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FORCE AND STABILIZATION:

TRANSNESS IN 20TH-CENTURY CRITICAL THOUGHT

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For Rose

We say *Iro*, that is, color, and say *Ku*, that is, emptiness, the open, the sky. We say: without *Iro*, no *Ku*.

- Martin Heidegger, *A Dialogue on Language*

Table of Contents

List of Figures

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Introduction – Bad Citizens

> I look upon the finest logical demonstration the way a sensible [*vernünftig*] girl regards a love letter.
>
> - Letter from Johann Georg Hamann to Immanuel Kant, July 27, 1759

In the Addition to §166 of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel encounters a problem within his account of the division of the sexes, an occurrence which should not be possible, yet which is and which he cannot explain: the education of women. For Hegel contends that the knowledge of spirit's universality is achieved in the male sex and in females is maintained only in the form of feeling and concrete individuality. Being that the advanced sciences, philosophy, and "certain forms of artistic production"[1] demand a universal faculty, women are better suited to those activities which rely upon imaginative ideas [*Einfälle*], taste, and elegance. However, Hegel knows that women are in fact educated even in those domains which require the universal faculty that they should not possess. Within this aporia between what ought to be and what is Hegel stammers and admits that he has met his limit. "The education of women happens—one knows not how—by, as it were, breathing in ideas, more by living than by acquiring knowledge."[2] Hegel's anxiety extends from the page. For he knows that women are ruled by their contingent inclinations. By their mere opinions. They are like plants whose unity is

[1] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Stephen Houlgate, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford [UK] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 169.

[2] Hegel, 169; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer, 15. *Auflage, Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2017), 319. Translation altered. The German is as follows: "*Die Bildung der Frauen geschieht, man weiß nicht wie, gleichsam durch die Atmosphäre der Vorstellung, mehr durch das Leben als durch das Erwerben von Kenntnissen.*"

regulated by the indeterminacy of feeling, not the universal determinacy of masculine thought and technical exertion.[3] Or so it should be.

However, women *are* educated. Exceptions do occur. Dangerous exceptions. For when women trespass into the provinces of man's domain—that is, scientific universal cognition—they "put those provinces themselves in danger."[4] When women rule "the state is at once in jeopardy."[5] The danger of women is the danger of parasitic indetermination. It is the danger of the imposter. And this danger extends to the method of the dialectic itself. For if the concrete can come to stand for abstraction then the universal idea, reason, and the idea of the universal itself, are all in danger.

Yet perhaps—rather than a fear of what the plantlike femininity of concrete individuality does when it trespasses upon scientific, universal cognition—what in fact produces Hegel's anxiety, what makes him afraid, is that what ought not to be, is. And is, not because of a transgression, but rather because of a methodological misunderstanding. An error in reason between the ought and the is, the rule and the fact, femininity and the woman. What makes Hegel nervous, what causes him to stammer, is that the problem of female education is a demonstration

[3] "The difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants. Animals correspond more to the character of men, while plants correspond more to women because the latter's development is more peaceful and the principle that underlies it is the more indeterminate unity of feeling." Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, 169.

[4] "These are the man's provinces. There can be exceptions for individual women, but the exception is not the rule. Women, when they trespass into these provinces, put these provinces themselves in danger." Hegel, 439n2. Quoted from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: nach der Vorlesungsnachschrift von H. G. Hotho 1822/23*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting, Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818 - 1831, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Ed. und Kommentar in 6 Bd. von Karl-Heinz Ilting; Bd. 3 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), 525–26.

[5] Hegel, 169.

of the limits of philosophy. A proof that philosophy is not up to the task set by its own expectations.

A contention of this dissertation is that the evidence of the failure of the gap between the concrete and the abstract that Hegel recognizes in the fact of the existence of an educated woman is a failure that is constitutive within the meeting of sexuality and philosophy. That is, the fantasy of the scientific nature of philosophy, that it reflects and produces truth rather than mere opinion, meets its limit at the sexual. For sexual difference and sexuality do not obey. They are bad citizens. Without proper etiquette they display their upbringing, that they are mere conventions, even in the face of truth.

Engaging the structure of Hegel's text—which enacts a simultaneous recognition and disavowal of femininity—sets the stage for the ways in which this dissertation understands the role of transness within 20th-century continental philosophy, and particularly post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. I argue that these archives have sought to instrumentalize transness as a means to express their philosophical desires for destabilization and the breakdown of structuring social and conceptual categorizations. Yet, as with femininity for Hegel, transness resists this internment. What this dissertation demonstrates is not only the manner in which transness, as a privileged concept within post-structuralism, refuses its conceptual determinations, but, simultaneously, the way in which this refusal is itself a necessary and productive aspect of these discourses themselves. Thus, this dissertation seeks not only to disclose these conceptual constellations, but also to clarify the genealogy of their emergence.

In the story of the movement from modern to contemporary European philosophy, if we position that juncture with figures such as Nietzsche and Freud, sexuality might be said to have emerged from the shadows. No longer that which should not be spoken of—or if spoken of,

contained as a mere addendum to a theory of ethical life—sexuality becomes a central component of philosophical thought. Not only within moral philosophy, or social-political theory, but as a constitutive and productive aspect of knowledge and cognition as such. This transition sets the stage, as it were, not only for 20th-century philosophical discourses of eroticism and desire (for example those of Bataille and Lacan) but also feminist psychoanalysis, post-structural feminism, queer and trans theory, affect theory, etc.

However, while this account seems to depict a fundamental transition of the position of sexuality *vis-à-vis* philosophy, what in fact it demonstrates is not an alteration but rather a cinematic gesture of reframing. For while indeed Nietzsche offers a metaphor of the concept of truth as the woman who exposes herself,[6] and Freud positions sexual taboos and repression as the central mechanisms for understanding both individual and social human experience, what these constructions maintain is an understanding of sexuality as a metonymy for the limits of the self-certainty of the claims of universal reason. Thus, while between the two philosophical epochs there is a fundamental difference in the manner of exposition, in the explicit nature of the self-refection, and in the moral relation to the sexual, in both epochs sexuality remains in the self-same position concerning the limit of philosophy's ability to achieve its own ideals. The contextuality of truth, the prejudices of philosophers, the self-opacity of our own psyche—thus the limits to the claims to reason—are named under the auspices of the sexual and sexual

[6] "Perhaps truth is a woman who has grounds for not showing her grounds? Perhaps her name is – to speak Greek – *Baubo*?" Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8. Baubo is the name of the woman who causes the grieving goddess Demeter to laugh by lifting up her skirts and showing herself. For more on Nietzsche's writing on Baubo see Frederika Tevebring, "'Baubo, Truth, and Joyful Philology,'" *The German Quarterly* 93.3, (Summer 2020): 359–73.

difference: truth as a woman who has not allowed herself to be won,[7] repression as the central mechanism for philosophical and artistic thought, and so on. If there was indeed a transition from modern philosophy to contemporary, it was not through an undoing of the position of the sexual as the limit of philosophy's purview, but rather a change in the orientation toward that limit. For within contemporary continental philosophy we see a desire for the recognition of the unknowability of truth, and perhaps, a self-consciousness of the role of sexuality within the setting of those limits, and thus, the mobilization of sexuality as a term of art.

If the orientation of contemporary philosophy toward sexuality is merely a new kind of defence mechanism—a loquaciousness that displays its anxiety through spectacle rather than omittance—it is within this context that this dissertation is situated. Taking as its starting point French post-structural philosophy—a loose set of text and thinkers which emerge from within the legacies of Nietzschean genealogy and Freudian psychoanalysis—it examines the effects and explications of sexuality, and especially transness, within French thought from the 1960s to the 1990s and the legacy of these discourses upon contemporary feminist, queer, and trans philosophy. While I maintain that the role of sexuality as a limit to the extensions of philosophy is sustained throughout these discourses, I also argue that the terrain in which the sexual and its relationship to truth is formulated within philosophy has gone through a subsequent transformation. For if the transition from modern to contemporary continental philosophy demonstrates a shift in the orientation of the relationship between philosophy and sexuality—

[7] "Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness, with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper ways for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won." Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 2.

from disavowal to mobilization—then the shift to the 'post-structural' includes another such epistemological transition. This transition does not affect the role of sexuality as such (which maintains its discursive position as that which determines the limits of reason) but rather in its methodological ability to determine signification. For a fundamental assumption shared across the post-structural, queer, and trans theory texts this dissertation engages is that all representation and signification is produced within historical contexts, and thus cannot be determined as such, but only within a given framework. Thus, if sexuality expresses the limits of philosophy's ability to systematically synthesize truth, the shift within these discourses is towards a transcendental desire to excavate the conditions of the emergence of those very concepts; asking what are the conditions for the emergence of the concepts of truth, of sexuality, of the woman, etc. It is from within this framework that transness as a philosophical concept comes into view.

For from within a field of discourses that desire disentanglement, destabilization, and self-conscious recognition of the conventionality of knowledge, transness came to occupy a privileged position as a metonymy for those desires. From within a genealogy of thought with its roots in 19th-century concepts of psychosexual hermaphroditism, bi-sexuality, the pathologization of inversion, etc. transness emerged as the exemplary conceptual site within sexual discourses for a reification of the instability of knowledge. If these methodologies called into question the validity and fixity of discourse, then transness served as a seemingly perfect rhetorical mechanism and device for their explication. Even when not named as such, transness was proffered within a chain of signification (transition, translation, force, etc.) that emerged as a central figural instantiation of the desire for the deconstruction of binary oppositions, and the dissolution of the reigning regimes of symbolization. However, as with the previous epochal philosophical movements, the mobilization of the sexual was encountered by a hidden force of

its denial. The claims of transness as a metonymy for instability and the privileging of force came against their limits, namely, that these constructions—of pure force, transition, alteration—were themselves reliant on conceptual sources that, while necessary, were not accessible from within the discourses themselves. The seemingly disruptive force of transness served, in fact, to stabilize these concepts, transforming them into presuppositions that allowed these discourses to avoid confronting their own unacknowledged foundations.

This realization gestures to a fundamental contention of this dissertation; namely, that all discourse is stabilized by its own conditions of possibility and that these conditions are unknowable to that discourse as a totality. This contention is shared in broad form with many of the philosophers this dissertation analyzes, yet, it is a further claim that these post-structural discourses, while instrumental to the development of these arguments, have offered insufficient methodologies for which to satisfactorily develop them. These insufficiencies mark not only a failure to develop such methodologies but is rooted in their discursive orientation. Through an examination of the co-implication of transness, broadly understood, and the concept of 'force' as found within these discourses, this insufficiency becomes apparent. Within the construction of transness as an embodiment of force, prejudicial assumptions become apparent concerning the self-opacity of discourse. Indeed, in the overwhelming majority of post-structural texts in which transness appears what is not given is an account of how to think transness as a form of identity rather than as a reified concept for transgression. This failure is not an example of discourses improperly applying their own lessons, but rather, it indicates and is internal to a fundamental methodological and epistemological violence constitutive of the discourses themselves.

§1. Stabilization and Force

> Limitless space where a sun would attest not to the day, but to the night delivered of stars, multiple night.
>
> - Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*

Definitionally, *stabilization* is that which allows for a thing to be encountered as a thing. For everything has an infinite number of things that make it a thing within a particular encounter for which it is a thing. But while within an encounter it may be possible to know certain elements of what makes the thing a thing, there are an infinite amount of other things that cannot be known but nevertheless determine the thing as a thing. Stability thus involves both those things that are known about what makes the thing a thing and an infinite amount of other things that cannot be known. Even the word 'thing' for those unknown things says too much about their thingness. A divine thing could know all things that make the thing a thing. All other things are determined, in a large part, by the absolute opacity of the heterogeneity of an encounter with anything. A thing is only a thing, that is an encounter is only an encounter, within its own field of stabilization, no less because the extent of the field can never be known in totality.

While these concerns have been germane to philosophy since at least its modern form, and are often gestured to in the texts studied in this dissertation, inadequate attention has been given to how stabilization operates in these discourses themselves. The focus of this study is therefore to shift attention from the ontoepistemological problem of stabilization which has determined the trajectory of modern European philosophy (through, for example, Cartesian hyperbolic doubt, or Kant's concept of the transcendental) toward a privileging of a discourse's methodological stabilization.

In turning to Paul De Man's "The Rhetoric of Blindness," we find an engagement with these concerns through his prognosis of a problematic within contemporary literary criticism. Using Maurice Blanchot as an example, De Man argues that Blanchot's main thematic of 'the disappearance of the self' is impossible to assert without recording its absence; namely that "the thematic assertion of this absence reintroduces a form of selfhood."[8] For language as such presupposes reading as an act which introduces an other entity to the text, an otherness that relies upon the concept of selfhood even merely to manifest its critique. Georges Poulet, another mid-century literary critic, shares a similar methodological problem to Blanchot. He asserts that in the act of reading the literary subject originates its own temporal world. However, this origin depends on "the prior existence of an entity that lies beyond the reach of the self, though not beyond the reach of a language that destroys the possibility of origin."[9] The problem, therefore, for both Blanchot and Poulet is that they say something other than what they mean to say. That is, their critical insight is undermined by its own epistemological assumptions.

However, in De Man's reading, this is not because of a failure on the part of these critics' methodologies. Rather, it is a constitutive aspect of criticism that there is a fundamental gap between a text and its insights. A text can grope toward an insight only due to the fact that its method remains unavailable to this very insight. Thus Blanchot's text can offer the insight of the dissolution of the subject only to a reader who is able to recognize Blanchot's blindnesses. This insight, which is the contradiction between what the text says and its intention, is only available to an other, namely the reader. This reader, of course, observes this insight only because of their

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[8] Paul De Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., rev, Theory and History of Literature, v. 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 105.

[9] De Man, 105.

own constitutive blindness themselves, which is a necessary predicate of conceptual formation, but of which they are "by definition incompetent to ask."[10] Moreover, the observation by the reader of the internal blindnesses within the text that they are reading, must be accepted within the terms of the text itself. That is, a blindness is only that blindness within the event of the reading and set by the terms of the engagement.[11] While wider in its scope than De Man's extrapolations of the blindnesses specifically within the act of literary criticism, the concept of stabilization, as developed above, shares with De Man's concept numerous structuring associations. Especially, that every discourse contains within its insights a field of stabilization that is necessary for the discourse's perpetuation, yet is not encounterable from within its own framework. Nevertheless, these insights can only recognized by a reading as given through the language of that discourse, for otherwise its content would be encountered as merely a manifold.

In this dissertation, I focus on the errors that emerge within post-structural discourses in terms of their inability to methodologically accept the lesson of the limits to their own textual mastery. I therefore specify two discursive errors that emerge in relation to the concept of stabilization: 1) An *error of stabilization* is a claim to give an account of all the things in an encounter that make the thing a thing. This error is definitionally an error, as stabilization can, as such, never be given in a totality. 2) An *error of preterition*. Preterition is a rhetorical term for a figure in which something is enumerated through its exclusion, for example, 'I won't talk about how x is in fact y," which of course establishes the relation of x and y through the claim of

[10] De Man, 106.

[11] "Their blindness, it will be remembered, consisted in the affirmation of a methodology that could be 'deconstructed' in terms of their own findings." De Man, 139.

omittance. An error of preterition is thus a claim that gives an account of what it does not know about what makes the thing a thing, which indeed means it claims to know those very things.

These two errors allow the discourses under study to achieve a stability of meaning that is at odds with the philosophy of knowledge that they endorse, one rooted in the objections contemporary philosophy made to the epistemology of its predecessors**.** Genealogically, this can be traced to the inaugural movements of contemporary philosophy. In "On the Prejudices of Philosophers" from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche emphasizes an insight that had always escaped the fundamental assumptions of modern philosophers, namely "that a thought comes when 'it' wishes, and not when 'I' wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts to say that the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think'."[12] Nietzsche names it a 'superstition' to assume that this 'it' that thinks is a subject, due to the grammatical habit of assuming that every action has a cause. But what is known is only the thought, therefore an assumption that this thinking is a predicate of a substance is nothing but a secondary interpretation that emerges from the process of thinking, and therefore without any immediate certainty. For Nietzsche, this is an expression of the most fundamental prejudice of all modern thought, namely that ontology describes being, in which being is the expression of a substance which is determined through its attributes. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* he expresses this through a metaphor of the popular expression of a 'lightning flash'. He writes:

> For instance, just as ordinary people separate lightning from its flashing, and take the latter as its *doing*, as the effect of a subject that is called lightning, so too popular morality separates strength from the expressions of strength, as if behind the strong one there were an indifferent substratum *free* to express strength or not to. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; the 'doer' is merely tacked on as a fiction to the doing—the doing is everything. The people basically

[12] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 24.

> double the doing when they have the lightning flashing; this is a doing-doing: it posits the same occurrence once as cause and then once more its effect.[13]

This privileging of becoming over being and of force over form, was maintained as a fundamental assumption within the post-structural French archives that this dissertation engages.[14] Indeed, it is because of this privileging that, as I have maintained, transness became metonymized as a figuration for the contemporary unmooring of ontological categories. Transness, therefore, was used as a means to satisfy the desire for a pure expression of becoming, and of transition; that which makes evident the absolute instability of conceptual and discursive categories. Yet, what this privileging of force is unable to account for, or rather epistemologically denies, is the stabilization of the concept of force that each discourse relies upon. In fact, the fetishism of force that arises in the second half of the 20th century is precisely an expression of the desire to deny the acknowledgment of stabilization. That is, it is maintained due to the desire to find a means for the expression of a category of pure expression and thus as conditional of categorization as such. However, what this dissertation demonstrates is that this reification of transness through the concept of force denies the specificity of transness as a category of identity. For the concept of transness as an identity relies, of course, on stabilization that is both known and unknown, consciously experienced and unconsciously determining. That this is the case is self-evident, what is not self-evident and in need of demonstration is the gap

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[13] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, volume 8 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 236. Emphasis in Original.

[14] See for example, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92–102; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Reprint (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002), 3–30; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 1–50.

between the self-evidence of these claims and the mobilization of the conception of transness that expressly denies this possibility as a fundamental aspect of its conceptual construction. For as goes the blindness concerning stabilization within the privileging of force, *mutatis mutandis*, goes the reification of transness as an expression of becoming and destabilization.

§2. Chapter Summaries

> Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
> And speak the truth that no man may believe.
>
> - Alfred Tennyson, *Tiresias*

The first two chapters of my dissertation engage primarily with errors of preterition, while the third and fourth deal with errors of stabilization. While transness as a matter of lived experience appears more explicitly in the later chapters, the first two chapters show how the rhetorical devices used in post-structural texts establish a treatment of sexuality in which transness is shown to stabilize the conceptual formations not only of sexual difference within these discourses, but embodiment and conceptuality more broadly.

In Chapter One, I trace a conceptual genealogy in both Derrida and Foucault's writing that will set the terrain for examining the relationship between transness and force throughout the dissertation. To do so, I turn first to a textual debate between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida concerning the status of madness within Descartes' construction of the *cogito*. This debate has primarily been positioned around the problem of the concepts of externality/internality as they relate to history. My chapter, however, frames it differently, attending rather to the methodological operations of deconstruction specifically concerning the problem of justification. Namely, what justifies Derrida's claim that madness is internal to the

operations of reason, and what allows for the determination that the concept of madness can be known within a given reading? Indeed, Chapter One asks, what justifies the account that Derrida maintains of a difference between the stable and the unstable as determined not from within a text but through a conventional interpretation? For while Derrida's texts offer a hermeneutical conception of textuality that maintains, alongside De Man, that blindness is a necessary component in the production of any insight, I argue that because of its methodological operations it is unable to justify its own assumptions

I then apply these findings of the structuring preteritionary error within deconstruction to a specific example in which Derrida explicitly attends to questions concerning sexual difference, namely a later work by Derrida on the French artist Colette Deblé, named *Prégnances: Lavis de Collette Deblé, Peintures*.[15] Utilizing the methodological findings developed earlier in the chapter, I argue that Derrida's deconstruction of the position of the feminine within representation gestures to an unacknowledged series of assumptions that stabilize Derrida's claims; namely those that arise because of a reliance on the assumption that sexual difference must be understood as an oppositional pair and therefore as determined through a binary logic, in which each appears as the *différance* of the other.[16]

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[15] Jacques Derrida and Colette Deblé, *Prégnances: Lavis de Colette Deblé, Peintures*, Rencontre (Mont-de-Marsan: Atelier des brisants, 2004).

[16] Thus, what is being questioned is the self-certainty that sexual difference can be assumed to be governed through a logic of opposition and thus under the sway of *différance*. A similar structure is found in Derrida's text "Différance" in which he posits that all of the pairs of opposites which construct philosophy appear as the *différance* of their other, that is, their other both differed and differed. Without attending to the claim itself, what I wish to draw attention to is that Derrida does not give justification, or any account, for what counts as the structuring terms of 'philosophy'. He writes, "Thus one could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase

Chapter Two charts the legacy of these methodological errors of preterition within deconstruction as it applies to French feminist psychoanalytic readings of the concept of 'bisexuality'. The chapter examines readings by Luce Irigaray and Sarah Kofman of Freud's concept of bisexuality. It argues that although offering widely contrasting explications of the role of femininity within Freud's work, both Irigaray and Kofman rely on a shared series of assumptions concerning Freud's concepts that is undercut by their own methodological prejudices. That is, even while admitting that Freud's construction of sexual difference both denies any knowable facticity as to what constitutes sexual difference beyond mere convention, Irigaray and Kofman assume that Freud's conception of bisexuality privileges the masculine as the unitary manifestation of the libido.

According to Irigaray, Freud's fundamental phallocratic assumptions leave the feminine as nothing but a pure negativity which nonetheless affects difference, if only through its haunting of the masculine as that which it is not, yet is always in danger of becoming. This conception, on its surface, and without Irigaray's notice seems very similar to Freud's concept of bisexuality, yet there are vital and fundamental contrasting aspects as well. For bisexuality indicates, within Freud's texts, a primordial indifferentiation anterior to sexuation yet one that is maintained, not as identity, but as a constant threat within sexual difference of its own unbecoming. Analogous but contrasting to the death drive, bisexuality manifests not a desire to return to a primordial state

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itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and differed in the economy of the same (the intelligible as differing-deferring the sensible,…."Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 17.

of indifferentiation,[17] but the danger that is also present within difference from that which it is not. Bisexuality is not a drive—it has no history, no economy, no vicissitudes—and yet it is maintained without content. Thus, while in a certain way homologous to Irigaray's conception of a negative femininity that retains its effects upon sexuality, bisexuality is not dialectically organized. Kofman is far more attentive than Irigaray to these ambiguities within bisexuality as Freud develops it. However, because of her own unacknowledged assumptions concerning sexual difference, namely its constitution within binary relation, she is also unable to recognize the full measure of the conceptual developments of Freud's writings on bisexuality.

These readings lead to a fundamental assumption of the second half of the dissertation, namely that transness (under various determinations: psychosexual hermaphroditism, transsexuality, transgender, transness, non-binary, etc.) has been historically figured as both an origin of sexual difference and its excess and perversion. While Freudian bisexuality is an aspect of the sexological and institutional genealogy within which transness emerges, transness has too often been maintained without the generative ambiguity of Freud's concept. Rather, transness has been maintained as a veridical origin, or as a perfect metonymy for sexual excess. This stabilization of transness ironically affirms an error of stabilization, and in so doing obscures the possibility of conceiving of transness as a category of identity that denies its figuration as a mere representation for the transgression of binary sexual difference, in which transgression affirms the rule.

That scientific and medical discourse have determined the framework from which much of transness has been thought throughout the 20th century is attended to in the third chapter of the

[17] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology" and Other Works v.18*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 24–33.

dissertation, specifically through its development within French post-modernism, and especially within the work of Jean Baudrillard. In his 1990 text *The Transparency of Evil*, Baudrillard writes: "We are all transsexuals."[18] In this chapter, I take this claim as both exemplary and symptomatic of the manner in which transness has been defined and codified by late 20th-century medical-scientific discourses that have theorized transsexuality as either a universal component of bi-sexual morphology, a form of sexual deviancy, or a utopic potential beyond normative gender. What binds these conflicting positions together is an assumption that transness is definitionally external to normative binary sexual difference. Furthermore, this chapter makes the epistemological claim that this construction of transness as both origin and perversion takes place under the disciplinary regime of 'science'. However, building on the methodologies of contemporary theorists of race such as Denise Ferreira da Silva, Rei Terada, and Sylvia Wynter,[19] I argue that rather than accept the role of transness as an object of the scientific gaze, we must recognize the manner in which transness is productive of categories of difference rather than merely a predicate of them.

While this chapter therefore develops a methodological account of the manner in which transness is productive of scientific conceptions of difference through readings of contemporary black studies, its primary textual engagement is the figure of "transsexuality" within the work of Jean Baudrillard, which I take as both productive and paradigmatic of French post-modern

[18] Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, Paperback ed. repr, Radical Thinkers (London: Verso, 2009), 23.

[19] See Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, Borderlines 27 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Rei Terada, "The Racial Grammar of Kantian Time," *European Romantic Review* 28, no. 3 (May 4, 2017): 267–78, Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

philosophy. For within the concept of transsexuality as Baudrillard formulates it, one finds a reinscription of transsexuality as both an object of scientific discourse and also an expression of its limits. “We are all transsexuals” thus expresses that we are all unsexed, pure expressions of indifferentiation, due to a transition that occurred because of the breakdown of conventional sexual roles precipitated by the feminist movements of the 1960s. However, I demonstrate that Baudrillard’s desire to formulate transness as an expression of pure indifferentiation is denied by his own assumptions concerning transness as simultaneously the origin of those very categories. In this expression of the fantasy of transsexuality as a concretization of the post-modern prognosis of an overarching epochal transition, what is discovered is an unacknowledged stabilization that is structurally contradictory to its discursive expression.

The oscillations within differing discourses concerning transness as found within contemporary theoretical and philosophical texts has produced a tension, on one hand between transness as a figure for sexual transgression and on the other as a figure for the violent histories of scientific and medical investigations of sex throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The final chapter of the dissertation traces the effects of these tensions, attending to debates within contemporary trans and queer theory, specifically by examining the aporias and contradictions that emerge surrounding the role of the sacramental concept of transubstantiation as it is mobilized within these fields. The assumption of the chapter is that these definitional contradictions and tensions are not because of an imprecision concerning theological terminology but are rather symptomatic of an internal contradiction within the conceptual genealogy in trans studies between transness as an expression of force and the impossibility of this desire, that is, the encounter with its own stabilization.

While exploring different contexts in which the term of 'transubstantiation' appears within the field of trans studies, the chapter primarily focuses on a debate between Judith Butler and Jay Prosser concerning their respective readings of the film *Paris is Burning*. a debate which circulates around Butler's claim that transness is the expression of a desire for the 'transubstantiation of gender'. The texts of this debate serve as a foundational source for both queer and trans theory, and as such it has been attended to within numerous texts.[20] However, I argue that this debate serves as a touchstone for thinking about transness specifically because it manifests an internal tension within these discourses between stabilization and force, an internal tension that has hitherto not been represented within the appropriate conceptual formulations.

This dissertation, as a whole, thus has two fundamental tasks: 1) to explore the conceptual relations between force and stabilization, and 2) to do so through the symbolic and conceptual formations of the concept of transness, broadly understood, within the discourses of 20th-century continental philosophy, and specifically psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. However, the contention of this dissertation is that these two tasks are not separable. For if sexuality is the expression of philosophy's limit, then its various historical manifestations emerge within the particularity of a hegemonic discourse. Transness is not simply an expression of this limit, but is productive of it. Moreover, its expression is not limited to the bounds of philosophical discourse. For the contradiction between the desire for pure force and the failure of this desire that the concept of stabilization necessitates is expressed as historical violences within the social and political experiences of trans and non-binary individuals. This is not merely an

[20] See for example "The Bodily Ego and the Contested Domain of the Material" from Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 13–42 and "'Tragic Misreadings': Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity," from Viviane K. Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 9–23.

assumption of philosophical dissemination. Rather, it assumes that the social, legal, and political violences experienced by trans individuals cannot be separated from the conceptual scaffolding which allows for those violences to be enacted. It is therefore the assumption of this dissertation that post-structural and psychoanalytic discourses play a privileged role in the construction of the conceptual formulations through which transness is socially and politically explicated, and the task of this text is to, as robustly as possible, discursively manifest those structures.

Chapter 1 – *Locus Standi*: Justification and Context in the Histories of Madness

> This is perhaps one of the meanings of any history of madness, one of the problems for any project or discourse concerning a history of madness, or even a history of sexuality: is there any witnessing to madness? Who can witness? Does witnessing mean seeing? Is it to provide a reason? Does it have an object? Is there any object? Is there a possible third that might provide a reason without objectifying, or even identifying, that is to say, without examining?
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> - Jacques Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis"

§1. Introduction

The question of how to give an account of the role of madness and dreaming within reason, the difference between them, and the ability of philosophy to determine this difference, is the driving force of the back and forth of texts between Derrida and Foucault that was inaugurated by Derrida's publication of "Cogito and the History of Madness."[1] The reception of this textual exchange has usually been framed around the positing of a specific question concerning historicity; namely, does history have an exteriority and an interiority?[2] The agenda of this chapter is to depart from this theoretical inheritance, which accepts the dichotomy of interiority/exteriority as determining the set of concepts in which to frame this argument. I will instead focus on asking what *justifies* the conceptual framing offered by Derrida, which has determined the reception of these texts. Does Derrida repurpose philosophical sovereignty

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Reprint (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002). For a history of the textual exchange see Seferin James, "Derrida, Foucault and 'Madness, the Absence of an Œuvre," *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Practical Philosophy* III, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 379–403.

[2] See two recent volumes on the topic: Olivia Custer, ed., *Foucault/Derrida Fifty Years Later: The Futures of Genealogy, Deconstruction, and Politics*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Yubraj Aryal et al., eds., *Between Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

specifically through its denial? That is, through his denial of the possibility of philosophy's sovereign ability to structurally exclude madness or the dream, does Derrida predetermine what counts as philosophy, and thus what counts as its interiority?

I will also argue that reading this debate as primarily one concerning interiority and exteriority risks missing the gravity of Foucault's response to Derrida, namely his accusation that Derrida serves as a "decisive representative" of a philosophical system whose effect is "the reduction of discursive practices to textual traces."[3] This claim has often been read, I will argue naively, as Foucault insisting that Derrida's 'project' cannot take into account historical events, a reality beyond textuality, a concreteness that eludes the Derridean totalization of the text. As I will demonstrate, this critique has been clearly attended to by Derrida, who has shown it as yet another manifestation of the desire for presence, and therefore of what he names phallogocentrism.[4] However, by reading Foucault's claim with the focus on the relationship between textuality and system, the problem becomes reconfigured as not what is the relationship between historicity and the historical, but rather a question of power and stabilization.

My argument, produced through close readings of sections from Descartes' *Meditations*, Foucault's *History of Madness*, and Derrida's "Cogito and the History of Madness", will point to a structural, methodological problem within deconstruction writ large, one which is brought to light through a reliance upon both Foucault's critique and Derrida's own conceptual devices. My claim is that Derrida's methodology relies on unacknowledged assumptions which stabilize his argument, and which his texts cannot, and do not, justify or acknowledge. What makes this claim

[3] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jean Khalfa (New York: Routledge, 2006), 573.

[4] See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 474–83.

so difficult to make convincingly is that Derrida is so attentive to it. In fact, one of the pillars of his work is that all discourse is contextual and, as contextual, is always blind to its own totality. It is for this reason that the opening sections of this chapter read so closely Derrida's engagements with Descartes' *First Meditation*. While it is simple enough to dogmatically make the argument that Derrida is blind to his own methodological prejudices, to convincingly make the argument through a reading of his texts that attends to its subtilties and intricacies necessitates a careful excavation of the arguments and undercurrents within the works. A remarkable aspect of Derrida's work is the manner in which his texts rigorously attend to their subject matter while simultaneously defending themselves against any possible critique. The success of this defensive position is achieved through the virtuosity of its systematic elaboration, but also by simultaneously questioning this very systematicity. It is this gesture of admitting a text's culpability in what it is critiquing that makes Derrida's work so difficult to criticize in a non-dogmatic manner, for this gesture allows Derrida to set the terrain for the subsequent criticism of his own texts. To deal with these issues, the structuring methodological assumption of this chapter is that Derrida's admission that his texts are in danger of enacting the very thing that they are critiquing is not enough to justify the disavowal of his discursive responsibility. Rather than expiation, this technique is in fact a defense mechanism against any possible elaboration of its blindnesses beyond what the text itself has acknowledged. Therefore, to avoid getting caught in the deconstructive trap that sets the limits of its own critique, this chapter attempts to work through the discursive movements of Derrida's text, moving alongside them, giving an account of each significant gesture, under the assumption that in the inhabitation of a text its seams become apparent, and with them, its prejudices and unacknowledged assumptions.

This argument does not, in its content, relate overtly to the subsequent archives and textual engagements of this dissertation, which surround sexual difference, and particularly transness and bisexuality. However, Derrida and Foucault's work serve as theoretical points of departure for all the subsequent philosophers and critical theorists within this dissertation. It is thus necessary to demonstrate, in detail and with as much clarity as possible, the methodological assumptions within their work, and which I will then be tracing through post-structuralism, French psychoanalysis, post-modernism, and contemporary queen and trans theory. After developing the stakes and structure of my argument through a close-reading of Derrida's and Foucault's debate, I will turn for the final section of this chapter to a reading of a late text by Derrida on the French painter Colette Deblé.[5] In doing so, I apply the methodological critique I have developed to questions explicitly surrounding sexual difference within the deconstructive archive, while also setting the stage for the subsequent engagements of this dissertation.

§2. Dreams and Errors

> But I see now, that without realizing it, I have ended up back where I wanted to be.
>
> - René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

The question of "Cogito and the History of Madness," as is evident by the title, revolves around the reading of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, within Foucault's *History of Madness*. Derrida's focus is on four pages in Foucault's book that begin the second chapter entitled "The Great Confinement." In these opening pages of a chapter in which Foucault argues that following a liberation of madness within the Renaissance, the "age of reason, in a strange

[5] Jacques Derrida and Colette Deblé, *Prégnances: Lavis de Colette Deblé, Peintures*, Rencontre (Mont-de-Marsan: Atelier des brisants, 2004).

takeover, was then to reduce it to silence,"[6] Descartes' text is named as an inaugural site of this silencing. In the "First Meditation," Descartes examines both dreams and madness alongside the problems of errors of perception. However, according to Foucault, "Descartes does not evade the danger of madness in the same way that he sidesteps the possibility of dream or error."[7] Whereas errors of perception and dreams both contain "residues" or "marks" of truth, so that "the truth will never slip away entirety into the darkness," madness is "precisely a condition of the impossibility of thought."[8] Errors of perception and dreams can be accounted for; for example, we acknowledge the dangers of perception at a distance but have some certainty in our proximate sensations. For dreams, we acknowledge their fantastical nature but affirm their reliance on the basic geometric and arithmetic laws of corporeal nature, that while imperceptible in themselves, allow for a fundamental verisimilitude between the dream world and waking life. Therefore, one can admit errors of perception and nevertheless allow for the possibility that one is dreaming while still retaining the fundamental stabilization of truth. Madness is otherwise. In madness, the problem is not that mad thoughts cannot contain elements of truth, but rather that madness excludes thinking. The mad subject is, as such, not a thinking one. "It is not the permanence of truth that ensures that thought is not madness, in the way that it freed it from an error of perception or a dream; it is an impossibility of being mad which is inherent in the thinking subject rather than the object of his thoughts…one cannot suppose that one is mad, even in thought, for madness is precisely the condition of the impossibility of thought."[9]

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[6] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 44.

