I consider the operations of gay go-go bars as 'strategic' – suggesting the bar owners maximise their profit through drinks and '*off*' fees, the fee that customers have to pay when they want to take a worker out. Through strategic operations, I argue that the bodies of male sex workers are objectified by the bar owner. The workers are used as a medium for maximising the profit of the gay go-go business.

To discuss the spatial practices the bar owners adopt, I draw attention to the strategies the bar owners use to produce gay go-go bars as 'places', that is through the spatial arrangement between the position of male sex workers on stage and the position of customers in the seating area, the use of lighting and the use and locations of mirrors. Taking theoretical discussions of 'positions' and 'looks' from chapter one – Laura Mulvey's visual analysis based on the binary opposition of 'subject-looking/object-being-

looked at', in contrast with Jane Rendell's reference to the use of Kaja Silverman's visual

analysis by Alice T. Friedman based on destabilising such a binary opposition, which is a

subject looking and being looked at, likewise an object is looked at and can look back – I

draw attention to the way in which the bar owners reinforce the position of customers,

constituting them as subjects of gazes.[4] In other words, the bar owners maximise the

voyeuristic pleasure of looking at the men on stage as 'objects' of desire and, at the same

time, minimise any possibility that this pleasure might be disturbed.

After exploring the strategies used in gay go-go bars, I examine the tactics of male sex

workers. I focus particularly on the possibility that male sex workers are able to 'use' the

space, in particular the mirrors, to reposition themselves not as objects but as the subjects

of their performative acts and of the look. I suggest that the way in which male sex

workers look at their reflection in the mirror can be discussed in terms of 'the experience

of the subject', as Silverman argues, 'seeing oneself being seen'.[5] The site of encounter is

key, produced through the spatial arrangement and the visual relation between the male

sex workers on stage and the gay customers in the seating area. I argue that the interior

space of gay go-go bars is not simply a backdrop, but a medium through which male sex

workers can deploy tactics in response to the strategies used by the business proposition

of gay go-go bars.

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[4] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 14–26 and Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56 referred to in Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House', *Assemblage*, v. 18 (August 1992), pp. 40–61, quoted in Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), p. 18.
[5] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', p. 127.

It is important to note that the investigation of the bar owners' spatial practices and male

sex workers' performative acts in gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town was based

on my understanding of the connection of Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's

spatial practices. I situate such an understanding as an interpretative lens to rethink the

first-hand information, observation, spatial experience and interviews, all of which were

conducted between September and December 2002 and March and May 2004. For

confidentiality, all participants are anonymous. Five gay go-go bars, namely the New

Twilight Bar, Classic2nd Boys Club, the New Tawan Bar, Jupitor2002 and Dream Boy,

were chosen to provide examples of location, accessibility, exterior and interior. I

observed and examined each bar in terms of how its space operated in general, and how it

operated differently from the others. I also explored the way in which each of them

arranged the space between the stage and the customers' seating area, the use of the lights

and the use and location of mirrors.

Patpong and *Surawong*: The History of the Gay Commercial Sex Business

To examine the establishment of the gay commercial sex business in Thailand, it is

important to begin with an investigation of the Thai political and economic situation in

relation to the intervention of the United States during the Vietnam War. According to

Jackson, 'the 1970s can be seen as the beginning of a homosexual quarter in the central

residential area of the city'.[6] Jackson goes on, 'There is no doubt that the influx of

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[6] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 244.

foreigners in the 1970s, both GIs and tourists, was a significant factor in the

establishment of gay bars and discos in the *Patpong* area'.[7] Like Jackson, Prakop

Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat also state that among the large number of

American servicemen, there was also a significant number of gay men, who introduced

new ways of meeting other gay men.[8]

Although I agree with these researchers: that the influence produced by American

servicemen in the 1970s was a vital factor marking the beginning of commercial gay

enterprises, I argue that we should not assume that this factor alone caused the

establishment of the gay commercial business, without also taking into account the

influence of local gay men and the context of cultural attitudes to homosexuality. For that

reason, I suggest that the influx of foreign gay men should be understood as a catalyst,

which reinforced both the establishment of the gay commercial sex business and the re-

constitution of Thai gay identities. As examined in chapter two, I have suggested that *gay*

king and *gay queen* should not be categorised according to gendered sexual identities,

which are 'masculine-therefore-active' and 'feminine-therefore-passive', but should

rather be identified through self-categorisation, which is '*gay king*-masculine' and '*gay*

queen-feminine', whereas a sex role, 'activity' or 'passivity', is a sexual preference and a

personal choice.

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[7] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 243.
[8] Prakop Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua* (Male Prostitutes) (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 1996), p. 3.
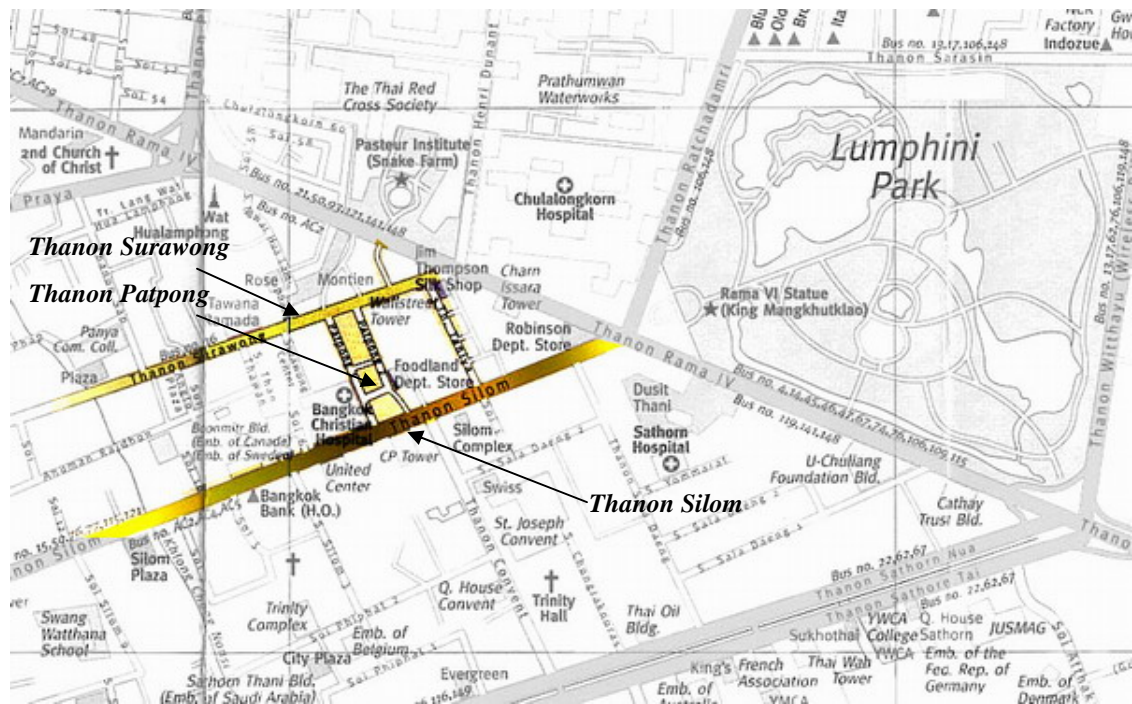
Fig. 4.1 The map of the central business district of Bangkok depicting the location of *Thanon Patpong*, *Thanon Silom* and *Thanon Surawong*.

Today, *Patpong* is one of the most significant streets in the central business district in

Bangkok (see Figure 4.1). But for many, it is also well known as 'the central area of sex

tourism in Bangkok'.[9] To understand the beginning of *Patpong* as 'the central area of sex

tourism', it is necessary to consider the presence of American servicemen in the city of

Bangkok and the national policy under the regime of Prime Minister Field Marshal Sarit

Thanarat, 1958–1962. In this section, I draw particular attention to the replacement of the

Prostitution Prohibition Act of 1960 with the Entertainment Places Act of 1966. I argue

that such replacement provided a great opportunity to increase both the number of

commercial sex businesses in Bangkok and the various kinds of so-called 'entertainment

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[9] Lenore Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in *Patpong* and Explorations of the Edges of Imagination', in *Journal of Sex Research*, v. 29, n. 4 (November 1992), pp. 451–75 at p. 451.

places'.[10] Thus, it is important to understand that the gay commercial sex business in *Surawong's* Boys' Town has been constructed through the same law and regulation as heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong*, which is the Entertainment Places Act; in other words, both of them are categorised as 'entertainment places'.

In the late 1950s, with the presence of foreign military officers, *Patpong* was gradually transformed from a foreigners' housing community into one of the most important business districts in Bangkok.[11] In the 1960s, the district rapidly became 'a bar-dominated entertainment strip'.[12] According to the Thai Government, by that time, under Sarit's nationalist policy, prostitutes were bound up with a symbolic meaning, that of 'a decline of traditional culture'.[13] Prostitutes were part of cultural attitudes concerning the 'proper' sex-gender roles and 'proper' sex-gender appearances established during the regime of Prime Minister Field Marshal P. Phibun, 1938–1941 and 1948–1957, which aimed to build up a 'good Thai citizen', as discussed in chapter two. Scott Barme argues that within the 'proper' image of the 'good Thai citizen' produced by Phibun's heterosexual and patriarchal-oriented nationalist policy, female identity, in the case of unmarried women, was 'closely bound up with the maintenance of virtue […] an

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[10] Jasmine Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand', commissioned by UNICEF-EAPRO, published online August–November 1995 <http://www.sexwork.com/Thailand/legal.html>, accessed 12th July 2005.

[11] Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in *Patpong*', p. 453.

[12] Cleo Odzer, '*Patpong* prostitution; its relationship to, and effect on, the position of women in Thai society', (unpublished paper, 1990), p. 52 and Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in *Patpong*', p. 456.

[13] Leslie Ann Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders: Gender, National Identity and Prostitution Policy in Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), p. 45 and Scot Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex, and Popular Culture in Thailand* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 229.

obsession that is endlessly reaffirmed through the plethora of beauty contests', and in the case of married women, was limited, 'revolving for the most part around the role of motherhood and the sphere of domesticity'.[14] It is not surprising that female prostitutes were considered 'improper' according to Phibun's nationalist policy and needed to be suppressed.

In the next regime of Sarit, in order to remove prostitutes from public view, or as Leslie Ann Jeffrey puts it, 'to clear the streets', Sarit launched the Prostitution Prohibition Act in 1960 to prosecute 'any person who "wanders" or "loiters" about the streets or public places in a manner or way which appears to be an appeal to communicate for prostitution purposes'.[15] As discussed in chapter two, this act placed an emphasis on women's sexual behaviour as well as men's sexual behaviour, in particular those *kathoeys* who presumably took a passive role in sexual intercourse. But this act was used only for a short period of time and was replaced by the new act in 1966.

According to Jeffery, Sarit's nationalist policy can be described as pro-Western. Sarit endorsed the Entertainment Places Act in 1966, which undermined the Prostitution Prohibition Act. It can be explained as a way of satisfying the demands from many military foreigner officers for female prostitutes. Jeffery argues that these foreign officers tended to see prostitution as 'an important part of maintaining order'.[16] To quote Jeffrey:

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[14] Barme, *Woman, Man, Bangkok*, p. 256.
[15] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 26.
[16] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 37.

The provision of sexual services through prostitution is considered to be both an emotional outlet and a reward for war-weary soldiers; a strategy for preventing the rape of local (alley) women; a counter to potential homosexual acts among the troops; and, when properly controlled, a way to limit the spread of venereal disease, which is a major threat to the health of soldiers.[17]

Unlike the Prostitution Prohibition Act, which emphasised 'sex acts' and the persons who commit those 'sex acts' in return for earning or any benefit, the Entertainment Places Act emphasised rather the 'places' in which the sex act takes place in return for earning or any benefit occurs. It is not clear whether these 'places' were considered as 'prostitution establishments', which means 'places established for prostitution or in which the prostitution is allowed, and shall include places used for soliciting or procuring another person for prostitution'.[18] The Entertainment Places Act defined these 'places' as 'entertainment establishments', which can refer to 'the various kinds of "Entertainment Places" [this act allowed] to operate under a license to be obtained from local police stations'.[19]

However, the Entertainment Places Act was ambiguous because it allowed bar owners both 'to hire women under the rubric of "entertainers" and to make a profit from those entertainers as long as the sexual encounter occurred off-site'.[20] Jasmine Caye points out

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[17] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 37.
[18] Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand'.
[19] Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand'.
[20] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 39.

that this act 'drove women into entertainment places [because] it has become much more

feasible for both women and entertainment establishments to render sexual services,

under the guise that only "special services" will be performed'.[21] The term 'special

services', as Caye describes:

> [For example, in establishing such places as massage parlours] the women come
> to the men's hotel room and 'massage' them, but, in reality do more than that. It is
> usually left for the customer to decide what kind of 'special service' he really
> wants, and because of that, they are able to participate in this industry without any
> legal action being taken against them.[22]

Exploitation of the Entertainment Places Act, in particular the terms 'entertainers',

'special services' and 'off-site', remains a significant feature of both the heterosexual and

gay commercial sex business today. Because there was no reference to the sex, gender

and sexuality of the entertainers in this act, both women and men can be hired as

'entertainers', for instance go-go dancers, rather than 'prostitutes'. Instead of achieving

the plan of controlling the number of 'entertainers', the Entertainment Places Act

broadened the possibilities for many bars to make a profit and rapidly expand their

business.

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[21] Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand'.
[22] Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand'.

Following Sukanya Hantrakul, as Lenore Manderson notes, 'the Entertainment Places Act resulted in the flourishing of alternative places to old style brothels, such as massage parlours, nightclubs, bars, coffee shops, tea houses and barber shops'.[23] By the late 1980s, the commercial sex business had diversified further 'to cater to all tastes and pockets: brothels, massage parlours, "go-go" bars, "cafeterias" and free (street) prostitution involving both women and men, catering for both foreigners and Thai male customers. The two lanes and side alleys of *Patpong* are part of this' (see Figure 4.2).[24] I argue that because the demand for the gay commercial sex industry rapidly increased, it is not surprising that Thai men who migrated from outside Bangkok to work in the capital city were hired as 'entertainers' to do 'special services' in various gay go-go bars in the area, including a rising number of gay go-go bars in *Surawong*.

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[23] Sukanya Hantrakul, 'Prostitution in Thailand', in G. Chandler, N. Sullivan and I. Branson (eds), *Development and Displacement: Women in Southeast Asia,* Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, n. 18 (Clayton: Monash University, 1988), pp. 115–36, quoted in Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances', p. 456.
[24] Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances', p. 457.

Fig. 4.2 Photographs of street scenes taken from the two lanes and side alleys of *Patpong*.

Like Manderson, Jackson argues that, 'from the early 1970s until about 1982, a significant but relatively fixed number of gay bars and discos were established in the entertainment district of *Patpong*'.[25] In this respect, deriving from the 'transgressive image' produced by the settlement of heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong*, I argue that there was an opportunity for gay go-go bars to 'disguise' themselves as 'entertainment

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[25] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 241.

establishments' in this area. To disguise suggests that the operations of gay go-go bars

were based on sharing a mutual interest in the sex industry, and assimilating themselves

in the so-called 'entertainment places'. In short, I argue that the Entertainment Places Act

of 1966 provides the possibility for an alternative sex industry to house itself in or around

the area of already well-established sex industry in *Patpong*. Since the 1980s, gay

commercial sex businesses have begun to appear in *Thanon Surawong*, known as

Surawong's Boys' Town.

Surawong and *Silom*: The Emergence of *Surawong's* Boys' Town
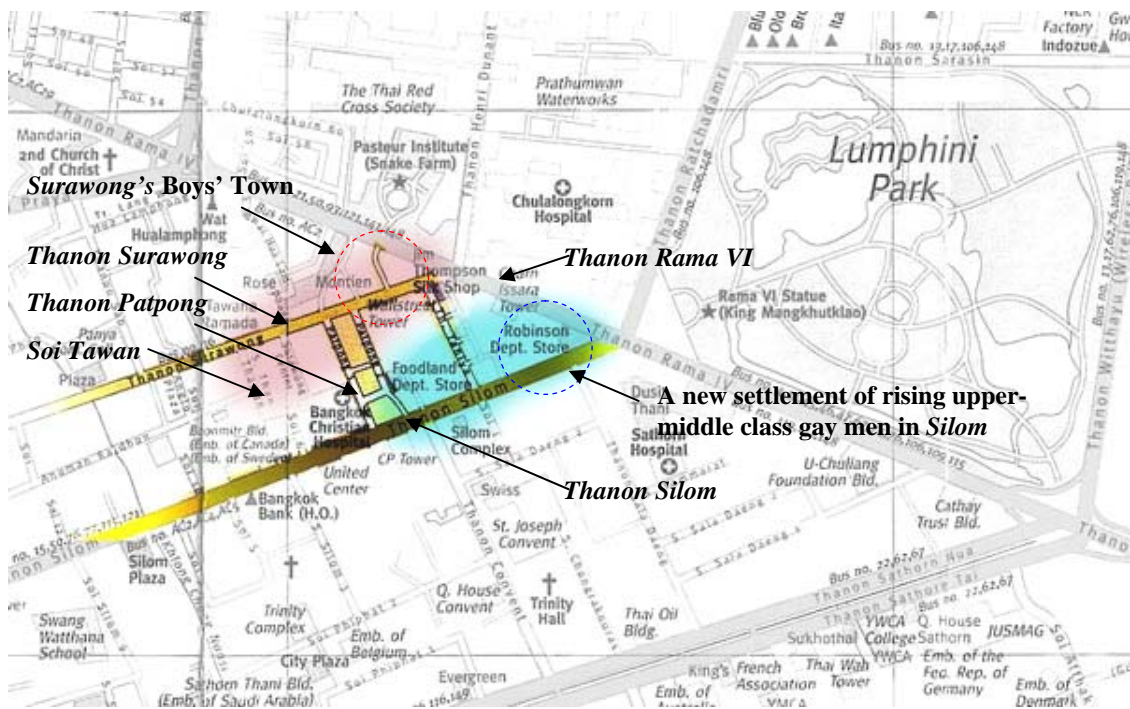
Fig. 4.3 Map depicting the boundary between gay lifestyle-oriented businesses in *Silom* (blue) and gay
sex-oriented businesses in *Surawong* (red).

Geographically, the two (in)famous alleys of *Patpong* are located in between the two

main streets, *Thanon Surawong* and *Thanon Silom* (see Figure 4.3). The area in

Surawong that I concentrate on is situated from *soi Phatuchai* at the corner of *Thanon*

Surawong to *soi Tawan* opposite the Tawana Ramada Hotel. This area is known among

Thais and gay Westerners as *Surawong's* Boys' Town. There are at least twelve gay go-

go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town.[26] It is not surprising that *Spartacus,* the Western gay

travel guide, described Thailand as 'a gay paradise'.[27] Yet, Jackson argues that to portray

Thailand as a 'gay paradise' is misleading because such images reflects only the

viewpoint of gay Westerners who tend to focus solely on surface aspects of sex acts,

without considering negative attitudes towards homosexuality in connection with the

kathoey, found in both academic and popular discourses, as I discussed in chapter two. I

suggest that Jackson's discussion concerning the Western-oriented perspective is useful

because it leads us to rethink the origin of the notion of 'Thailand as a gay paradise'.

Where did it come from? Might we consider that this notion has been built up according

to the way in which many gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town have offered gay

Westerner customers privileges over Thai gay male customers?

To examine *Surawong's* Boys' Town produced through a Western-oriented perspective

considering Thailand as a gay paradise, I draw particular attention to the two binary

oppositions: first, 'client/worker as higher/lower', which is the already existing social

hierarchy and class structure; and second, 'gay Western customers/gay Thai customers as

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[26] Based on my observation in March 2004, which were Blue Star Sexy Circus, Boys Bangkok Bar, Boys.Com, Classic2nd Boys Club, Dream Boy, Fuji Boys, Future Boys, Jupiter2002, New Man Bar, New Tawan Bar, New Twilight Bar and X-treme Bar.
[27] Peter A. Jackson, 'Tolerant But Unaccepting: The Myth of a Thai "Gay Paradise"', in Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (eds), *Genders & Sexualities in Modern Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1999), pp. 226–42.

higher/lower', which, as I argue, the new social hierarchy and class structure imposed on

Surawong's Boys' Town. I suggest that the ways in which many go-go bars reinforce the

image of a gay paradise has led local gay customers, who were positioned as lower, to

abandon *Surawong* and move to *Silom* – suggesting that Thai customers have displaced

themselves from a lower position, re-evaluated themselves in a new class, that is 'upper-

middle-class', and re-located themselves in the 'new' local gay business in *Silom*.

Jackson regards the earlier period in the early 1970s, in particular until the first go-go bar

appeared in town, as the first stage of the gay commercial sex business established within

the heterosexual go-go business in *Patpong* area. As stated by Jackson, 'homosexuals had

few if any specifically "gay" venues. Homosexual sex was a very minor sideline of the

then already well-established heterosexual sex market of coffee shops, brothels and short-

term hotels'.[28] Based on an interview with *Pan Bunnag*, a Thai elite *kathoey*, in *Neon*, a

local gay magazine in 1986, Prakop Siwatchana asserts that 'the Framing House', known

among homosexual customers as *Baan-Yod*, was believed in 1964 to be the first

homosexual-oriented bar in town.[29] It was not in *Patpong* but located at the King Taksin

Monument area in Thonburi, the other side of *Chao Phraya* River, and area known

among Thais as *Wong-Wian Yai*.[30] A few year later, two new homosexual-oriented bars,

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[28] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 241.

[29] Siwatchana does not mention sexual identity of *Pan Bunnag*. Terdsak Romjumpa claims that *Pan Bunnag* is *kathoey* and shows the selected photographs of *Pan Bunnag* in women's clothes, photographs from a local newspaper in 1972. See Terdsak Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society, 1965-1999', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2002), p. 57 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).

