

# Counter- sexual Manifesto

**Paul B. Preciado**

**Translated by Kevin Gerry Dunn  
Foreword by Jack Halberstam**



# COUNTERSEXUAL MANIFESTO

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CRITICAL LIFE STUDIES

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**JAMI WEINSTEIN, CLAIRE COLEBROOK, AND  
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*For Monique Wittig, Arizona*

*For petit Q, Las Vegas*

*In memory of Nathalie Magnan*



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## FOREWORD

### We Are the Revolution! Or, the Power of the Prosthesis

JACK HALBERSTAM

When you sign Paul Preciado's countersexual contract, you agree to renounce your status as a natural man/woman and you relinquish all privileges that may be extended to you from "within the framework of the naturalized heterocentric regime." The new contract that you enter into, a countersexual contract that comes both after and before nature, situates you as "an anus and an anal worker" and inscribes you into the order of the dildo. This prosthetic order, an alternative orientation to power, pleasure, knowledge, and desire, is not a system whose time is yet to come; it is a structuring condition of the world we already inhabit. As Preciado says in his new introduction, doubling down on the terms of a manifesto he wrote as a young differently gendered person: "It doesn't start with a call for revolution, but with the realization that we *are* the revolution that is already taking place."

We are the revolution that is already taking place! You can feel the energy in the sentence itself rippling through you as you read. Assume the position, man the barricades—or is that non-binary the barricades, trans\* the barricades—oh hell, just pull them all down. We are the revolution because the revolution is in us, it will become us and it will live on after us, because of

us. This “us” is not a casual first person plural; rather, it is the grammar of a new order that Preciado calls “somatic communism,” a way of being, moving, and changing that resides within the ability to “care and proliferate, connect and multiply.”

Like a queer character who has wandered out of Monique Wittig’s *Les Guérillères*, Preciado’s dildo-bearing countersexual butch exists beyond the “heterosexual contract” and makes open warfare on the so-called natural world. This is not a battle fought with soldiers and tanks; it is epistemological warfare in which the butch must be recognized not as an anachronism, a failed copy, a sad imitation of men, but as part of a new postwar industrial landscape in which soldiers, housewives, and Hollywood actors all deploy prosthetics to try to cover up the shattered landscape of the natural world. All that is solid has been glued together in this world, all that glitters has been painted gold, and while the butch gets sacrificed on the altar of the unnatural, the soldiers get fitted with artificial limbs, the housewives buy dishwashers, and TV circulates impossible images of beautiful doomed people. The countersexual is the figure who refuses the cover-up and exposes their own plastic reality.

Written in the waning years of the twentieth century but only now translated into English, this early work by Preciado finds shortcuts around the interminable debates about essentialism versus construction, performativity versus realness, and agency versus production. And, with admirable brevity, wit, and sophistication, the text offers readers an eclectic version of queer theory that builds more on Deleuze than Foucault but that also refuses to settle into an orthodox relation to Deleuze. Indeed, one chapter of the *Countersexual Manifesto* offers a fairly hard-hitting critique of Deleuze and, in the tradition of Gayatri Spivak’s critique of Deleuze and Foucault in “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” Preciado interrogates what Deleuze actually means

when he writes things like “Homosexuality is the truth of love.” Spivak proposed that Deleuze and Foucault invoked workers or proletarians without ever allowing them to speak for themselves within post-structuralist intellectual discourse. Preciado, in the context of the 1990s in France where identity politics were seen as gauche and simplistic and where the language of molecular-ity prevailed, pushed back on the unquestioned use of homosexuality and transsexuality as metaphors in French theoretical discourse. Refusing to abstract the sexual practices upon which his own text depends, Preciado recognized and named the very different stakes involved in claiming the space of homosexuality or transsexuality rather than just invoking its abstract form of critique—especially in the hyperpatriarchal systems of French academia. Just as Deleuze described a nomadism without nomads, a process of becoming woman or animal that is not about actual women or animals, so he called upon a transversal experience of homosexuality without actually needing to engage in homosexual behavior. Preciado offers a critique of this evasion of identity politics without plunging into the quagmire of identity himself. And yet, more than Butler, way more than Deleuze, and certainly more explicitly than Foucault, Preciado summons, inhabits and celebrates, claims, names, and joins the queer identities and communities and collectivities about and with whom he writes—these queer subjects include butches explicitly here but also “the intersexed, the crip, the gender-queer, the non-white, the trans.”

Building his manifesto through engagement with the work of Foucault and Deleuze, but also offering a critique of these theorists via the kinetic power of the thought of Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and especially Monique Wittig, Preciado cuts to the chase. Refusing the purity of a lesbian feminist utopia imagined through matriarchy, but also refusing the mastery of

a purely abstract account of power, Preciado offers an early take on biopolitical sex and begins the work of revealing how the epistemic regimes within which heterosexuality appears as the natural order of things have already collapsed. In their wake, we find an ideological landscape littered with the debris of a system in decline, dying but not dead, and continuing to spark the right circuits that allow for the impression of functionality. This is what Preciado means by the “slow temporality in which sexual institutions don’t appear to have ever undergone any changes.” Think here of Hal in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. When functional, the computer assistant to the astronauts in Stanley Kubrick’s classic techno-horror film is invisible, seamless, blending into the structure of the spaceship and the apparatus of colonial exploration. But, as a malfunction begins to tip the system into chaos, Hal, rather than slipping into redundancy and turning himself off, takes on a new role as an agent of exploration, deception, and destruction. So, the heterosexual matrix governs by remaining invisible and then turns to violence when its cover is blown. We countersexuals, of course, are its malfunction.

As we watch the heterosexual matrix—as Butler following Wittig named it—drift away from occupying the center of human continuity to situate itself all along the margins of human bodily creativity, blocking the exit routes to better orientations to relationality and gendered power, we do well to return to this pithy manual of dildonic, anti-castration, non-identitarian, counter-sexual power! Preciado, after all, does not only want to name the systems that oppress us, he wants to destroy them, or at least acknowledge that we are all witnesses to their catastrophic decline. To push the so-called natural order of things over the edge, he retools the terms of the gender system. And so, just as Monique Wittig could claim as a lesbian not to be a woman, so Preciado claims that the butch or trans\* person is an “event.”

Rather than representing the latest body to stand before the state awaiting recognition, the butch in this text and the trans\* in *Testo-Junkie* is rupture, rapture, “technology thief,” the bearer of the dildo, the prosthetic hero, the transitive subject of a “countersexual recession economy.” Stony in her masculinity, the butch lacks nothing and is a cyborgian counter-fiction.

Illustrated with cute cartoons representing the body as dildo, Preciado’s masterpiece mirrors its own theoretical drift. “Placing itself on the side of dildo,” as he writes in his new introduction, and reminding us that “this book, too, is a dildo,” Preciado’s manifesto refuses to make peace with the master narratives of Western philosophies of the body. Instead, he rips them apart (along with conventional feminism) and offers us a new theory of the body organized around the universality of the anus on the one hand and the plastic/silicone organizational logics of the dildo on the other.

Never one to hold back or use a modest frame when a grand and bold one will do, Preciado offers his manifesto in the spirit of disrupting “the three modern narratives of hetero-capital-colonialism: Marxism, psychoanalysis, and Darwinism.” Why not? Let them fall. There’s no one better to push these mouldering, lumbering, wobbly fortresses of knowledge production over the edge. Preciado, who has not always been cast as a feminist, comes bearing dildonic weapons. He has the full intention of finishing the job begun by Gayle Rubin’s interventions into narratives of kinship and capital in the 1980s and Butler’s near fatal assaults on Freud and Lacan in the 1990s. While Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women” skewered Freud—and to a certain extent Levi Strauss—for not critiquing the systems of exploitation and inequality that they wrote about, Butler’s “The Lesbian Phallus” took Freud and Lacan to task for not accounting for their own relationships to naturalized hetero-masculinity in their

theories of castration. Because neither Freud nor Lacan could imagine a non-*abject* form of non-male masculinity, female and queer masculinities represented a kind of unthinkable limit in their works on phallic power and feminine castration. So bewildered was Freud by the possibility of subverting phallic power that he could only wonder “What do women want?” Clearly neither Foucault nor Lacan knew the answer to this question.

Enter Gayle Rubin, Sylvia Wynters, Judith Butler, Rod Ferguson, Kara Keeling, and Donna Haraway. Enter generations of queer, decolonial, and feminist scholars who know exactly what “women” want—namely, the end of the culture within which *woman* is defined in relation to *man*, female embodiment stands in for the lack that all humans experience, black bodies represent the aberrant shadow of whiteness, colonized bodies aspire to become real only through imitation and subordination, and the phallus is still the (white) penis. Preciado, writing after Butler but before queer people of color’s critiques, also aspires to know what the queer/black/colonized/female/disabled body wants—it wants prosthetic extension, dildonic substitution, inauthentic routes to non-redemptive, anti-capitalist, somatic insurrection. If for Lacan, the human wants, period; if for Freud, the human body orients towards death, dying, and unbecoming; if for Marx, revolution depends upon the white male working body and its orientation to liberation, then for Preciado, what we want hangs in the balance and its contours will be known only once we overcome what he calls heterosexual choreographies in favor of a “new political organization of sex and sexuality.”

At a time when it is increasingly difficult to name the weapons that skewer us on a daily basis, let alone craft defences to them along with inventive routes around them, it is refreshing—nay, liberating—to listen to the voice of someone who thinks they

might know a new way to move on. The fact that this small, dangerous, propulsive book was written nearly twenty years ago does not lessen its impact now. In fact, its publication in English now calls attention to the coloniality of the academic world in which English is the lingua franca and scholars writing in other languages (even other colonial languages like French and Spanish) must wait to be translated before their work has the impact it deserves. Despite echoing across two decades and waiting in a queue that guarantees a “late” reading, *Countersexual Manifesto* continues to be an urgent and timely text. In fact, given the recent rise of various cultural expressions of total impatience with patriarchal systems of abuse, harassment, and violence, this book—a blatant and wild celebration of the end of “man” and a punk anthem for the dildonic system that replaces him—rewrites queer theory and seems to anticipate certain theoretical manoeuvres even as it leads the way forward.

Written first but translated last of Preciado’s books, *Countersexual Manifesto* stands the test of time and space and holds up like a silicone wonder dick in a sea of Viagra-dependent phallic flesh. Not asking to be authenticated or validated, not stranded as a prediction for a future that never arrived, this book strikes as many right notes now as it did in the 1990s when it was written, and as “Prosthesis, Mon Amour” did in 2001 when it was first published.

I am not just a fan of this book, I am a countersexual convert. Like Preciado, I too believe that “pleasure itself can no longer be the emancipatory force that Marcuse was waiting for.” He goes on, “Instead, we need to open a revolutionary terrain for the invention of new organs and desires, for which no pleasure has yet been defined; new subjectivities that cannot be represented by the means of identity politics.” The way forward for



Preciado is mutation, multiplication, and poetry. The way back will remain unknown and inaccessible. Sign on to the countersexual manifesto! Sign on and keep signing on. This revolution is now and you are its fragmenting and disintegrating author. Pick up the dildo and write your way out of History—the multitudes of a planetary somatic communism await your arrival.

# COUNTERSEXUAL MANIFESTO



## INTRODUCTION

*It is dangerous, in extending the frigid research of the sciences, to come to a point where one's object no longer leaves one unaffected, where, on the contrary, it is what inflames. Indeed, the ebullition I consider, which animates the globe, is also my ebullition. Thus, the object of my research cannot be distinguished from the subject at its boiling point.*

—Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1

**T**he manuscript of *The 120 Days of Sodom* is a twelve-meter-long paper scroll composed of small pieces of paper glued together, with writing on both sides in black ink. Sade wrote it in thirty-seven nights, in almost total darkness and in the tiniest handwriting, during his imprisonment in the Bastille in 1785, hiding it inside a hollow wooden dildo to avoid detection by his jailers. Anything written by Sade was confiscated and risked immediately justifying new charges. Sade declared that he spent his time reading and writing, eating, and masturbating—more than six times per day, he said. It was for these masturbation practices that he asked his wife, Renée-Pélagie, to make him a wooden dildo

for anal penetration. Hidden inside one of the prison's stone walls, the dildo protected the manuscript from the pillage of the Bastille and was ultimately recovered by Arnoux de Saint-Maximin and made public for the first time more than a century later, in 1904, by the German doctor Iwan Bloch under the pseudonym "Eugène Dühren."

The lesson we learn from the survival of Sade's most challenging text is not only that hollow dildos can be useful pens for hiding secrets or that any dildo can eventually contain a book but also that a book can operate like a dildo by becoming a technique for fabricating sexuality. Like a dildo, a book is a sexual body's assisted cultural technology of modification.

In this sense, this book, too, is a dildo. A dildo-book and a book about dildos that aims to modify the subject who might use it.

I was, indeed, someone else when I wrote this book. My legal name was Beatriz, I was supposed to be a woman, people identified me as a queer lesbian, and I was twenty-eight years old. This book was not written as a piece of academic knowledge. It was an experiment. It worked like a fictional technique that allowed me to start a process of becoming-other that's still under way. At that time, I was doing a doctoral dissertation in continental philosophy under the guidance of Jacques Derrida at the New School for Social Research. My doctoral topic was Saint Augustine's conversion as a process of transsexuality: when converting, Augustine moved from a luxurious desire and a booming sexual activity to an ethical imperative of chastity and sexual self-renouncement. For me, Augustine was transsexual: he transitioned from one economy of desire to another, contributing to the invention of a new sexuality dominated by theological introjection, the de-erotization of the body, and degenitalization. This is how I started to think of sexual plasticity as something that

exceeded contemporary gender politics, something that implied the fabrication of a different regime of desire.

At the same time, partly compelled by the discourse on deconstruction that circulated within the field of architecture at the end of the century but also looking for a better grant to finish my dissertation, I took my odd Augustinian topic from the New School to the School of Architecture at Princeton University. Entering the world of architecture meant a radical deferral of my philosophical practice. Though trained in constructivist theories of gender, I had never reflected about the very materiality of the performative processes of gender construction. “What do you really mean by ‘construction’ when you talk about gender?” the architects asked me, affirming that construction technologies were their main “business.” What did I really mean? I didn’t know.

I then started paying attention to the materiality of gender technologies. Architects and historians of design helped me to look at bodies and sexualities as specific effects of construction and visual techniques, including framing, collage, replication, imitation, assemblage, standardization, segmentation, spatial distribution, cutting up, reconstruction, transparency, opacity, and so on. If architecture is a political technology for fabricating social space, then bodies, too, can be understood in architectural terms. This is how I began to look at dildos and medical techniques of intersex and trans reconstruction as design, prosthetic, and bioarchitectural technologies that could be inscribed within a larger history of technological modification to our material bodies and our perception of space, time, and reality. Finally, I decided to turn from Saint Augustine to my own life and to dare to think about the very processes of material conversion and body fabrication that were taking place within the gender-queer and trans movement that I was living with.

To begin with, the reader shall not find excuses or legitimations here. I don't mind if you consider my sexuality queer or disabled. I embrace queerness and disability. This book starts with the jubilant and apparently antiscientific affirmation of the irreducible multiplicity of sexes, genders, and sexualities. It doesn't start with a call for revolution, but with the realization that we *are* the revolution that is already taking place.

This manifesto is also an answer to the essentialism/constructivism dilemmas that paralyzed philosophy, gender theory, and anthropology discourses in the twentieth century as well as a reaction to normative psychoanalysis,<sup>1</sup> Marxism, biological discourses and techniques, and mainstream academic writing in philosophy.

In writing this text, I wanted to avoid the enclosure of academic discourse while still using some of its critical tools to understand what had been excluded from it. Academic discourse and its grammar not only are like a forest that doesn't allow us to distinguish between individual trees but also go a step further, forcing the researcher to cut the trees down in order to understand the forest. As the logic of the dildo proclaims, instead of cutting down trees, lives, desires, and sexualities, this book is a call to care and proliferate, to connect and multiply.

I belong to a generation of philosophers and activists who grew up under the critical hegemony of psychoanalytic theories on the understanding of sexuality. The feminist and queer theories of the fin-du-siècle could be described as a coming to terms with the hypermasculinity, white supremacy, and heterocentrism of central European psychoanalytic theories of sexuality. Drawing on the steps that feminist and queer theories took against psychoanalytic norms, the texts and exercises included in this manifesto could be understood as a counterclinic of queer and trans sexualities.

Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis proposed understanding the dildo as a phallic instance, an object that allows one to maintain the phantom of power while avoiding the castration complex. Against Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari understood the notion of complex castration as one of the “ideological constructs” of psychoanalysis. The political and theoretical experience elaborated by queer and trans movements in the past few years extended and radicalized the *Anti-Oedipus* proposal.<sup>2</sup> The psychoanalytic notion of castration depends on a heteronormative and colonial epistemology of the body, a binary anatomical cartography in which there are only two bodies and two sexes: the masculine body and subjectivity, defined in relation to the penis, a (more or less) extruded genital organ, and the female body and subjectivity, defined by the absence of a penis. This dialectic of having or not having a penis is presented as a dilemma between two mutually exclusive possibilities. Outside of this binary, there are only pathology and disability.

This manifesto is the angry and impertinent response to the heterocolonial castration of the living being’s radical multiplicity and forms of production of desire and pleasure. We live in a world where violent gender diagnosis is a legalized practice in every modern hospital, forcing gender assignment according to the binary; a world where in spite of the technical separation of heterosexuality and reproduction that the pill enables, heterosexuality is still declared the normal and natural form of sexual reproduction; a world where hormones, prostheses, and surgeries enable an embodied experience of gender transition but where normalization of gender is the political requirement for any gender reassignment process; a world where experiments with three-dimensional printing of skin and organs are already taking place but always within the framework of hegemonic gender



and racial norms. And yet we—the intersexed, the crip, the gender-queer, the nonwhite, the trans—exist, speak, and act. We are anti-Oedipus in the pharmacopornographic regime. Our bodies and subjectivities might not have political or anatomic existence, yet we live within and against the binary sex-gender regime.

Thus, castration is not simply a psychological or a political-sexual device of the colonial heteropatriarchal regime. Since the 1950s, with the extension of the “Money protocol” of sexual assignment, castration has become one of the central techniques deployed by the medical-pharmacological industrial complex to define the body. Castration is a set of surgical and endocrinological procedures and rules that seek to reshape and transform the morphological and sexual irreducible diversity of bodies to sexual binarism (penis/absence of the penis) by subjecting so-called intersex babies to mutilating operations in order to technically produce gender difference.

The dominant psychoanalytic narrative and its binary genital economy could be understood as the clinical device that accompanies the heteronormative colonial regime by defining instances of pathology and seeking a normalizing treatment of the anxiety and psychic pain that the epistemology of sexual difference and its power-knowledge regime generate. Dominant psychoanalysis and pharmacology operate as therapeutic chambers in which the possibility of transforming the anguish and psychic pain that the dominant heterocolonial regime produces into political rebellion is deactivated and transformed into a process of subjective identification: “Accept that you are a man or a woman,” “Assume your heterosexuality or your homosexuality.” Enjoy and eroticize the violence of the binary regime.

Confronted with the impasse of these debates, I turned to the dildo as a counter-Augustinian object of anticastration conversion that was my own and yet foreign to me. This rather

banal and material artifact seemed to perform a conversion of my female and lesbian sexuality into something other, something that was unbearable and unspeakable to the point that it had to remain clandestine. The dildo seemed to be equally bothersome to my Lacanian psychoanalyst and my feminist friends. For both, it was the bad signifier, a pathological symptom of my uncas-trated desire for power and the replication of a dominant and phallic form of masculinity. As in the case of Sade in the Bas-tille, both psychoanalysis and feminism seemed to force me to write the discourse of the dildo in tiny script and hide it secretly within the dildo itself.

Nevertheless, my experience of the dildo was radically dif-ferent. I was interested in the nonidentitary grammar that the dildo introduces within bodies and sexualities. The dildo evades the disjunctive to have and to have not: it does not belong to the ontology of the essence or to the order of property. The dildo is and is not an organ that, although belonging to someone, can't be fully owned. The dildo belongs to an economy of mul-tiplicity, connection, sharing, transference, and usage. The dildo refuses to be inscribed into the body to create organic wholeness or identity. It stands on the side of dispossession and nomadism.

Placing itself on the side of the dildo, this manifesto disrupts the three modern narratives of heterocapitalist colonialism: Marxism, psychoanalysis, and Darwinism. Against Marx, it places reproduction at the center of political economy; against Freud, it aims to decolonize and rehabilitate the "fetish" as the cultural technology that enables fabrication of any sexual body; against Darwin, it questions sexual binarism as something that would be shared across the animal/human divide. Countersex-uality is anti-Oedipal and asymptotic to narratives of historic capitalist progress, human salvation, and planetary redemption.

Furthermore, dildonics stresses the irreducibility of sexu-alities to gender theories. Although gender theories marked a

major leap in the political emancipation of women, they also contributed to the removal of sex and sexuality from gender. The problem with gender studies is the way in which sexuality itself was erased from the discussion in an attempt to criticize sexual difference as a universal ontology. This manifesto affirms that sexuality can't be reduced either to sexual difference or to gender identity. Sexuality is defined here as a political and yet sometimes unconscious aesthetics of the body and its pleasure.

Sexualities are like languages: they are complex systems of communication and reproduction of life. As languages, sexualities are historical constructs with common genealogies and biocultural inscriptions. Like languages, sexualities can be learned. Multiple languages can be spoken. As is often the case within monolingualism, one sexuality is imposed on us in childhood, and it takes on the character of a naturalized desire. We are trained into sexual monolingualism. It is the language that we are unable to perceive as a social artifact, the one that we understand without being able to fully hear its accent and melody. We entered that sexuality through the medical and legal acts of gender assignment; through education and punishment; through reading and writing; through image consumption, mimicry, and repetition; through pain and pleasure. And yet we could have entered into any other sexuality under a different regime of knowledge, power, and desire. Still, we can learn any other sexual language with a greater or lesser sense of alienation and strangeness, of joy and appropriation. It is possible to learn and invent other sexualities, other regimes of desire and pleasure production. While thinking of sexuality as a language and aesthetic, this manifesto calls for surpassing formalism, functionalism, and the empire of vision. Countersexuality is an attempt to become foreign to your own sexuality and to lose yourself in sexual translation.

The countersexual manifesto was very much inspired by debates and silences around the normalization of sexuality that emerged from the feminist and queer communities at the end of the previous century. This book is the offspring of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, of Deleuze and Guattari, of Guy Hocquenghem and Monique Wittig, of Donna Haraway and Judith Butler, as well as of Ursula Le Guin and Alfred Jarry, of Marcel Duchamp and Jack Halberstam, of Ann Halperin and Yvonne Rainer.

I wanted to extend to sexuality the conclusions of the cyborg politics that Haraway explored in the late 1980s. The dildo, although apparently low tech, is a very powerful epistemic tool. The dildo is to sex and to the straight systems of representation of genitals what the cyborg is to the nature/culture divide. Like the cyborg, the dildo is located at the very edge of the racist male-dominant capitalist tradition. If the penis (phallus) is the organic embodiment of this hegemonic tradition, the dildo is its cyborg other. Although fabricated according to the logic of representation and appropriation of nature (sometimes imitating a penis), the dildo, like the cyborg, exceeds that tradition, pushing it to its very limits through parody and dissent. The dildo ontology is postnaturalist and postconstructivist. The dildo politics is post-identitary. At the very limit of life and death, of the organic and the machine, the prosthesis introduces within sex and sexuality not only the ontology of becoming and dispossession but also the politics of somatic drag.

## REALISTS VERSUS COUNTERSEXUALISTS

Glenn Gould affirmed that there are two kinds of musicians: virtuoso players for whom the piano (or any other instrument) becomes an end in and of itself and those for whom the

instrument is merely the interface through which our embodied sensorial materiality accesses the sphere of music, inventing a sound, creating a melody that didn't exist before playing. We could just as well say that there are two kinds of sexual agents: those for whom the object of sexual activity is the repetition of the score of their sexual identity (masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual) according to a certain definition of proper functions of organs and bodies (erection, ejaculation, reproduction, orgasm, etc.) and those for whom the organ (biological or synthetic, alive or technosemiotically incorporated) is merely the interface by which they access certain forms of pleasure or affects that can't be represented by sexual difference, gender, or sexual identity. We shall call the former "realists" or "genitalists," straight/homosexual "naturalists," followers, consciously or not, of the mainstream entertainment-cum-industry. We will refer to the latter as "countersexualists."

Sexual realism depends on sexual automation: promoted by medical-legal systems and pharmacopornographic techniques, sexual automation is the political technology for injecting determinism into the processes of social reproduction. The realists, hetero or homo, fuck within the assembly line of the biopenis/biovagina world. Sexocolonial capitalism automates sexuality, increasing (mostly unpaid) sexual labor and productivity but also the production of mainstream sexual identities that become the target of political and economic governance. Most philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists are sexual realists.

Against sexual automation, dildonics is the sexuality of the postgender and post-sexually identified subject. The true aim of countersexual practices is neither physical pleasure (which can always be transformed into profit) nor identity production but rather exuberant expenditure, affect experimentation, and freedom.

### 3D-PRINTING SEX

We don't have a body that we come later to reflect upon. We make ourselves a body, we earn our own body—we pay a high (political and affective) price for it. Our bodies and sexualities are collective institutions that we simultaneously inhabit and perform. The social technologies that produce and legitimize these living institutions are shifting radically.

We are living through a historic period comparable only to fifteenth-century planetary mutation. We will soon stop printing the book and start printing the flesh, thus entering the new era of digital biowriting. If Guttenberg's era was characterized by the process of desacralizing the Bible, secularizing knowledge, and proliferating vernacular languages against Latin as well as by the multiplication of politically dissident languages, then the bio-Guttenberg 3D era will bring forward the desacralization of modern anatomy as the dominant living language/code.

Soon we will be able to print our sexual organs with the aid of a 3D bioprinter. Bio-ink will be fabricated with an aggregate of mother cells from the body onto which the organ is to be grafted. The new organ will be digitally designed and printed for later grafting or implanting onto a body that will recognize it as its own. The process of printing so-called vital organs, such as kidneys and livers, is already in the testing phase, yet experimental biotechnology labs haven't yet discussed printing sex organs. They say that ethical limits must be established. But whose ethics are they talking about? Why can we print and graft a kidney but not a penis, a vagina, or a dick-clit? Is the aesthetic of sexual difference to be considered an ethical limit to the transformation of the human body? Are patriarchal and heterosexual norms to be considered ethical? Guttenberg was also persecuted when he claimed in 1451 that he would be able to print 180 copies of the Bible (supposedly God's word), composed of forty-two

lines of text per page, in just a few weeks—something that only authorized monks could do by hand in a process that had taken months. We know how to use a 3D bioprinter, but we don't know to use it freely. Countersexuality affirms that it is possible to design and print any sexual organ. A sexual organ is not a pre-determined morphological organ identified as penis or vagina according to the aesthetics of sexual difference as female or male. A sexual organ is any organ (inorganic or organic) that has the capacity to channel the *potentia gaudendi* through a nervous system connecting a living body to its exteriority or by producing a network of bodies and machines.

The regime of male hegemony and sexual difference (which still prevails in political terms but has been in crisis since at least the 1950s in the scientific sense) is to the domain of sexuality what religious monotheism was to the Western theological realm. Just as it was impossible (or, rather, sacrilege) for the medieval West to question God's word, today it is impossible (or rather antinatural) to question sexual binarism and the morphological aesthetics of sexual difference. Nevertheless, sexual binarism and the aesthetic of sexual difference are just historical categories, cognitive and political maps that frame and limit, normalize and hierarchize the proliferating form of our desire. The logic of sexual binarism as well as the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality are the effects of subjugation of the chaotic potency of each singular body to a process of sexual-reproduction industrialization. Bodies are recognized as human only as they are potential producers of ovules or spermatozooids to be located within a Fordist-family chain of production and reproduction.

We must liberate the productive forces of desire from colonial heterosexual capitalist captivity. Desire is already a machinic prosthesis that has taken certain organs as naturalized sites of

surplus libidinal production. If *operaismo* (workerism) affirms that *surplus*—the value added in production and in the development of the potentialities constituted by the appropriation of fixed capital—derives essentially from *productive social cooperation*, we affirm that sexual surplus derives from social sexual cooperation, from the collective production of desire. The only interesting sex is alien sex, meaning the becoming-other of your sex through the investment of a desire still unknown to you as an embodied subject.

The failure of the Left lies in its inability to redefine sovereignty in terms other than in relation to the Western, white, biomale, patriarchal body. The only way to global mutation today is to construct a *planetary somatic communism*, a communism of (all) living bodies within and together with the earth. With the distinction between production and reproduction (naturalized as male and female, respectively) at the core of the division of labor within modern colonial heterosexual capitalism, the new political organization of labor cannot be achieved without a new political organization of sex and sexuality. This implies that sexual organs as we know them, related to reproductive functions and normative heterosexual choreographies (penetrator, penetrated), have to be fully overcome. First, reproductive functions might have to be severed, extracted, and deterritorialized from bio-organs: the management of our reproductive cells could be decided collectively, with different chains of DNA being treated as a common collective wealth, the result of millions of years of mutation, learning, and transformation. The full transformation of sexuality would require an institutional transition. We will need to do away with traditional and naturalized organizational structures of sex as labor in families, marriages, and couples.

The transition from the disciplinary heterosexual regime of the nineteenth century to the pharmacopornographic regime



effected during the 1950s can be described in terms of the displacement of the application of automation from the factory to the functioning of organs considered sexual and from the behaviors (a sexual choreography with a predetermined script and productive outcomes) to a total computerization of the sexopolitical field through Novartis, Roche, Pfizer, Sanofi, YouPorn, Google, Facebook, and the like. We went from having sex with bodies on beds to having sex with substances on screens: we are logarithms and chemical composites fucking with each other. The task of micropolitically reappropriating the sexual body cannot consist of depriving the body of media and biotechnologies. We are media and biotech living entities. To the contrary, our task involves short-circuiting the code in order to invent new organs and sexual functions.

Against the reformist and integrationist legal agenda of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (LGBT) identity movements, countersexuality proposes a new configuration of the relationship between desire and body, between technology and consciousness. Against a fight for recognition and representation of identities according to traditional democratic means (voting, changing the law, etc.), I suggest radically experimenting with new practices of collective sexual emancipation and sexual self-government.

In a pharmacopornographic time, when somatic forces have been captured by the means of biomolecular and audiovisual cybernetic technologies, pleasure can no longer be the emancipatory force that Herbert Marcuse was waiting for. Instead, we need to open a revolutionary terrain for the invention of new organs and desires, for which no pleasure has yet been defined—new subjectivities that cannot be represented by the means of identity politics.

Moreover, the task of transitioning to the externalization of reproductive cells and the transformation of sexual institutions

cannot be delegated to the state and its vertical, no-longer-efficient commands or to neoliberal operations and their horizontal, ever-growing network. The goal is total DIYization of every individual's organs and subjectivities. Neither revolution nor production can be planned, but mutation, as an open project, remains uncharted.

The invention of new bodies will be possible only through the assemblage and hybridization of experiences from the border of what are traditionally understood as proper identities: organs, functions, and bodies are reshaped at the threshold of homosexuality and heterosexuality, trans and bio, disabled and abled, animal and human, white and nonwhite. These identities (which never existed and were only ever fixed points in the power-knowledge regime of the patriarchal-colonial) are now obsolete.

All sexual labor (paid or unpaid, within marriage or outside, reproductive or not) is cognitive labor because it depends on a technosemiotic system (what Freud called "libido" and Deleuze and Guattari call "desire") without which the body is simply neither sexual nor alive. It is necessary to develop the complete set of cognitive desire's productive possibilities in order to propose a new social contract. Once denaturalized, sexuality provides an open-form model for thinking about the relationship between a singularity and the common. Any sexuality is a technical assemblage between several previously disconnected bodies.

It is in the consideration of a nondetermined range of languages, aesthetics, forms of knowing and desiring as well as the interaction between technology and living systems that the dimension of sexual cooperation acquires a central role and may reveal key transforming political possibilities. The organs, as material platforms for production of pleasure and representational sites for inscription of identity, can and shall be reprogrammed and reformatted against heteronormative constraints.

This claim follows from the realization that the structure of sexuality has changed within the pharmacopornographic regime. Oppression and exploitation no longer derive from the extraction of the surplus of *potentia gaudendi* from one body by another body. *Potentia gaudendi* as *surplus* is never the product of one biological organ (either the penis or the vagina, the G-spot or even the brain) but rather is always generated through *sexual cooperation* because the pharmacopornographic network of semiotechanical, media, and biochemical technologies that actively construct sexuality do not belong to anyone in particular and can never be equated to a single body.

We don't need strong legs on which to walk forward. We need to think differently of movement and stillness, action and passivity, productivity and creation.