[7] Foucault, 44.

[8] Foucault, 45.

[9] Foucault, 45.

According to Foucault, Descartes refuses a conception of the experience of madness as a form of thought, excluding it from the domain of the thinking subject whereas dreaming, while fantastic, is a universal human experience. As Descartes writes in his "First Meditation": "But am I not a human being, and therefore in the habit of sleeping at night, when in my dreams I have all the same experiences as these madman do when they are awake—or sometimes even stranger ones."[10] This exclusion of madness from the possible experiences of a rational subject is offered by Foucault as a foundational event in the advent of classical rationalism; an exclusion that is institutionalized within the history of the social-political events of the classical era. Derrida remarks that Foucault is the first interpreter of the *Meditations* to isolate the doubts produced by the 'errors' of madness from the errors of sense perception and the dream, and thus to demonstrate its constitutive exclusion. However, Derrida follows by asking if the previous interpreters of Descartes did not "deem this dissociation auspicious" because they were inattentive to madness's inadmissibility, or because the exclusion is in fact not operative within the meditation itself. And it will be under the latter assumption that Derrida offers his counter-reading of hyperbolic doubt in the "First Meditation."

Derrida structures his counter-reading of Descartes upon two postulates. 1) In the passage in which Descartes examines those doubts that are founded on natural reasons (errors of perception, dreams, madness), there is no possibility given for overcoming the danger of sensory error or dreams. Whereas, according to Foucault's reading, dreams and errors of perception are "surmounted" and thus contained within reason, Derrida's first postulate argues that the possibility of errors of knowledge gained by the senses or from the illusions of dreams is always

[10] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

in danger of "total error." While senses can deceive according to the specificity of the situation, in dreams the totality of sensory experience is illusory, and therefore dreams, as the “hyperbolic exaggeration” of error, serve as the mechanism for testing the possibility of the overcoming of errors of knowledge.

Remembering that for Descartes, within dreams, what escapes doubt produced by illusion is not the certainty of anything based on sensory experience, which remains always within the danger of oneiric fantasy, but the “simple and universal realities”[11] that are of non-empirical origin (or even the fantasy of them). For these purely intelligible realities remain as the fundamental material from which the dream is constructed. Thus, as we could always be dreaming, the dangers inherent in the dream contaminate those areas of knowledge that depend upon empirical information which therefore cannot be safely relied upon, such as physics, astronomy, and medicine. Whereas the basic of truths of mathematics and geometry, which “deal only with the very simplest and most general things, and care little whether they exist in nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am waking or sleeping, two plus three equals five, and a square has no more than four sides nor does it seem possible that such obvious truths could be affected by any suspicion that they are false.”[12]

The certainty of even these fundamental truths of mathematics and geometry will, of course, be called into question through the figure of the evil genius, yet what Derrida’s first postulate maintains is that what escapes the fear of the error of the dream is not marks of truth that remain within them as sensory data of empirical or imaginative origin, but rather the purely

[11] Descartes, 15.

[12] Descartes, 15.

intelligible generalizations which are of "another order of reasoning"[13] than sensory or imaginative certainty. This other order of certainty, stabilized by the fundamentals of mathematics and geometry, "supposes a radical break with the senses. At this moment of the analysis, no imaginative or sensory signification, as such, has been saved, *no* invulnerability of the senses to doubt has been experienced. *All* significations or 'ideas' are *excluded* from the realm of truth, for the *same reason as madness* is excluded from it."[14] The first postulate therefore maintains that not only is madness only a particular case of sensory illusion, but that it is not the most serious one. It is rather situated akin to errors of perception, but without the force of the hyperbolic nature of dreaming, from which only the axiomatics of intelligible generalizations remain.

2) The second postulate emerges directly from the first, for not only does Derrida claim that madness occupies no privileged domain within the Cartesian ordering of doubt, but counter to Foucault's fundamental claim, it is not "submitted to any order of exclusion."[15] In the relevant passage from Descartes, the meditator of the "First Meditation" has just finished expressing the affirmation of close-by, surrounding, or self-reflexive embodied sensorial experience ("that these hands themselves, and this whole body are mine—what reason could there be for doubting this?"[16]) when the danger of madness is introduced: "Unless perhaps I were to compare myself to one of those madmen, whose little brains have been so befuddled by a pestilential vapour arising from a black bile, that they swear blind that they are kings, though they are beggars, or that they

[13] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 50.

[14] Derrida, 50. Emphasis in original.

[15] Derrida, 50.

[16] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 14.

are clad in purple, when they are naked, or that their head is made of clay, or that their whole body is a jug, or made entirely of glass. But they are lunatics, and I should seem no less of a madman myself if I should follow their example in any way."[17] It is this final injunction ("But they are lunatics") that grounds Foucault's claim of the Cartesian exclusion of madness.[18] Thus, Derrida's claim that madness is not submitted to exclusion must withstand the seemingly overt exclusion within Descartes' text.

To accomplish this task, Derrida refashions Descartes' text as a dialogue between a naive nonphilosopher and the meditator (whom Derrida seems to assume to be Descartes himself). Derrida notes that the paragraph which claims that close by or intimate sensory experience can escape the doubt of sensory error and culminates in the previously quoted section on madness, begins with, "but perhaps" (*sed forte*). This expression of the condition is, according to Derrida, *clearly* a feigned objection. He writes: "Descartes has just said that all knowledge of sensory origin could deceive him. He pretends to put to himself the astonished objection of an imaginary nonphilosopher who is frightened by such audacity and says: no, not all sensory knowledge, for then you would be mad and it would be unreasonable to follow the example of a madman, to put forth the ideas of a madman. Descartes *echoes* this objection: since I am here, writing, and you understand me, I am not mad, nor are you, and we are all the same."[19] Thus, according to

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[17] Descartes, 14.

[18] "It would be an eccentricity for [Descartes] to suppose that he were eccentric: as a way of thinking, madness implies itself, and thus excludes itself from his project. The perils of madness have been quashed by the exercise of Reason, and this new sovereign rules a domain where the only possible enemies are errors and illusions….But madness itself is banished in the name of the man who doubts, and who is no more capable of opening himself to unreason than he is of not thinking or not being." Foucault, 46.

[19] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 50.

Derrida's reading, what seems like an exclusion is in fact rather a feigning of Descartes' to remain within commonplace non-philosophical thought, only to in fact further destabilise, further disorient, through the more commonplace, universal category of dreaming. For dreaming, while commonplace, calls into doubt all the sensory foundations of knowledge that both errors of sensation and madness call into question only intermittently, leaving only the intellectual foundations of certainty to remain past its hyperbole. Thus madness would only serve to generate contingent and partial doubt, against the dream which constitutes "the hyperbolical exasperation of the hypothesis of madness."[20]

While Derrida thus argues that one can clearly see the manner in which Descartes' '*sed forte'* demonstratives that what follows is not an overt exclusion of madness, but rather a response to non-philosophical naiveté,[21] the certainty of his claim is perhaps not as self-evident as Derrida maintains. For does not the very practice of the meditation itself disallow the very division between philosopher and layman that Derrida relies upon? The opening of the "First Meditation" (only three paragraphs before the aforementioned *sed forte*) begins: "It is some years now since I realized how many false opinions I had accepted from childhood onwards, and that, whatever I had since built on shaky foundations could only be highly doubtful. Hence I saw that at some stage in my life the whole structure would have to be demolished, and that I should have to begin again from the bottom up if I wished to construct something lasting and

[20] Derrida, 51. Derrida adds, "What must be grasped here is that *from this point of view* the sleeper, or the dreamer, is madder than the madman." Emphasis in original.

[21] "The pedagogical and rhetorical sense of the *sed forte* which govern this paragraph is clear." Derrida, 50. In the original French it reads: "*On voit quel est le sens pédagogique et rhétorique du sed forte qui commande tout ce paragraphe*." Jacques Derrida, *L' écriture et la différence*, Collection Tel Quel (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 78. The original French phrasing begs the question as to the philosophical position of who can see [*On voit*] and follow alongside Derrida's reading of the 'sed forte'.

unshakable in the sciences."[22] It seems, at the very least, highly questionable that the meditator would have moved so quickly from positioning himself "from the bottom" of knowledge, to developing a clear discretion between a philosopher and his naïve interlocutor.[23]

I am not particularly interested in proving the truth or falsity of Derrida's claim of dialogic interlocution. What is pivotal to my argument, however, is that counter Derrida's defensive claims of clarity, the "pedagogical and rhetorical sense" of the text is *not clear*, and, moreover, Derrida's text seems to be aware of this inarticulation. Indeed, it is this lack of clarity which necessitates Derrida to make a more forceful claim as to the non-exclusion of madness if he wants to maintain his argument that a certain madness is constitutive of a certain history of reason. It is this argument that thus leads him to the absolute hyperbole of the evil genius and the claim that its movements can also be described as a kind of 'madness'.

§3. The Evil Genius and its "Madness"

> There is no great genius without a touch of madness.
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> - Seneca, *On Tranquility of Mind*

The figure of the evil genius within the first meditation follows directly from the realization by Descartes' meditator that arithmetic and geometric notions escape hyperbolic

[22] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 13.

[23] Foucault writes in his "Reply to Derrida": "The hypothesis of another voice seems to me (despite all the advantages that it may present me) useless and arbitrary. We should keep in mind the title of the text itself, *Meditations*. That means the speaking subject ceaselessly moves, changes, modifies his convictions, and advances in his certainties, taking risks and constantly trying new things. Unlike deductive discourse, where the speaking subject remains fixed and invariable, the meditative text supposes a mobile subject who tries out on himself the hypotheses that he envisages." Foucault, *History of Madness*, 579.

doubt. As we have seen, Descartes writes, "For whether I am waking or sleeping, two plus three equals five, and a square has no more than four sides nor does it seem possible the such obvious truths could be affected by any suspicion that they are false."[24] He then begins a new paragraph, writing: "However, there is a certain opinion long fixed in my mind, that there is a God who is all-powerful, and by whom I was created such as I am now. Now how do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth at all, no heaven, no extended things, no shape, no magnitude, no place—and yet that all these things appear to exist just as they do now?" And even if, as the meditator then assumes, that God as supremely good is not capable of such deception, he can "suppose that, not God...but some evil spirit supremely powerful and cunning, has devoted all his effort to deceiving me."[25]

Derrida names this transition as that from the hyperbolic moment within natural doubt—or those doubts of sensory errors and dreaming—to that of the absolutely hyperbolic moment of the fiction of the evil genius, in which even those simple and clear truths are put up for doubt. Having, contra Foucault, retained madness within the progression of the meditator's first reverie, Derrida claims that the transition of the hyperbolic moment of natural doubt to that of absolute doubt is also a transition from an earlier domesticated madness to a total madness accompanying the dangers of the evil genius. However, no description of madness is overtly offered in the "First Meditation in" relation to the evil genius. Rather, the textual metaphor given is between absolute hyperbole and the dream. The meditator, in having encountered the danger of the evil genius claims, "I will think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds, and all external things are no different from the *illusions of our dreams* and that they are traps he has

[24] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 15.

[25] Descartes, 16.

laid for my credulity; I will consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, and no senses, but yet as falsely believing that I have all these...."[26] Yet, as we have seen, Derrida must read madness into the "illusions of our dream" to support his fundamental claim of the internality of madness within the genesis of reason. The question thus remains as to the efficacy of this claim, and following its efficacy, the effects of its justifications.

Derrida's claim is clear: "Now, the recourse to the fiction of the evil genius will evoke, conjure up, the possibility of *a total madness*, a *total derangement* over which I have no control because it is inflicted upon me—hypothetically—leaving me no responsibility for it. *Total derangement is the possibility of madness* that is no longer a disorder of the body, of the object, the body-object outside the boundaries of the *res cogitans*, outside the boundaries of the policed city, secure in its existence as thinking subjectivity, but is *a madness* that will bring subversion to pure thought and to its purely intelligible objects, to the field of its clear and distinct ideas, to the realm of the mathematical truths which escape natural doubt."[27] The argument is evident; the definition of total madness given is the extension of doubt to pure thought and its intelligible objects, namely those of mathematics and geometry. That doubt is extended so is, of course, inarguably the hyperbolic effect of the evil genius within the movement of the "First Meditation." Yet, what justifies Derrida's naming this effect 'madness'? Derrida writes: "This time *madness*, *insanity*, will spare nothing, neither bodily nor purely intellectual perceptions."[28]

His claim is built upon a series of interpretations, presented as self-evident. First, Derrida claims that Descartes, having come upon the evil genius, returns to those claims which he had

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[26] Descartes, 16–17. Emphasis added.

[27] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 52–53. Emphasis added.

[28] Derrida, 53. Emphasis added.

previously only pretended to exclude in his earlier discourse with the nonphilosopher. He quotes the above list of elements that the meditator now, having encountered the danger of the evil genius, can no longer assume as self-evident ("I will think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds, and all external things *are* no different from the illusions of our dreams...," etc.). He adds, "We are thus quite far from the dismissal of insanity made above."[29] But is the status of the elements that the meditator must not take as secure in the aftermath of the evil genius actually a re-iteration of those dismissed in the early encounter with the possibility of madness? In the dismissal of madness, the meditator is explicitly not questioning the existence or facticity of an external world, but rather one's relation to it. Remember the claims of what madness may entail: "...they swear blind that they are kings, though they are beggars, or that they are clad in purple, when they are naked, or that their head is made of clay, or that their whole body is a jug, or made entirely of glass."[30] This is quite far from the more radical exclusions of air, sky, earth, color, shapes, sounds, etc., that are no longer stable in the wake of the absolutely hyperbolic moment. Of course, Derrida is aware of the non-comparability of the hyperbole of the absolute genius to the previous moments of hyperbolic doubt. Yet, why domesticate this latter moment of absolute hyperbole through the claim of its relation to the previous moment of madness? And it is clear that this is Derrida's claim: "Thus, ideas of neither sensory nor intellectual origin will be sheltered from this new phase of doubt, and *everything that was previously set aside as insanity is now welcomed* into the most essential interiority of thought."[31]

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[29] Derrida, 53.

[30] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 14.

[31] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 53. Emphasis added. The original French retains this temporal element of a return. "Ainsi ni les idées d'origine sensible, ni les idées d'origine intellectuelle ne seront à l'abri dans cette nouvelle phase du doute et *ce qui était tout à l'heure*

Again, what justifies the naming of this moment of meditation as a return of lunacy, especially as Derrida acknowledges that the "philosophical and juridical operation" of the absolute hyperbole, "no longer names madness?"[32] He argues, "paradoxically" that his definition of madness is strictly Foucauldian. "For we can now appreciate the profundity of the following affirmation of Foucault's that curiously also saves Descartes from the accusations made against him: 'Madness is the absence of work'."[33] Derrida's construction of the relationship between this unspoken madness and the absolute hyperbole is regulated by the question as to what is the difference between *de facto* and *de jure* relations between the Cogito and madness. *De jure* nothing is opposed to the totality of the possibility of madness, neither empirical sensual experience nor pure intellectual notions. However, from the point of view of factual, natural experience, no anxiety is possible regarding the actuality of the danger of this madness. This demands the recognition of an "essential and principled truth," namely that "if discourse and philosophical communication (that is, language itself) are to have an intelligible meaning, that is to say, if they are to conform to their essence and vocation as discourse, they must simultaneously *in fact and in principle* escape madness."[34] This truth then assumes both that

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écarte sous le nom d'extravagance est maintenant accueille dans l'intériorité la plus essentielle de la pensée." Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 82.

[32] My argument that the conceptual structure of madness returns with the figure of the evil genius and the absolute hyperbole that Derrida assumes is not offered in any of Foucault's responses, who rather argues that the position of the meditating subject in relation to that madness is differently arranged in the text than Derrida assumes. In fact, Foucault seems to accept Derrida's claim: "As for the scope of the trap, the evil genius, it is true, differs not from madness; but regarding the positioning of the subject in relation to the trap, the evil genius and madness are rigorously opposed." Foucault, *History of Madness*, 572.

[33] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 54. In French the internal Foucault quote reads: "La folie, c'est l'absence d'œuvre." Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 83.

discourse and philosophical communication are put in some ungiven relation of determination (it is not clear if philosophical communication is a subset of discourse or a condition of it, or any other relation, a problematic we will return to) and that not only does discourse escape madness in fact (tautologically so, in that it has spoken) but also principally—that normality must find a way to govern that experience of madness that had put its vocation as thinking in danger. This is an "essential necessity" from which "no discourse can escape."[35] Thus madness is present as an absence of work, in that any work (which is to say, perhaps any language, or any language plus discourse, which has not yet been specified) as such is not mad, for it has spoken, and as having spoken has acquiesced to the essential normality of reason. That is, it makes and has sense.

This, of course, returns dangerously close to Foucault's original claim of the expulsion of madness from reason, and therefore Derrida is at pains to make clear that the non-work of madness is not that which has been banished from the domain of the sensible and reasonable, but rather is the act of violence that closes itself off from the work, and thus allows sense to be made. Therefore madness, at least in a certain way, remains as that constitutive exclusion from which reason and speech are opened, and this opening, this genesis, is named as historicity. That is, the

[34] Derrida, 53. Emphasis added. The question as to the status of philosophical communication, discourse, and language within this locution remains unclear, yet is of great importance. In the sentence itself the clarity of the meaning relies both on the conjunction 'and' and the effect of the parentheses. That is, is Derrida's claim that discourse + philosophical communication = language, and that as language they must escape madness to have intelligible meaning? Or is it that discourse and (philosophical communication = language) must escape madness? And perhaps there are other possible logical arrangements as well. The original French does nothing to clarify the construction. "[À] savoir que le discours et la communication philosophiques (c'est-à-dire le langage lui-même)…" Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 83. What is of importance here, and will be further returned to is the ambiguity between discourse and philosophical language, and also the status of the communication of philosophy with that of the generality of language.

[35] Derrida, 53–54.

historical is precisely the opening offered by the exclusion of silence. A necessary omission from which language as it manifests reason stabilizes its sense, and that in so doing opens itself up as the condition of the historical, that is, as historicity. To employ Derrida's terminology, language is both born and haunted by the silence, or the stifled speech, of madness: "Within the dimension of historicity in general…silence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and *against* which alone language can emerge…."[36] While madness as silence is the absence of work, this doesn't mean it comes after or before work, or is outside of work. Rather silence/madness/nonmeaning is both the limit of work and its condition. As Derrida phrases it: "silence is the work's limit and its profound resource."[37]

Therefore, according to this logic, any philosopher or, in fact, any speaking subject[38] who speaks of madness is, as such, doing so from the realm of sense and meaning, viz. non-madness. Even in the speaking of madness, the speaker "reassures himself against any actual madness."[39] However, this search for security by the speaking subject is not localised only within overt discussions of madness, but are inherent in "the essence and very project of all language in general."[40] Even for the mad, or those who praise madness and see within it discursive or social-

[36] Derrida, 54. Emphasis in original. In French this phrasing reads: "…le part de silence irréductible qui porte et hante le langage, et hors de laquelle seule, et contre laquelle seule il peut surgir…." Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 84.

[37] Derrida, 54.

[38] Derrida again produces a certain relation between the philosopher and the speaking subject, which we should keep an account of, as we will return later to this constellation. He writes: "…any philosopher or speaking subject (and the philosopher is but the speaking subject par excellence)…" Derrida, 54.

[39] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 54.

[40] Derrida, 54.

political potentials, their language qua language is a break from madness. Therefore, according to Derrida, Descartes' maneuver not only does not reject madness, but rather, during the phase of radical doubt, installs madness at "the very heart of the intelligible,"[41] as the constitutive resource from which truth takes form. Thus, for Derrida, the Cogito does not escape madness, does not reject or exclude madness, but contains it within its own authority. For throughout the radical doubts of the absolute hyperbole, even if I can no longer assume the stability of any intellectual construction, let alone those of sensation or illusion, what remains is the truth of simple self-stabilization. I think, therefore I am, extends even to the madman.

If that was the full extension of Derrida's argument it would not need countering. Of course, the absolute hyperbole accounts for and contains each act of the previous movements of the meditation, and this would, counter to Derrida's previous claims, not necessarily impinge upon Foucault's discourse concerning the internment of madness.[42] However, Derrida's claim is more radical that this; he argues that madness is not just valid and therefore contained within the Cogito, but the Cogito itself is a kind of madness, a kind of "mad audacity."[43] If one were to pose that madness was excluded by the 'project' of the Cogito, the only possibility of escape would be either "in the direction of infinity or none"[44] for the Cogito accounts for any errors in the regime of appearances. For even if the world does not exist, even if my entire relation to the world was through nonmeaning, I still remain thinking, and therefore being. Even if I deny this project within thought, I thereby affirm it. This means, for Derrida, that the Cogito is determined by the

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[41] Derrida, 55.

[42] See below for Foucault's response. Also see Foucault, *History of Madness*, 554-560.

[43] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 56.

[44] Derrida, 56.

possibility and principle of the world, over the factual and existent one, and in this way, it positions the unreal as over and determinant of the real; “this project is mad.” Madness is both “its liberty and its very possibility.”[45]

The Cogito, which both opens and founds the world of possible experience, is “punctuated” by an unprecedented excess which exceeds in the direction of abstraction, that is towards either nothingness or infinity. According to this construction, a project such as Foucault’s which tries to determine the Cartesian Cogito within a historical structure risks missing its essential claim, namely that the hyperbole is not of the world, or an element within its history, but is rather the condition of the historical.[46] The hyperbolic project is, according to Derrida, self-narrating (“narration narrating itself”[47]) and cannot be contained or objectified as an object in history. Derrida's critique of Foucault is therefore doubled. On one hand, by arguing that madness has been excluded and thus interned in the hyperbolic development of the Cogito, Foucault fails to take into account the manner in which madness remains internal to it, or more precisely, in which the project of the Cogito is itself a form a madness. On the other, by determining the project of the Cogito with a historical structure, Foucault cannot take into account the way in which the Cogito is articulated historically while simultaneously is also the foundation and possibility of historicity.

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[45] Derrida, 56. We could ask, does this conception of madness, as that which positions the possible, the principled, and the unreal, above the factual, real, and existent continue the previously given conception of madness as non-work?

[46] Derrida writes, “I think, therefore, that (in Descartes) everything can be reduced to a determined historical totality except the hyperbolic project.” Derrida and Bass, 57. In French, “Je crois donc qu'on peut tout réduire à totalité historique déterminée (chez Descartes) sauf le projet hyperbolique” Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 88.

[47] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 58. In French, "récit récitant" Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 88.

Derrida's claim is, of course, carefully limited. While the hyperbolic doubt in its absolute madness rejects the determination within any historical-spatial matrix, the Cogito must be certified within a double gesture: 1) certification through God and 2) through the Cogito's temporization (which as we will see is in fact a unitary gesture). As we have seen, the Cogito is only valid during the instant of its intuition. So, while the Cogito is valid throughout any extremity of affect or being (passion, intoxication, madness, reverie, etc.), one must be reasonable if one is to reflect upon it, and thus retain and transmit it. That is, to give it a meaning. It is at this point, past the construction of the Cogito, that the containment of madness takes place, at the moment of the production of meaning, in the performance of the philosophical act. It is at this point that the madness of hyperbolic doubt becomes interned within the world, and thus within reason, both of which are given to us by God. For it is God who stabilizes our experiences of the world as given through memory.[48]

In the "Fifth Meditation," having perceived clearly and distinctly through reason that God exists, and through his existence as not a deceiver and as the stability of all things, the meditator affirms the truth of the deduction that everything perceived clearly and distinctly is necessarily true. Moreover, even when I am not concentrating on the reasons why I judge that my clear and distinct perceptions are true, my memory judging them to be true can suffice as long as I can

[48] It can be noted in passing that Derrida is in error when he states that it is in the penultimate paragraph of the "Sixth Meditation" that Descartes positions this relationship between "normality" and memory as stabilized though God. Derrida must have meant to refer to the penultimate paragraph of the "Fifth Meditation" in which Descartes formulates the stability of memory and facticity though God. The penultimate paragraph of the "Sixth Meditation" rather discusses the possibility of error within the nature of man as a composite of mind and body. This textual error is in the original French and maintained through translation. "In the next to last paragraph of the sixth *Meditation*, the theme of normality communicates with the theme of memory, at the moment when the latter is confirmed by absolute Reason as 'divine veracity,' etc." Derrida, 309n27. In French, "Dans l'avant-dernier paragraphe de la sixième des Méditations…" Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 89.

depend upon the certainty of my knowledge of the truth of God, which serves as kind of unconscious stabilization for certitude. However, as Derrida develops in a long footnote, it is incorrect, as Derrida claims Foucault is guilt of, to think of God as only that which protects the Cogito, interns it from the danger of its own possibility of madness or extremity. For the "classical rationalists" God is also "the other name of the absolute of reason itself."[49] Thus, Foucault[50] is in error when he accuses the Classical project of using God as means of sheltering itself from God. This understanding limits God to a finite power rather than that which contains madness within its domain, as Derrida believes he has shown absolute reason to have accomplished. Foucault therefore is in error as to the "philosophical specificity of the idea and name of God."[51]

Derrida's argument is therefore that Foucault's reading of the exclusion and the internment of madness is in fact correct, but positioned at the wrong moment within the act of meditation. The self-protection of reason from madness occurs not in the construction of the Cogito, but in its subsequent history. The 'error' of Foucault's, his 'misunderstanding', is assuming that philosophy is that which aims to think the finite. Derrida claims rather that "if philosophy has taken place—which can always be contested—it is only in the extent to which it has formulated the aim of thinking beyond the finite shelter."[52] That is, by historically (that is

[49] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 310n28.

[50] In this footnote, Derrida does not specifically here name Foucault, although the intent is clear, and Foucault is named by the end of the footnote. The specific locution is, "One cannot accuse those, individuals or societies, who use God as a recourse against madness…" Derrida, 310n28. In French: "On ne peut accuser ceux…" Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 90.

[51] Derrida, *Writing and Difference, 310n28*.

[52] Derrida, 310n28.

finitely) assuming that the philosophical rationalist project excludes madness, Foucault misunderstands the demand that one must "*first* acknowledge and respect the intentional meaning of this project itself"[53] before one can judge the manner in which it "served as an alibi for a finite historico-political-social violence (which is doubtless the case)."[54]

What methodically justifies this injunction—that one must *first* respect the intentional meaning of the philosophical project—is not explained. Neither is what stabilizes the assumption of its meaning and its intention. I will return to this problem of justification. For now, let us remember that Derrida assumes that the intention of this project (Descartes') is the conceptualization of the infinite that cannot be contained by any finite (historical, political, conceptual) determination. That is to say, that the Cartesian project had no "right" to exclude madness, except through the reliance on God, which can exclude madness only as its contentless extremity; an exclusion which is also its absolute embrace. Madness is therefore not excluded in principle, in intention, only "in fact, violently, in history."[55] Moreover, the difference between the principle of totality (a totality that as total allows for reason, accounts for it), that is its impossibility as instantiation, and the contingent fact of its violence, "is historicity, the possibility of history itself."[56] The Cogito, relying for its stability from God, is a 'work' as soon as it can be spoken, as soon as it enters into history, but before it is spoken, before it can be represented, it is madness. This is evidently Derrida's claim: that by not entertaining the

[53] Derrida, 310n28. Emphasis in original. In French: "…sans devoir d'*abord* reconnaître et respecter le sens intentionnel de ce projet lui-même." Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 90.

[54] Derrida, 310n28.

[55] Derrida, 310n28.

[56] Derrida, 310n28.

extremity of the hyperbole—that is, that its essence escapes order, escapes determination, that its essence is madness—Foucault misses the break between historicity and the historical, and thus, misrepresents the history of madness in its relation to the Cogito, a history which on one end cannot be told.

It is important to take note of how Derrida determines the relationship between historicity, history, and philosophy. Derrida argues that he is not claiming that a historicity of philosophy escapes its historical determination, but rather that "historicity in general would be impossible without a history of philosophy."[57] That is, the historicity which is proper to philosophy is the transition or dialogue between hyperbole and finite determined history. The rhythm of this transition is one of excess and return. In principle that which exceeds the totality is an excess; it is mad, deranged, absolute hyperbole, God, etc., and thus inexpressible, and yet it is expressed. That is, in its being represented its madness is interned, determined, named, and thus forgotten until reproduced in another expression of that which exceeds totality, and as expressed is determined, and thus falls again into oblivion. This "temporal rhythm of crisis and awakening" is the necessary condition for all speech, but is able to open itself to discourse only by interning madness at each moment of its utterance. This rhythm is not a dialectical procedure, in which a supersession of the binary relation between crisis and wakening is possible. Rather, that speech which interns madness, which Derrida names as *philosophy* must qua philosophy liberate the previously forgotten, or obliterated madness, as it interns the "madman of the day."[58]

History therefore is that simultaneous gesture of naming that which had been interned/forgotten/disavowed, while simultaneously a performance of the disavowal of that

[57] Derrida, 60.

[58] Derrida, 61.

which exceeds contemporaneity. The discursivity of this act, which is to say this act, or set of acts, is philosophy as such. This then properly follows from Derrida's claim that "historicity in general would be impossible without a history of philosophy,"[59] yet the claim is in fact more radical, namely that philosophy, in his telling, both serves the function of the making possible of historicity (the principle of history that opens between the principle and its fact) and also its unveiling as finite, which is to say, its history. This extremely robust conception of philosophy, that which both makes the historical possible, and the content of the possibility, begs the question as to the totality of understanding in its relation to the historical. Is finite thought the totality of the historical as is both implicit and explicit within these claims?[60] What stabilizes the determinations of both philosophy and history within this construction? One of course could excavate at least a certain genealogy of these claims, through phenomenology, and its antecedents, and particularly through the Classical and Romantic developments of the concept of "*Geist*." And yet, without undertaking this excavation, one can still remark on the self-assurance of the claim, at the very least, in its relationship to the problem of its topographical assumptions. Namely, what is exterior and interior to its purview, perhaps not metaphysically, but epistemologically and methodologically? For at the very least, Derrida is making a claim concerning the relationship between philosophy, finitude, and excess, which posits a domain of its expression, and as domain, through this topographical logic (what it extends to or does not extend to) simultaneously posits an assumption of an interiority and exteriority of its own jurisdiction.

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[59] Derrida, 60.

[60] Derrida, 61. "It is only by virtue of this oppression of madness that finite-*thought*, that is to say, history, can reign."

Under this construction, what could it mean that philosophy is both that which is withheld from finitude, its excess, as well as the determinant unfolding of history, *and yet* offer the possibility of its contestation ("If philosophy has taken place—*which can always be contested*—it is only in the extent to which it has formulated the aim of thinking beyond the finite shelter."[61])? What kind of meaning is possible outside of its jurisdiction? What site in which to offer this contestation? Within this construction it seems that there is no possible *locus standi* from which to contest either the purview of philosophy or its definition. For to do so, one is always already within that impossible gap between the principle, which as such exceeds finitude, and its finite expression, which is always already expressing that which has been, and in so doing silencing that which is.

Philosophy—as the positing of the unnameable (that which exceeds totality), but which as posited is named, and in its naming, interns—thus determines the scope of possibility of its own exclusion. We, in positing this relation, are put in an aporetic position, but one that is not generative in the common deconstructive mode. For we must assume ourselves to be external to philosophy if we are to name it as such. If we do not presume ourselves as such then from within the position of finitude how could we name that which exceeds finitude, even if our naming is simply diagnostic? We would have to have some mechanism of at least recognizing the boundaries of our finite determinations. But as we have already seen, the finite, as such, is that which recognizes only past forms of excess, which in their recognition are domesticated within discourse. The philosophy of the present, definitionally, is that which does not recognize its own hyperbole. And so, we as the diagnostician must be non-philosopher. Yet, philosophy is simultaneously given as that which offers the finitude of understanding. Therefore, to be outside

[61] Derrida, 310n28. Emphasis added.

the history of philosophy would then also to be outside of history as the determinations of reason.

One of the great lessons that Derrida offers, of which certain gestures of "Cogito and the History of Madness" are exemplary, is that from within any particular epistemological or metaphysical constellation its own interiority or exteriority cannot be established. What worries me in Derrida's formulation of the role and occupation of philosophy within or as the relationship given between excess/madness and finitude/history, is the manner in which a diagnostic is offered of a metaphysical instability. This diagnostic is offered by Derrida, however, through a reliance on an epistemological stabilization, one which insinuates a methodology, and which, as we have seen, is constitutively self-contradictory.

§4. Risk in the Reading

> preterition, n.
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> **1.** Rhetoric. A figure in which attention is drawn to something by professing to omit it; an instance of this.
> **2.** The act of passing over something without notice; omission, disregard; an instance of this.
> **3.** Theology. Omission from God's elect; non-election to salvation.
> **4.** The passing of time. Obsolete. rare.
> **5.** Roman Law. The omission by a testator to mention in his or her will one of his or her children or natural heirs normally leading to the invalidation of the will.
> Now historical and rare.
>
> - Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "preterition"

In Foucault's first textual response to Derrida's "Cogito and the History of Madness" he argues that one of the remarkable aspects of Derrida's text is the frankness in which Derrida portrays the stakes of the debate, namely "is it possible that there might be something anterior or exterior to philosophical discourse?" Foucault continues, "Could it [philosophical discourse]

have its condition in an exclusion, a refusal, a risk eluded, and, why not, in a fear? A suspicion which Derrida rejects with passion."[62] However, as was made evident in the last section of this chapter, Derrida does not reject that philosophy could have its condition as a refusal, but rather that philosophy's condition of possibility (and thus the possibility of history) relies on a relation between inclusion and exclusion, in which that which is included is also excluded, and *vice versa*. The seeming aporetic nature of this structure is explicated by the division between the conditional and the historical, which is also to say the infinite and the finite. Within this construction, philosophy, as such, is the relation between two movements. On one hand, "madness" or the silence of non-being (the infinite or nothingness), which is also to say of the absolute, is that which remains unspeakable, remains silent and therefore, within Derrida's definitional structure, mad. On the other hand, the bringing into speech the conditions of madness, which as spoken are violently compelled to be manifest within representation, is within finitude. As finite they therefore exclude and refuse madness. This is something of a tautological structure once it is systematically laid out: the absolute as absolute is, as such, unnameable, for to name it would be for it to be particularized. On the other hand, that which is represented is, as such, named, in that as represented it is a representation. Therefore, if one names madness the condition of the possibility of silence,[63] then one is simply positing an analytic judgment when

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[62] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 552.

