

we make the assumption  
 essential in completion  
 allows the categories  
 open permanently,  
 deal normative  
 being coercive.  
 it really necessary  
 History of Unity  
 agreed-upon social  
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 of identity  
 why the  
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 might cause  
 disrupts  
 the very borders  
 he self & other

Unity, indeed, in a good  
 is always conceptual,  
 & unitary provisional  
 might form serious context,  
 who the expector  
 the every feminist self  
 must drive in unity

complete. The assumption of its essential incompleteness permits that category to serve as a permanently available site of contested



identities are communicated, no longer constitute the  
 theme or subject of politics, then identities can come into being

(4) But when the old identities  
 & their representations -- i.e.  
 no longer are the subject  
 of our political project



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GENDER TROUBLE COUPLETS



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Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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A.W. STROUSE'S  
**GENDER**  
**TROUBLE**  
**COUPLETS**  
**VOLUME 1**







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For Henry Berman Shapiro

*Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore,  
tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi  
lo bello stilo che m'ha fatto onore.*



## *Preface*

Like an interior design collaboration between Michel Houellebecq and Martha Stewart, putting together a medieval verse form and queer theory is not only magnificent and original, it breathes the rarefied air that hipsters are trying to reach in vain when they turn, after vinyl, to cassette tapes. A.W. Strouse's short commentary on the first chapter of Judith Butler's monumental volume *Gender Trouble* is not only original and fully unexpected, it's sublime.

By short commentary, I mean quite technically the learned medieval form used by Latinate and Islamicate cultures who inherited it from Hellenized Romans and Jews in late-antiquity Alexandria, or from Greek schoolmasters in Byzantium. In medieval reading practice, three types of commentary are common. The middle commentary is what we would call today a translation or modernization. The long commentary

explicates all the difficulties and nuances of the text, line by line. It is similar to the modern companion, or the full set of footnotes. It is especially common for legal or the most popular literary texts, such as Ovid's *Heroides*. In the age of print, it was often set in the three margins around the original text, which was printed in the center. It is usually twice or three times longer, often many more, and it dwarfs the original text on the page, while still preserving the hierarchy of values. The page distribution, with the original text in the center and in larger print, makes it look like a precious jewel in a properly humble setting. The short commentary, naturally, is the summary of the text. The present, succulently original volume, is a short commentary in verse. Verse form was not unusual for medieval commentaries of all three types. The reader will feel like they've stepped into a time machine, taking the most beloved queer theorist with them, to disembark in Paris or Oxford or Venice, circa 1290, to have a drink with Roger Bacon or Dante, or maybe Marco Polo.

Why put one of the most famous and still one of the most urgently relevant critical theory texts of the 1990s into a form not used since Petrarch studied at Bologna? A form later reserved for teaching reluctant children manners, as in:

The Goops they talk while eating,  
And loud and fast they chew;  
And that is why I'm glad that I  
Am not a Goop — are you?

For a very good reason, indeed. Not only is this verse version of Butler's immortal, slender volume good fun, it will also help the students digest and remember the turns of Butler's argument. As we all know, Butler writes like a congenial, more elastic friend of Derrida: very down to earth, but nearly impossible to recall at length if you are reading her for the first time. Unless you are a mathematical genius or the kid who, during Spring Break, sits in a café at the University of Chicago discussing neo-communist thought while the rest of your age group has sex on the beach, the level of abstraction may not appeal to you. In terms of cultural references, it's hard to thrill to discussions of Monique Wittig if you've never before read any Wittig, and are later unlikely to do so. As a result, for most mortals, the experience of reading *Gender Trouble* is like alpine skiing: great on paper, difficult in practice.

The thesis of *Gender Trouble*—like all brilliant statements, including  $E = mc^2$ —is something that, nowadays, even a Catholic small-town twelfth grader knows; that is, gender is performative and its apparently unshakeable stability is not stable, natural, nor original, but it derives its illusion of permanence mostly from sustained repetition. It's a self-stylization with a history. So far, so pedagogically unproblematic. But, as anyone who has ever assigned university or college students *Gender Trouble* to read knows, that assignment works just as great (not) as assigning Lacan's *Seminars*. Take a whole semester to read three of the shorter essays, and it will be the most memorable class that these 1½



students ever took. Assign the whole volume to a large class for this week's discussion, and be prepared to do all the unpacking yourself—unless there is a conservative straight male in the classroom, who will gladly mainsplain it. Later, the vegan student with long hair and felt slippers will confess when they tried to read it out loud, the squirrel outside their window fell asleep with a nut still in her mouth. It's hard to be thrilled by discussions of 1968 lesbians when they are the same age as your grandmother.

This rhymed version solves the problem. It draws a clever cartoon map of the text that is memorable and manageable, navigable and fun. It's a commentary that helps us remember every turn of Butler's thought, and also a work of art that one fondly remembers reading. It's a subversive, secret adventure. If kitsch is art *remis au goût du jour*, remade to suit today's taste, this marvelous poem remakes 1990s feminist philosophy *au goût de* Dante, to the taste of Heloise and Hrabanus Maurus and Jean de Meun. It's not just great art, it's high camp: a loving assassination. It's a marvelous, maximalist *tour de force* that plays with a famously minimalist author. Foucault once said that his generation, so cocky about having revolutionized and reimagined the world, had not invented a single new sexual pleasure. I think it doesn't matter that we haven't, if we are the first to read such a sparkling thing as this poem.

—Anna M. Kłosowska

*Gender Trouble Couplets, Volume 1*



*“Women” as the Subject of Feminism*

But must there be a Womankind?  
A female Heart and female Mind?  
For Feminism to exist  
then must there be a Second Sex?  
If Feminism's greatest goals  
are liberated gender roles  
then Gender we presume as given —  
it is the base from which we're driven.  
This Woman then would constitute  
the prosecutor of our suit  
and she's the one politically  
whom we are serving fervently  
and She's the one we'd represent  
with Feminism's argument.  
Yet “Politics” is no sure term  
nor “Representing” very firm.

Well Representing helps, it's true  
to win a Civil Right or two  
but it oppresses us as well.  
A man-made mold or iron shell  
it must distort what it would show  
(at least that's how I read Rousseau).  
But we have tried to represent  
this Woman to her betterment—  
to find a language or discourse  
that we could use as a resource  
to make this Gender visible  
and make our protest critical.  
Indeed there's some necessity  
in razing visibility  
since Woman's life is not presented  
in ways with which we're well contented.  
And so it seems we need a Woman—  
the a priori Subject given.  
Yet Woman is no longer stable—  
a term whose standing's now ill-able—  
because there is of course debate  
on what by "Woman" we'd relate  
for surely there aren't Absolutes  
nor Truth that "Woman" constitutes.