## POETRY IS THE ONLY POLITICS

If this book is called a manifesto, it is because this text is based on the conviction, present in Russian, European, American, and African critical avant-garde movements, that it is necessary to think of politics (in this case the politics of sexuality and the body) with the instruments that the artistic imagination provides. A manifesto is a hyperbolic, flamboyant, political dildo. There is no freedom in politics without poetry. Whereas second-wave feminist and queer theory stressed the need to transform the epistemological regime to activate gender emancipation, it now seems clear that the desire regime must be transformed to decolonize the sexual body. Desire is not a given truth but a fabricated social field that can be modified under the condition of investing the tools of metaphor and imagination, of poetry and somatic experimentation.

It is precisely because the violence of the sexual and colonial regime is too serious that it is necessary to unfold the unconscious and deconstructing forces of poetry against it. Here we must draw upon everything that the artistic and minority movements have taught us. This manifesto is Dadaism applied to sexuality, conceptual feminism applied to the understating of gender difference and genitalia, radical pedagogy applied to the unlearning of gender and sexual identity disciplines. Performance art and post-structural theory ought to be understood here as dildos, cultural apparatuses of affect and imagination production that the text uses to displace the centrality of anatomical realism.

Inspired by the autistic and infantile energy that sprouts and resists the processes of discipline and control of the body, affect, and sexuality, this manifesto is a theoretical and poetic attempt to do what is done in cartoons: draw a door in the wall of sexual and gender oppression and escape through it. This door is called “somatic communism.”

ARLÈS, FRANCE, 2018



# 1

## COUNTERSEXUAL SOCIETY

**H**ow do we approach sex as an object of analysis? What historical and social factors play a role in the production of sex? What is sex? What are we really doing when we fuck? Do a writer's sexual practices affect the project? If so, in what way? Is it better for a researcher to engage in serial fucking while working on sex as a philosophical topic, or, to the contrary, is it better to keep a respectful distance from such activities for the sake of scientific objectivity? Can queers write about heterosexuality? Can you write about homosexuality if you're straight?

As always in philosophy, it's easy to turn to the most celebrated examples, to make the most of fixed methodological decisions, or at least to conceal our mistakes by appealing to the authority of tradition. It's well known that when Marx was starting his *Grundrisse*, everything seemed to suggest he'd base his economic analysis on the notion of population. Well, then, thinking about sexuality, I find myself faced with a similar conceptual imperative. Everything seems to suggest that I should base this project on notions of gender and sexual difference. To the shock of the philosophers and moralists of the time, however, Marx focused his analysis on the notion of "surplus value,"

avoiding the paradoxes of earlier theories. Making the most of Marx's strategy, this investigation of sex takes as its thematic axis the analysis of something that could seem marginal: a plastic object in certain queers' sex lives that until now has been considered a simple prosthesis invented to palliate lesbians' or transpersons' sexual disability. I am talking about the dildo.

Robert Venturi was onto something when he said architecture should learn from Las Vegas. It's time for philosophy to learn from the dildo.

This is a book about dildos, about prostheses and plastic genitals, about sexual and gender plasticity.

## WHAT IS COUNTERSEXUALITY?

Countersexuality is not the creation of a new nature but rather the end of nature as an order that legitimizes the subjection of some bodies to others. First, countersexuality is a critical analysis of gender and sexual difference, the product of the heterocentric social contract, the normative performativities of which have been inscribed onto our bodies as biological truths.<sup>1</sup> Second, countersexuality aims to replace this social contract we refer to as "nature" with a countersexual contract. Within the framework of the countersexual contract, bodies recognize themselves and others not as men or women but as living bodies. They recognize in themselves the possibility of gaining access to every signifying practice as well as every position of enunciation, as individuals that history has established as masculine, feminine, trans, intersex, or perverse. They consequently renounce not only a closed and naturally determined sexual identity but also the benefits they could obtain from a naturalization of the social, economic, and legal effects of such an identity's signifying practices.

This new society takes the name “countersexual” for at least two reasons. First, negatively: countersexual society is committed to the systematic deconstruction of naturalized sexual practices and the gender system. Countersexual society is therefore a destituting society. Second, positively: countersexual society proclaims the equivalence (not the equality) of all living bodies that commit themselves to the terms of the countersexual contract and are devoted to the search for pleasure–knowledge. Countersexual society is a constituting assembly of an endless multiplicity of singular bodies.

The name “countersexuality” comes indirectly from Michel Foucault, for whom the most efficient form of resistance to the disciplinary production of sexuality in our liberal societies is not the fight against prohibition (as the antirepressive sexual-liberation movements of the 1960s proposed), but rather counterproductivity—that is to say, the production of counter-protocols and forms of pleasure–knowledge as alternatives to the disciplines of the modern sexual regime. The countersexual practices proposed here should be understood as technologies of resistance or, put another way, as forms of sexual counterdiscipline.

Countersexuality is also a theory of the body situated outside the polarities man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexuality/homosexuality, trans/cis. It defines sexuality as technology, and it considers the different elements of the sex/gender system<sup>2</sup> dubbed “man,” “woman,” “homosexual,” “heterosexual,” “transsexual,” as well as their sexual practices and identities, to be nothing more than machines, products, instruments, apparatuses, gimmicks, prostheses, networks, applications, programs, connections, fluxes of energy and information, circuits and circuit breakers, switches, traffic laws, borders, constraints, designs, logics, hard drives, formats, accidents, detritus, mechanisms, usages, and detours.



Countersexuality affirms that in the beginning was the dildo. The dildo preceded the penis. It is the origin of the penis. Countersexuality recurs to the notion of the “supplement” as formulated by Jacques Derrida<sup>3</sup> and identifies the dildo as the supplement that produces that which it supposedly must complete.

Countersexuality affirms that desire, sexual arousal, and the orgasm are merely the retrospective products of certain sexual technologies that identify the reproductive organs as sexual organs, to the detriment of whole-body and whole-world sexualization.

It’s time to stop studying and describing sex as if it forms part of the natural history of human societies. The “history of sexuality” would be better served by renaming itself “the history of technologies” because sexual and gender apparatuses are inscribed in a complex biotechnological system. This “history of technologies” shows that “human nature” is an effect of the constant border negotiation not only between human and animal, body and machine,<sup>4</sup> but also between organ and prosthesis, organic and plastic, alive and dead.

Countersexuality refuses to designate an absolute past with a lesbian heterotopia (be it Amazonian or not, before sexual difference or after, justified by some biological or political superiority or simply the product of sexual segregation) that would constitute some sort of radical separatist feminist utopia. We don’t need an origin free from male and heterosexual rule to justify a radical transformation of sex and gender. There is no historical reason liable to justify the changes under way. Countersexuality is the case. This historical contingency is just as much the material of countersexuality as it is of deconstruction. Countersexuality does not speak of a world to come. It refers neither to a pure past nor to a better future; to the contrary, it reads the

fingerprints of what is already the body's end, as defined by modern Western discourse.

Countersexuality plays on two temporalities. The first is a slow temporality in which sexual institutions don't appear to have ever undergone any changes. In this temporality, sexual technologies are presented as fixed, borrowing the names "symbolic order," "transcultural universals," and, simply, "nature." Any attempt to modify them would be judged as a form of "collective psychosis" or as the "End of Humanity." This blueprint of fixed temporality is the metaphysical foundation of all sexual technology. All of countersexuality's efforts are directed against, operate on, and intercede in this temporal framework. But there is also a temporality of repetition and iterability, of the occurrence in which every incident escapes lineal chance, a fractal temporality constituted by multiple "nows" that cannot be the simple consequence of sexual identity's natural truth or of some symbolic order. This is the effective field where countersexuality incorporates sexual technologies as it intervenes directly over bodies, over identities, and over the sexual practices that are derived from these bodies and identities that are "fictional" yet still exist.

Countersexuality takes the technological production and transformation of sexed and *gendered* bodies as its object of study. It does not reject the hypothesis of social or psychological constructions of gender, but it does reposition them as mechanisms, strategies, and uses within a larger technological system. Countersexuality claims a close relationship to Monique Wittig's analysis of heterosexuality as a political regime, Michel Foucault's research on modern sexual *dispositifs*, Judith Butler's analyses of performative identity, and Donna Haraway's politics of the cyborg. Countersexuality supposes that sex organs and sexuality (not just gender) ought to be understood as complex

biopolitical technologies; it supposes that it is necessary to form political and theoretical connections between the study of sexual apparatuses and artifacts (dealt with until now as anecdotes of little interest within the history of modern technology) and sociopolitical studies of the sex/gender system.

To the end of denaturalizing and demystifying traditional notions of sex and gender, countersexuality takes as its foremost goal the study of sexual instruments and apparatuses and, thereupon, the sexual and gender relationships and becomings that are established between body and machine.

## THE GENITALS AS BIOPOLITICAL TECHNOLOGY

The sex organs are not an exact biological place, nor is sex a natural impulse. They are a technology of heterosocial domination that reduces the living body to erogenous zones according to an asymmetrical power distribution between the (feminine/masculine) genders, matching certain affections with particular organs, certain sensations or affects with particular anatomical reactions.

Western human nature is a product of social technology that reproduces the equation “nature = heterosexuality” on our bodies, architectures, and discourses. The heterosexual system is an epistemic regime and social apparatus that produces femininity and masculinity and operates by dividing and fragmenting the body: it cuts out organs and generates zones of high sense and motor intensity (visual, tactile, olfactory), which it afterward identifies as natural and anatomic centers of sexual difference.

Sexual roles and practices, which are naturally attributed the masculine and feminine genders, are an arbitrary grouping of

regulations inscribed onto living bodies that assure the material exploitation of one sex over another.<sup>5</sup> Sexual difference is a heteropartitioning of the body in which symmetry is impossible. The process by which sexual difference is created is a technological-reduction operation that consists of removing and isolating certain parts from the living being in order to make them sexual signifiers. Men and women are metonymic constructions of the heterosexual production–reproduction system that permits the subjugation of women as a sexual workforce and means of reproduction. This is structural exploitation, and the sexual and political profits that heterosexual men and women thereby gain necessarily reduce the erotic surface of the world to the sexual reproductive organs and privilege the biopenis as the one and only mechanical center of sex-drive production.

The sex/gender system is a biowriting system. It writes with blood, sperm, milk, water, sound, ink, oil, coil, uranium, capital, light, electricity, and radiation. The body is a living, constructed text, an organic archive of human history as the history of sexual production–reproduction, in which certain codes are naturalized, others remain elliptical, and still others are systematically deleted or scratched out. (Hetero)sexuality, far from spontaneously springing forth from every newborn body, must reregister and reestablish itself through constant repetitive operations and through the iteration of the (masculine and feminine) codes socially vested as natural.<sup>6</sup>

Countersexuality's task is to identify the erroneous spaces, the biotext's structural flaws (intersex bodies, transgender and transsexual bodies, queens, diesel dykes, faggots, butches, the hysterical, the horny and the frigid, the sexually disabled and the mentally ill, hermaphrodykes, etc.), and to bolster the power of deviating and drifting from the heterocentric biowriting machine.

When countersexuality talks about the sex/gender system as a biowriting system or about the body as a biotext, it does not mean to propose abstract political interventions that would amount to nothing but variations in language. Those who demand, at the top of their voices and from the heights of their ivory towers, the use of the forward slash in personal pronouns and preach only the eradication of gender markers in nouns and adjectives reduce textuality and writing to their linguistic residue; they forget the technologies of bioinscription that make them possible and living.

This is not a question of privileging a (feminine or neuter) marker as a form of affirmative action or of inventing a new pronoun that escapes masculine domination and constitutes an innocent position of enunciation, a new, pure origin for reason, a starting point from which an immaculate political voice can arise.

What we must shake are the biowriting technologies of sex and gender and their institutions. We're not talking about replacing some terms with others. We're not talking about eliminating gender markers or references to heterosexuality but rather about changing the positions of technoenunciation, the circulation of fluids, the uses of organs and bodies. Derrida foresaw this in his reading of performative utterances according to J. L. Austin.<sup>7</sup> Later, Butler used this notion of performativity to understand speech-acts in which queers and trans people wring the neck of hegemonic language, appropriating its performative force. Butler coined the term *queer performativity*: the political force behind the decontextualization of a homophobic insult and the reversal of the hegemonic positions of enunciation thereby provoked. *Queer*, for example, ceases to be an insult used by heterosexuals to mark homosexuals as "abject" and becomes the rebellious and productive self-designation of a

group of “abject bodies” who for the first time seize the word and reclaim their own identity.

We can characterize heteronormative bio-necro-political technology (the ensemble of institutions—not just medical and domestic but also linguistic—that constantly produce [wo]man-bodies) as an ontological production machine that functions by dint of the subject’s performative invocation of the sexed body. The elaborations on queer theory carried out by Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the 1990s have made it clear that the apparently descriptive expressions “it’s a girl” and “it’s a boy,” spoken at the moment of birth (or even at the moment the fetus is visualized via ultrasound), are in fact performative invocations, closer to the contractual expressions spoken in social rituals, such as the “I do” of marriage, than to descriptive statements such as “this body has two legs, two arms, and a tail.” These gender performatives are bits of language historically charged with the power to invest a body with masculinity or femininity as well as with the power to castigate intersex and morphologically dissident bodies that threaten the coherence of the sex/gender system by subjecting these bodies to necrosexual cosmetic surgeries (clitoris reduction, penis enlargement, silicone breast implants, hormonal refeminization of the face, etc.).

Sexual identity is neither the instinctive expression of the flesh’s prediscursive truth nor the effect of the inscription of gender practices onto the body understood as a flat surface.<sup>8</sup> So-called constructivist feminism’s mistake was believing in the Western nature/culture divide and thus turning the body into a formless material to which gender would give cultural form and meaning according to the cultural or historical matrix.

Gender is not simply and purely performative (that is, an effect of linguistic-discursive cultural practices), as some of Butler’s readers have claimed. Gender is first and foremost prosthetic.

That is, it does not occur except in the *materiality* of the body. It is entirely constructed, and, at the same time, it is purely organic. It springs from the Western metaphysical dichotomies between body and soul, form and matter, nature and culture, while simultaneously tearing them apart. Gender resembles the dildo. Both surpass imitation. Their carnal plasticity destabilizes the distinction between the imitated and the imitator, between the truth and the representation of the truth, between the reference and the referent, between nature and artifice, between sexual organs and sexual practices.

It is this mechanism of genital-prosthetic production that confers the feminine and masculine genders with their sexual-real-natural character. But, as with all machines, the failure, the accident, is constituent of the heterosexual machine.<sup>9</sup> Given that what is invoked as “real masculine” or “real feminine” does not exist, every imperfect approximation must renaturalize itself to the benefit of the system, and every systematic accident (homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, etc.) must operate as a perverse exception that proves the regularity of nature.

The homosexual identity, for example, is a systematic accident produced by the heterosexual machinery; in the interest of the stability of nature-producing practices, it is stigmatized as unnatural, abnormal, and abject. This bourgeois, colonial, central European genital-prosthetic machinery is relatively recent and, in fact, contemporary with the invention of the capitalist machine and the industrial production of objects. It was in 1868 that medical-legal institutions first identified this “counternatural” accident as structurally threatening to the stability of sex production, opposing perversion (which in that moment included all nonreproductive forms of sexuality, from fetishism and lesbianism to oral sex) to heterosexual normality. Over the course

of the past two centuries, the homosexual identity has taken shape thanks to the shifts, interruptions, and perversions of the performative mechanical axes of repetition that produce the heterosexual identity, revealing the sexes' constructed and prosthetic character. Because heterosexuality is anatomopolitical technology and not an underlying natural origin, it is possible to reverse and reroute (change course, morph, set adrift) its sexual-identity production practices. The fag, the fairy boy, the drag queen, the lesbian, the diesel dyke, the tomboy, the butch, the females to males (F<sub>2</sub>M<sub>s</sub>), the males to females (M<sub>2</sub>F<sub>s</sub>), and the transgendered are "ontological jokes,"<sup>10</sup> organic impostures, prosthetic mutations, subversive iterations of a false, transcendental sexual biocode.

It is in this space of parody and plastic transformation that the first countersexual practices appear as possibilities of a radical shift from the dominant sex/gender system: the use of dildos, the eroticization of the anus, and the establishment of contractual bondage/discipline/sadomasochist (BDSM) relationships, to name just three moments in a process of sex mutation.

The sex organs, as such, do not exist. The organs that we recognize as naturally sexual are already a product of a sophisticated technology that prescribes the context in which the organs acquire their meaning (sexual relationships) and are properly used in accordance with their "nature" (heterosexual relationships). Sexual contexts are established through skewed spatial and temporal delimitations. Architecture is political. Anatomy is political cartography. Architecture and anatomy organize and qualify our practices: public or private, institutional or domestic, social or intimate, able and disabled.

The management of space extends from the colonized territory to the body. The exclusion of certain gender and sex



relationships, as with the designation of certain body parts as nonsexual (most particularly the anus, “the first organ to suffer privatization, removal from the social field”<sup>11</sup>), is the basic fixation operation that naturalizes the practices we recognize as sexual.

The practice of fist-fucking (anal or vaginal penetration with the fist), which saw systematic growth in the gay, lesbian, and trans cultures beginning in the 1970s, should be considered an example of high countersexual technology. Workers of the anus are the new proletarians of a possible countersexual revolution.

As biocode, the anus presents three fundamental characteristics that make it the temporary place of countersexual deconstruction’s task. First, the anus—like its public extension, the mouth—is a “universal” erogenous center situated beyond the anatomical limits imposed by sexual difference, where roles and registers appear universally reversible. (Who doesn’t have an anus?) Second, the anus is an area of primordial passivity, a center of arousal and pleasure production that is not listed among the points prescribed as orgasmic. Third, the anus constitutes a technological workspace; it is the countersexual postprocessing facility. The anus’s task is not directed toward reproduction, nor is it founded on the establishment of a romantic nexus. It generates profits that cannot be accounted for in a heterocentric economy. Through the anus, the traditional sex/gender representation system *shits itself*.

The reclamation of the anus as a countersexual pleasure center finds common ground with the logic of the dildo: every point on the body is more than just a potential plane onto which a dildo can be placed; it is also an orifice—entrance, a vanishing point, a download center, a virtual action—passion axis.

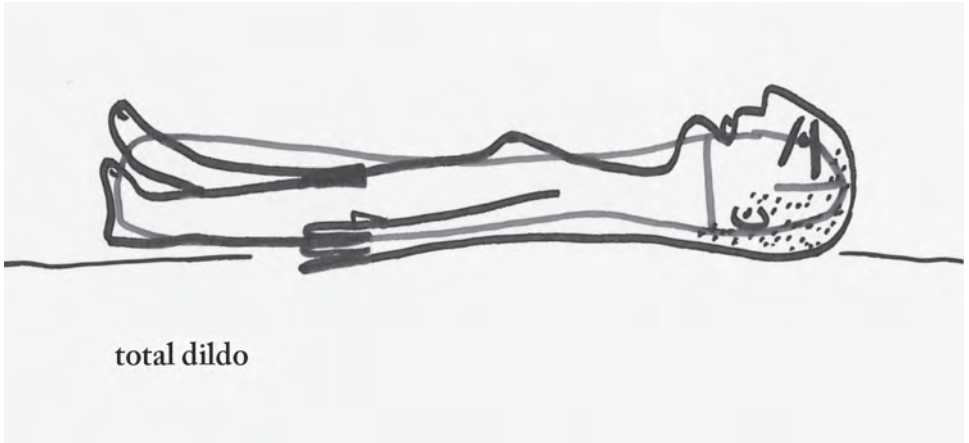


FIGURE 1.1

BDSM practices, such as the creation of contractual pacts that regulate submission and domination roles, have exposed the erotic power structures underlying the contract that heterosexuality has imposed as natural.

Parodying naturalized gender roles, countersexual society makes itself heir to the practical knowledge of the queer and BDSM cultures and adopts the impermanent countersexual contract as the preferred form of establishing a countersexual relationship.

## PRINCIPLES OF COUNTERSEXUAL SOCIETY

### ARTICLE 1

Countersexual society insists upon the removal of the designations *masculine* and *feminine*, corresponding to what are supposed to be biological categories (male/woman, man/female), from identification cards as well as from all administrative and legal state forms. The codes of masculinity and femininity shall become open and copyleft registers available to speaking, living bodies within the framework of mutually agreed-upon impermanent contracts.

### ARTICLE 2

To avoid the reappropriation of bodies as feminine or masculine within the social system, every new body (that is to say, every new signatory) shall bear a new name without any indication of gender, regardless of the language employed. Initially, to the end of destabilizing the heterocentric system, everyone will have then at least two names, one traditionally female and another traditionally male, or a name without previous gender connotations. All names such as Robert Catherine, Julia Jim, and Andrew Martha will be legal.

### ARTICLE 3

As part of the process of destitution of the heterocentric reproduction system, countersexual society insists upon the following:

- The abolition of the marriage contract, heterosexual and homosexual, and all of its liberal substitutes, such as common-law marriages, which perpetuate the naturalization of sex roles. The state shall not serve as witness to any sexual contract.

- The destitution of social and economic privileges derived from a living body's (supposedly natural) condition as masculine or feminine within the framework of the heterocentric regime.

- The destitution of transmission systems and bequests of patrimonial and economic privileges acquired by living bodies within the framework of the heterocentric reproduction and colonial system.

#### ARTICLE 4

The body's countersexual resignification shall become operational with the gradual introduction of certain countersexual policies. First, practices stigmatized as abject within the framework of heterocentrism shall be universalized. Second, high-tech countersexual research squads shall be created so that new forms of feeling and affection can be subjected to collective experimentation.

The countersexual system will take effect by means of a series of countersexual practices:

- The resexualization of the anus (an area of the body excluded from heterocentric practices because it is considered the filthiest and most abject) as a transversal countersexual center.

- The dissemination, distribution, and circulation of practices that subvert the recitation of the biocodes and categories of naturalized masculinity and femininity within the framework of the heterocentric system. The penis's centrality as the axis of power's meaning within the framework of the heterocentric system requires that a tremendous amount of effort be directed toward resignification and deconstruction. For this reason, during countersexual society's initial establishment period, the

dildo and all of its syntactic variations—such as fingers, tongues, vibrators, wieners, carrots, arms, legs, the entire body—as well as its semantic variations—such as cigars, pistols, nightsticks, dollars—shall be used by all bodies or speaking subjects within the framework of fictitious, reversible, and consensual countersexual contracts until the biopenis is made fully destitute.

- The systematic parody and simulation of the effects habitually associated with the orgasm in order thus to subvert and transform an ideologically constructed natural reaction. In the heterocentric regime, the limitation and reduction of sexual areas are the result of disciplinary medical and psychosexual definitions of the supposed sex organs and of the identification of the penis and the supposed G-spot as orgasmic centers. In all of these points, pleasure production depends on the arousal of one single anatomic zone, easy to localize in men but of difficult access, varying effectiveness, and even dubious existence in women.

The orgasm, the paradigmatic effect of heteronormative production—repression that fragments the body and localizes pleasure, shall be systematically parodied thanks to diverse disciplines of simulation and serial repetitions of the effects traditionally associated with sexual pleasure (see chapter 2, “Countersexual Reversal Practices”). Simulation of the orgasm is equivalent to a denial of the habitual spatial and temporal localizations of pleasure. This countersexual discipline is practiced to effect a general transformation of the body, similar to somatic conversions, extreme meditative and shamanistic practices, and rituals proposed in conceptual art, body art, and certain spiritual traditions. The projects of Ron Athey, Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens, Fakir Musafar, Zhang Huan, José

Pérez Ocaña, Roberto Jacoby, Hélio Oiticica, Bob Flanagan, and so on constitute examples and precursors of this countersexual discipline.

#### ARTICLE 5

All countersexual relationships shall be the product of a consensual contract signed by all participants. Sexual relationships without a contract shall be considered rapes. All speaking bodies shall be asked to clearly set out the naturalizing fictions (marriage, dating, romance, prostitution, cheating, jealousy) that form the basis of their sexual practices.

The countersexual relationship shall be valid and effective for a limited period of time (a temporary contract) that shall never equal the totality of the bodies' or speaking subjects' lives. The countersexual relationship is based on equivalency and not on equality. Reversibility and role changes shall be required in such a way that the countersexual contract shall never result in asymmetrical, naturalized power relationships.

Countersexual society establishes the obligation of countersexual practices, socially organized in loosely formed groups that any living body may join. Every body may reject the right to belong to one or various countersexual communities.

#### ARTICLE 6

Countersexual society declares and demands the absolute separation of sexual activities and reproductive activities. No countersexual contract may lead to the act of reproduction. Reproduction shall be liberally chosen by bodies capable of becoming pregnant or by bodies capable of giving sperm. None of these reproductive acts shall establish a "natural" filial bond between the reproductive bodies or with the newborn body. All newborn bodies shall have the right to a countersexual education.

**ARTICLE 7**

Countersexuality denounces the current psychiatric, medical, and legal policies and their definitions of sickness/health and disability/ability as well as the administrative procedures related to sex change. Countersexuality denounces the prohibition of gender (and name) changes as well as the obligation that any and all gender changes must be accompanied by a (hormonal or surgical) sex change. Countersexuality denounces the control of transsexual practices by public and private institutions of heteronormative state or corporate character that impose sex change in accordance with fixed anatomical-political models of masculinity and femininity. No political reasoning justifies the state's acting as guarantor of a sex change but not of a nose job, for example. All organs, reproductive or not, internal or external, must be equal before the law.

In countersexual society, sex-change operations shall constitute a voluntary form of public-utility surgery. These operations shall never allow bodies to adhere once again to the idea of masculine or feminine coherence. Countersexuality aims to be a nonheterocentric body-production technology. The countersexual technology investigation squads shall study and promote the following procedures, among others:

- Virtual exploration of gender and sex changes thanks to various forms of transvestism: cross-dressing, Internet drag, cyberidentity, and so on
- In-vitro production and 3D printing of a cyberclitoris for implantation in various parts of the body
- Transformation of various bodily organs into dildo grafts

**ARTICLE 8**

Countersexuality asserts that sex and gender are complex bodily cybertechnologies. Countersexuality, making the most

of Haraway's teachings, appeals to an urgent queerization of "nature."<sup>12</sup> The substances called "natural" (testosterone, estrogen, progesterone), organs (the male and female genital parts), and physical reactions (erection, ejaculation, orgasm, etc.) should be considered powerful "political living metaphors," the definition and control of which cannot be left in the hands of the state or of neoliberal corporations, be they medical institutions or pharmaceutical companies.

The sophistication found in most branches of therapeutic and cybernetic medicine (xenotransplants, cybernetic visual and auditory prostheses) contrasts sharply with the underdevelopment of organ-modifying technologies (phalloplasty, vaginoplasty, etc.) and sexual practices (take, for example, the scant evolution of the condom in the past two thousand years). Modern biotechnology's goal is the stabilization of the heteronormative categories of sex and gender (a project that spans from the eradication of sexual and body abnormalities, considered monstrosities at or before birth, to operations in the case of transsexuals). Testosterone, for example, is the biosocial metaphor that permits the passage of a body designated as feminine to a body designated as masculine. It is imperative to consider sexual hormones biopolitical drugs, the access to which cannot be safeguarded by heteronormative state institutions.

#### ARTICLE 9

The control and regulation of time are crucial for the design and improvement of countersexual practices. Countersexual society decrees that countersexual activities shall be considered a social labor as well as the right and obligation of all bodies (or speaking subjects) and that these activities shall be regularly practiced daily for a specified number of hours, to be determined as fits the circumstance.



**ARTICLE 10**

Countersexual society demands the destitution of the nuclear family as a production, reproduction, and consumption unit as well as planet-destruction unit. Sexual practice in pairs (that is to say, in distinct groups of more than one but fewer than three individuals of distinct sex) is conditioned by the heterocentric system's reproductive and economic purposes. The qualitative (straight) and quantitative (two) sexual normalization of corporal relationships shall be systematically subverted thanks to countersexual reversal practices and individual and group practices, which shall be taught and promoted by means of freely distributed countersexual images and texts (counterpornographic culture).

**ARTICLE 11**

Countersexual society shall establish the principles of a countersexual architecture. The conception and creation of countersexual spaces shall be based on the deconstruction and renegotiation of the border between the public and private spheres. This task implies the deconstruction of the house as a private space of heterocentric production and reproduction.

**ARTICLE 12**

Countersexual society promotes the destitution of traditional educational institutions and the development of a high-tech countersexual pedagogy in order to maximize the erotic relationship between living bodies as well as diversifying and improving countersexual practices. Countersexual society favors the development of knowledge–pleasure; it favors the development of technologies aimed at a radical transformation of bodies and an interruption of human history as the naturalization of oppression (the naturalization of class, race, sex, gender, disability, species, etc.).

## ARTICLE 13

Countersexual society insists that all sex acts be considered potential labor, and, therefore, it insists upon the recognition of prostitution as a legitimate form of sex work. Prostitution shall be exercised only upon entering into a free and consensual contract in which one of the parties is defined as the buyer of sexual labor and the other as the vendor of certain sexual services. All sex workers, regardless of sex or gender identity, shall have the right to equal and unrestricted work, without coercion or exploitation, and shall enjoy the same legal, medical, and economic privileges as any employee within the same territory. Countersexuality seeks to create a counterproduction of pleasure and knowledge within the framework of a countersexual-countereconomy system. For this reason, the publication of countersexual images and texts (counterpornography) as well as counterprostitution shall be considered arts and disciplines. One can foresee the establishment of programs for advanced research set aside for the study of the various countersexual disciplines.

Within the framework of countersexual society, speaking bodies shall be called *postbodies* or *wittigs*.

## (SAMPLE) COUNTERSEXUAL CONTRACT

Voluntarily and corporally, I, \_\_\_\_\_, the signatory, hereby renounce my natural condition as a man  or a woman  as well as all privileges (be they social, economic, or patrimonial) and all obligations (be they social, economic, or reproductive) proceeding from my sexual condition within the framework of the naturalized heterocentric regime.

I recognize myself and others as living bodies, and, with full consent, I hereby forswear naturalizing sexual relationships as well as sexual relationships outside of nonpermanent and consensual countersexual contracts.

I recognize myself as a dildo producer and as a dildo transmitter and diffuser on my own body and on all undersigned bodies. I foreknowingly renounce all privileges and obligations that may proceed from unequal positions of power created by the reiteration and reinscription of the dildo.

I recognize myself as an anus and an anal worker.

I renounce all filial bonds (be they marital or parental) that have been assigned to me by heterocentric society as well as the privileges and obligations that are thereby acquired.

I renounce all property rights over my seminal fluids or the products of my uterus. I recognize that my right to use my reproductive cells is valid only within the framework of a free and consensual contract, and I renounce all property rights over the living body produced by said reproductive act.

This contract shall be valid for the term of \_\_\_\_\_ months (renewable), from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
No. of Copies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# 2

## COUNTERSEXUAL REVERSAL PRACTICES

### DILDOTECTONICS

*Dildo = plastic penis*

*Téktón = builder, generator*

Dildotectonics is the counterscience that studies the appearance, formation, and utilization of the dildo. It localizes the deformations that the dildo inflicts upon the sex/gender system. Making dildotectonics a branch of first importance within countersexuality assumes consideration of the body as a surface and territory, a site of the dildo's displacement and emplacement. Owing to medical and psychological definitions that naturalize the body and sex (according to which the dildo would be a simple "fetish"), this undertaking can often be quite difficult.

From the heterocentric point of view, the term *dildotectonics* could designate any description of the deformations and abnormalities detectable in one or several bodies fucking with, or using, dildos.

Dildotectonics sets out to locate the technologies of resistance (which, by extension, we will call "dildotechnia") and moments

of rupture in the body-pleasure-profit-body chain of production within straight and queer sexual cultures.

It is also possible to generalize the notion of “dildo” in order to reinterpret the history of philosophy and artistic production. Writing, for example, as described by Derrida, would be nothing but the dildo of the metaphysics of presence. In the same way, following Walter Benjamin’s lead, we could assert that a museum of artistic replicas would have a dildological statute in relation to the production of the artwork in the era of mechanical reproduction. Ultimately, all of philosophy can trace its origins back to a more or less complex dildology.