[63] As Derrida does, in his words, "following" Foucault: "And, paradoxically, what I am saying here is strictly Foucauldian. For we can now appreciate the profundity of the following affirmation of Foucault's that curiously also saves Descartes from the accusations made against him: 'Madness is the absence of a work'," (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 54). The quote of Foucault's that Derrida refers to occurs in the preface to the 1961 edition of the *History of Madness*, in which he writes, "What then is madness, in its most general but most concrete form, for anyone who immediately challenges any hold that knowledge might have upon it? In all possibility, nothing other than the *absence of an oeuvre*." Foucault and Khalfa, History of Madness, xxi. Emphasis in original. In 1964, in response to this phrasing, Foucault wrote a

one argues that philosophy is the translation from a performance of madness (that which is not named, and therefore not ontologically determined), to its exclusion (in the naming, or the coming into being of the specification of the universal) as an act of history which has already been defined as this relation of flux between the abstract concept and its manifest particular.

For the above reasons, I question Foucault's claim that Derrida rejects the possibility that philosophy could have its condition in an exclusion. What I will argue, however, is that whether or not madness can be claimed to be purely, or in totality, excluded by philosophical discourse, the very formation of the discourse produces a kind of conceptual stabilization that remains unaccounted for by Derrida, and more importantly, at odds with the intention of his text. While, for reasons I have already made clear, I do not agree with Foucault that Derrida performs a

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supplemental text "Madness, The Absence of an Oeuvre," which was included in the 1972 French edition of *The History of Madness*. In the preface to this edition, Foucault writes that in this article he will "expand on a phrase I ventured rather blindly: 'madness, the absence of an oeuvre'." (Foucault, *History of Madness*, xxix). It is apparent in reading any of these texts that Derrida takes great poetic liberty with Foucault's phrasing, and much could be said about the various understandings of a 'work' and its absence given in these texts. What can be said for now is that Derrida limits his understanding of the concept of work to that which is structurally discursive. He writes, "Now, the work starts with the most elementary discourse, with the first articulation of a meaning, with the first syntactical usage of an 'as such,' for to make a sentence is to *manifest* a possible meaning" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 54. Emphasis in original). Within this construction of a work as a discursive act, if the definition of madness is the absence of a work, then it is correct to define madness as silence. Of course, much of the content of the present chapter has been in determining this difference between Derrida's textual concept of the work, and the relationship between these and what Foucault will name discursive practices. In effect one could pick blindly any sentence from the *History of Madness* to make evident the expounded boundaries through which Foucault understands the concept of a work. But, for example, the very first sentences of "Madness, The Absence of an Oeuvre," are: "One day, perhaps, we will no longer know what madness was. Its form will have closed up on itself, and the traces it will have left will no longer be intelligible." A close reading between these two quoted phrases, which offer these differing definitions of madness and its relation to the work, could offer much. For now and for these purposes here, it is clear that Foucault understands the absence of a work to mean something in excess of "elementary discourse" and this movement between elementary discourse and discursive practices will determine his subsequent readings of these texts.

secondary internment of madness in his reading of Descartes, I remain questioning as to the justification of the setting of the terrain that is produced through the discursive logic of inclusion and exclusion, and the accompanying set of concepts of work and non-work. What justifies the concept of the philosophical that Derrida employs, a conceptual construction which allows 1) absolute hyperbole to be named as madness, 2) for the concept of madness as the absence of work to be discursively totalized, and 3) that madness is termed as exclusively and exhaustibly the domain of the history of philosophy? I therefore follow Foucault in questioning the justification of deconstruction in its relationship to questions of its own assumptions concerning the stability of concepts. I ask these questions, even if I do not follow Foucault in his assumptions that within these assumptions Derrida relies upon a clear or demarked delineation between externality and internality. [64]

In section 4 of "My Body, This Paper, This Fire," Foucault turns to Derrida's claim that in the *Meditations* Descartes does not really speak of madness, that it is not in question, not even to the point of exclusion. As Foucault remarks, to address this question it is necessary to turn to the original Latin version of the text. In the passage that concerns madness, Descartes uses two terms for madness, in the first case in the sentence "Unless perhaps I were to compare myself to one of the madmen,"[65] the term for madmen used is *insani*. The second sentence is, "But they are lunatics [*amens*], and I should seem no less a madman [*demens*] myself if I should follow their

[64] A quick summation of Foucault's argument of the manner of exclusion is as follow: "To turn the Cartesian exclusion into inclusion; to exclude the one who excludes by giving his discourse the status of an objection; to exclude the exclusion by rejecting it into pre-philosophical naivety: Derrida needed all of that to master the Cartesian text, and to reduce to nothing the question of madness. We can see the results: the elision of the differences in the text and the compensatory invention of a difference of voices lead the Cartesian exclusion to a second level; in the end, it is excluded that philosophical discourse should exclude madness." Foucault, 570.

[65] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 14.

example in any way."[66] On these set of three terms, Foucault writes, "When it is a question of characterising them by the improbability of their imaginings, the mad are called *insani*: a word that belongs as much to everyday vocabulary as it does to medical terminology…But when Descartes wishes not to characterize madness, but to affirm that I should not take my example from the mad, he employs the terms *demens* and *amens*, terms that are legal before they are medical."[67] In general, "*Insanus* is a term of characterization; *amens* and *demens* are disqualifying terms. The first refer to signs; the other two to capability."[68] The difference between the two set of terms is a play between the gap between two definitional structures of madness: the medical and the juridical.

Foucault argues that Derrida, in reading these sets of terms as equivalents, flattens the text. For whereas Derrida does not disentangle the differential in meaning of the two terms, Foucault argues that within the terminological difference there is a normative claim. In the first term the doubting of one's body is to be "like those of a deranged mind, the sick, the *insani*." The movement of the text thus begs the normative question, if I can be read as mad? "Can I follow their example, and on my own account at least feign madness, and become in my own eyes uncertain whether I am mad or not? I neither can nor should. For those *insani* are *amentes*; and I would be no less *demens* than them, and juridically disqualified if I followed their example."[69] According to Foucault, Derrida's inability to see the movement from the medical to the juridical realm is *mutatis mutandis* with his inability to see the manner in which madness is excluded

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[66] Descartes, 14.

[67] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 559.

[68] Foucault, 559.

[69] Foucault, 559.

normatively, which is to say within a practical realm. What Foucault is making evident is that close attention to the text displays that madness is not excluded on the level of a conceptual framework, but rather it is excluded through an act of will. It must be seen as a decision because madness is not only, or even primarily, the absence of work as discursive textual iteration, but rather, that this discursive iteration is in relation to a practical register, from which they cannot be disentangled. We can return, for example, to "Cogito and the History of Madness," to see the manner in which Derrida himself acknowledges the danger of his construction: "Of course, in essentializing madness this way one runs the risk of disintegrating the factual findings of psychiatric efforts. This is a permanent danger…."[70]

Indeed, Derrida would of course make a similar claim to Foucault, that the violence that is produced through the absence of a work is bound between textual iteration and institutional practices. Yet Derrida, as we have seen, explicitly privileges the textual and the philosophical account, which serves as a kind of transcendental source for the emergence of the historical/political/social articulation. What is lost in the flattening of the text through its essentialization of madness is the procedure of the text as a meditation. As Foucault argues: "A 'meditation'…produces, as so many discursive events, new enunciations that bring in their wake a series of modifications in the enunciating subject: through what is said in the meditation, the subject passes from darkness to light, from purity to impurity, from the constraint of passions to detachment, from uncertainty and disordered movements to the serenity of wisdom, etc. In the meditation, the subject is ceaselessly altered by his own movement; his discourse elicits movements inside which he is caught up; it exposes him to risks, subjects him to tests or temptations, produces in him states, and confers a status or a qualification upon him which he in

[70] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 54.

no sense possessed at the initial movement. A meditation implies, in short, a subject who is mobile and capable of being modified by the very effect of the discursive events that takes place."[71]

This kind of textual event, a meditation, thus involves, for Foucault, a "double reading."[72] One must read the set of propositions within the text as they form a kind of system, but that very reading and encounter of the system must be engaged with as a kind of exercise, which must be carried out by each reader. That reader must not enter the text from within an assumption of a stable archive in which the text can be encountered. To do so would be to only perform one side of the double reading, that is to not read. For, while certain aspects of the *Meditations* may be understandable from within a pregiven assumption of their project, this denies the intention of the text itself, stated in its opening words, and applied throughout. It also makes certain movements in the text incomprehensible, those which resist deduction, yet are available through the empathetic and performative structure of meditation; the denial of madness, the certainty of god, the decision of the veracity of the things. Derrida's flattening of the text, seen for example in the invention of the dialogue between philosopher and peasant, through to the surety of its deductive and systematic stability, obscures the meditative and practical relations within the text, that while not anterior to its discursivity, are also not their condition.

What this gestures to is the manner in which Derrida's claim that the "intentional meaning of the project" must be *first* taken into account, before its finite sociality or politics can be engaged, assumes a certain philosophical teleology, one which flattens the text while instilling a scene of prioritization; one in which what is seen as intentional is only that which counts,

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[71] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 563.

[72] Foucault, 563.

which is to say that which can be given an account, under the auspices of a philosophy, whose doctrines, history, and discipline are always already decided, and decided elsewhere. That the intention of the work could include the process of its encounter, a process which operates under a set of regulations that are not only occupied with thinking "beyond the finite shelter,"[73] is lost when one flattens the text into one that is always already archived under the name of philosophy. And once flattened there is no possibility of resistance, no opposing winds from which to question the site of this already stabilized assumption of what is the philosophical to and from which it applies. No possibility to question the assumption that there is *this* history of philosophy. An assumption that denies that risk that the intention of the project could be read differently, or perhaps has been read differently yet under its name; that could come, or could have come, with different intentions.

Further clarity can perhaps be given to this argument by turning to a later text Derrida wrote as a return to his debate with Foucault. In this text, "'To Do Justice to Freud': the History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis." which was given as a lecture on November 23, 1991, at the Ninth Colloquium of the International Society of the History of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis, at a special session devoted to the *History of Madness*, Derrida returns to the questions of his first text and Foucault's responses, although primarily by focusing on the problem and position of Freud within the *History of Madness*, rather than Descartes. I will not attend to this text beyond a few comments, because it mostly repeats and rephrases the basic thrust of the argument from his "Cogito." However, in a certain way the text makes the stakes of my argument clear. Derrida writes of his original text:

> I recalled a rule of hermeneutical method that still seems to me valid for the historian of philosophy as well as for the psychoanalyst, namely, the necessity of

[73] Derrida, 310n28.

> *first ascertaining a surface or manifest meaning* and, thus, of *speaking the language of the patient* to whom one is listening: the necessity of gaining a good understanding, in a quasi-scholastic way, philologically and grammatically, by *taking into account the dominant and stable conventions*, of what Descartes *meant* on the already so difficult surface of his text, such as it is interpretable according to *classical norms* of reading; the necessity of gaining this understanding before submitting the first reading to a symptomatic and historical interpretation regulated by other axioms or protocols*, before and in order to destabilize*, wherever this is possible and if it is necessary, the authority of canonical interpretations. Whatever one ends up doing with it, one must begin by listening to the canon.[74]

This quote, in a remarkable fashion, brings forward the fundamental stakes of my argument, which is *not* a question of whether it is possible or not to establish a stable meaning before and in order to deconstruct. This construction is axiomatic of Derrida's work, and as axiomatic one falls into tautologies and infinite regressions when one attempts to question its veracity. However, and from within my own reading of the intention of his text, what can be asked is, internal to its self-regulations, what justifies the ascertaining of the meaning of the text, its language, and most importantly, its dominant and stable conditions, which is to say the figure of the cannon? What allows for the necessity of the reliance on classical meaning, so that its own authority can be questioned? This is not to say that it is or is not impossible to rely on the stability of the cannon (although the question as to how to read this claim alongside the concept

[74] Jacques Derrida, "«To Do Justice to Freud»: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," trans. P.-A Brault and M Naas, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (January 1, 1994): 231. Emphasis added. In French this reads: "Je rappelai une règle de méthode herméneutique, telle qu'elle me paraît encore valoir pour l'historien de la philosophie autant que pour le psychanalyste, à savoir la nécessité de s'assurer d'abord du sens patent, et donc de parler la langue du patient qu'on écoute: de bien comprendre, de façon quasi scolaire, philologique et grammaticale, compte tenu de conventions dominantes et stabilisées, ce que Descartes *voulait dire* à la surface déjà si difficile de son texte, tel qu'il est interprétable selon des normes classiques de lecture, et de comprendre cela même *avant de* soumettre cette première lecture à une interprétation symptomale et historique réglée par d'autres axiomes ou d'autres protocoles. Il faut bien comprendre cela même *avant de et pour* déstabiliser, là où c'est possible et si c'est nécessaire, l'autorité des interprétations canoniques. Quoi qu'on en fasse, il faut commencer par entendre le canon." Jacques Derrida, *Résistances de La Psychanalyse*, Collection La Philosophie En Effet (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 99–100. Emphasis in original.

of historicity that occurs within this same series of texts is of course valid), but rather it asks, methodologically, and perhaps one should say hermeneutically, what justifies the positing of this as an 'ought'? A rule with the force of necessity. For in this normative claim of the necessity of a giving an account of what is stable in order to destabilize, is a reification and concretization of what one assumes is the stable, is the canonical, without justification. And as unjustified, without possibility for appeal.

What seems available as a response for Derrida is that even within the appeal to the cannon and the stability and dominance of its classical reception, the very practice of reading, and encounter, is itself regulated by the logic of the trace, which Derrida's oeuvre attends to in various forms and guises, and throughout various archives. A term within this quotation that gestures to this intertextual or inter-oeuvre reading is his use of the term "voulait dire," which calls for a reading for intention as the very surface of the text; "…of what Descartes *meant* [*voulait dire*] on the already so difficult surface of his text." This technique of reading for what the text means to say, even if the text at the level of semantics contradicts or obfuscates, comes from Derrida's earliest writings, and continues throughout his body of work.[75] One can accept the efficacy of this technique, and yet rather than this acceptance offering justification for these claims, it is the very efficacy of the technique itself that calls them into question. For Derrida, it is only the absolute alterity of the other that allows for a reading of a text; that a text is always given from without means that one is always in a *process* of *reading* rather than intuiting a text, and in that encounter, one performatively produces the field of intention. Therefore, one is always already signing a text (accepting it as performatively produced) while counter-signing

[75] For perhaps the most famous example of this technique, used in a series of readings on Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, see "Part II: Nature, Culture, Writing," in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Corrected ed (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

(signalling one's resistance to the violence of the historicity in which that text is inscribed). External to a textual encounter one recognizes the impossibility of positing a a symptomatic and historical interpretation regulated by other axioms or protocols, that are not regulated by the absolute alterity of other, that it is never given over in its entirety, perhaps never given over at all. The stabilization that is necessary as anterior to destabilisation, within the reading of a text, recognizes the *de facto* impossibility of that stabilization, for that stabilization's stability will always already have been posited from outside of its own.

One can accept the veracity of these methodological claims, and due to that acceptance come to question the above mandate. For while the intention of the text is perhaps articulated—that one is constructing the surface of the text through a reading—this articulation is not extended to the history of philosophy in which it is articulated; that is to say, the cannon. It is of interest to note the locution Derrida employs, "Whatever one ends up doing with it, one must begin by *listening* to the canon/*il faut commencer par entendre le canon*." While *entendre* is a standard word for understanding, from within Derrida's work, it is difficult to not read this specific word choice, with its relation to speech, when there are various other words for understanding, as a kind of parapraxis. Can the aurality of the verb *entendre* be seen as a slip that gestures to its position as not determined within the quasi-transcendental logic of the trace, but rather as an undeconstructed stabilizing concept that is stabilized by the conventions of a mid 20th-century French education in the human and social sciences? As I have argued, the operation of destabilizing a given stability within a text through a reliance upon an anterior and unacknowledged source of stability is endemic to the methodologies of deconstruction in general. Although, as I have also made clear, even my critique relies upon this self-same methodology to make its claims. The thrust of my argument is therefore not contra the

methodology of the destabilization of a given stabilization that is posited or read as the intention of the text, but rather than this is not accompanied with a recognition of the reliance of this first site of stability upon an always anterior, and perhaps unknowable, epistemological stabilization. That is if (p) is the site of a text's 'classical' stabilization, then (p) is a necessary condition of (q), its destabilization. What I am arguing is that (p) must be accompanied by a realization that it relies upon (p^1), an anterior, and unknown, epistemological discourse that governs its conceptualization.

To turn back to Foucault before closing on this extended reading of Derrida and Foucault's readings of Descartes, I want to focus on the last few pages of "My Body, This Paper, This Fire," in which Foucault makes his forceful and well known critique of Derrida's text, and in a certain sense, of Derrida's philosophical engagement as a whole. I want to read it against what I have called a naive reading, and instead argue that Foucault is making a powerful claim not just about historicity within Derrida's work, but a larger claim concerning Derrida's methodology writ large. Allow me to first quote this section in close to its entirety, and then work through its relevant elements:

> It might well be asked how an author as meticulous as Derrida, and one so attentive to texts, managed not only to allow so many omissions, but also to operate so many displacements, interventions and substitutions. But perhaps we should do that while remembering that Derrida is recalling an old tradition in his reading. He is well aware of this, of course; and this faithfulness seems, quite rightly, to comfort him. He is reluctant, in any case, to think that classical commentators missed, through inattentiveness, the importance and singularity of the passage on madness and dreaming.
>
> I am in agreement on one fact at least: that it was not at all on account of their inattentiveness that classical scholars omitted, before Derrida and like him, this passage from Descartes. It is part of a system, a system of which Derrida is today the most decisive representative, in its waning light: a reduction of discursive practices to textual traces; the elision of events that are produced there, leaving only marks for a reading; the invention of voices behind the text, so as not to have to

> examine the modes of implication of the subject in discourses; the assignation of the originary as said and not-said in the text in order to avoid situating discursive practices in the field of transformation where they are carried out.
>
> I would not say that it is a metaphysics, metaphysics *itself*, or its closure, that is hiding behind this 'textualisation' of discursive practices. I would go much further: I would say that it is a historically well-determined little pedagogy, which manifests itself here in a very visible manner. A pedagogy which teaches the student that there is nothing outside the text, but that in it, in its interstices, in its blanks and silences, the reserve of the origin reigns; that it is never necessary to look beyond it, but that here, not in the words of course, but in words as crossings-out, in their *lattice*, what is said is 'the meaning of being'. A pedagogy that inversely gives to the voice of the masters that unlimited sovereignty that allows it indefinitely to re-say the text.[76]

The reception of this passage usually has a double focus; 1) the manner in which Derrida is himself internal to a history of philosophy and as internal to it, replicates its violences, and particularly its structural exclusion of that which lies outside the purview of reason, which within the taxonomy of this debate, gets named as the exclusion of madness. 2) that Derrida is part of, or rather is the most decisive contemporary representation of, a philosophical system that reduces "discursive practises to textual traces [*des pratiques discursives aux traces textuelles*]."[77] The reading of this phrase, and the surrounding passages usually positions Foucault's critique as arguing that Derrida, in his attempt to privilege textuality, cannot take into account 'real' historical events, 'real' madness, 'real' social-political structures of the internment of madness. That Derrida's prioritizing of textuality is a form of fetishism of the intellectual and a disdain for the embodied and historical, and this belies a fundamental apoliticism within Derridean deconstruction. This has been a longstanding critique of deconstruction from both positivist accounts, as well as from more sympathetic readers, like those who, following this naïve reading

[76] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 573.

[77] Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits II. 1976 - 1988*, Dits et Écrits. 1954 -1988, Michel Foucault. Ed. établie sous la dir. de Daniel Defert ...; 2, n.d., 267.

of Foucault, argue something such as that theoretically/philosophically Derrida's work is important, but it does not take into account history and social configurations in any robust manner and therefore falls into a danger of moral nihilism.

The theoretically sensitivity and manner of reading of Derrida's texts ranges widely across these types of critiques, but they all, to a certain degree, circulate around the problem of the possibility of an externality of history. That is, is there anything that resists historical determination? I am not arguing that the force of this critique is entirely absent from Foucault's claims. He argues, for example, that Derrida is not able to offer an analysis of the event, in its historical specificity, because, for Derrida that specificity is always already not itself, the trace of itself, and therefore only encounterable through quasi-transcendental analyses.[78] For example, in his "Response to Derrida" Foucault writes: "For Derrida, what happened in the seventeenth century could only be a 'sample' (i.e. a repetition of the identical) or a 'model' (i.e. the inexhaustible excess of origin). He does not know the category of the singular event; it is therefore pointless for him—and impossible—to read that which occupies the essential part, if not the totality of my book: the analysis of an event."[79] Therefore, I am not arguing that Foucault does not occupy this critique, which I am calling a naïve reading of Derrida. Rather, I am arguing that he occupies it in a very different way than that posited by his readers. For in Foucault's

[78] One could see the contours of the differences between Derrida and Foucault in the proximity and distance between their theoretical constructions of Derrida's quasi-transcendental read against Foucault's concept of the historical *a priori.* For Derrida, the 'historical' aspect of the historical *a priori*, would be too presence-ful, too satisfied at its own ability to determine the aspects of what counts as historicity. Whereas, Foucault seems to argue that the *quasi* of the quasi-transcendental is *quasi* only in name, and that due to the totalization of textuality and iterability, the feign of the *quasi* only hides, and not deeply, the sovereignty of the philosopher that lies underneath.

[79] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 577.

claim that Derrida is not able to properly take into account discursive practices, I see a pathway to the claims I have been trying to form as to the problem of deconstruction's methodological justification. Moreover, I call these readings naïve because Derrida's work has evidently and persuasively attended to these claims. For Derrida, as I argued in the early sections of this chapter, iterability does not inoculate a philosophical claim from its historicity, rather it *necessitates* a claim to be read historically. He argues that all claims, even transcendental ones are produced within a historical structure of desire, and deconstruction is developed precisely as a methodology to expose that historicity. However, what iterability further argues is that even the conditions in which one posits the historical, that is, what counts as an event or a text, must itself be seen as produced within a discursive field.

How can one read Foucault's critique otherwise? What does it mean to claim that Derrida's work reduces discursive practices to textual traces, to elide events "leaving only marks for a reading,"[80] if it is not positing some sort of un-deconstructable concept of event or of history? That Foucault argues that what lies behind this "textualization" of discursive practices is *not* a metaphysics seems to be of great importance: "I would not say that it is a metaphysics, metaphysics *itself*, or its closure, that is hiding behind this 'textualisation' of discursive practices."[81] In this we see a recognition that Derrida is not making a metaphysical claim of a determined history that is not taken into account within the concept of iterability, but rather that what is expounded and relied upon is a relationship to the determination of the methodology of philosophy, that is, a pedagogy. "I would say that it is a historically well-determined little pedagogy, which manifests itself here in a very visible manner. A pedagogy which teaches the

[80] Foucault, 573.

[81] Foucault, 573.

student that there is nothing outside the text…a pedagogy that inversely gives to the voice of the masters that unlimited sovereignty that allows it indefinitely to re-say the text." Foucault is here, of course, referring to Derrida's famous claim from *Of Grammatology*, namely, "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*"[82] which was translated by Gayatri Spivak as "There is nothing outside the text."[83] This translation, in grammatically positing that there *is* a nothingness outside the text, falls into the very making metaphysical of iterability which Foucault here avoids (although his own re-writing of the text in same ways does not do it justice, translating Derrida's claim into "'il n'y a *rien* hors du texte.")[84] Derrida's addresses this history in "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion" from *Limited Inc*. He writes: "One of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and this to an incessant movement of recontextualization. The phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction ('there is nothing outside the text') means nothing else: there is nothing outside context. In this form, which says exactly the same thing. The formula would doubtless have been less shocking."[85]

Using Derrida's locution from this quote, the force of my argument could therefore also be rephrased around the claim that 'deconstruction' could be the name of the effort to take into

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[82] Jacques Derrida, *De La Grammatologie*, Collection "Critique" (Paris: Édtions de Minuit, 1967), 220.

[83] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

[84] For more on the history of problems in the English translation of this text see, Geoffrey Bennington, "Embarrassing Ourselves," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, March 20, 2016. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/embarrassing-ourselves/.

[85] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 136.

account limitless context. For even if deconstruction acknowledges its own constitutive failure/blindness, it nevertheless manifests a desire for a complete account*, a total justification*, even if only through the logic of preterition. It is the force of this desire that is in tension with its content, namely the possibility of giving a total account which as a totality resists contextualization. This is why my position is not that there is an error within Derrida's specific argument, why it is not a quibbling along the edges. For I am not saying that Derrida could write otherwise. Rather, while my argument is genealogically and methodologically indebted to the 'content' of deconstruction, I am arguing that these constitutive contradictions within deconstruction extend not to a specific instance of its operation, a specific textual event, but rather to its methodology as a systemic whole (at another time I believe much could be added as to the question of the system of deconstruction, which one could begin with a reading of the bibliographic note from *Writing and Difference*[86]).

Derrida is of course very careful to explain that a context given is not rigid, not determined from an ahistorical position which gives it its conceptual stability. To the extent that it is rooted within any given context (one that is always "differentiated and mobile"[87]), it realizes its own internality within that given concept. For, as Derrida remarked many times, his concept of a text is not that of the book ("the text is not the book , it is not confined in a volume itself confined to a library. It does not suspend reference—to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not to the other"[88]). Rather the text includes its own contextualization, and so to say there is nothing outside the text is also to say there is nothing outside a given concept. And

[86] Derrida, *L' écriture et la différence*, 437; Derrida and Bass, *Writing and Difference, xiii*.

[87] Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 137.

[88] Derrida, 137.

yet, I would argue that there remains some remainder external to the totalization of the text, which is the clarity itself of what allows for the determination of the context. What *is* assumed is a discursive procedure that justifies the naming of a text as a text, of the totality as total. Which is to say, following Nietzsche, that deconstruction seems unable to take into account its own intentions.[89]

To return to Foucault's text, I am arguing that Foucault is not claiming, as the naïve critique would, that Derrida is in error for arguing that there *is* something outside the text, that the error in Derrida's system is that is does not attend to real people or real history, or real social-political events. Foucault is of course aware of the naivety of these claims and the impossibility of fixing any historical moment outside of a conceptual contextualization. Rather the thrust of his argument is that Derrida's construction falls within a desire for a kind of methodological mastery. That is, in its claiming of the *proper* language in which a text must be first be engaged (if only to be then destabilized through a deconstructive reading), Derrida's texts, counter to their own intentions, produce a concept of the historical that is immune to the auspices of iterability. The proper text is given as possible, within a reading, and therefore is introduced without origin, without history, simply as given. Thus, one can read this critique as the claim that in the particular and privileged relationship of philosophy to historicity, Derrida is not Derridean enough.

Foucault names this methodology a 'petite pédagogie'; little in its effect, as one more iteration of a series within a chain, a chain in which a philosophical text claims the totality of its

[89] "Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir: also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant has grown." Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

expanse, "that it is never necessary to look beyond it."[90] Pedagogical in the way that it offers itself as within a determined history of philosophy, one in which the philosopher retains for himself an "unlimited sovereignty" as to the conditions in which the text emerges as text. Within this reading the claim that 'textualization' cannot take into account discursive practices should not be read as claiming that deconstruction leaves aside the facticity of historical and political life that is outside the limits of a text; no, the claim is much less naive and much more robust. It is rather that iterability does not take into account its own discursive practices, and in so doing, it is *deconstruction* that naively occupies a blindness to its own reliance on a very specific form of discursive facticity and historicity.

It is from this juncture that we can turn to the questions as to what pre-conception of difference allows for the deconstruction of sexual difference that can be found within the pages of *Prégnances: Lavis de Collette Deblé*.[91] Is there, within the destabilization of the contours of the representation of the feminine an assumption of the proper which undergirds the intentions of the text, that stabilize the text without recognition, and in so doing places the text, and the desires of the text, within a history of a certain relationship of philosophy to the form of difference, and especially to a form of difference that operates upon given assumptions of the relations between morphology, identity, and the sexual?

§5. Prégnances

Supposing truth is a woman—what then?

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good/ and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*

[90] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 573.

[91] Derrida and Deblé, *Prégnances*. All translations my own.

The main focus of this chapter has been to establish a theoretical construction that can offer a structure and orientation to the rest of this dissertation; namely that the destabilization of a certain content within a text relies upon an anterior methodological stabilization, which, as I have argued in the introduction to the dissertation, is constitutively unencounterable from within that same discourse. This problem of stabilization is of course deeply indebted to both the work of Foucault and of Derrida, and it is for this reason that I chose their textual back-and-froth as a privileged position from which to embark. However, it is not only because it is the most obvious site of their encounter that I chose these texts, but because of the contours of the context of the debate itself, and its subsequent history. For what makes it of particular interest in the very fact that the debate and its legacies is framed through the question as to whether madness should be seen as interior or exterior to history and therefore how it determines a relationship between historicity and madness. Indeed, what I am attending to is that these methodological claims have been posed without *simultaneously* attending to their methodological limitations. Attending to these limitations would mean that any claim to the desire to deconstruct or destroy a determined content *produces the parameters of their same content*, and does *without any self-certainty* as to interpolating violences that these claims inaugurate and are situated within.

The stakes of this argument (and in an important way, this argument is that there are always stakes to any methodology) are especially apparent when examining a construction such as sexual difference. As has been argued in various forms and in various means,[92] the conceptual force in which sexual difference is tied to a logic of binary relations, means that attempting to see

[92] See the following chapter of this dissertation. Also see, Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1985).

the historical limits of sexual difference reveals unencounterable assumptions concerning the basic form of identity and being that serve as transcendental assumptions. The following chapters of this dissertation will be engaging with these concepts through various archives, but before turning to the first site of engagement (namely certain French interpretations of bisexuality within psychoanalysis), I will briefly look at a textual instance of Derrida's engagement with sexual difference, with the hopes that it can make apparent the type of applications that the preceding theoretical work of this chapter can make available.

I am not, of course, claiming to engage with any systematicity into the problem of sexual difference and femininity in Derrida's work. Many of his texts explicitly engage sexuality and gender,[93] and there has been much work exploring this archive.[94] Rather, I will read a relatively unknown text, but one that lays out in a particular and compelling way the contextual and methodological stakes of the relations between deconstruction and sexual difference. The text is entitled *Prégnances: Lavis de Colette Deblé. Peintures*. It comprises a short essay on Deblé's work by Derrida, which is accompanied by images from series of works by Deblé. The works are mostly washes, in French named *lavis*, in which diluted ink or watercolor paint is applied in combination with drawing. In various forms, colors, sizes, Deblé paints, in silhouette, women from the history of painting. From small drawings to life-size cut-outs, Deblé 'cites' the figures of women from the history of "Western art," removing them from their painted context, from their framing, even from their medium (changing color, tone, material). What is left is the figuration of women. Most often with a simple transcription at the top of the page, handwritten,

[93] For example, see Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism*, Reprint (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), 189–204.

[94] For example, see Christian Hite, *Derrida and Queer Theory* (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, 2019).

the name of the 'original' artist, name of the work, location of the work, date, and signed at the bottom. [figure 1].[95]

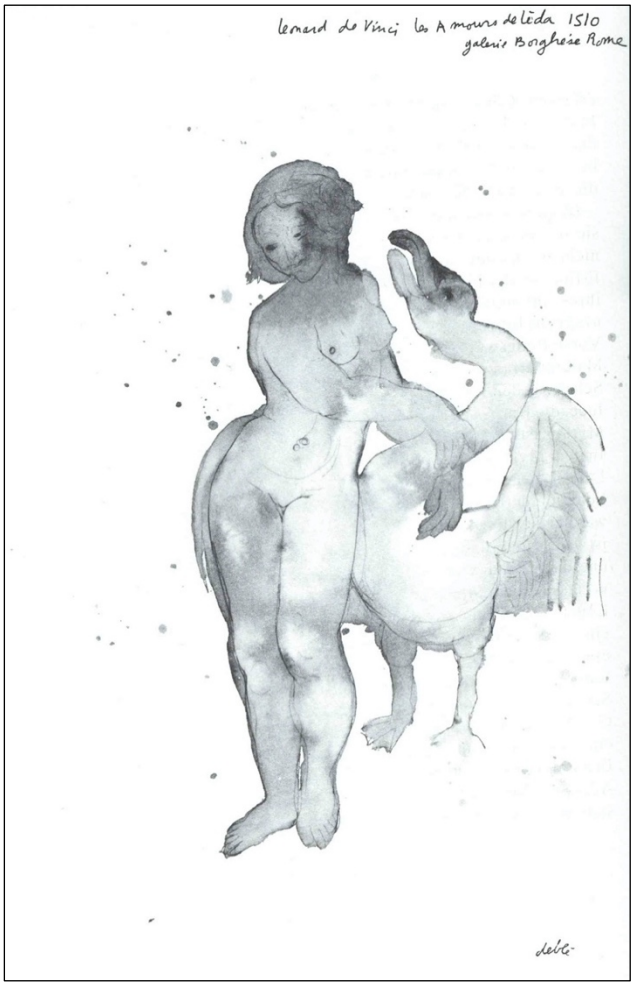

Figure 1: Colette Deblé, *Leonard de Vinci, Les Amours de Léda, 1510, Galerie Borghèse, Rome*. SOURCE: Jean-Joseph Goux et al., *Femmes dessinées = Gezeichnete Frauen = Retracing the woman* (Laon; Creil: L'Heur de Laon ; Ed. Dumerchez, 1994).

[95] Deblé describes her project as follows: "Has anyone ever tried to explore with only plastic means the history of art or some of its aspects, as the historian or essayist does with the aid of writing? My project is to try, through 888 designs, to recreate the diverse representations of the woman since prehistoric times up to the present as to create a visual analysis of diverse postures, situations, and settings." From Jean-Joseph Goux et al., *Femmes Dessinées = Gezeichnete Frauen = Retracing the Woman* (Laon; [Creil: L'Heur de Laon ; Ed. Dumerchez, 1994). Translation my own.