[30] Prakop Siwatchana and Duangphon Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua* (Male Prostitutes) (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 1996), p. 4, quoted in Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 23.

namely Sea Hag and Charlie, appeared in Bangkok. But neither of them can be regarded

as gay go-go bars like those in *Surawong's* Boys' Town today.[31] According to

Siwatchana, Patlom and Todsawat Rattanavimon, Sea Hag, for example, 'provided only a

place for those men, mostly *farangs*, whose sexual behaviour tended towards male–male

sex, to meet other gay *farangs* or to meet freelance young men'.[32] It is important to note

that Sea Hag did not offer sex services, so that these 'freelance' young men were not

'male sex workers' as those who work in the gay commercial sex business today. But

they might be 'prostitutes' who were regularly paid for sex by those gay *farangs* who

came to the bar.[33] Siwatchana, Patlom and Rattanavimon do not mention sexual identities

of these men, and we cannot assume they identified themselves as gay. But their

discussion is useful for arguing that the way in which these young men were motivated to

come and meet gay *farang* customers in the bar can be described as the model which was

steadily employed in the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town later on in the 1970s.

What is more important to emphasise is the fact that Siwatchana, Rattanavimon and

Patlom, explicitly regard these young men as '*dek off*', a term which locates these men as

the product of social hierarchy.[34] The term *dek* can be translated as 'young', in this case,

young men or boys. The term *dek off* generally refers to 'young men' who are believed to

occupy a lower position than customers who pay an *off* fee. As Graeme Storer notes, 'the

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[31] Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 23 and Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', pp. 22–4.
[32] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 23; Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 23 and Todsawat Rattanavimon, '*Pok-Pu'ak Chai Puu Phi Kai Hai Gay*' ('Revealing Men Who Sell Sex for Gay Men'), in *Bangkok 30*, v. 35, n. 4 (September 1989), p. 33 (my translation).
[33] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 23.
[34] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 23; Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 23 and Rattanavimon, 'Revealing Men Who Sell Sex for Gay Men', p. 33.

term *dek* denotes someone young, usually younger than the client, and also reflects the

low social and cultural status of the male sex worker'.[35] The term *dek* connotes also the

image of a 'young boy' – suggesting that 'age' is one of the important factors operating

in the Thai social hierarchy, in particular through male-centred sexual practices, as

discussed in chapter two. Needless to say, such a notion of 'young boy' can lead to the

problem of exploitation and child prostitution in Thailand. Thai scholars, for example

Kittikun Arnkasai and Taweekun Malayaporn, are concerned that child prostitution has

become increasingly common in Thai society and should be investigated carefully, but

none of these scholars seems to address the problem in relation to their pre-given lower

position derived from the Thai social hierarchy.[36]

Fig. 4.4 Photograph of the interior decoration of the Tulip Bar, 1969.

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[35] Graeme Storer, 'Rehearsing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand: Masculinity and Male-Male Sex Behaviours', in Peter A. Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys: Male and Female Homosexualities in Contemporary Thailand* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1999), p. 143.

[36] Kittikun Arnkasai, 'Child Prostitutes: a Case Study of Boy Streetwalkers', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1997), pp. 22–60 and Taweekun Malayaporn, 'A Study of Street Youth in the Sex Sale Service: a Case Study from the *Silom* and *Pattaya* Areas', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1994), pp. 23–5.

Following Sea Hag and those freelance young men who came to meet gay *farang* customers there, Siwatchana states that the Tulip bar, in 1969, became the first bar to recruit 'good-looking boys' from various public places, such as *Sanam Luang*, bus and train terminals, just to sit in the bar in order to fill it up and to lighten the atmosphere (see Figure 4.4).[37] In the same year, *Baan-Yod* moved from *Wong-Wian Yai* to *soi Phatuchai* in *Thanon Surawong* and became known as the Twilight Bar, which was the first time customers paid *off* fees in return for taking the boys off the bar premises.[38] Siwatchana, Khamnunwat and Patlom give no explanation for the term 'good-looking boys'. I would argue that, because the Entertainment Places Act of 1966 was came into force before the Tulip Bar opened in 1969, so, it might be the case that these bars hired 'good-looking boys' to be 'entertainers' for customers, who might ask for 'special services' from these boys by paying *off* fees and taking them outside the premises.[39]

According to Siwatchana, in 1972, Tom Boy was the first bar that required men who worked in the bar to go on stage to show themselves and, indeed, perform go-go dances.[40] Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden describes those men on stage in the bar as male go-go dancers, '[who were] encouraged to present their bodies more sexually as well as

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[37] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 24.
[38] Siwatchana and Khamnunwat, *Phuchai khai tua*, p. 5, quoted in Patlom, 'Male Prostitutes', p. 23.
[39] See discussion of the term 'entertainers' and 'special services' in note 22–23.
[40] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 25.

explicitly, but they were also requested to wear only a bikini or sometimes go completely

naked […] they try to dance sensually and make movements suggestive of sexual acts'.[41]

Following the first stage, Jackson considers the period from the 1970s to 1982 to be the

second stage of the establishment of the gay commercial business in *Patpong* area. He

suggests that the territory of the gay commercial sex business expanded from *Thanon*

Surawong to *Thanon Silom*. This time the expansion did not revolve around the gay sex-

oriented business, but was marked by a successful gay lifestyle-oriented business, called

the Rome Club in *Silom soi* 4 in 1972.[42] Jackson's discussion of the second period is

useful for constructing an argument suggesting that the demarcating line between

Surawong and *Silom* has been drawn, which leads us to rethink the construction of

Surawong's Boys' Town produced through the means of exclusion and marginalisation

of local gay men. However, it is worth arguing that: first, while Jackson places an

emphasis on the rising 'new' centre of the gay lifestyle-oriented business in *Silom* in

1972, it does not mean that the 'old' centre of the gay sex-oriented business in *Surawong*

had already come to an end. Rather, such a division suggests the different target groups

of these two areas. I discuss this division in detail in relation to the different social status

of gay *farang* customers and gay Thai customers later in this section. I also argue that the

gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town have increased since the 1990s through the

support and sponsorship of both local and Western customers – suggesting that many

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[41] Jan W. De Lind van Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity: Bar-Based Male Sex Work in Chiang Mai', in Jackson and Sullivan (eds), *Lady Boys, Tom Boys, Rent Boys*, pp. 187–211 at p. 189.
[42] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 241.

retired male sex workers came back to *Surawong* to set up their own businesses.[43]

Importantly, although many 'new' gay lifestyle-oriented bars in *Silom* did not provide sex

services, I argue that it does not mean that these bars had no freelance young men

working on their premises.

The third stage started about 1983, and featured 'a rapid expansion of commercial

homosexual facilities'.[44] Jackson also notes, in 1984, that other homosexual-oriented

venues expanded into 'the suburb of Bangkok called *Saphaan Khwaay* in the north and

further along *Sukhumvit Road* in the east'.[45] Jackson does not go further to analyse a

fourth period. I would say that the next period, perhaps from the 1980s until now, could

be characterised by a demarcation within gay urban culture between so-called higher-,

middle- and lower-class gay men whose class difference is marked by lifestyle, wages, a

Western-influenced image and, most importantly, their meeting places. I consider *Silom*

to be a 'new' centre for gay venues among local gay men, particularly young 'upper-

middle-class' gay men.

The increasing number of gay lifestyle-oriented business can be explained by the 'new'

identity of local gay men, who differentiated themselves not only from the feminine

'*kathoey*', as discussed in chapter two, but also from a cultural aspect based on the

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[43] Siwatchana, 'Life Styles and Heath Behaviour', p. 28.
[44] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 241.
[45] Most gay-related businesses in *Saphaan Khwaay* are set up as meeting places, such as karaoke bars, regardless of any explicit activities such as go-go dancing. Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 245.

existing social hierarchy in terms of 'Western-customers-higher/local-customers-lower'.

The following discussion draws particularly attention to the cultural aspect and examines:

first, the way in which this cultural presumption was, and still is, reinforced by many gay

go-go bars; second, the way in which local gay customers who, I argue, were the product

of middle-class culture actively repositioned themselves from 'lower' to 'upper-middle',

re-evaluated their gayness by moving to the 'new' centre in *Silom*.

Surawong and *Silom* each provided different niche markets of sex-oriented and lifestyle-

oriented businesses. In particular, the two areas increasingly produced different images of

social status not only among local gay men but also between gay *farangs* customers and

local gay customers. As mentioned earlier, many gay businesses in *Surawong* attempted

to preserve the predominant image of a 'gay paradise'; they tended to reinforce the

predominant image of lower-class male sex workers, while privileging gay *farang*

customers. I suggest that the way in which many gay businesses in *Surawong* privileged

gay *farang* customers over local gay customers created a conflict between the bars and

these local customers, which led them to abandon *Surawong*. To illustrate the attitude of

bar owners to this social change, I draw on a conversation with the owner of a gay go-go

bar in *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

Fig. 4.5 Photographs showing the street and activities in the night market in *Thanon Silom*. Counterfeit well-known brands of merchandise such as clothes, shoes, jeans and watches, including pirated music and movies can be found here every night after 10:00 p.m. At some particular spots along the street there are also hill-tribe people, whether genuine or not, selling their exotic merchandise to foreigners.

On 12 March 2004, I conducted an interview with 'S', the owner of a gay go-go bar in *Surawong's* Boys' Town. 'S' believes that among local gay men, *Surawong* is not considered to be part of their gay community. According to 'S', because these men consider themselves to be 'upper-class' young gay people, they prefer to go to *Silom*. As

'S' puts it, 'these men are afraid to show up'.[46] For those gay men it is perhaps not because they worry about their sexual identity being publicly exposed, but rather because the dominant image of lower-class Thai men produced through the binary opposition between *farangs* as higher and locals as lower reflects negatively on them. Here, I argue that the social status of these local gay men whom 'S' mentioned can be understood as 'upper-middle-class'.

'S' does not mention the self-presentations (masculine or feminine) or self-identifications (active or passive) of these so-called 'upper-class' local gay customers. But, it is important that the way in which 'S' considers these local gay customers to be 'gay' suggests that these local gay customers were recognised by their male-masculinity, and not by their male-femininity like the *kathoey* because since the 1960s Thai male-masculinity has been redefined with the meaning and value of heterosexual patriarchy. From this perspective, I argue that these local gay customers can be understood as the product of middle-class culture.

It is worth recalling here the discussion of 'middle-class' culture, as already examined in chapter two. According to Jeffery, it was in the 1960s when the 'new' middle-class men, who grew up or studied in Western countries and had overtly adopted the Western image of masculinity, began to criticise the 'old' image of Sarit's *nakleng* and the 'improper' male-feminine *kathoey*.[47] From this perspective, I would argue that the social status of

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[46] Quoted from in-depth interview with 'S', 12 March 2004.
[47] Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. 100.

these local gay men, who differentiated themselves from the *kathoey* and went to gay go-go bars for sex services, were unlikely to be 'lower-class' or 'rural-class', but rather 'middle-class', and their social status could be referred to by the image of Jeffery's new middle-class men, as mentioned previously.[48]

As I discussed earlier, *Surawong's* Boys' Town is produced through a cultural aspect based on the binary opposition 'gay *farang* customers/gay Thai customers' as 'higher/lower'. Thus, it is not surprising that many 'middle-class' local gay men do not wish to frequent *Surawong*, since they do not wish to be associated with such an image. Based on the observation of 'S', I suggest that these 'middle-class' local gay customers attempted to break down the binary opposition of '*farang* customers as higher/local customer as lower' – to displace their negative position from its dependent position; to replace the negative position with a positive position; and to give their position with a new meaning and value.[49] In other words, those 'middle-class' local gay customers who moved their social life from *Surawong* to *Silom*, and those 'middle-class' local gay men, who come directly to *Silom* in order to refuse to be associated with the pre-given social status, can be seen as 'upper-middle-class' local gay men who, as I suggest, might see themselves in the Western image of male masculinity or might re-evaluate their status to be equal with gay *farangs*.

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[48] According to Jeffery, the 'rural-class' can be referred broadly to 'the class of those who rely on the land for survival'. See Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders*, p. xxvii.

[49] See the discussion of three steps of deconstruction in chapter one. Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p. xv, quoted in Rendell, Penner and Borden (eds), in *Gender Space Architecture* p. 104.

The social status of 'lower-class' male sex workers, based on the binary opposition of 'client/worker as higher/lower', is reinforced through the bar business in general, and through the self-changing social status of local gay men. The attitude of local gay men to gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town is that 'gay sex-oriented bars' and '*Surawong's* Boys' Town' are a working place for poor young men from lower-class families, whose images are identified by the exotic *Isan* look – dark-skinned, smooth, fine featured and appearing to entertain gay *farang* customers more than gay Thai customers. I will elaborate on the *Isan* image in detail in the next chapter.

In accordance with the strategic plan which aims to industrialise the national market economy, many young men were drawn from the countryside to the capital city, as mentioned in chapter two. Specifically, following the increasing influence of Western gay liberation and tourism during the 1980s and 1990s, many young men from the countryside entered the gay commercial sex business in *Surawong's* Boys' Town. Wijngaarden notes that 'the increased demand has come from an expansion of gay tourism from both Western and Asian countries (especially Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan), as well as from the growing wealth of the Thai middle class, with more Thai men being able to afford to visit male prostitutes more frequently'.[50]

To investigate the division between *Surawong* and *Silom*, one has to understand the difference between 'gay go-go bars' or gay sex-oriented bars and 'gay bars' or gay

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[50] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 188.

lifestyle-oriented bars. To explain gay lifestyle-oriented bars, I draw upon Evelyn

Hooker's analyses of gay bars in relation to the notion of gay community, using her

analyses as a tool to examine the differences between them. Hooker describes the gay bar

as a 'free market'.[51] The term 'market' tends to signify both 'a business enterprise in

which leisure is accomplished via the market: gain from the sale of liquor and

entertainment is legitimate' and 'as a metaphor to conceive of transaction between

homosexuals, a set of terms relating to the negotiation of an exchange of sexual

services'.[52] Hooker goes further, arguing that the gay bar can be understood as a meeting

place 'where friends are met, the news of the homosexual world is to be heard, gossip

exchanged, invitations to parties issued, and warnings about current danger spots and

attitudes of the police given'.[53] From this perspective, the gay bar appears to be a

manifestation of social relations. The gay bar can be identified as a product of the gay

community.

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[51] Evelyn Hooker, 'The Homosexual Community' in John H. Gagnon and William Simon (eds), *Sexual Deviance* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 167–96 at p. 174.
[52] Hooker, 'The Homosexual Community', p. 174.
[53] Hooker, 'The Homosexual Community', p. 174.

Fig. 4.6 Photographs showing the street scenes in *Silom soi* 2 and 4 where major gay lifestyle-oriented businesses, such as gay-friendly pubs, bars, clubs, restaurants, cafés and clothing shops are situated.

We can see such environments in many gay lifestyle-oriented bars in *Silom* (see Figure 4.6). They are the manifestation of a local gay community. Like Hooker, Pichet Saiphan portrays *Silom* in relation to the representation of a gay community – suggesting the territory where various activities and a large number of gay-related businesses have come to establish the centre of urban lifestyles for gay men.[54] Saiphan continues, 'for many gay men, *Silom* becomes more than a meeting place […] here is the place where they belong'.[55] Saiphan suggests that what is more important is that gay go-go bars seem not to fit with the gay urban lifestyle. To quote Saiphan, 'in *Silom*, you can enjoy going to the bars like a chain session, one after another […] every time you go into a gay go-go bar

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[54] Pichet Saiphan, 'Silom: Gay Life and Gay Place', in Parita Koanantakool (ed.), *Life at the Margin: the Body and Identity* (Bangkok: Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2001), pp. 66 and 84–8 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).
[55] Saiphan, 'Silom: Gay Life and Gay Place', pp. 61 and 89.

you will be asked politely to order a drink – it is compulsory, whereas it is more like an

option in gay bars'.[56]

From this perspective, the difference between *Surawong* and *Silom* should not be

characterised by their different niche markets, but rather by the way gay people tend to

identify themselves with each place. But, we should not assume that there are no sexual

transactions in gay lifestyle-oriented bars in *Silom*, and I would argue that there are

freelance male prostitutes working in many lifestyle-oriented bars in *Silom*. Most of the

gay bars in *Silom* offer themselves as meeting places serving the social lifestyle of those

gay men who consider themselves to be the occupiers of *Silom* or as 'a part of *Silom*'.[57]

Within the capitalist market economy, it is not surprising that the gay lifestyle-oriented

bars in *Silom* are attractive to customers who reinforce their social status through their

affluence and, more importantly, through the predominantly Western-influenced image of

'upper-middle-class' gay men.

Unlike gay lifestyle-oriented bars, gay sex-oriented bars were not established as places

for gay men to enjoy social life with friends, but that they deliberately target those gay

customers who wish to buy sex services. As emphasised by Wijngaarden, 'many of these

venues call themselves a "bar" and maintain the air of a "normal" bar where one would

go to chat, drink and relax, while in fact most clients go to such venues with the specific

intention of picking up a male sex worker and enjoying sexual pleasure with him in

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[56] Excerpt from a conversation with Saiphan, 26 March 2004.
[57] Saiphan, 'Silom: Gay Life and Gay Place', p. 61.

exchange for money'.[58] Sexual explicitness became the main character of *Surawong's* Boys' Town, promoted by the go-go business. Additionally, following the increasing growth of gay tourism, *Surawong's* Boys' Town has gradually become the exclusive locale of pro-Western gay venues. This can be seen from the fact that many venues prefer to employ male sex workers who can speak English. Many of these young men who come from the countryside and work in go-go bars tend to see this professional job as a good opportunity to change their social status.[59] From my observations, gay *farang* customers seem to be more keenly interested in the exotic image of *Isan* boys; whereas the upper-middle-class local gay men, who are also customers, prefer to identify with the Western-influenced image. 'H', an editor of gay magazines, holds a similar view. He believes that the boys are willing to be in *Surawong's* Boys' Town because they will be more accepted here.[60] I will return to discuss the relations of gay *farangs* and the *Isan* image and the relations of 'upper-middle-class' local gay men and the Western-influenced image in detail in the next chapter.

The demarcation between *Surawong* and *Silom* is manifest not only through social hierarchy, cultural and class differences derived from different power positions rooted in Thai society, but also through the way in which the gay capitalists who own gay go-go bars tend to highlight this social construct by privileging *farangs* over local gay men. Many local gay men have abandoned *Surawong's* Boys' Town. What remains is the

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[58] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 189.
[59] As mentioned in previous chapters, I intend to discuss male prostitutes as performing homosexuals, not as homosexuals.
[60] Excerpt from an interview with 'H', 20 March 2004.

attitudes of local gay men concerning the 'lower' position produced through the binary opposition between customer-higher and worker-lower and the binary opposition between *farangs* and Thais. For the young men who have come to work in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, their lower-class identity is produced through the 'strategies' of those capitalists owning go-go businesses both to maximise the profit of the business and to maintain *Surawong's* Boys' Town as a 'gay paradise'. Indeed, to allow gay *farang* customers to maintain a higher position, local gay men and male sex workers need to be placed in a lower social position.

I have suggested that *Surawong's* Boys' Town is produced through the same law and regulations as the heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong* and through the change in the centre of local gay businesses in Bangkok from *Surawong* to *Silom*. In the following discussion, I draw attention to the 'spatial practices' of the bar owners, focusing on how their power is distributed through the exterior, the interior, the use of light, and the use and location of mirrors. In other words, I examine the 'strategies' of the bar owners, which produce gay go-go bars as 'places' in order to reinforce the binary opposition of 'client/worker as higher/lower', to encourage the customers to gaze at the bodies of male sex workers on stage and produce them as 'objects' of desire. After discussing the 'strategies' of the bar owners in 'places', I draw attention to the ways in which male sex workers respond to these strategies, considering the 'tactics' of male sex workers in their 'spaces'.