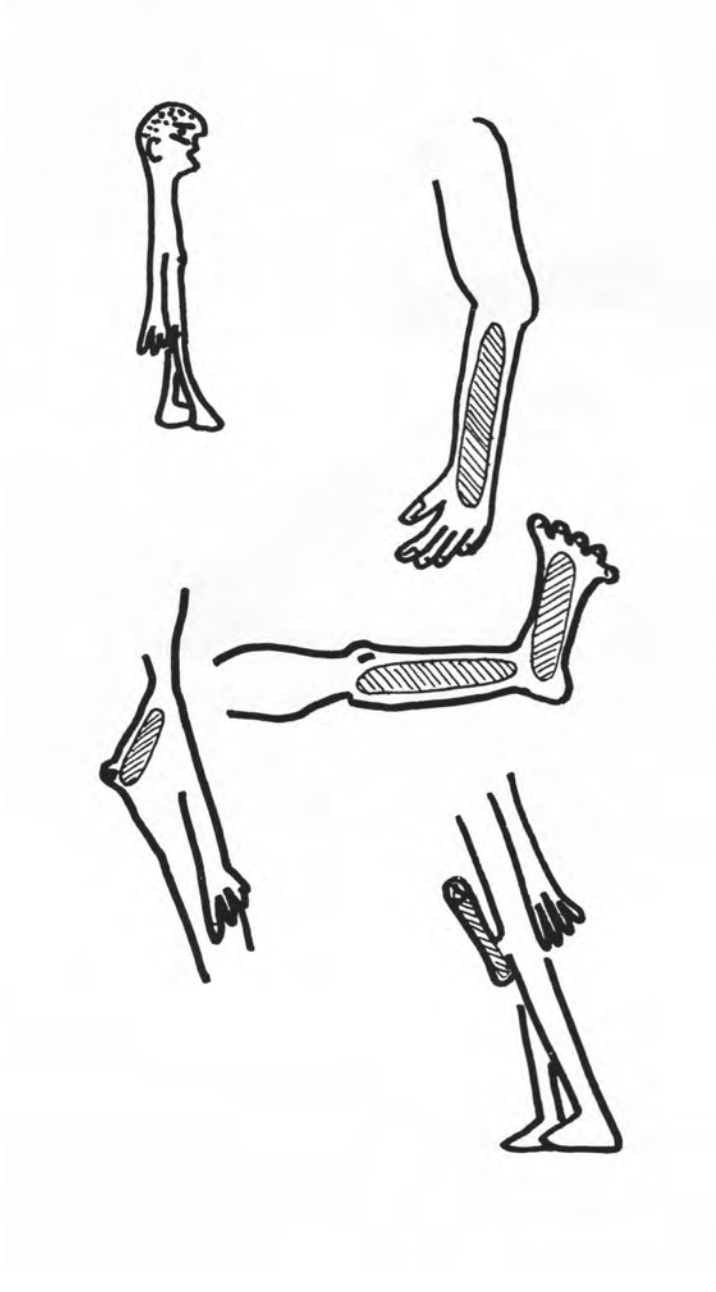


FIGURE 2.1

## PRACTICE I: RON ATHEY'S SOLAR ANUS

**Iteration<sup>1</sup> of a Dildo onto a Pair of Stilettos, Followed by  
Anal Self-Penetration**

Los Angeles, the early 1980s. Ron Athey acts in nightclubs. His performance, which debuted at the Minneapolis Walker Art Center in 1994, is censored in various art centers, unleashing an international debate over the limits of performance and body art. In *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life*, Athey uses blood; he scarifies his own and others' skin by joint agreement and speaks openly about drug use and being an HIV-positive fag. Although neither the performers nor the audience were endangered, Athey was accused of exposing audience members to HIV-positive blood.

Paris, August 21, 1999. Athey performs *The Solar Anus* in the Forum des images. This performance transcends both body art and sexuality. It is countersexual. First, we see a video where a gloved hand carefully draws and colors a black sun around his anus with the aid of a tattoo machine. The eyes of the audience then turn to the stage, where Athey prepares to take his throne. He's naked. A very precise genital torture that consists of a nontoxic liquid (saline solution) injection has deformed his penis and his testicles. His genitals, jutting out and swinging between his legs, look more like a kind of external uterus than male genitalia. His penis is bloated but unerect. It is full but spermless. Instead of ejaculating, he's taken the technical and calculated ejaculation of the syringe. His sex organs are countersexual. He's wearing garters. He's walking on stilettos. He advances slowly, as if he were going to fall with each step. Two dildos have been fixed onto his heels like spurs. He's tied them to his feet, as Pierre Molinier did in *Autoportrait avec éperon*

*d'amour*. The dildos drag behind his shoes like flaccid, secondary organs.

He prepares for the self-dildoing. He claims his throne: a chair, a hybrid of the gynecologist's table, the dressing table, and the S&M sling. He makes himself up by inserting long needles under his skin, which he then affixes to his crown of thorns with strings. He is the queen with her face stretched by the golden crown. He is the wife whose virginal anus, heated by the black sun, is ready for a solitary wedding night. On all fours, the queen surrenders her anus to the people. The audience of subjects waits to be covered by a wave of shit. Athey's anus gives: he pulls from it, with the assistance of a rod, Louise Brook's white-pearl necklace. An endless chain of immaculate, shining balls of shit. His anus is a blessing and a gift. When the anus is empty, ready to receive, the dildo-fucking ritual begins. A coming and going occurs between his legs. The dildos hanging from his heels fight to penetrate his anus. *Dildus interruptus*. Every time. Neither dildo totally possesses his anus. It belongs to neither. The threesome fucks or, rather, never quite fucks. They masturbate. No.

**Guiding Principle:** This practice is designed to repeat the sequence of Athey's *Solar Anus* performance in a domestic (yet not totally private) environment. It is particularly recommended for lonely husbands with lots of free time around the house and still-unexplored transgender or homosexual tendencies. This practice can be understood as the queering of the domestic postbourgeois environment. It is also recommendable for butches, male-identifying lesbians, heterosexual women with masculine identity (with or without a partner) subject to having left off all sexual activity for a period longer than six months.



**Number of Participating Bodies:** One.

**Technology:** Countersexual trans-lation (transfer, citation, bringing across) of the dildo onto stilettos, followed by a self-dildoing.

**Materials:** An enema, a pair of stilettos, two dildos (one small and hard, the other larger and soft), two cords, an armchair.

**Total Duration:** Eleven minutes.

The objective of this practice is to learn to traffic with dildos, turning to a sexual technology similar to that of the biocollage or of grammatology. The exercise consists of combining cross-dressing and anal self-penetration with dildos.

**Description:** Strip. Prepare an enema. Lie down lengthwise and remain in this position naked for two minutes following the enema. Get up and repeat out loud: “I dedicate the pleasure of my anus to all carriers of HIV. I owe you all my pleasure.”

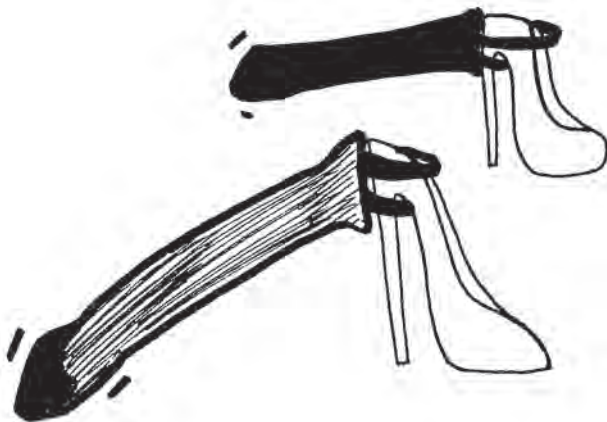


FIGURE 2.2

Those who already carry the virus may dedicate the pleasure of their anuses to their own anuses and to the opening of their loved ones' anuses. Put on a pair of stilettos and tie two dildos to the heels with cords. Prepare your anus for penetration with an adequate lubricant.

Lie in an armchair and try to fuck yourself in the ass with each dildo. Use your hand to help the dildo penetrate your anus. Each time the dildo comes out of your anus, depravedly cry your countername. For example: "Julia, Julia." After seven minutes of self-dildoing, emit a strident cry to simulate a violent orgasm.

The length of the practice should be managed with a stopwatch, which will indicate, like a voyeur of time, the end of the pleasure and the orgasmic apogee. The simulation of the orgasm should last ten seconds. Immediately following, breathing should become slower and deeper, and the legs and anus should be completely relaxed.

## PRACTICE II: MASTURBATING AN ARM

**Iteration of a Dildo Onto a Forearm**

**Guiding Principle:** The logic of the dildo.

**Number of participating bodies:** One.

**Technology:** Countersexual trans-lation (transfer, citation, bringing across) of the dildo onto a forearm, or dildotectonics applied to a forearm.

**Materials:** A red felt-tip pen.

**Optional Materials:** A violin (or a rough imitation of said instrument).

**Total Duration:** Two minutes and thirty seconds.

Within the framework of the heterocentric, capitalist system, the body functions as a total prosthesis in the service of sexual reproduction and genital-pleasure production. The body is organized around a single semantic-sexual axis, which must be mechanically aroused time and again. Sexual activity thus understood, be it heterosexual or homosexual, is normative: boring and monotonous. The goal of this countersexual practice is to learn to subvert the sexual organs and their biopolitical reactions. This exercise is based on the redesignation of certain body parts (in this case a forearm) thanks to an iterative operation that I call “inversion-investment-investiture.”

By “inversion-investment-investiture,” I mean an operation of prosthetic-textual iteration that first displaces and subverts the semantic axis of the heterocentric system and then invests

(dresses, institutes) a new body, in both the economic sense (setting it in motion, forcing it to produce a certain counter-profit) and the political sense (conferring the authority to do something, involving the ceremonial transfer of meaning and power, which is charged with performative force). This iterative operation displaces the performative force of the heterocentric code in order to invert and invest a process of subjectification.

**Description:** A body holds a violin between the base of the jaw and the left shoulder. The left hand rests on the strings with precision. The right hand rocks the bow energetically. The body looks fixedly at the left arm as if trying to follow a score on a music stand.

Without changing position, the body puts down the violin (operation: cut the violin). The head, now violinless, rests on the left arm. The space previously occupied by the object and the relationship that the object established with the body are systematically replaced with a dildo.

The somatic trans-lation operation shall consist of reiterating the dildo on the left forearm, drawing its shape with the help of a red felt-tip pen. This practice was inspired by the surgical methods employed in phalloplasty in order to manufacture a penis from the arm's skin and muscles. In reality, contemporary medicine works the body like an open landscape, where any organ can give rise to any other. Judging by this somatic plasticity, every body has at least four potential penises (two in the arms, two in the legs) and innumerable vaginas (as many as there can be artificially opened orifices on the body).

The gaze now turns to the arm's horizontal plane, to which the dildo has been iterated. The dildo-arm is taken in the right hand and stroked up and down, intensifying the blood



FIGURE 2.3

circulation up to the fingers (operation: jerking off a dildo-arm). The left hand opens and closes rhythmically. The blood pumps harder and harder. The feeling is musical. The melody is the sound produced by rubbing the skin. The body breathes in line with the rhythm of the stroking.

As in the previous practice, the total duration should be managed with the help of a stopwatch, which will indicate the end of the pleasure and the orgasmic apogee. The simulation of the orgasm should last ten seconds. Immediately afterward, breathing should become slower and deeper, and the arms and neck should be completely relaxed.



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FIGURE 2.4

## PRACTICE III: HOW TO PLEASURE A DILDO-HEAD

### Iteration of a Dildo onto a Head

**Guiding Principle:** The logic of the dildo.

**Number of Participating Bodies (or Speaking Subjects):**  
Three.

**Technology:** The countersexual trans-lation (transfer, citation, bringing across) of the dildo onto the head, or dildotectonics applied to a head.

**Materials:** A red felt-tip pen, seventy-five milliliters of (non-toxic) red-colored water, an electric razor.

**Total Duration:** Two minutes and five seconds.

**Description:** Three bodies sign a countersexual contract, the goal of which is to exercise the iteration of a dildo onto a head. The practice may be carried out as many times as they deem necessary so that each body is in the receiving position at least once. First, two of the bodies shave the third's head.

The somatic trans-lation operation is carried out thanks to the iteration of the dildo onto the surface of the shaved head—drawing a dildo on the skin with a red felt-tip pen.

The body in the receiving position holds seventy-five milliliters of red water in its mouth. This body remains standing between the other two, who rub the dildo-head in a regular rhythm, stroking up and down with their hands (operation: jerking off a dildo-head). Every forty seconds, the dildo-head looks to the heavens and spits. The other two workers are blessed by a purple rain.



FIGURE 2.5

After two minutes, the body will have spat three times. Just after the third spitting, the dildo-head will let out a strident cry, simulating a violent orgasm.

The practice, which will always begin with a head shaving (operation: cutting off hair), may last several days. During this contractual period, each of the three bodies will participate in the required shaving, and the practice will begin with the iteration of a dildo onto the head of one of the bodies. The bodies bound by the contract will learn to master the exercise of the head massage and will demonstrate extreme tenacity until they become experts in the art of simulating orgasms.





FIGURE 2.6



FIGURE 2.7



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FIGURE 2.8



# 3

## THEORIES

### DERRIDA'S SCISSORS: THE LOGIC OF THE DILDO

*What is a dildo? An object, an organ, a fetish . . . ? Should we consider the dildo an ironic parody of the penis or the penis's crude recurrence? When it forms part of certain butch/femme lesbian or transgender practices, should we interpret the dildo as reminiscent of the patriarchal order? Could it be that the dildo is a symptom of a phallogocentric construction of sex? What can we say, then, about dildos that aren't "phallic" (but rather are shaped like pigs or butterflies or mermaids or don't have any figurative form at all)? Pro-censorship feminists in the United States such as Andrea Dworkin and Québécois radical separatist lesbians such as Danielle Charest assert that any lesbian using a dildo should be considered a phony, a wannabe man, the dildo being a phallic imitation that helps compensate for penis envy. If this is the case, how can we account for gay men using dildos? Is it possible to refute the usual belief, common among feminists and antifeminists alike, that use of the dildo supposes imitation of a heterosexual act? Is heterosexuality to be defined by the form of organs involved in a sexual practice or as a political metagenital narrative that frames processes of subjectification?*

*Where are the genitals on a body wearing a dildo? Is the dildo a feminine or masculine attribute? Where do the pleasure and the enjoyment happen during dildo-fucking? Who feels pleasure? When a dildo is used, who is the subject of pleasure? Or does the dildo rather come to undo the subject as original owner of both organs and pleasures? If the dildo is nothing more than an "artificial substitute" for the penis, how can we explain cis-men who already have penises but use strap-ons? How can we continue talking about the dildo as the artificial reproduction of a penis in order to fill a void when two or more dildos are used? And in that case, how many penises does a cis-man wearing a dildo have? Can we invoke the "natural" image of the male body as something to be imitated when the dildo is placed on a part of the body besides the pelvic region (the arm, the forearm, the thigh)? What's the biopolitical difference between a dildo and a vibrator? Between a dildo and a whip? And what's the genealogical relationship between a strap-on and a chastity belt? Put another way: Is the dildo genealogically linked to the penis through a logic of imitation or, rather, to the pleasure repression-production technologies of the chastity belt and the clitoral vibrator?*

Someone in a future sexual world will remember the 1990s as the decade of the dildo. In 1991, Del LaGrace Volcano, who by then had begun a process of hormonal transformation, published *Love Bites*, a photograph collection that some feminist bookstores in London refused to sell.<sup>1</sup> They denounced two images in particular: the photograph of a gay man giving a blowjob to a dyke's dildo and a photograph of several dykes penetrating one another with dildos. Also in England, Jennifer Saunders was accused of raping underage girls with a dildo and was judged far more harshly than any cis-man was ever judged for rape. Meanwhile, Susie Bright, alias Susie Sexpert, for the first time dedicated a monthly chronicle to the dildo in her column in the gay and

lesbian magazine *The Advocate*. Shortly thereafter, the magazines *Outlook* and *On Our Backs* echoed this debate.

In Monika Treut's film *Virgin Machine* (1988), Dorothee sees the world through a translucent dildo given to her by a sex-positive, feminist stripper in San Francisco. In Paris, the dildo penetrated the silver screen in the lesbian film festival *Quand les lesbiennes se font du cinéma*, sparking generational and political conflict. In lesbian clubs in New York, Los Angeles, and London, Diane Torr conducted the first *drag king* workshops, in which cis-women were taught to pass for men for a day. At the same time, Annie Sprinkle, Jack Armstrong, a pre-op<sup>2</sup> F2M transsexual, and Diane Torr organized a workshop called "Drag King for a Day" in which heterosexual and lesbian women learned masculinity performance. The workshop challenged its participants to familiarize themselves with the "packing" technique: making a package by stuffing their underwear with socks and, if the occasion required, using a dildo without being detected by their sexual partner. The workshop's results were surprising: the participants confessed they had never experienced the city as freely as when they passed for men.

The dildo has become queer Alice's looking glass, through which we can read different sexual cultures. It drives the criticism of a certain feminist and lesbian discourse. It is relegated to the ranks of the sadomasochist and butch/femme<sup>3</sup> panoply and is often interpreted as a sign of how regrettably permeating the patriarchal and phallogocentric models are in lesbian and transgender sexuality. The proponents of censoring dildos in lesbian scenes argue that it puts phallic and chauvinist power back into porn and that it is nothing but the projection of masculine desire onto lesbian, even feminine, sexuality. Wicked object, the dildo is the missing piece that solves the paranoiac enigma represented by lesbian and F2M sex within a heterocentric sexual model. It

is as if the dildo were responding to the burning questions: How can lesbians fuck without a penis? How can F2Ms be men without a penis?

Judging by the reactions and controversies provoked at the slightest mention of the dildo, it seems safe to say that Elaine Creith was mistaken when she argued that “sex toys are politically volatile.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, the dildo’s marginalization and invisibility are constant and widespread: absolute suppression of it within lesbian feminist cultural discourse, lack of analysis of its presence in gay practices, incomplete and only commercial information on it in transsexual and sadomasochistic (S&M) communities; absence, timidity, or shame regarding it in most queer theoretical texts.

Scouring American queer theory and the critical re-readings of psychoanalysis that it brought about in the 1990s, one finds scant few analyses of the dildo, and these few are in the broadest discussions of the “female phallus” and “penis envy” or in texts that attempt to rearticulate the Freudian notion of fetishism with female desire.

Teresa de Lauretis criticizes the heterocentrism that allows Lacan to play permanently with the phallus/penis ambiguity. For Lacan, the penis is a genital organ that belongs to male bodies, whereas the phallus is neither an organ nor an object but rather a “privileged signifier” that represents power and desire and confirms access to the symbolic order. According to the author of *The Practice of Love*, in Lacan we encounter the question of having or not having a phallus from a heterosexual perspective (which psychoanalytic theory and practice strive to locate or induce in their subjects), in which the man/woman sexual difference and the act of copulation (understood as heterosexual biopenile penetration of a biovagina) for the purpose of reproduction are the norm.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, the dildo occupies a strategic position somewhere between the phallus and the penis. It acts as a symbolic threshold revealing the penis's phallic ambitions. Such are the conclusions de Lauretis draws from Sheila McLaughlin's classic film *She Must Be Seeing Things* (1987), in which Agatha, a lesbian, is plagued by jealous paranoia, fearing that her sexual companion is going to abandon her for a cis-man. Dildos and sex toys appear in the film as transitional objects that allow the lesbian protagonist to deromanticize and denaturalize the heterosexual stage. The film calls into question the stability of the visible order; from there on, the question around which the script revolves, according to de Lauretis, is "What are the 'things' she must be seeing?"<sup>6</sup> What are the "things" that lesbians see? Or, put another way, if heterosexuality is to be understood as a normative visual regime, how then do lesbians see things, organs, bodies? Agatha stokes her jealousy by rummaging through her lover's diary and photos until she finds what she is looking for. Then she sees it clearly: Jo is interested in men and is unfaithful. In the hope of equaling her male rival, Agatha begins dressing in men's clothes and finally decides to go to a sex shop to buy a realistic dildo.

It is in the sex shop that Agatha learns to see things in a new light. According to de Lauretis, when Agatha sees a dildo for the first time, she "confront[s] the phallus in its humbler manifestation and commodity form."<sup>7</sup> Even more importantly, Agatha sees something else in the establishment: an inflatable life-size doll. In the film's heterosexual imagination, the inflatable doll is correlative to the dildo. In the straight sex market, men can buy a copy of the female body in its entirety, but women have to make due with a replica of the penis. For de Lauretis, the difference between the "inflatable doll" and the "realistic dildo" makes explicit the "gender asymmetry in men's and women's access to a sexuality defined by sexual commodities."<sup>8</sup>



In this scene, Agatha's way of "seeing things," her relationship with the imaginary and her way of constructing herself as a subject of desire, changes. Agatha begins to understand what lesbianism "sees," which heterosexuality reduces to very few "things." For de Lauretis, the dildo constitutes the first moment in the confrontation of lesbian sexuality and heterosexuality; a second moment will occur when lesbian sex escapes from the reproduction of the symbolic heterosexual order's asymmetries. What interests de Lauretis here is the epistemological rupture introduced by the dildo. In this analysis, the dildo's value is merely critical, not practical. That's why, after confronting the heterosexual imagination and relieving herself of the phallus's weight, Agatha abandons the sex shop without buying a dildo.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler's analysis of the dildo is hidden behind the broader question of the "lesbian phallus" as well as behind the apparently more dignified and philosophical questions of the statute of lesbian subjects, power, and sexual desire. Wringing the neck of "penis envy" as Freud defines it, Butler notes that men must measure themselves against the ideal of the phallus precisely because they are equipped with a penis and not a phallus and are therefore obligated to compulsively perform their virility—a test lesbians needn't undergo. Although omitting use of the term *dildo*, Butler attributes to the phallus characteristics that we would associate, rather unhesitatingly, with sex toys: "plasticity, transferability, and expropriability."<sup>9</sup> "The displacement of the Phallus," says Butler, "its capacity to symbolize in relation to other body parts, or other body-like things, opens the way for the lesbian Phallus."<sup>10</sup>

The Butlerian critique of sexual-identity essentialism helps undo the false assumption—shared by antidildo lesbian feminists and homophobic discourses—that all straight sex is phallic and that all phallic sex is straight. For example, within

feminist orthodoxy, any representation of the phallus is considered synonymous with the return of heterosexist power over women and lesbians. Taking this hypothesis to its semiotic extreme, some radical separatists will claim that a sex act between two lesbians involving a dildo “is not truly lesbian.” In the normative heterocentric discourse, apparently opposed but metaphysically symmetrical with the separatist feminist narratives, the use of dildos among lesbians appears as effective proof that “a sex act without a penis cannot be considered truly sexual.” The dildo is an ontological hole within the binary logics of sexual and gender identities.

Early feminist queer theories attempted to demonstrate that a distance exists between the phallus and the penis and that this distance can be overcome, reterritorialized, and subverted by lesbian sex. The dildo is not the phallus and does not represent the phallus because the phallus—let’s say it once and for all—does not exist. The phallus is nothing but the phantasmic and political hypostasis of the penis within heteronormative patriarchal culture. The real question is the inscription of male hegemonic power within the cartography of modern anatomy. Just as with the assignation of sex to intersex babies—that is to say, to those babies whose sex organs cannot be identified as simply male or female in relation to the binary epistemology of so-called natural sexual difference (see the section “Money Makes Sex” later in this chapter)—and the symbolic order that seems to stem from that assignation are nothing but a question of centimeters for maintaining males’ hegemonic somatopolitical position. A possible interesting secondary conclusion is that the (flaccid) penis is not yet masculine enough. Only the erect, ejaculating penis, as a productive and reproductive organ, can claim to be phallic.

The attachment to psychoanalytic language has prevented most feminist and queer interpretations of lesbian and trans

sexualities from understanding the dildo beyond its relationship to the phallus. Taking a step aside from normative psychoanalytic grammars, the aim of this text is to rethink the dildo as a sexual technology that occupies a strategic space between modern biopolitical masturbation-repression technologies and pleasure-production technologies. If the dildo is disruptive, this is not because it allows the lesbian to enter the paradise of the phallus but rather because it shows that masculinity, like femininity, is subject to social and political technologies of construction and control. The dildo is an operator of the body's sexual plasticity and of the possible prosthetic modification of its contour and identity. Perhaps the dildo suggests that the organs we interpret as natural (male or female) have already suffered a similar process of plastic transformation.

Departing from psychoanalytic frameworks, Jack Halberstam has worked on the theory of the dildo not as a phallic signifier but rather and above all as a sexual object and gender modulator. For Halberstam, if the dildo arouses reproof in lesbian communities and in representations of it in general, it is because this pesky toy forces us to realize that “real” penises are nothing but dildos, with the small difference that, until relatively recently, you couldn't buy penises.<sup>11</sup> For Halberstam, use of the dildo by drag kings does not showcase a false imitation of masculinity but rather enables us to catch a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as authentic.

### *Learning from the Dildo*

Leaving aside both psychoanalytic and moral debates, this essay proposes considering the dildo, in its production and use at least from the eighteenth century on, as part of a biopolitical technology—that is to say, an element within a complex system

of regulating devices that define relationships between bodies, tools, signs, machines, uses, and users. The dildo, then, shows itself as another tool (or another body) among so many other organic and inorganic machines (hands, whips, penises, chastity belts, condoms, tongues, etc.) and not simply as a replica of a living sexual member.

Countersexuality says: the logic of heterosexuality is the logic of the dildo, invoking the transcendental possibility of giving an arbitrary organ the power to install sexual and gender difference. “Extracting” the organ that establishes the body as “naturally male” and calling it a dildo is a decisive political act in the deconstruction of heterosexuality. With the invention of the dildo, the penis ceases to be the root of sexual difference. If the penis is to sexuality what God is to nature, then in the domain of sexual relationships the dildo brings about God’s death as foretold by Nietzsche. In this sense, the dildo can be considered a critical act in the history of countersexual technology.

Philosophize not with a hammer but with a dildo. We are not talking about busting eardrums. We are talking about opening anuses. We must dynamite the sex organ, which has passed for the origin of desire and the raw material of sex and which has introduced itself as the privileged center where pleasure is taken and given and as the warranty of the species’ reproduction. When we fuck, the dildo is the outsider. Even tied to my body, the dildo does not belong to me. The strap-on denies the truth of pleasure as something that would originate in me. The dildo is *undecidable*. It contradicts the evidence that pleasure takes place in an organ that belongs to the subject. The dildo is the foreigner. An inorganic object that lives alongside the flesh, the dildo resembles what Julia Kristeva calls “the abject” because of its proximity to death, to the machine, and to shit.<sup>12</sup> The dildo is an intruder, an outsider, a hacker.

To unmask sexuality as an anatomopolitical ideology, it is necessary to understand the dildo (its separation from the body) as a deferred center of sexual and political signification. The dildo is not an object that replaces something that's missing. It is a cutting-and-pasting operation that takes place within heterosexuality, displacing the supposed organic center of sexual production onto a space outside the body. The dildo, as a reference of power and sexual arousal, betrays the anatomical organ by moving into other signifying spaces (organic and inorganic, male and female) that are resexualized by dint of their semantic proximity. From that moment on, anything can become a dildo. All is dildo. Even the penis.

During his visit to the aviation show in 1912, the inventor of the readymade, Marcel Duchamp, said to his friends Fernand Léger and Constantin Brancusi, "Painting is over. Who can do better than this propeller?" We can say the same thing about sexual prostheses, dildos, and vibrators. Sex is over. Who can do better than this dildo? If in Duchamp's case the readymade marked the passage from painting to conceptual art, the dildo marks the shift from sexual naturalism to conceptual countersex.

Although the erect penis claims to be a self-presence that is immediate and authentic to itself, this self-identity is contaminated by what it tries to exclude: the flaccid penis, the clitoris, the vagina, the anus—and the dildo. In this first deconstructive phase, however, the realistic dildo still possesses the formal and/or material characteristics of its normative referent (the penis): the same shape, the same size and color, it can already be considered a paradigmatic example of what Jacques Derrida defines as the "dangerous supplement" in his analysis of Rousseau's nature/culture opposition and its relationship to writing:

But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [*suppléant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place* [*tient-lieu*]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up *of itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy.<sup>13</sup>

So although the dildo appears at first to be an artificial substitute for the penis, the cutting operation has already set the organ-origin deconstruction process in motion. The dildo adds only to replace. In the same way that the copy is the original's condition of possibility and that the supplement can supply only insofar as it produces what it is supposed to supplement, the dildo, the apparent plastic representative of a natural organ, retroactively produces the original penis. It is neither a signified nor its signifier; it is neither a truthful representor nor a simple presence. Thanks to a facetious metaphysical pirouette, the dildo precedes the penis. The dildo becomes the penis's penis, the supplement's supplement, replacing the sex it supposedly represents.

The dildo deconstructs any form of sexual authority. Inverting binaries to turn the subordinated terms (*vagina*, *anus*) into the privileged term (*penis*) leaves the hierarchal, authoritarian structure of meaning intact, but the dildo (the alien, the object, the unsexual) defers authority indefinitely. This is grammar undoing sexual identity. On one hand, the dildo pretends to be an addition to a penis that is already full, present, and sufficient in itself. On the other hand, as a substitute for the genitals,

it appears as a (lesbian's, transperson's, or disabled person's) compensation for something that is lacking; it is insufficient in itself. In all cases, what should be fully present contains a constitutive absence that calls for supplementation.

As a supplement, the dildo introduces the exterior; it belongs outside the organic body. The dildo is *l'étranger*. It is simultaneously and paradoxically the exact copy of and the farthest thing from the organ; in this sense, its statute does not differ from that of the prosthesis, which, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, troubles every premise of phenomenology.<sup>14</sup> As a copy, the parasitical mimesis of the penis, the dildo is always coming ever closer to the ideal of imitation. It is never enough. It is never sufficiently close to the organ. It won't settle for imitation. That is why it must constantly transform itself, surpass itself in such a way that it literally moves beyond its form, beyond the size and excellence of that which it supposedly imitates. The dildo turns the penis against itself. Until now the flesh-and-blood sex organ, considered natural, as a presence has seemed self-sufficient. For this reason, in the modern heterocentric psychological and medical discourses, the dildo has seen its therapeutic use limited to situations in which the living organ no longer functions (due to homosexuality, castration, accident, or illness). The dildo accompanies disability and sickness, perversion, and impotence. Lesbian, transgender, and disabled bodies are constructed as supplemented by dildos. For this modern pathologizing discourse, disabled (male and female) bodies are like dykes and transsexuals: they have no sex. It is only when nature has already failed, heralding death, that the heterosexual medical institutions consider the dildo an emergency measure or a compensatory tool to fill a void. But the dildo doesn't work like a simple mock cock. The dildo writes sex under erasure.

The dildo diverts sex from its "authentic" origin because it is unconnected to the organ it supposedly imitates. Foreign to

nature, as *techne* and art, it behaves like a machine that cannot represent nature without the risk of transforming nature. The dildo is the evil other. It is death stalking the living penis. It terrifies. Relegated until now to the status of secondary imitation, these new plastic genitals open a line of technosomatic evolution as an alternative to that of the penis.

But the dildo is also a synonymous with impotence, with alienation, with the absence of an erection, with loss of control. In this sense, it is closer to the nineteenth-century representation of feminine, homosexual, disabled, nonwhite, and indigenous—but not masculine—sexualities. Thus, it would seem that having an orgasm with a dildo would be like being possessed by an object: loss of sexual sovereignty in order to finally gain a plastic pleasure.

In this way, little by little the dildo becomes a virus that corrupts the truth of sex and the genitals. It is not faithful to the organs' nature. It is the servant that rebels against its master and, proposing itself as an alternative route to pleasure, turns the master's authority into an object of derision.

The dildo has no natural use. There is no orifice that is naturally reserved for it. The vagina is no more suitable than the anus. The first stage of the cutting-and-pasting operation represented by the dildo unveils a transit of the signifier that kick-starts the unstoppable process of the heterocentric order's destruction. The second stage of this reflexive logic is the perfecting of the dildo in such a way that it comes ever closer to the ideal (in this sense, Rocco Siffredi and Jeff Stryker's dicks as represented by pornographic language must be considered living dildos) that establishes sexual difference and moves ever farther from its anatomical referent. The dildo becomes mechanical, smooth, silent, shiny, slippery, transparent, ultra-clean, safe. It does not imitate the penis; it substitutes and surpasses it in its sexual excellence.



In a third moment of discursive reflexivity, the dildo returns, transferring itself back onto the body in order to countersexualize it. Thus, the body, which formerly depended on an organic order that gave rise to hierarchies and differentiation, becomes total horizontality, a flat surface where organs and citations are displaced at varying speeds. The dildo is always a multiple effect, not a single origin.

The discovery of the dildo introduces the possibility of a sexual signifier's infinite repetition into the system. Thus, the phallus is swallowed up by the same transcendental force that naturalized it. Tending to abstraction, like capital or language, the dildo searches for only its own polymorphic expansion; it does not know organic or material limits; it grabs firmly onto everything in order to create difference; it generates difference far and wide, but it is not identified with difference itself. It is transit, not essence.

The dildo is the truth of heterosexuality as parody. The logic of the dildo proves that the very terms of the heterosexual male/female, active/passive system are nothing but elements among so many others within an arbitrary signification system. The dildo is the truth of the genitals as a signifying mechanism, against which the penis looks like the false imposture of a domination ideology. The dildo says, "The penis is a fake phallus." The dildo shows that the signifier generated by sexual difference has gotten caught in its own trap. It will be betrayed by the very logic that established it. And all under the pretext of imitation, of compensation for an impairment, of a mere prosthetic supplement.