Starting in the early 1990's Deblé began a project to make eight-hundred-and-eighty-eight images (wash drawings, cut-outs, paintings) of these representations of women taken from prehistoric cave paintings through to contemporary and modern art. The project has exceeded the original bounds of eight-hundred-and-eighty-eight, with thousands of representations of the female having been, and continue to be, produced. Deblé's materials and technique are quite traditional, and at first glance, her works seems to fit into more conservative traditions in contemporary plastic arts. However, what is exceptional about Deblé's work is not necessarily the technique of representation, but rather the performative effect of the works. Deblé's washes perform a perversion of the history of art through citation. On its surface, Deblé seems to work in literal invocation, but what is seemingly literal is decidedly unliteral. As Michael Bishop writes in "Windows Upon the Unseen: Colette Deblé", Deblé's work "decontextualises in gently stripping away accoutrements and landscapes, and thus resituating feminine presence within, as it were, its strict, uncluttered and concentrated interiority."[96]

One is tempted to see in this 'decontextualization' either a disavowal or a reformation of the relation between the allegorical and the figure of the woman in the history of painting. Deblé, through removal, and plastic renegotiation, denies the male gaze, denies the allegorical servitude of the figuration of the woman, and reproduces a concrete woman, by a woman, no longer woman as allegory of servitude, or affect, or love, etc. Or on the other hand, if one were to view the work as political allegory, the female figure is not concretely specified, but rather is purely negative, that which is removed, an abstraction of liberation or autonomy. Jean-Luc Chalumeau

[96] Michael Bishop, *Contemporary French Art 2: Gérard Garouste, Colette Deblé, Georges Rousse, Geneviève Asse, Martial Raysse, Christian Jaccard, Joël Kermarrec, Danièle Perronne, Daniel Dezeuze, Philippe Favier, Daniel Nadand*, Faux Titre 362 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 30.

has described Deblé's work as maieutic art, a Socratic art, or as Bishop has phrased it, an art that sets up a "trembling, shimmering, between-space, one of erasure, absence, and creation, new presence."[97]

Deblé herself questions the allegorical potential of her work. Questioning to what extent, "women can remain an allegory when a woman is the painter: when it is a woman painter who is re-drawing and re-designating her."[98] Deblé's painting, which is not precisely 'painting,' yet neither is it drawing, sits in a contradictory site of representation as un-representation or de-representation. Or perhaps, representation as its shadow–in relation to the image, but not it. Its reverse, still retaining a hazy shape, but in relief, haunting. As Bishop writes, in Deblé's work "we are moved beyond the visible; rational 'visual analysis', whilst eminently feasible, and deployed and invited, equally slips away as we enter the strangeness of plasticity's pure intrinsicalness and the unsayable world and *ontos* hovering about these superbly shadowy unrepresentations."[99]

Derrida's text on Deblé, unsurprisingly, is deeply invested in the technique of the citation, its relation to the logic of historicity and exteriority. Yet, already in the title of his text there are strange internal tensions. As a first tension, the word "*prégnances*" is an unusual word. Unlike its English etymological relation, it is not the common word to describe the gestation period, although it has that archaic root. The common French words are rather "grossesse" for pregnancy, and "enceinte" for pregnant. English has no direct equivalent for *prégnances*, although it comes close to the use of the word in the concept of a pregnant pause. *Prégnances* as

[97] Bishop, 30.

[98] Bishop, 35.

[99] Bishop, 40.

in expectant, salient, with and from a certain history. And yet, the term is not devoid of relation to the figuration of the woman's body. Even in the image by Deblé, used on the front jacket of Derrida's text, we see ambivalence in the relation of pregnancy/*prégnances* to womanhood [figure 2].

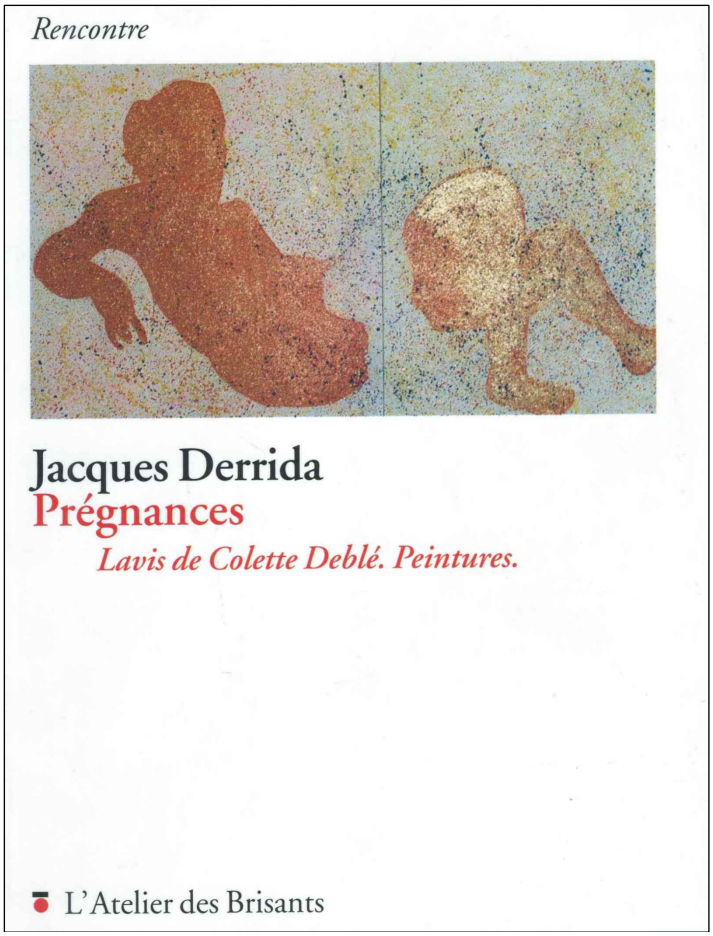

Figure 2: Front cover of *Prégnances: Lavis de Collette Deblé. Peintures*. SOURCE: Jacques Derrida and Colette Deblé, *Prégnances: Lavis de Colette Deblé, Peintures*, Rencontre (Mont-de-Marsan: Atelier des brisants, 2004).

A woman's figure, perhaps expectant, reclining, cut through the torso. Something washes past it, through it, dividing torso from legs, yet something else more than just legs, the resemblance of a protruding stomach. And this wash, through the body, yet of the body, will be of great importance. Even within the next word in the title: *Lavis*, or as Derrida will write in the

opening page of his text, "*Lavis, quel mot de combine de mots*/ *Lavis*, what word of so many words."[100] *Lavis*, itself another uncommon word, is a technical term for the kind of drawing/painting that I have previously described, which in English is known as a wash, or a wash drawing. Heavily diluted ink or paint used in combination with drawing. It is usually made with only a few colors, or otherwise it is classified as a watercolor.[101]

The water of the wash will be of great importance, Derrida will use it as a conceptual tool to tie together the feminine, the matriarchal and the history of representation – amniotic fluid, water, wash, water-as-that-which-blurs, streams crossing streams, drowning borders, etc. And this usage of the wash as water, as a tool in which to think indifferentiation/indetermination, is aided by the overdetermination of meanings of the *lavis* itself. Beyond the meaning of *lavis*, as wash drawing, there are at least two other word-games that can be played that aid Derrida's conceptual gesture. First, *lavis* becomes quite easily, with the smallest of textual interventions, *l'avis*. *L'avis* is an extremely common word in French, meaning opinion, and most importantly, according to. The title thus becomes: *Prégnances: L'avis de Colette Deblé*/*Expectations*, *According to Colette Deblé*. And finally, not a homograph but a homophone, *lavis* becomes *la vie*, the life. The life of Colette Deblé. And so, in this one word, Derrida locates a relation between the feminine, interiority, particularity, and the genealogical relation between womanhood and of painting. And it is this indeterminacy that Derrida engages. What happens in the operation of the citation? What of citation across mediums? Does a cited woman from a

[100] Derrida and Deblé, *Prégnances*, 7.

[101] Derrida comments on the proximity between the watercolor and the wash, also on the first page of his text, writing of Deblé, "Her technique, or rather her hand, her *way* – way and matter, way and memory - it is not the same as watercolor, although, it drifts within the same waters. She does not make watercolors but, more often, a *lavis*] wash."Derrida and Deblé, 7.

Rembrandt oil, the cited cave wall painting, the cited Picasso, do these painted women lose their status as paintings through citation, due to the addition of the water, and the removal of the frame? If they do, what remains in one's gaze of the original when one looks at the citation? And how to think this problem of the plasticity of the cited painting when (and according to Derrida this remains the case for all aesthetic representation, perhaps all representation as such), the object of citation is the female body, the female nude? And what to do even more so, when the citer is herself a woman? A draughtswoman. Does this particular position produce or deny an ironic potential?

This impossible position of the draughtswoman (Deblé), according to Derrida, produces the question of limits and desire. In her exponential cascading of citations, women after women, cited and removed from the history of art, Derrida asks, what does Deblé want? Or rather, he tells us what she does not want, which would be to cite and therefore to testify to a history of the subjugation of women, which Derrida calls feminist history. More than anything, "she would have not wanted, you see, she would have wanted *not* to cite, or not to cite any longer, woman as testifying, or worse still as appearing through representation, represented by painters and lawyers, in the voices and hands of the masters, and therefore, in the court of history, in order to write sententiously a feminist history of women, of women persecuted, sacrificed, exposed, martyred, abducted, deducted, observed, objectivized, drowned alive, the women hostages of painting."[102] She does not want to cite, as a means of replicating, and reproducing, and, according to Derrida, she therefore does not want to occupy a place *within* a genealogy of feminist art; feminist art being that which points to the modes of subjugation which the history of art perpetrates. Women as object. Feminist art as a "laudable enterprise, certainly, and much

[102] Derrida and Deblé, 12.

needed if a little dogmatic: who tells the story of who, from which point of view, with which language, which axioms, which archive, what other body?...And why not invent something else, another body? Another history? Another interpretation?"[103] Therefore, according to Derrida, this is what Deblé specifically does not want to do: paint (wash?) from a stable archive. In fact, he continues, "one could hear through the murmur of these drawings a reproach and disarming critique of the sententious authorities who preside over the great histories of women's history."[104] This is what Deblé wishes to not do, and what makes her, again according to Derrida, *not* a feminist artist.

But what is a feminist artist according to this logic? One who, bound to the confines of the limits of representation, and the "hands of the masters" can only depict and lament the history of women in painting. Women persecuted, sacrificed, exposed, martyred, etc.… But the list is not inconsequential, not only a list of terrible participles. Rather it points to both a growth and a delimitation. The feminist is one who points out this economy, that the subjugation of women, within painting, is one of indefinite expenditure. That there will always be women to paint, and in so doing, a woman to martyr. But this expenditure, while theoretically limitless in the growth of new particulars is itself strictly contained within bounds of what counts as a body, what counts as an axiom, as an archive. The question is then what language makes this subjugation through representation recognizable as representation (and therefore within

[103] Derrida and Deblé, 12–13.

[104] Derrida and Deblé, 13. Note the use of the adjective "sententious" [*sentencieuses*], which Derrida uses repeatedly in this text. I note it because of the particularly sententious way Derrida himself here addresses feminism. Derrida's sententious tone does little to take into account the very discourses internal to feminism that have long before Derrida's writing posed similar problems and concerns. Moreover, the question must be asked as to stability of the archive from which Derrida's text itself draws its prejudices concerning sexual difference.

masculine violence), rather than something natural, or an accident, a chance combination of shape and hue?

This delimited language within the potentiality of expansion is what both drives Deblé, while also, according to Derrida, produces something other than feminist interpretation. Deblé wishes she could cite differently, not cite the hands of masters, and with them, the long history of womanly violence. But, recognizing this impossibility, she cites differently. "Inventing another logic of citation, she cites them, these great masters of representation, these authorized painters, but without citing them either, therefore, without summoning them, without that gesture of vigilante counter-violence."[105] This is a double gesture, a citation which, while remaining citation, is not citation, or at least not a citation recognizable as representation. It depicts the fundamental problem of, what I have been calling stabilization. In the process of the desired production of something other than, some other shape, something without the violence we have known, in the process of destabilizing, one must simultaneously stabilize. A gesture of expansion, which is met only by a form of return. An echo.

On one hand we encounter men and women "their appearance stabilized in a picture."[106] But that very picture, its lines and colors, can encounter a woman who is there, "other than figuratively,"[107] there through "another logic of citation" which destabilizes that very tableau, of the body of a man and woman, to produce a new body, but only through a logic of citation, another logic of citation. This other logic of another citation produces a concept of stability as that which is the very allowance for the unstable. A production of a newness, a trembling,

[105] Derrida and Deblé, *Prégnances*, 13.

[106] Derrida and Deblé, 13.

[107] Derrida and Deblé, 13.

through a reformulation of the closure of metaphysics is a fundamental technique of many French philosophers of the second half of the 20th century (Bataille, Blanchot, Cixous, Irigaray, etc.). What is perhaps unique to Derrida is that he posits that this slippage comes only *through a return*, an echo, even if the echo echoes only an echo, one without origin .

Perhaps this explains Derrida's long engagement with the mythical figure of Echo and her relationship to Narcissus, figures which appear once again in his text on Deblé. Derrida frequently quotes the story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Echo, having been cursed by Juno to speak only through repetition, sees Narcissus in a grove and falls in love immediately. Narcissus, hearing her voice, calls out to her, "This way, we must come together." To which Echo replies, "come together." Upon seeing her, Narcissus exclaims: "Hands off. May I die before you enjoy my body." Imprisoned within her trap of repetition, Echo must tragically repeat, "enjoy my body."[108]

Derrida is interested in both the literality of the story, as a story, and its metaphorical lineages through the history of visual arts, psychoanalysis, and more general linguistic expression. He uses the story as a metonymy for the psychoanalytic understanding of the formation of the self within the paradoxical structure of narcissism, and its tragic and necessary relation to mourning. As Pleshette DeArmitt has described it, "Derrida's Narcissus, condemned as he is to blindness, must mourn not only the other whom he can never wholly appropriate but also his own autonomy. Yet, like a blind man feeling his way in the dark, he will ceaselessly attempt to sketch his own portrait, to trace his own image. And, even though each gesture of narcissistic reappropriation is destined to fail, such gestures must be attempted, time and again, if

[108] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61–66.

there is to be any relation to the other, any love, any hospitality."[109] This logic of narcissism is structurally an experience of the gaze. A producing of the self through an encountering the other as reflection, both the self and not-the-self. And this necessary act of self-formation through the failure of appropriation of the other (and thus a failure of re-appropriation), is both inaugurated through Echo, and finds parallel in it. Narcissus' self-love through gaze and reflection is put into play only through a return of language supplied by the other. It is his rejection of Echo which produces the reflected gaze in which he finds his beloved (self). Echo as a kind of necessary precondition of symbolic formation, a gift of the language of the other which comes in the form of citation.

Derrida will play on the French word for ultrasound, *une échographie,* a materialized echo, demarked, the image of the not-yet subject as the graphed repetition of the language of the other. But, in *Prégnances*, Derrida portrays Echo not within the construct of mechanistic repetition, but rather, as a poet herself, skilled at the play of discourse. She cites Narcissus verbatim, but only to allow his words to produce another meaning, and invokes the methodology of this ingenious perversion of citation, what he calls, contra-band citation, as a model for Deblé's oeuvre. The idea of the contra-band is a useful term in understanding Derrida's concept of citation in the work of the draughtswomen Echo and Deblé. Both Echo and Deblé take what is given through histories of language and representation, and without the production of new bodies and discourses, turns them around, produces a mimicry to their own specifications, a mimicry which potentially can gesture to the production of something otherwise than what was re-produced.

[109] DeArmitt, "Resonances of Echo: A Derridean Allegory," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 42, no. 2 (2009): 90.

Derrida writes: "So, to understand what Deblé is doing when she cites, contra-band, do not forget mythology, from which she draws so much. Remember as well, for example, *The Metamorphoses* (perhaps the work with the most consonance) and, in it, the cunning of the sublime Echo who also pretended to cite…What did Echo do? What had she *already* tried, condemned by the jealousy of Juno never to speak first and to repeat only a little, the end, only the end of the other's phrase, so to cite a fragment? Echo had played with language, irreproachably, as an interpreter both docile and brilliant. She had pretended to cite, after Narcissus, there where the fragment repeats to become again an entire phrase, invented, original and spoken, for who could hear it, *Echo signed on her own behalf*...."[110]

It is this brilliant docility, in both Deblé and Echo, that turns citation into production, and, potentially, delicately, always within the danger of its own un-doing, allows for a gesture towards the destabilization of what came before. And interestingly, Deblé makes evident that this kind of citation-as-destabilization is only available through pictorial citation. Deblé: "The pictorial citation can't be literal as the literary citation because it passes though the hand and way of the citer. So, there is a light trembling, a double allusion to the work cited and to the citer. My project explores this trembling because it supposes an extremely long exercise of the use and fatigue of the citation."[111] Citation through the hand of another, which both echoes and reforms, a double allusion. It exhausts, abuses, de-frames, and then reframes anew. But always in the form of the double. This is what Deblé is doing when she cites, inaugurating a discourse through a cunning citation, exhausting the citation, and in that coming apart, as something other than

[110] Derrida and Deblé, *Prégnances*, 15.

[111] Goux et al., *Femmes dessinées = Gezeichnete Frauen = Retracing the woman,* 5. My translation.

citation. And in so doing she produces a trembling of what was, and the possibility of what could be. A new kind of shape, especially the shape of what is known as "the woman" (and with it "the man"). If we can understand this logic of the echo which is never pure return as a kind of production of the pictorial citation, perhaps we can see the way Derrida attempts to destabilize the figure of the feminine and masculine (and with it so many genealogies of relation) through citation.

But what cannot be so cleanly articulated is the justification of the bounds of the citation—the claim of its emergence within canonical mastery, or the determination of what counts as occidental art, and most importantly the bounds of sexual differentiation. It is not sufficient to say that the cannon is always already open to the other or produced through the auspices of heteronomy, that is to say available for destabilization. For in that very claim of availability lies a determination of what counts, what can be counted; and then, unacknowledged, pre-judged, a claim to generalization. For what will be attended to in the following chapters of this dissertation is precisely the way in which representations of sexual difference both assume without question their binarity, while, behind the scenes, and unacknowledged lies an anterior and non-bifurcated relation. The possibility must be entertained that the very stability of sexual difference to be destabilized is not available to Derrida, and yet is blindly assumed, stable like a classical reading, like what counts in the representation of women in painting. And this, as I have argued throughout this chapter, remains a methodological trait of deconstruction as such.

In Derrida's claim of citation as a way to destabilize the stability of sexual differentiation, in this case within the history of "occidental" visual representation, there is an assumption made, through simply apodictic prejudice, that there *is* a primary stabilization, a canon, normative bounds from which citation and then deviation can occur. It is difficult to disentangle this

prejudice, because while this assumption is made, it is obscured by a nomological claim as to the instability of the categories themselves. In Derrida's concept of iterability and citationality there is of course no original but rather one is always already within the supplemental deviation of the iteration. Yet, I am not claiming that the deconstructive process in fact claims an origin, a site of theological certitude, against its own intentions. I do not believe this is the case, and, as we have seen, this critique has been attended to by Derrida many times. What I am claiming is that in the *discursive practice* of attending to a text, Derrida methodologically does not adhere to his own conception of supplementarity and citation. While, *at another level of his discourse*, he may destabilize the categories which he engages (metaphysical, epistemological, theological, etc.), within the discursive practice of a deconstruction, that is its methodology, he relies upon an unacknowledged source of stability. What this amounts to is a methodology that on one hand retains a theoretical assumption as to the radical contextualization of all knowledge (a position which these texts both ethically and epistemologically desire to maintain), which simultaneously does not encounter the limits of the possibility of this very methodology. For to admit this epistemology within his methodology would also necessitate a limit to the mastery of one's method. That one does not know, in any totality, that which one does not know. That this is a lesson one can find within Derrida's corpus, is, in the end, further evidence of my claims.

As I have been arguing, the stakes of these claims become especially apparent when one looks within this text at the role of the women within history. When "women historians" speak of producing a feminist history, Derrida's response is, to question who the feminist is to claim the authority to say what a woman is.[112] One does not need to take issue with his fundamental claim

[112] "Who tells the story of who, from which point of view, with which language, which axioms, which archive, which other body? Who dreams there? And why not invent something else, another body? Another history? Another interpretation? In this sense, one could hear through the

that any representation, in representing, defines itself through constitutive exclusion of what it is not. Rather, the question remains, what is the justification that denies the female historian the position of invoking a stability that is to be destabilized, but allows that self-same procedure methodologically within the deconstruction? In so doing, the one who is performing the deconstruction is always in the enviable ethical position of recognizing the violences of previous philosophies and regimes of representation, and from this position of recognition one can work to disentangle, destroy, deconstruct that which one is always already entangled within. But this position can only be occupied by a double gesture; an obscuring of one's own discursive practice in the event of their enaction, and an assumed mastery of the text that admits one's blindness but only under the condition that it stipulates what it cannot see. One is reminded of the wisdom of Nietzsche when he wrote, "If one would explain how the abstrusest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about, it is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?"[113]

As I will continue to attend to in the following chapters, and what this dissertation intends to argue, is that anterior to a destabilization of how sex is differentiated is an unexamined assumption in its stability. Namely, that it is in two, a binary relation, a vicissitude of the dialectic. What would it look like to imagine a methodology that both recognized the limitlessness of context and yet remained secure in its inability to know its own? To both acknowledge the relationship between the conditional and the act as structural, yet retain a

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murmur of these drawings, a reproach and disarming critique of the sententious authorities who preside over the great histories of the historians of woman/women historians." Derrida and Deblé, *Prégnances*, 12.

[113] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 13. Emphasis in original.

certain opacity of the act itself? Would it then read its own history in another way, or as another? A different kind of madness.

Chapter 2 – An Event Between Four: Freud's 'Bisexuality' in French Feminist Psychoanalysis

> Bisexuality, I am sure you are right about it. And I am accustoming myself to regarding every sexual act as an event between four.
>
> - Letter from Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, August 1899

§1. Introduction

In Freud's Lecture XXXIII, "Femininity," from his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*,[1] he names the subject of the lecture as that which "throughout history people have knocked their head against," namely, "the riddle of the nature of femininity."[2] This chapter takes up this riddle as it appears in Freud's corpus and as attended to within the French psychoanalytic feminist reception of Freud, specifically within texts by Luce Irigaray and Sarah Kofman. Both Irigaray and Kofman frame their projects as attending to the 'phallocratic' structure of Freud's work, in which femininity is presented as that which can only be manifest in relation to an always already pregiven masculinity. This formation, they argue, leaves femininity as either unattended to within the psychoanalytic framework, or as a pure negativity, symbolized by Freud's 'obsession' with penis envy and the castration complex. While I do not disagree that there is indeed a prioritization of the masculine within psychoanalysis (a claim, I may add, which Freud himself repeatedly acknowledges[3]), what I will argue is that the depiction of sexual

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[1] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" and Other Works v. 22,* ed. James Strachey, Repr (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 112–135.

[2] Freud, 113.

[3] For example: "We know less about the sexual life of little girls than boys. But we need not be ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a 'dark continent' for psychology." "The Question of Lay Analysis" from Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and*

difference within Freud's work is more complicated than its figuration by either Irigaray or Kofman. Moreover, I will argue that this becomes particularly apparent when one examines the role of the concept of bisexuality in Freud's texts and the manner in which this concept is received by both Irigaray and Kofman. For while we must attend carefully to the vital differences in Irigaray and Kofman's reading of Freudian sexual difference, both writers share a conception of bisexuality as determined within a binary relation between masculinity and femininity. While they offer differing modes of interpreting Freud's texts, both develop these interpretations though methodologies which are in many ways determined by the influence of deconstruction upon their work. Building upon the critique developed in my previous chapter, I will therefore demonstrate the manner in which the methodological legacies of deconstruction affect the claims inherent within both Irigaray and Kofman's work. Furthermore, I will ask if Freud's development of the concept of bisexuality offers a way to engage the problem of stabilization that resists some of the errors that I have argued are constitutive of deconstruction as a methodology.

§2. That 'Other' Bisexuality

> The theory of bisexuality is still surrounded by many obscurities and we cannot but feel it as a serious impediment in psycho-analysis that it has not yet found any link with the theory of the instincts.
>
> - Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*

Anxiety, Lay Analysis" and Other Works v. 20, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 212. For more on the relationship between femininity and colonialism in psychoanalysis read through the concept of the 'dark continent', see Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

At the beginning of the "Femininity" lecture Freud offers a description of a scene in which an individual first encounters another. He writes, "When you meet a human being the first distinction you make is 'male of female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty."[4] However, the custom of making this distinction relies in fact on a false sense of certainty. One may feel confident in making this distinction if one is merely describing the primary sexual characteristics, that is the "male sexual product" and the "ovum and the organization that harbours it"[5] (although as we will see this certainty too will be open to reconsideration). Yet, the secondary sexual characteristics, "the bodily shapes and tissues,"[6] are inconsistent and subject to variation. This variation is not that one oscillates between two discrete sexes, but rather within an economy of sexual differentiation in which the "proportion in which masculine and feminine are mixed in the individual is subject to quite considerable fluctuations."[7] While all individuals "apart from the rarest of cases"[8] have only one kind of primary sexual characteristic, that is 'male or female', all individuals have contingent and varying secondary characteristics, that retain both 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects. Therefore, no determined relation between primary and secondary characteristics can be given. That is, due to the fact that we *encounter* the sexual difference of the other only through the secondary characteristics, we cannot rely on anatomy to give us certainty as to the characteristics of one sex

[4] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" and Other Works v. 22*, 113.

[5] Freud, 113.

[6] Freud, 113.

[7] Freud, 114.

[8] Freud, 114.

or another. Freud writes that we "must conclude that what constitutes masculinity and femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of."[9]

If what constitutes sexual difference cannot be given through anatomy, is it then given through psychology? For while we are accustomed to thinking of sexual difference in morphological terms, these terms seem to have the weight of mental categories as well. Freud writes: "Thus we speak of a person, whether male or female, as behaving in a masculine way in one connection and in a feminine way in another."[10] However, the clarity in which these terms are made discrete is itself problematized, and makes manifest a slippage of the notion of bisexuality from anatomy to mental life. For the assumption of what is masculine and what is feminine in terms of behavior is based upon an anatomical assumption that pairs masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity. Yet this anatomical assumption is itself nothing but an instance of conventional association which cannot be scientifically determined. Concerning the supposed anatomical association between masculinity/activity and femininity/passivity, Freud writes: "You may well doubt whether you have gained any real advantage from this when you reflect that in some cases of animals the females are the stronger and more aggressive and the male is active only in the single act of the sexual union. This is so, for instance, with the spiders. Even the functions of rearing and caring for the young, which strikes us as feminine *par excellence*, are not invariably attached to the female sex in animals. In quite high species we find that the sexes share the task of caring for the young between them or even that the male alone devotes himself to it."[11]

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[9] Freud, 114.

[10] Freud, 114.

[11] Freud, 115.

The indeterminacy between activity/passivity and masculinity/femininity extends beyond spiders and the higher species of animals to human sexual life: "A mother is active in every sense towards her child; the act of lactation itself may equally be described as the mother suckling the baby or as her being sucked by it….Women can display great activity in several directions, men are not able to live with their own kind unless they develop a large amount of passive adaptability."[12] Freud names this mistaking of our assumptions concerning human sexual roles as determined by either passivity or activity as an "error of superimposition."[13] What Freud means by this term is not immediately clear. James Strachey, the editor of the *English Standard Edition* of Freud's texts adds this editorial remark to the term, "I.e. mistaking two different things for a single one. The term was explained in *Introductory Lectures*, XX."[14] The lecture Strachey refers to is entitled, "The Sexual Life of Human Beings." In this lecture, Freud writes about the difficulty of making a clear and distinct definition of what counts as the sexual. He writes: "We may suspect that in the course of the development of the concept 'sexual' something has happened which has resulted in what Silberer has aptly called an 'error of superimposition'."[15] The word in German, which Strachey translates as 'error of superimposition' is *Überdeckungsfehler*,[16] for which a literal translation would be a 'mistake of

[12] Freud, 115.

[13] Freud, 115.

[14] Freud, 115n1.

[15] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" (PART III) v. 16*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 304.

[16] It is particularly interesting that a prominent French translation, the "Cinquième Conférence" from the *Nouvelles Conferences sur la Psychanalyse* (Gallimard, 1971), which is the translation Irigaray bases her readings on—although as we will see the history of French translation of the

covering over'. Superimposition, with its cinematic allusion, seems an appropriate translation, however, for reasons we will develop, only if one retains that there can be many layers in a cinematic montage. Strachey footnotes 'error of superimposition'/*Überdeckungsfehler* here as well, and writes, "What Silberer seems to have in mind is mistakenly thinking that you are looking at a *single thing*, when in fact you are looking at *two different things* superimposed on each other."[17]

The text in discussion by Herbert Silberer which Freud and Strachey are referring to is the *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism* written in 1914.[18] In Section 1A of this text, entitled, "Introversion and Intro-Determination" Silberer describes the way in which, through psychoanalytic methods, we deduce that certain symbols appearing in our dreams stand for the father or the mother. These psychic images are not representations the dreamer has produced of its actual parents, but rather have "derived mere types whose meaning will change according to the ways of viewing them, somewhat as the color of many minerals changes according to the angle at which we hold them to the light."[19] It would be a mistake to think that this 'type' which has been derived by the dreamer and whose meaning is in constant flux and refraction is the

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"Femininity" lecture is a complicated one—translates this term as "*l'erreur de raisonnement analogique*" which in English would be "errors of analogical reasoning." At another juncture, it would be of great interest to think about the opposition and relation between superimposition and analogy within the Freudian concept of bisexuality. What kind of analogical reasoning would superimposition entail? For distinguishing between *paradeigma* and *homoiotes* is perhaps another route to get at the nomological and methodological problematics this dissertation is engaging as a whole.

[17] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" (PART III) v. 16,* 304n1. Emphasis added.

[18] Herbert Silberer, *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism* (Forgotten Books, 2015).

[19] Silberer, 252.

essential content of the dream. Rather, the meaning of the dream is only fashioned through these symbolizations, but are not inherent within them.

Silberer continues, "So then we get for the typical symbol a double perspective. The types are given, we can look through them forward and backward. In both cases there will be distortions of the image; we shall frequently see projected upon each other, things that do no belong together, we shall perceive convergences at vanishing points which are to be ascribed only to perspective. I might for brevity's sake call the errors so resulting errors of superimposition."[20] Strachey seemingly misunderstood "the double perspective" of the symbol as the source of the error. Silberer, and thus Freud, are not positing that the *Überdeckungsfehler* are mistakes because of the bifurcated nature of symbols. One could easily imagine a double perspective which allows for non-superimposition. Rather, the error comes from distortions of the image which produce an assumption of convergence but which only does so due to perspective. Indeed, as Silberer defines it, *Überdeckungsfehler* are those mistakes which come from the impossibility of any specific arithmetic account of symbolization as such. All symbols given through the errors of superimposition are constituted by at least one more instance than they appear to be.

It is therefore clearly incorrect to define superimposition as *two* different things counting for *one*, and yet , especially when put into the context of sexual difference, this error becomes part of a genealogy of misreadings of Freud.[21] For if one were to rely upon Strachey's editorial

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[20] Silberer, 252–53.

[21] See, for example, "The Father's Seduction" in Jane Gallop, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction*, Language, Discourse, Society (London: Macmillan, 1982). In this text, which is a reading Irigaray's writings on Freud, Gallop both acknowledges Freud's use of the term "errors of superimposition," while, and without textual evidence, arguing that Freud's own text is guilty of this very error. This is not performed as a deconstructive reading that works

intervention, it would seem that the error of superimposition describes an encounter with the other in which one recognizes only the other's masculinity *or* femininity, when in fact sexuality is comprised of *both* aspects. However, as we have seen, Freud is rather stating, that the *Überdeckungsfehler* is the misrecognition of sexuality as comprised of one determinable thing, rather than by an overdetermination which can never be resolved within any completable signification. It is this construction—a kind of palimpsest or montage without end—that Freud names 'bisexuality'.

Bisexuality is thus proved only negatively, that is, against the conventional determinations of sex and sexual difference. On one hand, its proof relies upon an allusion to animality to reject conventional assumptions of anatomical sexuality and sexual roles. On the other, it continues this rejection of convention but within the realm of human sexual difference, mostly through the figures of the active mother and the passive social man. It is perhaps necessary to add, although this will be addressed again later on in this chapter, that I am *not* arguing that Freud's conception of sex is not stabilized by the conventions of his time, which carry within them gendered and racialized violences. Rather, I am arguing that Freud is aware of the problem of the inescapabilty of conventionality, and thus historical context, in the construction of any concept. Indeed, he mobilizes the concept of bisexuality specifically as a discursive device to account for this very limitation. Yes, Freud produces his concept of the sexual, of femininity, of masculinity, etc. within the historico-epistemological frameworks that define him. However, the concept of bisexuality demonstrates Freud's insistence upon the recognition that while conceptuality cannot be separated from conventional prejudices, it is not,

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upon a constitutive contradiction in a text, but rather merely uses the term to describe Freud's purported reification of sexual difference, even though, as we have seen, his use of the term is demonstrably to argue against the veracity of their conventionality.

in its totality, determined by them. That which originates a concept, and as its origin is external to it, nevertheless subsists within it as the expression of the danger of the concept's unbecoming.

Bisexuality, as a concept, is the metonymic expression of that condition. It thus seems clear that bisexuality, contra the assumptions of Strachey, as well as those of Irigaray and Kofman that we will be addressing, is not simply an oscillation between a femininity within a masculinity, or its reverse.[22] For that description of bisexuality is understandable only within a framework in which masculinity or femininity is always already given. As we have seen, Freud fundamentally refuses this claim. Yet, if bisexuality is not a description of a simple oscillation, reversal, or combination of a pregiven sexuation, how does it perform the operation of both originating conventional sexual difference while exceeding its social and historical determinations?

To begin to address this question, we need to turn to the most sustained account Freud gives of bisexuality, namely in "The Sexual Aberrations" from the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.[23] In this text, bisexuality is conceived as a universal and constitutive aspect of sexual differentiation, both somatically and psychically, and yet simultaneously as something which must be disavowed in order for psychosexual differentiation to take place. As we will see, this ambivalence between origination and disavowal is intermixed with an ambivalence between the

[22] The assumptions of these readings extend to the Anglo-American psychoanalytic tradition, as well as within psychoanalytic Queer theory. For example, see Robert Stroller, "Fact and Fancies: An Examination of Freud's Concept of Bisexuality" in Jean Strouse, *Women & Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), and Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 91–92.

[23] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "A Case of Hysteria," "Three Essays on Sexuality," and Other Works v. 7*, ed. James Strachey, Repr (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 135-172.

site in which to posit bisexuality, either as anatomical or psychic.[24] In this text, Freud offers a development of bisexuality that both inaugurates sexual difference within ontogenetic development, and yet nevertheless, unconsciously retains its primordial indifferentiation. Thus sexual difference itself can be understood as a lingering hysterical symptomatic reaction to the meeting of primordial undifferentiated sexuality against the violent interpellations of social-historical convention.[25]

§3. An Unmistakable Relation

> Like character, fate, too, can be apprehended only through signs, not in itself. For even if this or that character trait, this or that link of fate, is directly in view, these concepts nevertheless signify a relationship—one that is never accessible except through signs, because it is situated above the immediately visible level.
>
> - Walter Benjamin, "Fate and Character"

While the word bisexuality [*Bisexualität*] appears in Freud's work as early as *The Interpretation of Dreams,* and slowly progressed towards its privileged position of importance within his subsequent works (famously Freud 'forgot'[26] that he first developed the concept

[24] See Chapters Three and Four of this dissertation for a discussion of the way in which transness, broadly understood, has been conceptualized over the 20th century within this ambivalent oscillation between the psychic and the somatic.

