Chapter Five

Two Tales of Resistance

The whole history of progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. If there is no struggle there is no progress.

Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning, they want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted.

-- Frederick Douglass

The goal of terrorists, whether of the freelance or the state variety, is to fill all our mental and emotional space with fear, rage, powerlessness, and despair, to cut us off from the sources of life and hope. Violence and fear can make us shut down to things and beings that we love. When we do, we wither and die. When we consciously open ourselves to the beauty of the world, when we choose to love another tenuous and fragile being, we commit an act of liberation as courageous and radical as any foray into the tear gas.

-- Starhawk, *Webs of Power: notes from the global uprising*

In this chapter, I focus on the analyses of two narratives for a number of reasons. First, this offers an opportunity for methodological diversity. The complexity of each story risks being lost in an overview analysis of similarities and differences. This form of analysis is valuable and provides the basis for the following three chapters. Each story is unique and I could not bring myself to cut up each and every one. Furthermore, I have benefited from exploring these particular interviews as whole narratives in contrast to the more traditional method of across-narrative qualitative data analysis. Second, these two stories are exemplary in their ability to demonstrate the processes of policing, resistance and empowerment. Which brings me to the third reason I have introduced this chapter: it provides the reader insight into the methodological process through which I came to understand sexual orientation in these terms.

Mark was the first participant I interviewed after developing an interview schedule more carefully focused on issues of sexual identity, desire and relationships (see Appendix III). I was anxious about asking participants such intimate questions. Fortunately, Mark and I seemed to develop a rapport very quickly, and the interview was very comfortable. In addition to changing the focus to more explicitly sexual aspects of life, this interview marked another significant change. Reading the transcript, I first began to consider the idea that an anarchist analysis might be appropriate for this project.

Mark, born on the continent, has lived much of his life in the UK. He now lives in an urban area. He identifies as white, male and middle-class. He currently has no sexual orientation identity. I chose to explore Mark's story because it provides an excellent example of sexual nomadism. Over the course of his life, Mark has had a complex and changing relationship with 'sexual orientation'. Mark's story may seem extremely different from many people's experiences. He has suffered from multiple sources of stigma as well as having a somewhat unusual sexual history. Focusing heavily on difference might discourage us from recognising how his experiences illuminates the processes of policing, resistance and empowerment that produce 'sexual orientation'.

Mark's Story

Mark actively resisted sexual state-forms: he rejected sexual orientation categories, had multiple romantic relationships, and challenged conventions of masculine sexuality.

Resisting Orientation

I asked Mark, 'Do you think of yourself as having a sexual orientation?' He replied, 'Orientation? No. I consider myself to be a sexual being.' 'And has this changed?' I asked. 'I've thought about and worked on it for some 3 years. [...] I've believed it for a year and a half. I live it. I've been living it for the last year and a half but that ties in with lots and lots of other things that have been in the way, I think.' When I asked him what this meant, being a sexual being, he replied, 'that doesn't mean I'm attracted to everybody. It's not about tits or cocks. It's about the person.' This period of living without sexual orientation is one of two times which Mark cites as examples where he felt especially comfortable or happy about his sexuality. 'Most definitely this year has been very, very comfortable and a very nice place to be.'

Mark characterised his sexual nomadism as a political choice as well as a reality of his personal experience.

> Mark: Because I believe that … there are things that need to be challenged. [...] I think [...] sexuality is something that can be challenged on an almost daily basis especially in the work I do and I think that people do need to be challenged on their sexuality and that kind of ties in with my HIV status. It comes up time and time and time again. 'How did you catch the virus?' 'Are you gay?' What's that got to do with it? So yes, I chose the challenge, very much so. But I'm not … it's not a fashion statement. I'm not out there trying to invent a 4th box or something.
>
> Jamie: Is it entirely political? [...] The way you describe it, it was quite political.
>
> Mark: No, it's not entirely political because I don't fit into one of those categories. I'm not straight. I'm not gay and I don't like 'bisexual'. [...] I just believe that people are sexual creatures and if we're going to have a box for bisexuals, then we also need a box for vegetables and we also need a box for animals and we also need a box … we can go on and go on and go on creating boxes. I'm not going to sit in a box.

Mark's rejection of sexual orientation identity did not go unchallenged. While others attempted to put Mark into boxes, he refused to allow his sexuality to be overcoded.

> I socialise on the gay scene constantly. [...] I had a very good friend who used to walk into every gay bar in [the city] with me and say 'this is mine and HE'S STRAIGHT, BY THE WAY.' And I got so pissed off with that,

> that I said to him one day, 'look, I'm not straight. I'm not gay. I'm not bisexual. I'm Mark and if I'm happy to live with that then you've got to accept it'. And my friends have. I mean there are people that … because of the [voluntary sector health] work I do, it kind of puts you in [...] a position of power where people snipe at you and they like to throw labels at me but I just refuse to take them up. So I think it kind of leaves them feeling frustrated. That's what labels are about, I think, aren't they? About other people being able to put you in a box and then … I don't know, deal with you or not deal with you, as they feel fit. And my experience has been that if you refuse to be pushed into one of their boxes, they're kind of (SHRUGGING). I don't know a word … it leaves them slightly powerless and confused.

As I argued in Chapter Three, power is not an object that some people hold over others, but a relationship which is enacted, like a claim of authority. Mark had learned to resist those claims of authority. In doing so, he recognised his own ability to take away their sense of power over him.

Mark's expenses of representation on the gay scene had a gendered dynamic.

> Women on the gay scene think it's very cool, yes. So many gay men refuse to believe it and I do … this is my assumption but I do really … I even read it. There was a piece in [a gay] magazine a couple of months ago about gay guys fantasising about straight guys and I think the finishing line was 'and don't forget, once you've had them, they're no longer straight'. And it was just like 'well, what a load of bollocks.' Just because you've slept with someone that calls himself straight, doesn't mean he's gay because you slept with him. It's strange. The gay community just seem to be the most … they love labels, more, I think, than the straight community. To use a label obviously. [...] The gay men that I've spoken to, they're kind of "yeah, nudge, nudge, wink, wink. Actually you're one of us." But my reply is "actually, I'm not".'

At this point in the interview, Mark seemed anxious that perhaps I would be like those gay men. After he said 'actually, I'm not', he went on to say 'But I think that's for you to decipher. I'm just telling you what happened.'

In fact that happened a few times during the interview, with Mark saying things like, 'God am I … maybe I'm just a closet gay or something.' and 'These questions are kind of making me feel that I'm actually a heterosexual but I'm not, or if I am, I'm not taking it on board. No, I'm not.' These comments indicated to me that while he had been very successful in

creating a nomadic space for himself, it was a difficult one to maintain. The force of sexual state-forms, produced through everyday policing, constantly threatened to recolonise Mark's identity.

These colonisation efforts meant that Mark sometimes felt driven into a defensive position. The first time I heard Mark refer to his sexual identity, before he volunteered to be interviewed, he said 'I'm not gay'. I asked him about this.