Now first of all there is some doubt  
on what the Subject's all about.  
I'm sure by now that you will know  
the theories of Michel Foucault,  
who claims that Power will create

the Subjects it would subjugate.  
This Power works by prohibition,  
by regulation, limitation  
and discipline for our protection  
(perhaps with choices and election)  
and so its Subjects are controlled  
as Power shapes them in its mold,  
for it defines and then produces  
these Subjects for its certain uses.  
If this be true then we must ask  
what is the “Subject” of our task?

If Feminism takes as given  
that there are Subjects known as women,  
how can we trust this formulation  
that’s simply Power’s machination?  
In fact the Subject whom we’d free  
is Power’s Subjectivity.  
This system made those very Subjects  
according to its rules, and its checks  
dictate those terms, so we will find  
that we are caught up in a bind.

The Subject is the question crucial.  
It is to Feminism central  
because the Subject is included  
by what is otherwise excluded.  
It is created by Repression  
and so it makes up our Oppression.  
The chains that bind it once it’s rationed

hide beneath the form that's fashioned.  
Repressive practices don't "show"  
(at least that's how I read Foucault).  
And so the Subject's a construction  
that's made by Politics' production.  
And when we think of Politics  
in terms of States and their Subjects,  
we would conceal the operations  
of Power and its own relations.  
The legal forces must invent  
the Subjects whom they'd represent.  
The Law produces and conceals  
the Subject who to Law appeals.  
This "Subject before Law" is prized  
as premise that is naturalized—  
this process magnificently  
making Law's legitimacy.  
And so it's not enough to try  
correcting Patriarchy's lie  
by finding ways to represent  
this Woman with good faith intent  
by showing literarily  
this Subject more compellingly.  
For we must also undertake  
a study of the things that make  
this Woman as a Category  
and Subject whose goals liberatory  
we would support, but who's produced  
by structures we've not yet deduced.

So when we ask about this Subject  
who stands before the Law's strict compact  
now we must entertain the thought  
that actually the Subject's not.  
Perhaps it is just fictional,  
a myth or construct cynical?

The Law makes fables that would trick us,  
ascribing reality status  
to Law and its dutiful subjects  
who stand before the Law's strict precepts.

The Feminists who speak of women  
would act as if one thing is given,  
and yet the term is hardly stable—  
to mean one thing it is ill-able—  
nor can command the strong assent  
of those whom it would represent.  
For what we would a Woman call  
is more than that, since it's not all—  
not everything that she would be.  
The term's not used exhaustively  
and Gender is not constituted  
coherently but convoluted  
particular to Time and Place,  
to Class or else to different Race.  
For clearly Gender intersects  
with Race and Class and Creed and Sex  
and every which Identity  
we formulate discursively!



And so it's not yet possible  
to keep this Gender in control.  
It's caught in many intersections  
and mired in interconnections.  
For Feminism then the case is  
there's no one universal basis.  
And there is no Identity  
that can exist cross-culturally.

To say it somewhat with more candor:  
there's not just one form of Oppressor.  
A patriarchy universal  
as concept isn't all that useful  
because so many different contexts  
there are in which Oppression exists.  
Nor can we look at the specifics  
to find examples of our concepts,  
thus making them illustrations  
of principles that beg our questions.

We're quick to label as one status  
the Patriarchy's weight upon us  
in order that we show the wisdom  
of the claims of Feminism.  
So as a shortcut we created  
a Woman who is dominated  
by a force that's universal—  
a Subject who is shared by all.

A universal Patriarchy  
appears now like so much malarkey.  
And yet this other concept— Woman—  
is waiting still to be disproven.  
Can Woman ever preexist  
Oppressor's grinding her to grist?  
Or is it just in nation States  
where Woman as a group relates?  
Will Woman always be defined  
against and within male Mankind?  
And is there any Feminine  
that every Woman has within?  
Some Essence that's not Masculine—  
a Universal Feminine?  
Within the Gender Binary  
sits Woman in her finery  
and yet without that boundary  
no females have camaraderie.  
Whatever specificity  
accrues to Femininity  
is cut off analytically  
and ghettoized politically  
from every which Identity  
like Class and Race/Ethnicity  
and so the so-called Unity  
of Woman's Subjectivity  
is filled with ambiguity  
and riddled with disunity.  
Of course the source of all its force?  
Representational discourse!

Now has this sketch exploratory  
destabilized the category  
of Woman seen as seamless set  
a notion we must now reject.  
And these domains exclusionary  
reveal of course the regulatory  
consequences of the construction  
when put to our emancipation.  
Indeed there is much fragmentation  
in Feminism's coalition  
and even there's some opposition  
from women whose representation  
would never fit so seamlessly  
in Feminist femininity.  
If Feminism's the suggestion  
that there is a Representation  
for all of those Feminist Subjects  
whom Feminism itself thus constructs,  
then this has had the consequence  
of failing those constituents  
whom Feminism represents  
not giving an accounting for  
Representation's power hoard.

We can't appeal to Strategy  
to justify this Category  
as though for purposes strategic  
this Woman needs must be our Subject.  
All strategies will mean much more  
than what they are intended for

and in this case exclusion might be  
an unintended Exigency:  
by having fixed a stable Subject,  
Representation's a false project.

Of course we cannot just refuse  
Representation. We must use  
the Language and the Norms today  
which make the field on which we play.  
There is no place outside this locus.  
Therefore its practice is our focus.  
We must address in any event  
what Marx termed "historical present"  
and so within the present frame  
our task will be to give a name  
to features of the Binary  
which would construct the Category  
in structures now contemporary  
which certain Selves would naturalize  
and others would immobilize.

So now within our Politics  
which some would call "post-feminist"  
we must interrogate this given —  
the subjects who are known as "women."  
We must critique this entity  
which is human Identity  
and track the Genealogy  
of Gender as Ontology.  
Then with smarter formulation

we can advance representation.  
We necessarily critique  
the theory feminist and seek  
escape from the necessity  
of holding an Identity.  
To pose a rhetorical question:  
Isn't it actually the notion  
of the category of Woman  
that thwarts goals of Representation?  
Or perhaps it's that the Construction  
of the category of Woman  
is made partly through regulation  
and serves as a reification  
of what is a gendered relation?  
Is Gender's categorization  
heterosexualization?  
Is Feminism not contrary  
to reify the category?  
If Gender as a stable notion  
can be no longer our foundation  
then we must probe the nitty-gritty  
and question Gender Identity.  
Now if we make Identity  
a problematic entity  
then we might trace politically  
what forces work juridically  
and seek a Genealogy  
of the very Ontology  
and set out in our inquiry  
to deconstruct the Binary  
that forms the Gender category.