Building Gay Go-Go Bars: The Strategies of Gay Go-Go Bars
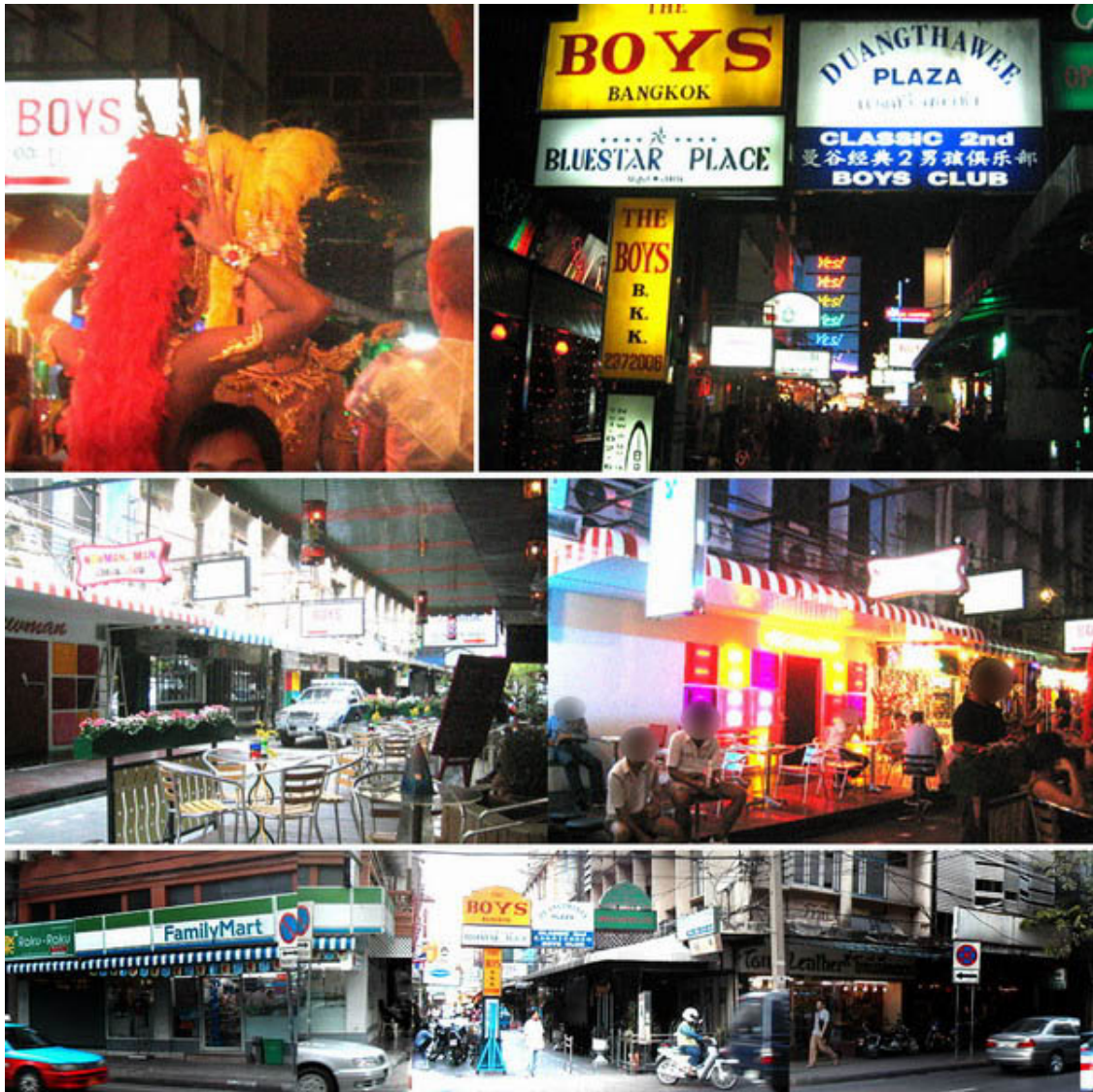
Fig. 4.7 Photographs showing the difference between day and night on the street in *soi Phatuchai,* known as *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

For some, the bar is a familiar place; the companionship and friendliness of the

workers has been built up over time and continual visits. For others, it is an

unfamiliar and dissociated event: removed from their own reality, the acts are

watched as other-worldly. For others again, a desire to explore the erotic realms

played out on stage is translated into a desire to return […] the bar is a

supermarket of desire, a commercial venue for the exploration of the edge of

fantasy; the workers are the objects of sale.[61]

Following Manderson's analysis of the commercial sex industry quoted above, the gay

go-go bars can be considered to be unconventional theatres where the male sex workers

are the main characters in the play, and the fantasy is that the dance performance is a sex

act (see Figure 4.7). In this section, I focus on the way in which gay go-go bars in

Surawong's Boys' Town provide customers with arranged environments in order to

intensify sexual desire. To explore the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town as an

active production, it is important to discuss how these places are constructed by the bar

owners.

These go-go bars are established by the bar owners in order to maximise profit and

operate in response to the capitalist market economy by creating an exceptional theatre of

sexual fantasy. As I discussed earlier, the gay commercial sex business 'disguises' itself

in the dominant heterosexual sex business in the *Patpong* area. The term 'disguise' of the

gay commercial sex business needs discussion. In the light of de Certeau's spatial

practices, to disguise of the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town should not be

understood as 'tactical' because it is not a way of unmarking marked identity, as

examined in previous chapters, but rather as 'strategic' – one which focuses on the

adaptation of the gay go-go business in order to maximise profit. It is worth remembering

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[61] Manderson, 'Public Sex Performances in *Patpong*', p. 463.

that the Entertainment Places Act of 1966 allows gay go-go bars to be considered as 'entertainment places'. In other words, these gay go-go bars are visible and marked by heterosexual-patriarchal hegemony – suggesting that they might be seen as marginalised places by the eyes of heterosexual normality, but they are invisible and unmarked by law and regulations of local authorities – suggesting that they are legal and operate 'under a license to be obtained from local police stations'.[62]

Having discussed *Surawong's* Boys' Town in terms of social construction, I now discuss it in terms of its material construction, such as its location, the buildings, signs and ways of decorating both the exterior and interior space of the gay go-go bars. In particular, I focus on the physical construction of the interior space of gay go-go bars under which space is operated strategically and produced by the bar owners as 'place'. Yet, through their physical construction, I argue that the interior space of gay go-go bars creates and intensifies customers' sexual desire. To quote Wijngaarden, 'the bars try to create a stimulating, erotic atmosphere for the client with music and dimmed red or purple neon (fluorescent) lights, and young men that are (or seem to be) "willing to please"'.[63] From this perspective, I examine the ways in which these go-go bars appear publicly, focusing on the location, the exteriors and decorative formations, such as vivid colours, signs and symbols, and the interior space, in particular the space between the stage and the customers' seating area, where the encounters and the looks of gay male clients and male sex workers take place.

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[62] Caye, 'Preliminary Survey on Regional Child Trafficking for Prostitution in Thailand'.
[63] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 189.

In response to the strategies operated in gay go-go bars, I argue that male sex workers are able to reposition themselves not as objects to be looked at but as acting subjects who are looking at themselves in the mirrors. Through the specific ways in which they look at themselves in the mirrors, I explore the tactics of male sex workers. To do this, the aim is to examine how the male sex workers respond to the bars' spatial arrangements. I argue that the interior space of gay go-go bars is choreographed to allow the visual relations between the positions of male sex workers being looked at on stage and those of customers who are looking at male sex workers from the customers' seating area.

The Location: the Disguise and the Representation of Gay Go-Go Bars
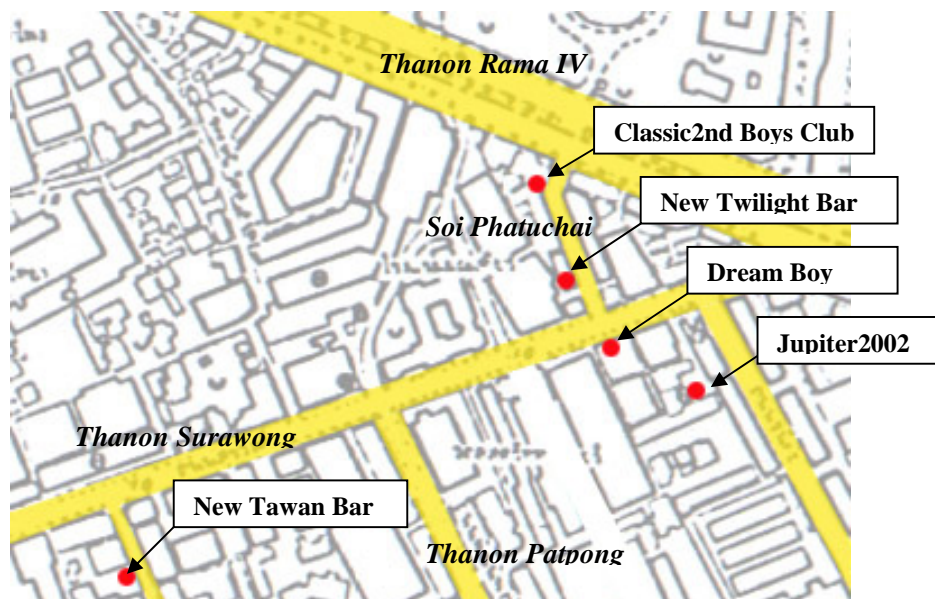
Fig. 4.8 Locations of five selected gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

The location of *soi Phatuchai*, the centre of *Surawong's* Boys' Town, situated slightly off two (in)famous alleys in *Patpong* can be understood as one of the important features

helping *Surawong's* Boys' Town to establish itself in contemporary Bangkok. The location of *soi Phatuchai* prevents the establishment of the gay commercial sex business from confronting the heterosexual-oriented go-go bars already well established in *Patpong*. For many gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, the location of *soi Phatuchai* is essential in order to attract more customers. But for Jupiter2002 and New Tawan Bar, their isolated location outside the premises of *soi Phatuchai* becomes more desirable, in particular for a number of gay customers who do not want anyone to see them entering a gay go-go bar (see Figure 4.8). Like Jupiter2002 and New Tawan Bar, Dream Boy is also situated outside the premises of *soi Phatuchai* and, more importantly, on the main street of *Surawong*. Many people see the location of Dream Boy as rather a disadvantage because it may discourage customers who have not yet come out and are afraid to be seen entering a gay venue. However, according to 'M', a bar manager, the location of Dream Boy is rather beneficial because the customer can enter without anyone noticing.[64] Locating gay businesses in the area of the well-known sex industry of Thailand does not automatically mean that the gay go-go bars are never faced with homophobia or prejudice against the gay commercial sex business. Unlike heterosexuals entering the heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong*, many gay customers prefer not to be seen entering a gay go-go bar. As 'M' claimed, those customers believe that the location of Dream Boy can provide them with an opportunity to disguise themselves in order to enter the bar unnoticed.

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[64] Excerpt from in-depth interview with 'M', 16 March 2004.

It is useful to emphasise that the term 'disguise' is used in two ways. The disguise of the gay go-go bars can be understood as 'strategic', one which assimilates and integrates the gay business into the mainstream heterosexual sex industry in order to attract more gay male customers and maximise their profit. I suggest that the gay go-go bars disguise themselves as legal 'entertainment places'. The disguise of gay male customers can be understood as 'tactical', one which unmarks their marked identity, based on heterosexual patriarchy; for now, I suggest that customers disguise themselves as 'typical tourists' walking along the street in a heterosexual-dominated bar area.

Unlike the heterosexual go-go bars in *Patpong*, which allow the activities of the female go-go dancers on stage to be seen from the outside, the locations of gay go-go bars tend to conceal what happens inside from the world outside. It is important for gay go-go bars either to distance themselves from the main street, thus preventing themselves from being entirely exposed to public eyes, or like Dream Boy and the New Twilight Bar to situate most of their activities upstairs. For those bars whose stage and activities are situated downstairs, for example Classic2nd Boys Club or the New Tawan Bar, the entrance is covered by a black curtain hanging from ceiling to floor. Various opaque but dazzling materials, namely aluminium, plastic and metal, are used to create an image of a modern or trendy bar.

4.9   **4.10**

Fig. 4.9 Signs and symbols publicly advertised the heterosexual go-go bars in the *Patpong* area.
Fig. 4.10 Signs and symbols publicly advertised the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

Signs and symbols are also important features helping many gay go-go bars to disguise themselves. Looking at the signs and symbols of female go-go bars in *Patpong* alongside those of gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, it appears that many gay go-go bars tend to adopt a similar way of advertising their business to the public (see Figures 4.9– 4.10). In other words, none of them appears to show that they provide sex services. I draw attention particularly to the way in which those signs and symbols are used not literally to show explicit sex, but, in the case of the gay go-go bars, are bound up with the representation of male gender: first, non-sexed identity body parts, such as lips; second, images of sexed male bodies, such as the torso of a muscle man; and third, metaphorical images, such as mountains and rockets to stand for sexed identity body parts.

I draw particularly attention to the word 'boy' is used in the same way that the heterosexual sex business uses the word 'girl' in their advertising, but, more importantly,

it is consciously used to highlight 'a lower position in power differences'. Just as the word 'girl' means the same thing within the conditions of heterosexual-patriarchal society, I argue that the word 'boy' is used as one of the bar owners' strategies in order to reinforce the binary opposition of 'client as higher' and 'worker as lower', in this case emphasising through 'age' difference, which is 'client-older-therefore-higher' and 'worker-younger-therefore-lower'.[65]

In a sense, the word 'boy' as used by the gay commercial sex industry seems to function on two levels: to empower gay male customer by positioning them in a 'older-higher' position, and to dispower male sex workers by positioning them in a 'younger-lower' position. Using the word 'boy' in advertising gay go-go bars is not simply a substitute for the word 'girl', but rather contributes to the plays of power difference, social hierarchy and class structure in male-centred sexual practices in Thai society.

The Interiors: Spatial Arrangement and Visual relations in Gay Go-Go Bars

Moving from outside on the street, I draw attention to the interior spaces of gay go-go bars, which are arranged both to accommodate customers and to create a theatrical environment, aiming to increase sexual desire, manipulate sexual fantasy and encourage customers to buy sex services.

The aim is to explore how the physical construction of the gay go-go bars operates. I suggest that the interior space is arranged strategically in order to produce specific

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[65] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', pp. 193–4.

images of the bodies of male sex workers. It is not surprising that every corner in gay go-go bars is well-defined and set up to provoke both the sensual and sexual desire of gay customers. For example, Classic 2nd Boys Club uses half-naked male mannequins to enhance customers' fantasies, and these mannequins are coloured with a red light. New Tawan Bar puts a large presentation board to display all photographs of its sex workers at the entrance. Dream Boy covers one side of the wall with a large relief panel depicting an exotic scenario of the boys in a tropical forest.[66]

At this point, I discuss male sex workers' performative acts and focus particularly on the moment when they are on stage in front of customers in the seating area. I explore the possibilities of male sex workers manipulating the 'place' regulated by the bar owners' strategies in order to reposition themselves, not as objects of the customers' gaze but as subjects of their own sight. To begin with, I examine the spatial arrangement and visual relation used in the 'place' of gay go-go bars, first through the relationships between the stage and the customers' seating area, then through the use of lighting and the selection of materials, especially mirrors. I argue that the way male sex workers perform on stage – the way they dance and look at their reflection in the mirrors while pretending to be the objects of sight for others is a tactic used to manipulate the 'place' and produce a new 'space'.

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[66] Based on my observation in March 2004.

The Stage and the Customers' Seating Area

According to 'M', 'nowadays it has become less important whether the boys [male sex workers] are good at go-go dancing or not […] what needs to be done is to put more ingredients into the bar in order to spice up those boys'.[67] The go-go business no longer relies solely on how good-looking the male sex workers are, but rather on how the image and appearance of male sex workers can be advertised. To display male sex workers on stage and make them more spectacular is a new business proposition that each bar must take into serious consideration.

In my interview with 'S', a bar owner, he mentioned that he planned to create a new type of gay go-go bar, which emphasised a large stage with a separate entrance for boys and customers. What 'S' suggests is the need to change the spatial arrangement of his gay go-go bar, which can be understood as a way of responding to the new regulations imposed by government policy reinforcing the Entertainment Places Act of 1966 – suggesting that the rubrics of 'entertainment establishments' and 'entertainers' are questioned, and for that reason, the bar owners whose bars operate under this act must be aware of how the act might change. It is important to note that the reinforcement of the new regulations was unclear by the time when I conducted by empirical research in March 2004. But, according to 'S', the new regulations concern, for example, all 'entertainers' must be dressed in white underwear with a white spandex top and the shows must be creatively presented with less explicit nudity. For 'S', the aim is to improve both the shows and the

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[67] Excerpt from in-depth interview with 'M', 16 March 2004 (my translation).

stage on which the shows are performed, in order to create new ways of displaying and

looking at the bodies of male sex workers.
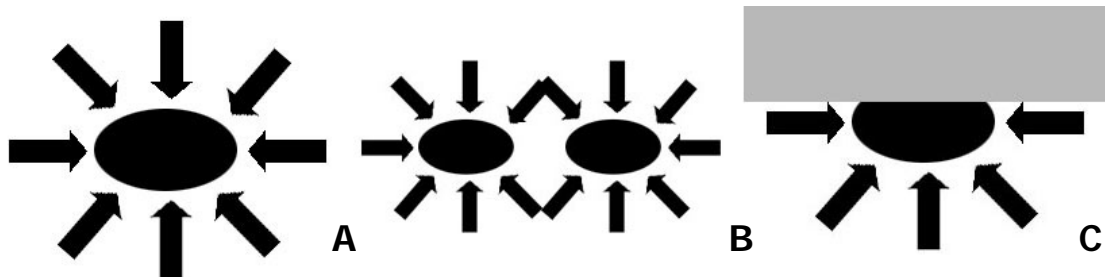
Fig. 4.11 Three diagrams showing how the stage in gay go-go bars is organised in relation to the
customers' seating area: A – single free-floating floor (found in New Twilight Bar), B – double
free-floating floor (found in Dream Boy) and C – an attached floor (found in Jupiter2002,
Classic2nd Boys Club and New Tawan Bar).

In my observations, I found that there were three primary types of spatial arrangement

and visual relations between the stage and the customers' seating area (see Figure 4.11).

The first is a single platform setting responding to every viewpoint in the room, the kind

of plan found in the New Twilight Bar. The second is not much different, but is set up as

a double floor, which responds not only to every view from the customers but also to the

length of the interior space. This kind of plan can be found in Dream Boy. Lastly,

Jupiter2002, Classic2nd Boys Club and New Tawan Bar have the kind of plan which

permits a view from one side while the other side is attached to the wall. Only the back

stage of New Tawan Bar is mirrored, which allows a customer to view the bodies of male

sex workers from behind.

Using visibility as an analytical tool, we can ask which of these three types seems to

produce a better 'theatrical quality' to display the bodies of male sex workers and, more

importantly, to reinforce the binary oppositions between 'customers-spectator-subject'

and 'male sex workers-spectacle-object'. Although the free-floating stages found in the New Twilight Bar and Dream Boy seem to be sufficiently responsive to multiple viewpoints, I argue that this fully responsive quality of the stage becomes a disadvantage. Instead of having a clear view of the men on the dance floor, one is inevitably aware of the presence of other customers on the other side of the dance floor. Someone who observes the bodies of male commercial sex workers on the dance floor is clearly observed by other customers simultaneously. By using the free-floating stage, the spectatorship of the customer(s) can be disrupted; the pleasure of looking as gazing is interrupted. Unlike the free-floating stage, the attached stage, found in Jupiter2002, tends to produce a more desirable visual effect, in particular preserving pleasure only for the customers, who can look at male sex workers on stage without being looked at from the other side of the stage.
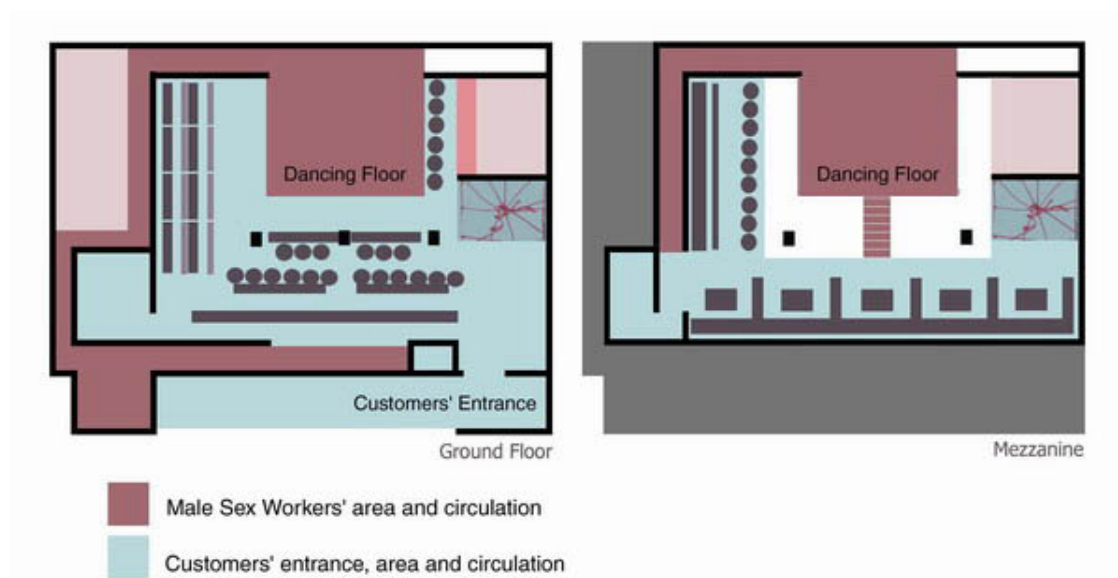
Fig. 4.12 Diagram depicting the spatial arrangements between the customer area (in blue) and the male sex workers area (in brown), and illustrating the relationship between the customers' seating area and the dance stage in Jupiter2002 (2004).

271

To explore the strategic operations in the spatial arrangement and the visual relations in the gay go-go bars, I draw particularly on my observation of the movement and circulation separating customers and sex workers and, importantly, the shows on stage. To illustrate such a strategic arrangement, I examine in detail Jupiter2002. After renovation in 2002, the new arrangement that the bar owner of Jupiter employed revolved around the organisation of interior space, in particular between the stage and the customers' seating area. Jupiter2002 introduced two significant features: first, separate entrances and circulation systems for customers and male sex workers; and second, a change in how the customers looked at the stage (see Figure 4.12).

Formerly, when male sex workers came on stage, they walked past the customers, with whom they could stop and talk. For many customers, to be directly approached by male sex workers could be considered unpleasant. Today, many gay go-go bars have a policy preventing male sex workers from going up to and talking to customers directly, as I reported from 'S' and his vision of creating a new go-go bar. When customers want to talk to a boy, they must tell the captain by referring to the number worn by the boy as a reference. Each number is also used to set up a numerical order for the boys to enter the dance floor. The entrance and circulation create a theatrical quality in the interior space of Jupiter2002. By having the male sex workers make their entrances and exits from behind the stage, Jupiter2002 is able to manipulate and highlight their sequence and appearance. To some extent, it appears to me that Jupiter2002 aims to make the shows

more professional, spectacular and theatrical, which suggest a lack of physical proximity in order to heighten desire.