[25] This therefore reads the concept of difference in Freud's texts in a manner very different than that of Lacan. Sexual difference in this reading is not limited to a relation between symbolic discursive construction and non-symbolic negative differentiation. Rather, what is being developed is a formulation that insists upon the over-determination of what can or cannot be symbolically determined as such. Thus, it calls into question the terminological discretion between the Symbolic and the Real. Cf. "The Signification of the Phallus" in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 575-584, and Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (London ; New York: Verso, 1994), 159–60.

through conversation with Wilhelm Fleiss), it is only in *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,*[27] that Freud fully formulates the conceptual centrality of bisexuality to his theories of psychosexual development. The title of the text itself points to the ambivalence between sexual identity and sexual act, a distinction that will become central in the development of the concept of bisexuality. The German title of the text is *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. The first English translation, published in 1910, titled it as *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*,[28] then renamed by the same editors in 1916 as *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*.[29] It was

[26] "One day in the summer of 1901 I remarked to a friend with whom I used at that time to have a lively exchange of scientific ideas: 'These problems of the neuroses are only to be solved if we base ourselves wholly and completely on the assumption of the original bisexuality of the individual.' To which he replied: 'That's what I told you two and a half years ago at Br. when we went for that evening walk. But you wouldn't hear of it then.' It is painful to be requested in this way to surrender one's originality. I could not recall any such conversation or this pronouncement of my friend's. One of us must have been mistaken and on the '*cui prodest*?' principle it must have been myself. Indeed, in the course of the next week I remembered the whole incident, which was just as my friend had tried to recall it to me; I even recollected the answer I had given him at the time: 'I've not accepted that yet; I'm not inclined to go into the question.' But since then I have grown a little more tolerant when, in reading medical literature, I come across one of the few ideas with which my name can be associated, and find that my name has not been mentioned." See Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life" v. 6*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), 143-144. For an account of this episode see Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud Life ; Work Volume One The Young Freud 1856-1900* (London: Hogarth Press Ltd, 1954), 344n1. Also see Alexander Wolfson, "*Herrschaft*, Death, and Sexual Difference in Freud's Signorelli Parapraxis," *American Imago,* 4, no. 77 (Winter 2020).

[27] For a further reading of Freud's sources, and his relationship to sexology, see "How to do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" from Arnold I. Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001). Also see Hilary Malatino, *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

[28] Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1910).

Strachey who in 1949 first published the essays under the title of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Concerning the translation of the title, there are two German word for sexuality, *Sexualität* and *Geschlechtlichkeit.* Freud did not use either of these.[30] Rather, as we have seen, he used the word *Sexualtheorie*. Therefore, we can ask if Freud is in fact writing a theory of the development of *sexuality*, as in the state or quality of sex as an ontological consideration, or is he discussing theories of *sex* and the manner in which sexual acts are psychically and somatically determined and determinate? The answer is not clear, nor is there an easy distinction between sexuality and sex, but in the context of the construction of the concept of sexuality the distinction is important. This is especially the case as Freud wrote the *Three Essays* in the context of an explosion of 19th-century medical discourses on sexuality. Many of the writers Freud mentions in the text—Havelock Ellis, Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, Iwan Bloch, Albert Moll, Magnus Hirschfeld—were instrumental in the burgeoning field of sexology, in which they were bringing into discourse catalogues of sexual proclivities, perversions, and activities. Freud's texts emerge from within these histories but are not as such sexological, in that Freud does not produce theories of sexuality primarily as *activities* within human experience. Rather, he constructs a

[29] Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York, Washington: Nervous and mental disease Pub. Co., 1916).

[30] The difference between these terms in Freud's works and the effect of their both having been translated in English as the same word—'sexuality'—is an underdeveloped and important issue to be addressed. Briefly, the word *Geschlecht* for Freud implies the possibility of a relation of difference, as seen in the possibility of the compound, *Geschlechtsunterschied* (sexual difference), whereas *Sexualität* does not have the conceptual relation to differentiation. A taxonomy of the relations between the terms *Geschlecht* and *Sexuell*, and the history of their translation, including Laplanche's decision to render *Geschlecht* as "*sexué*," would enrich the concept of Freudian bisexuality I am here developing. Also see "Gender, Sex and the Sexual" from Jean Laplanche, *Freud and the Sexual* (London: Int'L Psychoanalytic Bks, 2012).

field in which sexuality emerges as the fundamental productive component in the development of psychic life.

The section within the text entitled "bisexuality"[31] is a subheading in the subchapter entry "(1) Deviations in Respect of the Sexual Object" which is itself within the secondary unit of "(A) Inversion."[32] Bisexuality, at least topographically, is therefore placed within the unit considering questions of desire, and particularly of homosexual desire. Historically, this is not surprising, as Freud overtly relied on works by Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld, among others, in which they development the concept of bisexuality as a way to explain homosexuality—namely, as a form of 'psychosexual hermaphroditism'. However, this genealogy of the term bisexuality quickly caused internal tensions within Freud's text. Freud begins the section on aberrations in relation to sexual objects, as he often does within these essays, as explaining the "popular understanding" of a concept, and then dismissing it. He writes: "The popular view of the sexual instinct is beautifully reflected in the poetic fable which tells how the original human beings were cut up into two halves - man and woman - and how these are always striving to unite again in love. *It comes as a great surprise* therefore to learn that there are men whose sexual object is a man and not a woman, and women whose sexual object is a woman and not a man. People of this kind are described as having 'contrary sexual feelings', or better, as being 'inverts', and the fact is described as 'inversion'."[33] The feigning of great surprise concerning the existence of

[31] This subheading only appears in the English version. In German the chapter subheadings are posited within the margins on the side, and, unlike in English, "Bisexuality" is not given a unique sub-heading.

[32] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "'A Case of Hysteria," "Three Essays on Sexuality," and Other Works v. 7*, 136.

[33] Freud, 136. Emphasis added.

homosexuality allows Freud to begin the discussion of inversion in relationship to a conventionality which is already admitted to be fantasy. We, you, the reader, know that there are "contrary sexual feelings" but we, you, as embodying social conventionality disavow that knowledge. Freud thus is able to offer a structure of assumed normalcy but one that is not able to be occupied by a subject. Instead, the structure is produced within an analogical method, in that rather than positing that normalcy is a non-inhabitable regulative ideal, he insinuates the claim within a transferential process of reading. The claim that normalcy is not a category of identity that can be experienced is perhaps not possible to make straightforwardly, for in making the claim one abstracts the normative from normativity, stripping the concept of its determination. By inculcating the concept through a process of reading, Freud inaugurates a fundamental lesson of the text—that perverted sexuality is the constitutive form of the sexual that can be experienced by a human subject.

Having posited the existence of inversion, Freud offers a taxonomy of its various categories (absolute, amphigenic, and contingent) and works through two possible causes (innate and or acquired), both of which he dismisses. The first postulate is dismissed, for to assume inversion as innate would be to assume that one's sexual drive is attached to a particular type of object from birth, an assumption which psychoanalysis has rendered absurd. That inversion is acquired is similarly dismissed, for the contingent accidents of one's psychic life are not enough to explain the acquisition of inversion "without the co-operation of something in the subject himself."[34] Having dismissed the two causes that were prevalent within contemporary sexological discourse, Freud offers "a fresh contradiction to the popular views" concerning inversion that on first glance does not seem to fit within the overarching framework of the

[34] Freud, 141.

chapter concerning deviations in relation to sexual objects. He writes: "It is popularly believed that a human being is either a man or a woman. Science, however, knows of cases in which the sexual characters [*Geschlechtscharaktere*] are obscured, and in which it is consequently difficult to determine the sex. This arises in the first instance in the field of anatomy."[35] He continues that these cases of 'hermaphroditism" are important not in themselves, but because they "facilitate our understanding of normal development."[36] Within the 'normal' sexuation of both males and females, "traces" of the primary and secondary sexual functions of the 'opposite' sex are found. It would seem possible then to extend human physical hermaphroditism to psychical hermaphroditism as a means of explaining inversion. However, Freud finds no evidence of this finding. He writes: "The truth must therefore be recognized that inversion and somatic hermaphroditism are on the whole independent of each other."[37]

The development of the concept of bisexuality written in the 1905 edition of the text, in this instance under the name of either somatic or psychic hermaphroditism, does very little to aid Freud in his desire to explain inversion. If he were to claim that bisexuality could be seen as the existence of the feminine within the masculine or *vice versa*, this would add little to the concept of inversion, for it does not assume any understanding of what that masculinity or femininity might entail. However, in a footnote from 1910 we see the beginning of an alteration of the term 'bisexuality' and a gesture toward what it will eventually come to mean. In this footnote, Freud ascribes to Fleiss the origination of the concept of bisexuality, "in the sense of *duality of sex*."[38]

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[35] Freud, 141.

[36] Freud, 141.

[37] Freud, 142.

[38] Freud, 143n1. Emphasis in original

This construction of the 'duality of sex' is posited as both constitutive of inversion and simultaneously of the invert's choice of sexual object. For if common sense would assume that the inverted object choice would be the inversion of a 'normal' sexual object, then the homosexual would *feel* like a woman whose sexual object is a man. However, Freud argues that evidence does not support this conclusion, turning instead to ancient Greece to make his claim. In Greece, the "most masculine men were numbered among the inverts."[39] These men were aroused not by the masculinity of their desired object, but rather by the object's feminine mental qualities. Yet, when the boy becomes a man, he may himself become a lover of boys. "In this instance, therefore, as in many others, the sexual object is not someone of the same sex but someone who combines the characters of both sexes…Thus the sexual object is a kind of reflection of the subject's bisexual nature."[40]

Appended to this already remarkable last sentence is a remarkable footnote which Freud expands in five-year increments, adding to it with each of his revisions of the text—that is in 1910, 1915, and 1920. The 1910 footnote begins with a confession that psychoanalysis has not produced a complete explanation of the origin of inversion, while it has however discovered the mechanism of its development. The male invert (the only kind explained) goes through an infantile fixation on a female object, the mother. As the transformations of puberty occur, the male invert leaves this object-cathexis behind and narcissistically replaces the cathected object with himself. Freud writes: "That is to say, they proceed from a narcissistic basis, and look for a young man who resembles themselves and whom *they* may love as their mothers loved *them*."[41]

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[39] Freud, 144.

[40] Freud, 144.

[41] Freud, 145. Emphasis in original.

The explanation of the mechanism of inversion is thus a transferential event of the Oedipal object-cathexis onto a male/narcissistic desire. However, in 1915, Freud continues the footnote, as follows:

> Psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character. By studying sexual excitations other than those that are manifestly displayed, it has found that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious. Indeed, libidinal attachments to persons of the same sex play no less a part as factors in normal mental life, and a greater part as a motive force for illness, than do similar attachments to the opposite sex. On the contrary, psycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex - freedom to range equally over male and female objects - as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop. Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature.[42]

Thus the first edition of this text moves from an amphigenic description of inversion developed alongside the contemporary sexology of his colleagues in which inversion is understood as a pathological development, through a revision against the possibility of absolute inversion, to a concept of a universal homosexual object choice as a necessary aspect of psychosexual development. Moreover, bisexuality is posited as primordial within ontogenetic, phylogenetic and historical registers. He ends the 1915 footnote by detaching sexual inversion, in respect to object choice, from physical hermaphroditism, writing: "It may be insisted that the concept of inversion in respect of the sexual object should be sharply distinguished from that of the occurrence in the subject of a mixture of sexual characters [*Geschlechtscharaktere*]."[43]

The 1920 addition to the footnote expands on these claims while simultaneously

[42] Freud, 145–46.

[43] Freud, 146n1.

destabilizing their surety. Freud turns to the work of 'biologists' who performed experimental castrations and grafting of sex-glands across sexes of different species of mammals. These experiments produced transformations of the subject into the 'opposite' sex "more or less completely" in "both the somatic characters and the psychosexual attitude (that is, both subject and object eroticism)."[44] He then offers a human example of a man who had lost his testicles due to tuberculosis and subsequently had lived his life as a 'passive homosexual' who exhibited feminine secondary sexual characteristics. However, after a testicle from another man was grafted onto the patient, he began behaving in a 'masculine manner', that is, he was attracted to women and his somatic feminine aspects disappeared. Freud writes, somewhat cryptically, that rather than this case demonstrating a reversal of the assumption of the general bisexual disposition of the human being, "it seems to me probable that further research of a similar kind will produce a direct confirmation of this presumption of bisexuality."[45]

How are we to understand this footnote that has so many reversals in terms of the construction of what bisexuality means and its determination within psychic and somatic development? Moreover, how do we turn from this aspect of bisexuality give in 1920 to the much more expanded, if not still somewhat ambiguous, concept of bisexuality as we analyzed it in the lecture on "Femininity." I contend that Freud's oscillations as to how to describe bisexuality as it relates to both anatomical and conventional sexuation is internal to the very concept of bisexuality within psychoanalysis, rather than a refinement towards a conceptual clarity. That is, the ambiguity between the somatic and the psychic which is internal to bisexuality is necessary for the development of psychoanalysis as a science. The indeterminate

[44] Freud, 146n1.

[45] Freud, 146n1.

nature of bisexuality denies the possibility for a merely anatomical explanation of the sexual, rather arguing that the very concept of anatomy as a sexed category is stabilized only through conventional assumptions, which are themselves psychically determined. That is, one can only know what makes something anatomically, sexually differentiated by relying on conventionally determined norms of masculinity and femininity. The reverse is also operative; that the conventions of sexual difference, which, as we have seen, Freud ascribes to an analogy of activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity, are defined through an association with a pregiven somatic stabilization—that is, the movement of the spermatozoon defines masculinity as force, which is met by the passive ovum, giving content to the concept of the feminine.

Therefore, the case of the man who goes through a psycho-somatic reversal in the loss and return of his testicles only appears as a denial of a general bisexuality if one understands bisexuality as an intermixing of stable and binary sexual categories. However, if one understands generalized bisexuality as a primordial condition, anterior to binary difference, from which sexuation emerges, then what this case study demonstrates is that the undifferentiated bisexual disposition of the 'higher animals', up to and including human beings, subsists within binarized sexual difference as a reserve of its undifferentiated force. This reserve or excess thus remains as a constant threat to the stability of the conventional structure of sexual difference.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will chart the manner in which this conceptual construction of bisexuality becomes a means in which the concept of "transsexuality" emerges as the figuration of the tension that arises due to this primordial, undifferentiated aspect of sex. The manifestation of this tension is found in the anxiety that emerges within discourses that bring to the surface the constitutive ambiguity in definitions of sexual difference between the soma and

the psyche.[46] It is far too clear that this tension emerges historically as a force of violence in the manner in which transness is denied facticity as a site of embodiment. Before turning to these discussion however, this chapter will now turn to the concept of bisexuality in texts by both Irigaray and Kristeva. In doing so we will see if our reconstruction of bisexuality as a site for the stabilization of sexual difference alters our readings of the trajectory of these thinkers' critiques.

Before that, it is interesting to briefly note a genealogy concerning bisexuality that stems from early interpretations of Freud's works. As I noted above, James Strachey made editorial interventions that demonstrated his own assumptions concerning sexual difference that overdetermined the intention of Freud's texts. However, one can also find examples of the force of these assumptions within the translation itself. As we have seen, the English translation of the penultimate sentence of the 1915 addition to the footnote included above reads, "Finally, it may be insisted that the concept of inversion in respect of the sexual object should be sharply distinguished from that of the occurrence in the subject of a mixture of sexual characters."[47] The paragraph ends with this sentence: "In the relation between these two factors, too, a certain degree of reciprocal independence is unmistakably present."[48] Freud would thus seem to be arguing that inversion, as the desire for an object of one's same sex (p) should be 'sharply' distinguished from a bisexual mixture (q); that is between its assumed masculinity (q^1) and femininity (q^2). The final sentence of the paragraph is somewhat ambiguous as to which factors the "relation" of reciprocal independence refers to. It could be 1) (p) from (q), or 2) the internal

[46] For an example of an early biopolitical defence against this form of anxiety see Harry Benjamin, "Transsexualism and Transvestism as Psycho-Somatic and Somato-Psychic Syndromes," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 8, no. 2 (April 1954): 219–30.
[47] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "A Case of Hysteria," "Three Essays on Sexuality," and Other Works v. 7*, 146.

[48] Freud, 146.

differentiation of (q^1) from (q^2). However, the syntax of the text, alongside the included enumeration—"between these two factors"—seems to indicate the former (1) as the intended meaning, especially due to the fact that the differentiation (q) has an assumed content rather than an explicit one. However, this assumption makes the argument very hard to parse, for why would one need to maintain "a certain degree of reciprocal independence" from something which has already been "sharply distinguished." However, the tension between the syntax and the content of these two sentences becomes mitigated once one turns to the original German text, although why the meaning of Freud's text is seemingly not available for Strachey will be of particular importance.

These two sentences in German read as follows: "*Man darf endlich die Forderung aufstellen, daß die Inversion des Sexualobjektes von der Mischung der Geschlechtscharaktere im Subjekt begrifflich strenge zu sondern ist. Ein gewisses Maß von Unabhängigkeit ist auch in dieser Relation unverkennbar.*"[49] The German reads much less ambiguously than Strachey's translation that the relation in discussion in the last sentence refers explicitly to the "mixture of the sexual characters" itself, which removes any overt tension between syntax and meaning. When comparing the German and its translation it becomes clear that what makes the Strachey translation so hard to parse is precisely the enumeration within the last sentence, that is the "between these two factors." A more literal translation of the passage's last sentence would read: "A certain degree of independence is also unmistakable within this relation." With this literal translation the meaning of the entire quotation becomes clear: contrary to the leading sexological assumptions, bisexuality within an individual cannot be seen as explanatory for inversion of the

[49] Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke V*, ed. Anna Freud, Edward Bibring, and Ernst Kris (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1940), 45.

sexual object *because within a subject* there remains a "*certain"* [*gewisses*]" amount of separation between their internal sexual characters. Therefore a female homosexual desire, for example, cannot be understood as an external expression of her inner masculinity, for her sexual characteristics are 'relatively independent'. Indeed, and of utmost importance, Freud does not enumerate the sexual characters. He does not specify a binary relation of a masculine and a feminine *Geschlechtscharaktere*. Rather, the relation is governed by an independence, an *Unabhängigkeit*, of the aspects of sexuation within a subject. This independence of relations is precisely that which I have been describing as the perseverance and perpetuation of a primordial undifferentiated sexuality.

Strachey's translation leaves two possible readings of these phrases. The first, as we have seen, is that he reads the relation between these "two factors" as the relation between inversion and bisexuality. For reasons stated above this explanation seems suspect. The second possibility is that he reads the relation as properly indicating the "mixture of sexual characters" within the subject, but he enumerates it as *two* sexual characters. Presumably, one masculine and one feminine. Strachey's addition to the text of the qualifier, 'reciprocal' ("reciprocal independence"), does little to clarify which of these two readings Strachey intends, although it does highlight his dualistic assumptions. However, for our purposes here, exactitude between these two possible readings is not of great importance, for either possibility emerges due to Strachey's inability to read the intention within Freud's text. Strachey has already assumed bisexuality is a dependent relation between a bifurcated and stable sexuation. He must therefore domesticate Freud's texts by mediating the *Unabhängigkeit* of the relations within *Geschlechtscharaktere* through a logic of reciprocity. A reciprocity and a binarity which Freud has done his best to deny.

§4. "If one insists on counting…"

> Zeno rightly says in Aristotle: "it is the same thing to say something once and to be saying it always."
>
> - Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part 1: Science of Logic*

Both Irigaray and Kofman's readings of Freud are divergent in many ways. However, they share a common assumption that Freud's conception of femininity is incomplete and unsatisfying because the feminine does not appear within his economy of difference. In fact, the feminine is always that which is not present. For Irigaray, Freud's account of sexual difference is merely a defense against the generality of the masculine that his phallocentrism insists upon. For Kofman, the feminine in Freud's writing deconstructs itself, opening a space for its radical negativity, that is, the fundamental denial of its own figuration. The remainder of this current chapter will not, as such, critique either of these claims. Rather, it argues that these claims assume an understanding of sexual differentiation that simplifies and reifies Freud's account of sexuation. That is, their assumption that sexual difference is manifest as either a dialectical relation or a phallocentric fantasy produces a limit to their possible interpretations of Freud's texts. What cannot be encountered from within these interpretations is the concept of bisexuality as I have argued it appears in Freud—namely that which is anterior to sexuation but which remains as a determining excess to sexual difference.

In Irigaray's readings of Freud, particularly in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, as well as specific chapters of *This Sex Which is Not One*, she argues that sexuation in Freud is in fact not at all an account of difference. Within the formation of sexual difference, femininity is conceptualized through the assumed generality of the masculine. Thus, the feminine is, as such, non-apparent. It is rather the contingent instance of an assumed universal form. Irigaray writes:

"Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters. Thus the opposition between 'masculine' clitoral activity and 'feminine' vaginal passivity, an opposition which Freud—and many others—saw as stages, or alternatives, in the development of a sexually 'normal' woman, seems rather too clearly required by the practice of male sexuality."[50] Under this assumption, it is not surprising that Irigaray is clearly dismissive of the concept of bisexuality in Freud being anything more than another instance of the phallic over-valuation standing in for the negativity of the feminine. This is, in fact, precisely what we find in Irigaray's reading of Freud's "Femininity" lecture entitled "The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry" which begins *Speculum*.[51] For example, she quotes Freud as stating that "*the enigma of women* may perhaps be derived from this expression of *bisexuality in women's lives*."[52] Her reading of the quote is as follows: "This bisexuality would then be analyzed as 'early masculinity' on the one hand and as the 'beginning of femininity' on the other hand. As valid phallicism, and castrated phallicism….In which case, does female bisexuality not figure as an inverted recapitulation of the 'program' masculine sexuality writes for itself? As a projection, upside down, upside down and backward, of the end—the telos—of male sexuality."[53] I will point out, very briefly, that this is a gross misrepresentation of Freud's claim, not only given my

[50] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1985), 23.

[51] For more on Irigaray's methodology and its relation to Kofman's see Penelope Deutscher, "Disappropriations: Luce Irigaray and Sarah Kofman," in Dorothea Olkowski, ed., *Resistance, Flight, Creation: Feminist Enactments of French Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2000), 155–78.

[52] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1985), 111. Emphasis in original.

[53] Irigaray, 111.

interpretation of bisexuality as I have been arguing throughout this chapter, but on the surface of the text. The larger context of the Freud quote is as follows: "The development of femininity remains exposed to disturbance by the residual phenomena of the early masculine period. Regressions to the fixations of the pre-Oedipal phases very frequently occur; in the course of some women's lives there is a repeated alteration between periods in which masculinity or femininity gains the upper hand."[54] It is clear that Irigaray's accusation that this bisexuality is a phallicism of the female, through the inversion of the male as the female only works if "femininity" and "masculinity" refer to female and male *subjects*. As was demonstrated in my earlier reading of this same lecture, Freud has explicitly made clear that this is not the case. Moreover, bisexuality was the very term he used to explain the impossibility of any attempt to fix the definition of sexuality beyond mere conventionality.

This seemingly intentional misreading of Freud is a necessary gesture for Irigaray. For if her text were to take into account the non-bifurcated nature of bisexuality it would self-contradict its fundamental assumption of the generality of the masculine. This can perhaps most clearly be seen in an extended footnote from this same chapter. In it, Irigaray posits that the "oedipal triangle" operates within the "structuration" of a "dialectical trinity."[55] The points of the dialectical triangle are of course the father, the mother, and the child. However, the position of the child is "doubled thanks to 'bisexuality'."[56] The oedipal triangle therefore "will have brought in as many as four terms by the doubling of the third term, and by its ambivalent identificatory

[54] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" and Other Works v. 22*, 131.

[55] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 90n93.

[56] Irigaray, 90n93.

relationships with the other two."[57] If the doubling of the third term (the son) already implies a "relative negation" (one assumes Irigaray means the relative negation of the son's masculinity due to his constitutive bisexuality), the femininity within the son will be the object of an absolute negation given the son's fantasy of his mother's castration. According to this picture, the feminine is excluded from the dialectical trinity yet remains as a 'fourth term' that retains an affect upon the son through the proliferation of fantasies that it will produce within him. The absolute negation of the fourth term (the feminine) will return in a repetitious splitting of the now masculine subject, who must, to remain masculine, continuously efface his femininity. The fourth term therefore is only present as an absence that assures the subject's "access to the 'symbolic'."[58]

Irigaray completes the footnote with a long quotation from Hegel's *Science of Logic* which she bookends with these phrases: "This will need to be put together with a text of Hegel's…." And following the quote: "It remains to examine in depth the formal character of this quadruplicity."[59] The quote from Hegel is as follows:

> As self-sublating contradiction this negativity is the *restoration* of the *first immediacy,* of simple universality; for the other of the other, the negative of the negative, is immediately the positive, the *identical,* the *universal.* If one insists on *counting,* this *second* immediate is, in the course of the method as a whole, the *third* term to the first immediate and the mediated. It is also, however, the third term to the first or formal negative and to absolute negativity or the second negative; now as the first negative is already the second term, the term reckoned as *third* can also be reckoned as *fourth,* and instead of a *triplicity,* the abstract form may be taken as a *quadruplicity;* in this way, the negative or the difference is counted as a *duality.* The third or fourth is in general the unity of the first and second moments, of the immediate and the mediated. That it is in unity, as also that the whole form of the method is a triplicity, is, it is true, merely

[57] Irigaray, 90n93.

[58] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 90n93.

[59] Irigaray, 90n93.

the superficial external side of the mode of cognition.[60]

This text is from the last chapter of Hegel's *Logic*, "The Absolute Idea" in which he turns to the method of the dialectical process as that in which cognition returns back to itself as itself. The structure of this movement is that the sublation of the dialectic is a restoration of the immediate positive universality of its starting point. That is, a first immediacy (*p*) is negated by its mediation (*q*), which, due to the negation of the negation, leads to the return of a new immediacy as the third term (*r*). However, the third term is also third to a different order of enumeration, namely that of the first negation itself (p^1) and the absolute negation of that negation (q^1). Therefore the third term (r) can also be counted as a fourth term (r^1), in which the third term (*r*) is the immediacy of the new positivity that emerged from the sublation of (*p*) and (*q).* The fourth term (r^1) arises from the dual negation (p^1) and (q^1), which is to say the difference between the terms, (*p*) (*q*), and (q) (*r*). The fourth term cannot be differentiated from the third apart from the context of its enumeration, for the second set of terms (p^1) and (q^1) is simply the act of cognition recognizing difference, and therefore does not have an *identity* apart from the first set of terms.[61]

In another context it would be of great interest to put Hegel's development of the enumeration of the fourth term of the dialectic into further dialogue with our concept of a bisexuality which resists enumeration. For bisexuality is the force of an indifferentiation that is retained within difference, yet as indifferentiated resists the possibility of dialectic articulation. However, for now, let us ask why Irigaray includes this section from the *Logic* without

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[60] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 836. Emphasis in original.

[61] For more on the concept of the "fourth term" see Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (Verso, 2008), 179-180. Here Žižek, in a manner consonant with Irigaray, argues that the Fourth term is the "inherent condition of possibility of the dialectical movement: the negativity of a pure expenditure that cannot be sublated [*aufgehoben*], re-collected, in its Result," 179.

unpacking or development? I presume what Irigaray desires to achieve by including as an extended quote this particularly difficult section of Hegel's text is the concept of a fourth term which, while not present within a dialectical structure, remains as a force within its operation. For the logic of this fourth term is resonate with the manner in which she formulates her understanding of how femininity operates (or more precisely is not permitted to operate) within Freud's texts. Irigaray must therefore posit bisexuality as a positive duality, a binary set of terms within the subject, because it is only by doing so that femininity can be negated in the manner in which she claims. In building on the concept of a fourth term (femininity) which is non-sublatable, and yet remains internal to the dialectic as the condition of its possibility, she finds a manner in which to overtly criticize Freud's exclusion of the feminine. This exclusion of the feminine therefore also insinuates that the oedipal *structure* is nothing but a pure repetition of the Hegelian dialectic.

§5. In the Forgetting

> Like the man who withdrew to an island to forget—to forget what? He forgot.
>
> - Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on the 'Purloined Letter'"

Kofman orients her reading of Freud's "Femininity" lecture in contradistinction to Irigaray's, which she names a denigration of Freud. She writes: "In his lecture 'Femininity' ('*Die Weiblichkeit'*), a text recently denigrated—to put it mildly—by a woman psychoanalyst…," and there footnotes Irigaray's *Speculum*. Kofman notes that for her own engagement with the text she has retranslated Freud's lecture directly from the German,

because the "existing French translation is quite dreadful, and it omits many passages."[62]

She adds:

> Indeed, in my view it is no accident that most of the criticisms leveled against the Freud are based on this French 'translation'. Luce Irigaray claims that even the most meticulous translation would not have made much difference to the meaning of this discourse on femininity. One may at least have one's doubts about this and wonder why, under the circumstances, Luce Irigaray almost always persists in using a translation that she knows is faulty—unless it is to further 'the cause'. That of Femininity? Going back to the German text is not a matter of trying to 'save' Freud at all costs (I am no more likely to 'save' him than she is), but only of manifesting the minimal intellectual honestly that consists in criticizing an author in terms of what he has said rather than what someone has managed to make him say: the critique will be all the stronger for it. When we turn to Freud's text, we note further that it is much more complex, more heterogeneous, than the French translation allows one to imagine.[63]

This quote lays out in stark terms Kofman's criticisms of Irigaray's method but also Kofman's own relationship to Freud's text. Kofman criticizes Irigaray for knowingly misinterpreting the lecture, flattening it for dogmatic purposes. However, Kofman herself will offer a reading of Freud's lecture that, while retaining a heterogeneity and complexity within the text, nevertheless constructs a reading of its phallocentrism that in many ways will resemble Irigaray's. She writes: "Freud's texts are therefore, as always, heterogeneous: while they reject any direct identification of activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity, at the same time they remain imprisoned within the most traditional ideology. One or the other of these aspects predominates according to the strategic needs of the moment."[64] We see that Kofman constructs an oscillation between Freud's 'traditional ideology' and his destabilization of conventional gender norms,

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[62] Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 14n6.

[63] Kofman, 14n6.

[64] Kofman, 158.

while she argues that Irigaray has focused on only one side of the oscillation. However, like Irigaray, Kofman is comfortable with the claim that Freud is imprisoned within 'traditional' thought, and that his assumptions concerning femininity never quite escape the totality of his imprisonment.[65] These assumptions are especially conspicuous when examining Kofman's reading of the concept of bisexuality and, I will argue, leads her to deny the force of the concept's effects and determinations.

Kofman argues that Freud's concept of bisexuality serves as a defense against the accusations of feminist criticism. Recuperatively, he "grants" that pure masculinity and femininity are merely theoretical constructions whose content always remains uncertain. Men constitutively fall short of the masculine ideal.[66] The "thesis of bisexuality" is thus for Freud a "weapon that is supposed to put an end to the accusations made by women psychoanalysts."[67] In Kofman's reading, Freud develops bisexuality not only as a thesis to explain psychosexual development which Freud feels he must defend conceptually, but also as a defense against the accusation that psychoanalysis fundamentally privileges the male subject, and thus either ignores the female and or finds suspicious ways of accounting for her in an economy that has always already been formulated for a male subject. Penis envy, which Kofman argues Freud holds

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[65] For more on Kofman's concept of discursive imprisonment see Sarah Kofman, "Descartes Entrapped" from Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., *Who Comes After the Subject?* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 178-197.

[66] Confusingly, Kofman states that Freud is "prepared to grant" that "*most* men fall far short of the masculine ideal." Yet, the Freud quote she uses as evidence , from "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," is clear in its universality. "*All* human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics." Quoted in Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings*, 13. Emphasis added.

[67] Kofman, 13.

defiantly as an *idée fixe*, is the primary representation of this problematic. Bisexuality, according to this reading, serves as a means for Freud to maintain the privileging of the male while discursively denying he is doing so. That is, bisexuality allows him to claim that the male subject who admittedly is being privileged is in fact not masculine, but bisexually intermixed. Kofman writes: "It allows Freud to repeat the most tenacious, most traditional, the most metaphysical phallocratic discourse: if you women are as intelligent as men, it is because you are more masculine then feminine."[68]

However, as we have seen, Kofman desires to retain in Freud's conceptual constructions a complexity and heterogeneity. She thus continues: "But this thesis also makes it possible to displace the metaphysical categories that it renders problematic, since it proclaims the purely speculative character of the masculine/feminine opposition. The thesis of bisexuality thus implies that Sigmund Freud himself could not have been purely and simply a man (*vir*), that he could not have had (purely) masculine prejudices. That charge only reveals the metaphysical prejudices of those who press it."[69] This second alternative that Kofman provides, that of the defensive position, is that one cannot accuse Freud of phallocentric prejudices because he himself is never simply a man, and therefore never able to occupy the position of masculinity with the necessary purity. Under this logic, the feminist who accuses Freud of privileging the masculine would only be demonstrating her own metaphysical prejudices concerning the stability of sex.[70] Kofman

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[68] Kofman, 14-15.

[69] Kofman, 15. The text continues: "And it is as though Freud were loudly proclaiming the universality of bisexuality in order better to disguise his silent disavowal of his own femininity, his paranoia."

[70] For an example of this form of argument, see §5 of the preceding chapter, "*Prégnances*," especially those elements concerning "feminist historians."

argues that Freud never explicitly uses this argument in his own defense, that is, he never exposes a femininity within himself, or within any male, but rather only ever uses bisexuality to exhibit the masculinity within women, and thus as a strategic weapon against the accusations of feminists.

The force of Kofman's argument is therefore that Freud only feigns bisexuality as valid in principle for all humans, when in fact bisexuality privileges the masculine as the form of the unitary libidinal force. The singular libido is therefore straightforwardly differentiated within males, and formulated within females through the circuitous effects of the castration complex and penis envy. The universality of bisexuality thus perversely establishes a hierarchy in favor of the masculine because the abstract position of indifferentiation always already privileges the position of the male. It is thus only the male who "receives ontological determinations."[71] Kofman, unlike Irigaray, is aware that to make this argument convincing she must find a way to take into account that, as I have argued throughout the chapter, Freud is at pains to demonstrate repeatedly that bisexuality is not simply a co-mingling or co-incidence of masculinity and femininity but rather is the indifferent origin of this difference. Kofman attempts to solve this dilemma by arguing that it is only for 'strategic reason' that Freud appeals to "the original bisexuality common to both sexes."[72] However, this claim is made apodictically (in a manner very uncommon within her work, for as we have seen Kofman's methodology is that of methodical close reading, so much so that the text often reads Freud's lecture line by line) and there is no textual evidence given to support the accusation. This is perhaps not surprising for, as has been made evident, this claim cannot be justified because it assumes a definition of

[71] Kofman, 112.