*The Compulsory Order of  
Sex/Gender/Desire*

But as we now critically question  
the age-old category Woman,  
the category's invocation  
precludes perhaps Representation.  
Now does it really make much sense  
that all the Subjects it presents  
would be constructed by exclusion  
of those not granted its inclusion?  
And what would be the real relations  
of forms of Power's dominations  
and forms as well of its exclusion  
sustained by that Representation?  
We talk of Woman's Unity  
constructing Solidarity  
supposing shared Identity

and yet we always must remember  
the split between what's Sex and Gender.  
Created we that fine distinction  
to torque the ancient formulation  
which claimed that one's Biology  
would make a person's Destiny.  
By separating Sex and Gender  
we must indeed now reconsider  
how it's in fact that culturally  
that we're constructed sexually.  
And so we know that always Gender  
does not result from Sex; and neither  
is Gender nearly quite so fixed  
as naturally as we are sexed.  
Therefore the Subject's Unity  
is not made with impunity  
but as it were ALWAYS ALREADY  
contested even by the Body  
with Gender's multiplicity  
eschewing fixed Identity.  
Then Sex is by definition  
agent of Gender's deconstruction!  
If Gender is just cultural  
while Sex purely is natural  
it isn't necessarily  
that Gender follows naturally  
but actually there is distinction  
built right into the assumption.  
If even Sex is Binary  
it's not therefore necessary

that Man's construction perfectly  
informs male bodies totally.  
Perhaps the sexes seem to be  
an opposition Binary  
but there's no reason it'd be true  
that Gender's numbered just at two.  
A binary gender system  
relies on the common wisdom  
that Sex is merely a mirror  
reflecting a natural Gender.  
A Subject's own Identity  
should not assume priority  
since perhaps the Subject's formation  
is buried in the wrong foundation.  
For Feminism there's no Woman  
for our way of Representation.





*Gender:  
The Circular Ruins of  
Contemporary Debate*

Is Gender what you have or be?  
Is Gender just made culturally?  
Could we construct it differently?  
Is there a possibility  
of any gender agency?  
Is Gender's universal axis  
then always framed as different Sexes?  
And is there ever any Gender  
that's to the gendered Subject prior?  
Now some would say this very notion  
of Gender as man-made construction  
functions deterministically  
or even syllogistically  
encoding Bodies culturally

in meanings anatomically  
assigned and coded passively  
as though it weren't Biology  
but forces awfully culturally  
that thereby frame our destiny.  
And then in Simone de Beauvoir  
(within her classic oeuvre) are  
these thoughts you may have read before:  
A woman's not as woman born  
but she becomes as she would learn.  
Preceding Gender? There's an ego,  
an Agent (whom we call Cogito)  
who at some point takes on a Gender  
and therefore might have picked the other.  
Construction then is not a choice?  
Or does compulsion steal one's voice?  
And does compulsion come from Sex?  
Or made as Culture so expects?

In fact there isn't any Body  
which would not ALWAYS ALREADY be  
encoded by us culturally  
so that it's just fallaciously  
some preordained Biology  
is basis for Ontology.  
It looks like Sex by definition  
is Gender, which is a construction.  
And then this issue of construction  
must founder on the rock, convention  
debating if the Will has force

or if some Fate would Will coerce?  
Given then such characteristics,  
it all is traced back to Linguistics:  
how our debate is so constrained  
because (as I have just explained)  
the Body's written in these terms  
receiving as a set of Norms  
a Will that is appropriative  
or otherwise interpretative—  
and so the Body's made to fit  
the meanings inscribed onto it.  
The Body too is a construction,  
its meaning *post hoc* through deduction.  
And neither does it exist ever  
as prior to that marker Gender.  
Therefore critiquing insistence  
that the Body has existence  
both in and through this mark of Gender  
we simply cannot any longer  
assume the Body's neatly filled  
with Essence or that it's instilled  
with whatsoever Self has willed.  
So have not we discovered whether  
it's either Sex or either Gender  
that's firstly fixed, or is it free?  
Or what if what it's seen to be  
is actually a limitation  
and just a pre-fab supposition  
which is some claim of Humanism  
wrecking all our radicalism?

Now this intractability  
in the impossibility  
of truly analyzing Gender—  
because it's really made by Culture—  
exposes there's a quandary  
where Discourse builds a boundary  
that's set within a Hegemonic  
constructing system so Platonic  
which degrades corporeality  
and promotes rationality  
since Language always will constrain  
all Being to its own domain  
(with Gender acting as its Name).  
But whether Gender's cultural  
or if it's biological  
or if it is linguistical  
ALWAYS ALREADY it's sexual—  
an assumed Signification  
that is put in a relation  
of a kind of opposition  
against some certain kind of Other  
who would partake a different Gender.

Though Gender is relational  
it's not ergo just personal;  
because the Universal Person  
is set against the other Woman  
since Woman always is the Bearer  
who carries with her marks of Gender

while Manliness and Personhood  
are simply One—it's understood.

And yet to add a complication:  
there is a deeper contradiction  
which we might call a paradox;  
though Sex is Woman, she's the Sex  
who is not One (I do not lie:  
I read it in Irigaray).  
All Words are phallogocentric  
and so the Masculine Linguistic  
means Woman is not thinkable:  
a Sex un-representable  
who is a Multiplicity  
illegible to Unity.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir  
(within her classic oeuvre) are  
these thoughts you may have read before:  
the Woman always is the Other  
who is the very mark of Gender.  
According to Irigaray  
(whom I cite true and do not lie)  
the Woman cannot signify.

And so it's dialectically  
that excluded entirely  
is this Other's Identity  
denied in Sign's economy  
so that metaphysically

imposed is the Hegemony  
that structures Subjectivity.

And yet what is the Metaphysics  
presumed to be the Subject's substance?  
And who is it shaping this complex  
of the Sex and the Gender matrix?  
Alas the humanistic concept  
of the human as a so-called Subject  
assumes that there's a Person  
(or as it were a singular human)  
who is an agent of an action  
who's got a certain character  
which forms within a basic core  
upon which is a Gender, or  
there's someone whom we'd call a Person  
whom we deem capable of Reason  
who simply has some attributes  
now added onto Human roots.  
This universalist conception  
that views the Human as a Person  
provides a point for our departure  
in theorizing social Gender.  
If Gender's really a position  
constructed within a relation  
among Subjects whose Construction  
supplies their social constitution  
and Gender follows that relation,  
then Persons cannot simply "be"  
except as they are socially.

And Essence must be relative  
to that discourse relations give  
and discourse more determinative  
and Gender's then not substantive  
but formed by discourse cultural  
and, too, by terms historical.

And therefore the Feminine Sex  
is only linguistic Absence—  
the frank impossibility  
of any such grammatically  
named Noun which is substantively  
not really a Reality.  
According to Irigaray  
whom I would cite without a lie,  
it's actually her point of view  
to show such Substance isn't true  
but merely is a social force  
produced by Masculine Discourse.  
This Absence isn't marked as such—  
an argument that very much  
opposes what de Beauvoir's thought  
(that Woman's marked and Man is not).  
Irigaray's Sex is not Other—  
the lack that defines the Male Gender.  
The Feminine therefore can't be  
defined thus theoretically  
since Language would be phallogentric;  
the Female Sex is not a Subject  
and there is no representation



for any female/male relation  
if linguistic economy  
is made by Masculinity.