I argue that the spatial arrangements used by Jupiter2002 also aim to reinforce the visual relation between customers in the seating area and the male sex workers on stage. Jupiter2002 stimulates customers in the position of the spectator, while determining male sex workers in the position of spectacle. It is worth emphasising Rendell's visual relation between spectator and spectacle, as I discussed in previous chapters, where voyeurism enables a visual relation to be maintained in separation. Following Gillian Rose, Rendell argues that 'voyeurism is a controlling and distanced way of looking in which gratification is obtained without intimacy and where pleasure is derived from looking at a figure as an object'.[68] According to Silverman and Friedman, voyeurism can also be understood in terms of the pleasure of looking as 'gazing', derived from the spectatorship which 'implies disembodied, transcendent authority and surveillance'.[69] The strategic arrangements that Jupiter2002 uses to create a theatrical quality and to govern how customers look at male sex workers on stage tends to maintain relations between customers and male sex workers through separation.

The distance between the stage and the customers' seating area is also meant to display the bodies and image of male sex workers from a distance. To look at male sex workers

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[68] Gillian Rose, 'Making Space for the Female Subject of Feminism', quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18.
[69] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', pp. 125–56 and Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze', p. 42, quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18.

closely is a pleasure reserved only for customers willing to pay an *off* fee. From this

perspective, through the spatial arrangement between the stage and the customers' seating

area, I argue that the separate distance permits only viewing, strictly speaking, not

touching or closely examining the bodies of male sex workers. In other words, it allows

the bodies to be experienced only as 'images' not as fleshly entities until the *off* fee is

paid. Maintaining a distance suggests that the customers' sexual desire might be

intensified. In this sense, Jupiter2002 aims primarily to create a 'place' where customers

can sit and enjoy looking as 'gazing' at the male sex workers as objects of desire. The

position of customers is governed prior to their arrival at the seating area, and at the same

time, the position of male sex workers is also fixed in accordance with the stage and the

customers' seating area. I argue that the 'place' produced by the spatial arrangement and

visual relation of gay go-go bars creates a visual pleasure for customers and displays the

bodies of male sex workers as objects of desire.

It is worth remembering that the spatial arrangement of gay go-go bars operate

strategically to provide customers with a visual pleasure free of charge in order to

maximise the bars' profit. As I mentioned earlier, the bars make a profit through drinks

and *off* fees. Thus, I argue that the interior space of gay go-go bars is not a place where

customers' sexual desires can be exercised freely; rather, they are arranged and produced

through the strategies of the bar owners. In order to preserve the pleasure of looking at

the displayed bodies of male sex workers on stage for the privilege of the customers, gay

go-go bars reinforce certain visual conditions through a specific form of spatial

arrangement, lighting and mirrors. In the next section, I argue that the use of lighting and

mirrors becomes another strategy which aims to minimise any possibility of the

customers' pleasure of 'gazing' from being interrupted.

The Lights

The strategies of gay go-go bars to maintain both visual relations and social hierarchy in

terms of binary oppositions between 'customers-spectators-higher' and 'sex workers-

spectacles-lower' can also be found in the use of lighting. Besides the use of various

disco lights, red and ultraviolet light are two fundamental sources for enriching a

strangely familiar environment (see Figure 4.13). Wijngaarden notes that light is used 'to

create a stimulating, erotic atmosphere for the client with music and dimmed red or

purple neon'.[70] According to 'S', the red light directly affects the colour of human skin

and can effectively make dark spots disappear, whereas ultraviolet light will brilliantly

illuminate anything white, in particular the male sex workers' spandex swim suits.[71]

Fig. 4.13 Photographs illustrating the way red and ultraviolet light are used in gay go-go bars.

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[70] Wijngaarden, 'Between Money, Morality and Masculinity', p. 189.
[71] Excerpt from in-depth interview with 'S', a bar owner, 12 March 2004.

Under the red and ultraviolet light, the flesh of male sex workers' displayed bodies is

highlighted, luring customers to look at them and fantasise about them as objects of

desire. Besides the use of red and ultraviolet light, the lighting in general aims to set up a

boundary between darker and brighter areas. In a visual analysis focusing on the stage of

an opera house the 1820s London, Rendell argues that 'the darkness and size of the

auditorium produces a space in which a voyeur might control an unreturnable gaze'.[72] In

the case of the go-go bars, the extreme contrast between the darkness in the customers'

seating area and the brilliance on stage can be understood as the visual boundary aiming

to preserve the spectatorship of the customers and to diminish any possibility that their

gaze can be returned by the male sex workers.[73] The darkness can be used to protect the

customers themselves from an unwanted look. In addition, it may reflect the level of

privacy in gay go-go bars, which is very important for those customers who do not want

to be seen in this environment. Among the gay go-go bars that I observed first hand,

Jupiter2002 was the only one which considers this matter of the customer's privacy. The

way in which Jupiter2002 highlights the issue might be because of the presence of special

customers: politicians, government officials and celebrities who come to Jupiter2002

regularly and whose sexual identities must remain hidden.

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[72] Rendell, 'The Italian Opera House – Exchanging Looks', in *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, pp. 104–25 at p. 121.
[73] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 17.

Fig. 4.14 The interior space of Dream Boy, fully covered with mirrors in order to create the illusion of
extension and the expansion of spatial boundaries.
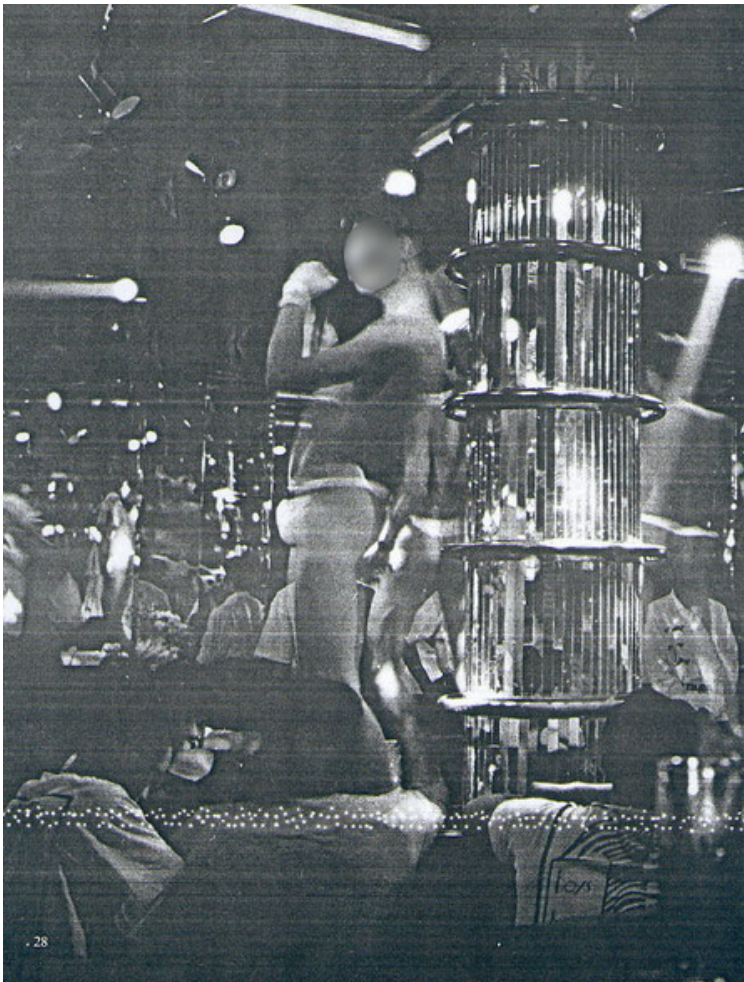
Fig. 4.15 Photograph of a male sex worker on the stage under the condition of extreme contrast between
the darkness in the customers' seating area and the brilliance of the dance floor.

277

The Mirrors

The mirror is a prominent decorative material found in every gay go-go bar (see Figure 4.14). But what I am interested in here is the mirrors as more than a decorative surface and rather how it is used as part of a strategic operation by the bar owners. I argue that the mirrors in gay go-go bars stimulate an alternative reality through their reflections. In addition, I also argue that the mirrors are used to reinforce the objectifying process by which male sex workers are positioned as objects to be looked at. Yet, through the specific operation of using the mirrors, I argue that male sex workers are able to act tactically in response to the bar's strategies. That is to say, by looking at their reflection in the mirrors on stage, male sex workers are able to actively reposition themselves from objects of to be looked at to subjects who look at themselves, producing a 'space' of the subjects.

From my observations, the mirrors are used to cover the wall surfaces inside the bars. They function to help the bars create an illusion of interior space, allowing customers to look at the bodies of male sex workers on stage from many angles, drift into the realm of sexual fantasy and, most importantly, to produce customers in the seating positions as looking subjects and male sex workers on stage as to be looked at objects. The mirrors in gay go-go bars are not set up against the wall in accordance to the customers' position, but rather wrap around the stage at the same height as the male sex workers' position when they dance on stage. Such a position suggests that the mirrors are used (by the bar owner) to forcefully assign male sex workers to look at their reflection. They appear on

stage under self-scrutiny (see Figures 4.15). In the light of de Certeau's spatial practices, I consider the mirrors to be one of the strategies used by the bar.

The position of the object of sight is produced through this spatial and visual arrangement, in particular the position of maximum the male sex workers are placed in on stage in front of the mirrors. I argue that this position of maximum exposure is produced through the play of power relations, which are manifested particularly through the 'place' regulated by the bar owners between the stage and the customers' seating area. To analyse the play of power relations in relation to the use of the mirrors, I draw on Diana Fuss and Joel Sanders's analysis of the spatial and visual arrangement regulated between psychoanalyst and psychoanalysand in Sigmund Freud's office. In this case study, Fuss and Sander focus particularly on the use of mirrors as a device through which power is made manifest. To quote Fuss and Sanders:

> Preferring a face-to-face encounter with prospective patients, Freud seated them approximately four feet away from himself […] Located in the centre of a square room, at the intersection of two axial lines, the patient would appear to occupy the spatial locus of power. As if to confirm the illusion of his centrality, the patient is immediately presented, when seated, with a reflection of his own image, in a small portrait-sized mirror, framed in gold filigree and hanging, at eye-level, on a facing window. As soon as Freud sits down at his desk, however, interposing

himself between patient and mirror, the patient's reflection is blocked by Freud's head.[74]

The location of the patient at the centre of the spatial locus of power, as Fuss and Sanders elaborate further, turns out to be 'the most vulnerable, as the patient suddenly finds himself exposed on all sides to a multitude of gazes'.[75] Reading Fuss and Sanders's analysis in the light of de Certeau's spatial practices, the mirrors used in Freud's office operate strategically to reinforce the spatial and visual arrangement and 'confirm the illusion of the centrality', or to be more specific, to confirm the powerlessness of those who are assigned to take the position of maximum exposure to multiple gazes. Here, the mirrors used in the gay go-go bars suggest that power might operate in the gay go-go bar the same way, giving male sex workers the illusion of centrality. The mirrors used by the gay go-go bars emphasise that these men on stage are 'objects who know themselves to be seen'.[76]

However, we might want to argue something different, that the mirrors offer male sex workers a chance to look at their reflections to 'ensure' their appearance, movement and ways of dancing in front of customers. I argue that the way in which male sex workers look at their reflections in the mirrors should not be considered to reinforce objectification, but rather can be used as a repositioning device, allowing them to shift

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[74] Diana Fuss and Joel Sanders, 'Berggasse 19: Inside Freud's Office', in Sanders, *Stud*, pp. 112–39 at pp. 119–20.

[75] Fuss and Sanders, 'Berggasse 19: Inside Freud's Office', p. 120.

[76] Fuss and Sanders, 'Berggasse 19: Inside Freud's Office', p. 124.

from objects of customers' gaze to subjects of their own sight. To examine male sex

workers as looking subjects, it is worth recalling my conversation with two male sex

workers I met in the gay go-go bars. Both of them look somewhat 'feminine', one of

them worn make-up. He told me that many male sex workers wear little make-up because

it would help them look better on stage, but comparing with other male sex workers,

these two men might be seen as '*gay queen*'.[77] They mentioned to me that they felt

'insecure' and 'uncomfortable' because they did not know what the customers meant by

looking at them.[78] In particular, one of them was furious at the way in which the

customers looked at him and talked among themselves about him. For male sex workers

on stage, it was an obligation to smile and to try not to be concerned whether they had

done something wrong or 'looked stupid'.[79] Both workers had relatively the same

experience when they looked at the mirrors: 'when I looked at the mirrors, I thought I

was doing fine'.[80]

I argue that male sex workers use the mirrors as 'a means of looking at themselves', not

in order to reinforce the bars' objectification.[81] In this respect, Sabine Melchior-Bonnet

suggests that the reflective image offered by the mirrors becomes 'more or less a

theatrical stage on which each person creates himself from an imaginary projection'.[82] To

look at a reflective image in the mirror is an act of 'looking as seeing'; as Silverman

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[77] Nittinun Prottinyn, 'The Third Way', *Mittina Junior*, v. 5 (September 1984), p. 55, quoted in Romjumpa, 'Discourses on "Gays" in Thai Society', p. 165.
[78] Excerpt from conversation with two male sex workers, 13 November 2002 (my translation).
[79] Excerpt from conversation with two male sex workers, 13 November 2002.
[80] Excerpt from conversation with two male sex workers, 13 November 2002.
[81] Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: a History* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 140.
[82] Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, p. 174.

argues, 'this "seeing" of oneself being seen is experienced by the *subject*-of-consciousness – by the *subject*, that is, who arrogates to itself a certain self-presence or substantiality – as a seeing of itself seeing itself'.[83] From this perspective, when male sex workers look at their reflection we can consider this as an active repositioning of themselves not as objects of to be looked at but as subjects of their own sight.

From my observation, male sex workers use and look at the mirrors differently both from the bar owners and from each other. I draw on my observation of these two male sex workers in comparison with other male sex workers on stage. Unlike the self-presentations of male sex workers who can be regarded as 'masculine', the self-presentations of these two men can be regarded as 'feminine'. Deriving from their conversation telling me that they were 'insecure' and 'uncomfortable', I suggest that these two 'feminine' male sex workers used the mirrors as devices for self-protection. For 'masculine' male sex workers, the mirrors might be only part of a decorative surface: they seemed to look at their reflections in the mirrors less than the two 'feminine' male sex workers did in the same period of time, and looked rather more at customers.

To explain looks and different ways of using the mirrors between 'masculine' male and 'feminine' male sex workers, it is worth remembering: first, they perform homosexuality, which operates from a 'lower' position in the social hierarchy in relation to the 'higher' position of customers. Second, both 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are the play of their self-presentations and, as I argue, not categorised following sex-gender roles, that is not

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[83] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', p. 127 (emphases added).

'masculine-therefore-active' and 'feminine-therefore-passive'. Such a play is produced through the constitution of male sex workers' gay subjectivities, which can further be distinguished as 'lower and masculine' and 'lower and feminine'.

The masculinity of those whose social status is 'lower' and who present themselves as 'masculine' might allow them to defend and re-evaluate their position, which might be equivalent to the privileging position of male-masculine heterosexual men in the heterosexual patriarchy. They might be *'gay king'*, who 'limit their sexual activities with customers to masturbation and oral sex and deny engaging in receptive and anal sex'.[84] In other words, these 'masculine' male sex workers are left 'unmarked' by the norm of sex-gender roles. They might feel more 'secure' and more 'comfortable' presenting themselves in front of customers in gay go-go bars. But for those whose self-presentation is 'feminine', their 'femininity' might lead customers to connect them with a passive sex role which could be related further to the feminine *kathoey*, who 'always' takes a 'feminine-therefore-passive' role. In other words, these 'feminine' male sex workers are marked by the norm of sex-gender roles. That might be the reason for both male 'feminine' sex workers I talked to feeling 'insecure' and 'uncomfortable' when they appear in front of customers in gay go-go bars, and using the mirrors as a device for self-protection in helping them to reposition themselves as subjects.

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[84] Jacqueline Boles and Kirk W. Elifson, 'Sexual Identity and HIV: The Male Prostitute', *Journal of Sex Research,* v. 31, n. 1 (1994), pp. 39–46 at p. 43.

I argue that the mirrors are manipulated and used differently by male sex workers. Based on discussions with the two male sex workers, I infer that the mirrors operate as a mode of defence – providing male sex workers with a way of empowering themselves to resist being objectified. In the light of de Certeau's spatial practices, I argue that through the look of male sex workers at the position of maximum exposure on stage, the mirrors are operated tactically. The mirrors allow them to be looked at and looking at themselves – as both objects and subjects. From my perspective, looking at how the mirrors are used tactically by male sex workers, they help the workers to resist being objectified and, at the same time, to produce the 'spaces'. As Melchior-Bonnet states, the mirror is 'a space of imagination in which the subject disguises himself and makes contact with his fantasies'.[85] Male sex workers actively manipulate the 'place' on stage through look to produce the 'place' as a new 'space' in which they are able to negotiate themselves as subjects.

In summary, I focus particularly on the construction of gay go-go bars in contemporary Bangkok, in particular an area called *Surawong's* Boys' Town. Examining *Surawong's* Boys' Town in terms of the historical changes to the gay commercial sex industry in Bangkok, I suggest that the gay go-go bars in this area have been constituted in relation to the heterosexual sex industry established in the 1970s. Many gay go-go bars adapt themselves to the mainstream heterosexual sex industry, in particular by using a similar ways of displaying themselves publicly.

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[85] Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, p. 182.

I suggest that the way in which the binary opposition, in particular between *farang*-higher and local-lower in many gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town is reinforced has led local gay male customers to abandon *Surawong* and move to *Silom* – a new centre of local upper-middle-class gay business. Unlike the gay go-go bars in *Surawong*, most of the gay bars in *Silom* can be regarded as lifestyle-oriented bars. The gay bars in *Silom* focus not solely on a sexually explicit business or display the bodies of male sex workers, but rather provide a new lifestyle environment in contemporary Bangkok. In contrast, by observing the interior space of the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, I suggest that the environment provided by these gay go-go bars should be considered as a space arranged to maximise the bars' profit. The position of customers in the gay go-go bars is fixed by the seating area so that they can gaze at the displayed bodies of male sex workers on stage. I consider the interior space of gay go-go bars, in particular the spatial arrangement between the stage and the customers' seating area, to be produced strategically as the 'place' in de Certeau's terms.

To understand the strategies of gay go-go bars, one must examine them not only in terms of how power is operated and distributed, but also consider the location from which the power is distributed. In this chapter, I have focused particularly on the way in which power is manipulated by the bar owners through various operations in 'place', such as the location, the exteriors, in relation to signs and symbols and, the interiors in relation to lights and mirrors. These strategic operations of gay go-go bars position customers in the subject position of the spectator and the male sex workers in the object position of the spectacle, thus highlighting further the binary oppositions of *farang* and local.

285

In response to the strategies of gay go-go bars, I focus particularly on how male sex workers might manipulate the 'place'. I draw attention particularly to the use of the mirrors – suggesting these can be used tactically to help male sex workers reposition themselves as subjects looking themselves being looked at. At the moment in which they are performing on stage and looking at their reflection in the mirrors they become subjects. Yet, I began to realise that the tactics of male sex workers do not attempt to overthrow the strategies of gay go-go bars embedded in their spatial and visual arrangement, instead, they aim to negotiate with the strategies imposed on them, in particular on stage at the moment of encounter. The tactics of male sex workers suggest the need to examine closely the strategic operation of each site, the situation and, most importantly, the 'place'. I suggest we need to question not only how 'place' is constituted strategically but also how this can be challenged tactically.

I examine closely the 'space' produced by the tactics of male prostitutes in order to question whether the emergence of a tactical economy enables the subject to turn a governed place into a space of occupation and at how this depends on the various positions of subjects. In the next chapter, I explore the degree of operation, manipulation and control used to construct images of male prostitutes in gay magazines as 'places'.

Chapter Five

**Representations of Space and Representational Spaces in Gay
Newsletters: Strategies of the Editors and Tactics of the Models**

> Is it him? […] or him? […] or maybe him? […] or possibly him? How can I let
> you know that when I saw you smiling at me from that '*Thai Guys*' page, I knew
> you were my long lost God, my hero. I knew you were the one.[1]

Since the 1980s, local gay men in Thailand seem to have been keen to respond to the
influence of Western gay liberation and tourism. One example of their response is the rise
of local gay magazines. According to Peter Jackson, the first commercially successful
Thai gay magazine, called *Mituna Junior*, began to appear publicly among local gay men
in 1984.[2] Today, gay magazines have become firmly established as important manuals for
the urban gay lifestyle.

In this chapter, I examine a specific type of gay magazine, gay newsletters. They should
not be regarded in the same way as gay pornographic magazines which represent sex
explicitly, but rather as a 'new' type of magazine which aims to connect readers' sexual
fantasies with the city, in this case contemporary Bangkok. The first gay newsletters were
published in 2000, and today there are three circulating among gay communities in

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[1] Excerpt from 'Ode to a Boy in Aqua Spa' by St. Francis dah Sissy, *Thai Guys*, n. 13 (2001), p.
26.

[2] Peter A. Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: an Interpretation of Contemporary Thai
Sources* (New York: Global Academic, 1989), pp. 241 and 245.

Thailand: *Thai Guys*, *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety*. They have become
increasingly popular not only among local gay men but also among gay Westerners. *Thai
Guys*, in particular, has become the crucial guide for gay *farangs* wanting to meet local
Thai men. Gay newsletters mainly provide gay men with specific information on the gay
urban lifestyle, such as reporting on new gay venues, interviewing gay men who are
successful in their personal or professional lives and showing the 'hottest' guys from
selected go-go bars or massage parlours. Serving as a gay information centre, the
newsletters also provide an opportunity for their readers to send in their sexual stories,
based on memories of lived experience or fiction, which they can share with other gay
men.