> Well it's not really a question that comes up a lot except when I'm doing work for the HIV community and then sometimes it comes up because the majority of people that are involved there are still predominantly gay, I suppose. [...] [T]he majority of people assume I'm gay. I've heard it from gay men. I've heard it from straight men. I've heard it from women. I've heard it so many times that if I'd had a pound for every time I've heard it, I'd be rolling in it and we wouldn't be sat here. We'd be doing this over at the Hilton, over dinner. So that's probably where that was coming from. I can't remember how … you had a question right at the beginning, how do you describe your sexuality and I can't remember. Sexual. That's how I describe it. That's how I'd describe myself. Yeah, if it came out as 'well, I'm not gay' then it probably came out because I was assuming that people were assuming that … what a way to go, eh? … that I was gay. It's just … I've had so many situations happen around planning stuff for HIV and AIDS where it's 'OK, well us gay guys together, we'll …' and I'm like 'whoa, I'm not gay'. And then … I can't remember. I'm guessing and that's probably why I said I'm not gay. I'm not straight and I'm not bisexual. I'm me. Sexual.

Resisting Compulsory Monogamy

The second nomadic aspect of Mark's sexual experience is his polyamoury (i.e., having multiple simultaneous romantic-sexual relationships). Throughout the interview, Mark referred equally to the importance of both his male partner and his more recent relationship with a girlfriend. The significance of these relationships to Mark's sexual nomadism is an almost taken for granted truth throughout his story: that he loves Steven and Sarah very much. The importance of his relationships become clearer as the narrative continues.

Resisting 'Sex'

Mark had had a long relationship with Steven that had become increasingly intimate over the years, including the development of a sexual relationship. Mark had also come to develop a nomadic concept of sex. Dominant understandings of sex often revolve around a phallocentric and linear process that begins with a man's erection and ends with his orgasm. While this definition is constantly contested and sometimes cannot even be applied to some sexual encounters (e.g. non-genitally oriented sadomasochism or sex between/among women), it holds considerable weight in many contexts and may be difficult to resist. Mark's relationship with Steven did not conform to this definition.

> we had sex. And … yeah, we had sex but what did that mean to me? It didn't really work on the level of erections. Well, it did for him. The first time it didn't for me. I don't even think I achieved an erection, let alone come but sex isn't about that for me. Sex is a lot more. It's about also just being able to cuddle and feeling just being very comfortable with someone and so on that level it worked very much and we went on and, I don't know, for the last maybe 2 years … he knows that I love him. I do love him dearly and he's told me recently that he loves me and we sleep together occasionally and I can probably count on one hand the amount of times that I've climaxed with him but, as I say, that's not what it's about, for me. I've heard lots of women say that and I never believed them. 'It doesn't matter. I don't need … as long as you're happy.' I used to think 'yeah, bollocks!' But, no, I believe it because I've experienced it. For me it's OK.

There had also been times with Steven where the experience had been orgasmic for Mark.

> OK, well, would you rather I talked about like a full-on, red-hot sexual encounter with him, one of the few that there have been? I mean when it's been like that, well, we're normally quite drunk and on Ecstasy or something so all my inhibitions, I think, are out of the way and I can blame it on that maybe the next day so maybe that makes me feel better. Oh, it's been excellent then and there was one time when we both came together and that was spot on. That was just brilliant but that's not usually the case. Usually … I kind of feel that although I described him earlier as 'the female' male, I kind of take on that female role whereby as long as he's orgasmed, it's OK and I'm just happy to curl up next to him and stroke his hair while he falls asleep or whatever.

Mark very openly defined sex as not centred on orgasm. 'It's all about loving and cuddling and touching and feeling nice and warm and safe. That's what sex is, for me anyway.' At the same

time, he seemed to want to be able to enjoy orgasms with Steven more frequently. I asked him about his talk of needing to lower inhibitions.

> Mark: Yeah, that's a question that I don't know the answer to. Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. I'm telling … because that's been the experience so far, I'm slightly concerned that that might be the reason that I have to be out of my head on something but I hope it's not. I hope it just hasn't occurred because it hasn't occurred. In fact, I'm lying because the time we came together, we were both completely sober. Well we were both hungover but we both … no, we both knew very much what we were doing so, no, that was good. So it has happened. Sorry.
>
> Jamie: But it just doesn't happen very often.
>
> Mark: No. That's the only time I can think of.
>
> Jamie: Mostly it's him getting off and you getting a cuddle. That makes it sound bad.
>
> Mark: Yeah, that makes it sound like a trade-off because I don't have a problem with him getting off because it's not him getting off. I'm getting him off and that's kind of nice too. Does that make sense?

Mark's nomadism does not exist without boundaries. This is no criticism; constructing a 'sexuality without boundaries' (whatever that may be) as a new standard would be as authoritarian as compulsory heterosexuality or lesbian purity. The forms Mark's resistance had taken are less important, in this regard, than demonstrating his capacity for resistance and trying to understand what has empowered him to express it. Mark's resistance to sexual policing is even more remarkable given Mark's background of sexual abuse and exploitation.

History of abuse

> Mark: Where to start. OK, from a very early age, at school in [UK City], I was aware, for some reason, that older men were attracted to me and I used to have horrible situations whereby I'd be scared to get off the bus at [my stop ...] and I'd, for example, get off at [another one] and walk another way home [...] because there were certain people that would know what time I was coming home and would wait for me and follow me home. Or even worse, would be there in the morning and follow me to school.
>
> Jamie: How old were you?
>
> Mark: 13, 14, 15. I was also abused at an early age, sexually abused, at

> the age of 12 and that kind of ties in with this … I don't know, that's probably why I was scared of these people and didn't really know where to go with that information.

Then, at the age of 16, he attended a homoerotic play, which he had worked on as part of his college course.

> during the first half somebody started to fondle me and I got excited […] it was all very mixed up […] like my father was in the military and my grandfathers were in the military and my grandfathers' grandfathers were in the military. You know 'men are men'. I didn't enjoy the abuse although, again, there was some sort of sexual excitement […] so it was all very mixed and confusing [...] I was confused about them touching me, about the fact that I got erect and was excited or … yeah, that's the word, 'excited'. At the time, I didn't want to be excited but that's what it was, I suppose. Yeah, that wasn't right at the time, I suppose. But God, there was so much confusing around that, that I wouldn't really know what to say.

Feminist research on sexual violence (e.g., Kelly, 1987; Kelly and Radford, 1996; McLeod and Sherwin, 2000) demonstrates the ways in which such relationships have the effect of representing the non-consenting person as an object, limiting their autonomy. Through these frightening and confusing experiences, Mark's identity was policed. Likewise, the less extreme but related forms of sexual violence embodied in his family's militaristic ideals of heterosexual masculinity led Mark to find the experience at the theatre even more difficult to cope with. Mark's story indicated that the possibility of consensual sexual activity with another man might have been exciting, though at odds with his masculine identity. As is clearly illustrated here, the possibility of heterosexual identity depends upon the policing of gender. A further factor had the effect of constraining his autonomy and capacity to develop more effective ways to resist sexual harassment than changing his travel patterns. Mark was afraid and 'didn't know where to go'; he had no access to sources of support and advice.

Around the same time, Mark also had his first consensual sexual experience, which resulted in an unplanned pregnancy.