Between any social positions  
we surely can make some distinctions  
on what is perceived as the Subject  
within the given social context.  
The very circularity  
of Feminism's inquiry  
is underscored by the positions  
which locate Gender inside Persons  
and those who claim the very notion  
which views the Human as a Person  
who is positioned as a Subject  
within the sexist pre-modern construct  
without the possibility  
both structurally, semantically,  
of female positivity.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir  
(within her classic oeuvre) are  
these thoughts you may have read before:  
the very notion of the Subject  
within the existential project  
which takes shape from Misogyny  
is therefore ALWAYS ALREADY  
a Masculine, a Universal  
within the framework existential  
defined precisely as it'd differ

from what it makes its female Other  
outside its universal Norms  
in singular, embodied forms.

Some say de Beauvoir wants to fight  
for Woman, so she'll have the right  
to be a Subject existential  
in these same terms now universal.  
But she rejects a cool Abstract  
and disembodied, male Subject  
as well as the disparagement  
of disavowed embodiment  
projected on the Feminine  
as though the body's Female. Then  
to link corporeality  
somehow with Femininity  
as a gesture just restricts  
the Body and the Female Sex  
as if it follows logically  
however paradoxically:  
Man is Incorporeality  
and tool of Rationality  
who only then is ever free.  
And so de Beauvoir's proposition  
would seem to start to beg the question:  
Exactly what is this negation  
by which male identification  
is all Universality  
and makes Corporeality  
construed as Femininity?

The Master-Slave dialectic  
provides some terms analogic  
for this Gender asymmetry  
prefiguring an Economy  
that signs for Masculinity,  
creating always its very Subject  
in terms of course of this self-same lack.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir  
(within her classic oeuvre) are  
these thoughts you may have read before:  
whether some Femininity  
is an instrumentality  
of Freedom and of Existence  
or limiting as an Essence  
which shows that the Embodiment  
informing all her argument  
is actually the reproduction  
of old Descartes and his distinction  
of Body as different from Freedom  
yet I assert the contrary  
against the ancient binary  
which sets up that duality  
of Mind and Body hierarchy—  
where de Beauvoir sees as synthesis  
in her compelling analysis  
and claims this very dualism  
would follow Phallogentrism.

Tradition philosophical  
through Plato, Sartre, or Husserl  
insists on the distinctiveness  
of Body against Consciousness.  
This slash between the body, soul  
in Plato, Sartre, or Husserl  
supports regimes political  
as well as psychological  
that thus are hierarchical:  
For what by Dualism is meant  
but fleeing from Embodiment?  
And scholars now can document  
the many texts that represent  
the Mind as Masculinity,  
the Body, Femininity.  
So every single Reproduction  
of Mind and Body in distinction  
repeated thus conventionally  
creates a Gender hierarchy.  
But in de Beauvoir's formulation  
there is always this separation  
of Freedom and the human Body—  
a Mark that's frankly shoddy  
because it's not along the axis  
of Gender and the Sexes—  
but an old Cartesian distinction  
in dire need (I think) of revision.  
De Beauvoir's point officially  
is that this Femininity  
is marked on Body by Discourse

then leaves men's bodies (but of course)  
unmarked as though universal;  
but what is seemingly worse still:  
according to Irigaray  
(and yet again I do not lie),  
the Marked is always like the Marker  
so Self is always like the Other;  
thereafter all Signification  
is man-made and (as a construction)  
puts Woman as an Otherness  
and cannot grasp the differences  
but gives a Label or a Name  
and therefore marks it as the same.

*Theorizing the Binary, the Unitary,  
and Beyond*

De Beauvoir and Irigaray  
don't either of them ever lie  
but differ each in how they see  
the patterns forming structurally  
in Gender's own asymmetry.  
For one, it's dialectically  
in misfired reciprocity.  
To the other, it's dialectic  
hiding what's monologic.  
The epistemological  
as well as ontological  
and even system logical  
are by Irigaray exposed.  
And yet whatever else she shows  
is undercut: analysis

has failed in its ambitiousness.  
For can we just identify  
economies that signify  
both always monolithically  
as well as monologically,  
transcending terms made culturally  
as they are made historically  
in many different far-flung contexts  
which each have differences of Sex?  
For is it not Imperialism  
or even like Phallogentrism  
to ignore all the operations  
of different ways there are Oppressions?  
To simply note the many cultures  
as other kinds of othered Others  
is another amplification  
of the very same, tired construction  
and again an appropriation  
(maybe an unthought repetition)  
and gesture of colonization  
by which the Phallus, too, would function.

Of course as Feminists we seek  
to explicate and to critique  
manly claims so totalizing  
even in our own theorizing.

To name just one Identity  
of a singular enemy  
also mimics the strategy

of Masculine Patriarchy  
and doesn't offer any more  
than terms of the Oppressor, or  
if such totalizing tactics  
would work well in both these contexts  
then such gestures colonialist  
are not then purely masculinist  
but can texture any relation  
with a hint of subordination.

Nor yet can we make the assumption  
that there is one discrete Oppression  
that has a sequential existence  
along a certain model axis  
that has a structure horizontal  
and thus ignores all factors social.  
Nor may we use another model  
that takes a shape that's vertical  
that would rank different Oppressions  
in groups of causal-linked relations  
presuming some originations,  
preserving thereby derivations.  
The field of Power whose structure  
is the colonial gesture  
encompasses also the axis  
of differences of the Sexes  
so that its very differential  
is not at all hierarchical  
in terms of Phallogentrism  
or Racism or Classism,



each stemming from some first position  
as though the primary condition  
of originary oppression.  
And so the false appropriation  
of an Other's own suppression  
is never just exclusively  
enjoined by Masculinity.

Now these debates in Feminism  
that dwell on an Essentialism  
raise many a pertinent question  
about a Masculine Oppression  
and universal claims to free  
a Feminist Identity.

Well any universal claim  
takes as its standpoint that old same  
and shared Epistemology  
which simply makes apology  
for some outdated Unity  
ascribed to Femininity  
as being Sexuality  
and linked up with Maternity.  
To me the globalizing gesture  
(already I've said in this chapter)  
has generated quite a number  
of critiques quite admonitory  
of Gender as a category  
and Woman as exclusionary  
when she is seen as unitary  
and this negates entirely

the full, rich multiplicity  
— intersections politically  
and socially and culturally—  
and fits them all in one construction  
and patly labels it a “woman.”