Unlike gay pornographic magazines, which aim solely to draw out readers' sexual
fantasies, gay newsletters aim to connect readers to the advertised gay venues, that is to
bring together readers, bar owners and male sex workers. In this respect, I consider gay
newsletters to be examples of gay spaces, produced by the editors to help gay readers
meet other men and experience gay venues. In the light of Henri Lefebvre's theories, as
discussed in Chapter one, I suggest that we can discuss gay newsletters in terms of
'representations of space' and 'representational spaces', which can be distinguished by
'spatial practices' adopted differently by editors, readers and male models.[3] Here, I
suggest that the spatial practices adopted by editors produce gay newsletters as
'representations of space', whereas the spatial practices adopted by readers and male

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[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 39 and 41.

models use gay newsletters as 'representational spaces'. How can we differentiate between the spatial practices of editors and those of readers and male models? Might it be possible that the spatial practices used to produce gay newsletters are different among three local examples? It is important to examine not only how editors, readers and male models operate gay newsletters differently, but also how the three editors operate their gay newsletters different from each other.

I examine the spatial practices of editors, readers and male models through de Certeau's spatial practices of strategy and tactic. In the light of de Certeau's theories, it is the strategy of the editors to produce the gay newsletters as 'representations of space'. From this perspective, through the strategies I argue that gay newsletters are produced as 'places', that is, there are three different 'places' produced strategically by the editors of each newsletter. The materials I use in this chapter come from the three gay newsletters: *Thai Guys*, *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety*, published between 2000 and 2004, and from interviews I conducted with the editors of gay newsletters during my fieldwork in March 2004, but because of the issue of confidentiality and the Data Protection Act, the editors remain anonymous.

To understand gay newsletters in terms of 'representations of space' and 'representational space', this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the history of Thai gay newsletters. The newsletters can be seen as the product of gay urban culture, which revolves around the construction of Thai gay identities and the establishment of the gay commercial sex industry, as I suggested in chapters two and four respectively. It

is important to examine the newsletters in relation to the historical transition of Thai gay

magazines, from pornographic to life-style. To understand this historical transition, I

draw upon Narupon Duangwises's cultural-historical analyses of Thai gay magazines

published from the early 1980s.[4] Duangwises views gay magazines as a development of a

capitalist economy, which increasingly comes to broaden this specific niche market, and

as a depiction of how Thai gay identities have been manipulated and changed, in

particular in relation to social, cultural and class structures.

Duangwises distinguishes two generations of gay magazines: those published in the

1980s, which aimed to introduce gayness and gay urban culture, and those published

from the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, which aimed to reaffirm what it means to

be 'gay' and to reinforce the different representations between higher-class and lower-

class local gay men.[5] I will discuss in detail this historical transition from introduction to

specialisation of Thai gay urban culture later in this chapter.

Not only does Duangwises examine how Thai gay magazines were transformed from

introduction to specialisation of local gay urban conditions; he also draws out the

different representations of local gay men between the '*tee*' look and the '*Isan*' look. I

suggest that Duangwises's discussion of these two representations is useful because it

provides us with an alternative view of how local gay men are categorised. In other

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[4] Narupon Duangwises, 'Naked Man: Pornography and the Sexual Life of the Thai Gay Male' (unpublished paper, 2002), pp. 1–21 (all quotations from this paper are my translation).
[5] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', pp. 7–9.

words, the '*tee*' look and the '*Isan*' look can be understood as categorisations of local gay men operating not from gendered sexual identities but from class differences, that is the '*tee*' look represents a 'new' image of 'upper-middle-class' local gay men, whereas the '*Isan*' look represents 'old' image of 'lower-class' local gay men.

I focus on these two representations, and argue further that editors of Thai gay newsletters use such representations in their spatial practices to reinforce the social status and class difference, which already exist in Thai gay urban culture. I examine the use of representations of local gay men in gay newsletters in order to understand the connection between their class-based representations and the class-based gay venues in Bangkok, and between *Surawong's* Boys' Town and *Silom*, as examined in the previous chapter. In order to understand the relations between *Surawong's* Boys' Town and '*Isan*' men, and between *Silom* and '*tee*' men used in gay newsletters, it is important to remember that these relations have been produced before these newsletters use them to reinforce relations in order to differentiate their readers.

The second section examines in detail how the editors of the three local gay newsletters use the representations of the '*Isan*' look and the '*tee*' look to produce different representations of space. This section also focuses on how the power of the editors is distributed through the classification of readers, the advertisement for gay venues and the constitution of certain ways of looking at the photographs of the male models. In Duangwises' first and second generation of Thai gay magazines, a number of male sex workers were selected to appear on the front cover of the magazine – as models. The

popularity of using male sex workers as models in newsletters has begun to decline

nowadays, but I argue that it is one of the strategies of Thai gay newsletters to make

readers connect the models who appear on the front cover (real men) with the

representation of male sex workers inside (imagined men) and the representation of

locations where male sex workers have been photographed inside (imagined spaces) with

the real locations outside (real spaces). For now, I suggest that the representations of

space in Thai gay newsletters can be divided into two: those which represent a gay

tropical paradise as in *Thai Guys* and those which represent modern gay spaces as in *Max*

Magazine and *Bangkok Variety*.

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The third section explores the relations of the 'strategies' used by editors and the 'tactics'

used by male models. I suggest that the way in which editors distribute their power to

objectify male models and produce them as objects of the readers' gazes can be examined

in various locations in the 'representations of space' in the newsletters, such as the front

cover, the men's contest, the fashion photographs section and the reports news section.

In relation to de Certeau's spatial practices, I consider editors' spatial practices to be

'strategies' and these particular locations to be 'places'. I question whether it is possible

to rethink and understand gay newsletters differently, in particular examining these

locations with the male model in subject rather than object position. We consider the

'tactics' of male models, which allow them to respond to editors' strategies in order to

reposition themselves not as objects but as subjects and produce 'spaces'.

To do so, this section focuses particularly on the specific form of visual relation used in the representations of space in gay newsletters. To discuss this visual relation, I draw upon Susanne Kappeler's and Annette Kuhn's visual analyses of the relationship between pornography and photography.[6] By adopting visual relations based on the subject-object positions of pornography, gay newsletters are able to produce the subject position of the spectator at the moment of looking at the models. Through looking at the representations of the models in a certain way, the readers' sexual fantasies are intensified and such intensification encourages readers to go to meet these men in the advertised venues. I connect the strategies operating in gay newsletters to the operation of the binary opposition between 'readers-spectators' and 'models-spectacles'.

I question whether it is possible for the models to resist the process of objectification and reposition themselves not as objects but as subjects. Can the acts of male models destabilise the readers' spectatorship? Might it be possible for the readers' pleasure, deriving from voyeurism – a distanced way of looking at the representations of male models produced as objects of desire without intimacy – to be interrupted? Such questions lead me to examine the 'come-on' photograph – a certain representation of male models looking at the camera while being photographed. I argue that the 'come-on' look can be read differently, as a strategic action to reinforce the position of readers as looking subjects, but, as I argue, one which can be read as a tactical action, in particular

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[6] Susanne Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', in *The Pornography of Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 49–62 and Annette Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', in *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 19–47.

as the performative acts of models in subject position, models who allow themselves to be looked at as objects. I suggest that the 'come-on' look allows male models to destabilise the spectatorship of readers and to reposition themselves not as objects but as looking subjects.

Thai Gay Magazines: From Pornographic Magazines to Newsletters

To begin with, it is necessary to look at the period before pornographic magazines were established. In 1975, a large number of personal letters written by Thai gay men were sent to the advice columnist, known as *Uncle Go*, in the popular sensationalist fortnightly magazine *Plack*. *Plack* was not in fact a gay magazine, but it ran a specific column which enabled many gay men to portray or describe themselves to others publicly. For local gay men, it was the first time that they were able to connect with other gay men; and, in relation to Lefebvre's notion of space, I argue that it was a representational space for gay men. Jackson regards *Uncle Go*'s column and those letters as primary resources for analysing how the discourse on sexual identity and sexual behaviour among local gay men was constructed, in particular through *Uncle Go*'s attitude towards gayness.[7] For Jackson, these letters can be used as 'an interpretation of male homosexuality in Thailand'.[8] Notably, the stories of homosexual experiences which appeared in *Plack* at that time seem to be rather cynical because, as Jackson describes them, '*Plack* reports the strange, the weird and the sensational, anything from two-headed frogs to magic amulets

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[7] Peter A. Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go: A Go Paknam: Male Homosexuality in Thailand* (Bangkok: Bua Luang Books, 1995).
[8] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, p. 17.

and the immoral and mad exploits of the strange white skinned tribes inhabiting Europe

and North America'.[9] According to Jackson, being gay during that period can be

represented as 'something unusual, stimulating or outrageous'.[10] Jackson's analysis of

Uncle Go's column examines how it provokes local gay men to imagine gayness in

relation to the city. *Phai's* letter, for example, enquires about gay bars:

> I know from the news that the *Patpong* area has gay bars. *Uncle Go,* could you
>
> please explain what kind of rules they have and how to behave there. Is it
>
> expensive? I would like to know how things work because no-one's ever
>
> explained it to me. Everyone I ask just tells me to go and try.[11]

It is worth remembering that from the late 1970s through the 1980s the representation of

gay men in Thailand still remained unclear; they persistently set themselves against the

representation of the feminine *kathoey*, as I discussed in chapter two. From this

perspective, *Go*'s column can be understood as the first time that gay men from various

parts of Thailand had a meeting place. As Jackson claims, there was correspondence from

gay men 'from all levels of Thai society, from both the cities and the rural areas, and

from all geographical regions'.[12] Many local gay men saw *Uncle Go*'s column as an

opportunity to express themselves, and at the same time, read stories and be informed

about the existence of others. *Go*'s column enabled individual gay men to realise that

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[9] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, p. 17.
[10] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, p. 31.
[11] Jackson, 'Letter 29: *Phai* (n.d.)', *Dear Uncle Go*, p. 179.
[12] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, p. 28.

they were not alone. Yet, the way in which gay men produced their space was relatively

slow and inconsistent. It was not until 1984 that the first successful commercial gay

magazine, *Mituna Junior*, came into public view.[13]

The First Generation of Thai Gay Magazine

According to Duangwises, the first generation of Thai gay magazine, 1982–1988, was

very implicit and, importantly, used the already established market of heterosexual

pornographic magazines for distribution. For example, *Cheng-Chai* in 1982, literally

translated as 'masculine man', targeted both 'real' men and 'real' women.[14] The contents

of *Cheng-Chai* revolved around male bodies and masculine images, such as imported

documentary and discussion based on male cosmetic and clinical treatment, a sports

section, dating section, social lifestyle including eating-and-drinking section, fashion for

men and, a 'special photographs' section. As Duangwises describes, '[there were

photographs of] naked guys but these did not display sexual organs or they were

photographed with naked women'.[15] Duangwises refers to the editor of *Cheng-Chai* and

notes, 'If any publication wanted to depict same-sex desire, the contents and images had

to be ambiguous'.[16]

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[13] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 245. See also Anan Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution: Case Study of Male Prostitutes and the Gay Client Group in the Bangkok Area', MA Thesis (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1994), p. 31; Pichet Saiphan, 'Silom: Gay Life and Gay Place', in Parita Koanantakool (ed.), *Life at the Margin: the Body and Identity* (Bangkok: Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2001), pp. 36–95 at p. 52 and Chai-Montri, 'History of Thai Gay Magazines', in *Neon Magazine*, n. 18 (1986), pp. 123–6.
[14] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', pp. 7–9.
[15] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 9.
[16] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 8.

In 1983, *Mituna* was published, adopting *Cheng-Chai*'s contents and ways of presenting

photographs of naked men with their sexual organs covered and with naked women.

According to Duangwises, *Mituna* claimed that its target was 'everyone, no matter what

phet you are'.[17] In March 1984, *Mituna* decided to launch the first gay magazine, called

Mituna Junior. The contents of *Mituna Junior* revolved around gayness and male-centred

sexual practices, such as photographs of naked Thai and Western men with covered sex

organs, love stories and sexual experiences between two men, and a section on dating and

match making called the 'Gemini Club'. In the following years, the market for gay

magazines increased steadily, as indicated by several new titles coming out, such as

Neon, published in 1984*, Morakot* and *Gaysorn* in 1985*, Mid Way* in 1986*, Him* in 1987

and *My Way* in 1988.

It is worth comparing Duangwises's first generation of Thai gay magazines with

Jackson's third period of the development of male homosexual discourse, starting in

about 1983, 'a rapid expansion of commercial homosexual facilities'.[18] The

representation of Thai gay men began to be constituted in such a way that the line of

separation between the discourse of male-masculine-identified gays and that of the

feminine *kathoey* became clearer. At the same time, the gay commercial sex business

began to expand from *Surawong's* Boys' Town to other parts of Bangkok, as I mentioned

in the previous chapter.[19] Duangwises views these first generation gay magazines as a

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[17] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 8.
[18] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 241.
[19] Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 245.

vital medium through which the increasing growth of gay urban culture and various new

gay venues came to be represented. While models in the first generation gay magazines

came from 'model-wanted' advertisements posted by magazine editors, many of them

were male sex workers in gay go-go bars. The naked photographs of models in the first

generation were 'naked but did not display their sexual organs, being photographed in

short pants, sports-wear, swim-wear or using a piece of cloth to cover their sexual

organs'.[20]

Many columns in the first generation gay magazines aimed to suggest, for example, 'how

to "come-out" to your family', 'how to choose the right partner' or 'how to present

yourself (as *gay king* or *gay queen*) in society', and made-up stories or real stories aimed

to portray love and relationship between two men, in contrast with heart-break stories and

sexual experiences. For Duangwises, gay magazines in this first generation wanted to

emphasise what it meant to be 'gay'.[21]

The Second Generation of Thai Gay Magazines

The second generation of Thai gay magazines emerged in the period when *Silom*

gradually became the new centre of local upper-middle-class gay men. I argue that the

magazines in this generation tended to produce a 'new' image of local gay men adopted

from the West. I examine the origin of this second generation of Thai gay magazines

through the representations of male models as 'old-negative-lower' and 'new-positive-

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[20] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 10.
[21] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 10.

higher', which were bound up with the different representations of male sex workers in *Surawong* and upper-middle-class local gay men in *Silom*. It is important to note that gay magazines in the second generation did not construct a hierarchy, but rather reflected the existing conditions of social hierarchy and class difference in local gay urban culture.

According to Duangwises, Thai gay magazines published between the end of the 1980s and the 1990s appear to be more explicit – showing sexual organs and anal penetration.[22] Without any stories, fiction or other kinds of image, they established themselves as gay pornographic magazines, such as *Male*, *Heat*, *Violet*, *Hot Guy*, *Man* and *GR* published by the end of the 1980s, and *M*, *Door*, *KXM*, *Dick*, *H*, *M&M* and *Gay Max* published by the end of the 1990s.[23]

Another feature that clearly marks the difference between the first and second generations of Thai gay magazines is the price. The second generation was relatively expensive at around 400-600 Baht, which was a rapid change compared with the magazines in the first generation, approximately 20-35 Baht in 1982, gradually increasing to 50, 80, 100 and then 120 Baht by mid-1987.[24] I argue that marking themselves expensive suggests a different targeted group, in this case upper-middle-class gay men.

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[22] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 11.

[23] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', pp. 11–12.

[24] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 11. In 1982, 23 Baht per U.S. dollar, and In 1987, 26.69 Baht per U.S. dollar, exchaging rate according to World Currency Yearbook 1985, p. 819, published online <http://intl.econ.cuhk.edu.hk/exchange_rate_regime/index.php?cid=2>, accessed 12th July 2005.

The image of male models is another important feature which helps us to understand the origin of the second-generation gay magazines. To quote Duangwises, '[it changes] from dark, tall and handsome known as "*Thai* style" or the "*Isan* look" to "*tee* style"'.[25] The term '*tee*' is derived from '*ar-tee*' in Thai, which is actually adopted from the Chinese and literally means younger brother. But the term '*tee*' is used to describe a person whose origin appears to be half Chinese, half Thai – depicted by an image of light-skin color and almond eyes.[26] For Thais, the '*tee*' look represents someone from a wealthy middle-class family with a good education, whereas the '*Isan*' look represents a person from a poor lower-class family.[27]

As Duangwises notes, like the male models in the first-generation gay magazines, the models in the second generation gay magazines were male sex workers selected from the gay commercial venues where they worked.[28] But the male models in the second generation appeared to be more sophisticated – suggesting a careful selection process. As Duangwises claims, 'they appear to be higher "quality" male sex workers', the quality of their image tends to suggest their professional sex services.[29] I argue that the change from the *Isan* look to the *tee* look as a way of representing male models, as noted by Duangwises, is the result of focusing on the rising market of upper-middle-class gay men and their urban lifestyle.

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[25] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 11.
[26] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 12.
[27] Narvilai, 'Male Prostitution', p. 25.
[28] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 11.
[29] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 12.

To further examine the representation of male models in second-generation gay

magazines, it is necessary to refer to the line of demarcation produced by the different

orientations of the gay venues between *Surawong* and *Silom*. As I discussed in the

previous chapter, in the 1980s, as the gay commercial sex business established itself

firmly in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, many local gay people started looking for something

different, in particular those upper-middle-class gay men who were influenced by the

dominant image of lower-class Thai men produced through the binary opposition

between '*farangs*-higher' and 'locals-lower'. It is worth remembering that the most

important factor in the separation between *Surawong* and *Silom* is not the business

orientation as such, but rather the social hierarchy among local gay men, in particular that

hierarchy established between those who regard themselves as 'upper-middle-class' and

those who are positioned as 'lower-class'. The second-generation gay magazines

embraced the rise of upper-middle-class gay men – encouraging association of the *tee*

look with upper-middle-class men, while rejecting the representation of the *Isan* look of

lower class men altogether. Initially, I argue that the separate representations of the *tee*

look and the *Isan* look are persistently depicted in Thai gay newsletters nowadays. I will

examine the difference in detail later in this chapter.

The role of the gay magazine editors, who change the representation of the male models

and highlight the social hierarchy, needs discussion. When Duangwises examines the gay

magazines *Male* and *Heat*, he comments that '[they] seem to establish themselves as

trend-setters which can endorse taste and style or perhaps manipulate it as well'.[30] The

role of magazine editors is important because they have control over visual representation

in the magazine, including placing the advertisements of participating gay commercial

venues and the model on the front page. However, the role of editors is also connected to

the role of the owners of gay bars, affecting what can or cannot appear in gay

magazines.[31] To understand the representations of space produced in gay magazines, it is

necessary to examine the representations in terms of how they operate. In the next

section, I examine in detail the relationship between the editors of the new generation of

Thai gay magazines and the operation of these magazines through which the

representations of space are produced.

The 'New' Generation of Thai Gay Magazines

At the end of the 1990s, the number of commercial gay businesses in contemporary

Bangkok were rapidly increasing, including a 'new' market for gay magazines known as

gay newsletters. Following on from Duangwises' second generation of Thai gay

pornographic magazines, I argue that gay newsletters have adopted ways of representing

both the gay venues and the models that are different from the previous generations of

gay magazines. They aim to represent the bodies and images in accordance with two

different groups of readers: those who identify themselves with the *Isan* look and those

who identify themselves with the *tee* look. In addition, in response to the rapid growth of

the gay commercial business, I argue that gay newsletters aim to represent the diversity

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[30] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 12.
[31] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 14.

of the gay commercial business, such as the new gay go-go bars situated outside

Surawong's Boys' Town, and the saunas and spas, massage parlours, karaoke bars and

discotheques in contemporary Bangkok. I focus on the representations of space of various

gay venues used in gay newsletters. It is important to note that the advertised gay venues

also provide gay newsletters with 'new' distribution locations, in which readers are

divided in accordance with the geographical locations of the venues.

Unlike gay pornographic magazines, gay newsletters attempt to both encourage the

sexual imagination of readers and connect the alternative lifestyles of gay men with

'actual' urban environments, that is to map the readers' sexual fantasies onto the reality

of the city. In the past three years, three local gay newsletters have been published – *Thai*

Guys, *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety*. *Thai Guys* has increasingly been circulated

among gay *farangs*, whereas *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety* are aimed at both local

gay men and gay tourists from Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. Initially, I

suggest that the different popularity of these two groups of newsletters derives from the

representations of the male models as '*Isan*' in *Thai Guys* and '*tee*' in *Max Magazine* and

Bangkok Variety. It is worth emphasising that the *Isan* look in *Thai Guys* is often bound

up with the image of a tropical gay paradise, constructed in particular for gay *farangs*.

The *Isan* look is used to constitute the 'place' in which gay *farangs* still remain

privileged. In contrast, the *tee* look in *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety* aims to

constitute 'places' for upper-middle-class local gay men and oriental tourists who have

sexual fantasies about other oriental men. I argue that the editors operate the

representations of space in their newsletters strategically. That is, gay newsletters make

their representations become a means of separating, the '*tee*' look from the '*Isan*' look,

and connect the '*tee*' with upper-middle-class and the '*Isan*' with lower-class and, most

importantly, to separate the places in which the difference between the *tee* look and the

Isan look.

I argue that gay newsletters operate strategically through the representations of space to

encourage in readers a certain way of looking at and imagining the models. I examine the

strategic operations used by the newsletters through their manipulation of the visual

relations between subject and object positions. Gay newsletters produce both the readers

as subjects who are asked to look at the representations of the male models, and male

models as objects to be looked at. I suggest that the bodies and images of male models

are subject to objectification. Yet, to engage with these male models in the position of the

subject, in other words to invert this strategic operation, we must recognise the two ways

in which objectification takes place: through the choreography of bodies and through the

photography of bodies. Here questions arise: is there a possibility for male models to

reposition themselves not as objects but as subjects? Can the male models act tactically in

response to these two modes of objectification in the representations of space in gay

newsletters? I examine the tactics and the 'spaces' of male models through a different

interpretation of the 'come-on' look in the next section. But for now, I draw attention to

the question of how readers are produced as subjects and how the sexual imagination of

subjects is intensified through certain ways of looking at and imagining the models in the

newsletters.

