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WORKSHEET #4
Picking a Drag Name

Obviously, it's possible to think about the varieties of kitsch or camp in a drag king performance, in which the goal is to bring out the constructed dimensions of masculinity with hyperbolic style, as would be the case in drag king incarnations of Elvis Presley, the over-the-hill skirt chaser, the vulgar macho guy, or the cliché of a plumber in porn. In any case, the drag king destiny of each participant is an insoluble enigma until the moment when the transformation is produced.
(Preciado, 368)

What are you asking of audience members when your name includes “uncle,” “daddy,” “mister,” “master,” “sir”, etc.? How do sexually aggressive drag king behaviors (overt cock references, basing a males persona on their ability to have heteronormative sex with women, and drag queens as back-up dancers) perpetuate versus deconstruct toxic forms of masculinity? When thinking about how your persona might contribute to pitfalls of exaggerated masculinity, consider how concepts such as dandyism or “sprezzatura” shape extravagant expressions of masculinity. What are the pitfalls of an exaggerated masculinity and/or camp? Dandyism, for example, is an aesthetic of masculinity deeply rooted in expressions of classism —pointing to a capitalism performed in hyper-masculine camp (take for example self-described dandy Roger Stone).

A refusal of parody or camp deconstructs a hyper-masculinity through an examined performed femininity. Such challenges in queer drag king practices, against a camped hyper-masculinity (soft drag, alternative packers) resist capitalistic and hegemonic forms of colonial gender that Bottici identifies within her writing and reiterated in the WHAP! Lecture:

It is only with the emergence of a worldwide capitalist system that gender binary “men” versus “women” became hegemonic worldwide. This does not mean that sexual difference did not exist before capitalism. It simply means that binary gender roles were not as universally accepted as the primary criteria by which to classify bodies. Modern capitalism made the mononuclear bourgeois family, with its binary gender roles, hegemonic. (Bottici, “Anarchafeminism”)

This emergence of a hegemonic gender binary is a set of universal criteria on performing gender roles that emerges out of a global capitalist system. This wider context serves as a challenge to conventional narratives that cast all drag as a liberation of gender roles. The colonial and capitalist elements of drag can be seen in its own ascent to the is comparable to the practice of professional, popular, and mainstream drag queen performance—such as the practices of self-proclaimed supermodel of the world, RuPaul, and their television show, RuPaul’s Drag Race (RPDR) with international spinoffs and performance tours. While drag king performance seeks to dismantle normative gender performances and a deconstruction of femininity, popular homo-normative drag queen performances often reinforce femininity (e.g. Queens are chastised on RPDR for not wearing high-heels, not tucking, and not cinching). And instead of challenging commodity fetishism, RPDR is an example of the commodity fetishism of only further packages gay identity and culture for easy consumption by hetero-normative individuals and corporations (e.g. the new “Pride” clothing collection at Target). Through RuPaul’s professional and personal capitalist practices (e.g. fracking on their ranch), his “gay identity has become both a marketable commodity and a device of withdrawal from struggle against domination.” (Mary Nardini Gang, “Towards the Queerest Insurrection”).