Some thinkers seek a formulation  
of Feminism’s coalition  
which won’t assume essentially  
what always Woman needs must be.  
And so the identification  
of those who are in that position  
sometimes articulated as Woman  
might join to foster coalition.  
Now clearly this coalitional  
transformation is political  
and yet the form of coalitions  
(assemblages of new positions)  
cannot be set, not pre-determined  
without inviting inadvertent  
problems caused by limitation  
on shaping a new coalition.  
Insisting on a Unity  
assumes that Solidarity  
is somehow purely fundamental  
to any action instrumental.  
And yet perhaps the coalition  
could well accept a contradiction  
and see inherent fragmentation  
furthering democratization.

Might not it be that Dialog  
is really just a Monolog  
that is specific culturally  
and bound to historicity?  
And therefore the Power relations  
which fuel such basic limitations  
on working dialogically  
require, too, our scrutiny  
(or else the dialogic model  
would recapitulate the liberal  
assumption always of some equal  
who as a Subject must agree  
on what would count as Unity).  
But it is just a fallacy  
to invoke Woman, as though she  
is solely one Identity  
or Class, Age, Race/Ethnicity  
and of one Sexuality.

And so by making the assumption  
about the baked-in incompleteness  
that allows that category  
to be open permanently—  
as an ideal that is normative  
without its being demonstrative—  
we ask if it is necessary  
to attain any unitary  
solidarity as a goal  
for each action political?  
Is not all such regimentation

the cause or root of fragmentation?  
Might not it be that coalition  
might better pursue desired action  
embracing at once fragmentation  
against that very Unity  
of Woman as Identity?

The Norm of Solidarity  
promotes an exclusivity  
at level of Identity  
excluding possibility  
of every set of proposed actions  
which might well cause disliked disruptions  
to break out at the very border  
that's between the Self and its Other.

This Unity indeed as goal  
is always just conceptual  
and Unity's provisional—  
in every form contextual  
not bearing any expectation  
that every Feministic action  
must now arise in Unity  
of one same fixed Identity.  
And action then could now begin  
as every which and way, "women"  
excluded once, can now join in.  
And this anti-foundational  
approach that's coalitional  
as a new form political

assumes neither Identity  
nor any so-called Unity.

Advancing thus Identity  
in Culture's terms of Unity  
instates always a definition  
preventing thereby the creation  
of any identity concepts  
new-made in political actions.  
So any call to Unity  
cannot expand Identity.

But when the old Identities  
and representing entities  
no longer are only the Subject  
which fuels our political project,  
well then can new Identities  
arise in new exigencies.  
Certain political practices  
now arranged on new-found axes  
devised on a contingent basis  
can come about then as the case is.  
So a structural political  
that now is coalitional  
need not expand the category  
to make it somewhat unitary  
but offers more complexity  
to Self as multiplicity.

If Gender's a complexity  
whose claim to a totality  
is ALWAYS ALREADY deferred  
(its self-same essence not affirmed)  
then to affirm Identity  
conflicting in disunity  
allows structure that is hodge-podge  
of sundry, open assemblage  
permitting both convergences  
as well as those divergences  
that without Telos normative  
denies closure definitive.



*Identity, Sex,  
and the Metaphysics of Substance*

Oh! what is an Identity?  
And what can ground the certainty  
Identities are actual  
and all are self-identical  
persisting, as though they're the same—  
coherent, single, with one name?  
And even more importantly  
does Gender have Identity?  
We can't discuss Identity  
unless we make an inquiry  
into something that comes prior  
which of course is human Gender  
since never are there human Persons  
except as we are gendered constructs.



It seems to me now that the notion  
of Human Being as a Person  
(as one who has some agency)  
makes claims to an Ontology—  
an argument about the Being  
implicit in one's social Meaning.  
And yet this takes elaboration  
and questioning of the assumption  
that actually the context social  
exists outside (as an external)  
with somehow a true Personhood  
either already understood  
as Consciousness or else as Reason  
or as moral deliberation.  
The question of Identity  
is (within most Philosophy)  
almost always one centered on  
some internal criterion  
presuming continuity  
to Self as one Identity  
(of just one Person throughout Time).  
But such conjectures are not mine.

Instead I ask to what degree  
do regulations that we see  
as Gender's social formulation—  
constructing its dualist division—  
not constitute Identity  
creating in reality  
the mere coherence of Subjects

with their self-identical status?  
Is it not that Identity  
derives from Normativity  
assigned as if it comes from Nature  
when it's a descriptive feature?  
In other words Identity  
when seen as Continuity  
is not a tick of Personhood  
(as is thus often understood)  
but it's a trick made socially  
by norms constructed culturally  
of intelligibility  
dictating legibility.

In as much as Identity  
is linked to Sexuality  
as well as Sex and Gender norms  
then in the way the Person forms  
there is a problematic question  
which is open to a deconstruction.  
And now we track the emergence  
of beings whose supposed coherence  
appears to make them Persons, but  
their Gender makes us wonder what  
their essence is, which won't conform  
to any culture's Gender norm  
by which the Person is defined—  
so we are caught up in a bind.

Genders are intelligible  
and somehow they are integral  
to structures institutional—  
coherences relational—  
maintaining their continual  
Identities as Sexual  
as Gendered and Desirable.  
In other words there are Specters  
of discontinuous vectors  
produced and then prohibited  
by Laws which all have limited  
a Gender to perceived connection  
of linking Sex with its Expression.

And yet by now I'm sure you know  
that that's the point made by Foucault.  
For as he ironically terms it  
Sex's truth is made by the norms it  
itself makes as Identity  
in forming Sexuality.  
Well Heterosexualization  
always makes the instantiation  
of a discursive opposition  
between what's seen as Feminine  
and what's construed as Masculine  
(where these two terms are understood  
as attributes of Personhood).  
And yet the culture gives the Norms  
by which all gendered selves have forms  
and Norms require and insist

that selves can only then exist  
when Gender follows from its Sex  
as well when gender practices  
should follow normatively either  
the custom of their Sex or Gender:  
Identity's relational  
to structures, which (political  
and made by the customs cultural)  
would shape our sexualities.

Since some Gender Identities  
must fail already to conform  
to suit the letter of the norm  
they seem impossibilities  
or as it were monstrosities.  
And yet these rare Identities  
provide us opportunities  
to open up the very terms  
of identitarian norms.

When Identity is legible  
and therefore it's intelligible,  
that's when the matrix singular  
creates it own peculiar  
deep link within compulsory  
Heterosexuality's  
discursive regularities  
that make up Sex Identities.  
Identity's made by the force  
of Power ruled through its Discourse.

Then is Gender Identity  
not made by regulatory  
and erstwhile a compulsory  
Heterosexuality?

Or would maybe that explanation  
actually be totalization  
where Heterosexuality  
just takes the place that logically  
was held by Phallocentrism  
as sole cause of all Sexism?