> well, at the age of 16 I went out and lost my virginity to a girl and got her pregnant all in the same night and I happened to have friends, an older peer group that I hung around with and always had hung around with and they were very much into drugs and heroin was their drug of choice and I remember going and saying 'oh my God, my girlfriend's pregnant and I'm only 16 and she's 16 and I can't go home with this. This is the end of the

> line and I don't know what to do', and somebody said 'here, have some of this' and I kind of had a hit and for 8 hours I didn't really care what was going on. And so I sort of quickly got into heroin in a big way.

Mark had extensive needs and capacity to fulfill them was limited. First, he was unable to effectively manage sexual risk. Second, he did not have the emotional capacity to deal with the consequences of this mismanagement and chose drug use as an alternative. This situation is hardly unique among young people in the UK. In fact, it can be recognised as interrelated with the hierarchical binary logic upon which sexual orientation depends, and which it supports (e.g., Sedgewick, 1990). Two key factors in unsafe sex among young people are rigid gender expectations and the construction of sex as natural in opposition to contraception as unnatural, which in turn depend on divisions of male/female, mind/body, rational/emotional and natural/unnatural (Holland, J., C. Ramazanoglu, et al. 1998; Luker, 1975). The policing that produces binary logic in this situation inhibited Mark from recognising, much less exploring, alternative possibilities. Third, Mark's comment that he couldn't go home suggests that it was a heavily policed environment, characterised by militaristic masculinity. Although harmful and unconstructive, heroin use and the oblivion it provided can be interpreted as an act of resistance, an effort to escape policing.

Mark described walking in the street after the birth of his daughter as the other of two key periods in his life where he felt most comfortable with his sexuality. 'Here I was, obviously a man because I've got a woman and a child.' He felt secure when he was able to demonstrate evidence of his heterosexuality and virility. The continuous production of normative and stigmatised possibilities for gendered and sexualised presentation of self necessarily resulted in insecurity: no position of privilege can ever be completely secure. Mark's ability to maintain a status of heterosexual masculinity must have felt particularly insecure due to his (nonconsensual) same-sex experiences. His public presentation of woman and child offered him a chance to bolster a 'normal' status.

Throughout the interview, Mark suggested that his drug addiction was intertwined with anxieties about sexuality. His use of heroin to help cope with an unwanted pregnancy was only the beginning. Early on, we had the following exchange:

> Jamie: OK, so the time you decided to stop using was the same time where

> you started thinking of yourself as not having a sexual orientation? So it was about 3 years ago?
>
> Mark: They are related but the question as to whether or not I had a sexual orientation was around slightly longer than that and possibly was one of the reasons that I started to dabble again, which ended up with me becoming addicted again, just the confusion around whether or not I had a sexual identity or orientation, whether or not it was important and all the hang-ups and what have you that go along with being a poof or being straight or being whatever.
>
> Jamie: So it was quite a difficult time and it drove you back to drugs?
>
> Mark: It was confusing. I think when you're an addict, you're looking for the reason you're an addict and if you can find the reason you're an addict, well you can sort that reason out and you're no longer an addict and it's only when you begin to unravel your own persona and the things that make you tick, that you realise that there's not just one thing that goes into making you an addict. It's like a whole … one of those knots of snakes or something. It's a very, very complicated thing. And sexuality, because of my past, played a very strong part in my being an addict.

His heroin habit, ironically funded through sex work, allowed him to avoid dealing with sexuality. 'My life was turned off. That's what heroin does for you. No emotional attachment. The physical, well, we could have gone 10 rounds in the ring or an hour in bed or whatever. It was meaningless.' Opiates also have the effect of inhibiting sexual desire. As he put it, 'I didn't have a sex life. [...] If we go round to the church and try and explain that to the people down there, they would probably have trouble understanding it but …I think you understand where I'm coming from. I didn't have a sex life.'

Mark did not enjoy his career as a sex worker, but it served dual functions of funding his habit and taking revenge on men.

> And so my addiction … so because all this had gone on and I'd kind of felt used by … I'm saying gay men now but then I would have said by 'queers' or 'faggots' or something very negative. I thought 'well, you've used me. I'm going to use you.' And I ended up as a rent boy, earning money to pay for my addiction. 'On the game' as they say. A title I find very funny because it's very, very far removed from any game that I enjoy but that's a phrase they use, 'on the game'. I was involved in prostitution.

Because Mark would not have chosen to be a sex worker if it were not for his dependence on

heroin, and because it was tied up with his childhood experiences of sexual violence, I see his sex work as a continuation of the sexual violence of his past. Mark's autonomy, and in particular his sexual autonomy, continued to be constrained during his employment as a sex worker.

Eventually, Mark went into rehabilitation and gave up sex work. There, he tested positive for HIV. Giving up heroin in rehab, Mark's sexual desires, which had been dulled by opiate use, returned. Mark became very heterosexually active and, at the same time, very homophobic.

> Mark: I hated gay men for a very, very long time, even after I came out of rehab, I hated gay men. [...] I was a very, very angry heterosexual man. [...] In my [support] group there were two homosexual men who I fought with constantly, verbally and once physically. They were perceived as the enemy at that time.
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> Jamie: The enemy?
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> Mark: Well, yeah. There's a triangle that I can never remember and it's got the enabler, the victim and … another side to it. I can never remember what the other side is but they were seen as the enabler and the enabler, as the name says, enabled me to use. [...]Well, the guy that I'd lived with had been a dealer so I kind of held him responsible for my sister's [drug-related] death and [...] he was the person who got rich by selling and making money from death and other homosexuals had been my means of getting money to indulge in this slow torturous putting to death of oneself, myself. So, yeah, I viewed them as the enemy.

He even went out queer-bashing on a number of occasions, but never actually found any victims, for which he was very thankful. Mark blamed gay men for his HIV status and drug addiction. Mark felt a strong need to express anger at the same time as differentiating himself from homosexuality. Emotions such as guilt, anger and hatred prevented Mark from seeing that gay identified men were not his opposite, not the enemy.

While in rehabilitation, he also regularly visited male public sex areas, so afraid that he carried a weapon.

> […]I suppose it was also wrapped up in my self-esteem. It was like when I was using, these people obviously liked me because they paid me to have

> sex with me and so I suppose there was perhaps a big gap when I stopped using as to my self-worth […] Maybe I was checking out if I was still desirable.'

Mark's was still deeply drawn to homosexuality. He said that it offered him both the excitement of risk and the validation of his attractiveness. His relationship with homosexuality was both intense and ambivalent. This relationship was not one that allowed him to consider that homosexuality might not be the opposite of heterosexuality.

Mark described one sexual experience from this period of his life:

> Mark: I thought I was having sex with a woman and it was a boy. It didn't matter. I mean I had penetrative sex, which I was expecting to have anyway. It just so happened that it was anal as opposed to vaginal. […] It wasn't a big deal.
>
> Jamie: Were you surprised […] that it was a turn-on?
>
> Mark: No, because, […] I'd masturbated, I suppose, over chicks with dicks in the past ...
>
> Jamie: But that was also during your homophobic days, wasn't it?
>
> Mark: They weren't men because they had tits. Work that one out. I don't know.