The Pornographic Imagination

According to Donald Soper, the pornographic imagination is derived directly from

pornographic material as 'a visual expression of sex, which concentrates upon the

promotion of pleasurable feelings, and provides for the satisfaction of desire'.[32] Yet, in

relation to the pornographic imagination, gay newsletters do not rely heavily on the

representation of explicitly sexual activities, but rather intensify readers' sexual

imagination through a certain way of looking at the bodies of the models and imaging the

models. As Duangwises describes, although there are many images of good-looking guys

in the magazines, they are neither entirely naked nor photographed with another man or

men in sexual encounters: 'the models were not totally naked: some wore shorts,

sportswear or underwear or perhaps used clothes to cover their sexual organs'.[33]

To understand how the 'position' and 'look' of readers are regulated by the

representations of space in gay newsletters, I draw upon Susanne Kappeler's visual

analyses of pornography: 'pornography is not a special case of sexuality; it is a form of

representation […] word- or image-based, or, to be more precise, representational

practices, rather than sexual practices'.[34] According to Kappeler, within these

representations, there is always an editor, or in Kappeler's terms the 'third party', who is

behind the scenes conducting, producing and, most importantly, operating the processes

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[32] Donald Soper, untitled commentary in C. H. Rolph (ed.), *Does Pornography Matter?* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 42.
[33] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 10.
[34] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 2.

which objectify male models.[35] The spatial practices of the editors can be considered to be strategies which operate through representations of space to produce reader's pornographic imagination.

Pornography is strategically produced position readers as looking subjects and, at the same time, reinforcing the objectification of male models through the representations of their bodies. From this perspective, pornography offers readers the pleasure of looking at male models – a voyeuristic pleasure, as I discussed in chapter one. To sustain the distance, the act of looking can be considered as 'gazing'. Following Friedman, Rendell describes it this way, 'gazing is a more sustained operation of vision that implies authority and surveillance'.[36] Looking as gazing offers the spectators an opportunity to preserve their anonymity and prevent themselves being looked at. That is to say, looking as gazing is a strategic action, these representations of space produce and control subject-object positions in a 'one-way direction'. As Kappeler states, the relationship has nothing to do with the models but is solely to do with the readers and the feeling of pleasure they derive from contemplating the models.[37]

The subject–object positions controlled within these representations of space are enhanced by realistic quality of the photographs of male models. These photographs

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[35] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 50.
[36] Friedman follows Kaja Silverman's, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', pp. 125–56, quoted in Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 18. See also Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority and the Gaze', p. 42.
[37] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 56.

connect the position of the readers-viewers with the power of the gaze. Within this

simulated reality, these photographs are able to reinforce the relationship between male

models-objects and the 'reality' in which the male models are situated. In this case, I

argue that this 'reality' can be seen as the geographical locations and the advertisements

of various gay commercial venues represented in gay newsletters. Because gay

newsletters play with the 'reality' of the gay commercial sex business, such a reality

encourages readers to make the connection between the models and the male sex workers

who actually work in the particular venue. To reinforce such a 'reality', short interviews

with the models are presented, encouraging readers to go and meet the models in the

advertised venues. The photographs of the male models represent them as objects

connected with the 'reality' of the gay venues. From this perspective, the representations

of space in gay newsletters are used to construct a certain way of looking at and

imagining the male model. As Kappeler argues, the pornographic photographs are used to

increase the curiosity of the spectators and their wish to actively engage with the object.[38]

Unlike other forms of visual representation, photographs have the capacity to appear

truthful. Annette Kuhn argues that photographs can be understood as 'evidence that

whatever is inside the frame of the image "really" happened, was "really" there: it is

authentic, convincing and true'.[39] Kuhn continues, 'To complete the circuit of recording,

visibility and truth set up by the photograph, there has to be someone looking at it'.[40] In

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[38] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 52.
[39] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 26.
[40] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 27.

this respect, the photographs record the view of a subject who has looked in a certain way through the lens. As Kappeler suggests, 'he [the photographer] is in direct communication with another subject – the spectator or reader'.[41] Here the position of the camera's lens can be connected with the eyes of the spectators-readers. The readers are invited to imagine themselves into the advertised venues and to meet the male models. In short, the use of photographs produces readers as subjects of the gaze by objectifying the bodies and images of the male models.

The Representations of a Tropical Gay Paradise

For many gay Westerners looking for an exotic fantasy in a tropical country like Thailand, *Thai Guys* is the one and only local gay newsletter which attempts to represent Thailand in this way. Of the three local gay newsletters, *Thai Guys* was the first, starting publication in October 2000. Because the main target of *Thai Guys* is gay *farangs*, it is published entirely in English. To explore the representations of space in this *farang*-oriented newsletter, one needs to examine this monthly newsletter in relation to the development of gay go-go businesses in *Surawong's* Boys' Town. It is important to note that *Thai Guys* can be read as a medium through which the gay commercial sex business, in particular those *farang*-oriented go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, is represented.

As discussed in chapter four, by the end of the 1980s, *Surawong* became the centre of the gay commercial sex business in contemporary Bangkok. The majority of the customers here were, and still are, Westerners who now live in Thailand. Many of them have their

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[41] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 52.

businesses in Bangkok or other major cities like Chiang Mai in the North of Thailand,

Phuket in the South, or the beach city of Pattaya. In the past twenty years, this gay *farang*

community has increased significantly, integrating itself into many sectors of gay-related

commercial business, such as cafes, bars, restaurants, law and solicitor services, hair

salons, hotels, real estate services, limousine services and even luxury resorts. *Thai Guys*

brings together all these commercial interests.

Thai Guys

Today, *Thai Guys* has established itself as an information centre for gay *farangs*, and also

aims to constitute *Surawong's* Boys' Town as the only 'place' of interest to *farangs*.

Thus, it is not surprising that the bars in other parts of Bangkok have never advertised in

the magazine because, as an editor of *Thai Guys* claims, 'the boys there cannot speak

English and most of them are only interested in Thai customers'.[42] In a close reading of

Thai Guys, the city of Bangkok is represented only by *Surawong*, *Silom* and *Sukhumvit*,

the locations where most Westerners congregate and which local people know as *farang*

areas.

To understand the constitution of the 'places' of gay *farangs* as represented in *Thai Guys*,

it is necessary to draw attention to *Thai Guys*' spatial practices. Key here is the

representations of models used by *Thai Guys* as a medium to create fantasy for its readers

which connects them with the gay *farang*-oriented venues. Most of the models used by

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[42] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Thai Guys*, 20 March 2004.

Thai Guys appear to be male sex workers who regularly work in the gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town.[43] I argue that what *Thai Guys* attempts to establish the relations between these men and gay *farangs*. Within *Thai Guys*' representations of space, the bodies of male sex workers are used to represent the images of local men and, more importantly, to reinforce a cultural aspect of '*farangs*-higher' and 'locals-lower'. In particular, *Thai Guys* aims to reinforce the representations of *Surawong's* Boys' Town as a tropical gay paradise, as examined in chapter four. We need to question not solely how the bodies of the male sex workers are represented, but rather how such representations become a medium through which power relations between readers and workers are manipulated.

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[43] Some male sex workers were also selected by *Thai Guys* from the gay *farang*-oriented venues in Pattaya and Phuket, the locations where local people also know as farang areas outside Bangkok.

The *Isan* Look

Fig. 5.1 Photographs depicting the *Isan* look portrayed in *Thai Guys.*

He is so beautiful, brown, smooth and the hair, his hair is fantastic, falling gently

over his eyes, so black, but like a raven, shiny black – amazing color black.[44]

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[44] Excerpt from 'The Boy From *Roi-et* Province', *Thai Guys*, n. 11 (2001), p. 11. *Roi-et* is located in the North-East of Thailand.

The area in the Northeast of Thailand is known as *Isan*. When people want to portray someone who comes from that particular area, they normally describe that person in terms of their '*Isan* look'. As described above, the *Isan* look has often been used to portray local men who come to work as sex workers, in particular the men who work in *Surawong's* Boys' Town. Although Duangwises argues that the *Isan* look became less popular (among local gay men) in the second generation of Thai gay magazines, models with the *Isan* look still dominate many gay *farangs*' sexual fantasies, as illustrated in the quotation above.[45] Most of the models appearing in *Thai Guys* represent the *Isan* look (see Figure 5.1).

I argue that the portrayal of *Isan* models enables *Thai Guys* to produce specific forms of representations of space which based on the relationship between gay *farangs* and *Isan* boys, and between the *farang* readers and *Surawong's* Boys' Town. As a result of the economic crisis in rural areas, many *Isan* young men come to Bangkok to work as sex workers in the gay commercial sex business. This provides the possibility of making money but, at the same time, distances themselves from their 'lower-class' position. I argue that such an attitude is encouraged by a rising upper-middle-class urban culture. In short, the aim of transforming their social status lures many *Isan* young men to work in the gay commercial sex business.

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[45] Duangwises, 'Naked Man', p. 12.

It is believed that these *Isan* young men are willing to work in the gay commercial sex business because they will be more accepted (by gay *farangs*).[46] As an editor of *Thai Guys* claims, 'when they look at themselves, what they find is a lower-self esteem. They think that they are from a lower class not accepted anywhere else [but] many *farangs* do admire them, because they are dark, tanned, thin and handsome', as an editor describes.[47] Many gay *farangs* come from a 'cold culture' where being tanned is admirable and can signal that 'you are rich because you have time to relax and sun-bathe'.[48] From this perspective, the bodies and images of *Isan* young men are bound up with the symbolic meaning of a tropical paradise. *Thai Guys* aims to enrich this symbolic meaning, that is to encourage its readers to relate themselves not only to the representations of a gay tropical paradise, but also to the real 'places' in which such representations get constituted. (see Figure 5.2).

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[46] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Thai Guys*, 20 March 2004.
[47] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Thai Guys*, 20 March 2004.
[48] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Thai Guys*, 20 March 2004.
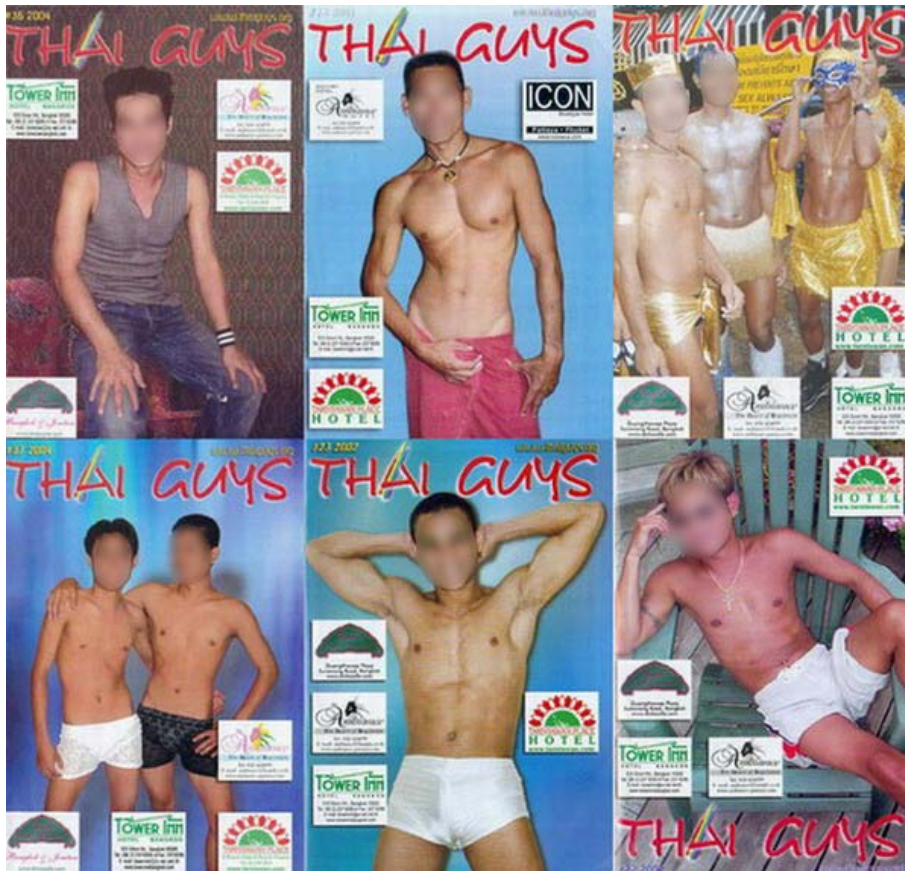
Fig. 5.2 Selected front covers of *Thai Guys*. Published between 2001 and 2004.

Thai Guys seems to recognise the social conditions under which *Isan* young men struggle, but nevertheless exploits this situation. I argue that the magazine attempts to represent *Isan* men, who frequently come from gay commercial sex venues, in a vulnerable position. That is to say, in *Thai Guys*' spatial practices, *Isan* young men are represented as 'lower-class' young men with a lower level of education, who come from the poor countryside. Through various articles, letters and particular ways of representing *Isan* young men, *Thai Guys* suggests to gay *farangs* that they could help these *Isan* young men. It is important to emphasise that the way in which *Thai Guys* represents *Isan* young men in this condition can be regarded as a 'strategy' aimed at both parties – producing its

readers as the 'ones who can help', and producing *Isan* young men as the ones who need

help. I argue that this particular strategy helps *Thai Guys* to produce *Surawong's* Boys'

Town as a tropical gay paradise and, at the same time, reinforces social hierarchy,

cultural and class difference as 'gay *farangs*-higher' and 'locals-lower'.

This strategy can be found through a close reading of *Thai Guys*, in particular an advice

column written under the pseudonym Connie Lingus, where many letters from *farangs*

are selected for Connie's counselling. For example, one letter explains the huge problem

in maintaining a relationship between Walter, a *farang* who lives in Thai middle-class

society, and Lek, his *Isan* boyfriend. As Connie suggests, 'if Lek (a bar boy) happens to

come from Northeast Thailand and his skin turns a gorgeous shade of chestnut in the sun,

he is damned'. Then Connie goes on to explain that, '[if] Lek is working as a bar boy,

that means in the Thai social echelon, he is *the lowest of the low* […] a middle or upper

class Thai would spy Lek across a crowded room and immediately spurn him as

unworthy of sharing the same air conditioner'.[49] Another letter depicts the situation of

Isan young men who intend to live together with gay *farangs* in order to improve their

social status. As the letter notes, 'for a Thai, the chance to go abroad and become a legal

immigrant in a country like Canada (for instance) is a dream few can ever hope to

realise'.[50]

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[49] Excerpt selected from the Connie Lingus Advice Column in *Thai Guys*, n. 36 (2004), pp. 4–5 (emphasis added).
[50] Excerpt from Connie Lingus, *Thai Guys*, n. 22 (2002), p. 4.

Thai Guys' strategy, which aims to empower gay farangs over vulnerable *Isan* young

men, can also be found within various photographs (see Figure 5.3). As mentioned

earlier, I argue that the way in which *Thai Guys* uses a series of photographs, does not

focus solely on intensifying readers' sexual fantasies, unlike gay pornographic

magazines, but rather enlarges the prospect of many gay farangs who become successful

both in the business world and in their personal life. The photographs in *Thai Guys* which

depict relationships between gay farangs and *Isan* young men are used strategically to

produce a connection between the image of a gay tropical paradise with the

representations of local young men and with the reality of social events, places and, more

importantly, various farang-oriented gay venues, in particular *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

Fig. 5.3 Selected social events presented in *Thai Guys*. Published between 2001 and 2004.

In addition to representations of the *Isan* look, *Thai Guys* uses a certain way of

advertising gay-related commercial businesses to reinforce the representation of a gay

tropical paradise. For example, the advertisements for a real estate company, Farang

Services, run by American-born Phil Graham, always depict the attractions of living in a

tropical country: a nice environment, the beach and sunshine (see Figure 5.4). When *Thai Guys* interviewed Graham, he said, 'we can advise them [gay *farangs*] on the many aspects of a move to Thailand. We laugh about the same jokes and images. Communicating is much easier. Ownership and management of Farang Services and *Thai Guys* Magazine is mostly the same'.[51] Utopia Tours and many other travel agencies are also publicised in *Thai Guys* (see Figure 5.5). Not only are these agencies willing to set up private or group tours travelling to a number of major cities such as Phuket, Chiang Mai or Pattaya, where the readers are able to meet Thai boys, but their services are also useful in providing, as one advertising campaign claimed, 'a competent visa service to bring your boyfriend to your country'.[52] *Thai Guys* also advertises a number of gay commercial sex venues to ensure that any *farangs* who visit Thailand 'will never be lonely again', as quoted in the advertisements for Tawan Men Club and Boyz Boyz Boyz go-go bars depicted in Figures 5.6 and 5.7.

Fig. 5.4 Advertisements for Farang Services in *Thai Guys*. Published between 2003 and 2004.

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[51] Excerpt from an interview with Phil Graham, 'Maybe I am the Motherly Type', quoted in *Thai Guys*, n. 37 (2004), pp. 58–9.
[52] Quoted from advertising campaign for 'Mr. Boon Tour & Law Co., Ltd.', *Thai Guys*, n. 13 (2001), p. 57.

Fig. 5.5 Advertisement for Utopia Tours in *Thai Guys*, n. 24 (2002).
Fig. 5.6 Advertisement for Tawan Bar in *Thai Guys*, n. 33 (2003).
Fig. 5.7 Advertisement for Boyz Boyz Boyz in *Thai Guys*, n. 33 (2003).

As the information above suggests, *Thai Guys* has established itself as a channel which

can help gay *farangs* connect with local gay men, and also create a *farang*-oriented gay

tropical paradise. It is important to recognise that the spatial practices used by *Thai Guys*

not only represent Thailand as a tropical gay paradise but also produce Thailand as the

'place' for gay *farangs*. It is worth comparing this to Kappeler's analysis of the role of

the producer of pornography: 'he may or may not represent himself as the subject-master

in the scenario of the picture. He is in direct communication with another subject, the

spectator or reader'.[53] In this sense, the role of the editor in establishing the 'place' of gay

farangs appears throughout *Thai Guys* in the way that stories, articles, photographs and

advertisements are used strategically. The 'place' *Thai Guys* represents is an isolated

island, without any geographical reference, here Bangkok is entirely detached from other

local contexts and represented only through a map of *Surawong-Silom*. In the map, only

those locations where the gay *farang*-oriented commercial sex business operates are

visible. In short, what the *Thai Guys'* strategies do is to produce a 'place' where gay

farangs occupy a privileged position, and connect the real locations of the gay *farang*-

oriented commercial sex business with the image of a gay tropical paradise.

The Representations of Modern Gay Thais

Unlike *Thai Guys*, *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety* aim at local gay people and other

gay tourists who come to Thailand from other Southeast Asian countries, such as

Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia or, to be more specific, not those gay

farangs who seem to be interested only in *Isan* young men and *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

Max Magazine and *Bangkok Variety* portray their readers as 'upper-middle-class, well-

educated, high-income individuals, presenting themselves with good fashion sense and,

more importantly, identifying themselves with a Western lifestyle'.[54] In this respect, I

argue that *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety* want to differentiate themselves from

Thai Guys. In particular, I focus on the way that they attempt to produce a 'new' place for

Thai gay men – regarded as the representations of space of upper-middle-class local gay

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[53] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 52.
[54] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Bangkok Variety*, 9 April 2004.

men. To examine such representations in *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety*, it is

important to understand how the two newsletters are produced and what kind of spatial

practices they use – focusing on the way each of them uses spatial practices strategically

yet differently, not only from *Thai Guys*, but also from each other.

Max Magazine

In April 2001, the first issue of *Max Magazine*, known at that time as *Bangkok Gay Max*,

was published. One time editor of *Max Magazine* states that, he wants to make *Max

Magazine* representative of creative and positive Thai gays. *Max Magazine* aims to

represent 'other gay values, not focusing solely on sexual sensitivity' and, at the same

time, to reduce 'negative comments from the wider society'.[55] In this respect, *Max

Magazine* seems to suggest that the representations of gay men in Thai society need to be

changed; it offers a 'new' representation of Thai gay men.

To examine this 'new' representation, I draw attention to the 'new' generation of Thai

gay men seeking alternative ways of living in the city. As mentioned in the previous

chapter, the rise of this new generation began when the heartland of the gay commercial

sex venues in contemporary Bangkok started to destabilise, before it became *Surawong's*

Boys' Town as it appears today. It was in the 1980s that local gay men abandoned

Surawong and moved the centre of their urban lifestyle to *Silom*.[56] It is argued that these

men in *Silom* see themselves differently from local men in *Surawong*, who are bound up

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[55] Quoted from Editor's Talk section in *Bangkok Gay Max,* v. 1, n. 5 (August 2001), pp. 8–9.
[56] Saiphan, 'Silom: Gay Life and Gay Place', p. 66 and pp. 84–8.

in separated spheres based on the existing social, cultural and class differences of *farangs* as higher-class' and 'locals as lower-class'.[57] As 'S', an owner of a gay go-go bar, claims, 'these men consider themselves to be upper-class young gay people and they prefer not to come to *Surawong*'.[58] Yet, it is not clear whether it was the clear intention of *Max Magazine* to connect upper-middle-class gay men to the representation of the upcoming *Silom*. What *Max Magazine* certainly does do is differentiate a 'new' and 'positive' image of upper-middle-class gay men, *Max Magazine*'s readers, from the 'old' and 'negative' image of local gay men, whose representations are bound up with the 'lower-class' image of local male sex workers in the sex-oriented environment of *Surawong's* Boys' Town.

As the self-acclaimed 'hippest' gay guide, *Max Magazine* provides readers with vital information about a variety of gay venues: cafés, pubs, restaurants, saunas, massage parlours, go-go bars and discotheques, including maps, contact numbers and directions, and about up-to-date male fashion mostly from the West. Although most of gay venues represented in *Max Magazine* are situated in *Silom-Surawong*, the magazine also shows other gay venues in other parts of Bangkok, such as *Saphan Khwaay and Ramkhumhang* and *Sukhumvit*. From this perspective, I suggest that the spatial practices used in *Max Magazine* produce a 'place' through which representations of upper-middle-class local gay men get played out.