We learn from France whose Feminists  
as well as her Post-Structuralists  
make no agreement uniform  
that would define that “Power” term.  
Consider all the oppositions  
among the various positions.  
We have at first—I would not lie—  
the views of Luce Irigaray  
who says there is no Sex but One  
(the Masculine whose production  
opposes any other Gender  
which simply is the male one’s Other.  
And then as you are sure to know  
there is the point made by Foucault  
who sees both Masculinity  
as well as Femininity  
and even Sexuality  
as all one single entity

built up by discursivity  
of science and modernity.  
And then of course I'd not renege  
the work of one Monique Wittig  
who keys Sex as a category  
to the regime regulatory  
of the condition compulsory  
of Heterosexuality  
constructed as the Feminine  
by universal Masculine.  
But Wittig as you surely know  
agrees in essence with Foucault  
that Sex will end when finally we  
o'erthrow what's the Hegemony  
of Heterosexuality.

These models each explanatory  
show Sex as a category  
but understood in different terms  
of Power in its many forms.  
So what's the possibility  
that we can think complexity  
of all these fields of power, or  
how all them mash together; for  
the theory of sexual difference  
suggests that there's no real existence  
granted the Female as a Subject  
because she's totally the Object  
within a representational  
program or system conventional.

She's always the Representation  
and hence without representation.  
Irigary's Ontology  
then argues somewhat subtly  
a Woman's what can't simply be  
because she is the very Difference  
who's baked already into Essence —  
she's not just the Opposite Sex  
in contrast to manly Subjects  
nor's she just the Opposite Gender  
opposed to the Masculine Other —  
she's really the economy  
of Opposition's binary  
(the secret, monologic plan  
who's used constructing human Man).

Yet all agree despite difference  
that Language makes from Sex Substance  
or a self-identical Being  
as though not a way of seeing.  
Discourse conceals! We cannot be  
a Sex or Gender essentially.  
So now again I do not lie  
when I say that Irigaray  
would claim that Grammar's no index  
of what is Gender or is Sex  
for Grammar privileges the model  
of Gender as the foundational  
and Binary in opposition  
between — within — representation.

Irigaray says that this Grammar  
(subtending to its take on Gender)  
assumes that Man and Masculine  
and Woman and the Feminine  
create a kind of Binary  
which masks a higher harmony—  
the singular Hegemony  
of one sole Masculinity  
that shuts up Femininity  
as site of Multiplicity  
against the Phallic Unity.

Also by now I'm sure you know  
that Sex's Grammar for Foucault  
imposes the Gender Binary  
through a system regulatory  
shrinking the Multiplicity  
of any Sexuality  
that might disrupt Hegemony.

Yet nor would I ever renege  
on noting how Monique Wittig  
examines Sex's Binary  
in terms of a compulsory  
Heterosexuality  
and aims to squash that tyranny—  
advancing a true Humanism  
that's free from any rank sexism.  
And elsewhere she views the promotion,  
the profusion, indeed diffusion,



of all economies erotic  
that are not strictly phallogentric  
as ways that we might flatly free  
Sex, Gender, and Identity.  
And Wittig sees the Lesbian  
as pushing back from restriction  
of any Gender Binary  
imposed by Sexuality.

But in her humanist assumption  
the modes of all signification  
as well as all representation  
are not under interrogation.  
But rather self-determination  
affects the rehabilitation  
of existential agency  
granted to Lesbianity.  
Therefore she won't critique the Subject  
who is Patriarchy's Symbolic.  
Effectively her argument  
negotiates some replacement  
of the universal Subject, Man  
with a new one, the Lesbian.  
So the Woman-Is-Sex equation  
is just a Masculine conflation  
encoding Femininity  
as sexed Corporeality—  
hence, a refusal to grant women  
the freedom that's granted men.

To break Sex as this property  
might phase out the misogyny  
which makes Sex a synecdoche  
for all of Femininity.

Gender Wittig sees as index  
for the old opposition, Sex,  
and claims there only is one Gender  
which is used always in singular  
where the Masculine is general  
as a non-gendered Universal.  
And Wittig calls for the destruction  
of Sex as made by this construction  
where Woman must assume the status  
of Subjecthood that is denied us.  
As we move toward that destruction  
the Woman still must somehow function  
as universal point of view  
and as particular one, too.  
So Wittig's view of the Lesbian  
(replacing her in the Subject, Man)  
confirms the normative promise  
of Metaphysics of Substance  
(the ideals of Humanist ethics).

So Wittig does not quite comply  
with insights from Irigaray  
but she defends that the presumed Person  
who's equated perhaps with Freedom  
assuming a status pre-social

for a freedom that's universal,  
subscribing as well in essence  
to a Metaphysics of Substance  
responsible for the production  
of Sex as a hidden construction.

Well the Metaphysics of Substance  
is something that scholars would nuance  
in discussions contemporary  
of Nietzschean philosophy.  
And in setting out to teach me  
about works by Friedrich Nietzsche,  
says Harr: the methodology  
for building up Ontology  
is trapped in Illusions of Being—  
in fallacious, dumb ways of seeing—  
mistaking Grammar's prerequisite  
of the Subject and the Predicate  
as though they were Reality  
of some one true Identity  
at levels of Ontology  
(of Substance and of Attribute)—  
Constructions Wittig would dispute  
because they serve to institute  
an Order and Simplicity  
in some one true Identity.  
They don't present and can't reveal  
an Order that is really Real.

This criticism Nietzschean  
explains the pickle we are in:  
psychological categories  
govern at last the theories  
of Gender and Identity  
and give to them Reality.  
For Haar and for other such critics  
this is a false Metaphysics  
and offers critique of the notion  
of Psychological Person  
who's viewed as a substantive thing  
(or — if you prefer — like *das Ding*).  
Psychological categories  
derive from false preliminaries  
(assumptions of Identities)  
which is the belief in Language  
with all of its messy baggage.

Now Grammar made Descartes presume  
ego cogito ergo sum.  
But does "I" think? No! Certainly!  
The truth is that thoughts come to me.  
Really the Subject's false conception  
merely arises from the fiction  
that any kind of Unity  
begins in words' Reality.

And as Wittig has shown moreover  
there isn't a Language sans Gender.  
Wittig analyzes the Grammar

of French as it pertains to Gender  
and through this work in Wittig's eyes  
this Gender not only qualifies  
but constitutes the Episteme  
by which this Gender we would deem  
as somehow universalized.  
(Although of course Wittig realized  
it's not the same in French and English  
this gendering grammatical-ish.)  
Nevertheless the mark of Gender  
is always just as Grammar's rendered  
with Person always as a bearer  
linguistically as some one Gender—  
a primitive Ontology  
that is a built-in Binary.  
Arising from Ontology  
this Gender is Philosophy.  
And Wittig's views corroborated  
by discourses so saturated  
with implicit Ontology  
in Sex and Sexuality.

The claim that one may simply be  
a Sex or Sexuality  
is clearly symptomatic  
of Western metaphysical  
assumptions about Substances  
where Genders seem as Essences.  
And in the case of men and women  
this would subordinate the notion

of Gender to Identity  
and furthermore the fallacy  
that Person can a Gender be  
presumes some state of prior Essence  
that's coupled with presumed existence  
or sense of self-identity  
that's linked to Sexuality.