Mark was homophobic and insecure about his heterosexual identity, yet he was able to enjoy sex with a person whose morphology included aspects that are often considered definitive of male identity. The relative frequency of 'chicks with dicks' as objects of 'heterosexual' male fantasy in pornography and telephone sex lines indicates that gendered desire is not entirely binary. Despite this obvious contradiction, the illusion of binary sexual orientation was maintained for Mark as it is for many men.

I asked Mark how his attitudes about homosexuality had changed from intense homophobia to his lack of sexual orientation identity. He talked about significant relationships.

> [When] I split up with [...] my soul mate, she was the one that said 'look, you need to look at your attitudes towards these people and that it

> probably says more about you than me.' And because I wasn't prepared to listen to that, that's why we split up, I suppose.

But it made him think. After ending this relationship, Mark moved to another city where he became involved with HIV work and where he met many gay identified men. At the same time, he was exposed to discussions of the power of language, stigma and discrimination within HIV organisations. He cited these alternative discourses as an inspiration for his resistance to sexual orientation. When Mark moved to this new city he had no support network, and quickly became very close friends with a male couple who were supportive. He described the men's relationship in gendered terms, with a macho pool playing manly man and a camp, clothing conscious, long-haired womanly man. Initially, he felt much more comfortable in the company of the man he identified as straight-acting because he did not want to be associated with homosexuality. Then the couple split up and the 'macho one' moved away while the 'campy one' stayed. Mark's relationship with 'Steven' (the campy one) deepened, which Mark found confusing.

> We became so close that I began to question what it was he wanted from me. I didn't have … I didn't believe, because of my past, I didn't believe that people could like me for me, that … there'd always been … people had always wanted something from me and that was usually sex, especially men, and one night, out of I don't know … we'd gone out and got drunk and out of the sort of wanting to show or demonstrate some sort of gratitude, I decided that I'd sleep with him, which was a complete disaster because I wasn't sleeping with him because I wanted to sleep him. I was sleeping with him to repay him for some debt that I thought that I had incurred. But fortunately, it was such a disaster that it was obvious that it was wrong, not only to me but to him and the next morning it was number one. He made breakfast and we needed to talk about this, what went on. And we were able to talk about it. It kind of blew me away. I was able to say just what I said to you there. 'The reason I slept with you last night or tried to sleep with you was because I thought that's what you wanted and that's why I owed you'. And he said 'no, that's completely ridiculous.'

Empowerment and Ethical Relationships

> And that's, I suppose, when I started to believe that people could like me for me and then I began to look at my sexuality as in, well, if I was prepared to do that maybe I could sleep with him as me.
>
> I consider myself very fortunate that he was there and willing to … I don't know, to lend himself to helping me discover what was going on inside my

> head, I suppose. Very easy to say 'typical homosexual fantasy and he played his cards exactly right and got what he wanted' but no, that's not what he's about and that's not what he was about. He was honestly out to help me and he did.

Central to Mark's resistance to orientation were two significant (and ethical) relationships. He was only able to moved beyond an understanding of heterosexuality and homosexuality as opposites with Steven's care and support. Mark eventually begin a sexual relationship with Steven, which had lasted one and a half years at the time of the interview. In addition to his relationship with Steven, Mark had begun a new relationship with 'Sarah' three weeks prior to the interview[9]. He was unsure whether this new relationship would change his relationship with Steven.

I suggest that it is the anarchic characteristics of these relationships that enabled Mark to develop a sense of empowerment sufficient to resist orientation more effectively than he had previously. Mark talked about three aspects of relationships that he found desirable: mutual care, trust and openness. Mutual care is a core value of anarchist politics. Advocated by Kropotkin (1987 [1902]) as an alternative to the Hobbesian social Darwinism that has dominated discourses of human nature and biological and social evolution, mutual aid is presented as a significant force in human development as well as the ethical basis for anti-authoritarian forms of social organisation. Mutual aid has also been theorised through a gendered lens in feminist conceptions of an 'ethics of care' (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002) or even a 'love ethic' (hooks, 2000). By the same token, trust is necessary for nomadic relationships. Simultaneously, anarchist critiques of stable hierarchies as a form of interpersonal violence suggests that hierarchy inhibits capacity for trust: it is difficult to trust someone who claims authority over you or who is competing with you for authority. The ability to communicate openly, to accept each other's differences, and to resist pressure to maintain taboos concerning certain topics or practices are all supported by a rejection of hierarchy.

Mark described both of his romantic relationships as based in an ethic of mutual aid.

9 Some might suggests that such a recent romantic development could only have little impact on Mark's sense of self and should not be called a 'relationship'. Similarly, many people argue that various examples of anarchist organisation (e.g. the Spanish Civil War, etc.) 'don't count' as evidence of the possibility of anarchism as (a) viable alternative(s) to governments and corporations because they didn't last 'long enough.' (See Bey, 1985 on the value of brief periods of anarchy.)

> they both have this caring … 'Sarah' fantasises […] about caring for a man and [Steven…] is just a natural born carer. And I like being cared for. Now, don't get me wrong. There's payback for that. There's loads of payback for that. I don't lie in bed all day and have them do things for me. I like to do things for them too.

Mark emphasised the similarity of his two Steven and Sarah, rather than describing them as two types of relationships: heterosexual and homosexual. This was a marked contrast from his earlier experiences of 'sexual orientation' during a period of his life characterised by relationships of domination and exploitation. The emotional security provided by anarchistic relationships offered Mark a sense of stability that he had previously attempted to maintain through a macho heterosexual identity.

Given Mark's background of sexual abuse and exploitation, developing his capacity for trust in sexual relationships had not been easy. This applies particularly to men, though his relationship with Steven was exceptional.

> Mark: Yeah. [...] I'm more often attracted to women. I could be attracted … well if I am attracted to a man, then it would have to be … I would have to feel that I held all the aces, if you like, before I would possibly take it any further.
>
> Jamie: Why is that?
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> Mark: Why is that? That probably goes back to the abuse and being used and … yeah, those issues, I think.
>
> Jamie: Would you say you don't trust men?
>
> Mark: Yeah. I am a man so I know what men are like. That's a terrible thing to say, isn't it? [...] And they've given me reason not to trust them so … and I've also given people reasons not to trust me so, based on that, I'm generalising and, to be on the safe side, I'd just say that *men are men until they prove themselves differently*, as has [Steven]. (My emphasis)

Although the changes in Mark's life were dramatic, this example demonstrates that it is not a fairytale story of completely overcoming one's past. Like many people, Mark has had difficulty trusting men. The desire for dominance within so many constructions of masculinity is a crucial obstacle for efforts to abolish sexual orientation in particular and relationships of domination in general. In Mark's terms, Steven was no longer a man, because he had proved himself to be a caring being. Despite Mark's extraordinary experiences of masculine violence,

his anarchistic relationship with Steven had supported his resistance to sexual state-forms of sexual orientation, compulsory monogamy and masculine independence.