This betrayal thus supports the subversive iteration of heterosexuality but not every form of rejection of "patriarchal" signifying. Just as there exists a negative theology, there also exists a "negative sexology," which proceeds by way of excluding any

representation of the “patriarchy” in what it considers transfigurations of the penis. Separatist lesbian theory and transphobic feminism, which criticize dildo use because of its complicity with the symbols of male domination, still believe in the ontological reality of the penis as hegemonic genitalia. In this naturalistic erotica, the absence that structures the body, faithful to a monocentric, totalizing anatomical chart, mourns the vestiges of the very phallocentric system it criticizes. This lack as an absence of the signifier, an effective void (“never a penis, never a dildo”), now becomes a new pleasure center. It could be a singular political possibility. But it cancels out its own criticality when it pretends to be universalized, becoming normative and excluding trans and dildo sexualities as abject. In this negative sexology, transgression is produced by denying the very grammar that produces sexual signification—as if all sexual grammar were contaminated or “patriarchalized.” These theories run the risk of restructuring the body based on another empty center, when they could instead deny the center’s centrality, multiplying it until the very notion of center doesn’t make sense. The climactic shift brought on by the dildo is not equivalent to a substitution of the center, even an empty center, by means of imitating an original model. The origin is betrayed by the conversion of any given space into a possible center. Transforming any body (organic or inorganic, human or not) into a possible pleasure center defers the origin, troubles the center. The genitals must be deterritorialized. Therefore, all is dildo. And all becomes orifice.

If castration is such a powerful metaphor in psychoanalysis, it is thanks to the potentiality of the cut-up technique as a strategy of subversion. Once again, it is not Nietzsche’s dick-hammer that brings about the reversal of all values but rather the dyke’s grammatological scissors, which cut, displace, and paste. Therefore, “dildo dyke” or “dildo F2M” or “dildo crip” is not just

another sexual identity out of so many or a simple declination of the codes of masculinity onto a female or disable body but the last possible sexual identity. Beyond the dildo, everything becomes countersexual.

By being unidentifiable as an organ in the traditional man/active, woman/passive opposition, the dildo turns fucking into a paradoxical act. Faced with this small object, the whole heterosexual gender-role system loses its meaning.<sup>15</sup> When it comes to the dildo, conventional concepts and affects surrounding both heterosexual and homosexual pleasure and orgasms become obsolete. In relation to the body, the dildo plays the role of a moving boundary. As significance taken out of context, as subversive iteration, the dildo leads to the impossibility of delimiting a context. First, it calls into question the idea that the male body is the natural context for the prosthesis/penis. Then, drastically, it threatens the supposition that the organic body is sexuality's proper context.

The strap-on (regardless of whether it is considered an imitation or a parody), far from stabilizing the wearer's sexual and gender identity, provokes a chain of successive identifications and negations, analogies and displacements. As an object fixed onto the flesh, it troubles the relationship between inner and outer, between passive and active, between organ and machine. As a movable object that can be displaced, untied, and separated from the body and that is characterized by the reversibility of its use, it continually threatens the stability of oppositions such as male/female, penetrating/shitting, offering/taking, and so on.

The dildo's affordability and disposability demystify the link customarily established between love and sex, between reproduction of life and pleasure. Here is an object that must be boiled at a high temperature to get it good and clean, an object you can give as a gift, throw in the trash, or use as a paperweight. Love

leaves, love returns, sex partners come and go, but the dildo is always there, like a survivor of love. Like love, it is transit, not essence.

By reconfiguring the erogenous boundaries of the fucking/fucked body, the dildo calls to question the idea that the limits of the flesh coincide with the limits of the body. Pleasure always happens in a relational expanded body, constructed by social relationship, discourse, technology, and exteriority. The dildo disrupts the distinction between a feeling subject and an inanimate object. By separating itself, it resists the force with which the body appropriates all the pleasure for itself, as if pleasure comes from *within* the body, from *within* the subject. The pleasure that the dildo procures belongs to the body only insofar as it is reappropriated, just because it is “tied.” The dildo raises the question of death, of simulation and dishonesty in sex. Inversely, it also forces an examination of life, truth, and subjectivity in sex. The dildo that experiences pleasure knows that pleasure (all sexual pleasure) is never given or taken, never owned; that it is never really there; that it is never real; that it is always externality, incorporation, and reappropriation.

## BUTLER'S VIBRATOR: A BRIEF GENEALOGY OF SEX TOYS AND SEXUAL PROSTHESES

In his project *The History of Sexuality* (which today would perhaps be better titled *The History of Biopower*), Michel Foucault identifies four *dispositifs* that allow us to understand sexuality as the product of positive and productive technologies rather than as the negative result of taboos, repressions, and legal prohibitions. These four sexual technologies are, according to Foucault, the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogization of children's sex, the socialization of procreative behaviors, and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure.

The analysis of the constructive *dispositifs* of the sexualities called "normal" or "aberrant" would belong to the study of the zone Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Donzelot call "the social." "The social sector," says Deleuze in his preface to Donzelot's book *The Policing of Families*,

does not merge with the judicial sector, even if it does extend the field of judicial action. And Donzelot shows that the social does not merge with the economic sector either, since in point of fact it invents an entire social economy and lays new foundations for marking the distinction between the rich and the poor. Nor does it merge with the public sector or the private sector, since on the contrary it leads to a new hybrid form of the public and the private, and itself produces a repartition, a novel interlacing of interventions and withdrawals of the state, of its charges and discharges.<sup>16</sup>

The definition of this "social" space concerns neither anthropology nor sociology but rather forms an internal criticism of the structure of the human sciences as we know them on university

campuses and in institutions that produce and reproduce knowledge. This calls into question the possibility of continuing to work in categories such as “man,” “human,” “woman,” “sex,” “sexuality,” and “race,” which are simply the performative product of the disciplinary normative work that has been carried out in the human sciences in the West since the eighteenth century.

Foucault had planned to publish a volume of *The History of Sexuality* dedicated to studying the figures of the woman, the mother, and the “hysteric.” According to Foucault, this volume was intended to be an analysis of the sexualization of the woman’s body, the concepts of pathology that arose in relation to that sexualization, and the insertion of that body into a perspective that invested it with significance in social policy.<sup>17</sup> In the end, he developed little more than a timid genealogy of the sexual *dispositifs* at work in the production of women’s bodies while he was at the Collège de France in 1974 and 1975, and he did not have time to outline the arguments that would have allowed him to draw up a differential analysis of the *dispositifs* that bring about the various sexual inscriptions on the female body as different as straight women and lesbians, wives and spinsters, frigid bitches and nymphomaniacs, good girls and prostitutes.

If any work in this direction has been done, the effort has arisen from feminist, lesbian, and queer analysis. From the 1950s, feminism has repoliticized the medical and psychological notion of “gender” to claim the social and historical constructed dimension of femininity and masculinity. In spite of the centrality of the figures of the drag queen, the transsexual, and transgender women within contemporary feminist and queer discourses, most theatrical and linguistic readings of “gender performativity” and “identity performance” often dispose of the body and sexuality prematurely, making it impossible to carry out a critical analysis of the technological inscription processes that make

gender performances “pass” as natural or not. Emphasizing the possibility of crossing gender limits by means of gender performance, most discourses on queer performativity have ignored the bodily processes and especially the transformations that occur in transgender and transsexual bodies as well as the gender- and sex-stabilization techniques at work in heterosexual bodies. What transsexual, transgender, intersex, and disability activists have put on the table are not so much cross-gender theatrical or stage performances as they are physical, sexual, social, and political transformations that take place off-stage, or, put another way, they have put precise transincorporation technologies on the table: clitorises that grow until they become external sex organs; bodies that mutate to the rhythm of hormonal dosages; uteruses that do not procreate; prostates that do not produce semen; voices that change tone; beards, mustaches, and hairs that grow on unexpected faces and breasts; dildos that have orgasms; reconstructed vaginas that do not desire penetration by a penis; testicular prostheses that can be boiled at 212 degrees and will even melt in the microwave.

What I am suggesting is that perhaps if the hypotheses of so-called gender constructivism have been accepted without effecting significant political changes, it might be precisely because this constructivism depends on and maintains a distinction between sex and gender that ends up fulfilling the Western metaphysical opposition between culture and nature as well as by extension between technology and nature. The need to fight against all normative forms of gender essentialism would have made feminism and queer theorists in the 1990s victim of that fight’s own discursive purge.

There is a theoretical and political breach between Simone de Beauvoir’s assertion that “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman” and Monique Wittig’s declination of that maxim in

1981.<sup>18</sup> When Wittig claimed that “lesbians are not women,”<sup>19</sup> the issue is not just one of pointing out gender’s constructed character but also of reclaiming the possibility of intervening in this construction to the point of interrupting the reproduction of heterosexuality and opening lines of flight from a becoming that is imposed, if not as natural, at least as socially normative or even as symbolically preferential.<sup>20</sup>

My task consists of an attempt to escape the false essentialism–constructivism debate by bringing both queer theory’s and post-structural philosophies’ analytical tools (including Derrida’s deconstruction, Foucault’s genealogy of power, Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis, and Butler’s gender performativity) face to face with certain unfitting becomings, with improper bodies, organs, and objects to which neither feminism nor queer theory has wanted to or been able to respond. This was the aim of throwing a dildo into the grammatological machine in the previous chapter. I will do this again in chapter 4 by studying some surgically reconstructed and hormonally transformed sex organs. In the current chapter, I tackle the technologies implicated in the repression and production of the nonheterosexual orgasm, which foreshadow contemporary sex toys that until now have been considered fetishistic devices.

This forced confrontation progresses toward a “metaconstructivism” not only of gender but also and above all of sex—that is, toward a reflection on the limits of constructivism; it prefigures a certain kind of radical queer materialism or trans empiricism. It is also a response to the need, after a moment of concentration on identity politics, to return to practices, to what Foucault would have called the “manifold ways of making sex,” ways in which the body is constructed and constructs itself as “identity.”<sup>21</sup>

In an attempt to interrogate the limits of queer theory, I begin with a reflection on these strange organs and objects that are



related to the repression and production of sexual pleasure. These “sex machines,” which I identify as the dildo’s structural neighbors, occupy a space between organs and objects. They sit themselves down, unstably, on the very hinge of nature and technology.

This outfit of sex machines allows us to begin reflecting on the effects of flesh transformation involved in every performative invocation of sexual identity and finally lead us to attempt to reformulate gender identity in terms of prosthetic incorporation. Let’s start this debate by calling to mind George Canguilhem’s enigmatic sentence in *Knowledge of Life*: “Machines can be considered organs of the human species.”<sup>22</sup> In this chapter, we ask: What sort of organ-machines are the “human” species’ sex organs?

In her study on the relationship between bodies and sex objects, Gayle Rubin, more than Foucault, emerged as a trailblazer. Rubin’s memories of the origins of Samois, the first lesbian S&M organization, founded in 1978 in San Francisco, capture her fascination with the “extraordinary fabrications of pleasures” and some of the “instruments” that take part in the “uses of the body . . . as desexualized, as devirilized,” which Foucault admirably referred to on several occasions.<sup>23</sup> “I do not see how one can talk about fetishism, or sadomasochism,” explains Rubin,

without thinking about the production of rubber, the techniques and gear used for controlling and riding horses, the high polished gleam of military footwear, the history of silk stockings, the cold authoritative qualities of medical equipment, or the allure of motorcycles and the elusive liberties of leaving the city for the open road. For that matter, how can we think of fetishism without the impact of cities, of certain streets and parks, of red-light districts and “cheap amusements,” or the seductions of

department store counters, piled high with desirable and glamorous goods? To me, fetishism raises all sorts of issues concerning shifts in the manufacture of objects, the historical and social specificities of control and skin and social etiquette, or ambiguously experienced body invasions and minutely graduated hierarchies. If all of this complex social information is reduced to castration or the Oedipus complex or knowing or not knowing what one is not supposed to know, I think something important has been lost.<sup>24</sup>

Rubin, who, unlike Foucault, is not afraid to adopt the mass production of objects and popular culture as references, does not look back to the Greeks but instead points out the possibility of considering sexuality as part of a wider history of technologies, which would include everything from the history of the production of consumer goods (motorcycles, cars, etc.), “extractivism” (the production of energy), and the transformation of raw materials (silk, coal, oil, plastic, leather, etc.) to the history of urban planning (streets, parks, districts, open roads, etc.). It would be, then, a rethinking of S&M and fetishism to see them not as marginal perversions in relation to the dominant “normal” sexuality but rather as essential elements in the modern production of the body and of its relationship with manufactured objects in the history of capitalism. In this way, the history of sexuality is displaced from the realm of the natural history of reproduction and made part of the (artificial) history of production. Continuing in the vein of Rubin’s intuition, I attempt to locate the place of the dildo within a complex web of technologies of material production, of signs, of power, and, finally, of technologies of the self.

It is within this analytic framework that I would like to outline the development of a group of technologies related to the

production of what we would today call “sexual pleasure” and more specifically around what modern sexology has taken to calling the “orgasm,” the ultimate and irreducible unit of individual pleasure. This brief analysis shows, first, that technological intervention (production) in (of) sexuality has been a constant practice of modernity (albeit under different and discontinuous models). Therefore, if it makes sense to talk about a contemporary change in sexual production or reproduction, one would be more likely to find such a change in the strategic transformations of certain forms of technological incorporation of sex than in a (troubling or alarming, as it tends to be described in certain naturalisms’ apocalyptic narratives) step from a natural to a technological form of sexuality. In the second place, none of these technologies should be considered a total system that would absolutely and necessarily produce certain “pleasure” and certain forms of “subjectivity.” Rather, to the contrary, these technologies show themselves to be failed structures (thus moving beyond the very notion of structures) in which no instrument of domination is safe from being perverted and reappropriated within what I call, following the suit of Foucault’s intuitions, distinct “praxes of resistance.”

Through analysis of certain instruments and objects produced through the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, such as gloves to prevent the hand from making contact with the clitoris and so-called muscle vibrators, we will see that “female sexual pleasure” is the result of two opposing mechanisms (*dispositifs*) that worked in parallel from the end of the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth: technologies relating to the repression of masturbation and technologies used in the treatment of hysteria. I limit myself to schematically outlining a possible genealogy of the production of the female orgasm, though it would also be possible to carry

out a similar analysis of male erection and ejaculation as the product of the paradoxical encounter between the technologies that repress masturbation and treatments dedicated to curing impotence, erectile dysfunction, disability, sexual debility, and homosexuality.

### *Tie Me Up: Technologies of the Masturbating Hand*

Theodore Rombout's painting *Allegory of the Five Senses* (1637) features five figures, all white males. Three of the figures, representing Smell, Taste, and Hearing, are strapping young men. Each appears absorbed in his own sensorial experience. There is no visual connection between Smell, Hearing, and Taste. In contrast, a strong connection is established between Sight, represented as a wise old man holding a pair of spectacles, and Touch, an old man caressing the face of a stone statue. Whereas Touch recognizes the surface of the face with his hands, Sight watches with a distant, elevated expression that seems to encompass both Touch and the face being caressed. Touch and Sight are marked by a radical epistemological asymmetry: Touch is blind, and Sight touches with his gaze, contaminated by neither the singular nor the material. That is to say, Sight implies a superior mode of experience that needs neither the hand nor the skin.<sup>25</sup> In the transition from touch to sight that marked the emergence of philosophic modernity, colonialism, and capitalism, touch as a "disabled sense" was literally contained and effectively "impeded" by a series of technological instruments that mediated between the hand and the genital organs. These instruments eventually regulated the troubling possibilities open to the hand that touches itself and turns the individual into its own object of knowledge, desire, and pleasure. Behind the problem

of blindness, which structures the debates on knowledge and feeling in Locke, Berkeley, Condillac, Buffon, Diderot, and Voltaire, the modern (female, nonwhite) hand of the masturbator lies in hiding.

As Vern L. Bullough shows in the first detailed study of the history of sexual technologies, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a massive production of apparatuses and instruments dedicated to the prevention of what came to be known as “disorders produced by masturbation.”<sup>26</sup> Although masturbation has been known as a “solitary vice” since antiquity and appears in Giovanni Sinibaldi’s classic medical treatise *Geneanthropeia* (1642)—often considered to be the first treatise on sexology—as the possible root of several conditions, including “constipation, a hunched back, bad breath, and a red nose,”<sup>27</sup> it was not until the eighteenth century that masturbation was medically and institutionally defined as an “illness.” One of the first sources of belief in masturbation’s insalubrity was the anonymous English-language treatise *Onania, the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution*, published in Holland around 1710, which presents the “moral and physical decay” caused by what the account refers to as “self-abuse.”

Some years later, in 1760, the Swiss doctor Samuel Auguste Tissot published *Lonanisme: Dissertation sur les maladies produites par la masturbation*. According to Tissot’s theory of the humors, masturbation is first and foremost a form of *gâchis*—that is, a needless waste of bodily energy that inexorably leads to illness and even to death. This *gâchis* happens not only with masturbation but also with any act of coitus whose objective is not procreation and, therefore, any homosexual relationship.<sup>28</sup> It is important to point out that, for Tissot, masturbation itself is not a disease but rather a causal factor present in a wide array of illnesses, including epilepsy, stupidity, and madness.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the differences between these classic treatises, *Onania* and *L'onanisme* have a common denominator: each describes a process of moral degeneration and its pathological identification. Each highlights the simultaneous appearance of one-person sex and an array of techniques of the self through which to understand, control, and produce the individual as the subject of a sexual identity. Both imagine a model of the individual body as a self-regulated system, a closed, finite energy circuit in which the expenditure of that energy may be endangered by excessive loss of certain bodily fluids, such as water, blood, or semen.<sup>30</sup> The rhetoric of self-abuse defines a risk of contamination and illness within the individual's own bodily circuit that precedes community and sexual relationships. The contamination takes place in a new political space in which sexuality is defined: the individual and his or her own body. A lack of self-control and an excess of self-affection become self-abuse and self-contamination by threatening the balance of energy fluids in the individual body. Before any kind of sexual relationship can exist, the individual is already threatened by a sort of inner contamination, and the only possible source is his or her own body.

In a gesture symptomatic of the appearance of the new form of power Foucault later identified as "biopolitics," Tissot anticipated the production of living bodies as "goods" and "merchandise" and the regulation of sexuality as the fundamental form of management of the reproduction of the population. In this physical model of circuits, fluids, and communicating vessels, sexual energy is nothing but a modality of the body's energy, liable to be transformed into physical force in the case of labor or into procreative force in the case of (hetero)sexual activity.<sup>31</sup> Here, pleasure is considered a simple by-product, a kind of wastage resulting from this sexual energy's consumption. The consequence of this restrictive economy of bodily fluids and sexual

pleasures—a model that continues into the Freudian theory of communicating vessels—is that any productive activity indirectly depends on a surplus of fluids and sexual energies that can be literally di-verted or per-verted, that can be mobilized in any number of directions. In the same way, any mechanical energy can be transformed into sexual energy as if it were a side effect of the same physical equation. Thus, labor and sexuality belong to the same ergonomic circuit in which any kind of capital can become sex and in which all sexual (yet unpaid) labor becomes (reproductive) capital. The circularity of this life-economic technology, which we should not hesitate to join Foucault in calling “sexuality,” is complete with the guarantee of the efficacy of heterosexual coitus as well as the generation process during pregnancy and birth. It is this technology of heterosexual-body production that the masturbating hand endangers so that masturbation must be disciplined by a number of equally important repression techniques.

Note that these sex and gender technologies do not exist in a vacuum: they bring together white, European, heterosexual body-producing colonial technologies, forming part of a wider necrobiopolitical program. The new masturbating body, threatened by contamination within its own borders, also operates as a political metaphor for the creation of new modern states in a period of full-on colonial expansion. In this period, the skin, subjected in the same way as the frontier to an immunological process of self-protection and self-demarkation, became the surface for inscription of the new European states’ sovereignty. The same economy of energy regulation protected both the body and the nation-state from “deplorable solitary maneuvers” that could become a threat to its security and its reproduction. In nineteenth-century France, for example, hygienist and anti-onanist movements interpreted masturbation not just as a

problem of “individual morbidity” but also as a form of social pathology and presented the masturbator as a “polluting agent” in the whole social body who threatened the survival of the autochthonous white race. As Vernon A. Rosario points out, there was a shift between the time of Tissot and the time of the Restoration (1814–1830): the image of the masturbator moved from the figure of the young girl who must be protected from her tactile vices to the image of the recalcitrant, perverse, adult, (perhaps homosexual) male masturbator, whose lack of interest in the reproduction of the species threatened the future of the nation.<sup>32</sup>

Tissot’s theories on masturbation reached America in the nineteenth century through the works of Benjamin Rush and Edward Bliss Foote, who disseminated the theory that masturbation hampers the exchange of “animal magnetism” between the sexes.<sup>33</sup> Sylvester Graham and John Harvey Kellogg, leaders of the emerging industrial firms Graham’s and Kellogg’s (of breakfast-cereal fame), contributed to the implementation of those theories and the manufacturing of diverse anti-onanist devices. This industrializing period saw the production of diverse technological instruments dedicated to the regulation of domestic practices, a production of ordinary life that ranged from a regimented breakfast to regimented sexual touching—from Kellogg’s Cornflakes to antimasturbation belts.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bourgeois and colonial pathologization of touch and privileging of sight as the proper sense for knowledge and rational action reigned supreme. Touch and the skin were the common denominators of the era’s two forms of venereal “contamination.” The skin became the surface of inscription on which the signs of sexual deviation were written. Cutaneous pustules were considered the



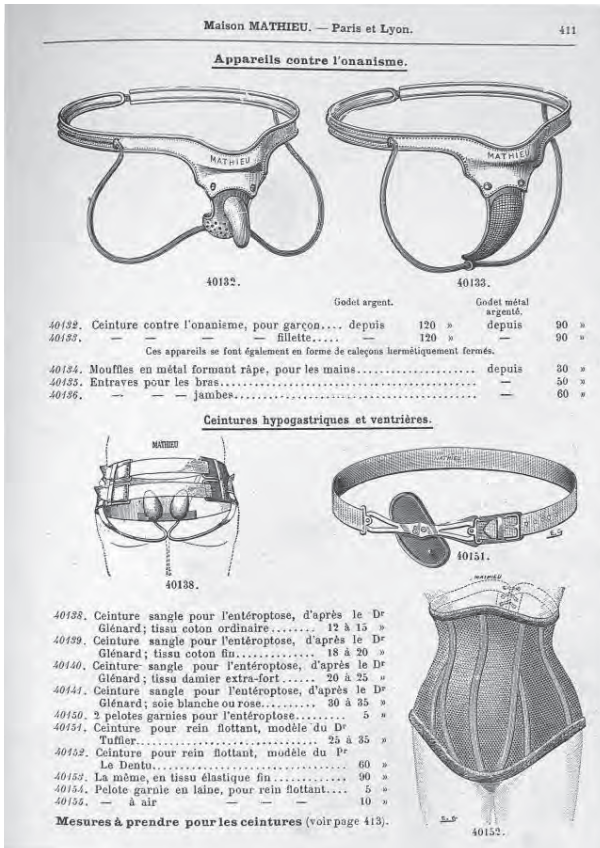


FIGURE 3.1 Illustrations of instruments to treat and prevent masturbation from the “Catalogue de la Maison Mathieu,” Paris, 1904.

visual signs typical of the masturbator’s vice and the syphilitic’s sexual promiscuity. The diagnosis of both illnesses meant recognizing before touching and therefore required a kind of touchless knowledge. The skin appeared to betray the confidentiality and privacy of the new individual body by acting as tissue that allowed a public display or exhibition or as a text that allowed one

to read the individual's sexual actions, from masturbation to hysteria, from homosexuality to syphilis.<sup>34</sup> The facial expressions of the "solitary vice" and of the "corona veneris" translated touch into vision, a process in which the skin acted as an interface.<sup>35</sup> Threatened by both sexual infection and colonial contamination, bourgeois European skin thus acted as the physiological tissue for a certain pornocartography that allowed the eye to see—that is, to know—a person's sexual history through a decoding glance. No touching necessary.<sup>36</sup>

A phenomenological analysis of the objects designed to prevent contact reveals the appearance of a new sexual (yet sexless) organ that threatened the genital organs' sexual autonomy: the hand. Bullough has identified more than twenty instruments designed to prevent masturbation that were registered as "chastity belts" or "surgical devices" in the U.S. Patent Office records between 1856 and 1917.<sup>37</sup> These apparatuses include night gloves that prevented genital touching, bed irons that kept sheets from rubbing against the body, shackles that prevented friction between a young girl's legs, and all sorts of belts designed to prevent touching in the case of the young girl and erection in the case of the young man. Circumcision, perforation of the foreskin with a ring, and, in extreme cases, partial castration were recommended for boys. For the young girl, the burning of the inner portion of the buttocks near the genitals and, in severe cases, clitoridectomy were recommended.

Bullough writes that

the female harnesses usually had perforated wire-type meshing so that the girls could urinate through them and never touch themselves. All of these devices were fastened in the back, many with locks for which only the parents had the key. For males, there were similar devices, but most popular were sheaths with metal

teeth that fitted over the penis. If the penis became erect, the teeth pierced the flesh and made any erection painful. Each new breakthrough in technology seemed to lead to a new kind of device; appliances that gave electric shocks, for example, came on the market after the development of batteries.<sup>38</sup>

Electric alarms that rang in the event of an erection or “nocturnal pollution” also became popular. There was a gradual diminution in the production and sale of these devices beginning in 1925 as the pathological consequences of masturbation were called into question.

Nevertheless, the repressive technologies related to the restraint of touch must not be reduced to power *dispositifs* that produce subject positions, in a strictly Foucauldian sense. Michel de Certeau has highlighted that every form of technology is a system of objects, users, and uses open to resistance and *détournement* (diversion, perversion, appropriation, and queerization). In the spirit of Foucault, David Halperin has applied the term *queer praxis* to this method of turning certain domination technologies into technologies of the self, including what could be called identity-construction techniques.<sup>39</sup>

Every technique that belongs to a repressive practice is liable to be cut off and grafted onto another set of practices, reappropriated by different bodies, reversed, and put to different uses, giving rise to other pleasures and other identity positions. In fact, around the middle of the twentieth century, most of these repressive antimasturbation techniques were turned into initiation rites and practices that comprised alternative sexualities in gay, lesbian, and BDSM subcultures. For example, perforation of the foreskin with a ring reappeared in gay and S&M culture under the name “Prince Albert,”<sup>40</sup> with two key differences: first, the body, which until then had been a simple object

of the practice, became a subject who could decide what piercing, where, and so on. And, second, whereas in nineteenth-century literature the ring appeared as an impediment to erection, in the piercing culture it came to be known for its ability to make erections and orgasms last longer.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the uses of what appears to be the same technique and the positions of power that these uses entail have come full circle.

For example, a contemporary American S&M magazine dedicates an entire issue to “genital torture”: techniques such as electro-torture, urethral encroachment, genital piercing, penis elongation, scrotal inflation, and surgical modification of the genitals. The issue’s electro-torture techniques include violet wands, which “apply static electricity to the entire genital area, especially to the glans,” as well as several electric shock machines marketed under names such as “Relaxation,” “Walkmaster,” “Titillator,” “Cattle Prod,” and “Stun Gun.”<sup>42</sup> These sexual appliances belong to the corpus of repression-of-masturbation and warfare-torture technologies, just like the alarms that alerted the sleeper of a possible erection or the electrodes used against young masturbators and homosexuals during the nineteenth century. As we will see later, they have a technological affinity with the devices employed to produce what were called “hysterical orgasms” through electric stimulation—that is to say, mechanical “titillation”—of the clitoris.<sup>43</sup>

All these techniques (genital torture, the use of constraint devices and strap-ons) have been drawn from gender-specific technologies (the production of heterosexual femininity and masculinity) and species-specific technologies (the production of human normality and domestic animality) as well as from their respective practices and from the medical, reproductive, and moral discourses about them and have been recontextualized within queer body-object relationship systems. Every

*détournement* of a technique means the reappropriation of a certain medical, warfare, or scientific discourse in a popular sub-culture and thus the interruption and disruption of the pleasure-knowledge production and distribution channels.

### *The Hysterical Prosthesis*

Masturbation was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church in the Renaissance, medically pathologized in the seventeenth century, and technologically stifled by mechanical and later electric means in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hysteria was, in parallel, defined as a “female malady,” and an equally numerous array of devices were put into operation to make way for the technical production of the so-called hysterical crisis. I cannot pause here to conduct a historical analysis of hysteria and of the various medical models that have reconceptualized it, which range from melancholy to neurasthenia and from frigidity to nymphomania.<sup>44</sup> In any case, there was no drastic change in the treatment of hysteria between the era of Ambroise Paré, who in *Opera ostetrico-ginecologica* (1550) proposed inserting a dildo-like tool in the vagina with *oleum nardum*,<sup>45</sup> until perhaps the advice given in 1859 in *Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l’hystérie*, whose author, Pierre Briquet, claimed to have found a suitable treatment for hysteria thanks to what he called “titillation of the clitoris.”<sup>46</sup> The first titillation therapies were performed manually—doctors considered them long and tedious efforts that were not always compensated by a “hysterical crisis.”<sup>47</sup>

As Rachel Maines’s detailed archaeology of orgasm-related machines has shown, the vibrator emerged as a therapeutic instrument shortly thereafter, around 1880, as a mechanization of this manual effort.<sup>48</sup> The Weiss vibrator, for example, was an

electromechanical apparatus that rhythmically massaged the clitoris, pelvic area, and other muscles subject to vibration treatment. John Harvey Kellogg, who, as we have already seen, put his all behind the industrial production of antimasturbation apparatuses, also contributed to the production and commercialization of the first electric vibrators in the United States.<sup>49</sup>

It seems that it was John Butler (and not his opposite number Judith) who at the close of the nineteenth century created and commercialized the first hand-held electric vibrator intended for domestic use. The earliest vibrators, such as the famous Chattanooga, were prohibitively expensive and cumbersome, strictly for professional use in a hospital setting. Given their domestic nature, today's vibrators, though entirely different in shape, are the technical and social descendants of Butler's machine, not of the Chattanooga.

The diagnosis of hysteria and the procurement of the "orgasm" as a result of a "hysterical crisis" were associated with a certain indifference or frigid reaction to heterosexual coitus that was considered to be possibly related to different forms of sexual deviation, especially a proclivity toward "lesbianism." In 1652, Nicolaus Fontanus wrote that

wives are more healthfull then Widowes, or Virgins, because they are refreshed with the mans seed, and ejaculate their own, which being excluded, the cause of the evill is taken away [. . .] But what shall we say concerning Widowes, who lye fallow, and live sequestred from these *Venerous* Conjunctions? we must conclude, that if they be young, of a black complexion, and hairie, and are likewise somewhat discoloured in their cheeks, that they have a spirit of salacity, and feele within themselves a frequent titillation, their seed being hot and prurient, doth irritate and inflame them to *Venery*.<sup>50</sup>

Just as potential lesbianism underlay every form of hysteria, every treatment for hysteria seemed to run the risk of indulging the hysteric in a kind of pleasure that could drive her to lesbianism. For example, in 1905 Robert Taylor wrote that hysteria must never be treated with a dildo or any other “penis substitute,” given that such a practice could give rise to “vaginismus” and lesbianism.<sup>51</sup> Sewing was sometimes prescribed as a possible cure for hysteria, but there also seems to have been a general understanding in the second half of the nineteenth century that “the power of the sewing machine was such that heterosexual women could be turned into lesbians by ‘excessive work’ on them.”<sup>52</sup>

As the vibrator moved from the medical space to the domestic space, which was traditionally reserved for women, it became imperative to restrict the use and appropriation of new technologies. Small, manageable machines (from the sewing machine to the telephone), designed and manufactured to regulate the domestic space and control female bodily activities (sewing, cooking, cleaning, etc.), became women’s strange bedfellows. They acted as a kind of double-edged technology: on the one hand, they were technologies of domination that reinscribed women’s supposedly natural function in society through “domestication,” and, on the other, they were technologies of resistance that had burrowed their way into private spaces.<sup>53</sup>

The two therapeutic spaces where hysteria was addressed were the marriage bed and the examination table. In other words, “female” sexuality and pleasure were constructed in a space of tension where at least two institutions converged: the heterosexual institution of marriage, in which women were subject to their husbands, and medical institutions, in which women, as patients, were subject to the clinical hierarchy. In the nineteenth century, the institution of marriage gained strength as a space for reproduction, domestic economy, and inheritance but rarely

as a space for sexual pleasure. Around 1910, the technologies that had been used exclusively in medical contexts began entering the domestic space, typically by short-circuiting domestic-hygienic tools, such as the shower and the “familiar massage” vibrator.