In a pre-feminist context  
which would confuse Gender with Sex  
Gender's a mode of Unity  
for embodied Identity  
opposed to some Sex Opposite  
whose structure's a prerequisite  
to build an oppositional  
coherence individual  
among Desire, Sex, and Gender,  
inside a Self that they each render.

Assumption that one just can be  
a given, sexed Anatomy  
is undermined by observation  
of gendered psychic disposition.  
"I feel like a Woman" is true  
because Aretha has sung "You  
make me feel." So always the Other  
invoked is an opposite Gender —  
a formulation that coerces  
the Binary it thus imposes.

Gender can be a Unity  
of Sex and Sexuality  
only when Sex is understood  
as equal to what Gender would  
and only when Desires be  
Heteronormativity —  
performed in terms of a relation  
where Sex is made in opposition.  
Indeed for Gender's Unity  
there ALWAYS ALREADY needs must be  
Heterosexuality.

Heterosexuality  
produces uniformity  
of gendered terms that constitute  
a Binary we must refute.

Well there is a presupposition  
within this very Gender relation  
of a casual reproduction  
of Sex and Sexuality  
for Gender is Desire, or  
Desire's Gender. Furthermore  
within this certain Unity  
constructed metaphysically  
Sex, Gender, Sexuality —  
with each one in this Trinity  
now all unlocked by just one key:  
Heterosexuality.

A naturalistic paradigm  
where Sex and Gender intertwine  
with these in continuity  
to lusting Sexuality  
as basis of Identity  
and for a paradigm expressive  
which sees the Self as successive  
to Sex and Gender and Desire  
and not to such expression prior—  
are both what Luce Irigaray  
(I paraphrase but do not lie)  
sees as a wish to reify.

This sketch of Gender gives a clue  
for the substantializing view  
and its deeper Metaphysics  
as linked to Power Politics.  
The institutionalization  
of the rank compulsory  
Heterosexuality  
requires Gender's Binary  
with one term, Masculinity  
demarcated from Femininity—  
a demarcation overall  
clearly Heterosexual.

And then this differentiation  
of two intertwined oppositions  
creates a strong consolidation  
or a presumptive Unity



both within Masculinity  
and in Femininity  
through terms of Sexuality.

Now the displacement strategy  
of relational Binary  
form of its ontological stance  
(the Metaphysics of Substance)  
claims Gender's dueling categories  
are made within its binaries.  
And then I'm sure that you will know  
that that's implicit in Foucault:  
Sex, he says, as category  
is product of an inventory  
produced within Modernity  
by modes of Sexuality.  
And the strange, tactical production  
of that old, discursive construction  
of our Sex within a Binary  
conceals of course the primary  
aims of the secret apparatus  
which postulates that both the Sexes  
are cause of Sexuality.  
Here's a conclusion that he draws:  
"It is an effect that seems the cause."  
Regimes of Sexuality  
by functioning discursively  
instate the Gender Binary  
and thus make Sex a category.

In an intro Foucault would write  
to notes by a hermaphrodite  
(a certain Herculine Barbin  
whose journals—in Foucault’s jargon—  
show “practices” that would critique  
Modernity and its technique).  
Heterosexuality—  
which cannot grasp an Identity  
that thwarts its Sexuality.

From norms this Herculine departs  
having both male and female parts.  
Moreso the system just has shelves  
for filing certain gendered Selves.  
And those conventions that produce  
a Self in terms of Sex, reduce  
the Self to either He or She—  
a frame that Herculine’d exceed  
since Herculine deploys the terms  
of Gender using “both” its forms  
and thus exceeds the finery  
set up by Gender’s Binary.  
Conversing disconcertingly,  
Heterosexuality  
and Homosexuality  
are advanced anatomically  
in a discontinuity  
of Heterogeneity  
that’s cut off paradoxically.  
by “Hetero”-sexuality

(undermining subversively  
that Metaphysics of Substance  
once seen as the very Essence  
of identitarian Sex).

Foucault sees Herculine's ex-  
perience as some Pleasures that  
are like the "grin" without the "cat!"  
And Pleasures thus are figured here  
as qualities that don't adhere  
to any abiding Substance  
which thus suggests the happenstance  
of all gendered experience  
not apprehended as Substance  
or the hierarchical Grammar  
of a Noun and Modifier.

Through this reading of Herculine  
our Foucault claims that he has seen  
exposure ontological  
of attributes accidental  
and postulates Identity  
as restricted culturally  
in principles of hierarchy.  
And this insight wholly dispenses  
with Genders any Substances  
so it's no longer possible  
to hold the gendered Subject whole  
subsuming Gender dissonance  
into a prior essence, as

if men might act quite Feminine  
yet with some manly underpin  
(a “man” who is Ontology  
or figure of Biology).  
But the notion of this Substance  
is just a fictitious essence  
produced through the compulsory  
construction of coherency  
which orders neatly Attributes  
into the Gender Absolutes.

And so it seems this dissonance  
must undermine the Substance stance.  
Appearance of a Self that’s gendered  
is by a Regulation rendered  
which marshals forced coherences  
into some fictive Substances.  
The exposure of this production  
as made by Regulation  
by resisting assimilation  
with attributes, or any quirk  
transgressing the same old framework  
as certain dissonant Adjectives  
would redefine the Substances  
(the Nouns that they would modify).  
And so we may hypothesi  
that this explodes as forgeries  
all of Gender’s categories  
since they include what they exclude  
(as we quite rightly must conclude).

But if supposed Substances  
are nothing but coherences  
of contingently made construction,  
of attribute in regulation,  
then the very Ontology  
is formed quite artificially  
and so a superfluity.

So as this now is broken down  
we see that Gender's not a Noun.  
But neither is it made from sets  
of some free-floating sobriquets.  
We can't deny that its effect  
is made within the old Subject  
(mainly when performatively  
it is imposed coercively  
when Power wants coherency).

In Metaphysics of Substance  
a Gender's merely Performance  
which makes up that Identity  
that Gender would presume to be.

In the terms that I'm construing  
Gender simply is a Doing  
and not the doing of a Subject  
who before the Deed could exist.  
In the project liberatory  
of thinking the category—  
outside Metaphysics of Substance—

there is certainly relevance  
for what some critics would teach me  
about words by Friedrich Nietzsche.  
“There is no Being just the Deed.”

Now Nietzsche might not have agreed  
but let me state a corollary:  
There is no Gender category  
and no Gender Identity  
behind Performativity  
and this makes the very expression  
that’s presumed to have been their Essence.