Mark also characterised his relationships with his Steven and Sarah as very open. They were the two people he mentioned being able to talk to about emotions around sexuality, including the abuse of experiences of his past. 'I do [talk about it with] two people. I do to the guy that we've been talking about and I do to my present girlfriend and although that's very, very new, we've talked intensely and long about it.' His relationship with Sarah offered further examples of the depth of trust and capacity to be very open about subjects and practices which are often constructed as taboo: sex between HIV- and HIV+ people, anal sex play (Morin, 1998), nonmonogamy and masturbation.

Like many positive people, Mark found it difficult to disclose his HIV status to prospective sexual partners. His disclosure to Sarah may have helped open up other taboo topics.

> Three weeks into this relationship, [...] when we got back to her house, sex was imminent and I stopped and said 'look, we don't need this. I'm HIV Positive' and she said 'oh, don't be stupid. I know'. Oh God, that was just such a relief and from that moment on we've both been very, very … no, we've both been very frank with each other and, without wishing to be disrespectful to my previous female partner, that wasn't … it wasn't like that. So this … Sarah is very, very comfortable to be with.

Anal sex play, along with self confidence, came up in discussions of what Mark found sexually attractive about Sarah.

> Mark: What I find sexually attractive about her now? OK, she's not scared to be who she is. She's not scared not to shave under her arms. Not that I find that a turn-on, hairy armpits, but she has hairy armpits and she's not going to shave them because I might like clean-shaven armpits. She is comfortable in her own body and I find that sexually attractive. She's also quite happy to touch my arse and have her arse touched and things like that, which are things that are … I don't know, new … not new but I or my experience has taught me you kind of leave, for a while at least, until you get to know each other better. So we've kind of both kind of went in at the deep-end. I find all of that very exciting.
>
> Jamie: And that's quite sexy?

Mark: Well, it's quite sexy, yeah, but that's not the bit that's sexy. The bit that's sexy for me is the openness, that there are no taboos or at least I haven't found any taboos yet.

Exploration was not limited to sexual practice, but extended to open communication about difficult topics including non-monogamy and masturbation.

Mark: Has it come up? Yeah. I mean she knows that I slept … she knows that I've slept with Steven. [...]

Jamie: And did she know before that this was a possibility?

Mark: She knows that we love each other and that we've had sex and she knows that the sex doesn't work for me and so she obviously … she doesn't feel threatened by it but that's … I'm making an assumption here. I don't know. My feeling is that she doesn't feel threatened by it.

Jamie: Have you talked much about sexual identity and those kinds of things with her?

Mark: Yeah, I suppose we have. Yes, we have, yeah. She made love to a sweet potato recently and she …

Jamie: [...] you trust each other enough to talk about sweet potatoes?

Mark: Yeah. I mean, masturbation, the biggest taboo, is it not? In this country? Big taboos, yeah.

Jamie: Yeah, especially for women.

Mark: Especially for women, yeah. Especially two sweet potatoes.

Jamie: Two at once.

Mark: Mmm. So … God, that says that she's prepared to take risks for me and I can't not be happy with that.

Jamie: So she's talked to you of vegetables and you've talked to her about the other man? [...] And it's all still OK?

Mark: Yeah, very much so. I think that's strengthening it. We kind of started telling each other, very quickly, little things about the past and it was Sarah that said 'I'd rather hear it sooner than later' and that kind of fitted in nicely with how I felt. It was like 'OK, well, we've both got baggage. Let's get it out. Let's make this a safe place for both of us.'

The production of taboo is authoritarian because it involves producing unspeakable topics, which then must be policed. As I have earlier argued, authoritarianism depends upon the continuous production of rigid boundaries and binary logic. The taboos surrounding anal sex play, nonmonogamy and (creative, female) masturbation have mutually supportive relationships with hierarchies of reproductive over nonreproductive sex (Rubin, 1993), monogamy over nonmonogamy (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995), 'partnersex' over masturbation (Dodson, 1996), masculinity over femininity, and others. Openness rejects the authority that produces unspeakable topics and potentially disrupts the interrelated hierarchies; it also supported Mark's capacity to resist orientation.

Sexual Anarchy

An anarchist reading has been consistent with the elements of Mark's story. He was greatly hurt by hierarchical sexual relationships of abuse and exploitation. Through the support of anarchistic relationships, characterised by mutual aid, trust and openness, Mark was able to overcome much of that harm. Not only that, he has been able to resist the authoritarianism of compulsory sexual orientation, compulsory monogamy and dominant conceptions of sex and relationships. This has involved massive changes in his emotions and his relationship with gender. Emotions such as guilt, fear, shame and hatred, which support conformity (Scheff, 1990) and, therefore, sexual state-forms, were tied up with Mark's (homophobic) heterosexual masculinity. Empathy, respect, trust and ultimately love offered Mark the opportunity to escape 'sexual orientation' by providing him with a sense of security that does not depend on his rejection of homosexuality and femininity. Finally, Mark experienced conditions that encouraged reflexivity, providing him space in which to reflect on the relationship between the personal and the political. Exploration of his self potential and relationships with others, facilitated by his partner and girlfriend, and his exposure to the alternative discourses of the voluntary sector, were crucial in Mark's nomadism.

My intial evaluation of Mark's story in terms of relationships of domination and anarchist resistance encouraged me to consider this as a basis of analysis for the thesis as a whole. But, I was still reluctant to commit myself to this controversial course. Various factors supported me in my decision to strike off nomadically creating this path, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Another interview, much later in the research process was valuable

encouragement for my own resistance to sticking to well worn academic paths. Highlighting the significance of this interview in the research process, and characterising the processes of policing, resistance and empowerment, here is Erica's story.

Erica's Story

Erica was actively involved in anarchist politics and explicitly links this to her relationship with sexual orientation identity. Like Mark, Erica's early life was affected by relationships of domination. Also like Mark, she was able to overcome her history of abuse and develop comfortably nomadic relationships and desires. Again, in her nomadic life resisting borders, she was not without boundaries. She presented a high degree of awareness of what she needed to maintain a sense of safety in an insecure world.

History of abuse

> Jamie: Can you think of any examples where you felt embarrassed, guilty or ashamed about something to do with sex?
>
> Erica: A lot of my life was like that really because I was molested when I was quite young and I think that [for much of my life, I thought of] sex and sexuality as being like a really big mess and being really not right and what was happening to me a lot of the time is that for many years my sex life was kind of a sort of stop and start kind of thing. I'd have either a bad experience or a sort of non-experience. You know when you have sex and sometimes think 'what was that about?' So there was a lot of that and periods of months when I wouldn't let anybody get anywhere near me or I was just really distressed or I couldn't handle having sex because I kept having flashbacks of abuse and things like that. So there was a lot of that and kind of … not being very clear about consent and what it meant to have sex that I wanted with somebody that I wanted, [and ...] not knowing that very much and not really being there very much when it happened. So it was all that kind of mess that really goes with sexual abuse and that sort of thing. So a lot of the time, what would happen to me, especially when I was a teenager at school, was that, for some reason, other peers seemed to think that I was really sexually sussed and stuff and I was very aware that they thought that of me and I felt like a real fraud because actually I didn't think that I was. But at the same time I had quite a lot of sexual knowledge and kind of … and I was quite articulate and I used to read more than they did and there were lots of different books at home that I could just pick up and read because there were lots of books in my home when I was growing up. So people kind of got this vibe from me that I was kind of sexually active and sexually sussed and whatever, and my only feeling was that

> actually I wasn't and I didn't have a clue a lot of the time and I think I spent years feeling like a real fraud because of that. That was the main thing. I felt like I was … So I felt like I was always hiding. Even when I was in a heterosexual community and nobody ever questioned my heterosexuality, even though it didn't really exist but I still felt like I was hiding. Yeah. Maybe that's why sexual orientation means fuck all to me because actually I know that you can still be in the closet even when sexual orientation is not even a question.