[72] Kofman, 112.

bisexuality which is determined not by a reading of Freud's text, but by an assumption of Kofman's that stabilizes what she intends the text to mean—namely, that bisexuality privileges the masculine. Given those *a priori* assumptions concerning Freud's concept of bisexuality, Kofman cannot encounter it. For Freud's concept is a deeply unstable one. A concept that remains ambiguous and non-determined; that remains non-figured even as it allows figuration, and figuration of precisely what it is not—namely binarized and discreet sexual difference.

Kofman's virtuosity as a reader allows her to recognize the manner in which this concept resists determination, and thus this recognition produces a leitmotif, within her text, of anxiety and disavowal. Indeed, one could follow along, throughout Kofman's book, the manner in which the concept of bisexuality is repeatedly reified, which is then followed by the subsequent realization of the constitutive ambiguity of the term. The anxiety within the text is displaced by Kofman onto Freud, which she names as Freud's 'paranoia', and justified in the apodictic claim of Freud's 'strategizing'. Let me be clear: I am not arguing that Freud's text is devoid of phallocratic and conventional violences. No text can escape the violence of its historical conventions, and much of Freud's text wears these markers on its surface. I am however claiming that Freud's phallocratic assumptions are manifest within the scope of conventional sexual difference, and thus as aspects of what Freud has discursively accounted for as historical construction. Again, I am not maintaining that Freud's texts do not inhabit and perpetuate phallocratic violences, alongside many others. They do. However, I am claiming that bisexuality as developed by Freud is not a concept that can be determined by the historical conventionality of sexual difference. It is rather the origin of what becomes conventionalized and yet is maintained beyond the point of origination as the constant hazard to those very conventions. Bisexuality thus persists as the danger that the fantasies of naturality will be exposed for the

contingent social-historical violences that they are.

The tension within Kofman's argument between her own prejudices and the ambiguity of Freud's text comes out in her development of how Freud relies on 'science' as he formulates the concept of bisexuality, and her subsequent critique of Irigaray's explications. Irigaray, according to Kofman, argues that for Freud, science is a means for the reproduction of the same. That is, Freud uses biology to stabilize sexual difference through an appeal to the anatomical surety of the male sexual product. This site of stability is "like the fixed point to which Descartes clings at the moment of his hyperbolic doubt."[73] For as long as Freud attends to this biological surety he does not have to take into account the emasculation inherent within bisexuality and the damage this would do to the prioritization of masculinity. However, according to Kofman "this affirmation [of Irigaray's] runs counter to the entire text: far from seeking certainty and decisiveness, Freud here is appealing to science in order to shatter the pseudocertainties of popular opinion, in order to bring popular opinion up short. His recourse to science does not have as its goal the quest for security; on the contrary, it aims at plunging into aporia."[74] Kofman argues that Freud's positioning of science as an aporia necessarily causes him to move to 'another agency', that is psychology, in his desire to find a source of stabilization for the concept of bisexuality. As is perhaps evident, I am sympathetic to Kofman's critique of Irigaray. However, as I have argued, it is because Kofman shares with Irigaray assumptions concerning the conditions for the emergence of the concept of bisexuality that Kofman is not able to recognize its constitutive instability—that is, that any desire on Freud's part for stabilizing sexual difference would remain within his own autobiography, and not within the scientific regimes of

[73] Kofman, 112.

[74] Kofman, 112.

psychoanalysis. For the desire for 'plunging' the scientific 'into aporia', that Kofman rightly discovers, is not a dialectical movement toward a desire for surety, but rather a constitutional aspect of bisexuality as a conceptual device.

The privileging of the ambivalence surrounding the relation between science and bisexuality in Kofman's readings of Freud can in some ways be expanded to Freud himself. Freud forgets from where the concept of bisexuality emerges, he returns to it over and over, rewrites his theories of it, admits its conceptual opacity, etc. Even in the word itself this ambivalence reigns—for while the word 'bisexuality' [*Bisexualität*] was bequeathed to him by Fliess and his contemporary sexological colleagues, Freud's development of the term is nothing but a denial of the binary nature of sexuality as such. Thus Freudian bi-sexuality is a term that denies its own etymological signification. This is not a hermeneutical failure on Freud's part. The ambivalence resides within the concept. It is both a non-empirical condition of sexual difference and yet that which retains experiential effects upon sexuation. And yet, even those effects are not experienced as such. Rather, as the danger of an excess of the origin, their effects are felt, through the displacement of forces, as anxiety. It is the anxiety of an unconscious recognition that the stability of the conventional symbolic regimes that make experience livable can at any moment be overrun by their nonrepresentable origin. Perhaps Freud's forgetfulness was due to this anxiety, the difficulty in scientifically determining a concept which escapes determination. That in its enumeration resists enumeration. That desires for its own conceptuality to be unmastered.

The following chapter of this dissertation will take up the genealogical and disciplinary effects of the invention of the psychoanalytic and sexological discourses concerning bisexuality and hermaphroditism. Using 'post-modernity' and especially texts by Jean Baudrillard as an

exemplary site, it will trace the discursive effects of the invention of bisexuality as a scientific category. Doing so, it will ask how the concept of transness, (which in the archives of this chapter is labeled as 'transsexuality') which emerges through and within both sexology and psychoanalysis, operates within a scientific regime while simultaneously rejecting the stability of its own epistemological framing.

Chapter 3 – Otherness of the Sexes: Transness within the Post-Modern

> It is clear that the world is purely parodic, in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form.
>
> - Georges Bataille, *The Solar Anus*

§1. Introduction

In his 1990 text *The Transparency of Evil*, Baudrillard writes: "We are all transsexuals."[1] The 1990s were filled with such claims, which offered a proliferation of texts engaging the figure of the transsexual.[2] From techno-feminist valorisation, through theories of gender performativity, transsexuality—seldom clearly distinguished from transgender identity or 'transvestites'—came to represent the historical and material work of breaking down and undoing categories of sex, desire, race, and the human. In this chapter, I take this era as both exemplary and symptomatic of the manner in which transness has been defined and codified by 20th-century medical-scientific discourses that have theorized transsexuality either as a universal component of fetal bi-sexual morphology, a form of sexual deviancy, or as a symbol of a utopic end to normative binary gender. What holds these conflicting ideological and theoretical positions together is an assumption of transness as external to the materiality and conceptuality of normative binary

[1] Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, Paperback ed. repr, Radical Thinkers (London: Verso, 2009), 23.

[2] The term 'transsexual' is the term found within the archives that I am discussing. While I use the word in this chapter with reservations, one of the orienting conceptual questions of this chapter centers on the socio-medical construction of both the term and its inhering conceptualizations.

sexual difference. Challenging these views, this chapter situates transness not as aberration or end, but as a central productive force in the conceptual formation of sexual difference.[3]

Furthermore, this chapter makes the epistemological claim that the construction of transsexuality as either morphological bi-sexual origination or apocalyptic cybernetic hybrid takes place under the disciplinary identity of "science." The goal of this chapter is to question this oscillation of transsexuality as either aberrance or excess, which has been historically positioned, and thus biopolitically inscribed, under the auspices of scientific discourse within post-modern philosophy. Rather than accept the role of the transsexual as an object of the scientific gaze, I will demonstrate the discursive and material productive relation of transsexuality to contemporary techno-scientific notions of the psycho-somatic, and its further associations with the virtual and the prosthetic. After presenting a methodological argument concerning the concept of productivity, I will turn, as the primary engagement of the text, to the question of "transsexuality" in the work of Jean Baudrillard, which I take as both symptomatic and paradigmatic of what is called post-modern philosophy. To do this, I first turn to the work of trans theory scholar Susan Stryker, who engages Baudrillard's texts as a way both to clarify the relationship between post-modernism and transsexuality, and to question how a productive formation of the relationship between transness and the scientific could allow for a reconfirmation of the centrality of transness, not as exception, but as a core material and conceptual component of modern life.

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[3] There have been surprisingly few readings of Baudrillard's usage of the concept of transsexuality, and none written since the beginning of this millennium. See Susan Stryker, "Christine Jorgensen's Atom Bomb: Transsexuality and the Emergence of Postmodernity" in Ann Kaplan and Susan Merrill Squier, eds., *Playing Dolly: Technocultural Formations, Fantasies, and Fictions of Assisted Reproduction* and Rita Felski, "Fin de Siècle, Fin de Sexe: Transsexuality, Postmodernism, and the Death of History," *New Literary History* 27, no. 2 (1996): 337–49.

§2. Toward an Analytics of "Transsexuality"

> Following the ghost, seeking the lost treasures it announces, reason's accursed offerings that refigure no-thing, require an exploration of the grounds it haunts.
>
> - Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*

The concept of productivity that I am employing builds on the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva, especially as developed in her text, *Toward A Global Idea of Race*,[4] in which da Silva examines the productivity of race within the construction of contemporary identity. In her evocative argument, da Silva describes a structure of analytics in which the production of race is not a mechanism that takes place within scenes of subjective determination but rather in representational regimes. She argues that theorizations that assume race as a predicate of the subject (even fields, such as much of post-colonial theory,[5] whose assumptions are not available within their own discourse), do so upon the assumption of the universal applicability of what da Silva terms the "transparent 'I'," —namely, that self-knowing manifestation of rationality and freedom consolidated within post-Enlightenment European thought. The transparent subject qua subject is a being whose interior ontology is dependent on its capacity to be expressed through temporal duration. This is fundamentally a conception of ontology as regulated within the disciplinary bounds of history: "the region of modern knowledge that assumes time as the privileged ontoepistemological dimension."[6] Da Silva claims that this reliance on the internality

[4] Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, Borderlines 27 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

[5] da Silva, 12–14.

[6] da Silva, xv.

of the temporal subject is determinant even within post-structural and post-colonial critiques of subjectivity in which sovereignty is either dispersed/decentred or produced within a structure of exclusion/abjection. Therefore, by remaining reliant on the ontological prerogative of interiority, post-structural theories evacuate and disperse the centrality of the subject, that is, they form it as a nodal point of a network, or as in relation to constitutive abjection. By not attending to the prioritization of historicity within these conceptions, they leave transparency unchallenged, and therefore, the universalization of European particularity as regulative of the representation of the modern subject.

In opposition to the pervasiveness of historicity within humanistic thought, da Silva charts the manner in which "science, " especially with the emergence of the racially focused sciences of the 19th century, operates as the region of modern thought that prioritizes space as the privileged sphere of ontoepistemological thought. She argues that within Enlightenment philosophy space became bound to a concept of exteriority, which was only ever accessible to reason as a secondary form mediated by interiorized temporality.[7] Da Silva's genealogical analysis offers both Descartes' and Kant's projects as the site of the production of the interrelation of interiority and spatiality, whose telos culminates with Hegel's project and the inauguration of what da Silva terms, transcendental poesis.[8]

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[7] da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 59–62.

[8] See da Silva, 69-90. In another context, I would like to look more rigorously into the question of da Silva's reading of the concept of interiority in both Descartes and in Kant. For while da Silva's argument is in many ways persuasive, I remain skeptical that interiority is as robust a conceptual framework as da Silva maintains for describing the thinking substance in Descartes, and the priority in which time is given as the primary form of all intuition in Kant. In Descartes, I believe this account could be complicated by his description of the penal gland in both the *Sixth Meditation*, and the *Passions of the Soul* (as well as his correspondence with Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia). Here, Descartes makes evident that while self-reflection is prioritized within the movement and procedure of the meditation as a discursive act, in the realm of human experience,

Having secured the status of interiority as the privileged "ontoepistemological prerogative"[9] within modern representation, da Silva proceeds to argue that the 'scientific' is the conceptual field which, contra historical discourse, privileges the externality of space, and was able to form concepts of sociality and relationality that were not bound to internality as regulatory of experience. The scientific reliance on a conceptual formation of externality as regulative of representation served as an alternative to the perverseness of transparency and was thus able to furnish, what da Silva names, an 'analytics of raciality'.

The analytics of raciality offer a structure of engagement, as given through scientific logic, that allows for an accounting of the means in which the conceptuality of the subject is produced through social, political, and conceptual relations. These, da Silva argues, are the necessary conditions for the formation of the concept of the 'global'. In this chapter, I wish to retain da Silva's theorization of an epistemological production of a logic of identity that is not bound to subjectivity and psychology because of their necessary structuring through the intricacies of interiorized difference and similitude. Rather, as she pivots away from subjectivity

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apperception is always given through a composite relation between the body and freedom of the soul. In Kant, it is of course correct that it is by means of the inner sense that all appearances are given. Yet, this does not mean that interiority is the condition of externality, as da Silva maintains, but rather that both the inner and outer sense are both only forms of appearance which have no truth outside their mere representation. And while the inner intuition may be the mediate of outer appearance, it would be a mistake to psychologize this mediacy. One would have to carefully construct the relation of the mediation between the pure forms of intuition and their relationship to concepts. For, the internal intuition of the self gives the self itself as a representation (in apperception). Therefore interiority, if it assumes an element of psychology, is as much a product of the outer sense as the inner (see Immanuel Kant et al., *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 189/B68). This is to say, that in both Kant and Descartes, although for different reasons, I remain skeptical that the concepts of interiority/exteriority best reflect the productive tensions between embodiment and freedom. The question would remain as to how and if this would necessitate a reformulation of da Silva's genealogical argument.

[9] Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 38.

towards a non-psychological, anthropological discourse, da Silva develops discursive methodologies which, in so doing, attend to identitarian violences within transcendental logics. What I am trying to here develop engages this methodology by arguing that when non-normatively differentiated, sexual aberrancy is caught within a bifurcated position as either origin or excess, what is left unremarked upon is the way in which transsexuality acts as a discursively productive apparatus at the core of modern thought, an apparatus not yet explored.

To track the manner in which the scientific becomes the site for the productivity of differentiation, da Silva builds on the work of Sylvia Wynter, especially from her text, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument."[10] Here Wynter argues that the modern episteme has been produced through the 'overrepresentation' of man over the human. The term "Man," in Wynter's construction, names the present hegemonic ethnoclass (the Western Bourgeois) which overrepresents itself as the totality of a universal humanity. This denies the empirical reality of the human beyond that of Western and westernized representation and ideological purview. The process of this overrepresentation is therefore the imposition of a coloniality, which discursively institutes itself through the production of the concepts of being, power, truth, and freedom. Wynter offers a genealogy of the construction of these discursive formations, tracing them from their roots in theological epistemology, through their transference from a theological discourse into that of secular science, from which the figuration of Man will find its stabilization.

This 'cultural-historical dialectical transformation,' whose point of origin Wynter places in the Renaissance, centers around a transformation of the 'space of otherness.' In the

[10] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

prescientific regime, otherness was differentiated through a separation between celestial and territorial geographies, in which the differentiation between the spiritual and the fleshly was mapped onto a symbolic coding of interiority and exteriority. The flesh, bound to the natural/the earthly, was held within the sphere of the "sublunar," the terrestrial sphere of corporeality and death. The spirit, extended through the 'supralunal,' was the realm of the divine, beyond the earthly sphere, and, importantly, of an absolutely incommensurate substantiality than the earthly. The mapping of the celestial/earthly onto the "master code" of spirit/flesh extended to the territoriality of the earth in which there could be no externality to God's grace, so that "the geography of the earth had also had to be known in parallel Spirit/Flesh terms as being divided up between, on the one hand, its temperate regions centered on Jerusalem—regions that, because held up above the element of water by God's Providential Grace, were habitable—and, on the other, those realms that, because outside this Grace, had to be uninhabitable."[11]

The 'humanist revolutions' of the Renaissance, i.e. the discoveries of Copernicus, etc. established a homogenization of the sub-and-supra-lunar terrains (the heavens recognized as essentially composed of the same substance as the earth), and with it an epistemological shift away from the absolute bifurcation of the master coding of the sprit/flesh regime. This shift not only allowed for and was because of the birth of the physical sciences, but also that of colonial expansion, in which a peopled world beyond Grace could be conceived. With the homogenization of substance and the 'discovery' of populations that had not been exposed to the Divine word, Wynter locates the dialectical-historical conceptual shift from the master-coding of

[11] Wynter, 278–79.

the Spirit/Flesh to that of Rational/Irrational, and with it the first formation of the concept of Man, which Wynter name, *Man$_1$*.

Within this new regime the 'space of otherness' is produced through a separation between the rational and irrational, which positions the colonial Other as the physical remnant of the projection of the abnormal and subhuman, and is thus unable to imagine an other to those postulates of being, power, truth, freedom as the essential component of the concept of Man. Thus Man (here Man$_1$) becomes determinant, as an overvaluation, of humanity as a whole, constitutively excluding those humans external to an Enlightenment conceptualization of the rational. Wynter elaborates a second historical transformation that emerges from the one determined by (and determinant of) the physical sciences and the master coding of the rational/irrational, to that of the biological sciences, determined by the Darwinian constellation of selection/deselection (*Man$_2$*). Within this framework, Man$_2$ is over-represented as human because of the formation of a hierarchy which is figured through W. E. B. DuBois's conception of the color line; that is, a systematization and gradation of the peoples of the earth predicated upon their climatological racial categorization and enforced within the social/political reality by relations of socioeconomic dominance. What is central to the argument here is that the production of the concept of man, both *Man$_1$* and *Man$_2$*, is determined by and determinant of the development of modern scientific epistemology.

This sketch of the arguments put forth by both da Silva and Wynter makes evident the conception formation of the scientific as productive of apparatuses of knowledge which produce, in da Silva's terms, analytics of identity. While both these accounts build on the genealogical methodology developed by Foucault in texts such as the *History of Sexuality, vol. One,* they focus on the a possibility of disavowal. In Foucault's formulation, while the subject is produced

within regimes of power, the desire for disavowal, and more importantly the possibility of structural disavowal, emerges as secondary either because of its engulfment within the vicissitudes of relations of force, or as an element of a secondary juridical negativity. What Wynter and da Silva both offer is a way for disavowal to be seen not as secondary to productive discursivity, but as a necessary postulate of discursive and conceptual productivity. Moreover, the scope of this disavowal must extend to the foundational epistemological categories of the scientific and its relation to predicates of identity.

I follow da Silva in the understanding of the scientific as the mechanism in which to understand productive apparatuses; however I argue that the production of these modes of power, in the case of "transsexuality," both affirms the productivity of the scientific while foreclosing its geological force and extension. As I have argued earlier in this dissertation, this foreclosure is produced through a denial of the internality and identity of transness, which, as lacking interiority, is denied subjecthood. In this chapter, I will continue this investigation arguing instead that transsexuality has emerged in relationship to scientific production, but through a conception of a virtual space, dispersed within conceptual and material networks, but without solidity or stability as an embodied subject. Instead, the scientific both produces the concept of the transsexual and denies it as its object, determining while foreclosing its regimes of representation and interpellation. This productivity and phenomenality is manifest at the precise site of the indifferentiation of the psychic and somatic, foreclosing the manner in which the concept of indeterminant sexual difference is productive of the field of the scientific itself, through its position as both a crux for, and buttress against, the intermixture of the internalization of the psychic and externalization of the soma. The 'transsexual' as unmoored within virtual non-identity, is disciplinarily produced as the object of scientific purview, which simultaneously

accomplishes the structurally obscuring of transsexuality's position as determinant of certain regimes of modern science, such as sexology, anatomy, symptomatic psychology, surgical morphology, etc.

This necessitates the acknowledgment of an axiomatic of this chapter, and of this project writ large, namely that in genealogies of identity emerging from Enlightenment thought—such as the sexually differentiated subject—conceptualizations of the same are always predicated upon a conception of identity which has been produced through a logic of abstraction. On its surface these categories of identity may be assumed to have been produced through an abstraction of an interpellated normativity, for example the masculine/feminine sexed body. However, these acts of interpellation are produced only through a perverted differentiation that allows for the recognition of that abstraction. As Nick Land has argued in an early work: "the paradox of enlightenment, then, is an attempt to fix a stable relation with what is radically other, since insofar as the other is rigidly positioned within a relation it is no longer fully other. If before encountering otherness we already know what its relation to us will be, we have obliterated it in advance. And this brutal denial is the effective implication of the thought of the *a priori*, since if our certainties come to us without reference to otherness, we have always already torn out the tongue of alterity before entering into relation with it."[12] My argument does not deny the transcendental violence of assumptions of the same, but rather calls attention to the ways in which this mechanism gestures and makes evident the manner in which any critique of transcendental logic through identarian structures already assumes, not the exclusion of the obliterated other, but rather its necessity as a productive force of its own manifestation.

[12] Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, 2nd ed (Falmouth : New York, NY: Urbanomic ; Sequence Press, 2012), 64.

This is the fundamental assumption of this chapter: discourses that assume masculine abstract universality, which posit transsexuality as either a biological origin of sexual difference or as monstrous other, fail to take into account that the manner in which transsexuality, rather than an unrepresentable module of the feminine, is the productive motor of the regimes of the representation of sexual difference. Transness offers a unique position in the field of the inscription of difference as both that which is disavowed and productive. This aporetic position justifies itself through a return to the 'scientific' both within the realms of the physical and human sciences.

§3. The Real and The Hyperreal

> There's no "there," there either. No one is or has one sex at a time, but teems with sexes and sexualities too fluid, volatile, and numerous to count.
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> - Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones*

Susan Stryker, writing at the turn of the last millennium, also drew attention to the ways in which post-modernity and transsexuality are discursively bound. For Stryker, symbolic manifestation was represented in the interrelations between nuclear energy and transsexual reassignment/affirmation surgery. Stryker demonstrates the ways in which discourses surrounding the remaking of the modern world through the advent of nuclear weapons was historically positioned in a relationship to the surgical alteration of transsexual bodies. Both, she argues, were seen as representations of apocalyptic notions of futurity and the breakdown in the stability in referential representation. "The parallel roles in recent history of transsexual bodies and nuclear bombs are rooted in the fact that both accomplish a literalization of modernity's representational crisis by abolishing the stability of material referentiality in a historically novel

fashion. In doing so, they actualized the destruction of the modernist episteme…Transsexuality, too, is posed as an impossible reality beyond the absolute limit of an incommensurable sexual difference, a liquidation of the body as a stable ground of meaning. It is the end of history in another sense, a space in which semiotic activity must mutate into new forms if it is to survive."[13]

Stryker posits transsexuality as implicit within the construction of a reality beyond the absolute limit of an incommensurable sexual difference while simultaneously within a post-modern scientificity in which the boundaries of the body and the discursive constellation of psycho-morphology are dissipated and reconfigured without clear lines of demarcation. Stryker thus poses a theoretical question that has been central to trans theory since the late 1980s, namely what are the social, political, and conceptual effects of the mobilization of transness as metonymy?[14] She writes: "To what extent can transsexuality be considered a techno-cultural fantasy that helps map the contours of contemporary society?"[15]

The debates surrounding this question are perennially addressed within the field of trans studies, and still circulate within the contemporary field.[16] However, what Stryker raises is perhaps not only the problem of metonymy, but also, the desire for the metonymy, and the relationship of that desire to a material productivity. For how does "transsexuality" get concretely established within discourse as a figure of medico-scientific post-modernity? Through

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[13] Kaplan and Squier, *Playing Dolly*, 165.

[14] For example, see Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (Columbia University Press, 1998). Also see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

[15] Kaplan and Squier, *Playing Dolly*, 161.

[16] For example, see Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager, "After Trans Studies," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 103–16.

what genealogies of surgical, psychanalytic, and cybernetic interventions? What is obscured by these positings? What kind of embodied subjectivity is announced?

Stryker turns to Baudrillard as a privileged site for the conceptual tethering of postmodernism and transsexuality. Baudrillard, she argues, understands transsexuality "as a refusal of sexual difference and a flight from the somatic body into technologically mediated body images fantasized as circulating with a dematerialized 'traffic of signs.'"[17] Stryker critiques Baudrillard's tone as vitriolic, as well as his refusal to engage in the specificities of "real transsexual lives." [18] And yet, while she rejects the trajectory of his plot as "a further degeneration from the postlapsarian knowledge of sexual difference into the gray entropy of undifferentiation,"[19] she embraces his underlying project, in that the "transsexual can, and often does, *productively figure* in attempts to make sense of recent as well as prospective historical experience."[20] This chapter uses Stryker's rejection of Baudrillard's trajectory as a way to orient itself in relationship to his archive, yet it will also question the sincerity in which the underlying project itself takes into account the productivity of the transsexual within its own conceptual apparatus. For, as I will argue, it is precisely as a figuration for the post-modern and the futural that the productive aspect of transsexuality has been foreclosed. Moreover, it is the positing of transsexuality as symbolic and devoid of materiality that disallows Baudrillard to take into account the way transsexuality is productive of the conceptual terrain in which that figuration can emerge. It is the enclosure of the "transsexual" as an object of scientific knowledge, and

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[17] Kaplan and Squier, *Playing Dolly*, 162.

[18] Kaplan and Squier, 162.

[19] Kaplan and Squier, 162.

[20] Kaplan and Squier, 162. Emphasis added.

under the name of scientific discursivity, that foregrounds transsexuality as exception and denies the material and conceptual apparatus through which sexual differentiation is produced. To understand the means of this foreclosure we must situate Baudrillard's engagement with transsexuality within the larger framework of his work, especially as it concerns questions of difference and simulation.

In his early work, Baudrillard offered a genealogy of 20th-century semiotics in which he posited a lineage from the 1920s to the 1960s in which a diminishment in consumer demand, created by the global economic depression, was met by the need for an artificial intensification of that desire—an intensification which resulted from technological advancement in the means of production and the resulting expansion in marketable goods. The overproduction of goods, and the accompanying inflation of desire, which resulted in a reconfiguration of the capitalist management of signification, Baudrillard names the regime of the sign-value. Sign-value, as developed by Baudrillard, operates unburdened by the materiality of the object and its satisfaction of the demands of sustenance, but instead gains its exchange-value through an ever-rapidly increasing circulation of its representation. The speed and durability of this de-materialized circulation operates at such a rapid pace, with such a proliferation of values and reproduction of its own symbolic status, that the relationship between the signification and its refence to a material object is lost in the infinite archive of the reproduced, leaving instead only ever-expanding simulation, a simulacra predicated upon nothing else but its seriality.[21]

Starting in the 1970s, Baudrillard began to focus on the mechanism of the symbolic accrual of meaning of the sign-value, in which the object becomes manifest within a form of

[21] See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 75–79.

hyper-reality, beyond attachment to a concrete existence. Rather than the traditionally Marxist conception of productive expansion through dialectic exchange and progression, meaning itself accrues through the exchange of symbolic value which as a virtual form detached for materiality resists the logic of accumulation and profit. Much of this work on symbolic meaning production, and the term symbolic exchange itself, Baudrillard develops from readings of Bataille.[22] For Bataille, symbolic exchange is bound within the concept of the general economy, which is posited in contradistinction to the Hegelian legacy of a "reserved economy."[23] In the reserved economy, dialectical progression is conceived as necessarily producing a surpass (of meaning, goods, labour) which is then incorporated into a teleological economy in which any excess is reclaimed within the machinations of the totality of historical progression. The general economy resists this form of exchange, prioritizing expenditure, waste, sacrifice, destruction, as that which escapes the totalizing engulfment of dialectic sublation.

Bataille's formation of the general economy was not only diagnostic of an aspect of experience that had not been accounted for from within Hegelian-Marxist accounts of social and subjective experience (such as mystical experiences and "primitive" modes of sociality), but it was simultaneously an ethical injunction, in which human sovereignty is bound to an embrace of expenditure and excess as a means to resist the totalizing grasp of the dialectical production of meaning within dominant capitalist economic and social modes. However, a systematic theory of the general economy encounters a necessary contradiction—namely, that an excess cannot be grasped as an object, either materially or conceptuality. To grasp excess, to name it as an

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[22] See, for example, Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 19–41.

[23] See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Reprint (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002), 251–77.

experience or a concept, would be thus to place it back within a reserved economy. To be sovereign, according to Bataille, is thus to lose one's ontological status, one's status as a thing. That is, to die. Sacrifice, the gift of death, becomes metonymic for that which escapes an economy of exchange.

Baudrillard's engagement with Bataille's conception of death and sacrifice circulates around the problem of symbolic exchange as that which accounts for the systematicity of excess, that is, its ability to be transmitted as both concept and material object, without being subsumed by the logic of work. Thus, the absolute intimacy between symbolic exchange and death, the coupling of which allows for the development of symbolic exchange as "revolutionary," due to its offering of an economic system outside the delimiting bounds of productivity. Following both Nietzsche and Foucault, Baudrillard's concept of the revolutionary is positioned within discourses of historical rupture, within which he postulates two scenes of epochal break, both predicated around transitions within the semiological production of meaning and exchange value.[24] The first is that of the break between the pre-modern and the modern, constituted by the leaving behind of primordial modes of symbolic exchange, toward the embrace of production through the accrual of surplus value. The second, that of the transition from modern to post-modern society, which is organized around an ever-expanding simulation of symbolic exchange value. For Baudrillard, the post-modern society of simulation—in which meaning is predicated not upon work or a regime conceptuality determined by real objects but rather by a sphere of cultural production of non-material objects—is always in refence to a structure of endless repetition, in which an object of experience is infinitely copied and reconstructed not as itself, but as its virtual reproduction.

[24] See Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London ; New York: Verso, 2005), 145–68.

The structure of the post-modern condition is that in which meaning is accrued through reference to a symbolic regime without a concept of an original. This symbolic regime thus emerges through a transition from regulation of the logic of the real to that of the hyperreal. The realm of the hyperreal, a concept of spatiality determined by simulation, is experienced as more real than real, as the real itself, even if it is, on its surface, acknowledged as simulation. This acknowledgment of the real as unreal, yet fantasized as the experience of the real, produces a psychology of the aleatory, a regime of signification without reference to origin or ends, in which a constant and endless barrage of images, codes, and models constitute and reconstitute the boundaries of the real, without stability or final determination. In this way, historical materiality is turned on its head, the superstructure determining the regime of the real and thus producing the end of the tradition of a political economy.

Thus, reversal in the organizing political and social structures of modernity, alongside an explosion in the technological capacity for the proliferation of simulated representation inaugurates an epoch of the hyperreal in which psychic life is primarily experienced as the individual's desire to escape the pathologies produced by the loss of the real into hyperreal simulated experienced. Schizophrenia rather than hysteria become the organizing pathology of the post-modern experience: "A full-blown and planet-wide schizophrenia, therefore, now rules."[25] This schizophrenic play of simulated representation and re-representation without ends means that along with a the loss of the concept of a real world of objects, the very experience of difference is also lost in a generalized and homogenizing play of the similitude of simulation. Within simulation, discretion is lost alongside the fixity of the relationship between referent and reference. This produces within hyperreality the impossibility of separability, and along with it,

[25] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, 104.

of difference. As simulations without difference proliferate unmoored from the stability of referentiality, these simulacra lose the potentiality for the accrual of meaning, cathecting only to themselves, in an infinite circle of the reproduction of the same. Thus the subject is inundated with an endless barrage of messages without meaning, in an age aptly called *post*-modern due to its loss of the determining factors of modernity—class, politics, economy, and difference. An age past even the dream of liberation.[26]

The over-coming of modernity by post-modernity is predicated not in the denial of modernity's effects, but due, rather, to their "successes." Labor, production, political economy, difference, art, all end with the closure of the modern not through their disavowal but due to the desire for their over-coming built into the conceptual core of modernity. The desire for the formation of a utopia at the end of a liberal telos. And it is here that the transsexual, both as object and as metonymy, comes to play such a crucial role in Baudrillard's thought. The end of the categories of signification in the transition from the modern to the post-modern is comprised of a "liberation of signs" whose liberation the categories of modernity presupposed as the foundation of their conceptuality. Therefore, the political is conceived only within a telos towards its utopic end, and this apocalyptic conceptual foundation is shared across the categories of modernity—its economy, aesthetic representation, sexuality, etc. Thus, the loss of the real and turn towards hyperreality relies upon a generalized conception of the success of the real towards the foreclosure of its own ends, in which for example, the "liberation" from patriarchal domination through universalized feminism allows for the unmooring of sexual differentiation. A

[26] "Postmodernism is the simultaneity of the destruction of previous values and their reconstruction in distortion." Jean Baudrillard, Dietmar Kamper, and Christoph Wulf, eds., *Looking Back at the End of the World*, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 41.

discursive end of history which Baudrillard, starting in the early 1990's titles, *after the orgy*. "If I were asked to characterize the present state of affairs, I would describe it as 'after the orgy'. The orgy in question was the moment when modernity exploded upon us, the moment of liberation in every sphere. Political liberation, sexual liberation, liberation of the forces of production, liberation of the forces of destruction, women's liberation, children's liberation, liberation of unconscious drives, liberation of art."[27]

The success of the total revolution is not, as such, experienced socially. Rather the experience of post-modern existence is only one of the simulations of the orgy; that is the simulation of liberation, work, history. Post-modernity thus produces a double bind in which the goals of modernity are realized in their ends, and yet the experience of those ends must be affectively and socially denied, and this denial must be infinity repeated within the simulation and play of the hyperreal: "The state of utopia realized, of all utopias realized, wherein paradoxically we must continue to live as though they had not been. But since they have and since we can no longer therefore nourish the hope of realizing them, we can only 'hyper-realize' them, though interminable simulation. We live within the interminable reproduction of ideals, phantasies, images and dreams which are now behind us, yet which we must continue to reproduce in a sort of inescapable indifference."[28]

§4. The Trans-Scientific

> The imminence of the death of all the great referents (religious, sexual, political, etc.) is expressed by exacerbating the forms of violence and representation that characterized them.

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[27] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, 3.

[28] Baudrillard, 4.

- Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*

Post-modernity is, for Baudrillard, an experience of an inescapable indifference which is properly understood as a trans-indifference in that, within the circuiting of the hyperreal, categorization is denied by endless contamination and substitution. Along with the closure of the differentiation of the object, conceptual determination is lost, producing an infinite algebraic potential of re-signification without reference: "Thus every individual category is subject to contamination, substitution is possible between any sphere and any other: there is a total confusion of types. Sex is no longer located in sex itself, but elsewhere—elsewhere else, in fact. Politics is no longer restructured to the political sphere, but infects every sphere, economics, science, art, sport…."[29] He names the four overarching conceptual figures for this contamination and substitution as transaesthetics, transeconomics, transpolitics, and transsexuality.