Analyzed from the point of view of the history of technologies, the phenomenon that has been called “female orgasm” since seventeenth century, if not earlier, is nothing but the paradoxical product of two opposing technologies at work: the repression of masturbation and the production of “hysterical crises.” Female pleasure has always been problematic, given that it does not seem to have a specific purpose in biological theories or religious doctrine, according to both of which the goal of sexuality is procreation. At the same time, male sexuality is frequently described in terms of erection and ejaculation but rarely in terms of orgasm. Female pleasure was described as the crisis that came from a hysterical illness, a kind of “hysterical paroxysm” that had to be produced in clinical conditions, often with the help of diverse mechanical and electric tools. The orgasm, thus described, was considered both a crisis symptomatic of an illness that affected only women and the therapeutic climax of a drawn-out process marked by technical efforts: massaging with the hands or with a vibrator, using pressure showers, and so on. According to this model of the body, the patient who had shown herself indifferent to the techniques employed in heterosexual coitus was described as “lacking sexual energy,” energy that the vibration machine could flesh out and supplement. Then again, within the repressive logic that pathologized masturbation, the orgasm was simultaneously described both as “superfluous wastage,” a needless squandering of corporal energy that ought to be directed toward the labor of sexual production and reproduction, and as polluting, possibly disease-carrying residue.



In this way, the orgasm emerged not only as deeply private and intimately linked with the individual body but also as eminently political, the point where two antagonistic branches of the same biopolitical technology met. It was, in part, the optimization of the body's abilities and output, a parallel increase in its usefulness and its docility, a fuller integration in efficient and economic control systems. It also meant, in part, the establishment of sexual mechanisms that would serve as the foundation for the processes of heterosexual reproduction.<sup>54</sup>

The orgasm lies at the intersection of two opposing logics. It is both illness and cure, waste and excess. It is the poison and the antidote. The orgasm is to sexuality what writing is, in Derrida's reading of Plato, to the truth: *pharmakon*.<sup>55</sup> It is vice and excess against which one must fight with the tools of oppression and at the same time a cure that can be obtained only through the strict implementation of mechanical and electric tools. In the body of the young girl, repeated orgasms through compulsive masturbation amounted to an excessive expenditure of corporal energy that, it was said, produced frailty and even death. However, in the young hysteric's body or the lonely widow's, the orgasm came only through vibration, like a kind of electric *supplement* of which it seems that the machine, more than the woman, was the subject. In the case of masturbatory delirium, the orgasm was considered closer to an animal force, a primitive instinct that must somehow be domesticated and disciplined through a harsh regimen of self-observation and self-control. The vibrator was designed to bring the hysteric's body to a hysterical paroxysm with scientific precision. Thus, the orgasm was both madness that had to be forcibly repressed and the scientific product of mechanical techniques. Masturbatory pleasure, as a by-product, the residue of a break in the body's energy balance, was a symptom and a harbinger of a future illness, be it

madness or syphilis. For the woman lying on the examination table being worked on by the vibrator, the orgasm did not come from the female body's inner energy but rather from adaptation, from tuning the body to the machine. That is to say, it came from the reduction of pleasure to its purely mechanical response. The machine *had* the orgasm. There was thus no sexual responsibility or true subject of pleasure. A common characteristic underlay each of these pleasure-production regimens: the orgasm did not belong to the body that "came."

Situated on the border of the body and the inanimate object, the realistic dildo's strap-on position is similar to that of the chastity belt and the vibration machine. But in addition to being similar to these pleasure-producing and pleasure-repressing technologies, the dildo is also related to a third kind of technology: prosthetic limbs and implants. To understand the dildo as an object, we must look at the evolution of prosthetics through the twentieth century. Strangely enough, the boom in vibrator production at the turn of the century coincided with the moment at which medicine began designing numerous arm and leg prostheses, especially after World War I.

The prosthetic reconstruction of the male body marked the passage from a wartime economy to a labor economy. Prosthetics made the transition from soldier to new postwar industrial worker possible. In this process, it was the prosthetic hand, not the prosthetic penis, that was central to the reconstruction of masculinity. Jules Amar, director of the French labor prosthetics military laboratory, was in charge of monitoring veteran amputees' professional and medical trajectories.<sup>56</sup> His research on prosthetic-hand production led him to design and manufacture artificial limbs that were increasingly distant from the anatomy of the "natural" hand. These limbs evolved into a type of

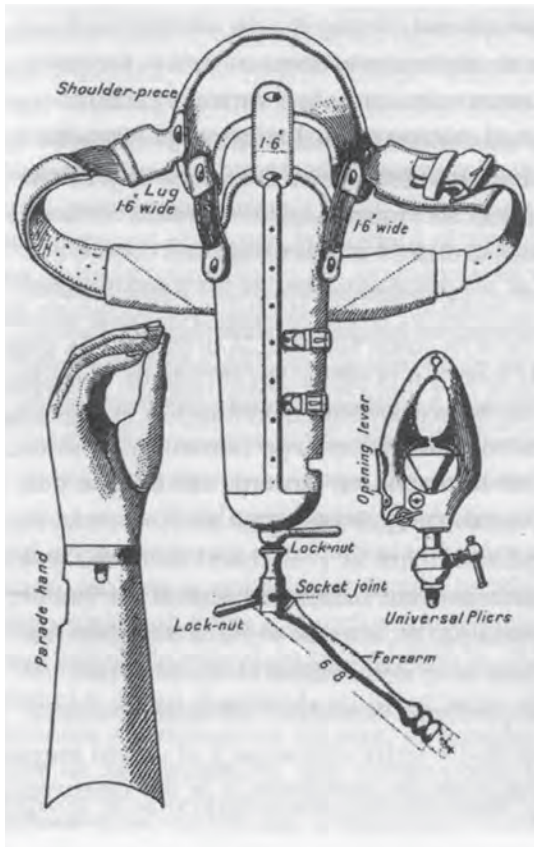
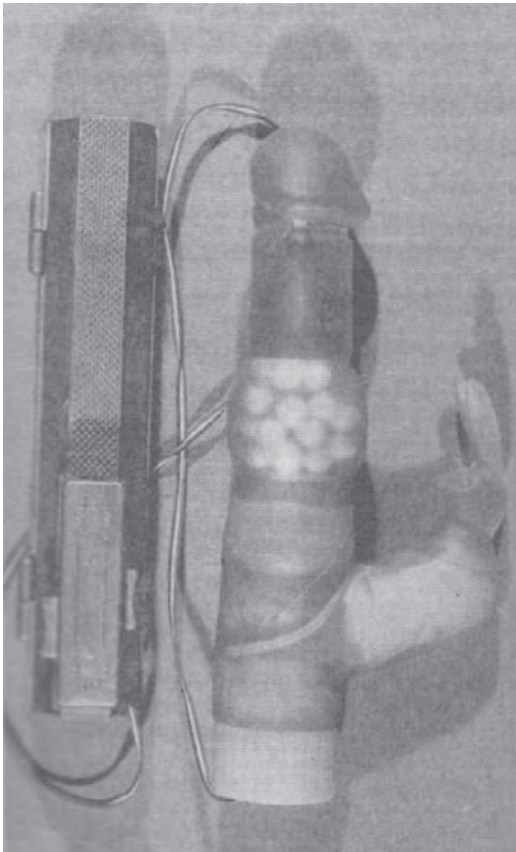


FIGURE 3.2

prosthesis that was functional but not mimetic. For example, the prosthesis that Jules Amar called the “work arm” consisted of a basic prosthesis equipped with several attachments, from the “resting hand,” an imitation of a hand, to the “universal pliers,” which bore no resemblance whatsoever to a natural hand. The design of the resting hand addressed aesthetic and mimetic criteria, whereas the other attachments dealt with questions of

efficiency in production-line work. Prosthetic hands not only functioned as a reconstruction of the “natural” body but also allowed the male body to be incorporated into the machine as a living tool or a human and intelligent attachment.

Similarly, we could say that the vibrating dildo, whose design and commercialization were influenced by the North American feminist and lesbian movements of the 1960s and 1970s, evolved not as an imitation of the penis but rather as a complex prosthesis



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FIGURE 3.3

of the female masturbating hand. Just take a look at the Pisces Pearl vibrator, one of the best sellers at Good Vibrations and SH! (two women-only sex shops).<sup>57</sup> The Pisces Pearl is related to vibration technologies and the production of the “hysterical crisis” as well as to prosthetic techniques of the realistic dildo. Electrification and mechanization endowed the masturbating hand with the utility it had been deprived of by the technologies designed to repress onanism. The female masturbator’s hand and the hysteric’s vibrator operate as true “switches” in the sexual circuit, reconnecting genital organs and nongenital (and even inorganic) objects and organs. The hand and the vibrator liberate the orgasm from therapeutic settings and heterosexual relationships. The vibrating dildo is a hybrid of the hand,<sup>58</sup> the nineteenth-century vibrator, and the penile prosthesis, as can be seen in Michel Rosen’s photograph of a person masturbating a dildo with a vibrator.<sup>59</sup> Used as a vibrating extension of the body, the vibrating dildo moves farther from the normative model of the penis and closer to a third hand endowed with vibrating precision. Far from being limited to a psychological or phantasmic effect or a single practice, this synthetic sex organ paves the way to unprecedented possibilities for incorporation, decontextualization, resignification, and mutation.

From a countersexual point of view, it is necessary to establish a narrative of sexuality’s synthetic history that consists of the speculum (vision) and the penis at one extreme and the hand (touch) and the dildo at the other. In the same way that the speculum has been the tool par excellence for observation and representation of women’s bodies in medical spaces, the penis has been the only organ granted the male privilege of penetration in the marriage bed. In a Foucauldian sense, the speculum and the penis function as true *dispositifs* in the service of biopower, the center of which is the heterosexual female body. With respect to this biopolitical technology, the hand



FIGURE 3.4

and the dildo, far from being phallogentric imitations, widen the escape routes. In this sense, the vibrating dildo is a synthetic extension not just of the masturbating lesbian/trans/crip/queer hand that has known the glove and the chain but also of the lesbian/trans/crip/queer masturbating hand that has known touch and penetration. In the end, the strap-on dildo could be simultaneously considered a synthetic sex organ, a hand grafted on at the trunk, and a plastic extension of the clitoris.

MONEY MAKES SEX: THE  
INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE SEXES

*Adam's Vagina*

Since the 1970s, if not earlier, medical technology has congratulated itself for being able to create Eve from Adam or, rather, Marilyn from Elvis. It doesn't work the other way around, apparently. Modern surgical techniques, practiced almost unexceptionally in Western hospitals,<sup>60</sup> are unable to construct a "functional" penis with a "normal" appearance. According to medical literature, phalloplasty, or surgical construction of the penis, is the product of at least four fairly complex surgical operations: suturing the vaginal labia shut; grafting tissue from the leg or the womb or both; grafting a vein, often from the leg; and constructing the penis. Despite the risk that this series of operations entails (loss of arm or leg mobility, for example), until now the teams tasked with transsexual surgery have been happy with operations that have offered only "very mediocre cosmetic results," contending that a transsexual ought to make do with the genitals he gets, even if they are "grotesque" in appearance.<sup>61</sup>

By contrast, since the end of the 1980s, several surgical techniques have allowed for the construction of "female genital organs" that are indistinguishable from those that are called "normal." Yet if we look closely at these medical practices on a strictly discursive level, it becomes clear that medicine does not talk about constructing a vagina but rather about the possibility of transforming ("invaginating") a penis into a vagina, as if the penis naturally has the option of "becoming vagina," to decline Deleuze's famous phrasing.<sup>62</sup>

For example, take the vaginoplastic techniques that appear in the advertising brochure published by the well-reputed St. Joseph

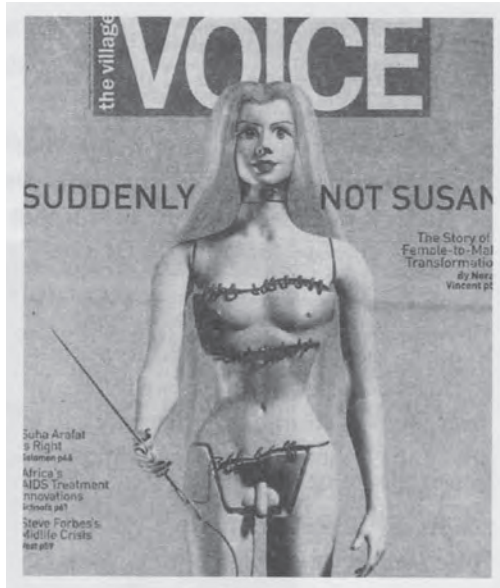


FIGURE 3.5

cosmetic surgery clinic in Montreal. The brochure describes the simple technique of “inverting the skin of the penis,” which consists of draining the penis’s cavernous body in order to later turn the “phallic” tissue inside out until it forms a vagina. Step one: an incision is made in the skin of the penis and the testicles in a way that will allow the tissue to be used later to construct the back walls of the vagina. Step two, today still termed “castration”: the testicles are extirpated; an incision is made in the upper part of the penis so that the skin slides down. With his finger, the surgeon makes a space for the vagina between the bladder and the rectum. Step three: the surgeon reconstructs the clitoris from the cavernous body, hoping to recover (with luck) the maximum possible excitable surface area. A urinary catheter is



placed in the bladder. The penile skin is turned inside out and pushed into the interior. If necessary the process is completed with a graft, making use of the skin from the scrotum. Step four: a penis-shaped mold is placed in the space reserved for the vagina.

This process is carried out as an invagination of the penis because, within the heterocentric medical discourse, masculinity contains the possibility of femininity as inversion. The potential coexistence of both sexes within the penis proves that male heterosexuality and, by extension, male homosexuality derived from a hermaphroditical model. In what we would have to call the heterosexual mythology of sexual difference, the man does not belong to the family of viviparous animals (which need a uterus to reproduce) but rather has a secret hermaphroditical parentage of the vegetable and animal order. In fact, the techniques used to produce masculinity and femininity have been rigged: the transformation from male to female is created according to a hermaphroditical model that allows for a “natural” change from the penis to the vagina, whereas the transition from femininity to masculinity obeys a model of irreversible sex production, a prosthetic model that demands a nongenital organ be used: a piece of an arm or a leg that can be turned into a penis.

The specificity of the hermaphroditical model of masculinity lies, then, in the suppression of the uterus for the purpose of reproduction. Males belong to the underground race of snails, leeches, and earthworms. Their genitals are apparently “normal.” That is, they are entirely differentiated from the other sex’s genitals (biologists would use the term *gonadic*). Even so, they entail a double physiology that already contains the germ of female sex organs. Therefore, paradoxically, for separate “gonadic” sexes to be produced, the hermaphroditical model must be passed through. I am using the term *gonadic* deliberately because the

time has come to point out the artificiality and strangeness in the construction of what the medical discourse considers normality. When the medical community uses the word *normal* to designate everything that is not hermaphroditical or intersex, it might as well say “gonadic.” The manufacturing of heterosexuality depends on the success of the construction of these gonadic, binary, differentiated sexes.

According to the technologies at work in transsexual surgery, it is not necessary to *construct* a vagina: we have only to *find* the vagina that is already inside the penis. A penis can “become vagina.” But according to the same technology that produces sexual difference, a vagina cannot “become penis.” Why this technological asymmetry? What are the processes of reversibility and irreversibility that give rise to the construction of sexual difference? What is the underlying relationship between masculinity, heterosexuality, and hermaphroditism within this medical discourse?

An analysis of the medical techniques involved in the assignment of sex—that is, related to the decision making that allows one to confirm that a body is male or female—reveals, better than any other discourse, the models of gender construction according to which (hetero)sexual technology operates: the treatments that medicine reserves for so-called intersex babies (described by normative discourse as bodies that have the “characteristics” of both sexes and that could eventually evolve toward the sex opposite their apparent sex), the technologies used to determine sex, prenatal etiology, amniocentesis, ultrasounds, cytology, chromosome analysis, hormonal assessment (prescription of gonadotrophin, steroids, etc.), genital examinations (from palpation to X rays), as well as the wide array of surgical processes intended to reduce or eradicate any and all sexual ambiguity troubling sexual binarism.

Sexual technology is a kind of abstract ∞ “operating table” ∞, where areas of the body are trimmed off as “organs” (be they sexual, reproductive, perceptive, or other):<sup>63</sup> the mouth and the anus, for example, are designated as the entry and exit points, without which the digestive apparatus cannot be a coherent system, but they are rarely designated as parts of the sexual/reproductive system. Sexual identity is defined on this double-entry (male/female) table, always and every time, not based on biological facts but in relation to an a priori anatomical-political determination, a kind of imperative that *extracts* sexual difference from the body: in body insemination and reproduction.

Behind the question “Is it a boy or a girl?” lies a differentiating epistemology established by the empirical order that makes the body intelligible by fragmenting and dissecting its organs—an array of precise visual, discursive, and surgical techniques that hide behind the name “sex assignment.” The operations commonly known as sex-change surgery and sexual-reassignment surgery, which are generally stigmatized as borderline cases or strange exceptions to the rule, are really nothing but second tables where the trimming work done on the first abstract ∞ operating table ∞, on which we have all already lain, is renegotiated. The very existence of sex-change or sexual-reassignment operations, along with the legal and medical regulatory regimes that they give rise to, proves that “normal” sexual identity is always, in every case, the product of a costly necrobiopolitical technology.

It is as if in between the first institutional level of sex assignment (medical, legal, filial) and the socioanatomical order that this same first level produces, it is necessary to create an intermediary operating table to regulate and trim cases that are problematic, atypical, or abnormal—or, put another way, the

cases of bodies that call the heterosexual epistemic order into question.

*Intersex. Transsexual. Tranny. Cripple.* All these terms and others like them speak to the limits, the arrogance, and the violence of the heterocentric discourse that has formed the foundation of the medical, legal, and educational establishment for the past two centuries. Eclipsed by bourgeois feminism and the gay rights movement, the demands particular to transsexuals and intersex people were not heard in the United States until 1994.<sup>64</sup> In today's Europe, transsexuals and intersex people are just beginning to organize.

Vaginoplasty (surgical reconstruction of the vagina), phalloplasty (surgical construction of the penis with the help of a skin graft from another part of the same body, such as the forearm or the thigh), metoidioplasty, clitoris enlargement or shape modification thanks to testosterone, removal of the Adam's apple, mastectomy (removal of the breasts, generally followed by reconstruction of the chest and construction of nipples using a graft of one single excised nipple), hysterectomy (removal of the uterus): in areas subject to renegotiation, sex-change operations seem to solve "problems"—that is, the "discordance" between sex, gender, and sexual orientation. But, in fact, they are visible stages for the work of heterosexual technology; they make manifest the technological, biotheatrical construction of the sexes' natural truth.

This array of "reassignment" processes is nothing but the second trimming ☩, the second fragmenting of the body. The interdiction of sex and gender changes, the forcefulness that these operations often entail, their attempt to mutilate or to sterilize the body, and their substantial economic and social price must be understood as forms of epistemic violence and sexual censure.

*Intersex . . . Just Like You and Me*

The first fragmentation of the body, sex assignment, is conducted through a process that could be called, following Judith Butler's terminology, performative invocation. None of us has escaped this political interpellation. Before birth, thanks to ultrasound—a technology celebrated for being descriptive, though in reality it is entirely prescriptive—or at the very moment of birth, we are interpellated as female or male. The scientific regime of sexual difference requires birth (and, in the near future, even fertilization) and sex assignment to coincide. We all have lain on this first performative operating table: "It's a boy!" "It's a girl!" The given name and its role as linguistic currency ensure the constant reiteration of this performative interpellation. But the process does not stop there. Its effects demarcate the organs and their functions, their "normal" and "perverse" uses. If the interpellation is performative, its effects are prosthetic: it fabricates the body.

This process of prosthetic production, which always takes place in every case, becomes self-reflective in intersex and transsexual normative operations: once sex has already been assigned, any change in designation requires that the body literally be trimmed, crafted. This "second reassignment" reinscribes the body into a new classification order and literally redesigns the organs (we have already seen the extent to which surgery is obsessed with finding one organ within another), leaving nothing to chance, in such a way as to produce a second coherence that must be just as systematic, just as binary and heterosexual, as the first.

The masculinity- and femininity-assignment table designates the sex organs as the generative areas for the whole body and the nonsex organs as merely peripheral. That is, based on a specific sex organ, this abstract epistemology of the "human" allows us to

reconstruct the entirety of the body. The body becomes human only when it has been sexed; a sexless body, like a disabled body, is considered monstrous, nonhuman. According to this logic, only a visually identifiable penis or vagina can be considered a human-producing organ. Any other organ (the nose, the tongue, or the fingers) lacks the power of defining the human body as human. Thus, the sex organs are not only “reproductive organs,” in the sense that they make the sexual reproduction of the species possible but also, most importantly, “productive organs” that give coherence to the properly “human” body.

So-called intersex bodies compromise the mechanical work of the sex-assignment table, undermining the syntax according to which the sexual machine produces and reproduces bodies. Intersex babies represent an epistemic threat; they move the border beyond which (sexual) difference is the condition of possibility to produce (sexual) identity. They cast doubt on the operating table’s performative automatism. They reveal the arbitrary nature of categories (identity and difference, male/female) and the complicity that establishes this categorization with the heterodesignation of bodies. But what are the genital and generative parts? Where should we look for them? What is named and what is seen? How can an organ be produced from a name? Can we imagine a world beyond this metaphysics of gonadic binarism?

The technologies already under way in the assignment of sex to intersex babies follow the same logic as the technologies used in the case of transsexual persons. In light of a deficiency (bodies without a visually recognizable vagina or penis) or an excess (bodies that combine supposedly feminine and masculine sexual characteristics), the sex-assignment table continues to function, but this time as a true operating table, by means of pharmacological treatments, implants, grafts, and mutilations that may continue until adolescence or even beyond. In this way, what we have

called sexual identity's generative center is constructed as exclusive and exclusionary: it is compulsory to choose between two and only two options, male and female. It comes as no surprise that one of the most common narratives of an intersex baby's birth and sex assignment is a fabrication of a story according to which twins have been born, one male and one female. This "mythic" narrative reaches its denouement with the death of one of the children: a tragedy but also a comfort. The Latin origin of the word *sex* (which was introduced in romance languages around 1500) is *seco*, from *secare*, "to divide" or "to cut." There is no sex without separation, segregation, partition. Sex making = Sex killing. Biopolitics = Necropolitics. It is the act of cutting and dividing that installs sexual difference. Suzanne Kessler, who has studied the decision-making process in cases of "problematic" sex assignment, speaks to this narrative: "There were parents of a hermaphroditic infant who told everyone they had twins, one of each gender. When the gender was determined, they said the other had died."<sup>65</sup>

The management protocols in place for intersex children rest on the theory developed in 1955 by John Money, professor of pediatrics and medical psychology at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, and Joan and John Hampson and put into practice shortly thereafter by Money and Anke Ehrhardt. Curiously, the same theory that defends sexual difference as normal and natural rests on a purely constructivist hypothesis (before constructivism was even used in feminist arguments). Money's conclusion in 1955 could not be, it seems, any more revolutionary: gender and sexual identity, he claimed, are alterable until the age of eighteen months.

Money's sex-assignment theory provoked a naturalist critique from the medical and scientific community, especially from Milton Diamond. In spite of their discursive antagonism, Diamond

and Money shared, as Judith Butler has pointed out, an underlying commitment to the epistemology of sexual difference: “Malleability is, as it were, violently imposed, and naturalness is artificially induced.”<sup>66</sup> True opposition to their shared belief in sexual difference would come from Suzanne Kessler’s feminist studies in 1978 and, more recently, from the activist intersex movements.

As we might have ventured, Money is also a prescriptive figure in transsexual psychology. Beginning in the 1950s, his authority in the fields of sex assignment of newborns and sexual reconstruction was such that we can confidently assert that, at least in the Western countries of the “developed” North, “Money makes sex.” Western sexual human bodies are, in this respect, the product of a specific style and epistemic design, a political sexual aesthetics, that we could call “Moneyism” and that maybe one day will simply be described as a postwar aesthetics of fabrication of sexual difference.

Money’s model could be understood as a case of neoliberal sexual governmentality in which sexual and gender governance works through the silent work of scientific laws, administrative procedures, medical forms, limitation of the conditions of access to citizenship rights, and commercialization of technologies of the self. Developed in the late 1950s, Money’s protocols for gender assignment would rapidly expand to be used globally, producing the normalization of the heterosexual Western knowledge-power-pleasure regime of the body. Money’s model owes its effectiveness and success over the past sixty years to the strategic combination of two languages, two epistemologies of the sexual body: chromosome analysis and aesthetic judgment.

If you are one of those who believe that transsexuality and sex-change operations are unnatural and abnormal, take a look



at the guidelines introduced in the 1950s to assign a sex to newborns in Europe and the United States.

Before playing a doctor tasked with sex assignment, you had better brush up on your definitions:

**XX:** Genetically female. According to modern medicine, a body is considered genetically female if it has two X chromosomes and no Y chromosomes.

**XY:** Genetically male. According to modern medicine, a body is considered genetically male if it has at least one Y chromosome.

**CLITO-PENIS:** In sex-assignment jargon, a small organ that resembles a clitoris but has the potential to become a penis.

**MICRO-PENIS:** In sex-assignment jargon, an otherwise well-formed penis that is unusually small.

**MICRO-PHALLUS:** In sex-assignment jargon, a small, poorly formed penis that may be difficult to recognize as such but that nonetheless should not be confused with a clitoris.

**PENIS-CLITORIS:** In sex-assignment jargon, a large clitoris that should not be confused with a small penis.

Do you find the terminology confusing? It is modern medical neoliberal taxonomy gone baroque.

The bodies that are considered “intersex” after being submitted to a visual exam are subjected to a battery of hormonal treatments and genital operations that can last until the beginning of adolescence. According to Money’s model, if chromosome analysis reveals the intersex newborn to be genetically female (XX), any genital tissue that could be confused with a penis must be surgically suppressed. Reconstruction of the vulva (along with reduction of the clitoris) generally begins at three months. If the visible organ resembles what medical terminology deems a

penis-clitoris, this operation entails, in most cases, excision of the clitoris.

The reconstruction is completed later by surgically forming the “vaginal canal,” in the heterosexual sense of the term. That is, the surgeon opens an orifice that will later be able to receive a penis during heterosexual coitus. In those cases in which the “vaginal canal” (as a canal able to receive a penis) is not far from its usual position, vaginoplasty (similar to the procedure performed on transsexuals) is performed when the child is between the ages of one and four. Generally, the vaginal canal is definitively set when the patient finishes growing, after the pubescent body is hormonally “feminized” with the help of estrogen.<sup>67</sup> As Cheryl Chase has argued, these pediatric genital surgeries should be considered “the attempted production of normatively sexed bodies and gendered subjects through constitutive acts of violence.”<sup>68</sup>

Vaginal-canal construction processes in intersex girls are not merely meant to produce an organ. More than anything, they move toward the prescription of sexual practices, defining the vagina as the one and only orifice that can receive an adult penis. What Money fabricated is heterosexual femininity because lesbian uses of bodies and organs are never part of medical expectations. The violence and the prescriptive weight of sex-assignment operations allow us to put Monique Wittig’s mythical assertion “I don’t have a vagina” in perspective.<sup>69</sup> What this seemingly incoherent sentence means is that, given the cause-effect relationship that conflates sex organs and sexual practices in the heteronormative epistemology, the radical transformation of a body’s sexual activities must somehow entail the mutation of the organ and the formation of a new anatomical-political order. The new intersex movement calls for the right to live and fuck in an anatomical-political order that exists outside of heteronormativity. This is what countersexuality means.

Now let's turn to a case of male assignment. If the intersex newborn has at least one Y chromosome, it will be considered genetically male. In these situations, the question is whether the so-called phallic tissue is liable to react positively to an androgen-based hormone treatment that will enlarge the size of the micro-phallus or micro-penis. But the baby's body is subjected to visual scrutiny that relegates chromosome analysis to the realm of secondary truths. The "length," "size," and "normal appearance" of the genitals replace the criteria applied in chromosome testing.

What these medical procedures hope to recover is a supposed original moment of recognition in which the body's nomination as male or female coincides with the first impression we receive of the same, be it through intrauterine visualization (that is, ultrasound) or extrauterine visualization (the moment of birth). Pediatric surgery attempts to resolve the contradictions that arise from two orders of truth: the combination of chromosomes and the visual morphological representation of genital tissue. But this battle is already taking place within the field of metaphors and representations. Both are cartographic systems: chromosomic maps and anatomic maps. Finally, confronted with the task of fabricating a sexualized social body, the classification of the intersex body is fundamentally visual, not chromosomal. It is as if the eyes were put in charge of establishing the true gender by verifying the relationship between the anatomical organs and an ideal binary sexual order. In other words, a body outside of a heterocentric regime of sexual difference simply can't be seen. There is no visual regime where it can look like anything other than a monster or a mistake. Thus, we could say that the intersex anatomy is (in what seems a contradiction in terms) invisible.

These sex-assignment procedures ensure the inclusion of every body in one of two sexes/genders within an exclusive

oppositional framework. The presence of incompatible opposites in the intersex newborn's body is interpreted as an anomaly or even as an arrest that takes place during the development of a fetus, whose genital tissue was gender-undifferentiated at one moment. For Money, Ehrhardt, or the Hampsons, intersexuality was either a case of regression or a case of pathological fetal development. But Money never recognized that these anatomical ambiguities could problematize the stability of the sexual order. They did not constitute a third sex or, rather, an  $n + 1$  sex. Instead, they bolstered the stability of the sexual order. Intersex organs were described as "bad," "underdeveloped," "malformed," and "incomplete." That is to say, in no instance were they recognized as true organs but rather as the pathological exceptions that proved normality's rule. Like Descartes's evil demon, malformed sex organs deceive us, lay traps for our perception, and lead us to misjudge gender. Only medical technology (including linguistic, surgical, and hormonal technology) can reintegrate the organs into the heterosexual knowledge regime's order of perception, making them conform (as male or female) with the truth of our gaze in such a way as to reveal (instead of malignantly hiding) the true sex.

According to Kessler, sex-assignment criteria are not scientific but aesthetic: vision and representation play the role of truth creators in the sex-assignment process. Vision creates sexual differences. It is only recently, in the face of pressure from transsexual, intersex, and transgender associations, that these aesthetic criteria have been called into question. For example, we now know that, given the chance, the majority of F2M transsexuals opt for no operation or for metoidioplasty (enlargement of the clitoris up to four centimeters) rather than for phalloplasty. We also know that despite medical predictions that gay and lesbian patients will be brought into the heterosexual fold after undergoing transsexual

surgery, many F2M transsexuals live as gay men or pan-sexual individuals after the operation and many M2F transsexuals live their female lives as lesbians or as pan-sexual.

From a countersexual point of view, the heterosexual knowledge regime works according to what we could join Foucault in calling a biopolitical ritual of exclusionary inclusion.<sup>70</sup> The different body is not eradicated but physically transformed in order to be included within the heterosexual visual regime. Scientific and aesthetic criteria come to reinforce a political-visual patriarchal law: any body that lacks sufficiently developed external genitalia or whose external genitalia cannot be visually recognized as a penis is politically punished and identified as female. This is the cutting act that manufactures sex.

As we can see in the case of genetically “male” babies born without penises or with very small penises and therefore reassigned to the female gender, the truth of the newborn’s sex is based on its alignment with normative heterosocial criteria, according to which the production of an “individual unable to engage in genital [heterosexual] sex” is, for Money, the “worst mistake” that could be committed in sex assignment or reassignment.<sup>71</sup>

The task of assigning a sex to intersex newborns is a sexualization performative process: the designations *clito-penis*, *penis-clitoris*, *micro-phallus*, and *micro-penis* do not describe the existing organ but are instead given based on the sex that is going to be produced. An organ’s name always has prescriptive value.

If the newborn has an X chromosome and a Y chromosome—that is to say, if it is considered genetically “male”—its genital tissue will be termed a micro-phallus, micro-penis, or even clito-penis in order to indicate its ability to “become a penis.” In these cases, medical evaluations will be conducted in order to learn if the sex organs have or could acquire the appearance of a

normal-size penis capable of obtaining an erection (regardless of its ability to reproduce).

If the newborn reacts positively to hormonal testing—if its tissue grows—it undergoes a local testosterone-based treatment so that it develops a small penis. An XY newborn that remains unresponsive to hormone therapy constitutes an impossible contradiction for the medical discourse: we're talking about a genetically male baby without a penis or, in the more telling phrase, "with an insufficient penis" (a penis shorter than two centimeters after hormonal treatment). Acknowledging this contradiction would mean either that the coherence of the sexed body—and, consequently, of sexual identity—can be obtained without a generative center (sex = sex organ) or that there is a sexual order that exists outside the coherence of the organs.

For this reason, Money and his colleagues believed that it would be much more prudent to sidestep the eventual "identity crises" that a micro-penis or small penis could cause for a "male" child by reassigning the majority of these newborns to the female gender. In these cases, the micro-phallus was called a peniscitoris and was later shortened and transformed through a complete vaginoplasty. For Money, "maleness" was not defined by a genetic criterion (possession of one Y and one X chromosome) or by sperm production, but by an aesthetic criterion, the possession of "an appropriately sized" pelvic protuberance. As a result of this centimeter policy, in the absence of a well-formed penis that met the minimum size requirements, the majority of intersex XX and XY babies were assigned to the female gender.

