

**From “Coming Out” to “Becoming”:
Locating, Performing, and Re-engineering
the Geography of the Closet**

John Sheng Kuo*

Abstract

While recent geographical approaches adopted by gay studies are focused on prescribing how desires can be situated and spatialized, this study attempts to raise a more fundamental question: how can geography help revising and reconstructing the existent identification structure in gay cultures? Its objective is to investigate the performative power underlying the geography of the closet, and then probe into the implications of coming out in this new framework. To do so, the study re-examines the theories by Sedgwick, Butler, Foucault, Deleuze, as well as the life and work of American gay writer Edmund White. Gay identity and its geography are never in a harmonious relationship; on the contrary, it is full of tensions, paradoxes, manipulations and delusions. To reconcile these issues, as this research intends to suggest in the end, depends on how to re-engineer the geography of the closet.

Keywords: Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Performativity, Geography, Queer Theory, Gay Studies, Homosexuality, the closet

* Associate Professor, Department of English, National Dong Hwa University.