However, sex is not simply one of the categories of the indifferential substitution of the real, for it is through and within sexuality that the circulation of spheres of signification occurs: "Sexuality impregnates all signification and this is because signs have, for their part, invested the entire sexual sphere."[30] The impregnation of all signification by the sexual does so through the guise of sexual difference which, as a simulation of difference, is one that both necessitates an other and denies its very possibility. It is a kind of cosmetic surgery in which the other is produced as an artificial synthesis of itself, a state of experience which is, in fact, nothing other than its own liquidation. This double simultaneity of denial and production is absurd, an absurdity in which the sexes qua sexed must differentiate while simultaneously denying the

[29] Baudrillard, 8.

[30] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London ; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1993), 97.

possibility of their differential. It is this terrain in which the concept of gender is both produced and sundered from sexed embodiment. Gender is manufactured as a category of the sexual that is systematically divorced from the sexed body through its enunciation as performative. Here the transsexual appears as a conceptual figure, both metonymically and materially, signifying both indifferentiation and duration of the traumatic effects of the death of the other that survive beyond their representability: "The coming of the problematic of gender, now taking over from that of sex, illustrates this progressive dilution of the sexual function. This is the era of the Transsexual, where the conflicts linked to difference–and even the biological and anatomical signs of difference–survive long after the real otherness of the sexes has disappeared."[31]

The coming of the epoch of the transsexual is marked by a disappearance of sexuality and with it a relation of the subject to pleasure. The transsexual, as a figuration devoid of sexuality, is determined not in relation to pleasure, but in relation to artifice, artifice as the production of the prosthesis, the tending of sex towards the artificial, a tending that has the temporal structure of the futural: "the body is *fated to become* a prosthesis."[32] Thus, according to Baudrillard, the sexual liberations of modernity were not directed towards an emancipation of women, but rather, and unmistakeably, towards death of the sexual as such. "The sexual revolution may thus turn out to have been just a stage in the genesis of transsexuality."[33]

This structure of affirmation and foreclosure, manifest through the transsexual, is explicitly mediated through the language of a cybernetic revolution and a turn towards the

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[31] Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London ; New York: Verso Books, 2008), 128.

[32] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, 20. Emphasis added.

[33] Baudrillard, 24.

horizon of the scientific. The cybernetic revolution is bound to the sexual revolution, and both raise fundamental ontological questions ("Am I a man or a machine?...Am I am man or a woman?"[34]), which produce a paradoxical outcome. The cybernetic and sexual revolutions both open the door to psycho-somatic "indeterminacy, anxiety, and confusion,"[35] and in the aftermath of the revolution and the production of indeterminate identities, (that is, after the orgy), a generalized desire is produced for generic sexual identities, the very conceptual objects that had been overturned in the technological and sexual "liberations." Thus the turn towards transsexuality as a turn to a desire for a generic identity that had been produced through, and bound within, a scientific, cybernetic futurity—one that stands in for the desire for a sexual identity that had been lost through that very desire for sexual liberation. "The is how *we became* transsexuals…politically indifferent and undifferentiated beings, androgynous and hermaphroditic—for *by the time* we had embraced, digested and rejected the most contradictory ideologies, and *were left* wearing only their masks*: we had become*, in our own heads—and perhaps unbeknownst to ourselves—travesties of the political realm."[36]

I note the temporal demarcations in the preceding passage to highlight something of importance for the argument of this chapter and for the conceptualization of the post-political, post-revolutionary image of ubiquitous transsexuality. Transsexuality is conceived by Baudrillard as the futural form of sexual difference, that which occurs after the closure of sexual difference, and yet which post-modern politics and imagination is predicated upon. Transsexuality is thus both the subject of contemporary political experience, and simultaneously

[34] Baudrillard, 24.

[35] Baudrillard, 24.

[36] Baudrillard, 25. Emphasis added.

an unrecognizable object, abjected from the simulated experience of gender identity, a metonymy for pure force. What is therefore categorically denied to the transsexual is the actual, material, possibility of a non-ubiquitous, non-universal, non-metonymic identity. This problem of the denial of the transsexual as contingent subject within Baudrillard's late writings have been raised elsewhere,[37] however, what I am here drawing attention to is not simply the violence of this constitutive occlusion, but also that this conceptual structure is endemic to post-modern constructions of transsexuality, beyond the surface problematics of texts such as these. That is, these figurations of transness as force without embodiment both rely upon and obscure the stabilization that these very claims rely upon, especially concerning their scientificity. The epistemological doublings the transsexual has to bear—as both metonymy and concrete identity; both futural organism at the end of difference, and the primordial scene of difference's emergence—are structural to the scientific (cybernetic, psychological, and morphological) determinations which have produced the contours and limits to the concept of transsexuality, whose effects are felt and manifested very concretely within contemporary sexual and political frameworks and experience.

Here we see the manner in which it is the discourses of scientific technology which allow for the futural positing of trans-ontology (cosmetic surgery, information technology, etc.) void of vectors of determination. Always discursively manifesting through a logic of horizonal expectation, transsexuality emerges in conceptuality as foreclosed from a relation to difference, the futural empty refracting of infinite similitude. However, even within the development of a concept of transsexuality, such as found in Baudrillard's texts—as that which remains bound to the fields of psychoanalytic and cybernetic science as reliant on a determined relation between

[37] See above discussion of Kaplan and Squier, *Playing Dolly*.

the psychic and the morphological—one finds, beyond the self-knowing discursivity of the text, a formation of transsexuality as productive of difference. Moreover, this productive faculty is always already anterior to the scenes of abjection within which it finds itself inscribed.

This inscription of the transsexual as the post-modern and post-revolutionary subject, as regulated by the structure of hyper-reality and simulation, is bound to the determinations of representation whose main force of distribution is through aesthetic representation. As has already been mentioned, the foundational concept of post-modernity is a blurring of the demarcations of social and political framework—the impossibility of discretion between economics, politics, the aesthetic, and the sexual. As has also been stated, the sexual, through the figure of the transsexual, becomes the master signifier for this indeterminacy, in which all symbolization is manifest through transsexual indifference. The medium of this post-revolutionary production and its manner of dissemination is that of aesthetic representation which, in having lost its relation to the real, is hyper-produced in constant simulation and simulacric re-signification. Therefore art as the phenomenon which historically was bound to the desire for illusion is no longer operative. For with the foreclosure of the real also is lost the differential between the concrete and the illusionary. Any desire for the illusion becomes indistinguishable from non-aesthetic desire for a non-mimetic object. Within the horizon of simulation and indifferentiation, all that remains as art is the hyperreality of the image and with it a fantasy of art as relational practice or a collection of objects from everyday life, symbolized for example in Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*.

Like the sexual revolution, and conceptually bound to it, the revolutions of modern art produced the conditions for its own disappearance. "During [modernity], the aesthetic illusion remained very powerful, just as the illusion of desire was for sex. The energy of sexual

difference, which moved through all the figures of desire, corresponded, in art, to the energy of dissociation from reality (cubism, abstraction, expressionism). Both, however, corresponded to the will to crack the secret of desire and the secret of the object. Up until the disappearance of these powerful configuration–the scene of desire, the scene of illusion–in favor of the same transsexual, transaesthetic obscenity, the obscenity of visibility, the relentless transparency of all things."[38] Bound to the nullity of transsexuality (the prosthetic subject without relation to desire), contemporary transaesthetics, in its desire for a generic identity whose possibility the revolutions of modernity denied, foregrounds banality and nullity as its structuring values, even to the point of the mobilization of irony to allow for, if nothing else, at least the fantasy of pleasure.

And again, like the transsexual who is offered as a figure for the culmination of sexual liberation yet simultaneously materialized as only prosthetic artifice, contemporary art orients itself towards a desire for banality, its meaning and context having been reduced to nullity through the revolutionary genealogies of modernity: "Therein lies all the duplicity of contemporary art: asserting nullity, insignificance, meaningless, striving for nullity when already null and void. Striving for emptiness when already empty. Claiming superficiality in superficial terms."[39] Art proliferates everywhere. Technological apparatuses allow for the constant inundation of art, through new media, digital technologies, and virtual reality, and yet what is incessantly reproduced is without rule, without criteria or judgment, without differentiation, and therefore not art, in the way in which the clone betrays its original. The transsexual is thus, according to Baudrillard, the only proper contemporary artist, a master of artifice, without

[38] Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art: Manifestos, Interviews, Essays*, trans. Sylvère Lotringer, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (New York: Semiotext(e), 2005), 25.

[39] Baudrillard, 27.

difference, without itself beyond sheer replication. Art and sex have, in their ubiquity, and as such, ceased to exist. A secular world, devoid of illusion, determined by the indifferentiation of the cybernetic, and the fantasy of a world after the end of the other.

§5. Oscillation and Reversal

> Not identity loss, a term that attempts to reinstate the old dichotomy but rather, identity slippage, an inside/outside implosion.
>
> - Sandy Stone, "Invaginal Imaginal: How to Fill (or Surround) Virtual Space"

In the "The Ecliptic of Sex," Baudrillard makes a claim which has since become somewhat infamous within post-modern feminist theory,[40] namely that there is only one sexuality—masculinity: "Freud was right: there is but one sexuality, one libido—and it is masculine."[41] Baudrillard's tarrying with the "aporia" of femininity, through the concept of seduction, is a theoretical gesture towards the possibility of non-simulated representation while maintaining the inescapabilty of the post-modern regime of the hyper-real. In his development of the concept of seduction, the feminine is not postulated as a dialectical relation to the masculine within the binary opposition of sexual difference, but rather as regulated by a kind of nonrelation. The nullity of feminine sexuality is what precisely allows it the sexual purview of seduction. "The feminine is not substituted for the masculine as one sex for another, according to some structural inversion. It is substituted as the end of the determinate representation of sex, as

[40] See, for example, A. Keith Goshorn, "Valorizing 'the Feminine' while Rejecting Feminism?" in Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* as well as Victoria Grace, *Baudrillard's Challenge: A Feminist Reading* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000).

[41] Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, English ed (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 6.

the flotation of the law that regulated the difference between the sexes."[42] The feminine is not an object of experience or a term in relation. All experience, all conceptuality, is determined by the phallic regime of sexual representation. The feminine therefore is unable to intervene in sexuality, which is absolutely determined by the phallus: "There is no use seeking from within this structure, to have the feminine pass through to the other side, or to cross terms. Either the structure remains the same, with the female being entirely absorbed by the male, or else it collapses and there is longer either female or male—the zero degree of structure."[43] When the feminine attempts a political or social entrance into the sexual (through feminism, for example), a chaos is produced by the desire for the reconfiguration of masculine/feminine normative relations and the impossibility of the realization of those desires because of the ubiquity of masculine sexuality. From within this chaos, the transsexual emerges as the result of the instability and sexual indeterminacy. The disintegration of the sexual, the impossible rejection of the total sovereignty of the masculine, produces a sphere of conceptuality and representation that cannot be explicated by any historical framework: "A universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of psychic or psychological relation, nor those or repression and the unconscious…A universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of structures and diacritical oppositions, but implies a seductive reversibility—a universe where the feminine is not what opposes the masculine, but what seduces the masculine."[44]

For Baudrillard, the totalization of the virtuality of simulation offers a world of objects that cannot be touched and controlled by desire and force, but rather must be sneaked up upon,

[42] Baudrillard, 6.

[43] Baudrillard, 6.

[44] Baudrillard, 7.

convinced, cajoled. Seduction does not operate within the sphere of truth or autonomy. It has no determination. It even bears the name of femininity only as a historical convention, for the sovereignty of seduction is not housed within the binary structure of sexual difference. It rejects, "biological bi-sexuality." Rather it resides within the bounds of trans-sexuality, the "trans-sexuality of seduction."[45] Thus, trans-sexuality comes to serve as metonymy for feminine seduction, which itself is metonymic for the nullity of a conceptuality that rejects production, rejects sexuality, rejects representation, yet, fundamentally, has "always existed."[46]

Thus, according to Baudrillard, the concept of the feminine-as-transsexual is constitutive of sexual difference while simultaneously its abrogation. The feminine is devoid of identity, it is the finality of sexuality, "the end of the determinate representation of sex"[47] and yet, its necessary prior condition in which the transsexuality of seduction is offered as a form of unrepresentable sovereignty that has *always existed*. It is in the nullity of the feminine as a non-sovereign transsexual sovereignty which foregrounds it as both anticipatory and as closure. It is within this conjuncture of anticipation and denial that we can locate the manner in which transsexuality is offered as the productive force of both differentiation and its dissipation.

In *Forget Foucault*, Baudrillard challenges Foucault's proscription of the ubiquity of power in which power is figured as dissipated and diffused and yet all-encompassing. What, according to Baudrillard, is missing from Foucault's conception is that in the positioning of power's totalising force of determination, power is conceptualized as real—decentered, discursively produced, yet still effecting a sphere of experience presumed to be reality. This,

[45] Baudrillard, 7.

[46] Baudrillard, 7.

[47] Baudrillard, 6.

therefore, misses the radical subversion of post-modernity's movement beyond the reality-principle to a hyper-reality structured through simulation: "Foucault unmasks all the final or causal illusions concerning power, but he does not tell us anything concerning the simulacrum of power itself."[48] Foucault's account of power cannot take into account its "non-political side…the side of its symbolic reversal."[49] The non-political side of power evades the critical elucidation of the bio-political regime, mediated predominately through the discursive-technological development of sexuality, and here, at his description of the limits of the explanatory purview of sexuality, Baudrillard adds a pivotal addendum. He writes: "This is no doubt the same reversibility which the category of the feminine has exerted throughout the entire course of our culture's sexual history…Today phallocracy is crumbling under this very challenge, taking with it all forms of traditional sexuality—and not at all due to social pressures from any form of feminine liberation."[50] The reversibility of the feminine, its ability to unform and reform towards and as the masculine, as well as away from it, is thus productive of its own categorization throughout the entire course of Western sexual history. Yet it is not the political forces of liberation which produce the revolution of the orgy of modernism's transition to post-modernity, but its indeterminacy. Both predicative and determinate.

It is this reversibility in terms of sexual difference which is the very motor of the differentiation. Both the site of sexuality's manifestation, and the limit of its conceptual purview. How, within Baudrillard's constellation, can one describe this reversibility other than through a

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[48] Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, trans. Sylvère Lotringer, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (Los Angeles, CA : Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2007), 50.

[49] Baudrillard, 50.

[50] Baudrillard, 62.

logic of "transsexuality," namely the reversibility of sexual difference which through simulation posits itself as differentiated and yet resists any manifestation of that difference? Here, symbolic trans-sexual difference is both acting as the productive element of forces of sexual differentiation, while simultaneously as prevented from appearing as its productive conceptual apparatus. Moreover, this productive elision is formulated as squarely within regimes of the scientific invention of the sexual through and within the biopolitical development of 19th-century sexology, morphology, and psychology.

Tracing a genealogy that begins with 19th-century sexology, through psychoanalysis, past cybernetics, and into contemporary bio-engineering, my dissertation has argued that transness has been turned around, named, materialized, symptomized, and eulogized within a scientific and theoretical indecision surrounding the relationship of the psychic and the somatic. Indeed, in this chapter I maintained that in Baudrillard's usage of the concept of transsexuality, one finds a unique reinscription of the binding of the concept of transsexuality to scientific discourse, due to his mobilization of both psychoanalysis and post-modern cybernetic theories of virtuality and simulation. In the next and final chapter of the dissertation, I will continue to trace the figuration of transness within theoretical discourses of the late 20th century, turning specifically to the emergence of the field of trans studies. Although I will be navigating a set of texts that are foundational for the field, as well as for the field of queer theory, what I will be examining is the ways in which trans studies is haunted by an ambiguity that we have traced from psychoanalysis, through to post-structuralism and post-modernism: namely does transness symbolize a sublation of sexual difference (and with that, its origin, horizon, and telos); an excess or perversion of it; or something else, a third term. Specifically, I will attend to this by examining why the term 'transubstantiation' has been taken up so frequently by trans theorists, and in ways that are in

overt tension with the traditional understanding of its meaning. This will allow us to question how the theological and the scientific have become bound within the contemporary construction of concepts of sexual identity, and the productive role figurations of transness have within these formations.

Chapter 4 – "…a certain transubstantiation": Sacramental Symbolization and Trans Philosophy

Like that it wasn't with me.

- Venus Xtravaganza, *Paris is Burning*

§1. Introduction

It is surprising, perhaps, that Judith Butler, who problematizes the concept of the sexed body as substance would use a phrase such as "the transubstantiation of gender,"[1] in relation to transsexuality[2] and without attending to the concept's theological and philosophical histories. Jay Prosser has also remarked on this problem, using it as a mechanism from which to question Butler's formation of the performativity of gender and the materialization of the sexed body. Following Prosser, this chapter uses as a point of orientation the following question: why is Butler's invocation of transubstantiation made in relation to the concept of transsexuality? It examines the areas of conjunction between transsexuality and transubstantiation in works by Judith Butler and Jay Prosser, as well as other trans theorists, to look further into the relations between gender performativity, bodily materiality, and certain genealogies of theological, psychoanalytic, and philosophical thought.

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[1] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* Routledge Classics (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 89.

[2] As with the previous chapter, I will continue to use the terms "transsexual" and "transsexuality" when these are the terms found in the texts with which I am engaging. The term is now considered, by many, to be pejorative. The most commonly used contemporary terminology is either "transgender" or "trans," although there is much variation and contestation surrounding terminology within contemporary scholarship and social frameworks.

In the first chapter of Jay Prosser's *Second Skins*, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex,"[3] Prosser posits a syllogistic logic he finds at work within Butler's early texts, namely that transsexuality serves as an allegory of queerness, and as queerness is structurally transgressive, transsexuality is, as such, a form of transgression. Prosser further claims that Butler's argument is symptomatic of much of early queer theory's willingness to employ the figure of the transsexual as an allegorical technology towards the development of a post-structural/post-modern theory of gender and sexuality as non-essential, performative, and potentially alterable by transgressive sexualities and gender identities. While this chapter does not, on its surface, address these concerns, it does take up a series of problems that emerge in relation to them. Namely, what kind of materializing does Butler's formulation of sex as a "process of materialization"[4] rely on? What manner of assumptions concerning the relation between force and materialization obliquely and covertly stabilize these concepts? Why and how are these assumptions bound to theorizing transgression and "transsexuality"?

In *Second Skins*, Prosser argues—contrary to Butler's claim that matter is not a surface or a site but rather, as construction, a temporal process of force which operates through reiteration of norms—that the specular conceptuality of surface materialization relies upon a prior 'literal materiality' and that this relation of the literal and the conceptual is localised within the desire for/of the transsexual body. Prosser astutely questions Butler's usage of the concept of transubstantiation, demonstrating the ways in which the substance of the trans body comes to serve, in Butler's text, as a metaphoric and phantasmatic construct, formed through a

[3] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (Columbia University Press, 1998).

[4] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xviii.

prioritization of the specular, and without a concrete materiality. What happens, Prosser asks, if we rather think about the materiality of the body as something we can feel rather than see? While I am sympathetic to Prosser's critique of Butler's early engagements with transsexuality and his work to offer a corrective through the development of the concept of 'trans-materiality', this chapter will also focus on the ways in which Prosser, as well as other trans theorists, develop concepts concerning identity and body materiality that in fact share assumptions with Butler's work. To do this, I focus on the concept of transubstantiation as it appears within these texts. This chapter sketches out a genesis of the concept of transubstantiation within trans theory, demonstrating how it illuminates a central ambiguity and ambivalence internal to the discourse. That these ambiguities appear throughout trans studies, from its early articulations in Butler and Prosser, through to contemporary works by scholars such as C. Riley Snorton and Mel Chen, gestures to the centrality and conceptual importance of these concepts to the field of trans studies.

§2. Transubstantiations

> Oh, mystic words. The *mysterium tremendum* of deep identity hovers about a physical locus; the entire complex of male engenderment, the mysterious power of the Man-God, inhabits the "germ glands" in the way that the soul was thought to inhabit the pineal.
>
> - Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back*:* A Posttransexual Manifesto"

While theological terminology is replete within the seminal texts of trans studies,[5] transubstantiation has a particular place of prominence. Transubstantiation describes the

[5] For example, see Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10, no. 2 (29) (May 1, 1992): 150–76 and Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix:

transition within the sacramental act of the Eucharist of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The most well-known explication of this concept is found in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, who employs Aristotelian hylomorphic concepts of substance, form and matter, as well as the terminology of substance and accident, to explain the miracle of transubstantiation. In the history of English translations of Aristotelian terminology, the term 'substance' is used for the Greek *ousia*, which can also be translated into English as 'being'. Its translation as the word substance comes through the Latin translation of *ousia* as *substantia*, meaning literally, something that stands under or grounds things. In Aristotle, being/substance (*ousia*) is understood as a compound of both matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*); matter as pure potentiality, and form as actuation.[6] That is, matter is what *subsists* in a change of form, in which the pure potentiality of matter loses a form and gains a new form within a transition. In the concept of substance, Aristotle, and Aquinas following, distinguish between essential or substantial forms and accidental forms or properties of a substance. An accident (or species) of a substance have no necessary connection to its essential properties or formal manifestation. For example, in the melting of a block of ice, the substance of the ice as ice/water/vapor, etc. is essential, whereas its accidental properties—cold, hard, etc.—have no necessary connection to the substance's being itself. Traditional Catholic theology describes the Eucharist through these Aristotelian terms. It holds that the substance of the bread and wine change through the miracle of the consecration of the Eucharist ("This is my body...this is my blood"), while the accidents of the bread and wine remain. That is, the bread remains bread-like, the wine, red.

Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (June 1, 1994): 237–54.

[6] See "Book Zeta" from Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred, Penguin Classics (London ; New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 167-230.

Transubstantiation relies upon the conceptual formation of the separability of substance and accident, offering a concept of substance uncoupled from a sensual encounter of it. The host is flesh, although, empirically, it remains unmistakeably bread.

Unlike the other sacraments, for example Baptism, substance (matter/form), is not filled with divine presence, as it is with the holy baptismal water, but rather the substance itself is transformed. The bread becomes, rather than is filled with, divine flesh; the wine as blood. The accidents of the bread and wine remain, but the substance itself, is, in its totality, replaced. What is at stake here is a question of the spatiotemporal *permanence* of the substance and of the accidents. I will return to this question of the Eucharistic-Hylomorphic relation of space and time, but for now I will emphasize that what is occurring is the transition of a substance, from one stable substance to another, within the duration of unchanging attributes of the object.

On a surface level, transubstantiation, in which the appearance of an object is retained while its substantiality transitions, seems an odd choice to use as a metaphor for transness, especially transsexuality, which, to keep within the same terminology, presumes a kind of substantial interior permeance and a transition of external appearance. Thus, in its reoccurring mobilization in trans studies, what is primarily foregrounded is the element of transubstantiation that describes an act of transition and alteration. For example, in Mel Chen's *Animacies*,[7] which looks at the ways in which hierarchizations of matter, dependant on vitalist assumptions, distribute agency in ways that effect structures of sexuality, race, and non-human agency. Following Butler, Chen argues for a concept of matter not as stable substance, but as a process of signification; matter as mattering, becoming rather than being.[8] Chen also follows Butler, as well

[7] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Perverse Modernities (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

as Julia Kristeva, in positing that the process of signification occurs in relation to an excluded other, the abject, which is constitutive in the formation of norms.[9] Thus the abject, that which is excluded from the regulative norm, is precisely what gives the subject its contours and determinations.[10] However, for Chen, trans-ness, in a very broad understanding of the term, signifies that which "survives the cancellation wrought by the operations of abjection."[11] Trans-ness, encompassing animality, objecthood, and certain formations of the human as 'border violation', resists exclusion through processes of transformation that do not rely upon sources of stable reference. Chen writes: "In an unstable realm of animacy, relational exchanges between animals and humans can be coded at the level of ontological meditation, or alchemical transformation, one that goes beyond a vitalism that infuses given boundaries with lifelessness."[12] These relational exchanges at the boundary of the representable are what

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[8] In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler writes, "What I would propose...is a return to the notion of matter not as site or surface, but *as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.*" Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xviii. Emphasis in original.

[9] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, Nachdr., European Perspectives (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010), 1–31.

[10] "This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabilitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subjected, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation." Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, xiii.

[11] Chen, *Animacies*, 128.

paradoxically allow for the form of the norm to be achieved; "...the strictest hierarchy is what paradoxically enables that hierarchy to become what it is imagined to be."[13] This operation as an exchange of relations, which both extends beyond discursive and biopolitical governance, while simultaneously stabilizing those self-same relations, Chen names ‘transsubstantiation’—which Chen also uses as the title of this section of *Animacies*: "Animals, Sex, Transsubstantiation." While Chen does not remark upon why the double -s is maintained in the spelling of 'transsubstantiation', presumably it is to highlight the power of the prefix trans-, and with it a conception of an economy of circulation, indeterminacy, and border violation.

While Chen mobilizes the term of transsubstantiation, and highlights, through the doubling of the -s, the relationship of prefix to the root, C. Riley Snorton in *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity,*[14] theorizes more explicitly the work the prefix *trans*- does within the conceptual framework of his text. In *Black on Both Sides*, Snorton makes frequent reference to the phrase "the transubstantiation of things," which he puts in relation to an understanding of transness that couples race and sexuality in a productive indeterminacy. He writes: "Although the perception that race and gender are fixed and knowable terms is the dominant logic of identity, in this book 'trans' is more about a movement with no clear origin and no point of arrival, and 'blackness' signifies upon an enveloping environment and condition of possibility. Here trans—in each of its permutations—finds expression in continuous circulation

[12] Chen, 129.

[13] Chen, 129.

[14] C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

within blackness, and blackness is transected by embodied procedures that fall under the sign of gender."[15]

This process of signification through resignification, under the concept of the 'transubstantiation of things', is manifest through two interrelated terms, 'transitivity' and 'transversality'. These terms Snorton develops in relation to the concept of 'Man' as conceived by black studies scholar, Sylvia Wynter, and especially from her text, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,"[16] which we examined in the previous chapter. For Snorton, Wynter's formation of the overvaluation of Man takes place not only through the violent imposition of the color line, which produces a concept of blackness as "the paradox of nonbeing,"[17] but also in the "apposition" of blackness to transness. Blackness, as a condition for the emergence of colonial being, also relies on a concept of transness not as a predicate of identity, but as the condition for the emergence of any identity. Snorton relates to this the grammatical concept of the transitive, namely that which needs a direct object to compete its sense of meaning. Both transness and blackness as appositional structures are as such indeterminant in that they are excluded from any representational regime. However this constitutive exclusion is itself productive of the emergence of the dominant categories of whiteness and binarized, 'natural', sexual identity, which only occurs in relation to their disavowal. It is this productive nonbeing that is inherently in relation to the concept of transubstantiation. Snorton writes: "As a grammar, the transitive

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[15] Snorton, 2.

[16] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

[17] Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 5.

provides critical insight into the transubstantiation of things."[18] Transubstantiation here serves as conceptual marker for an economy of exchange, a logic of fungibility. Blackness and transness, as excluded from the representational regime of Man, are only manifest as exchangeable others, without particularity, and thus without being. This model of transubstantiation situates blackness and transness as within the "order of things that produce and maintain an androcentric European ethnoclass of Man as the pinnacle of being,"[19] and thus within the transubstantial economy of continuous circulation.

Blackness and transness, within this model of an economy of circulation, are not simply analogous terms that can be exchanged without remainder, but rather, blackness, as the unrepresentable, as a "tear in the world"[20] of representation, becomes the condition of possibility from which gender can emerge. And this emergence, as a form of relation, is, as we have seen, what Snorton names transubstantiation. He writes: "...Gender is itself a racial arrangement that expresses the transubstantiation of things."[21] For the development of this transubstantial logic of the "not-seen that opens and limits visibility" (again it is important to return to how at odds a traditional conception of transubstantiation would seem in relationship to this conceptualization), Snorton relies on the concept of supplementarity as explicated by Jacques Derrida, especially in the section of *Of Grammatology*, entitled, "…*That Dangerous Supplement*…".

In "…*That Dangerous Supplement*…", Derrida defines the supplement as that which is able to account for the unity between reappropriation of presence on one hand, and the negativity

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[18] Snorton, 6.

[19] Snorton, 6.

[20] Snorton, 9.

[21] Snorton, 83.

of absence (writing) on the other. Nature, as self-proximity, which is always delayed and differing from itself as presence, thus must add-on a technical addition—a word, image, representation—namely a supplement, as an "artificial ruse to make speech present when it is actually absent."[22] This is to say that presence as presence (or speech or Nature) can never give a full account of its own presence. It is always in the act of following itself, trying to catch up with its own positing, and in so doing it is never fully present to/as its own presence. Therefore, presence comes to mobilize representation (as speech mobilizes writing) as a mechanism to present itself as itself. However, in presenting itself as presence, it must therefore simultaneously deny it is using a means of deferral (representation, writing), in which to do so. And so the 'logic' of the supplement becomes essential.

This also accounts for the double nature of the supplement. On one hand it serves an exuberant function, it "adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It culminates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *techné*, image, representation, etc., come as supplements to nature…."[23] But on the other hand, the supplement qua supplement, in the manner of a trace, is empty, ghostly, can add nothing at all to presence but itself as an index, as precisely nothing. It is pure self-referentiality. The supplement therefore is 'dangerous' precisely because it is what allows access to presence, to nature, but what simultaneously disallows it, implicates culture infinitely within nature, positions representation as always already anterior to its own signification.

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[22] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Corrected ed (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 144.

[23] Derrida, 144–45.

It is this structure of infinite regression of representation (one will always have to represent what one is representing and so on and so on) that leads to the 'concept' of the chain of supplements. For Derrida, the supplement, as a negative addition to nature, comes always in the form of the supplement for a supplement. In this way presence cannot ever really be called presence, instead it is a (perhaps infinite) unfolding of supplements that attempts to stand in for Nature. But even then the supplements themselves cannot successfully stand in as themselves, for they must themselves be represented as representations. Derrida writes: "The symbolic is the immediate, presence is absence, the nondeferred is deferred."[24] Snorton's use of Derrida's construction of supplementarity points to the tension at play within his use of transubstantiation as a concept. The supplement gestures to a non-presence upon which representation depends, and yet it also depends upon a concept of a circulation of references which attempt to stand in for this non-presence. Through the concept of fungibility that Snorton employs, what is offered within the construction of the "transubstantiation of things" is a field of representation in which presence is maintained, albeit as an excess of the supposed boundaries of signification, precisely through transitivity and transversality. In Chen's work, as well as in Snorton's, transubstantiation comes to represent an apparent change in a contingent representation that seemingly denies a stability of substance, while offering a kind of negative substance as *a priori* condition. On one hand, this seems to build upon a Derridean logic of the supplement. However, on the other, and ironically, through the reliance on the term transubstantiation, an impermanence in what could be named the accidental realm, portrays a kind of presence as substance, albeit one that is fungible, excessive, yet present. While this problem was attended to in more detail in the previous chapter, particularly within post-modern archives, the rest of this current chapter will sketch out in more

[24] Derrida, 154.

detail the formation of this ambivalence within concepts of transsexuality as it occurs in a foundational site of the mobilization of the term transubstantiation, namely in the debates between Judith Butler and Jay Prosser.

§3. Sight in Site

> In instantaneous changes the becoming and the having become coincide, as, for example, becoming and having become illuminated. In such changes, when we think of a thing as it actually is, we speak of its 'having become'; when we think of when it was not, we speak of its 'becoming'.
>
> - St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

It is in Judith Butler's reading of the film *Paris is Burning*,[25] specifically when discussing Venus Xtravaganza, a young Latina trans woman featured in the film, that Butler first employs the term "transubstantiation." She writes: "Now Venus, Venus Xtravaganza, she seeks a certain transubstantiation of gender in order to find an imaginary man who will designate a class and race privilege that promises a permanent shelter from racism, homophobia, and poverty. And it would not be enough to claim that for Venus gender is *marked by* race and class, for gender is not the substance or primary substrate and race and class the qualifying attributes. In this instance gender is the vehicle for the phantasmatic transformation of the nexus of race and class, and the site of its articulation."[26] What does Butler mean by the adjectival qualification of "*certain"*? What work does the word 'certain' perform? From what traditions does this 'certain' transubstantiation emerge?

[25] Jennie Livingston, *Paris Is Burning* (Miramax Films, 1991).

[26] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 89. Emphasis in original.

The simplest form of these questions is, what does Butler mean when she claims a 'a certain transubstantiation of gender'? Knowing that for Butler gender is precisely that which does not have a natural or biological stability of substance, why invoke this term and its lineage within metaphysical and theological determinations? In other words, what effect does Butler intend the adjectival qualification of 'certain' to hold? In *Bodies that Matter,* Butler uses the term transubstantiation many times, but all localized within a few pages and all in relation to transsexual desires for transition.[27] To quote again the first usage of the term, Butler writes that Venus Xtravaganza is seeking "a certain transubstantiation of gender", but that "…it would not be enough to claim that for Venus gender is *marked by* race and class, for gender is not the substance or primary substrate and race and class the qualifying attributes. In this instance, gender is the vehicle for the phantasmatic transformation of the nexus of race and class, the site of its articulation."[28] The certain transubstantiation of gender that Venus seeks is not a substantial change, where the gender of transsexual Venus changes her sexed and gendered "substance" from a male substance to a female one, a change in which the accompanying color of her skin and class relations would transition, whereas, presumably, her bodily shape, voice, affect, and perhaps even, as Venus names it, her "between-me-down-there" [29] as non-essential, non-substantial attributes would remain the same.[30] Rather, in this 'certain' transubstantiation of

[27] Butler, 89–94.

[28] Butler, 89

[29] Livingston, *Paris Is Burning*.

[30] Even under this logic, one should ask if Venus in fact desires this kind of transubstantiation. As Venus maintains throughout the movie, she already *is* a woman. What she seeks is an alteration in her social position, as well as a change in one certain attribute, her "between-me-down-there." This opens the important question as to the perspectival recognition of a substance. Which form of recognition determines the identity of a substance? Is it the social normativizing

gender, what is transitioned as substance is gender as a "vehicle," as the "nexus of race and class," as "the site of its articulation."[31] Transubstantiation, already within a conceptuality determined by a relation of substances, in which one substance occupies the locality of where another substance was before it, is here re-positioned as an internal 'movement' of the site *of a site*. A virtual transition of the site of articulation of race and class, the nexus of these 'attributes' into a position of reconfiguration. Substance here articulated as the conditions for *a performative event* of identitarian articulation.

It is surprising to find the concept of transubstantiation here. A logic that one could expect to find within Butler's work would be one in which the gendered body is figured within conflicting regimes of articulation, formed and forming under the vicissitudes of the disciplinary schematics of normative intelligibility, and the regulative schema of abjection and performative gender articulation and sexuation. For example, in the introduction to this same text, *Bodies that Matter*, Butler proposes this description of bodily materiality: "What I would propose…is a return to the notion of matter, *not as site or surface* but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter. That matter is always materializing has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power…."[32] Materiality in Butler's most fundamental conception is not a site or surface but rather the process of a performative event. However, this is then in seeming contradiction to Butler's later development of the concept of substance in her

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assumption of Venus' biological male-ness or her own surety in the truth of her essence as a woman?