For Erica, overcoming the trauma of childhood sexual abuse was a long process. As with Mark, open communication and trusting relationships have been crucial to her recovery. Of particular significance was talking about sex.

> Jamie: Do you talk with many other people about your emotions about your sexuality and how you feel about your sexuality and how you feel about …?
>
> Erica: I used to a lot more, I think, when I was in my twenties, early to mid-twenties, when I was in a real mess. I was really up to here in sexual abuse and so it was lots of me being distressed talking about my sexuality and feelings about sexuality, mostly with other people who were either just supportive people -- I went to sexual abuse support meetings once or twice so that sort of thing, or with other women -- very occasionally men but really mostly women who also survived abuse and we sort of shared an understanding on that. So a lot of my talking about sexuality would have happened in that time and most of it was negative. Occasionally it was just like 'oh, guess what?' That was fine. Guess what? That doesn't put me out anymore but that was quite rare. And then I suppose I kind of … I probably still talk about it quite a lot but I feel like I don't because I used to talk about a hell of a lot and now I don't talk about it as much. So I feel like I talk about other things but mostly now I'm talking about sex and sexuality … it's in a positive way and it's with mates. Yeah. And it's about how good it is.

Abuse went along with confusion around sexuality in general. Recovering from trauma was necessary for Erica to begin the process of understanding her relationship with sexual orientation.

> Jamie: Do you think of yourself as having a sexual orientation?
>
> Erica: I don't know. Not really, particularly. I think when I was trying to think of myself as having a sexual orientation, it was really messing my head up and then I was thinking 'oh, I must be really messed up' and then I realised when I dropped the sexual orientation dilemma, suddenly my head

wasn't messed up anymore. So it must have been that. I don't know.

Jamie: So what happened there?

Erica: I sort of grew up but also my sexual orientation identification is really bound up with lots of personal issues from my early life so I think I had all of that to sort out and then before I could feel confident enough to start questioning sexual identification taboos and boxes and things in society, I didn't have the confidence to do that because it was all such a disaster for me anyway, from a personal point of view. And once I kind of healed from a lot of trauma and sorted my head out, then I was able to look at stuff and think it's a load of rubbish. I don't have to conform to this. So I think it kind of happened that way round really and that happened during my mid to late-20's.

Jamie: So what boxes did you try to conform to?

Erica: Well I kind of tried to conform to a heterosexual box because that's pretty much what I thought I should do and then I sort of didn't try to conform to but considered a lesbian box and I thought it didn't really fit. I felt really uncomfortable with that and with all the connotations that I could see around that particular box and with the gay scene and I sort of considered bisexual box and that didn't feel particularly right either. It felt restrictive and it felt like … the most difficult thing for me was that I felt that once I chose a particular thing to call myself, then I'd have to conform to that and I'd have to keep it up like a membership and I couldn't really handle doing that. So I kind of dropped, not intentionally, but I kind of dropped it all and then, at some stage, I realised that I didn't actually need any of that so I didn't pick it up again. It kind of happened like that.

Jamie: So what was restrictive about the bisexual box?

Erica: I was considering whether I could define myself as bisexual. I knew a few people who identified as bisexuals and they were wankers, just personal stuff. So I was just like 'no', housemates and other people that I met and I also knew a lot of people on the gay scene who spoke of bisexuals in very derogatory terms and always had a name for them behind their back or whatever and that was also really horrible. So because I was still shopping for identities, that didn't … you know, that it wasn't a very good ad for it and also I really had this image, again, that I was getting from the outside, that being bisexual I'd have to have a male partner and a female partner all the time and that was kind of like ughh.

Sexual abuse was not Erica's experience only of (nonconsensual) sexual domination. She was subjected to pretty severe emotional violence on the gay scene where she would socialise with her (gay male) partner. She resisted having categorisation imposed upon her.

> [P]eople on the gay scene saw me as a sort of closet girl who couldn't get her head sorted out and that would really make me mad. It was so patronising and I thought, actually if I stay on this scene and come out as anything to these people, they're going to question and I wasn't interested. And then I kind of moved away from the scene anyway and dealt with other shit and then moved to a different scene where actually it didn't matter at all. So then I was fine, but, yeah, it took a lot of shifting.

This example illustrates the problems of representation -- it is patronising to speak for other people. Furthermore, her spatial language of moving and shifting fits neatly with the Deleuzian concepts of state-forms and nomadism. This gay bar was a policed state. The policing of Erica's sexuality was not a singular act, but an ongoing process of trying to fit her into different boxes.

> Jamie: Why do you think they thought you were a straight girl?
>
> Erica: Because they did. I don't know why they thought that. I know they did think that because some people said that and some people told me about conversations that happened when I wasn't there and it was just the general attitude that I was picking up from them and I think when I was on the gay scene, it was when I first started seeing my lover who was on the gay scene. He was a gay man, and a lot of people couldn't quite work out what I was doing on the scene and they sort of … some people were like really angry with me for being a het girl. They perceived me as a het girl because I had a male lover and I was a girl on the gay scene and I wasn't keeping up the pretence of being a fag hag so I wasn't supposed to be there. *I didn't match the criteria.* So then other people or sometimes the same people sort of tried to cope with that by sort of deciding that I must be a closet lesbian and [being] kind of really unhelpful, really patronising and quite aggressive sometimes verbally and generally quite weird with me. Women more so than the men. I think it was easier for men to get their head around me. Somehow they seemed more relaxed with me. Most of the women didn't, a lot of the women on the mainstream gay scene that I met did not like me at all. They were hostile to me, it was really awful. (My emphasis.)

The policing involved multiple forms of punishment for failing to fit into the accepted boxes.

> That general hostility kind of thing and general kind of not talking to me, only talking to me about certain things rather than other things like going

> off and having bits of their conversation by themselves, like never really treating me like I was in their lesbian club and … the total opposite of solidarity in a sense and it was just like … and it wasn't that hurtful because I wasn't close to any of these people but it was nasty. I didn't like it much really.

While Mark found that women on the gay scene were much more open to accepting his nomadism, Erica's experience was that (some) men were more accepting of her. If fear of the Other is indeed a recognition of the possibility of that otherness in oneself (e.g., Butler, 1993), then it might make sense that Erica's resistance would make women more anxious. She *could* be one of them, but she isn't. An alternative explanation might be that in an environment defined by same-sex desire, anyone who is ambiguous about their availability as either a same-sex partner or a member of the same identity might cause some anxiety. Whatever the case, Erica was able to find some support from some men on the gay scene.