Only when the newborn has two X chromosomes but a normal-size, well-formed penis does medicine consider the possibility of reassignment to the male sex. According to Money, "castration" of a "normal" penis is tough to explain to parents, and the "fetal masculinization of brain structures would predispose

[these intersex infants] ‘almost invariably [to] develop behaviorally as tomboys, even when reared as girls.’”<sup>72</sup> Perhaps what Money is talking about is the difficulty of explaining to Mom and Dad (the presumed heteronormative couple) that their little tyke may really be a little dyke. Convinced it was better not to give the benefit to any such doubt, Money trusted in the penis’s ability to induce a masculine identity, even in a genetically female body.

The case of intersex babies mobilizes at least four technologies. On an epistemological level, “the intersex” oppose an essentialist genetic technology and a constructivist surgical technology (while making them work). On an institutional level, they oppose transformation technologies and fixation technologies (while making them collaborate). The first two technologies belong to medical spaces and are the key to the production of the sexual bodies that we call normal—they pave the way for transition from sickness to health, from monstrosity to normality. The third and fourth, which belong to both public and private institutions, such as schools and the family, guarantee the perseverance of sexualization and “genderization.”

Given the tension that exists between these sometimes oppositional, sometimes complementary technologies, the time factor is crucial for sex assignment. The fact that a child’s sex/gender can be assigned relatively late—that is to say, there may be a lapse between birth and assignment—sufficiently reveals the contingent nature of the decisions and choices that come to play in the technologies that produce the truth of the sex. For example, social institutions and the medical discourse are under the pressure of a “deadline” in terms of sex assignment, considering that domestic and pedagogical institutions cannot perform their mechanical and reproductive task of resexualization and

regenderization on a genderless body. And parents certainly are not the last ones to demand that the doctors quickly determine their baby's sex despite morphological or chromosomal ambiguities. While acknowledging to Kessler the pressure that families put on the sex-assignment process, one doctor pointed out that parents "need to go home and do their job as child-rearers with it very clear whether it's a boy or a girl."<sup>73</sup> Now, for the first time, it is necessary to contemplate a queer parenthood that does not require sex and gender in order to form filial bonds and to educate children.

Money contended that sex/gender identity can be changed until a child is approximately eighteen months old (though hormonal and surgical treatments could continue until after puberty), not because later change is impossible (witness sex-change and reassignment operations for transsexual persons) but because the medical discourse cannot face the political and social consequences of sexual ambiguity or fluidity beyond early childhood. This is why, according to Money, sex must be assigned as soon as possible, which often means immediately, at first sight—and decisively and irreversibly at that.

The development of plastic surgery and endocrinology, the technical construction of femininity in transsexuality, the hormonal and surgical oversexualization of heterosexual women, the development of hormonal contraceptive techniques and of in-vitro reproduction techniques, as well as the imposition of the appearance and size of the penis as criteria for sex assignment from the first moments of infancy are some of the factors that led me to identify a change in the sex knowledge regime after World War II and to outline two models of sex production. The first is based on the division of sexual and reproductive labor and corresponds with a period of industrial-colonial capitalism. This model, which dates back to the eighteenth century, identifies sex



with sexual reproduction and deals fundamentally with the political management of the uterus. The second model, which corresponds to postindustrial neoliberal capitalism, is characterized by the stability of the penis as a sexual signifier, the plurality of gender performances, and the proliferation of sexual identities that exist alongside imperialism and the globalization of the Western penis as signifier. This model, which governs, for example, the representation of sexuality in heterosexual pornography, identifies sex with the appearance of the sex organs, especially the penis, and with their optimum performance. This is the new world order of Viagra and the orgasm at any cost. Both of these models produce paranoid dreams created by the white hetero-centric order. Two utopias/dystopias that are nevertheless the expression of the system's structural foundation: the "matriarchal (nonwhite) family" and the "homosocial" male ghetto. It is important to highlight that although these models appeared in different eras, in our time they are not mutually exclusive but overlapping.<sup>74</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the presence or absence of ovaries was the medical discourse's main criterion in the assignment of sex in the cases that the same discourse qualified as hermaphroditism. In this organ economy, the relationship between anatomic sex and social sex reflected the division of reproductive labor. Any body, with a penis or without, was assigned as female if it was liable to become pregnant and give birth. The "sex = sexual reproduction = uterus" model produced the utopia/dystopia of the "matriarchal family": a reproductive system (such as the plantation economy) where the presence of the man was forcefully reduced to the circulation of sperm and that was aimed toward the transmission of "race" through women, creating a global colonial uterus where reproductive mothers worked ceaselessly.<sup>75</sup>

As the study of Money's procedures suggests, since the 1950s assignment to the female gender has always been a possibility for genetically male or female bodies, whereas assignment to the male gender is reserved only for those bodies with XY or XX chromosomes and with normal-looking penises. The "sex = sexual performance = penis" model produces the utopia/dystopia of the homosocial male ghetto: a sexual paradise of erect penises. This utopia/dystopia is the foundation/phobia of strongly homosocial societies, in which postindustrial capitalism seems to promise the transformation of any economic value into penis and vice versa (see the first section of this chapter, "Derrida's Scissors: The Logic of the Dildo").

In this second model, the medical discourse manages sex (re) assignment according to what I call John Money's "dildo taboo": "Never assign a baby to be reared, and to surgical and hormonal therapy, as a boy, unless the phallic structure, hypospadiac or otherwise, is neonatally of at least the same caliber as that of same-aged males with small-average penises."<sup>76</sup>

The dildo taboo consists of forbidding a female body from having a clitoris or any other external genital part that could visually pass for a kind of "penis." In other words, the dildo taboo, in sex assignment and sex change, ends up prohibiting the technological construction of the penis. The asymmetry that exists in the social construction of the genders resurfaces in the medical construction and sex-change technologies. This is why it is possible to assert that in contemporary medical and legal discourses the penis takes on a quasi-transcendental character, situating itself beyond artifice, as if it were only nature. It is precisely into this kingdom of the penis's naturalness that the dildo bursts as "a living specter."

## HARAWAY'S PROsthESIS: SEX TECHNOLOGIES

Calling sex “technological” may seem contradictory or even unsustainable. Doesn't a definition of sex that ignores the traditional opposition between technology and nature run the risk of seeming incoherent? Within capitalism, advanced technology is presented as always new, continually improving, always faster, always liable to change and thus seems to be the very motor of history and time. In contrast, sex, by its very opposition to gender (whose historic, unnatural, and constructed character was thoroughly exposed by sociological and feminist discourses in the 1980s and 1990s), continues being described as a transcultural stable framework, resistant to change and transformations. Sex can seem like the last remnant of nature after technologies have finished their task of gender construction.

The term *technology* (from *techne*, “craftsmanship,” versus *physis*, “nature”) puts a series of binary oppositions into motion: natural/artificial, organ/machine, primitive/modern, where the “tool” has a mediating role between the terms. Positivist narrations of technological development (in which Man is presented as the sovereign reason that tames, domesticates, and dominates brutish nature) and apocalyptic and antitechnological narrations (such as the prophecies made by Paul Virilio, who, situated on the very threshold of the negative horizon, is on the lookout for the safety of territory, recording the accidents of the machine that belches a lethal rationality, destroying and devouring nature) have a common metaphysical premise: the opposition of the living body (a limit or a first order) as nature and the inanimate machine (which is either liberating or perverse) as technology.

Donna Haraway has shown how the definition of humanity within the anthropological colonial discourse depends on this notion of technology: the “hu-man” is defined first and foremost as an animal that uses tools, as opposed to “primates” and “women.”<sup>77</sup> In her critical analysis of primatological discourses, Haraway shows that the colonial anthropology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries supported its definition of male and female bodies with the technology/nature, tool/sex opposition. Technology is the colonizer’s criterion for determining the degree of culture, rationality, and progress reached by a certain human community. In the dominant colonial narratives, women and the “indigenous” are described as if they lack technology, being thus part of “nature” and therefore becoming the natural resources that the “white man” must dominate and exploit.

The notion of “technology,” then, is a key category around which species (human/nonhuman), gender (male/female), race (white/black), and culture (advanced/primitive) are structured. The male body is defined through the relationship established by technology: the “tool” extends masculinity or even replaces it. Given that traditional anthropology didn’t consider the gestation and education techniques developed by African women as technology in the strict sense of the word,<sup>78</sup> the female body is considered foreign to any kind of instrumental sophistication and is defined as purely “sexual.” The anthropological discourse has constructed the female body in relation not just to the body of the human male but also to that of the female primate, characterizing it as a full-time sexual body due to its lack of an estrus cycle. This definition is not based on the ability to acquire tools (as is the case with men) but rather on the regularity of sexual activity and pregnancy. According to classic anthropology, which Haraway scrutinizes, the female human body is different from

the female primate body because it is forced to be always available for (heterosexual) sex; it is a body custom made for the imperative of domestic procreation.

Technology and sex are strategic categories in the European colonial anthropological discourse, which describes masculinity in relation to technological apparatuses and femininity in relation to sexual availability. But “sexual reproduction,” apparently confined to nature and women’s bodies, has been “contaminated” from the start by cultural technologies, including specific sexual practices, contraception and abortion regimes, and medical procedures and religious rituals during childbirth. Like Haraway in anthropology, Jean-François Lyotard, undoing metaphysical discourses, has pointed out that if nature and technology are opposing categories in the scientific and anthropological discourse, both in reality are intimately linked to “natural procreation.”<sup>79</sup> There is complicity between the notions of technology and sexuality that anthropology tries to conceal but that nevertheless flutters behind the Greek roots of the term *techne*. Aristotelian theories on human procreation described sperm as a liquid that contained “men *in nuce*,” “homunculi” that had to be deposited in the woman’s passive womb. This theory, which was not refuted until the discovery of the ovaries in the seventeenth century, understood procreation as a bodily agricultural technology in which men are the technicians and women are the natural breeding ground. As Lyotard insists, in Greek the expression *techne* (abstract form of the verb *tikto*, which means “to engender” or “to produce”) refers both to artificial forms of production and to natural generation. In fact, the Greek word for “generators” is *teknones*, and the word for a germ cell is none other than *teknon*. A prime example of cultural contradiction, technology invokes both artificial production (where *techne* =

*poiesis*) and sexual or “natural” reproduction (where *techne* = creation).

But it was feminist criticism that first pointed out and analyzed this link between technology and sexual reproduction. At the outset of the 1970s, feminists attempted to write a political history of the technological appropriation of women’s bodies. The force with which the feminist discourse designated the female body as the product of not just natural but also political history was without doubt one of the greatest epistemological ruptures of the twentieth century. For many feminists, technology invoked a wide array of techniques (not just tools and machines but also the procedures and rules that governed their use, from genetic testing and the pill up through the epidural) that objectified, controlled, and dominated women’s bodies. Nevertheless, until Donna Haraway, the majority of feminist analyses of “technology” (such as those conducted by Barbara Ehrenreich, Gena Corea, Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, Linda Gordon, Evelyn Fox Keller, etc.) reduced sex technologies to a constellation of reproductive techniques. The difficulty with this kind of feminist gait is that it falls into the trap of essentializing and homogenizing the category of the woman, an operation that generally leads to the conflation of women’s bodies and sexuality with the reproductive function, placing the emphasis on the dangers (domination, exploitation, alienation) that technology represents for women’s bodies. This feminism missed two key chances to develop a criticism of sexual technologies. First, by focusing on an analysis of female difference, it overlooked the constructed character of the male body and gender identity. Second, by demonizing all forms of technology as apparatuses in the service of patriarchal domination, this feminism was unable to imagine dissident uses of technology and queering

of techniques as a possible political strategy by which to resist domination.

The feminism that rejects technology as a sophisticated way for men to dominate women's bodies ends by assimilating any form of technology into the patriarchy. This kind of analysis renews and perpetuates the binary oppositions of nature and culture, female and male, animal and human, primitive and developed, reproduction and production. According to these feminist *negative* diagnosis, the ultimate aim of technology is not merely to appropriate the womb's procreative power but also to take things even further and replace "biological women" (who are good, natural, innocent) with "machine women," thanks to future biotechnological replication, such as giving and manufacturing artificial uteruses.<sup>80</sup> In some of these feminist narratives, transgender women are seen as the demonic result of patriarchal capitalist technologies.<sup>81</sup> In another high-tech dystopic account—Andrea Dworkin's—women end up living in a reproductive brothel, where they are reduced to the state of biological and sexual machines in the service of heterosexual men.<sup>82</sup>

Most of these feminist criticisms call for an antitechnology revolution that would free women's bodies from coercive, repressive male power and modern technology in order to join with nature. In fact, however, these feminist theories of the 1970s and 1980s ended in a double renaturalization.

On the one hand, with the deprecation of sex technologies, women's bodies were presented as entirely natural, and men's dominating power, transformed into technologies of control and possession, was seen as being exercised on what was thought women's most essential capacity: reproduction. Reproduction was described as a natural ability for women, the raw material onto which technological power was to be deployed. In this discourse, woman is always nature, and man is technology.

Although Simone de Beauvoir initiated a conceptual process of denaturalization of gender, she failed to extend her constructivist analyses to man and to masculinity as a gender. Although her statement “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” drove the evolution of feminism over the course of the twentieth century, it was not until the queer and transfeminist shift of the 1990s (heralded by Jacob Hale, Jack Halberstam, Del LaGrace Volcano, and others) that feminism ventured its male declination, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a man.” Through the 1970s and 1980s, the endless song of Lacanian psychoanalysis, sung by countless skeptical voices, from Lacan himself to Kristeva, asked, “Does the woman exist?” yet it did not hear its correlate, “Does the man exist?,” until the recent appearance of masculinity studies. Similarly, in the 1980s Wittig claimed that “lesbians are not women,” but more than twenty years passed before this declaration of war saw its most obvious implication: “gay men are not men.”

Essentialist (enitalist, reproductive) feminism withdrew into conservative positions on maternity, reproduction, and renaturalization of feminine difference. But so-called constructivist feminism, despite being much more intellectually dexterous thanks to the articulation of numerous social and political differences around the notion of gender, fell into a mirror-image trap. First, by insisting that femininity is the artificial result of a wide range of power technologies’ procedures, constructivist feminism made masculinity seem paradoxically natural, given that the latter seemed not to need to be submitted to its own technological power. Masculinity ended up being the only nature that remained, whereas femininity was subjected to an incessant process of construction and modification. The fact that after the 1950s fashion, plastic, reproductive, and pharmacological technologies took the female body as their primary target seems to



confirm this thesis. The problem with this approach is that instead of questioning the very opposition between technology and nature, it holds that technology *modifies* a given nature. The second trap of constructivist feminism was to work with the opposition between gender and sex as an antagonism between social construction and nature. Highlighting the constructed character of gender as a historico-cultural variable, constructivist feminism ended up reessentializing the body, sex, and the genitals, which it conceived as the place where cultural variation ran into an impassable natural limit.

But there is no strict opposition between sex and gender. These two notions simply belong to different epistemic regimes of the body. Whereas the modern notion of sex and sexual difference is that they are supposed to be given by nature and essentially immutable, the notion of gender, invented in the 1950s in the process of technical management of sexual and morphological differences in “intersex babies,” stresses change and mutability.

The strength of the Foucauldian notion of technology lies in its eschewal, first, of the reductive understanding of technology as a collection of objects, tools, machines, and other mechanisms and, second, of the reduction of sex technology to those technologies involved in the management of sexual reproduction. For Foucault, a technology is a complex *dispositif* of power and knowledge that encompasses tools and texts, bodies and instruments alike, institutions and social rituals, discourses and regimentation of the body, protocols and procedures, laws and rules to maximize life, pleasures of the body and regulation of truth statements. Sexual and gender technologies’ greatest feat hasn’t been the transformation of women’s bodies only, but the invention as organic of certain political differences. I call this process of naturalization and materialization of power relationships the “prosthetic production of gender.”

Toward the end of the 1970s, Foucault obsessively returned to the idea of technology when thinking about sexuality: Too much Canguilhem or too much fist-fucking in the backrooms of San Francisco? This still-unanswered question will be the subject of later countersexual research. In any case, we know that at a seminar in 1982 Foucault argued: “My objective for more than twenty-five years has been to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology. The main point is not to accept this knowledge at face value but to analyze these so-called sciences as very specific ‘truth games’ related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.”<sup>83</sup> He went on to cite four major types of technologies: technologies of production, which allow us to transform or manipulate things; technologies of sign systems; technologies of power; and technologies of the self.

This notion of “technology” allowed Foucault to do away with the aporias proposed by the models of power being circulated in the 1960s and 1970s. The first was the legal, liberal model, according to which the subject is sovereign by nature and his sovereignty must be recognized and validated by the law. According to this model, power is centralized and emanates from positive institutions such as the state or the legal system. Foucault abandoned the notion of the autonomous and sovereign subject who possesses/cedes power in favor of the concept of local, situated processes of subjectification that are the product of specific power relationships.

At the same time, Foucault did away with the ideology/revolution framework according to which power emanates from economic structures. From this perspective, power is always dialectical and pits groups against one another (the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat in the classic interpretation, men and the

patriarchy versus women in feminist Marxism). By defining technology as a productive power system, Foucault rejected coercive and repressive power models (such as psychoanalysis's "repressive hypothesis") that claimed power is executed as a prohibition joined to social, psychological, or physical sanctions.

For Foucault, technology is a kind of artificial productive micropower that does not operate from the top down but rather circulates at every level of society (from the abstract level of the state to the level of corporality). This is why sex and sexuality are not the effects of repressive prohibitions that hinder full development of our most intimate desires but the result of a wide array of productive (not simply repressive) technologies. The most powerful way in which sexuality is controlled, then, is not through the prohibition of certain practices but through the production of various desires and pleasures that seem to stem from natural predispositions (man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, etc.) and that are ultimately reified and put in objective terms such as "sexual identities." Disciplinary sexual technologies are not a repressive mechanism; they are reproductive structures and technologies of desire and knowledge that create different knowledge–pleasure subject positions.

### *Gender Prosthesis*

Drawing upon the Foucauldian notion of "sex technology," countersexuality negotiates the endless debate between "essentialism" and "constructivism." Constructivists tell us that the categories of man and woman are not natural, that they are constructed, culturally normative ideals that are subject to changes in time and culture. The essentialists take refuge in models drawn from psychoanalytic kitsch ("the name of the

father” or the “symbolic order”) and in biological models according to which sexual and gender difference depend on genetic, chromosomic, or neuronal structures—invariants that persist beyond cultural and historical differences.

The sex/gender distinction increasingly refers, in parallel, to the distinction between essentialism and constructivism, which continues to be central to contemporary feminist, gay, lesbian, and queer theories. It is as if everything related to sex and sexual difference (the biological functions related to reproduction, for example) could be best encompassed by an essentialist framework, whereas gender, the social construction of sexual difference in different historical and social contexts, is best apprehended with the help of constructivist models. Nevertheless, the essentialist and constructivist positions have a common metaphysical foundation. Both models rest upon a modern premise: the mechanical external relationship between spirit and matter, between mind and body. This assumption can be found in even the most radical constructivist positions.

Understanding sex and gender as technologies of the soul and body allows us to sidetrack this opposition. It is not possible to isolate bodies (as passive or resistant materials) from the social forces that construct sexual and gender differences. Contemporary technoscientific practices ignore the difference between organic and mechanical: technoscience intervenes directly in the modification and affixing of certain structures on the living organism. In the 1970s, Foucault used the term *biopolitics* to describe this new phase in contemporary societies in which the production and control of life itself are the goal. New biotechnology is anchored, *working* simultaneously on bodies and on the social structures that control and regulate cultural variability.<sup>84</sup> It is impossible to determine where “natural bodies” end and “artificial technologies” begin; cybernetic implants, hormones,

organ transplants, pharmacological management of the human immunological system in people living with HIV, and the Internet are just a few examples of biopolitical artifacts.

I have taken this brief detour through the essentialism/constructivism debate to unveil these positions' shared dependence on a Western metaphysical concept of the body in which consciousness and the spirit are considered immaterial and materiality is considered strictly mechanical and soul-less.<sup>85</sup> But what interests me from a countersexual point of view is this promiscuous relationship between technology and bodies. How, specifically, does technology "incorporate" or, put another way, "fabricate" a body? To better situate the problem, I make two vertical cuts in the history of the production of flesh, and to that end I return to the two major twentieth-century technological incorporation metaphors, the robot and the cyborg, from which we can springboard to thinking about sex *as* technology.

The robot and the cyborg as political figures cannot be separated from the history of colonial capitalism. The idea of the robot was first developed by a Czech engineer named Karel Čapek around 1920. The word *robot* designated any kind of automatic mechanism that could carry out an operation that required making a basic decision. Čapek hoped to manufacture a kind of "artificial worker" that could replace the human workforce in assembly lines (in Czech, the term *robota* means "compulsory labor").

The robotic vocation consists of designing "automatons," machines with a human appearance that can move and act. But, colloquially, *robot* also means "a man reduced to the state of an automaton." With the robot, the body is paradoxically captured between the "organ" and the "machine." At first sight, however, the organic and the mechanical seem to pertain to opposite

registers. The organic follows nature, living beings, whereas the mechanical depends on tools and artificial apparatuses.

However, the two terms have not always been separate. *Organ* comes from the Greek word *ergon*, designating a tool or piece that, combined with other pieces, is necessary to conduct some regulated process. According to Aristotle, “as in the arts [*technè*] which have a definite sphere the workers must have their own proper instruments [*organon*] for the accomplishment of their work.”<sup>86</sup> Incidentally, the word *organon* used in this sense serves as the title to the collection of Aristotle’s works of logic. Therefore, *organon* has the sense of being a method of representation, a tool of knowledge, and a collection of norms and rational rules thanks to which we can understand and *produce* reality. For instance, an Internet protocol could be understood as a digital organon, a method of encoding information so it can be displayed in different devices. The organon is thus an apparatus or *dispositif* that facilitates a particular activity in the same way that a hammer extends the hand or a telescope brings the eye closer to a far-off object. It is as if it were the prosthesis and not the living member that has always been hiding behind the notion of the organon. The notion of “prosthesis” appeared around 1553, at the time of colonial expansion of Europe and the development of modern science, and was used to refer both to the supplement of a word with a prefix in grammar and to the reconstruction of a body with an artificial limb. The grammar is the organon, and the prosthesis is the prefix to a word or to a body.

The model of the robot catalyzes the contradictions and paradoxes of modern metaphysics: nature/culture, divine/human, human/animal, soul/body, male/female. It is subjected to the law of parodic and mimetic performativity (defined as a regulated process of repetition). The same idea of the robot draws its

strength from the “machine” as an explanatory metaphor for the organization and operation of the living body. But the body/machine metaphor has a double meaning. La Mettrie’s man-machine, like Descartes’s animal-machine, rests on the idea that the biological body and its activities can be reduced to a complex system of mechanical and electromagnetic interactions. When Albertus Magnus described his “automatons” and his “mechanical servants,” he hoped to be able one day to model an artificial mechanism that could take the place of human actors. If the eighteenth century thought of the human body as a machine, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ended by dreaming up machines that would act like human beings. An understanding of bodies as work tools in the service of the machine led to the invention of the steam engine in 1765 and to Taylorism shortly thereafter. The industrialization of labor throughout the nineteenth century inverted the terms of the mechanical metaphor: the machine became the subject, the “organon.” Workers became little more than conscious prostheses that adapted to the mechanism’s unconscious organs.<sup>87</sup> Industrial work was the product of this coming together of natural and mechanical members.

The robot, then, is the site of double-track transference between the human body and the machine. Sometimes the body uses the tool as part of the organic structure (→ prosthesis), but at other times the machine integrates the body as a part of the mechanism. The eighteenth-century image of the man-machine, in which the (male) body was imagined as a mechanical totality, transitions into the threatening nineteenth-century image of a “living machine” (as in Fritz Lang’s film *Metropolis* [1927]), represented as either a woman or a monster. Women, animals, monsters, and machines that desire consciousness anticipate Haraway’s cyborg.

Masculinity became increasingly prosthetic over the course of the twentieth century. Marie-Louise Roberts and Roxanne Panchasi have studied the reconstruction of the body, specifically in the rehabilitation of maimed male soldiers during the interwar period.<sup>88</sup> This intervention was inspired by the mechanical model of the “robot” according to which the “reconstructed male body,” considered part of the “workforce,” must be reintegrated into the industrial production chain. Jules Amar, director of the French “labor prosthetics military laboratory” in the 1920s, designed a series of prosthetic arms and legs whose objective, for the first time, was not imitating the natural limb: he attempted to repair the disabled body in such a way as to make it one of the essential gears in the productive industrial machine, just as it had been an essential gear in the war machine. In *La prothèse et le travail des mutilés* (1916), Amar proposed an explanation of and cure for phantom-limb syndrome (later called the “Weir Mitchell phenomenon”), or perceived sensation in a lost limb, by reconstructing the body as a working totality with the assistance of mechanical prostheses.<sup>89</sup>

Jules Amar’s prosthetic workers and soldiers demonstrate that within Western capitalism the male body was technologically defined and constructed as a working tool. If the reconstruction of the disabled male body was effected with the assistance of mechanical prostheses, it is because the male worker’s body had already been imagined through the “robot” metaphor. Within the framework of Western capitalist slavery (the plantation economy) and Taylorist labor management (in industry during peacetime and in the industries of mass destruction during war), the “male body” in and of itself already constituted the organic prosthesis in the service of a broader mechanism. The postwar male body was conceived as a mechanical apparatus that could be artificially reconstituted with the assistance of prosthetic



limbs: “working arms” or “pedaling feet” with which the worker could be incorporated into the industrial machine. This technological reconstruction was carried out according to the categories of sexual difference. Men, not women, were prosthetic reconstruction’s first object of concern after World War I. Curiously, Amar never considered the sex organs as organs that could be technologically replaced. Prosthetic rehabilitation was reserved for industrial work organs (the penis, certainly, could not be considered as such). For Amar, an “amputee” or a “disabled person” was someone who “had suffered the mutilation of an organ meant for movement” and should not be confused with an “impotent” person, someone incapable of “functional reestablishment” because he had lost all ability to carry out the work of sexual reproduction.<sup>90</sup>

This definition of impotence sufficiently suggests that the male sex organs were situated on the margin of prosthetic reconstruction. Mechanical fingers dexterous enough to hold nails and even play the violin were put into production, but no functional prosthesis was proposed for the so-called sexually maimed. In fact, prosthetic technologies that promised to reconstruct the male body threatened man’s “natural” position of power in the family, industry, and the nation. If the male body (sex organs included) could be prosthetically constructed, it could also be deconstructed, displaced, and—Why not?—replaced. Amar’s prostheses were aimed at curing the phantom-limb symptoms, at stopping the instability that the symptom creates between the organic and the inorganic, the living and the dead, the present and the invisible. But the prosthesis itself coming alive came to trouble any further stability.

The hallucinatory incorporation of the prosthesis signals a symptomatic moment in the passage from the robot model to the cyber model. What’s interesting, from a countersexual point

of view, is the capacity of the incorporated prosthesis to acquire consciousness, to absorb the body's memory, to feel and act. The prosthesis that experiences phantom sensitivity breaks with the mechanical model in which the inorganic limb ought to be a simple tool that replaces the missing member. It becomes impossible to stabilize the prosthesis, to define it as mechanical or organic, as body or machine. For a time, the prosthesis belongs to a living body, but it resists definitive incorporation. It can be separated, unhooked, thrown away, replaced. Even when it is bound to the body, incorporated and apparently endowed with consciousness, it can at any moment revert into an object. The prosthesis troubles the meanings of feeling and acting according to a metaphysics of body/mind division as well as to a phenomenology of subject/object relationship.

The prosthesis's borderline condition shows the impossibility of drawing a clear line between "the natural" and "the artificial," between "the body" and "the machine." The prosthesis forces us to face the fact that the body-machine relationship cannot be understood as a simple assemblage of inanimate parts joined together in order to do a specific job. As far as the modification of the organic body's lived activities are concerned, the prosthesis surpasses the mechanical order. The hallucinatory prosthesis is already a cyborg.

In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan characterizes twentieth-century technologies as prosthetic supplements to natural functions.<sup>91</sup> The normative understanding of disability implies that the prosthesis is an artificial substitute for the living organ, an imperfect supplement, and a mechanical copy. But the relationship between the body and technology, the process of the production of subjectivity, is always already prosthetic: it transforms the structure of sensitivity. The prosthesis is not just the replacement of an absent organ; it is also

the modification and the development of a living organ with the help of a technological supplement. As a prosthesis of the ear, the telephone allows two distant speakers to communicate. The television is a prosthesis of the eye and the ear that allows an indefinite number of viewers to share an experience that is both communal and disembodied. We could retrospectively think of cinema as a prosthesis of the dream. New cybertechnologies suggest the development of new, virtual, hybrid forms of touch and sight, such as virtual touch thanks to cybergloves. Architecture, cars, and other modes of transportation are also complex prostheses to which other prostheses-of-the-senses, with their communication systems and networks, from electrical cabling to the computer, can be connected. Within this logic of increasing connectivity, the body seems to merge with its prosthetic organs, giving rise to a new level of organization, generating an (individual? transpersonal?) organic-inorganic continuity.

This way of understanding the prosthetic construction of the natural is what Georges Teyssot calls “a generalized theory of disabilities.”<sup>92</sup> The prosthesis, intended at first to reduce what in an industrial-colonial regime were considered “physical disabilities,” creates complex behaviors and communication systems without which the human body would be considered un-able. The typewriter, for example, was invented for the blind as a way to give them access to mechanical writing; it later became widespread as a prosthesis of writing that radically altered the way “able” people communicate. The so-called disability of blindness is so integral to the structure of the typewriter as a prosthesis that a fictional blindness (“Try not to look at the keyboard!”) has become imperative for anyone learning to type, as if it were necessary to have an experience of functional difference in order to access, with the prosthesis, a new level of complexity.

In other words, every technological “organ” reinvents a “new natural condition” by which we are at the same time disabled

and enabled. What's more, every new technology reimpairs our nature's ability to perform a new activity, and we must compensate for that activity with technology. New in-vitro fertilization technologies, for example, were developed to compensate for a perceived "deficiency" in so-called normal (hetero)sexual reproduction. At that very moment, these technologies produced a range of reproductive methods that did not require heterosexual relations, that were accessible to everyone, and that were liable to transform the forms of incorporation of what we continue calling, for lack of anything better, "men" and "women." What I am suggesting here is that sex and gender should be considered forms of prosthetic incorporation that pass for natural but that, despite their anatomical-political "naturalness," are subject to continual processes of transformation and change.

Haraway's cyborg brings into fruition the contradictions and possibilities of prosthetic incorporation. *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) marks a radical turning point for feminism.<sup>93</sup> Or, more precisely, it launches a critical shift, moving from the demonization of technology to its political investment. This shift from antitechnology feminism to postnature/postculture coincides with the passage from the robot to the cyborg: the passage from industrial capitalism to technobaroque capitalism in its neoliberal, global, financial, communicative, biotechnological, and digital phase. In a way, Norbert Wiener established the conditions of this new capitalism in his definition of cybernetics. Wiener's work consists of a collection of theories relative to communication and regulation between the living being and the machine.<sup>94</sup> If the robot was created in factories and on Taylorist production chains, the cyborg is being created in the biotechnology lab. The first "postmodern" cyborg was designed after World War II by genetic engineers who implanted cybernetic connections in a living animal, artificially saturating its information system with electric circuits, hormones, and chemical and biological

fluids. The cyborg is not a closed, mathematical, mechanical system; it is open, biological, and communicative. The cyborg is not a computer; it is a living being connected to visual and hypertext networks that pass through the computer in such a way that the connected body becomes the thinking prosthesis of the systems of networks.

The law of the cyborg is not mimetic repetition but rather the production of the most horizontal communication possible, in the computer science sense. “The cyborg is text, machine, body, and metaphor—all theorized and engaged in practice in terms of communication.”<sup>95</sup> A few examples of biosocial cyborg technology that could be the object of a countersexual study include the dildo that experiences pleasure, people living with AIDS, the transsexual body, the pregnant body.

This is not a question of choosing between robots and cyborgs. We already are cyborgs who incorporate cybernetic and robotic prostheses. There’s no turning back. Mechanical and cybernetic technologies are not neutral tools that emerged from a scientific paradise that could be subsequently applied with more or less ethical goals. From the beginning, technologies (from high-tech online communication systems to gastro-nomic technologies and all the way down to low technology such as fucking) have been political systems that ensure the reproduction of specific socioeconomic structures. Haraway insists that technologies are not intrinsically “clean” or “dirty.” Contemporary biotechnologies and cybertechnologies are simultaneously the product of power structures and possible enclaves that resist that same power. They are possible locations for reinvention of nature.