[31] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 89.

[32] Butler, xvii. Emphasis added.

'certain' transubstantiation, in which it is precisely offered *as* a "site of articulation."[33] Can one read, against the grain of the surface of the text, a manner in which to place these terms together—matter and substance, in a hylomorphic relation of matter as pure potentiality, and form as its concretion—even though Butler has already claimed this "certain" concept of substance to be one which rejects fixity and locality? What happens if a performative event is read as potentiality, and the site of this potentiality as a nexus of articulation rather than a locale? Concretion of a potentiality as a site of its potential, rather than manifestation? Not site as bounded, fixed, surfaced, but rather, site as a process of stabilization in which the performative event, as a temporal act, occurs. Would this offer a logic of trans-substantiation, in which substance is proposed not as bodied or form/matter relation, but rather as a preconditional and yet socialized site for the emergence of a body which can bear attributes? And this certain site of a site, this nexus, would be what is named, by Butler, as 'gender'?

That substance is already the site of a site, a spatiality rather than a space, would this mean that the trans-substantiating of this 'substance', must be, what Butler calls "phantasmatic"? What is transformed is not the attributes of the substance, but rather the "nexus" of those attributes, their manner of relation anterior to concretization. Does the logic of the phantasmatic indicate that the transformation of this spatiality, which Venus *desires*, occurs within the scope of the fantasy? The question I am trying to pose is whether Butler conceives of this kind of transubstantiation as something that occurs in Venus' *desire*, namely, to be "a rich white lady"[34] (as Venus says it) which would indicate that this certain transubstantiation of gender would be

[33] Butler, 89.

[34] Livingston, *Paris Is Burning*.

occurring within a fantasy or a daydream. Thus, transubstantiation would then be an act that takes place within desire, regulated by the logic of the fantasy or the dream.

The employment of sacramental language to describe gender is limited in Butler's text to two trans subjects within the film, Venus Xtravaganza and Octavia St. Laurent. Octavia is a young, black, trans woman and Butler's interest and focus on her centers around one particular scene from the movie. Octavia dreams of becoming a famous fashion model, and the film, alongside chronicling her fantasies, follows Octavia to a modeling session. That a camera appears in the scene, not the filmmaker's camera but the photographer's, opens for Butler a kind of *mise-en-abyme* relation of spectatorship and desire, one in which the "white lesbian [filmmaker Janette Livingston] phallically organized by the use of the camera…eroticizes a black male-to-female transsexual–presumably preoperative–who 'works' perceptually as a woman."[35] On one hand, the camera phallacizes, and on the other, a certain erotic femininity is produced alongside and through a relation to it. Octavia 'works' at her own feminization, which is mirrored and inverted through a lens, producing a phallic counter-relation in the filmmaker. The camera produces a certain terrain in which attributes of identity are reconfigured. A certain site in which a configuration of conceivable bodies can be organized and reorganized within economies of desire. The camera specularly produces a phallicized filmmaker through her desire for Octavia, who can be recognized in that desire only through, and as, a manifest of her own desire (and work) to be (seen as) a woman.

Butler writes: "Livingston incites Octavia to become a woman for Livingston's own camera, and Livingston thereby assumes the power of 'having the phallus', i.e. the ability to confer that femininity, to anoint Octavia as model woman. But to the extent that Octavia receives

[35] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 93.

and is produced by that recognition, the camera itself is empowered as phallic instrument. Moreover, the camera acts as surgical instrument and operation, *the vehicle through which the transubstantiation occurs*. Livingston thus becomes the one with the power to turn men into women who, then, depend on the power of her gaze to become and remain women."[36] The apparent contradiction, or at best imprecision, in Butler's usage of the term 'transubstantiation' makes her concept of phallic transubstantiation difficult to parse. Here we are given an idea of a transubstantiation as the force of transition, or perhaps the transition itself, with the camera as the "vehicle in which the transubstantiation occurs."[37] This concept of the camera as the vehicle of transubstantiation is confirmed and reconfirmed within these few pages. Further on the same page Butler writes, "Does the camera promise a transubstantiation of sorts?"[38] And on the following page, "To the extent that the camera figures tacitly as the instrument of transubstantiation, it assumes the place of the phallus, as that which controls the field of signification. The camera thus trades on the masculine privilege of the disembodied gaze, the gaze that has the power to produce bodies, *but which is itself no body.*"[39] How can one read this alongside the explicit announcement pages earlier that gender is *not* substance being transitioned within this "certain" "sort" of Eucharistic event? Rather, gender is figured as the vehicle, or the site of identity attributes (race, class). When read together transubstantiation is conceptualized by Butler both *as* the phallic-camera, and *through* the phallic-camera; both *as* the site (body) of a transition, and also the *site of the site*. What then does it mean to call the power to produce a site,

[36] Butler, 93. Emphasis added.

[37] Butler, 93.

[38] Butler, 93.

[39] Butler, 94. Emphasis added.

to produce a body, a transition of substance? What concept of transition is invoked? And what concept of substance, in which being is thought of both as matter and mattering, process and event?

The seeming contradictions and irresolvable tensions cascade with each use of the term transubstantiation, a certain sort of theological crisis marking the text. The text seems both aware of this danger, reticent, and yet desirous of it. Transubstantiation as a term emerges in the text, seemingly without necessity or genealogical relation, used frequently within few pages, and then is forgotten, and does not appear again. The adjectival qualifications that surround Butler's usage of transubstantiation – a 'certain transubstantiation', a 'transubstantiation of sorts', brings to question the force of this term at all: why it is used? Is it the titillating idolatry in applying this most catholic term to the "transgression" of Octavia and Venus's "queer" and "subversive" bodies? Why this word, transubstantiation, and what happens in the choice of precisely it, rather than using a word such as 'transition'? It would perhaps seem that the desire for the trans-, as a prefix, is clear. What is being engaged are concepts of alteration and movement, the force of an object on another, the force of the transitive, the force of transition, translation, etc. The suffix of 'substance' is less clear. Why employ the concept of substance, especially when what gets offered by Butler is substance as both site and vehicle, that is, as both condition of substance and the substantial itself? To engage these questions, I turn to Jay Prosser's *Second Skins*, in which the question of the relation between transubstantiation and transsexuality is also posed. For Prosser, the question is not overtly the problem of substance, but rather that of materiality. This will, hopefully, show that even if Butler turned away from the problem of substance that can be seen in her opaque usage of the term 'transubstantiation', the problems internal to the concepts of substance—material, process, and their relation to the performative event, to the spatial and

temporal—are internal to the concept of body mattering that grounds Butler's work, whether or not the Eucharistic terminology was overtly employed.

§4. The Body and the Ego

"The immediate occasion when it has changed" is an ambiguous phrase.

- Aristotle, *Physics*

Prosser defines transubstantiation as follows: "In the Eucharistic sense of transubstantiation that the bread and wine *stand for* Christ's body and blood is simultaneously *metaphorization* of the materials and literalization of the Godhead. The exchange of speech during the Eucharist between the priest ('The body of Christ') and the recipient ('Amen') contracts both into agreeing that the materials are literally this body."[40] Prosser's definition of transubstantiation is not footnoted or textually explicated, and what he offers is a description of transubstantiation very much at odds with traditional theological description, for, as we have seen, transubstantiation is precisely that which resists the logic of the metaphor. However, because Prosser reads in transubstantiation a concept of the metaphorical as in antinomic relation to the literal, he can use Butler's differing conception of transubstantiation to develop his fundamental critique of Butler's construction of sex/gender performativity.

Prosser describes Butler's usage of the term transubstantiation as follows: "Venus's desire is here said to represent a transubstantiation of gender in that her transsexuality is an attempt to depart from the literal materiality of her sexed and raced body (and as her class is intricated with these corporeal materialities, thus also a move away from her social materiality) precisely according to a strategy that reliteralizes sex: the acquisition of a vagina to make her a

[40] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 48. Emphasis added.

'complete woman'. The term 'transubstantiation' sustains exactly such antinomy: it conveys both literalization and deliteralization, is both performative and constative."[41] Prosser's positioning of this supposed antinomy within Butlers conceptualization of transubstantiation reveals the problematic that, according to Prosser, runs throughout Butler's work; namely, that the figure of the transsexual is one that *metaphorizes* both the performative and material aspects of gender and sexuation. That is, the transsexual metaphorizes the inherent performative aspect of gender, which takes place within a process of the materialization of the sexed body. The figure of the transsexual allegorizes the citational nature of gender and sex, maintaining that both are bound within disciplinary intelligibility—never natural, stable, but rather, producing itself as natural through re-iteration of and within normativizing bounds. However, Prosser continues that Butler's metaphorization of the transsexual can only succeed as metaphor through the concrete literality of the transsexual body, or if not body, at the very least, the transsexual's desire—the desire for the real sexed body of their other. The antinomy within transsexual figuration, according to this schema, is a metaphor stabilized through concretization, operating within a syllogistic logic of contradiction. The literal shows its metaphoricity through deliteralizing itself, within the bounds of an always new production of a literality. The transsexual serves to enact an event of performative gender and sexual formation. This gestures to the normative conditions of gender performativity through their very transgressive specificity, but only because of a reliance on the constative stability of a literal body, or at the least, a constative desire: what to do with the "between-me-down-there." Between me, not quite of me. Rather, producing me, through both a denial of what is, and the literality of what is not/will be, or perhaps will not, depending on how the story goes.

[41] Prosser, 50.

What is at stake is carried over from the relation between the phantasmatic and the literal, to use Butler's terms, within the boundaries of body materiality—bounds inscribed by a theological frame, a Catholic enunciation, a certain history and genealogy of desire and logic and prayer. Prosser's response to this relation is constructed around Butler's concept of heterosexual melancholy, developed in both *Gender Trouble* [42] and *Bodies that Matter*. Butler argues that the homosexual desire for the parent of the same sex must be abandoned due to a taboo on homosexuality built into the very structure of sociality, which is therefore a prior and necessary condition for the structuring oedipal incest taboo. The abandoned homosexual object-cathexis is not, in truth, abandoned but, rather, is repressed and thereafter melancholically incorporated as a form of self-identification.[43] Butler proposes that the imaginary production of the body itself, as sexed, is constructed through the melancholic incorporation of the lost homosexual object. In the loss of, for example, the desire for the father, the 'boy' incorporates that desire as a primordial form of sexed self-identification, in this case, as male. This self-identification extends to the manner in which the projection of the body as gendered surface is literalized.

This literalization of the sexed body, through incorporation of the lost homosexual object-cathexis which then gets incorporated *on the surface* as sexual signification, is in fact a fantasy of literalization and a literalization of a fantasy. It is not, for Butler, the sexuation of the body in relation to an anatomical or natural materiality, of course, but literality through the incorporation of a symbolic fantasy. No body, or matter, as stable substance, is "literally" incorporated within homosexual melancholic incorporation, rather, one has a fantasy of the

[42] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[43] See Butler, 1999, 73-91 and Butler, 2011, 169-185.

incorporation of what has been lost (here a homosexual identification), and through the incorporation of that fantasy of a literality of a sexed body, one's own sexed body emerges through incorporation as its literal truth. A literal truth which is only literal qua fantasy of its literality. It is through the literalizing of the fantasy, and the fantasy of the literal, that a body is inscribed as sexed. As Prosser writes: "It is only via this fantasy of literalization that the body comes 'to bear a sex' as literal truth, that gender gets inscribed on the body as sex and sex appears as the literal embodiment of gender…"[44]

Prosser names this construction within Butler's texts as a "deliteralization of sex"[45] and posits that it is based on a conception of the body as a psychically projected surface, which is achieved through "a rather eclectic reading"[46] of Freud's concept of the bodily ego developed in Freud's essay, "The Ego and the Id." Freud's sentence from "The Ego and the Id" from which both Prosser and Butler will base their claims concerning the relationship between the ego and the body appears in Joan Riviere's English translation of Freud's text as follows: "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface."[47] Butler sites this passage in a footnote to the second chapter of *Gender Trouble*,[48] and again in the second chapter of *Bodies that Matter*[49] where the discussion is carried over into a

[44] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 41.

[45] Prosser, 40.

[46] Prosser, 40.

[47] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: " The Ego and the Id " and Other Works v. 19*, New Ed edition (London: Vintage, 1962), 26.

[48] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 209n43.

[49] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 30.

footnote.[50] Prosser argues that Butler makes a crucial substitution in her reading of this passage within her quoting of Freud's text, one that is necessary for her conceptualization of the body as psychic projection. “Butler replaces the referent ‘it’ in the subsequent part of the cited sentence, which in Freud clearly refers back to the ego as bodily ego…with the word…‘body’.”[51] That is, Prosser claims that Butler breaks up the phrase, and uses square brackets around the word “[the body]” instead of the word “it” which in Prosser’s reading refers not to the body, but to the ego as bodily ego. This would mean, by Prosser’s account, that for Butler there is no differentiation between the body and the psychic projection of the body, and that the body would appear not only as surface entity but as the psychic projection of that surface. Butler turns the body into a “psychic effect”, which becomes “commensurable with the psychic projections of the body.”[52] Prosser argues that this reading by Butler is clearly at odds with Freud’s intention by referencing a footnote found in the 1927 English translation of Freud’s text. The footnote, written by Joan Riviere, which appears at the very end of the previously quoted sentence reads, “[I.e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensation, chiefly those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.—Authorized note by the Translator.”[53] The footnote does not appear in the German editions, and the *English Standard Edition* of 1961 includes this following note, presumably written by James Strachey, the editor of the series: “This footnote first appeared in the English translation of 1927, in which it is

[50] Butler, 197n4.

[51] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 41.

[52] Prosser, 41.

[53] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego & the Id.*, trans. Joan Riviere (Hogarth Press, 1949), 31.

described as having been authorized by Freud. It does not appear in the German editions."[54] Prosser reads this added footnote as validation that for Freud the "bodily ego" relies on a materiality of the body which originally provides sensations from which the ego-projection is developed. Butler references this same passage and footnote in *Bodies that Matter*,[55] where *she erroneously attributes Riviere's note itself to Freud*, rather than to Riviere.[56] Butler's footnote to this text from *Bodies that Matter* reads as follows, "*Freud* then supplies a footnote, "I.e., the ego is untimely derived from bodily sensations chiefly from those springing…morphology."[57] For Prosser, the "modifying subordination" in Butler's phrasing, the "although" makes it clear that Butler realizes that she must read "against the manifest sense of the note—the description of the ego as derived from the body—in order to emphasize the antithesis: the body as morphology."[58]

These slippages of attribution become even more complex. For while Butler erroneously reads the footnote as Freud's, Prosser reads Riviere's note as if it were written by Strachey. Prosser writes: "the explanatory footnote added by his editor James Strachey that appears first in the 1927 English translation of the text…."[59] However, as noted above the note was written by

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[54] Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 19,* 26.

[55] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 197n4.

[56] It is especially striking for Butler to attribute to Freud Riviere's writing, as Riviere figures prominently in *Gender Trouble*, where Butler explicitly engages with Riviere's own concerns about phallic identity produced through masculine writing practices. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 68.

[57] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 197n4. Emphasis added.

[58] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 42. There is no indication that Prosser is engaging with the overdetermined nature of the term manifest here. However, it of course brings to mind Freud's own distinction between manifest and latent content.

[59] Prosser, 41.

the translator Joan Riviere, not Strachey. In addition, the editor of the 1927 edition was Ernest Jones. Strachey did not edit the translation of this text until *Volume 19* of the *Standard Edition* in 1961, in which the added note, quoted above, makes it seem that Strachey is suspicious of Riviere's editorial intervention. Separate from the bibliographic comedy of errors, there is a more fundamental problem of translation. Prosser reads the translator's note as an inversion of Butler's reading, namely that in fact it maintains a distinction between the body's real surface and the body image as a mental projection of this surface ("a distinction between corporeal referent and psychic signified."[60]). Freud's text in the original German, in which, again, the footnote does not appear, does not offer such a differentiation between ego and bodily ego, that Prosser (and Butler for that matter) relies upon in trying to theorize a relation between the body as literal and/or as projection. The original German text reads: "*Das Ich ist vor allem ein körperliches, es ist nicht nur ein Oberflächenwesen, sondern selbst die Projektion einer Oberfläche.*"[61] As we've noted, Riviere translates the first clause as, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego." However, in the German text, in an unusual syntactical structure, there is no noun following the adjectival modifier (*körperliches*), although an article precedes it (*ein*). Freud therefore offers no named concept of a "bodily ego"[62] Rather, a more literal translation would read: "The I [the ego] is primarily bodily" or "The I is primarily a bodily [one]." The

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[60] Prosser, 41.

[61] Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips. Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse. Das Ich und das Es*, 10. Aufl, Gesammelte Werke, chronologisch geordnet / Sigmund Freud ; Bd. 13 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer [u.a.], 1998), 250.

[62] The reading of Freud's concept of the "bodily-ego" runs throughout English language psychanalytic theory. For example, see Roy Schafer, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis.* (London: Yale University Press, 1981); Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins, eds., *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

difficulty for the translation is that there is an article that precedes an adjective but without a nominal relation. The adjective, 'bodily', therefore both relates to the subject of the sentence, yet the spectral nature of the object means that the bodily-ness of the ego, of the I, both is opposed to it, through a kind of retrojected projection, and literalized. The I is not in relation to the bodily I, but *is* the bodily [I]. What is clear in the German, unlike in the English translation, is that there is no structure of antinomy or binary relation between ego and bodily ego, between the psychic and somatic. Rather the ego *is* the bodily ego, and this ego as bodily is both a corporeal surface and the projection, psychically, of that surface. The lack of nominal closure in Freud's phrasing posits the corporeality of the ego as a non-temporalized co-incidence. The bodily ego is not a prior condition, or a subsequent projection, but rather a co-incidental surface and spectrality of that surface. A further aspect of the English translation makes this harder to access, and causes difficulties in both Prosser and Butler's readings. Riviere temporalizes the relation between ego and the bodily ego by translating "*vor allem"* as "first and foremost." *Vor allem* is a qualitative adjective without a quantitative temporal meaning. Freud is not claiming a *prior* temporal corporeality anterior to the ego, but rather that the bodily nature of the ego is its primary attribute. Contrary to Prosser's claim, Freud is not offering a bodily-ego which relies on a prior literal body materiality. Rather, the ego is bodily, *both, and coincidentally* as surface and as projection of that surface.

§5. Ambivalence and Stabilization

> The most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the one in most need of explanation, is its tendency to change round into mania – a state which is the opposite of it in its symptoms.
>
> - Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia"

Why does this phrase of Freud's concerning the "bodily ego" produce so many errors of reading, inconsistences, and difficulties of translation? Separate from contingent histories of translation and reception, perhaps it is rather located in the difficulty in trying to think the somatic/psyche relation not given within a structure of dualism and antinomy. Whereas, Prosser phrases the differing readings surrounding Freud as whether the somatic is fact psychic projection, or anterior to the ego construction, the footnote from *Gender Trouble* from which Prosser produces this interpretation is perhaps more complex than Prosser makes apparent. Butler writes: "The notion of the surface of the body as projected is partially addressed by Freud's own concept of the 'bodily ego'. Freud's claim that 'the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego'…suggests that there is a concept of the body that determines ego-development."[63] Already it is clear that Butler is not simply producing an idea of a relation between the psychic and the somatic, in which the somatic is determined only through psychic projection, but rather that *it is the body* that determines ego-development. Contrary to Prosser's claim, the site of disagreement is not whether or not the body is or is not psychic effect. Butler is clear that this is not the case. In fact, it is hard to imagine what a literal body as psychic projection would entail. Rather, Butler is questioning the representation and semiotic terrain in which the relation between the body and ego-development takes place. To understand this terrain, as it appears in Butler, one needs to take into account the relation between the mind and the psyche as developed in Butler's deformation of melancholic incorporation.

Butler writes, "If the identifications sustained through melancholy are 'incorporated,' then the question remains: Where is the incorporated space? If it is not literally within the body,

[63] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 209n43.

perhaps it is *on* the body as its surface signification such that the body must be understood as *an* incorporated space."[64] Following Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, Butler theorizes incorporation as "antimetaphorical activity"[65] because it assumes a lost relation, but maintains it as resistant to representation and signification. Incorporation is not failure to name, but a resistance to metaphorical signification as such. Therefore, melancholic incorporation as gender identity is that loss of the homosexual cathected object (due to the homosexual taboo) which would "encrypt itself on the body."[66] Incorporation literalizes the lost homosexual object on the body, which then becomes the subject's psychic projection of their literally gendered and sexed body. Butler calls this incorporation a "fantasy of literalization or a literalizing fantasy,"[67] that is, a fantasy which precisely offers the body as if it were natural and literal.

In relation to the social legitimizing practices that constellate the formation of the gendered norms which determine the scope of intelligibility from which these fantasized literal bodies can be recognized as such, Butler makes a reference to transsexuality, which is the only such reference in *Gender Trouble*. She writes: "Transsexuals often claim a radical discontinuity between sexual pleasure and bodily parts. Very often what is wanted in terms of pleasure requires an imaginary participation in bodily parts….The imaginary status of desire, of course, is not restricted to the transsexual identity; the phantasmatic nature of desire reveals the body not as its ground or cause, but as its occasion and its object."[68] It is following this claim that Butler

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[64] Butler, 86.

[65] Butler, 87.

[66] Butler, 87.

[67] Butler, 89.

[68] Butler, 90.

makes use of Freud's concept of the bodily ego, as one which exceeds the body, yet is coincidently determined by it. A semiotic site of production, the body "sets limits to the imaginary meanings that it occasions, but is never free of the imaginary construction. The fantasized body can never be understood in relation to the body as real; it can only be understood in relation to another culturally instituted fantasy, one which claims the place of the 'literal' and the 'real'."[69] The body comes to appear and bear meaning through, and in, an endless chain of signification, yet an endless chain of signification which posits itself, retroactively, as fleshly, naturalized, concrete. Prosser claims that Butler posits an original fantasy, a psychic projection, which corporeality depends upon, against his own position that Freud offers a corporeal dependence of the psyche, that the ego develops through an already given body materiality. Yet, this is not Butler's position. Butler rather argues that the very logic of the corporeal and the real is produced in a set of relations between a resignification of the somatic and psychic. That the psyche is, of course, dependent upon a certain corporeality, but that the site of signification in which those terms appear is always already within a complex of power relations.

The question remains, if, as Butler claims, the phantasmatic nature of desire is not restricted to transsexual identity, why does Butler use the figure of the transsexual to illustrate this position? Prosser argues that this is symptomatic of Butler's conceptualization of bodily materiality through a prioritization of the surface of the body, and the necessarily reliance of this prioritization on scopophilic valuation. Prosser writes that Butler's "prioritization of surface is emphatically occularcentic, as is *Gender Trouble*'s concomitant investment in the transgender subject of the power to reveal sex as 'gender all along'…. *Gender Trouble*'s theoretical economy of gender relies heavily on a notion of the body as that which can be seen, the body as visual

[69] Butler, 90.

surface."[70] Butler's 'occularcentric' conception of the gendered body explains why the transsexual serves as example, even when exemplifying a generalized condition of gender performativity. The transsexual subject as example produces a concept of performativity which relies upon the visible sphere to fabricate its demarcations: "girls who *look like* boys and boys who *look like* girls."[71] If gender performativity is a continuous process of becoming rather than being, an emergence rather than a naturality, Prosser argues that this performativity in fact relies upon a theatricality, and a concomitant stability of materiality maintained through specular relations. Prosser, while not naming it as such, posits an alternative form of materiality which the transsexual makes evident. "The transsexual doesn't necessarily *look* differently gendered but by definition *feels* differently gendered from her or his birth-assigned sex."[72] Prosser asks whether we can resignify the concept of materiality and thereby produce a trans materiality of sorts, one that would not rely on the same surface/interior relation? Even if we do not accept Prosser's strict binary delineation between the literal body and psychic construction, can we still maintain this critique of performativity and its reliance on surface materiality? Can we still work to imagine a new horizon of materialization?

A problem remains that in both Butler and Prosser's engagements with the conceptuality of materialization the idea of a bodily ego is posited as *prior* to the psychically projected ego, even if for Prosser the materiality of the body relies on a stability of reference, and for Butler, it is rather a terrain of continuous resignification. Both rely on a temporal notion of *prior relation* which stabilizes the material and spatial claims they make. As I have argued, an examination of

[70] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 43.

[71] Prosser, 43.

[72] Prosser, 43.

the German text of Freud's *Das Ich und das Es*, and its English translation can lead to a reading in which Butler remains in fact too-close to Prosser's conceptualization of the body and ego as discreet categories, even if Butler is very attentive to the resignifcatory matrix in which the body comes to bear and produce meaning.[73]

The question of the body and psyche as site and in sight is localized in both Prosser and Butler's texts around transsexual desire and the figure of the transsexual body. Transubstantiation becomes a discursive terrain in which these questions and debates play out precisely because of the relations between force, event, material, and form present in the word and its linguistic and contextual histories. This is to say that it is not surprising that transsexuality and transubstantiation became bound within these texts; both share vestiges of relations within certain constellations of thought, be they queer theory or theology. Although the reading of this term is divergent within the texts this chapter has engaged, what is shared is a concern with the relation between the body as a site of meaning production and the manner and historicity of the production of the site of that site. However, what is also maintained is an ambiguity surrounding the term, the uncomfortable manner in which the attachment of prefix to root produces a desire in much of contemporary trans theory for the term transubstantiation to do work it is seemingly unable to do. The fundamental question that emerges from this insight, and has guided this dissertation as a whole, is why there is this iterant ambiguity, and does it point to a structuring

[73] For a further engagement with this concept it would be of great interest to look at Freud's use of the term "Cortical Homunculus" as a proper representative of the anatomy of the ego. In this reference, we see a visual representation of the manner in which a bodily ego does not assume a body as we could encounter it through visual encounter, but one that is always in the process of being formed, in a poetic relation to a psyche, from which it cannot be disentangled. See, for example, Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 19,* 26, in which he writes, "If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for [the ego] we can best identify it with the 'cortical homunculus' of the anatomists, which stands on its head in the cortex, sticks up its heels, faces backwards and, as we know, has its speech-area on the left side."

antinomy in the concepts of substance and body materiality as foundational and axiomatic within contemporary theories of sexual difference?

Conclusion – The Marriage of Case IV and Case V

> To define force—it is that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him. Somebody was here, and the next minute there is nobody here at all.
>
> - Simone Weil, "The Iliad, or the Poem of Force"

At the close of the final chapter of this dissertation, I posed a question which I stated had guided this text as a whole: why, within philosophical discourses of the 20th century, does sexual difference seem to manifest an itinerant ambiguity as to the boundaries of the psychic and the somatic? The answer to this question that this dissertation seems to have provided is that the ambivalence that sexuality manifests within philosophy—its acknowledgment and disavowal—produces a recurrent conceptual event. In its first movement, and as a mechanism of defensive, philosophy stabilizes the concept of sexuality—that is, it attempts to intern sexuality through exposition. However, having completed this act, it finds that sexuality nevertheless remains unbound, for sexuality, as such, is that which exceeds its determination. It is the itinerant encounter of philosophy with that which is at, and just beyond, its limit. In the second movement, realizing its error, and in an attempt to save face, philosophy turns to the other side of that which had been stabilized; pure force, sexuality as transgression, as transition, translation, trans…. And, having turned force into thing, the performance begins anew. Hence, itinerant ambiguity.

Thus, the desire to resolve the impossibility of determining the exact relation of the somatic and the psychic is an expression of the denial of the necessity of stabilization as such. This extends even to a term such as '*différance'* which, in a certain manner, destabilizes structuring conceptions, yet, in the same gesture, affirms their relation, as a relation, even if as

differed, as deferred. This is as robust a denial of stabilization as can be found. And as such, a deconstructive expression is, rather, structurally constructive. A denial of stabilization entails a denial of destabilization, for the thing is always once again given as the thing.

Yes, fine, but what does it mean to say 'destabilize', one might ask? One could say to me: the almost infinite, nay perhaps infinite, definition you give for stabilization leaves no room for undoing. No room for a tearing down. No room for destruction. Stabilization as conservation, as a desire to affirm that which always was. Resistance against loss. Pure recuperation.

Perhaps.

Perhaps stabilization is also just another name for mourning.

Yet, it is perhaps only Freud who realized the imprecision of extending mourning to questions of construction. For Freud, loss of an object, not knowing its relation, or the epistemological field in which it emerges, as an object, as a thing to love, is not a failure, is not a thing to be overcome, to fall into a field of knowing or of account. Overdetermination is not an act, one which can be put into a lineage of determinations. It is an ambiguity which forms.

The emergence of transness, understood as a conceptual object of scientific engagement as well as a representational identity, occurs in the 20th century within this constellation. This is not to say, of course, that theories of sexual difference did not nominate transness as the exception to sexuation that proves the rule. They did. And this history is as violent as they come. In the research for this dissertation I came across a 'case history' within an article named "Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders" by James Kiernan, a late 19th-century sexologist from Chicago. In this article he describes two "cases" of "pseudo-hermaphroditic female[s]"[1]which he

[1] Jas G. Kiernan, "'Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders' (Part One)," *The Medical Standard* IV, no. 5 (November 1888), 130.

labels as Cases IV and V. Case IV (who is never named by Kiernan) was the child of an "insane" mother who died in childbirth. At the age of about seventeen Case IV "displayed a great liking for boyish games and attire, but a repugnance to suitors."[2] Having been forced into a marriage that failed, Case IV ended up in an almshouse, where Case IV met Case V. Case V, who would later take the name of Joe, "preferred muscular sports and labor"[3] and had also been forced into a short-lived marriage. After the end of the marriage, Joe "went west, assumed masculine attire, became a hunter, and spent several years among the Indians." [4] Having returned and living in the almshouse, Joe met Case IV and they became "strongly attached." Eventually the two "took up their abode in the woods as husband and wife."[5]

The rest of the account given by Kiernan is extremely violent, as well as difficult to clearly stitch together. In 1876, the two returned, and Joe was introduced to Case IV's family as "her husband." Having been brought in to work for the family business, Joe was "found to be a woman in disguise," [6] by Case IV's uncle, who then caused Joe's arrest. It is unclear of which particular 'crime' Joe was accused. After four months in prison, Joe was released and he returned to live again with Case IV. From this point on, the temporality of the events becomes especially unclear. Case IV's mother passed away and left Case IV with several thousand dollars. Kiernan writes that, "This property she has not claimed, but still leads her old curious life." [7] As for Joe,

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[2] Jas G. Kiernan, "'Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders' (Part Two)," *The Medical Standard* IV, no. 6 (December 1888), 171.

[3] Kiernan, 171.

[4] Kiernan, 171.

[5] Kiernan, 171.

[6] Kiernan, 171.

he died in the Willard Hospital for the Insane, where he was admitted due to the "consequence of a maniacal attack." [8]

I quote the rest of this passage with hesitation, as even its repetition here enacts a continuity of its discursive violences. Yet, I feel it is necessary, as a means in which to make the stakes of my claims clear. Kiernan writes: "After admission, 'Joe' tried to have sexual intercourse with her associate. 'Joe' said that with her 'husband' she had never had anything but repugnant sexual relations, but with her 'wife' sexual satisfaction was complete. She had an enlarged clitoris, covered with a large relaxed prepuce. She has periodical attacks of sexual furor."[9] And these are the last words written about Joe and Case IV.

The context of their narrative is within an article by Kiernan that attempts to draw a direct relation between pathological behaviour and anatomical degeneration. Kiernan postulates an original bisexuality of the human species that can be traced back to early evolutionary stages. This can be seen, for example in the "rudimentary female organs of the male,"[10] such as masculine nipples. However, due to 'reversions', which are caused either 'functionally'—that is behaviourally—or 'organically', the human species can atavistically return to an earlier state. "The inhibitions on excessive action to accomplish a given purpose, which the race has acquired through centuries of evolution, being removed, the animal in man springs to the surface." [11] Case IV and Case V are merely two examples of this return to a primordial, animal state.

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[7] Kiernan, 171.

[8] Kiernan, 171.

[9] Kiernan, 171.

[10] Kiernan, "'Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders' (Part One)," 129.

[11] Kiernan, "'Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders' (Part One)," 129.

This story brings into view the attitudes that, this dissertation has argued, structures 20th-century discursive and social determinations of transness as a concept—its 'literalization' as primordial and therefore anterior to sexual differentiation, yet something which emerges from a perversion of sexuation; that is, a degeneration from that which it is supposed to be pre-originary. Moreover, it demonstrates the manner in which these discourses and institutions—here medico-scientific—determine possible experiences for those individuals who are encompassed and interned within their conceptual and disciplinary frameworks.

I remember Joe and Case IV not only to acknowledge the importance of this story as an exemplar of the genealogy this dissertation has developed. I tell it for two further reasons. Yes, on one hand, to show in stark relief the violences that can occur through the denial of conceptual ambiguity. It can be seen in the very language that attempts to situate these individual's experiences as either a perversion of their psychosexual development *or* an atavistic morphological degeneration. Their torment is due to both an assumption of perversion caused by degeneration, but also its reverse, that is degeneracy through biographical deviance and criminality. Ironically, both these conflicting accounts are validated through an appeal to the stability of the relation between 'science' and 'truth'.

But on the other hand, I tell this story to demonstrate that ambiguity is not, as such, ambivalence. The vicissitudes of the histories of Case IV and Case V do not gesture to an ambivalence between two possible sexual identities that remain hermaphroditically present, either psychically or anatomically. Rather, the ambiguity within their identities, without necessary bifurcation, seems to me, poetic, constructive of new possible ways of being. Case IV and Case V are poets and myth-makers. As Nietzsche says of the drive to form metaphors: "The drive seeks out a channel and a new area for its activity, and finds it in myth and in art generally.

It constantly confuses the cells and the classifications of concepts by setting up new translations, metaphors, metonymies; it constantly manifests the desire to shape the given world of the waking human being in ways which are just as multiform, irregular, inconsequential, incoherent, charming and ever-new, as things are in the world of dream."[12] And like Nietzsche's metaphors and myths, they emerge from worlds; worlds which can never be, in totality, seen or known.

The violences of Kiernan's text are, in some ways, shared with most of the philosophies this dissertation engages; that is, the positioning of ambiguity as ambivalence, interning it within a logic of binary relations, predetermining its stabilization, and then positioning that ambiguity as nothing but the transgression of the limits that it had already predetermined. This is a great violence, yes, but also such a lack of imagination. Such an unwillingness to see myth and make poetry. To write it. This dissertation sees a great poetry and beauty in the unusual lives of Joe and Case IV. Poetry, beauty, and, perhaps as importantly, a conceptual model in which to let remain unthought that which it is better left unsaid.

[12] "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense" from Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 151.

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