> Some of the guys accepted me. Some of the guys, I think, [...]found it sometimes quite difficult when I didn't conform [...]. Quite a few of the guys really hounded me. [...] A few guys were actually really OK with me being me. I remember one guy who got chatting to me one night and I didn't really know him before, he said 'so, are you gay or straight?' and I went [shrug] and he said 'oh, does it not matter?' And I said 'it doesn't matter'. So they kind of … some people got the gist and most of the people who got the gist were the men. I can't really imagine one lesbian that was on the gay scene like that, but he was friendly to me and just accepted me.

Of course, Erica not only resisted orientation herself, she also 'corrupted' a nice gay boy with her perversion. This intensified the policing to which she was subjected. Efforts by others to maintain clear categories included trying to break up a relationship with her lover.

> Jamie: Did you ever get in trouble for having a gay male lover from people on the gay scene?
>
> Erica: Yeah. I haven't had direct verbal contact but I think a lot of the hostility was to do with that as well as the fact that I didn't conform and I think the fact that I was just a girl there who looked like a dyke but didn't define herself as a dyke and had a male lover who's supposed to be gay, that was enough. That was part of me not conforming. So I think the hostility was [...] mostly a lot of people talking behind my back and trying to convince my lover, at times when we were stressed together, which has happened a lot of the times, that we've been stressed together, trying to convince him that he was not happy with me and I was the wrong person for him and he was so much happier when he was picking up these perfect

strangers at a bar rather than when he was out with me, that I was miserable, that I'd had a problem with the gay people.

Erica's rejection of sexual orientation was intertwined with her anarchist politics. Her relational analysis of anarchism, focusing on free association, official and unofficial hierarchies and freedom of expression has been an important influence on my thinking about anarchism.

Jamie: What does it mean to you to not have a sexual orientation?

Erica: That I'm free, that I don't need to call myself anything and then call myself something else according to how I feel or not feel or what I do and who I do it with and whether I do anything at all, that it doesn't matter, that I'm just myself. It's great and it means that actually I think that's how it should be, that it should be fine for everybody to become attached to whoever, at whatever time and in whatever way and whatever level they want to without bothering. *It's like interpersonal relationships are sort of delicate enough without adding all these sort of obstacles* and it just becomes a sort of big obstacle race and it shouldn't be like that really. So, for me, actually, now and not having a sexual orientation that I identify with, also it ties in with my anarchist politics. I sort of see it as part of that really. I don't separate my politics from my thoughts and opinions about sexual orientation. It's all the same thing. (My emphasis.)

Jamie: How do you see the connection?

Erica: The freedom, the freedom to be yourself without any dictate from hierarchy because it's still hierarchy. It might be an unspoken hierarchy that dictates. Sometimes it is a spoken hierarchy. Sometimes it's the State that dictates what you should do and what you can do and what you can't do, according to who you fuck or who you love or whatever but it's just like all the unspoken hierarchy that I think are the worst ones anyway because they're the origin of the structure. Yeah, *all the sort of having to conform to certain things and what we lose, what we give up on just for the safety of conforming. [...] that's [...] part of what I'm really fighting against every day*. In all sorts of different levels, not just at a sexual level. But I don't separate sexuality from the rest of it. And I actually think my … a lot of my more articulate anarchist thinking developed around the time that I was struggling with the gay scene and when I dropped out of it and I was getting my head around sexual orientation so it all actually developed quite simultaneously. (My emphasis.)

Jamie: So do you think being a victim of hierarchy in the gay scene led you towards anarchism or is that a … or is it all kind of mixed up together?

Erica: Yeah, it's kind of mixed up together. I think … I actually think I've always been an anarchist and I didn't have a word for it [...]. It's not that I

was the great believer in hierarchies and authorities and I really wanted to conform all my life and then something happened and I changed. I've always been like this. I've never actually fitted into anything. I've never matched any criteria. Particularly I've never conformed to much stuff or I've tried to, really suffered and then dropped out but I've never actually willingly done it or easily done it. [...] It doesn't mean that at some stage I read a book or something. And I get that a lot from people. They just think … because suddenly I'm more articulate about my ideas, they think I've only just got my ideas. But I was kind of … I have been really politically active here for about three years and so I see that as a result of all the fluff that went on in my [...] mid to late-20's and the sort of all the struggle with sexual orientation and the gay scene and that was part of that process.

On the topic of questioning and confusion, Erica pointed out the way in which it is nonconformity that is questioned, rather than why people conform. If the terms of the state-form are accepted, the nomadic life can only be interpreted as confusion. But Erica learned to recognise that her sexuality and sense of self were not the problem. It wasn't personal (individual), it was political (relational).

Erica: There was more questioning than confusion. It's like I've never really … I don't think I've ever really been confused with myself. I was confused by all the stuff that I saw around me, like what you do with your identity once you've got it? Where do you put it? Where do you go with it? How do you present it? What does it get you in terms of what benefits? What trouble does it get you? Why the fuck do you do that in the first place? It was more like the general confusion with the way the sexuality was arranged within society rather than confusion with me. That's the other thing that I get … I'm starting to get from people, the 'oh, you're just confused'. And I know that's a real stereotype thing. A lot of people get that. I'm not confused with myself. I was just as confused with the structures of sexual orientation around me as I am with all the other structures around me. I'm not confused because I do understand them. I can see why they're there and how they got there and why people stick to them to an extent but actually they don't mean anything to me and I think because I was sorting out my sexuality and my sort of sexual healing generally, that it was something that I was dealing with and it felt really important at the time because I thought 'oh, this is probably part of my healing and I need to sort it out'.

Again, Erica used spatial language to describe her changes. She physically left the gay scene, but she also left behind the sexual state-form at the same time. Or, as I suggested to her, 'You escaped.'

Erica: I escaped, yeah. I actually felt I was avoiding the problem that I

> should be dealing with and I think that feeling lingered until I got involved with [a queer anarchist group] about a year and a half ago and I thought 'these people are normal. Wow!' It was just like suddenly I realised that there was really nothing wrong with me [...] and I'm all right because I met a huge load of people [...] who were all very different [...] but [...] they don't give a fuck about identity and that's so good. [...] *Nobody actually ever asked me what I was*. Nobody was interested. They were interested in me but they weren't interested in … it was just like … yeah. It took me a while to actually say my lover or whatever and he's whatever and […] and actually all that was fine. I just sort of realised that nobody batted an eyelid and that people had their own lifestyles and when I saw other people's lifestyles and how open they were with that I just thought 'oh, it's OK. It's actually fine', because I was expecting so much aggression and questioning. I walked into the first meeting and was really expecting to like have to justify myself and describe myself and identify myself before I walked in the door. And I didn't have to do that. It was great. It was just like, yeah, it was nice. I just thought 'oh, I was right all along. I'm OK. I'm normal. I'm fine.' Normal is not about conforming to a norm. Normal as in all that sort of relaxed feeling that I get when I know that there's nothing wrong with me really and nice feelings.
>
> [...] I remember being at [a queer anarchist] sex party and just being so happy because my lover was there somewhere and I was doing my thing and I knew he was doing his thing and then we got together at some time in the morning and I just thought 'oh, this so blissful'. [...] I felt 'this is OK. This is like just being ourselves and being together' and we hadn't had a dirty look from anybody. Yeah. That was nice.