Technology’s most sophisticated move has been presenting itself as “nature.” The discourses of the natural and social sciences remain encumbered by the dualistic body/spirit, nature/

technology Cartesian rhetoric, despite the fact that biological and communication systems have proved to function according to a logic that eludes the metaphysics of matter, because those binaries buttress the political stigmatization of certain groups (animals, women, nonwhites, queers, trans and intersex bodies, the disabled, the mentally ill, etc.) and make it possible to systematically block their access to the technologies (textual, discursive, bodily) that produce and objectify them.



# 4

## COUNTERSEXUAL READING EXERCISES

### ON PHILOSOPHY AS A BETTER WAY OF DOIN' IT IN THE ASS—DELEUZE AND “MOLECULAR HOMOSEXUALITY”

*There is only one sexuality, it is homosexuality . . .*

*There is only one sexuality, it is feminine.*

—Félix Guattari, “A Liberation of Desire”

*Homosexuality is the truth of love.*

—Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of “molecular homosexuality” remains on the seldom-analyzed periphery of Deleuze criticism, despite its strategic position in *Anti-Oedipus* and the frequency with which the French duo asserted their identity as “molecular homosexuals” in the 1970s: “We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense.”<sup>1</sup>

“Molecular” or local homosexuality, materialized through a coming-out that cannot be reduced to an identity or to the



evidence of practices, undoubtedly belongs to the collection of characteristics with which Deleuze presented himself as a public person. His “molecular homosexuality” and his fingernails, which were long and unkempt, are the strange, personal attributes by which Deleuze (a much more surreptitious character than many of his contemporaries, such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault) can be recognized and caricatured, but their philosophic and political importance is often reduced to a hagiographic anecdote.

Deleuze and Guattari used the chemical language of molarity and molecularity to refer to two possible relationships between ontology and politics. Molarity, characterized by rigid segmentarity, produces fixed political identities without becomings. Molecularity, on the other hand, develops transitory in-progress segmentations that endlessly open processes of becoming. When rejecting molar homosexuality and identifying themselves as “molecular homosexuals,” Deleuze and Guattari seemed not only to strangely refer to themselves as homosexuals (despite being known to be married and have female lovers, respectively), but also to establish a moral distance between themselves and “molar homosexuals” (those for whom homosexuality is their identity).

We could certainly explain Deleuze’s “molecular homosexuality” as part of what could be called the “fingernails effect.” That is, we could reduce it to a kind of eccentricity or concept caprice (a snobbish affectation, “like Garbo’s dark sunglasses”<sup>2</sup>), a notion/inattention that, once discerned, does not affect our reading of the key Deleuzian concepts. Nevertheless, I have decided to subject the “case of molecular homosexuality” to the *Anti-Oedipus* hypothesis, according to which “logical operations are physical operations too.”<sup>3</sup>

This involves trying to understand what kind of physical operations produce “molecular homosexuality” as a concept:

What is the relationship between the obscure notion of “molecular homosexuality” and the oft-repeated mantra about “becoming woman”?<sup>4</sup> What could be Deleuze’s goal in making such a careful distinction between two kinds of homosexuality, molecular and molar? What were the conditions of public discourse for French intellectuals after 1968 that made it possible for Guattari and Deleuze to declare themselves “molecular homosexuals,” whereas Foucault, a gay man who frequented San Francisco’s S&M backrooms, left any first-person statements out of his analyses of homosexuality and avoided taking a position in the face of new identity politics formations that were on the rise in France in the 1970s and 1980s? What is this “molecularity” that Foucault did not share with Deleuze and Guattari? What is the price to be paid for molarity, and who can declare himself or herself molecular?

In the 1970s at the University of Vincennes (today University of Paris VIII), Deleuze became the philosophic mentor not just of three French gay activists and writers—René Schérer, Tony Duvert, and Guy Hocquenghem<sup>5</sup>—but also of the Front homosexuel d’action révolutionnaire (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action). Schérer wrote that Deleuze, without being homosexual (meaning without being “molarly homosexual”), “has joined in and supported this fight.”<sup>6</sup> This group also included Michel Cressole, who was responsible for the first clash with Deleuze over the latter’s unity with a purported philosophy of desire.<sup>7</sup> Michel Cressole—a young, queer, left-wing journalist at *Libération* and Deleuze’s personal frenemy—was the first to question the philosophic and political truth of a discourse on drugs, schizophrenia, and homosexuality written by a man who had not experienced addiction, mental illness, or anal sex. In 1973, Cressole penned an open letter to

Deleuze that directly attacked the ambiguity of his position: “You always wanted to drive home that you, with your body, stand before madness, drugs, alcohol, and the anus. It’s true, when you present yourself as a genealogist or a functionalist it’s not possible to reproach the tremendous decency or hypocrisy of your dementia or fecality, just as Artaud did to Carroll.”<sup>8</sup> Subsequently and more virulently, the criticism centered around a new, illuminating (although paranoiac) opposition of “You” (Deleuze) and the queers:

When you look at how it’s going for the gays, and when you tell them all about what you see, that’s what they like, everything seems to be going well for them, but when, innocent like children, the gays come back to find out where the person who said that is, to see if he is, “in fact,” there, they find a proper and kindly man, who only beats his breast as a kind of lip service, who forbids them nothing, who is ready to defend them, but only to “defend them” lying on his back, who protests their suffering of always being like that, as one protests in good faith.<sup>9</sup>

For Cressole, Deleuze’s so-called molecular homosexuality was a form of breast beating that hid a dementia and a fecality that could only be described as hypocritical. Nevertheless, it remains unclear why Deleuze, a “proper and kindly man,” in Cressole’s words, needed to identify as a homosexual and to distance himself from heterosexuality as an identity with the adjective *molecular*.

Twenty-five years later, at a conference in Australia (which would end up assuring the globalization of Deleuze’s philosophy through English translation), Ian Buchanan attempted to respond to Michel Cressole’s criticisms with the concept of

“transversality” or “transversal relation.” According to Deleuze, it is possible to think or write about a phenomenon transversally without going through the material experience, in the same way that it is possible to travel without changing places. Félix Guattari had already become familiar with and made use of the notion of “*transversalité*” in his psychotherapeutic work in the 1950s at La Borde clinic in Cour-Cheverny. The concept of transversal relation, as it was employed by Deleuze, takes up not just this schizoanalytic notion but also and especially David Hume’s idea that any of a process’s effects can always be produced by other means.<sup>10</sup> One example Deleuze most frequently employed to illustrate this concept was the so-called drunkenness of Henry Miller, an experiment that consisted of becoming intoxicated by drinking only water. In Deleuze, transversality seems the condition of possibility for certain experiences of “becoming.” Thus, for example, “abstract nomadism” does more than imply that it is possible to travel without moving—it also opposes the usual experience of traveling to a transversal practice that applies only when one is at rest: if you really want to travel, “you shouldn’t move around too much, or you’ll stifle becomings.”<sup>11</sup>

Transversally, Deleuze’s heterosexuality is to molecular homosexuality as water is to Henry Miller’s drunkenness or as being at rest is to abstract nomadism. Deleuze’s response to Cressole’s letter clearly alludes to these transversal effects:

And what do my relations with gays, alcoholics, and drug-users matter, if I can obtain similar affects by different means? . . . I owe you lot nothing, nothing more than you owe me. I don’t need to join you in your ghettos, because I’ve got my own. The question’s nothing to do with the character of this or that exclusive group, it’s to do with the transversal relations that ensure that any effects

produced in some particular way (through homosexuality, drugs, and so on) *can always be produced by other means*.<sup>12</sup>

In this argument, homosexuality, along with alcohol and drugs, is presented as a toxic, ghetto experience that gives one access to certain effects. If toxicity and the ghetto are not desirable, their transversal effects seem to be nonetheless indispensable for producing “ontological heterogeneity.”<sup>13</sup> Deleuze seemed to be preoccupied with obtaining in his own way—that is, transversally—the same effects that gays, drug addicts, and alcoholics obtain, while somehow reducing the toxicity of their ghetto. If this “transversal relation” is critical, it is because it allows Deleuze to dodge the question of identity politics, at least rhetorically.<sup>14</sup> The transversal relation does not exist in the order of the individual or of property: the experience of inebriation, for example, is not something possessed by the individual but rather by the material itself, the flow that the drunkenness is made of for a certain period of time. Nor does it exist in the order of the community or the group. Identifying as an “alcoholic” does not account for the chemical or psychotropic event of inebriation or for the eventual possibility of hydraulic drunkenness à la Henry Miller.

Apparently, Deleuze was not interested in the discourses that were emerging around identity (despite confessing to having his own ghetto: but which one?). According to him, “one person’s privileged experience is a weak, reactionary argument” that suffers from an excess of “flat realism.”<sup>15</sup> As Deleuze writes in the preface to *L’Après-Mai des faunes* by Guy Hocquenghem, homosexuality is neither an identity nor an essence: “No one can say I am homosexual.”

It goes without saying that it is not due to a change such as becoming heterosexual, that Hocquenghem has come to doubt the validity of certain notions and declarations. It is only by remaining homosexual forever, remaining and being homosexual more and more, being a better and better homosexual, that one can say “well, no one is really homosexual.” Which is a thousand times better than the hackneyed, insipid idea that everyone is homosexual or will be: we’re all unconscious latent queers.<sup>16</sup>

This remark creates a tension not only between the impossibility of being homosexual and the necessity of being a better and better homosexual but also between being unconsciously queer and being molecularly homosexual.

Moreover, the homosexual community cannot serve as a referent for the enunciative truth of an “us” in the same way that the homosexual identity cannot serve as a referent for the enunciative truth of the “I.” The problem of philosophy, Deleuze believed, is not so much determining who can think or talk about what as it is about creating a set of conditions to produce new utterances.

Nevertheless, all these logical adjustments did not settle the question of Deleuze’s “molecular homosexuality” once and for all. It is still worth asking: What are the mechanisms of transversality, the conversion passages through which it was possible for Deleuze to “be homosexual” while sidestepping the fecality and toxicity of the ghetto? What are the effects that Deleuze believed he had reached molecularly that allowed him to “be homosexual” without “owing anything” to the gays? What would be the logical operations that would allow the affirmation of homosexuality as a universal position of enunciation? And if this were possible, regardless of identity, the ghetto, and sexual practices, what would be the meaning of this refined conceptual homosexuality?

### *Proust's Molarity*

Although the expression “molecular homosexuality” did not appear until 1971–1972 in *Anti-Oedipus*, in the book *Proust and Signs* (1964) Deleuze had already carried out a detailed analysis of the figure of the homosexual and of Marcel Proust’s novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time* or *Remembrance of Things Past*, 1913–1927) as an operation of homosexual-sign decodification.<sup>17</sup> As often happened in Deleuze’s monographic studies of other authors (Nietzsche, Spinoza, Foucault, Bergson, Leibniz, etc.), in *Proust and Signs* he ended up producing an interpretive machine that functioned insofar as it *Deleuzianly* manufactured the object of its own reading. I propose to take advantage of these performative elements in order to retrospectively decipher Deleuze in the light of his own Proust.

Deleuze first diverges from the conventional interpretations of Proust by considering *In Search of Lost Time* not as a compensation of the passage of time and the loss of memory through writing but as a process of amorous learning, or learning through love. First, he rejects the classic definition of memory as a collection of representations of past facts and events. This cumulative notion of memory supposes a certain equivalence between every unit of time: memory is nothing but a more or less elaborate archive of mental representations in which every instant corresponds to a fact. If this were the case, *In Search of Lost Time* would be reduced to a detailed taxonomy of facts/images in chronological order. For Deleuze, however, *In Search of Lost Time* cannot be a simple sequential collection of facts/images because there is no unit of time that can act as a common denominator to all events. The difference of intensity at every instant leads to inflections, invaginations in the course of time, forcing time to fold in onto itself, which explains why two chronologically

distant instants are represented with a single image and a single unit of memory. Thus, the “madeleine” contains a monadic density of memories that cannot be reduced to a single fact or a single instant in time. For Deleuze, Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* is the temporal learning of decodification of different types of signs. It is through the concrete activity of decodification that we can apprehend time: learning from time.

In symphony with Paris’s post-Saussure, post-Hjelmslev semi-otic environment of the 1970s,<sup>18</sup> Deleuze affirmed that reality is offered to the subject not in the form of an object but in the form of a coded sign. Accordingly, he based his analysis of Proust on the specificity of decoded signs: their matter and form, the effects that they provoke, the relationship between the sign and the signified, the faculty implied in the decodification process, their temporal structure, and, finally, the particular relationship that they initiate with the truth.

The first circle of the signs submitted to the decodification of *In Search of Lost Time* is the circle of “worldliness.”<sup>19</sup> Curiously, worldly signs are the signs that appear in friendship and in philosophy. For Deleuze, those are empty, stupid signs that, although they make themselves available to intelligence, are marked by forgetfulness. They are cruel, sterile signs that already depend on the same fallacy as representation—that is, on the illusion of believing in the sign’s objective reality without being familiar with the operations through which it makes replacements within the structure of time. Friendship depends on certain goodwill in the interpretation of signs, in the same way that philosophy depends on goodwill in the search for the truth. Deleuze contraposes friendship with love and philosophy with art. Whereas friendship and philosophy are prey of goodwill, love and art depend on the exchange of deceptive signs, lies that, as we will see, emanate from what Deleuze shall define as a form of cryptic homosexuality.



The signs' second circle of codification is the world of love.<sup>20</sup> According to Deleuze, Proust shows in *In Search of Lost Time* that falling in love is nothing but learning to recognize the other by its specific signs. Love demands the lover's dedication to intensely decoding the particular signs produced by the beloved. The lover of *In Search of Lost Time* is first and foremost a seeker of signs, a translator and an interpreter who aspires to decode the signs of love in every encounter. But the decoding of amorous signs is paradoxical: as the lover learns to decode the beloved's signs, he also learns he is not the one who created the sign: "We cannot interpret the signs of a loved person without proceeding into worlds that have not waited for us in order to take form, that formed themselves with other persons, and in which we are at first only an object among the rest."<sup>21</sup> This is why the same signs that once invited the lover to love now take him to the pain of jealousy. In this way, decodification becomes disappointment and disenchantment when the beloved's signs exclude the one decoding them. All of the time invested in learning and decoding the signs of the other now seems to have been wasted.

Deleuze uses the phrase "the contradiction of love" to describe this inversely proportional relationship between the decodification and the verisimilitude of love: the more sophisticated the decodification of the beloved's signs, the closer one comes to the end of love and the bitter disappointment of jealousy. But it is precisely at this point that Deleuze changes conceptual directions in order to define jealousy not just as a painful affection but also as a process of knowledge, the truth that justifies the time seemingly wasted in decoding. The outbreak of jealousy is a crucial moment of revelation in the serial process of learning from love. Along with the pain and the lost time, jealousy offers the lover, for the first time, the pleasure of a truth that is stronger than love itself: "subjectively, jealousy is deeper than love, it

contains love's truth."<sup>22</sup> Recognizing a sign as a lie and the development of jealousy as exclusion and thus as the impossibility of continuing to decode push the lover to abandon the world of the beloved and to continue the *search*. Thus begins the first serial repetition of love as an interpretation of signs. In this first approximation, love is condemned to be simple serial *heterosexual* monogamy.

But this semiotics of jealousy would not be particularly exceptional if it were not for the way in which Deleuze, reading Proust, solves the problem of repetition and seriality (and incidentally the question of heterosexuality and monogamy). The deepening of signs that begins at the first outbreak of jealousy reaches its turning point when the lover recognizes that it is not accidentally but structurally that he has been excluded from the beloved's world of signs, given that the signs that the beloved produces are not aimed at another man (with whom he could compare himself and compete) but at another woman. The truth of the love between man and woman is spoken in the form of a lie. Heterosexual love, Deleuze asserts as he follows Proust, is the deceptive product of an exchange of signs aimed at a concealed other: man produces signs for other men ("signs of Sodom") and woman produces signs for other women ("signs of Gomorrah"). Love appears to be a semiotic shooting range where the heterosexual relationship is the result of a fortuitous but necessary meeting of two crossed stray bullets. "Essence, in love," Deleuze writes, "is incarnated first in the laws of deception, but second in the secrets of homosexuality: deception would not have the generality that renders it essential and significant if it did not refer to homosexuality as the truth that it conceals. All lies are organized around homosexuality, revolving around it as around their center."<sup>23</sup> As René Schérer later points out, heterosexual loves

are characterized by their “superficial depth,” whereas the loves of Sodom and Gomorrah uncover a “surface saturated with truth.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, we come to understand why the learning of signs does not depend on goodwill or on some kind of inclination toward the truth but on the violence of a concrete situation that pushes us to search.<sup>25</sup> This is why friendship and philosophy, though they are close to the production of signs, lack the queer tools necessary for decodification, given that they are fundamentally “realist,” ingenuous heterosexual activities that cannot face the sign that has folded in on itself in the form of a lie. The truth of love is not, as philosophy would wish, the assumption of reason but rather the residue or detritus of a decodification process that finds success only in failure. The truth is the result of the violence that forces the lover to give up the pleasure of serial repetition of heterosexual love; it is the necessity with which he believes in the lie and the force with which the choice of pain is imposed on his will in the face of the threat of Sodom and Gomorrah. The jealousy of the “homosexual” other constitutes the vanishing point and the line of divergence of serial repetition of heterosexual loves.

Finally, Deleuze asserts, following an inertia that can only find its *raison d'être* later in *Anti-Oedipus*, which is more than an interpretation of Proust, “Homosexuality is the truth of love.”<sup>26</sup> At this point, *Proust and Signs* acquires an uncanny complexity. First, Deleuze applies the term *intersex loves* to heterosexual relationships, designing an opposition between intersexuality and homosexuality that adheres to the medical language in use at the close of the nineteenth century,<sup>27</sup> to which he pays no explicit attention.<sup>28</sup> Second, homosexuality is revealed in reality as the product of an original hermaphroditism, with the coupling of two hermaphrodite bodies considered “intersex love”:

At the infinity of our loves, there is the original Hermaphrodite. But the Hermaphrodite is not a being capable of reproducing itself. Far from uniting the sexes, it separates them, it is the source from which there continually proceed the two divergent homosexual series, that of Sodom and that of Gomorrah. It is the Hermaphrodite that possesses the key to Samson's prophecy: "The two sexes shall die, each in a place apart." To the point where intersexual loves<sup>29</sup> are merely the appearance that covers the destination of each sex, concealing the accursed depth where everything is elaborated.<sup>30</sup>

Now we distinctly understand why homosexuality is the truth of love: "The truth of love is first of all the isolation [*cloisonement*] of the sexes."<sup>31</sup> Homosexuality, before being an identity or a practice, is the sexual architecture of living beings: original separation of the sexes that establishes the heterosexual theater of homosexual love.

Perhaps in response to this complexity, Deleuze added a second part to *Proust and Signs* in 1970. He called it "The Literary Machine," and it includes not just a Proustian distinction between Greek homosexuality and Jewish homosexuality but also an analysis of the fundamental tropes of homosexuality in Proust (which were essential for schizoanalysis), the vegetal and the electromechanical models. This second part also includes the distinction between *global and specific homosexuality* and *local and nonspecific homosexuality*. This distinction became thematic in the opposition of *molar homosexuality* and *molecular homosexuality* in *Anti-Oedipus*. Finally, homosexuality, in the figure of Charlus, is revealed as one of the most powerful literary machines, as anticipated in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* by partial objects, desiring machines, and bodies without organs.<sup>32</sup>

For Deleuze, homosexuality cannot be explained by the autonomous signs that it produces but must rather be explained by reference to an original unity, a foundational vegetal mythology:

Here the vegetal theme takes on its full significance, in opposition to a Logos-as-Organism: hermaphroditism is not the property of a now-lost animal totality, but the actual partitioning of the two sexes in one and the same plant: “The male organ is separated by a partition from the female organ”. . . . [A]n individual of a given sex (but no sex is given except in the aggregate or statistically) bears within itself the other sex with which it cannot communicate directly.<sup>33</sup>

Homosexuality and heterosexuality alike are the products of a binary disciplinary architecture that separates the male and female “vegetal” organs while condemning them for remaining together. Thus, for Deleuze all intersex relationships are the setting for the exchange of hermaphrodite signs between souls of the same sex, “an aberrant communication [that] occurs in a transversal dimension between partitioned sexes.”<sup>34</sup> This is the relationship that he calls “molecular homosexuality”: “no longer an *aggregate and specific homosexuality*, in which men relate to men and women to women in a separation of the two series, but a *local and nonspecific homosexuality*, in which a man also seeks what is masculine in a woman and a woman what is feminine in a man, and this in the partitioned contiguity of the two sexes as partial objects.”<sup>35</sup>

Deleuze has already made three careful strategic substitutions. First, he says “intersexuality” where he ought to have said “heterosexuality.” Second, he has given a particular form of these intersex relationships the name “local or molecular homosexuality.” The third displacement of signifiers, which is more violent

and less justified, is the equation of “molecular homosexuality” with what Deleuze calls “transsexuality.”<sup>36</sup> By now we should not be surprised that Deleuze uses the notion of “transversality” to explain this specific form of homosexuality. It was Charlus who carried out the work of the transversal, acting as a “pollinating insect” and fertilizing the sexes in a way that would certainly complicate the discrete exchange of Deleuzian signs.

Let’s dwell on the figure of Charlus for a moment and follow, through him, the transition between the two parts of *Proust and Signs* (which were separated by six years and Guattari’s growing presence in Deleuze’s work) or, rather, between the assertion that “homosexuality is the truth of love” and the restriction of homosexuality in its molecular modality after 1970.

Attracted by Charlus, Deleuze seems to oscillate between two opposing readings of homosexuality. On the one hand, homosexuality is presented as the painful stage on which the original separation of the sexes is played out. Charlus showcases this division and carries out the pollination that aspires to join the partitioned sexes. In this sense, the homosexual is first and foremost a pedagogical figure, a mirror in which the heterosexual can safely observe the future of the sign and the hermaphroditic separation of his own sex, as if he were someone else. Charlus is a lens, a method of knowledge, a tool for representing the mechanisms that form the foundation of heterosexual love. For his part, Charlus seems to be the harbinger of the genders’ dissolution, the end of sex as the coupling of organs and in this way threatens the very distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality.

Charlus is not just *In Search of Lost Time’s* homosexual character par excellence but also, most importantly, the prime example of the male homosexual. When recognizing the effeminate characteristic of homosexuality in another man, the novel’s

narrator says, "He's a Charlus." Charlus is a fold of deceptive signs, a Gordian knot of codification and decodification. Charlus's body, swamped with signs, offers itself up to the labor of decodification as if it were a text of flesh and bone. In the description of Charlus as a latticework of signs, Deleuze comes curiously close to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's later explanation of the showing/hiding dialectic in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).<sup>37</sup> As Schérer notes, the homosexual is seen through precisely the signs that conceal him: "the gestures, the looks, the silences, and the postures, are the verbal ciphers of hieroglyphics."<sup>38</sup> More than a mere sender of (deceptive) signs, Charlus *is* a sign. However, signification does not correct his semiotic inflation. For Deleuze, homosexuality is a superior mode of knowledge precisely because it is in homosexuality that all of the contradictions of Western metaphysics vanish: the figure of Charlus, the sacrificial victim of semiotic ritual, causes a shift in the vertical plane of truth as an opposition of the signifier and the signified, of the low and the elevated, of the female and the male. This is the first moment of perversion: the Nietzschean *inversion* of all opposites, the transvaluation of all values. At a second stage, however, perversion is above all a *torsion* of the vertical plane of truth, an alteration of the correspondence between signs and the transcendent truth that they seem to invoke. The horizontal plane of homosexuality is a theater around which signs circulate without a transcendental referent. In the same way that, according to Deleuze, the schizophrenic surrenders himself to the flow of meaningless signifier chains, Charlus takes pleasure in the progression of simulation; perhaps this is what leads Deleuze and Guattari to say in *Anti-Oedipus* that "Charlus is therefore surely mad."<sup>39</sup> Romanticizing the figures of both madness and queerness, adopting uncritically the language of psychopathology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Deleuze seems unable to

think of homosexuality and transsexuality outside of the normative frameworks of sexual binarism and heterosexual codes.

Charlus is simultaneously the incarnation of the vegetal hermaphrodite and the pollinating insect that manages communication between the separated sexes. But this pollination, which Deleuze calls “transsexual,” is described contradictorily:

But matters are complicated because the separated, partitioned sexes coexist in the same individual: “initial Hermaphroditism,” as in a plant or a snail, which cannot be fertilized “except by other hermaphrodites.” Then it happens that the intermediary, instead of effecting the communication of male and female, doubles each sex with itself: symbol of a self-fertilization all the more moving in that it is homosexual, sterile, indirect.<sup>40</sup>

Charlus does not belong to the order of the individual, he stands beyond the unisex subject, in a botanical space where he takes the task of pollination upon himself. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Charlus is able to sidestep Oedipus’s sexual dilemma thanks to anal pollination: “Oedipus must not know whether it is alive or dead, man or woman, any more than it knows whether it is parent or child. Commit incest and you’ll be a zombie and a hermaphrodite.”<sup>41</sup> Charlus can fertilize without barging in on the relationship of the father and the son. He surrenders the anus and circumvents incest: the possibility of creation that escapes cruelly repetitive sexual reproduction. We can venture that what fascinated Deleuze—what he called molecular homosexuality—was Charlus’s ability, as a pollinating insect, to carry out a process of fertilization, generation, and creativity in the midst of those who would otherwise have been sterile. It is the riddle of male maternity that fascinates Deleuze: the possibility of generation outside of the female body.



Charlus is the great pollinating insect who establishes fertile connections between hermaphrodites. It is he who does the paradoxical work of “sterile fertilization.”<sup>42</sup> The molecular Charlus positions himself before and after history, before the animal evolution that led to man and after humanity as an Oedipal heterosexual genealogy, approaching the senseless order of the antilogos: the order of the machine, of art, of thought. He does not identify with guilt or with the ghetto;<sup>43</sup> he does not allow himself to be absorbed into the two “accursed associations that reproduce the two Biblical cities” Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>44</sup> The distinction between molar Charlus and molecular Charlus now becomes clearer, as does the distinction between paranoia and schizophrenia, between homosexuality as an identity and homosexuality as a transversal becoming. As Deleuze and Guattari state in *Anti-Oedipus*,

It is therefore more a matter of the difference between two kinds of collections or populations: the large aggregates and the micromultiplicities. In both cases the investment is collective, it is an investment of a collective field; even a lone particle has an associated wave as a flow that defines the coexisting space of *its* presences. Every investment is collective, every fantasy is a group fantasy and in this sense a position of reality. But the two kinds of investments are radically different. . . . One is a *subjugated group* investment, as much in its sovereign form as in its colonial formations of the gregarious aggregate, which socially and psychically represses the desire of persons; the other, a *subject-group* investment in the transverse multiplicities that convey desire as a molecular phenomenon, that is, as partial objects and flows, as opposed to aggregates and persons.<sup>45</sup>

The molecular Charlus is made of incessant becomings—becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-flower, becoming for an instant a flow that enters and exits the anus—but is not identified with woman or with the insect or with the flower or with shit. Charlus is molecular because when he does it in the ass; he fertilizes.

Molecularity restricts homosexuality to fertilization, generation, and creativity.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, an act of creation would entail a certain “sterile fertilization” between “authors” of the male sex, a generation that would be innocent, vegetal, mechanical, virginal, but also . . . anal. Perhaps this is why one of the most frequently cited definitions of philosophical creation in Deleuze’s work (which, strangely enough, is from Deleuze’s response to Cressole) is “behind-the-back insemination”: “the history of philosophy as a kind of ass-fuck [*encoulage*], or, what amounts to the same thing, an immaculate conception. I imagined myself approaching an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nonetheless be monstrous.”<sup>47</sup> Cast in this light, the history of philosophy resembles a chain of anal fertilizations between ghettoless, guiltless molecular homosexuals. That is, between “intersex” males with their own heterosexual ghettos who nevertheless reproduce among themselves in a hermaphrodite circuit that escapes the laws of heterosexual (female) reproduction.<sup>48</sup>

Beyond the curse of the “natural” generation that seems to dominate Oedipus (uterine reproduction that chains man to a relationship with Eve and, in turn, to guilt and identity), homosexuality opens the molecular anus to artificial, monstrous fertilization. “Everything exists in those obscure zones that we penetrate as into crypts, in order to decipher hieroglyphs and secret languages. The Egyptologist, in all things, is the man

who undergoes an initiation—the apprentice.”<sup>249</sup> Male heterosexual philosophers ought to be molecular homosexuals in order to reproduce with one another. Western male philosophy is a form of artificial patriarchal insemination through which the semiotic anus becomes a uterus (woman) and later a ceaselessly pollinating insect (animal). Anal philosophers throughout history have been chained to the textual flow of a daisy that joins anuses and dicks, that interprets and translates. Molar male heterosexuality is here the truth of “molecular homosexuality.” The problem of interpretation that we have pursued throughout the text seems suddenly to invert itself: the question is no longer why Deleuze and Guattari asserted themselves as “molecular homosexuals” but why they could not come out as male heterosexuals in the 1970s.

## DILDO

We can find writings related to the production of sexual prostheses and sex toys that date back to the third century B.C.E. Mileto, a prosperous city in Asia Minor, was famous among the Greeks for producing and exporting *olisbos*. The *olisbos* was known, in its time, as “an imitation of the virile member” crafted in wood or packed leather, which had to be given a generous application of olive oil before use. Judging by numerous written documents, the *olisbos* was used not only by many women for masturbation as a way to compensate for a sexual culture that did not particularly care about female pleasure but also by women known to the Greeks as *tribadas* in practices at which biological men were not part of a sexual assemblage.<sup>50</sup>

The *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* notes the emergence of the words *godemichi* (1583) and *godmicy* (1578) to describe objects intended to produce sexual pleasure. *Gode* can mean “a female sheep that is not yet pregnant” or “a soft, effeminate man.”<sup>51</sup> According to these definitions, the dildo seems to refer not just to the production of pleasure but also to a femininity that is masturbatory and, consequently, sterile and false in relation to the use of organs within heterosexual reproductive practices. Edmond Huguet and Alain Rey have zeroed in on two possible etymologies for the word *godemiché*: the first is derived from the medieval Latin term *gaudere* or *gaude mihi*, which mean “to take pleasure” or “to be sexually aroused”; the second is from the Catalan word *gaudameci*, in reference to “leather from Ghadames,” where dildos were made.<sup>52</sup> *Godeo*, *godesco*, and *godible* are Spanish words that have similar definitions but that have never been used to refer to the dildo. According to Pierre Guiraud, the term *godemiché* could come from a compound of *goder* (“to joke” or “to trick”) and *Michel*, a name that had erotic connotations in

the sixteenth century. Around 1930, *gode* was used as a shortened version of *godemiché* to mean “artificial phallus.”<sup>53</sup> It’s worth mentioning here that the 1980 French edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* fails to include *godemiché* between *Godard* and *Goethe*.

The English term *dildo* appeared in the sixteenth century and seems to come from the Italian term *diletto*, which means “pleasure” or “delight.” In Middle English, the verb *to dudo* meant “to caress” a woman in a sexual way. Apparently, dildos were quite commonplace in seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century England. For instance, *Tractatus de hermaphroditis* (1817), a classic treatise on hermaphrodites by Giles Jacob, notes the existence of women who lived with other women and illegally passed as men. “Female husbands” are said to use dildos to “compensate for the lack of a penis.”<sup>54</sup> Anecdotes can be found in the era’s lecherous forensic medical literature in which everyone (wives included) was shocked to discover the “husband’s” true “sex” after his death.

In nineteenth-century slang, *dildo* meant “artificial penis” or “an instrument (of wax, horn, leather, India rubber, gutta-percha, etc., and other soft material), shaped like, and used by women as a substitute for, the penis.” But the word *dildo* also had the sense of “stupid” or “idiot.”<sup>55</sup> Beyond different possible etymologies, we find two recurring principal meanings: *dildo* and *gode* refer either to “an object that is a substitute of the penis in vaginal penetration” or to a “soft and effeminate man.”<sup>56</sup>

What’s more, the *dudo* is a very prickly, pink-flowered cactus that grows in the desert regions of North America.

Curiously, the *Etymological Dictionary of the Spanish Language* by Joan Corominas does not include a single word that covers the meaning of the terms *dildo* and *godemiché*.<sup>57</sup> In Spain, we have foregone wordings such as *consolador*, *cinturón polla*, and *polla de plástico* (consoler, cock belt, and plastic cock). The first word is

not used in lesbian sexual culture to talk about the dildo. Instead of *consoladores*, here we would say *vibradores*. This study has allowed me to conclude that the majority of sex toys that are grouped together under the umbrella term *dildo* are not and do not attempt to be simple plastic or silicone imitations of a “cock” (some are closer to prosthetic hands or tongues, for example). In the Spanish edition of this study, I chose to Hispanicize the word *dildo*, which is already used in Spanish and Latin American gay and lesbian culture, and to leave out the normative and undermining terms *polla de plástico* and *cinturón polla*.