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[57] Excerpt from in-depth interview with 'S', 12 March 2004.
[58] Excerpt from in-depth interview with 'S', 12 March 2004.

The *Tee* Look

In comparison with *Thai Guys*' spatial practices, representations of the '*Isan*' look have never been used in *Max Magazine*. In contrast, the representation of the '*tee*' look is key. I suggest that the '*tee*' look is an important feature used in *Max Magazine*'s spatial practices to produce a 'new' image of Thai local gay men.

Fig. 5.8 Photographs of *Max Magazine*'s Models. Published between 2001 and 2004.
Fig. 5.9 Selected front covers of *Max Magazine*, v. 1 (May 2001); v. 1 (August 2001) and v.2 (July 2002).

He is so popular. I am not surprised that everyone in the school likes him because

he is so handsome. He has dark eyebrows, well-defined muscles and a particularly

light skin colour, clean. His height is around 180 cm.[59]

As opposed to the *Isan* look, the models appearing in *Max Magazine* are light-skinned,

tall and 'clean' (see Figure 5.8). Short interviews between *Max Magazine* and its models

are regularly presented, demonstrating that the models are well-educated. According to

Duangwises, the '*tee*' look gradually became more desirable than the '*Isan*' look among

local gay men from the end of the 1980s.

From a close reading of *Max Magazine*, I argue that it acts strategically to transform the

image of local gay men. The representations of the '*tee*' look are used to manipulate

readers' pleasure in looking and to enhance readers' self-presentation, persuading them to

identify with the new look. The models in *Max Magazine* are represented in a similar way

to the models in gay pornographic magazines, in order to produce readers' sexual

fantasies through the pornographic imagination. In other words, *Max Magazine* adopts a

certain way of representing the models from the previous generation of Thai gay

pornographic magazines. Yet, no photos of naked men have appeared in *Max Magazine*.

To explore the inherently pornographic quality in *Max Magazine*, I draw attention

particularly to the role of the editor who manoeuvres the choice of representations –

focusing on the operation of three particular locations in the newsletter: the front cover,

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[59] Quoted from 'My Footballer Superstar', a story in 'Max Passion', *Max Magazine*, v. 3, n. 21
(April 2003), pp. 66–9 (my translation).

the men's contests and the advertisements. I regard three ways of representing the '*tee*'

models, in terms of three locations in particular, as *Max Magazine*'s strategies.

It is claimed that *Max Magazine*'s front page is prohibited to male sex workers. The

models are selected by the editor, whose background is as a professional photographer in

the Thai gay pornographic industry and the owner of a modelling agency (see Figure 5.9).

It is important to note that most of the front-page models are winners of the men's

contests – the beauty contests for handsome young men (see Figure 5.10).[60]
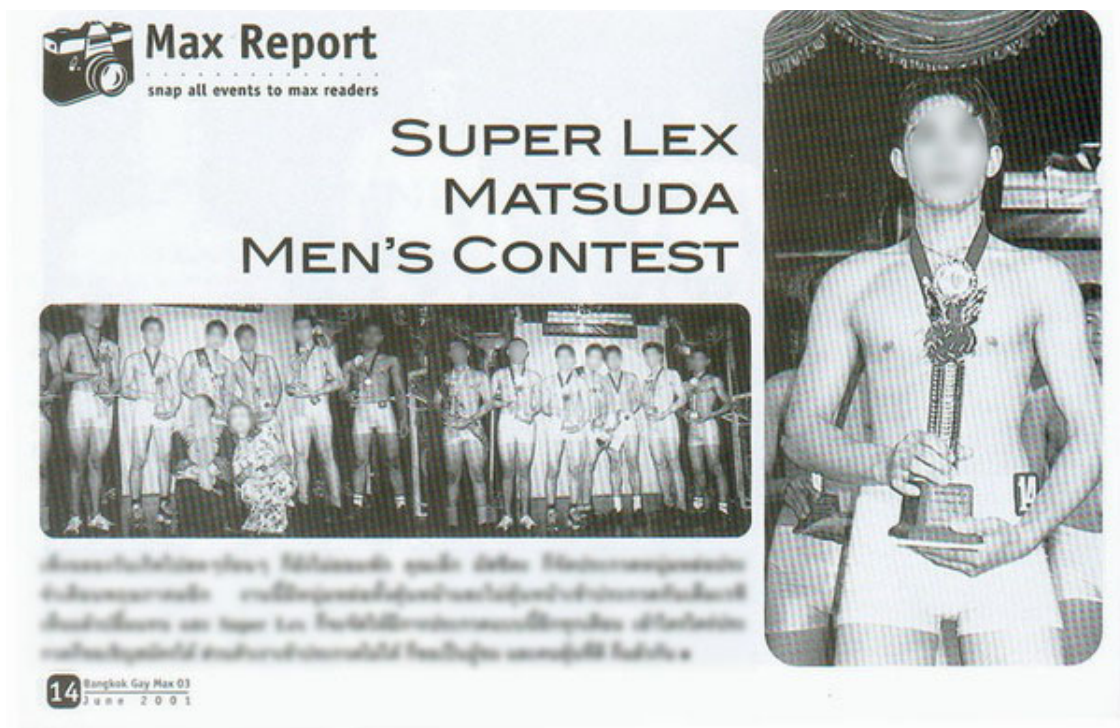
Fig. 5.10 Photographs of a Men's Contest in the section 'Max Report', *Max Magazine*, v. 1 (June 2001).

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[60] For example, Mr. Summer Man Contest 2001, the men's contest for the grand openings of Spek sauna, of Falcon-Man Club sauna, of the Sake Discotheque and of Hero Men's Fitness Club in *Max Magazine*, v. 1 (May 2001), pp. 18–26 and the men's contest from Hercules sauna, from Babylon sauna and from 'Super Lex' go-go bar in *Max Magazine*, v. 1 (June 2001), pp. 10–15.

The section of the men's contests is one of the important features used by *Max Magazine* to represent a 'place' for upper-middle-class gay men, in particular producing it through the gay venues where the contests take place, typically the primary gay commercial sex venues like go-go bars, saunas or massage parlours. Only a few take place in a non-commercial sex environment. Because the editor owns a modelling agency, as he points out, he also sends the models to the contests in the name of *Max Magazine*.[61] From my observation, many other contestants enter these contests through the sponsorship of the bar owners themselves, as the host of the contest announces when each contestant walks on the stage. Indeed, I would argue that the main purpose of the men's contests is to promote the bar business, and its winner can earn a reputation as the star of a bar and increase their '*off*' fees.[62]

It is not certain whether an editor who owns a modelling agency helps his models become part of the gay commercial sex business through the men's contests, but it is clear that these models and the men's contests they appear in feature in *Max Magazine* in order to maximise the profit of particular gay commercial venues. Once a venue has been reported in *Max Magazine*, it can be guaranteed that it and its men are going to be noticed. Not only are the representations of the men's contests bound up with the gay commercial sex venues, but the bodies and image of the contestants are also produced as representations of male sex workers in the venues.

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[61] Excerpt from in-depth interview with an editor of *Max Magazine*, 1 April 2004.
[62] Excerpt from conversation with two male sex workers working in gay go-go bars in *Surawong's* Boys' Town, 13 November 2002 (my translation).

It is clear that the photographs in *Max Magazine* represent the '*tee*' look. Unlike the photographs of *Thai Guys*' *Isan* models, the lighting, setting and poses of the models in the photographs are well organised and professionally set up. It is perhaps because the editor used to work as a photographer in the gay pornographic industry. The representations of the models in *Max Magazine* seem to suggest that it is the intention of the editor to stimulate the readers sexually, and perhaps that makes them more explicit than the representations of the *Isan* models in *Thai Guys*, which produces the *Isan* young men as poor and vulnerable rural boys.

To encourage readers to go to the advertised venues, it is also the strategy of *Max Magazine* to juxtapose the representations of the models with advertisements for the particular venues. *Max Magazine* attempts to establish a connection between the men in the simulated reality of the photographs and the 'real' places where the photographs were taken. Such strategic operations are also found in the section on the men's contests, as I noted previously. That is to say, using a specific form of representations of space – one that refers to a certain way of using photographs of the '*tee*' models in the advertised gay venues – *Max Magazine* provides readers with a particular way of looking at the models and imagining them as objects to be looked at. In particular, these men are expected to be found in the 'places' of the advertised venues.

Fig. 5.11–5.12 Advertisements for Babylon Sauna in *Max Magazine*, v. 2 (September 2002) and v. 1 (June 2001).

To illustrate the strategies used by *Max Magazine* in advertising gay commercial venues, I focus on two particular advertisements for Babylon, a gay sauna. In the advertisement, a photograph of a young man appears in the centre of the page. Notably, his image can be described as '*tee*', light-skinned with black hair, semi-naked but fully covered with foam (see Figure 5.11). Another shows photographs of many young men in swim-wear to advertise a special night which had already taken place in Babylon (see Figure 5.12). Both advertisements clearly aim to encourage readers to go to Babylon. The advertisement in Figure 5.11 uses the photograph of the young man to depict 'who could be found in the future event (of the foam party on 18th January)', whereas the advertisement in Figure 5.12 uses the photographs of those real men who were in the real event. It is not my intention to question whether Figure 5.11 is more real than Figure 5.12. Rather, I emphasise the strategies of *Max Magazine*, which operate through a play of representations and the real. In other words, the advertisement in Figure 5.11 aims to connect an 'imagined' man with an 'imagined' venue, whereas the advertisement in Figure 5.12 aims to connect 'real' men with the 'real' venue. With no photograph of the

real event provided, the representation of Babylon in Figure 5.11 is used strategically to

produce Babylon as a 'place' in readers' imaginations. The representation of Babylon in

Figure 5.12 using photographs of men from the real event produces 'place' in the

magazine and is reinforced by the 'real' place of Babylon.

Within representations of space which operate through the photographs of the '*tee*'

models in the gay venues, I suggest that *Max Magazine* acts strategically to produce

readers' sexual fantasies and, more importantly, to connect such fantasies with the reality

of urban environments. Through the specific form of representations of space, I argue

that readers are encouraged to imagine the models as male sex workers, as discussed in

the section on men's contests. In such a way, *Max Magazine* uses the representations of

the models in the particular venues as a device through which to produce a 'place' of

upper-middle-class gay men. This 'place' produced by *Max Magazine* provides its

readers with a specific way to see themselves and other people – people whom they

consider to be of the same class and to be stimulated sexually by the same sort of

desirable look.

Bangkok Variety

The first issue of *Bangkok Variety* was published in early 2002. As an editor of *Bangkok*

Variety claims, it can be read as a travel guide rather than as a general gay magazine, and

relies heavily on the commercial sex business.[63] *Bangkok Variety* aims to help people

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[63] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Bangkok Variety*, 9 April 2004.

who are not gay to understand gay people and gay culture in a broader context.[64] It is not surprising that among the three local gay newsletters, *Bangkok Variety* seems to be the only one which aims to bridge the demarcation between the male-masculine gay and the feminine *kathoey*. Additionally, it seems to me that its intention is not to reinforce the stereotypical representation of local gay men – as entirely opposed to the *Isan* look and embracing of the *tee* look, but rather to diversify the representations of local gay men in urban environments.

Yet, in a close reading of *Bangkok Variety*, focusing in particular on its spatial practices and ways of representing the models, I would argue rather that the representations of space of *Bangkok Variety* seems to operate in a similar way to those of *Max Magazine* – intensifying readers' sexual fantasises and creating a connection between readers and various gay venues in contemporary Bangkok. Thus, it is important to note that I do not examine *Bangkok Variety* in as which detail as I did *Max Magazine*, but rather to emphasise four particular sections: the men's contest, the fashion photographs section, the reported section called 'Outside' and the map provided in the supplement *Gay Guide Bangkok*. I argue that these locations illustrate how *Bangkok Variety* operates differently from *Max Magazine*. Initially, I argue that these four locations are used to reinforce both the pornographic imagination and the plays of representation and the real.

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[64] Excerpt from interview with an editor of *Bangkok Variety*, 9 April 2004.

Fig. 5.13 Selected front covers from *Bangkok Variety*: first row, left to right, an image from Bangkok Pride 001, *Bangkok Variety*, November–December 2002; photograph of Bee-Nena Rose: Pok Model from ICK Pub, *Bangkok Variety*, October–November 2003. Second row, the Winner of Dare Devil, Fashion Show at D.J. Station discotheque, *Bangkok Variety*, February–March 2003 and Mr. Apichat Intharapanich, the Winner of Mr. Summer Man 2003, *Bangkok Variety*, May–June 2003.

Fig. 5.14 Selected photographs from the fashion photographs section in *Bangkok Variety*, following the same order of the front covers in Fig. 5.15.

What *Bangkok Variety* represents on its front cover is many positive sides of being successfully gay: the winner of a fashion contest, the winner of a *kathoey* beauty contest and the winner of a men's contest (see Figure 5.13). Like *Max Magazine*, its front page is also reserved for the winner. The men's contests in *Bangkok Variety* also encourage readers to create a connection between contestants and venues – encouraging readers to think about the contestants as male sex workers. Unlike *Max Magazine*, *Bangkok Variety* enhances ways of looking at and imagining the men through the use of colour

photographs (see Figures 5.15–5.16). The real of the bodies is produced through color

photographs as the representation of fleshly entities, and encouraging readers' sexual

fantasies to be materialised in relation to the bodies and the places they look at.

Fig. 5.15 A series of photographs presenting Plern Harbor 'A Go-Go Party' Contest, *Bangkok Variety*, November–December 2002, p. 49.
Fig. 5.16 A series of photographs presenting the Mr. Chinese Guy Contest 2004 at Slyper X, a go-go bar, *Bangkok Variety*, February–March 2004, p. 5.

In the section called 'fashion photographs', *Bangkok Variety* uses a different model from

the front cover. Unlike the front cover, the fashion photographs section is important

because most of the models who appear in this section work as sex workers, as short

interviews with the models in the section clearly shows. These men are selected by the

bar owners for whom the models work or by the editor. From my close reading, the

models in the fashion photographs section express themselves sexually – not in any

explicitly sexual activities but rather in order to encourage readers to imagine them in

sexual acts. In a sense, the models in the fashion photographs section are used to

encourage the readers' pornographic imagination and intensify the readers' sexual

fantasies (see Figure 5.14). The venues in which the fashion photographs are shot appear

to be those where the models or sex workers work. In one example, the model is a male

sex worker who works in AMEN, a gay sauna, and the venue where the fashion

photograph is shot is also the AMEN sauna.[65] It is worth emphasising that although the

conjunction between the models and the place they work can also be found in *Thai Guys*

and *Max Magazine*, the difference is that *Bangkok Variety* uses such a conjunction in an

explicit way – not only to create the fantasy of connection between the models and the

venues as the men's contests do, but rather by focusing on the fact that these models are

'actually' sex workers who can be seen in the flesh in the advertised venues.

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[65] *Bangkok Variety*, November–December 2002, pp. 29–32. Similarly, a model from The Beach
Body Massage was used in *Bangkok Variety*, May–June 2003, pp. 31and 32.

Fig. 5.17 Advertisement for X2 Sauna in 'Outside', *Bangkok Variety*, February–March 2004, pp. 42–3.


Fig. 5.18 *Gay Guide Bangkok*, March 2004.

Within its representations of space, I argue that *Bangkok Variety* aims to produce

Bangkok as the centre of Thailand's gay sex industry. *Bangkok Variety* uses the section

called 'Outside' to give readers vital information about 'new' gay venues. It offers

readers a series of photograph of the exteriors and interiors of advertised gay venues as

well as a short review, usually written by the editor. The aim of 'Outside' is to enable

readers to familiarise themselves with the venues before they decide to go there, as

shown in Figure 5.17, which illustrates X2 sauna.

Within the operation of 'Outside', the representations of space operate strategically

through objectification. In this case, the bodies of the models are produced as objects to

be looked at and used as a medium through which the representations of space in

'Outside' get played out. From this perspective, 'Outside' is not a typical reported section

or a tour guide, but rather one of *Bangkok Variety*'s strategies which aims to produce the

readers as subjects whose sexual fantasies are intensified through objectification of male

models. That is a way of creating a connection between the readers' sexual imagination

and the imagined place, and the real sex and the real place.

Bangkok Variety provides the readers with 'Gay Guide Bangkok', which emphasises

existing locations of various gay venues in relation to other geographical contexts. 'Gay

Guide Bangkok' is in fact a supplement of *Bangkok Variety* and is distributed separately.

'Gay Guide Bangkok' contains a simplified version of *Bangkok Variety*, such as news,

information and reports on men's contests, but also maps and a directory for each gay

commercial sex venue, such as saunas, go-go bars, and including karaoke bars and restaurants. 'Gay Guide Bangkok' divides the city into seven zones: *Sanam Luang–Khaosarn, Ramkhumheang, Ratchadapisak–Prachanived, Sukhumvit, Soi Phatuchai–Silom Soi 2, Siam–Ratchadamri–Phathumwan* and greater *Silom* (see Figure 5.18). The various locations of each venue are shown in relation to various geographical references, such as street names, north–south orientation, the river, sky–train routes and other important buildings like embassies, hospitals and universities. All these geographical references and the city's contexts have been omitted from the maps of *Silom* and *Sukhumvit* offered by *Thai Guys*. They are not clearly presented in *Max Magazine* either. By mapping each gay venue clearly in relation to the city's context, such spatial practices suggest that *Bangkok Variety* is a specific form of representations of space – drawing on the connection between the represented venues and their physical locations in order to encourage its readers to come to the venue.

The 'Come-On' Look: the Tactic and the Space of Male Sex Workers

As in the three gay newsletters examined above, the editors play an important role in establishing particular form of representations of space for their magazines. The editor of *Thai Guys* represents '*Isan*' models as rural, poor and vulnerable young men to constitute the 'place' for gay *farangs*, whereas the editors of *Max Magazine* and *Bangkok Variety* represent '*tee*' models as well-educated and Western-oriented local men to constitute the 'place' for upper-middle-class local gay men. Only in *Bangkok Variety*, there are models, in particular, in the fashion photographs section, represented clearly as male sex workers. The bodies of all these models are subject to objectification. In this sense, the bodies of

Isan models are used as objects of desire to produce sexual fantasies for *Thai Guys'* readers and represent Bangkok as a place – a tropical gay paradise. Likewise, the bodies of *tee* models are used as objects to produce sexual fantasies for *Max Magazine*'s and *Bangkok Variety*'s readers and represent Bangkok as a modern place for local gay men. The relationship between the readers and the models in these representations of space is produced in 'a one-way direction', that is, through voyeuristic pleasure.[66] As Kuhn suggests, the photographs of the models used in these representations of space might say: 'look at this, this body is here for you to look at, and (you) will enjoy looking at it'.[67]

In examining the photographs of the models I ask: Are these men performing only in order to reaffirm the readers as the subject of the process of objectification? Do the readers or the editors act strategically by looking at the photographs of models in the magazines? To examine the emergence of the tactics of the models, we must recognise that the strategies used in gay magazines – through a close reading of the photographs of the models in the representations of space – operate in two ways: in the way that their physical bodies are positioned by the editors or the photographers, and in the way that the images of their bodies are produced as objects to be looked at. It is important to examine how objectification operates through the position of the readers produced at the moment of encounter. The readers are spectators or subjects who look at the bodies of the male sex workers in the photographs. In the light of de Certeau's spatial practices, I argue that there potential within these representations of space to enable these models to reposition

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[66] Kappeler, 'Subjects, Objects, and Equal Opportunities', p. 56.
[67] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 38.

themselves not as objects but as subjects – as occupants of the 'spaces' they produce –

and to rethink these representations of space as representational spaces.

It is also important to examine how the performative acts of the models operate to

constitute subjects. It is worth referring to Judith Butler's performativity theory here –

arguing that subjectivity is constituted through performative acts, in this case through the

way in which the models are prepared to be positioned and looked at. To examine the

performative acts of the models, I draw particular attention to the section on the men's

contests and consider these men's contests to be specific representations of space where

the agencies prepare the bodies of the models for the contests. Gay newsletters provide a

stage for many models, allowing them to be looked at by customers in the venues, by

photographers, and by the readers publicly.

For the models, gay newsletters are an important medium, providing the possibility of

improving their social status and career. In particular, in the case of *Thai Guys*, many

Isan young men who work as sex workers and display themselves in the men's contests

have more opportunities to meet gay *farangs*; and through the sponsorship and support

offered by gay *farangs*, they can potentially move away from the social struggle, as

Connie's counselling in *Thai Guys* points out. From this perspective, I argue that these

models intentionally allow themselves to be seen as objects in order to encourage

potential relations between themselves and their customers.

The representation of bodies in gay newsletters, unlike pornographic magazines, does not

represent 'sex'. The models in gay newsletters are not produced as 'sex' objects, as

objects penetrated by men, but as objects of the gaze. Because gay newsletters inform

readers about the gay commercial sex venues, such content aims to increase curiosity, to

eroticise sexual fantasies and to lure readers to go to the advertised venues.

To examine the way in which representation is used tactically, in other words to reverse

objectification, I focus on the spatial and visual representation of the 'come-on'

photographs, in particular the representation of the models who are photographed while

looking at the camera. According to Kuhn, 'the come-on look suggests that the model is

purposefully displaying the body for the spectator, that he knows the spectator is there

and is inviting the spectator quite openly to take a good look'.[68] Kuhn goes on to say,

'facial expression, the come-on look in particular, is a key moment in the pinup's

construction of the subject position for the spectator'.[69] In this sense, to use the 'come-on'

look strategically reinforces both the subject position of the readers and the

objectification of the models. As Kuhn argues, 'the spectator is lured by the picture's

assurance that he is the one [the male model] wants'.[70] In this sense, the 'come-on' look

denotes an invitation to look at, as Kuhn also argues, 'a promise that he [the reader] will

derive both pleasure and knowledge from his looking'.[71]

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[68] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 42.
[69] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 43.
[70] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 40.
[71] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 40.