No Borders! (just boundaries)

Erica worked to resist borders -- national, sexual and otherwise. At the same time, a significant source of empowerment for Erica, and necessary to her overcoming the damage caused by domination, was her autonomous capacity to define boundaries. Freedom depends upon the capacity to say yes, no or anything else to a particular experience or relationship -- that is to establish boundaries for oneself. For Erica, specifically, her background of sexual abuse means that she was very aware of having been denied the capacity to say no. All generally not as traumatic as sexual abuse, authoritarian social organisation means that feeling incapable of saying no is a common experience.

Erica described how she had very little conscious memory of her childhood experiences of sexual abuse. Because of this, she found sexual experiences to be very disorienting. Boundaries enabled her to reclaim sexuality.

> My first really sexual experience was to decide not to have sex. To just say 'no' to sex and it came out of fear and out of confusion and out of all sorts of shit but actually it was really affirming and sexual and made me feel really sexy because I realised that I couldn't really say 'yes' to sex without knowing what it was like to say 'no' kind of thing. So, yeah, so that was good. And I'm quite choosy about sex now. I very rarely … its not that I don't experiment. I don't take chances but I very rarely enter into sex unless I've got a clear inkling that its going to be good because I'm not interested in any sex that's any less than like really, really good. I don't want boring sex anymore. I don't want any of that, or guilt sex or kind of street cred sex or … I don't want any of that. I'm not interested. [...] I think that's one of things that I can't change, is that … that was the beginning of my sex life. I can't do anything about that and what I can do is just make sure that its really good now, which I do.

Erica reclaimed sexuality by saying no to sex, much like street parties reclaim public space by saying no to the alienation caused by car culture and capitalism. In neither case is this a reclaiming of an essential presocial reality, but a redefinition of social relationships based on active consent rather than domination.

Erica also has firm boundaries when it comes to pain and power play.

> I'm not into S&M in a big way. I'm not into bondage and that sort of fetish stuff and anything that involves any violence, like objects really freak me out. For a long time I wasn't into sex toys at all because using objects really freaked me out. Less so now. [...] But, yeah, mostly sort of violent domination stuff. I can really understand that some people are into it but I'm really not at all.

This maintenance of boundaries is consistent with nomadism; it allows for movement across borders without fear of repercussion, not a need to cross all borders. Nomadism is not a romanticisation of the transgressive. Nomadic relationships with particular boundaries may also change over time. They have for Erica and her partner.

> [T]he other thing that really shapes our sex lives is that we've been abused and we've both got over it in our own way and it actually … I think it shaped our sex life in a negative way in the past but now it's quite positive because it's about going 'oh, oh I can do that now'. And I didn't before but now I do. Maybe I'll try that one day. [...] and I don't see that as separate from my sexual orientation or my sexual identity because it's all the same thing.

Finally, Erica provided a powerful example of the benefit of playing with boundaries. In her case, it was a way to overcome her childhood sexual abuse.

> [Getting together after a separation, we] hadn't slept together for probably about a year and it was kind of really difficult and then I talked a lot about my virginity stuff and how I didn't really feel that I'd lost my virginity. And I sort of realised that some of my thing of not having sex for months was that I was trying to get my virginity back so that I could lose it and I'd done that for years and how bored I was with that. [...] So it was really nice because we did this sort of teenage thing where we just like really courted each other for ages and we just went a bit further every time and that was very sexy. That was really sexy. And maybe that's nothing to do with the sexual orientation but it was just so unique to our relationship, that we could do that, that we could both do that, that we were like on the same level with that and it was great and it really worked as well.

Conclusions

Erica's story, and her own analysis, is highly compatible with the anarchist poststructuralist framework I outlined in Chapter Three. Her experiences of sexual borders and policing, growing up and on the gay scene, highlight the State-like character of sexual orientation. They also demonstrate the decentralised nature of power. If we were to think of a State-centred gay and lesbian lobbying organisation as the gay equivalent of the State apparatus, then a centralised notion of power would suggest that gay policing would be done by employees of Stonewall in the same way that police are employed by the State apparatus. However, this policing is clearly decentralised, though perhaps concentrated in particular locations (e.g. gay bars). Furthermore, this policing, which continuously produces the borders of state-forms, depends upon a violation of anarchist poststructuralist ethics against representation. The emotional violence was clear in Erica's experiences of being represented as 'closet lesbian' and 'dopey straight, blonde straight girl'. Erica's capacity to name herself, her autonomy, was continuously denied. Furthermore, her partner's capacity to choose his relationships was also challenged. This process was, in Erica's words, 'the total opposite of solidarity', or perhaps more explicitly, the opposite of anarchy. Despite this intensive policing, Erica continued to resist. One of the most inspiring, and important, lessons I have learned from my participants' stories is that resistance is always possible, but also always difficult. Resistance requires a sense of power, and Erica was losing hers on the gay scene. At least, that is how I interpreted her understated comment 'people's prejudice started getting to me a

bit but then when that happened I moved away.' Given the great sense of relief she describes when moving on to a queer anarchist scene, I feel this interpretation is justifiable. The anarchist activism, within the context of a supportive network, provided Erica (nomadic) space within which to redevelop a sense of power and, simultaneously, a sense of well-being.

Ken Plummer (1995) argued that the classic coming out story is a linear narrative characteristic of modern storytelling. This narrative suggests that empowerment is a state to be achieved through the act of coming out and revealing one's true self. While coming out is radically empowering for many people, representation of gay, lesbian or bisexual identity as an endpoint fixes the self and halts the process of empowerment. I suggest instead that stories such as Mark's and Erica's illustrate the non-linearity of life. The nomadism of these stories is in their process based on continuous resistance (to continuous policing), supported by and producing, continuous empowerment. This ongoing nomadic practice of resistance is consistent with anarchist ethics of relationships. Mark did not begin to resist when he decided that he could have sex with Steven on his own terms, but, he did begin to get much better at it. Instead of taking heroin and hiding from older men following him home from school, Mark was enjoying powerful relationships that resist categorisation. Likewise, Erica did not begin to resist when she found her anarchist group, but she became more effective. She describes this in terms of her thinking about anarchist politics, 'because suddenly I'm more articulate about my ideas, they think I've only just got my ideas'. To present these stories as periods of policing ended through resistance, enabled by empowerment would be to fall into the same trap as identity politics.

If the linear coming out story is a hallmark stories of sexual identity politics, then the nomadic narratives of Mark and Erica are exemplary stories of sexual anarchy. These stories are characterised by the intertwined processes of policing, resistance and empowerment consistent with the anarchist poststructuralist framework I outlined in Chapter Three. The 14 other stories are explored over the course of three chapters focusing on each of the three processes in turn. These can never be separated, as I have illustrated in my analysis of Mark and Erica's stories. Resistance always accompanies policing (Foucault, 1980, 1990), even if it is not always very effective. And the factors that encourage resistance are acts of resistance in themselves. Finally, this analysis aims not only to provide grounding for anarchist politics of sexuality, but to demonstrate the extent to which sexual anarchy already exists. This best begins by analysing the State-like nature of 'sexual orientation'.