The use of the word *dildo* in Spanish would be etymologically justified by its relationship to the Latin word *dilectio* (love, delight, or pleasure), one of the roots of the modern Spanish word *dilección*, which the *Diccionario de la Real Académica Española* defines as “voluntad honesta y amor reflexivo” (sincere goodwill and thoughtful/reflexive love). As a matter of fact, the latter meaning strikes me as quite a nice definition for *dildo*: reflexive love.

PROSTHESIS, MON AMOUR<sup>58</sup>*For Zigzag*

This is the story of the first butches to ever walk on the face of the earth. It all began before the computer was anything but a pitiful war machine made with hundreds and hundreds of punch cards. I don't remember. But you've got to believe me: this was an irreversible shift in the monotonous evolution of male and female bodies.

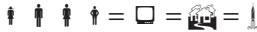


September 2, 1945. The first lesbian First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, waited in her ministerial closet and received the black and white soldiers coming back from the front. 🏠 Poor things! They didn't have anyone waiting for them back home. The old women, the newlyweds, the white and the nonwhite women—while the war was on, they all had learned to work in factories. 🏭 They had survived like Amazons in the industrial age: they had fed the nation not with milk but with machine oil.

The United States had been in such a hurry to send its callow-faced, smooth-bottomed boys to World War II and bring order to the people. Who was going to tell the Nation that its precious soldiers were just as filthy as the Communists and the faggots? But the American and European soldiers, the Allies and the enemies, had heard the Call of the Anus. They had discovered the violence of the howitzer and the cudgel's soft rectal touch. The war, yes, it was not peace, but the war that would prompt the birth of the first homosexual communities in the United States. And the many side effects of this simultaneous production of war and homosexuality? How was militancy to be prevented after that? How were we going to

distinguish the future sexual communities from the military squadrons?

Some soldiers had lost one or more limbs. The war factories had been turned into an industry that manufactured not only domestic appliances but also artificial arms and legs to repair the bodies that had been maimed in combat. The same factories that used to produce machine guns and bombs now made shiny, jointed prosthetic legs. Charles and Ray Eames, two of the most important architects of the 1950s, understood that the transition from war to peace meant recycling weapons, turning them into new objects for the emerging, comfortable consumer society. So with the same engineered fiberboards they had used to make the plywood sheets that held wounded soldiers' limbs in place, the Eameses manufactured multicolored chairs for American schools and conference rooms. The new market imperatives were material plasticity and affordability. Even canned foods, which had been invented for wartime provisions, now became the modern housewife's indispensable ally.



Little Boy left its footprint on silver nitrate film and tattooed every single body in Hiroshima that sixth of August, 1945. Representation technologies and war technologies: one and the same combat. A single, identical technological process lay behind the production of the modern, white, straight American couple, behind the consumer's insatiable body, behind the television and its soon-to-be-color-saturated images, behind industrial-scale molded plastic, behind the car and the highways it would take to residential neighborhoods, behind the pill, behind prenatal diagnosis, behind the H bomb. I didn't see anything. But I know that Marilyn and Elvis were two perfectly plastic bodies, carburized by drugs, just as plastic as the vinyl that would capture their voices. Those smooth, radiant bodies were



born from the ashes of Hiroshima. The new Hollywood prototypes of masculinity and femininity were already so artificial that nobody would have bet a dollar that Elvis wasn't a drag king or that Marilyn wasn't a silicone transsexual. Years later, Caesars Palace in Las Vegas held a Marilyn and Elvis pageant, drawing model imitations of their plastic heroes from around the country.

That's how it was after the war: World-Integrated Capitalism, the greatest of the prosthetic systems, set about devouring and commercializing the productions of sexual identity. Ordinary consumer products, prosthetic legs, and silicone breasts were now produced on an industrial scale using similar design, production, and sale procedures. The bodies worked out, reconfigured, mainlined, and plasticized; they treated themselves with radiation, vitamins, hormones. Gender performances, the new sexual-industrial reproduction mechanism, belonged to this new industrialized body. The capitalist machine's success depended on its ability to put material and bodily plasticity to work producing the new consumer subject. Then, little by little, this plasticity took on global dimensions. The earth itself became a great biopolitical industry. Behind all this manufacturing lay the heterosexual colonial narrative that justified the reproduction *ad aeternum* of men's mechanical bodies and mothers' "natural" (edible) flesh.

$$\ddagger = \Upsilon = \ddagger$$

mass production of consumer goods =  
 new plastic body culture =  
 new gender performances

While Nixon was selling washing machines to the Soviet Union, American dykes started secretly working their muscles just as the soldiers had done. They started providing one another with prostheses that scared their daddies. It wasn't long before

they saw that muscles and dildos suited them. On urban streets from San Francisco to New York, close to where transsexual women survived selling their malleable tits to tourists, bars were opened where the first rubber-dildoed, rubber-booted butches met the first femmes. Who could turn down a plastic cock when all across the country objects and bodies were being plasticized and (de)colored?

Amid prefabricated houses and kitchen robots, the butch seemed like a body whose design was technically simple and affordable but in social and political terms was sophisticated and costly. As if it had been subjected to the same transformation as technopatriarchal capitalism, the retro-dyke body of the 1950s mutated to the rhythm of the machine. The butch did not come to us—by which I mean natural humans of all sorts—aboard a UFO. ♠ Nor did she disembark from Communist Sputnik. She grew up in the factory. Multiply oppressed for her class, gender, race, and sexual desire, the butch is closer to the objectification and externality of the machine than to the supposed subjectivity of human beings. She is a proletarian and a guerilla. She is not afraid to put her body on the line. She knows manual labor well.

Postwar colonialist anthropology, heir of the concentration camp and laboratory, tells us that the primate forsook its animal condition thanks to the liberation of the thumb, which allowed it to make tools and handle weapons. Well then, to bring this fiction full circle in the service of the white European male hand, we may as well say that the butch forsook her female condition thanks to her laboring hand, a hand that betrayed femininity with an indecent, displaced, inconvenient gesture, incorporating work tools, excelling in manipulation, unexpectedly coupling with the machine, easily doing bodily plumbing, tenderly dominating.



Every once in a blue moon, amid the boredom that comes from the repetition of gendered behaviors, bodily positions, sexual gestures, and the monotonous droning of orgasmic shrieks, there is an event—a desperate attempt to rewrite the laws of the anatomic map, to change skins, to call pleasure by another name. The butch is that event. She caused a rupture in the repetition of the heterosexual bodies.

Daughter of a postmetaphysical era, she became a technology thief when she realized that the gesture of the hand, the use of tools, and the knowledge of machines are not naturally linked to a single male or female essence. Like a careless spy, she burst in on the cold room where the white heterosexual married couple and their kids were watching TV and stole the prostheses that allowed men to dress up their domination as nature. In what was certainly her most beautiful blow, she simulated masculinity. In what was certainly her cleverest strategy, she smuggled the furnishings of gender production. First, the white T-shirt, the chinos, the leather belt, the chest-flattening bands, the hair gel. But also the apparatuses that improved movement and communication: first the motorcycle, then the typewriter, the camera, the computer. First the dildo, then the hormones, then the flesh itself and subjectivity.

At first, the butch was just an inversion of gender put in service of the femme (the butch was the “perfect boyfriend,” the “Prince Charming” all the girls dreamed of). Then she escaped the constraints of heterosexuality and pushed her transformation to its limit to liberate herself from her apparent telos: the male body. Even when using various more or less sophisticated prostheses that had long been men’s privilege, under no circumstances did this use give rise to the same effects of domination. The

prosthesis is not essence. It is transit. It is a multiple effect, not a single origin. It exists only within the concrete context of the graft. Instruments and tools, separate from the practices of power bound to masculinity, constitute the object of a countersexual decontextualization.

In this history of sexual culture, the butch is the one who introduced working women to conceptual sex. Recycling reproductive organs in Sapphic machines. Cha-cha-cha-uh-uh! Fuck-ing without men and without women? There is no butch/femme sex outside of a shift in sex and gender roles, outside of a certain prosthetic commitment. Pleasure/pain, copy/paste, top/bottom, butch/femme are nothing but divergent vectors, operational matrixes, variable figures of a poietic heterogeneous production of multiple desires.



The butch made herself. She is colder than war, harder than stone. They call her Stone Butch. Untouchable, she manages a *countersexual* recession economy, devoting a minimal space on her (female) body to pleasure. She produces the maximum possible quantity of pleasure outside her body, in an ever-differed space, both plastic and carnal. The butch is neither touched nor penetrated. I haven't seen anything, but I know that pleasure does not come from the body—male or female—but from prosthetic incarnation, from the interface, where natural and artificial meet.

But the butch is also the product of a short circuit between the imitation of masculinity and the production of an alternative femininity. Her identity emerges from deviation, from a derailment event within the process of iteration. Apparently male, with her shaved head and a cigarette in hand, the butch declares herself heiress to a fictitious masculinity that men themselves have

not and cannot embody (given that they believe in masculinity) and that only a butch can perform and imitate successfully.

The butch is thus at the antipodes of heterosexual masculine display. Stony yet sensitive; tough yet tender; untouchable yet multiorgasmic. Her body, both denied and magnified, is fucked without being penetrated and penetrates without fucking.

The stereotypes of heterosexual masculinity and femininity fail to characterize the permutations of sexuality that a butch/femme encounter produces. Joan Nestle says that a true femme doesn't step out onto the street without a dildo in her purse. It is the femme who carefully affixes the dildo to the butch's waist, arm, or leg. A femmeless butch is a sexless butch. The butch fucks the femme with the dildo given by the latter. How can this traffic of organs be stabilized? Who does the dildo belong to? Who, then, is the penetrating and who the penetrated body? Where is the event of incorporation produced?

The butch's dildo is nothing but a prosthesis among so many others; it extends and increases her laboring hand's already-confirmed capacity. This dildo is, first and foremost, a manual machine to which the butch contributes her spiritual driving force. It's enough to graft this expert hand onto the butch's trunk so that it becomes a plastic extension of the pelvis. Meanwhile, the male remains convinced of his natural superiority.

The prosthesis doesn't phantasmically compensate for an absence; it is not hallucinatory or delusional, but rather, like the breasts on Judge Schreber's naked torso, it constitutes a band of productive intensity.<sup>59</sup> The metaphysics of the absence, shared by certain technologies and certain branches of psychoanalysis, would like to convince us that we all lack something. They tell us that the world is in proper working order because women lack penises, because men lack uteri and breasts, and because both lack the "transcendental phallus"—that is to say, the

megadildo. They tell us that animals lack souls and that cybernetic machines lack flesh and free will. They tell us that electric connections compensate for this deficiency with an excess of information. . . . We lack nothing. We do not lack a penis; we do not lack breasts. The body is already the crossroads of multiple intensities: we have as many organs as desire can produce. All we lack is gumption. The rest we've got in spades.

That is the specificity of the butch: her productive desire, her spunk. When everything seemed to suggest that a tomboy was merely playing at masculinity, compensating for something that was "lacking," the butch takes the initiative and fabricates bodies.

The butch of the 1950s was a low-tech, sexual cyborg, factory made and home operated. Her identity was a social appliance: a transorganic tissue made of spare parts taken from heterosexual junkyards. Her body was a space privileged for the implantation and displacement of new sex organs. The butch was both an apparatus and a terminal where other prostheses could connect. Like Monique Wittig, she had no vagina. Her sex was not genital. Her body was not the anatomical object of gynecology or endocrinology. Altering the reproduction of the heterosexual order, severing the chain of nature imitation, the butch departed from the laws of evolution. She was posthuman and postevolutionary. This was a political mutation taking place in the cells, in the organs. . . .

But this revolutionary moment was in no way futuristic or utopian. There was no glamour. The first butches were not chic, they were not hip, they were not cool. When these muscular arms and robust legs walked down the street, they drew comments in hushed voices: "Look at that butch," "Bro, get a load of that dyke," "Does that carpet-muncher think she's a fucking dude or something?"

MEN sing: ♪♪♪♪ THE *BUTCH* IS UGLY ♪♪♪  
 FEMMES respond: ♪♪♪♪ THE *BUTCH* IS SEXY ♪♪♪

Prosthetic ugliness is the lesbian body's avant-garde aesthetic.

Grafts, dildos, implants, drugs, hormones . . . so many other prostheses, so many other gender-production zones. The prosthesis is the occurrence of incorporation—historically, the only way to “be a body” in our postindustrial societies. The prosthesis is not abstract; it does not exist except for here and now, for this body and in this context. I haven't seen anything, but I know that in the twenty-first century all genders will be prosthetic: *masculinity* and *femininity* will be terms that designate historic (perhaps obsolete) incorporation structures. That's why the butch, as a prosthetic body, is not an exception but part of a generalized process of identity production. The macho-man Spaniard is no less prosthetic than the butch, and Bibi Anderson's curves are just as artificial (and just as glorious!) as Pamela Anderson's.

Whether we know it or not, all of us, like Agrado in Pedro Almodóvar's film *All About My Mother*, are waiting for the prosthetic transproduction of our bodies: for a new modem, a new pacemaker, a marrow transplant, a new antiviral cocktail, a better ecstasy, a hormone that makes your clitoris grow but doesn't give you hair, the pill for men, Viagra for housewives. . . .

The next century's butches don't need to look like James Dean, and they don't need to have a dick like Dad's. They're playing with the DNA sequence that separates them from heterosexual evolution and they are *MUTATING*.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 30, 2000

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This manifesto is also the journal of a trip between France and the United States. I arrived in Paris in January 1999, thanks to an invitation from Jacques Derrida to attend a seminar at the École des hautes études. I went to see what “doing deconstruction” could mean in France; I also wanted to try to pick up the lost trail of Monique Wittig. When I say “deconstruction,” I’m referring to the transatlantic reception of Jacques Derrida’s philosophy, especially through the lens of feminist queer readers, such as Judith Butler, and to what in the 1970s became known as queer theory.

There is no doubt that we have to ask about the reading and translation practices that take place on both sides of the Atlantic. In France, these practices make deconstruction look like a politically neutral intellectual game, whereas in America deconstruction is, above all, a practice of infiltration and language hybridization that undermines political and social institutions’ normative, naturalizing functions, catching them up in an irreversible shift. Queer deconstruction? It might be better to talk about “transitioning” or “grafting” or simply about “dildonics.”

This little book “finds” its spot in the political and theoretical space that could have been left open in France if *The Straight*



*Mind* had been published in French, if its author had not escaped to the desert, and if radical French lesbianism had not gone into hiding behind white liberal feminism and betrayed itself.

What are the texts that should form the deviating “canon” of queer philosophy? Where can we find agents that still remember the origins of a radical, sexual, political movement? How can we find the Anglo-Saxon thread that allows for an understanding of the French lesbian chain? Talking about queer philosophy means traveling with no guide but an invisible cartography and, in the end, with no fixed program or aim in sight, inventing the Archive.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**o the queer French activist ZOO and everyone who attended the Q seminar in the winter of 1999 and the spring of 2000 when I elaborated some of this book's central ideas, especially Xavier Lemoine, Martine Laroche, Sophie Courtial, Nini Francesco Ceccherini, Jacques Isnardi, Bernadette Henique, Gérard Verroust, and Catherine Violet. And specially to Suzette Robichon-Triton, to whom I owe virtually every piece of the lesbian archive that I haven't had to invent. To the feminists who have on several occasions given me the opportunity to speak at seminars and in conversations in France: Nicole Claude Mathieu, Danièle Charrest, Gail Pheterson, and Françoise Duroux.

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prosthetic incorporation and the prosthesis. I have learned from them all, but they shouldn't feel at all responsible for their teachings' unintended consequences.

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To my parents, who have supported my reading and writing despite their deepest convictions.

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To my trusted French editor, glorious anus and excellent dildo transporter, Guillaume Dustan.

To the LUMA Foundation where I reviewed this translation and wrote the introduction to this book.

# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. I exclude the dissident clinical practices that have been carried out by the likes of Jean Oury and Félix Guattari, which continue today in the projects of Suely Rolnik and others.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

## I. COUNTERSEXUAL SOCIETY

1. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
2. The expression “sex/gender system” was first used by Gayle Rubin in her article “The Traffic in Women,” in *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Reyne R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.
3. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967).
4. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
5. See Monique Wittig, “The Category of Sex,” *Feminist Issues*, Fall 1982, 63–68, reprinted in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 1–8.
6. See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

7. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307–30.
8. Paradoxically, this platform of repetition and reiteration is simultaneously the heterosexual subject's compulsive training center and the space where all possible subversion takes place. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 128–34.
9. Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York, Semiotext(e), 1977).
10. Monique Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," in *The Straight Mind*, 80.
11. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 143.
12. Donna Haraway. "A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies," *Configurations* 2, no. 1 (1994): 59–71.

## 2. COUNTERSEXUAL REVERSAL PRACTICES

1. *Iteration* in this context refers to the Derridian notion of *iterability*, whereby the main characteristic of a "proper name" and of a signature is not its originality but the fact that it can be repeated. See Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307–30.

## 3. THEORIES

1. Del LaGrace Volcano, *Love Bites* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1991).
2. The terms *pre-op* and *post-op* refer to the preoperative (hormonal or nonhormonal) and postoperative states of transsexual body transformations.
3. Butch/femme practices appeared in American lesbian culture at the end of the 1940s as declensions of masculinity (butch) and femininity (femme) and of the sexual roles traditionally understood as masculine and feminine. In any case, butch and femme represent two distancing mechanisms in relation to normative heterosexual woman's identity.
4. Elaine Creith, *Undressing Lesbian Sex* (London: Cassell, 1996), 91.
5. Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 220.

6. Ibid., 113.
7. Ibid., 101.
8. Ibid.
9. I owe this astute observation to Ira Livingston.
10. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 57–91, 158, capitalization in the original.
11. Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 215.
12. See, for example, Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
13. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 145, emphasis in original.
14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2013).
15. For more on *gender-fucking* in lesbian sex, see Cherry Smyth, *Lesbians Talk Queer Notions* (London: Scarlet Press, 1992).
16. Gilles Deleuze, “The Rise of the Social,” foreword to Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979), x.
17. See David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), 354.
18. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 283.
19. Monique Wittig, “The Straight Mind,” in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 32.
20. I am talking here about the ambiguity with which certain psychoanalytic theories, such as those of Julia Kristeva, adopt constructivist gender schemes while at the same time privileging traditional (maternal and prelinguistic) models of femininity.
21. This attention to practices, to what “is done,” was already a constant in Foucauldian archaeology.
22. George Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*, trans. Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 87.
23. Michel Foucault, “The Gay Science,” interview by Jean Le Bitoux, trans. Nicolae Morar and Daniel W. Smith, *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Spring 2011): 396.

24. Gayle Rubin, with Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic," interview, in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 85.
25. The opposition of touch and vision has structured modern notions of science and knowledge. Touch, like love, is associated with blindness and therefore with illness and a lack of autonomy. See David M. Kleinberg-Levin, ed., *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and Terry Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
26. Vern Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York: Wiley, 1976).
27. Cited in Reay Tannahill, *Sex in History* (1980; reprint, New York: Scarborough House, 1992), 344.
28. Samuel Auguste Tissot, *A Treatise on the Diseases Produced by Onanism*, trans. "a physician" (New York: Collins & Hannay, 1832).
29. For example, one of Tissot's proofs of the causal relationship between masturbation and madness was the preponderance of "young masturbators" who populated the psychiatric wards in France and Switzerland (*ibid.*, *passim*).
30. In this energy circuit, vaginal secretions occupy a precise position in between water, blood, and semen, without ever attaining the "active power" possessed by semen, according to Tissot.
31. Consider the repercussions that this definition of sex as labor would have for the redefinition of prostitution.
32. See Vernon A. Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
33. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1812); Edward B. Foote, *Plain Home Talk About the Human System* (New York: n.p., 1871).
34. See Vern L. Bullough and Martha Voght, "Homosexuality and Its Confusion with the 'Secret Sin' in Pre-Freudian America," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 28 (1973): 143–55.
35. According to the medical historian Sander Gilman, it must be the skin that bears the stigma of the illness, given that touch is the threshold of contamination. See Sander L. Gilman, "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease," *October* 43 (1987): 87–108.

36. For more on the notion of infection and contamination in relation to colonial politics, see, for instance, Ana Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995); Daniel J. Walther, *Sex and Control: Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1880–1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2015). For a relation to biopolitics, see Michael Hart and Toni Negri, *Empire* (Paris: Exils, 2001), 176–78.
37. Vern L. Bullough, “Technology for the Prevention of ‘Les maladies produites par la masturbation,’” *Technology and Culture* 28, no. 4 (1987): 828–32.
38. *Ibid.*, 832.
39. David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 86.
40. *SandM Utopian Guardian*, no. 34 (1999).
41. See Stephanie Heuze, *Changer le corps* (Paris: Musardine, 2000).
42. *Ibid.*, 8.
43. There is a third veterinary technological line that I do not analyze here but that is nonetheless important for the study of the differentiating production of animal and human corporality. A series of technologies common to the production of hysterical and lesbian femininity, the feminized male body, black corporality, disability, transsexuality, and animality remains to be researched. Certain tools used exclusively in veterinary contexts are also used in alternative sexual practices. The cattle prod, for example, is a hybrid technology that has its origins in the mutilation and castration of large domestic animals and whose electrification dates back to the nineteenth century, but we also find it today in the *SandM Utopian Guardian* guide to alternative sexual practices. The page that introduces these technologies includes detailed instruction on how to sterilize these tools and an introduction to the use of prophylactic measures, from gloves and masks to hypodermic needles and catheters.
44. Georges Didi-Huberman has developed a brilliant analysis of the relationship between the medical and discursive invention of hysteria and the development of modern photography. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of La Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004).



45. Ambroise Paré's recommended therapies also included marriage for young ladies and horseback riding for older women and widows. *Oleum nardum*-based treatments were reserved for extreme cases.
46. Pierre Briquet, *Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'hystérie* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1859), quoted in Rachel Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: Hysteria, the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 37.
47. For more on the technification of hysteria, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), and Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*.
48. Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*, chaps. 4 and 5.
49. From among these devices, it seems worthwhile to highlight the vibrating bar, the vibrating chair, the trunk-shaking apparatus, and the electromechanical centrifugal vibrator.
50. Nicolas Fontanus, *The Womans Doctour; or, An Exact and Distinct Explanation of All Such Diseases as Are Peculiar to That Sex with Choise and Experimentall Remedies Against the Same* (London: n.p., 1652), 4–5, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A39862.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.
51. Robert Taylor, *The Technology of Orgasm* (1905), quoted in Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*, 59.
52. Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*, 57.
53. There was a whole class of hydrotherapeutic treatments for hysteria, such as the shower, that transitioned from medical institutions to the domestic space and were subsequently reappropriated as pleasure-producing technologies.
54. See Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
55. See Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 70.
56. Jules Amar, *Organisation physiologique du travail* (Paris: Dunod et Pinot, 1917).
57. Good Vibrations, which has been based in San Francisco since 1977, was the first women's sex shop established on feminist principles.
58. Do not forget the importance of the hand, in anthropological discourse a tool and therefore indicator of species differentiation (animal/man) and gender differentiation (female/male).

59. Michel A. Rosen, *Molly, 1993*, in *Sexual Art: Photographs That Test the Limits* (San Francisco: Shaynew Press, 1994).
60. See International Commission on Civil Status, *Transsexualism in Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000).
61. See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 329.
62. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, vol. 2 of *Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 357. I am referring to “becoming woman.”
63. I have borrowed the phrase “operating table” from Foucault, who borrowed it from Raymond Roussel; see the beginning of Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).
64. On the trajectory of the transsexual and transgender movement, see Pat Califia, *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1996).
65. Suzanne J. Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexual Infants,” in *Sex/Machine: Readings in Culture, Gender, and Technology*, ed. Patrick D. Hopkins (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 248.
66. Judith Butler, “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality,” *GLQ* 7, no. 4 (2001): 621.
67. Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender,” 244.
68. Cheryl Chase, “Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 301.
69. The sentence “Moi, je ne n’ai pas de vagin” (I don’t have a vagina) is attributed to Monique Wittig. According to different stories, she uttered that sentence at a feminist conference during the 1980s.
70. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 180.
71. Money cited in Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender,” 252.
72. John Money, “Hermaphroditism and Pseudohermaphroditism,” in *Gynecologic Endocrinology*, ed. Jay J. Gold (New York: Hoeber, 1968), 460, quoted in Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender,” 251.
73. Quoted in Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender,” 244.

74. For a longer development of these intuitions, see Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics*, trans. Bruce Benderson, introduction trans. Kevin Gerry Dunn (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).
75. This colonial understanding of reproduction can be found, for example, in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family* (1939; reprint, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969). For a reading of this text, see Angela Davis, *Women, Race, Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 14–23.
76. John Money, “Psychological Counseling: Hermaphroditism,” in *Endocrine and Genetic Diseases of Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. L. I. Gardner (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1975), 610.
77. Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.
78. For an interesting collection of essays on gestation and education techniques, see Jan Zimmerman, ed., *The Technological Woman: Interfacing with Tomorrow* (New York: Praeger, 1983).
79. Jean-François Lyotard, “Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy?” in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 52.
80. Gena Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).
81. The most influential example of these violent narratives is Janice G. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1979).
82. Andrea Dworkin, “Sexual Economics: The Terrible Truth,” in *Letters from a War Zone* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993), 117–25.
83. Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 17–18.
84. This kind of hybridization can be clearly seen in medical discourses on cancer, AIDS, and other such ailments. See Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
85. On the dematerialization of consciousness and the devalization of matter in Western metaphysics, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

86. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Cosimo, 2008), book 1, part 4, p. 31.
87. Christoph Asendorf, *Batteries of Life: On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 42–43.
88. Marie-Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 27; Roxanne Panchasi, “Reconstructions: Prosthetics and the Rehabilitation of the Male Body in the World War in France,” *Differences* 7, no. 3 (1995): 109–40.
89. Jules Amar, *La prothèse et le travail de mutilés* (Paris: Dunot et Pinat, 1916).
90. Ibid.
91. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).
92. Georges Teyssot, “Body Building,” *Lotus* 94 (September 1997): 121.
93. Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (New York: Routledge, 1985).
94. Norbert Weiner, *The Human Use of Human Beings* (New York: Avon, 1954).
95. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 212.

#### 4. COUNTERSEXUAL READING EXERCISES

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 70.
2. Deleuze quotes Michel Cressole, *Deleuze* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1973), 105, in Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic,” in *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 5. One of the accusations that Michel Cressole leveled at Deleuze was that the latter used homosexuality in the same way that Garbo used sunglasses, to put on airs.
3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Sur *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*,” interview by Catherine Backès-Clément, *L’Arc* 49 (1972), translated in “Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on *Anti-Oedipus*,” in Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, 15.

4. There is not space in this chapter to consider the relationship between the notions of “molecular homosexuality” and “becoming woman,” which merits its own analysis. Nor do I consider the complex figure of Albertina in this chapter’s discussion of Deleuze’s book *Proust and Signs* because I have dealt with that topic in another article: “Albertina Anal” (unpublished manuscript). For more on American feminism’s cautiousness with respect to the notion of “becoming woman,” see Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook, eds., *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
5. In 1972, Guy Hocquenghem published *Le désir homosexuel (Homosexual Desire)*, trans. Daniella Dangoor [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993], in which he developed a Marxist reading of homosexuality as a political regime that was also inspired by *Anti-Oedipus*. Gilles Deleuze wrote the preface to Guy Hocquenghem, *L’Après-Mai des faunes* (Paris: Grasset, 1974); for an English translation of the preface, see note 16.
6. René Schérer, *Regards sur Deleuze* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1998), 72; all translations of quotations from this source are by Kevin Gerry Dunn except where noted.
7. “Unité d’une prétendue philosophie du désir,” see Deleuze, *Marcel Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 43–46. The story of some of these Deleuzian ups and downs can be found in Françoise Chatelet, *Cronique des idées perdues* (Paris: Stock, 1997).
8. Cressole, *Deleuze*, 102, English translation by Kevin Gerry Dunn.
9. *Ibid.*, English translation by Kevin Gerry Dunn.
10. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748; reprint, London: Simon and Brown, 2011), “Cause and Effect” in part 1.
11. Gilles Deleuze, “On Philosophy,” in *Negotiations 1972–1990*, 138.
12. Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic,” 11, emphasis in original.
13. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 61, a translation of *Chaosmose* (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1992).
14. See the argument made in Ian Buchanan, introduction to *A Deleuzian Century?* ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 5.

15. Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic," 12.
16. Gilles Deleuze, "Preface to Hocquenghem's *L'Après-Mai des faunes*," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 284.
17. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
18. Instead of following Ferdinand de Saussure's division of the sign into the signifier and the signified, Deleuze and Guattari use Louis Trolle Hjelmslev's formulation, according to which the sign unfolds into forms of content and forms of expression.
19. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 5.
20. *Ibid.*, 11.
21. *Ibid.*, 8.
22. *Ibid.*, 9.
23. *Ibid.*, 80–81.
24. Schérer, *Regards sur Deleuze*, 65, translation as given in Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 81.
25. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 15.
26. *Ibid.*, 81.
27. Proust's father, Adrien Achille, was an epidemiologist who worked on the study of aphasia, hysteria, and neurasthenia. As a doctor's son and an asthmatic from the age of nine (at the time considered a symptom of a psychopathological condition), Proust was well acquainted with medical descriptions of sexual pathologies. Although Deleuze never invokes the medical discourse in his analysis of Proust, it is possible to establish an approximation between the interpretation of Proust's (and, hence, Deleuze's) homosexuality and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs's theory of the Third Sex. I have elaborated on this connection in "Becoming Urning" (unpublished manuscript).
28. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze prefers the language of heterosexuality to that of intersexuality.
29. The English translation of *Proust and Signs* being used here incorrectly renders "les amour intersexuelles" as "heterosexual loves" instead of "intersexual loves." See Gilles Deleuze, *Marcel Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 8.
30. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 10–11.

31. Ibid., 80.
32. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
33. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 135; the translation of *Proust and Signs* used here includes both parts in the same volume.
34. Ibid., 136.
35. Ibid., 136–37, emphasis in original.
36. Ibid., 137.
37. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
38. Schérer, *Regards sur Deleuze*, 65.
39. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 318.
40. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 80.
41. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 83.
42. For Deleuze, Charlus is the pollinating insect and the desiring machine. For Guy Hocquenghem, Charlus and Jupien rather “have no sex . . . they are the very machine of sexual desire” (*Homosexual Desire*, 91).
43. For more on the topic of guilt and the law’s depressive conscience, see Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 131–36; Gilles Deleuze, “Coldness and Cruelty,” introduction to *Venus in Furs* by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, in *Masochism*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 81–90; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 42–44; Schérer, *Regards sur Deleuze*, 71–73.
44. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 81.
45. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 280, emphasis in original.
46. Deleuze met Guattari in 1969 and was impressed by the latter’s way of “confronting philosophy in a state of creativity” despite not having philosophical training (Robert Maggiori, “Nous deux: Entretien avec Deleuze et Guattari,” *Libération*, September 12, 1991). From that moment on, Deleuze and Guattari worked together on several projects spanning more than two decades.
47. Quoted by Brian Massumi in the translator’s foreword to Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, x, using but slightly modifying (most notably replacing “screwing” with “ass-fuck”) the translation of Gilles Deleuze, “I Have Nothing to Admit,” trans. Janis Forman,

- in *Anti-Oedipus*, special issue of *Semiotext(e)* 2, no. 3 (1977): 112, <http://azinelibrary.org/approved/anti-oedipus-psychoanalysis-schizopolitics-semiotext-e-volume-ii-number-2-1977-1.pdf>.
48. Here one must revisit the writings of Otto Weininger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Lacan, among others, to uncover the question of heterosexuality that lies in hiding beneath research on femininity, sexual difference, and homosexuality. See also Slavoj Žižek's analysis of Weininger, Nietzsche, and Freud in *Metastases of Enjoyment* (New York: Verso, 1995).
  49. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 92.
  50. See Reay Tannahill, *Sex in History* (New York: Scarborough House, 1980), 99.
  51. Alain Rey, *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1992), under *godemichi* and *godmicy*.
  52. Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle* (Paris: Edouard Champion, 1925–1967), and Rey, *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, under *godemiché*.
  53. Pierre Guiraud, *Dictionnaire érotique* (Paris : Payot, 2006), under *godemiché*.
  54. Giles Jacob, *Tractatus de hermaphroditis* (1817), Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13569/13569-h/13569-h.htm>.
  55. John S. Farmer and William Ernest Henley, *A Dictionary of Slang: An Alphabetical History of Colloquial, Unorthodox, Underground, and Vulgar English* (1903; reprint, London: Wordsworth Editions, 1982), under *dildo*.
  56. See Jonathon Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, digital ed. (2018), <https://greensdictofslang.com/>, under *dildo* and *gode*.
  57. Joan Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua Castellana*, 4 vols. (Bern: Francke, 1954).
  58. This text was first published in French, separately from the *Countersexual Manifesto*, as “Prothèse, mon amour,” in *Attirances: lesbiennes fems/Lesbiennes butch*, ed. Christine Lemoine and Ingrid Renard (Paris: Éditions Gaies et lesbiennes, 2001), 329–35.
  59. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 19.





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