However, we might want to argue something different and suggest that within the spatial

and visual representations the models also uses the 'come-on' look tactically, that is to

challenge spectatorship by disrupting the continuity of voyeuristic pleasure. From this

perspective, the 'come-on' look provides the models with a way of becoming subjects of

the look. To examine the 'come-on' look in the light of Kaja Silverman's visual analysis

based on a close reading of Lacan's psychoanalysis, the 'come-on' look can be discussed

as a way of seeing oneself being seen.[72] As Silverman states, 'this "seeing" of oneself

being seen is experienced by the subject-of-consciousness – by the subject, that is, who

arrogates to itself a certain self-presence or substantiality – as a seeing of itself seeing

itself'.[73]

In front of the camera, the 'come-on' look can be read as a performative act or a tactic of

models who are fully aware of themselves being looked at. In this case, the models

imagine the spectators looking at them from behind the lens, not just the photographer

but also the reader, and still permit the spectator to gaze upon them. Reading the 'come-

on' look as a tactic of the male models, I suggest that the supposed position of readers in

the models' imagination encourages the models to reposition themselves not as 'objects'

but as 'subjects' looking at themselves as objects. For example, reading the advertisement

for X2 sauna (see Figure 5.17) more closely, six half-naked men are photographed in

towels positioning themselves in front of the camera in the sauna's outdoor Jacuzzi.

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[72] Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56.
[73] Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan', p. 127.

Within this particular photo, their positions are choreographed to make room in the Jacuzzi in front of them supposedly for the reader and, importantly, all of them look at the reader. According to Kuhn, this 'come-on' look suggests to the reader that the male models are communicating with him, and that facial expressions and smiles of the models can be read as an invitation drawing the reader to look at them and into what is happening.[74] This particular way of using 'come-on' look aims at the reader and their sexual imagination.

In conclusion, through specific spatial practices, gay newsletters should be understood not only as a product of the capitalist market economy but also as representations of space regulated by the editors. If we examine gay newsletters through de Certeau's spatial practices of strategy and tactic, we can see that they do act strategically, in particular by objectifying models in two ways: by controlling their physical bodies and by controlling the representation of the models. In these strategic operations, the representations of space suggest that the aim of gay newsletters is to create a connection between imaginary spaces, in this case the representation of a tropical gay paradise and that of modern spaces of local gay men, with the real city.

Gay newsletters are intended as a medium for gay men to identify with. The three gay newsletters examined represent three different 'places' where the subjects of the readers are constituted. In the representations of space in gay newsletters, the relationship between sex-oriented and lifestyle-oriented businesses seems to be intertwined and it

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[74] Kuhn, 'Lawless Seeing', p. 42.

becomes less and less possible to make any distinction between them. On the one hand,

the parties and celebrations of successful gay entrepreneurs and gay celebrities are

depicted to demonstrate their social life in contemporary Bangkok. On the other hand,

many advertisements for the gay commercial sex business reinforce relations between

'sex' and the city. The primary aim of gay newsletters is to encourage readers to go to

advertised venues. The physical contexts of the city – maps, directions and information

on taxis, and so on – are provided in the newsletters. Unlike pornographic magazines, gay

newsletters aim not only to draw out the readers' sexual fantasies, but also demand that

they map their sexual fantasies onto the city.

Conclusion

Within my investigations of these three gay 'places', namely cruising areas in the streets, go-go bars and their representations in the newsletters, I have explored place-space relations through different types of power relations operating in their various ways through the 'strategies' of gay male clients and the 'tactics' of male prostitutes. To discuss the relationship between 'place' and 'space' through the ways in which power operates and gets distributed, my investigations suggest that we need to take modes of objectifying and constituting the subject into consideration – suggesting that Michel de Certeau's spatial practices do not provide us with enough information about the constitution of subjectivities.

I emphasised this point in chapter one by examining how male prostitutes have been identified with their sexual behaviour, and so as categorised as homosexuals. To challenge this, I explored male prostitutes' sexual practices through feminist critiques of identity politics. I drew particularly on Judith Butler's performativity theory – arguing that specific practices and acts can be theorised as a discursive mode of constituting the subject. Performativity theory suggests that the sexual practices can reinforce the identity categories, and also resist them. Through Butler's performativity theory, I discussed the sexual practices of male prostitutes as performative acts of subjects – suggesting that these men produce 'gay' subjectivities through their sexual practices: acts and looks at the moment of encounter with gay male clients.

In particular, an act of looking can be understood in different ways – it might be a strategy or it might be a tactic. According to Foucault's theory of power, the way in which the look operates strategically can be described through the notion of 'technologies of power', while the way in which the look operates tactically can be described through the notion of 'technologies of the self'. It is worth emphasising that in technologies of power, the act of looking 'determines the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination and objectivizing of the subject'.[1] In contrast, in technologies of the self, the act of looking 'permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being, so as to *transform* themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immorality'.[2] That is to say, if the look of gay men is strategic, while the look of male prostitutes is tactical, this helps male prostitutes to reverse objectification and reposition themselves as subjects of their sight. The specific act of looking in male prostitutes' practices can be understood as 'seeing oneself being seen' – suggesting that in this way one *consciously* begins to relate to oneself, as the subject-of-consciousness.[3]

I look at how the relationship between subjectivity and space could be used to explore the constitution of 'gay' subjectivities in Thailand, as discussed in chapter Two. As my

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[1] Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), p. 18.
[2] Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p. 18 (emphasis added).
[3] Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125–56.

historical investigation shows, Thai gay subjectivities have been constructed through the notion of gendered sexual identities – suggesting that Thai gay men identify themselves not as opposed to 'heterosexual' men, but rather as opposed to the feminine *kathoey*. From this perspective, I argued that the construction of Thai gay identities allows Thai male prostitutes to perform gay sex without disrupting their sexual identities – as long as they maintain a 'masculine' image. In terms of the sexual practices of Thai male prostitutes, while they consider an active role as reinforcing the construction of a 'masculine' man, they consider a passive role to be the result of their 'lower' position derived from existing social, cultural and class structures based on 'client/worker' as 'higher/lower', rather than on 'feminine' or 'unmasculine' identity. In short, reading particularly passive role through the acts of subjects, the performative acts of Thai male prostitutes can be understood as 'lower-therefore-passive' and not 'feminine-therefore-passive'. By producing 'gay' subjectivities at the moment of encounter, male prostitutes consciously take the 'lower' position in male-centred sexual practices in order to maintain relations with clients whose position in Thai power hierarchy is presupposed to be 'higher'.

It is vitally important to take the local conditions into consideration. To understand the relationships between gay clients, bar owners and editors and male streetwalkers, sex workers and models and their operations in 'place' and 'space', it is necessary to think about theoretically to the connection Butler's performativity and de Certeau's strategy and tactic and how these operate in to the Thai context, focusing particularly on the different cultural understanding of sex, gender and sexuality in relation to social, cultural and class structures and how this influences spatial and visual practices.

In short, through particular theories, I develop a way of engaging with gay male clients and male prostitutes and different operations of producing, using and occupying spaces. By examining Thai history, I developed a way of understanding the constitution of Thai gay identities and the specific performative acts of Thai male prostitutes. I also developed a way of encountering gay male clients and male prostitutes in urban environments through observation, interviews and spatial experiences. Nevertheless, I came across a number of complications in the way that I planned to use the interviews as first-hand material. It is worth remembering that prostitution in Thailand at the time that I gathered information was, and still is, a very sensitive area, in particular for the men who sell sex to other men. Many of them refused to participate. On many occasions, useful information was derived from general conversations – rather than consented interviews, but to protect my participants' privacy, all the names of participants have been anonymised.

Taking together – theories, histories and the material from my fieldwork – the explorations outlined in chapters three to five can be discussed like this: at the moment of encounter, gay male clients act strategically to produce 'places' where they can retain a voyeuristic pleasure in looking at other men as objects of desire, while male prostitutes act tactically to produce 'places' as 'spaces' where they can respond to gay men's strategies and reposition themselves not as objects, but as subjects.

Chapter three examined how streets have been produced as meeting places through *driving-as-cruising* – the specific urban practices which derive from the mobility of gay

men. Male streetwalkers in their immobile positions use places differently – producing 'places' as 'spaces' in order to interrupt gay men's voyeuristic pleasure by displaying themselves in certain ways in order to be looked at and to produce the possibility of returning the look. The meeting places in gay go-go bars were discussed in chapter four – focusing particularly on the interior space between the stage and the customers' seating area. Through the strategies used by bar owners, the interior space has choreographed to produce the stage, as the 'place' of maximum exposure, to provide customers with a certain way of looking at male sex workers on stage and to intensify customers' sexual fantasies. The 'place' of maximum exposure is, however, produced as 'space' through the performative acts of male sex workers on stage looking at their reflection in the mirrors. In this sense, the place – particularly the stage, the customers' seating area and the mirrors – is used tactically, providing male sex workers with the possibility of repositioning themselves not as the objects of customers' gazes, but as subjects 'seeing-themselves-being-seen'.

Chapter five examined gay newsletters in terms of representations of space – suggesting that the newsletters are produced as meeting places to connect readers with male prostitutes and gay venues. Through the strategies of the editors, these representations of space operate through the play of the relations between the sexually imagined spaces and real spaces. By adopting a certain way of representing the models from gay pornographic magazines, these representations of space produce readers as spectators, while the models are subject to objectification – represented as male sex workers. I drew attention particularly to the 'come-on' look. This is a strategy which helps the editors to invite the

readers to look at the models and connect them with the advertised venues, but I argued that the look can also be read as tactical – as the act of a subject who 'prepares-to-be-looked-at'.

The Space of the Subject

> *The relation to oneself* that is self-mastery is a power that one brought to bear on oneself *in* the power that one exercised over others.[4]

In a close reading of Foucault, Deleuze asserts that the act of resisting power can be understood as a specific way in which one relates to oneself. Here, I suggest that male prostitutes produced as objects in the 'places' produced by gay male clients, bar owners and editors, can resist objectification and produce these 'places' as new 'spaces' at the moment when male prostitutes relate to themselves. For de Certeau, this specific way of producing 'space' by relating to oneself is called the 'turn', and he claims that the 'turn' is vitally important because it can 'intervene in a field which regulates them, [the tactics introduced into the field] a way of turning it to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first'.[5] Male prostitutes seek the possibility within the objectifying process to 'turn' themselves from being objects of desire to being subjects in their own spaces and in their own sight. From this perspective,

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[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1998), p. 100 (original emphasis).
[5] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), p. 30.

the most important feature in the investigation of the spaces of male prostitution is the play

of power relations between subjects and objects through space and place.

The connection between de Certeau's spatial theories and Butler's performativity theory

suggests the need to think about 'place' and 'space' through ways of operating and the

positions of those who operate. It also leads us to rethink de Certeau's spatial theories in

terms of their flexibility, in particular to how we might apply the theories to different

subjects and to different positions of the subject. I emphasise here the position of gay male

clients and their operations towards male prostitutes at the moment of encounters.

In Butler's performativity theory, gay men are subjects of heterosexual objectification. In

this respect, masquerades, ways of cruising and of looking at other men are tactical –

suggesting that gay men behave tactically in order to 'pass' through the norms of

heterosexual hegemony.[6] Butler's performativity theory provides gay men with the

possibility of repositioning themselves in the subject position – arguing that the

subjectivities of gay men are constituted through performative acts. Paradoxically, the

actions of gay men, whom I regard as gay male clients in relation to male prostitutes is

different – suggesting that the ways in which gay male clients operate space through

masquerades, ways of cruising and of looking at male prostitutes can be read as strategic.

These actions of gay male clients change from a mode of resisting to a mode of

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[6] Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (eds), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 307–20 at p. 313. See also Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 96.

controlling. That is, gay male clients' operations are aimed at male prostitutes to produce a 'place' in which to look at these men as objects of desire from a distance.

Gay men might act strategically or tactically, depending on their relation with those whom they encounter, in this case male prostitutes. The position of gay men has been defined through a culturally specific Thai social hierarchy and class structure, that is between 'gay men-clients-higher' and 'male prostitutes-workers-lower'. As discussed in my empirical research, the position of gay men is also constituted differently in each site – defined by the cars, the bar owners and the editors. The manipulation of power relations derived from the subject and object positions in each site is key. The relationship between gay male clients and male prostitutes in each site can be read as the extension of the existing social, cultural and class differences, through which gay male clients are produced as 'subjects-clients-higher position', while male prostitutes are produced as 'objects-workers-lower position'.

I focused particularly on the way that objectified subjects, male prostitutes, are able to use tactics to 'turn' or to 'reposition' themselves from being objects in the 'place', to being subjects in the 'space'. According to de Certeau, tactics operate in the territory of the other without possessing it. In this sense, the tactics must remain mobile, enabling them to be used 'as concepts to discern a number of heterogeneous movements across different

distributions of power'.[7] To remain mobile, tactics open up new possibilities that 'offer

themselves at any given moment'.[8]

The connection between Butler's performativity theory and de Certeau's spatial practices

suggests a relation between 'performance' and 'operation', that is, to 'act' is to 'turn' – in

particular in relation to oneself. The condition of 'one-relates-to-oneself' is not given but

emerges in the subject position when one consciously thinks and cares about oneself.

Thinking is a tactic which operates in a different 'space'; indeed, 'without leaving the

"place" where he has no choice but to live'.[9] As Deleuze says of Foucault, thinking is the

key, 'on each occasion it [thinking] invents the interlocking, firing an arrow from the one

towards the target of the other, creating a flash of light in the midst of words, or unleashing

a cry in the midst of visible things'.[10] Deleuze continues, 'thinking takes on new figures:

drawing out particular features; linking events; and on each occasion inventing the series

that move from the neighbourhood of one particular feature to the next feature of

resistance, which pave the way for change'.[11] In this sense, de Certeau's spatial practices

provide us with a way in which between subjects and objects can be envisioned through

space and place, and a way in which we can understand the constitution of the subject

through producing, using and occupying space as a product of ones thought transforming

'place' into 'space'.

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[7] Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 163.
[8] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 37.
[9] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 30.
[10] Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 116.
[11] Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 117.

While Steve Pile and Michael Keith argue that the tactic is an act of resistance at the level of corporeality which overthrows processes of objectification, my empirical studies suggest that male prostitutes' tactics are not entirely aimed at overthrowing, but rather aim to negotiate with the strategies operated by gay men, in this case drivers, clients, bar owners, readers and editors.[12] The relations between male prostitutes and the clients depend on each other – their transactions involve the exchange of money for sexual service. In this case, tactics can be read as certain ways of negotiating, helping male prostitutes to relocate themselves in the position of subjects and to sustain relations with their clients in general.

We have investigated how the 'spaces' of male prostitutes are produced through a series of tactics, that use and manipulate gay 'places' and to reverse the strategies operated upon them. These meeting 'places' should not be understood as merely the background which allows sexual encounters between male prostitutes and their potential clients to take place, but rather as a manifestation of power relations where the objectification operated strategically by gay men can be 'turned' tactically by male prostitutes. Male prostitutes define and redefine themselves by engaging in various meeting places.

By examining the spaces of the subject, de Certeau's spatial theories provide us with a way of thinking, and a way of positioning ourselves in the meeting places where power relations operate. In this sense, the operations in these meeting places suggest the need to think about the role of architecture.

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[12] Steve Pile and Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 16.

Rethinking the Role of Architecture

Within the investigation of these three meeting places, architecture can be read through

various operations in the streets: at the corners, bus-stops, pavements, street furniture and

trees; in go-go bars: the stage, the customers' seating areas, the lights and the mirrors; and

in the spatial representations in the newsletters: in photographs, in reported sections and in

the maps. In particular, in the gay commercial sex business, architecture appears to be a

medium which the bar owners and editors use to control the encounters with male

prostitutes, to intensify sexual fantasies and, more importantly, to gaze at the bodies of

male prostitutes.

However, through an investigation of the relationship between subjectivity and the space

of male prostitutes, the role of architecture can be argued differently. This investigation has

shown that architecture might be used either strategically or tactically depending on the

distribution of power – suggesting the need to think about who distributes power and from

what position in a given particular situation. Architecture is produced as 'place' through

strategies in order to produce male prostitutes as objects and, in this case, to sustain the

different positions in the existing social hierarchy between gay male clients and male

prostitutes.

In contrast, architecture can also be used in a tactical sense, in particular through use and

the everyday life activities of its occupants.[13] It becomes clear that architecture in a tactical

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[13] Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (eds), *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 101.

sense is not meant to be measured geometrically, but rather, as Jane Rendell suggests, as 'an integral and changing part of daily life, intimately bound up in social and personal rituals and activities'.[14] Through tactics, architecture is also produced as 'space', helping male prostitutes to reposition themselves as subjects. In this sense, the investigation of the different operations of gay male clients and male prostitutes in places and spaces has challenged understandings of architecture – suggesting the need to think about how architecture plays a performative role.

Further research

Today, many of the meeting places of gay men and between gay male clients and male prostitutes in Bangkok are constantly changing and developing in order to negotiate territories with the heterosexual normality. For the last two years, male streetwalkers around *Saranrom* park have been driven away by the police who regularly scrutinise the area. The population of gay men who drive-as-cruise also seems to have visibly declined. Although we may see some male streetwalkers coming back to work in the streets, the *Saranrom* area as one of the best-known space for male prostitution is not the same. Due to the advanced technology of the Internet, gay men and male prostitutes have changed their ways of meeting. Through the Internet, they frequently arrange to meet up in unconventional locations: deserted highway exits, petrol station cubicles or the toilets of department stores. Unlike the material-based environment, the subject–object relations in the pixel-based environment are based both on image and appearance, and on text and symbol – appearing on screen and interacting in real-time conditions.

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[14] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 102.

As this investigation approached its conclusion, I began to question under what conditions

male prostitutes could become political subjects – whether or not male prostitutes are able

to think and care about themselves and change their objectified position in their working

environments. In 2003, Suporn Koetsawang and Kuntee Topothai were supported by the

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to conduct a pilot study of sexual behaviour

among male commercial sex workers in Bangkok. Although the primary aim of this study

was to establish an effective programme for preventing the transmission of a life-

threatening disease, namely HIV/AIDS, in male commercial sex workers, Koetsawang and

Topothai also tried to investigate some other aspects of the everyday life of sex workers,

such as their perspective on their work, their motivation, their health care and their

customers, achieving this through discussion among focus groups.[15] To quote a summary

of the discussion:

> Most services included chatting, massage and sex. Some intimate customers had
>
> invited the CSW [male commercial sex workers] to accompany them to different
>
> tourists attractions inside and outside Thailand. All CSWs considered these extra
>
> services to be a good opportunity and as a beneficial experience. […] They were
>
> concerned about their health much more than we had expected. […] Concerning

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[15] Suporn Koetsawang and Kuntee Topothai, 'Pilot Study of the Male Commercial Sex Business in Bangkok, Thailand: the New Possibility of HIV Transmission' , Reproductive Health for Quality of Life Development Association of Thailand Nakorn Chaisri Hospital (Nakorn Pathom, 2003) pp. 1–5.

their future, all planned to have their own small business or to work in a better

occupation.[16]

What interests me most here is the discussion that Koetsawang and Topothai facilitated,

which I argue enabled these male sex workers to think of themselves from the 'subject'

position. The discussion allowed them to think about themselves in relation to the

customers, to sexual practices, to the conditions of their working environments and to their

future. In this way, the male prostitutes themselves began to narrate their stories of lived

experience.

It is worth emphasising that the subjects of male prostitutes explored in this investigation

were constituted through theories, histories, observations, interviews, spatial experiences

and, more importantly, through a discursive mode of constituting subjects. That is the

reason why Deleuze in his a close reading of Foucault, addresses the difficulty of how to

present '"the life of in-famous men" [because] it does not deal with famous men who

already had both words and light at their disposal and became famous for their evil'.[17]

Instead, what we deal with here is the lives of those whose existences are 'dark and

mute'.[18] To bring their existences into the light and let their voices be heard, it is necessary

to 'clash with power'.[19] The need is to create a specific medium, such as a way of

presenting, of documenting, of drawing and of writing, through which the 'voices' of

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[16] Koetsawang and Topothai, 'Pilot Study of the Male Commercial Sex Business in Bangkok, Thailand', pp. 4–5.

[17] Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 82.

[18] Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 82.

[19] Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 82.

objectified subjects can be transmitted, in particular in association with the field of

architectural research. This is the direction I would like to take in further study.

This investigation is intended to inform to the field of architectural research in Thailand –

to expand towards the architectural humanities and multidisciplinary research. The

architectural discipline in Thailand still remains in the shadow of professional practice and

architecture is understood only in association with the designed building-object.

Furthermore, schools of architecture in Thailand tend to highlight this condition by training

architectural students in studio-design based on a range of building types, and not in

relation to social relations, let alone any investigation of the relations between subjects and

objects manipulated through space and place and through the performative role of

architecture.[20] The need therefore is to develop a new concept of architecture among Thai

academics as more than the mastery of built forms. It is important to interject social

aspects derived from an investigation of subject to object relations in the field of

architecture, indeed into architectural research in Thailand. The relationship of

subjectivity, sexuality and space used in this investigation is of course one example and

there are other areas to be explored.

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[20] For example, Bachelor Program, Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University, published online 2003 <http://www.arch.su.ac.th/knowledge/B_Arch2546.htm>; Bachelor Program, Faculty of Architecture, Chiang Mai University <http://www.arc.cmu.ac.th/newmis/curriculum/b_index.php>; and Bachelor Program, Faculty of Architecture, Kasatsart University <http://www.arch.ku.ac.th/courses/index.htm>, accessed on 12th July 2005.

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