*Language, Power,  
and the Strategies of Displacement*

But so many Feminist screeds  
presume a Doer does the Deeds.  
Unless at first an Agent be  
it seems there'd be no Agency  
and hence no mode of transformation  
for protesting our domination.  
But Wittig is ambiguous  
when it comes down to these Subjects.  
On one hand, Wittig would dispute  
the metaphysic Absolute.  
But on the other, she explains  
the human Subject she retains  
(the Agent individual  
as locus metaphysical).  
The Construction she diagnoses



but meanwhile she still presupposes  
a Doer who's behind the Deed  
and yet acknowledges the need  
to know Gender's performative.

So the dispute that she would give  
regards the temporality  
of conflating fallaciously  
the cause of Gender with results  
so it's the Sequence that she faults.

And yes! by now I'm sure you know  
that Wittig's sharing with Foucault  
the trace of the old Marxist notion  
of what's known as Reification:  
she tells us that the major gist  
of material-feminist  
approaches to this problem show  
(you know she echoes with Foucault)  
that what appears as Origin  
for the Oppressions we are in  
is in fact like a mark imposed  
within the Discourse of our foes.

The "Myth of Woman" manifests  
only through a False Consciousness.  
And thus this mark can't pre-exist:  
Oppression marks out what Sex is  
and tells that our Sex be taken  
as *a priori* Subject given.

So Sex, which looks like true perception  
is really just a myth's construction;  
and meanwhile, yet the Oppressor  
proclaims that Sex is like Nature  
(according to Compulsory  
Heterosexuality).

For Wittig, the Homosexual  
is a proposition radical —  
a desire liberatory  
who would transcend the category.  
So Sex can't simply be erased  
or obfuscated or effaced  
by contesting effectively  
Heterosexuality.

But when I cite Irigaray?  
Believe you me! I do not lie.  
She argues flatly: Gender's mark  
must be seen the crucial part  
that operates foundationally  
in the field of Ontology.  
For Wittig, Language is a tool  
whose structures metaphysical  
are in no way misogynist —  
only the application is.

Irigaray would like to see  
somehow the possibility  
of a new sign Economy

that might escape the Mark of Gender  
which in fact is the erasure  
by the Phallogocentric  
of the Female from its rubric.

Irigaray says: Binary  
excludes all Femininity.  
And Wittig claims that this position  
is the re-consolidation  
of the old, sexist mythic fiction.

Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir  
(within whose classic oeuvre are  
some thoughts you may have read before),  
Wittig says that there's no such thing  
as writing that is Feminine.  
For Wittig, there is no debate  
that Language serves to subjugate  
but in her methodology  
she views all words materially  
with words even an institution  
that might portend a Revolution.  
Language is a concrete practice  
maintaining the very actions  
of Individuals, and hence  
weakening by the consequence  
of concerted collective action  
from within the linguistic Fiction.

If the category of Sex  
(as Wittig astutely suggests)  
is produced as a category  
by the framework of mandatory  
Heterosexuality—  
to always restrict Identity  
along a normative axis  
of the two opposing Sexes,  
Homosexuality  
may overthrow Hegemony  
of Sex as a category.

But Wittig also takes an issue  
with using Genital Tissue  
organizationally  
to construct us sexually—  
as an Economy  
that counters Subjectivity  
marked by Woman's supposedly  
distinct, natural Gender function  
in Sexual Reproduction.

Now all this great proliferation  
of pleasure through Imagination  
suggests a Feminine formation  
of Eros's certain diffusion  
as though opposed to the construction  
of supposed Genitality.

In a sense the Lesbian Body  
is an inverted kind of theory  
of Freud's old Sexuality  
which claimed superiority  
of Phallic Sexuality  
(over former Anality  
and polymorph Perversity).  
Only an Invert (in Freud's terms)  
fails to reach the Genital norms.  
Critiquing Genitality  
Inversion is used critically  
and praised by Wittig (precisely  
as that one Sexuality  
operating politically  
as a post-genitality).

In Heterosexism's Matrix  
the development of the Sexes  
is always their Normalization.  
And so Wittig's mobilization  
as well as radical subversion  
of this old, Freudian Inversion  
may just however reinscribe  
the structure she would undermine.

If every anti-genital  
is seen as oppositional  
into the structure sexual  
then would not then the Binary  
just reproduce quite endlessly?

Well the psychoanalysis  
of which Wittig's opponent is  
produced as a consequence  
a double bind, since in a sense  
she assumes in her argument  
Freud's theory of development  
which although it's now "inverted"  
isn't therefore just subverted.

So Polymorph Perversity  
assumed as being primary  
before the added Mark of Sex  
is then in Wittig's work expressed  
as being highest in degree  
of human Sexuality.  
(Perhaps she underestimates  
how Language always propagates  
the Mark of Gender, which she'd label  
disposable and variable.)

In the Lacanian theory  
a prohibition primary  
would operate more forcefully  
and really less contingently  
than practice regulatory  
like the kind of category  
which by now I am sure you know  
is theorized by Michel Foucault.

In Lacan (I do not lie)  
it's just as in Irigaray:  
Sex is not a category  
that is formed in a Binary  
which would retain as its basis  
a Substantive Metaphysics  
but it is a fictive construction —  
i.e., the Masculine Subject —  
produced when Father's Law prohibits  
every desire of Incest,  
forcing the Heterosexual  
into timeless deferral.

The Female's never just a mark  
or attitude or added part.  
The Feminine is like a lack  
on which the Law will then unpack  
a set of different rules linguistic  
that's signified by the Symbolic  
creating the Sexual Difference  
giving Lacanian inference:  
that by the Founding Prohibition  
does the masculinist position  
have individualization —  
a heterosexualization  
of and through the Law of the Father  
which would bar the Son from Mother  
so ever even their relation  
is also an Instantiation  
of that same old Law of the Father

(whereas always a girl's desire  
for both her Father and her Mother  
requires that she be the bearer  
of the mark of Maternity).  
So both male Masculinity  
as well as Femininity  
are instituted from within  
the prohibitions that produce  
such Subjects for their certain use  
so Genders made unconsciously  
emerge in an Imaginary  
of Gendered Sexuality.

The appropriation Feminist  
of the Sexual Difference  
attempts to see the Feminine  
but not as it's been grounded in  
a Metaphysics of Substance  
but just as a wordless Absence  
affected by the male rejection  
which grounds all Signification  
(indeed through this very exclusion).

The Feminine as Excluded  
within that frame (it is concluded)  
betrays the possibility  
of shaking the Hegemony.

The works of Gallop and of Rose  
in different ways would both propose



the same very constructed status  
of all the Sexual Difference—  
its basic instability  
and consequent duality  
of the same Law whose point would be  
the Sexual Identity.

Now Wittig in the French context  
would argue that the Difference  
is actually a replication  
of an old abstraction.

This neglects unconscious realms  
in which Repression overwhelms:  
emerging in the Essences  
it undercuts coherences.  
As Rose points out (and I agree)  
a construction of Identity  
along the disjunctive axis  
of the Male and the Female sexes  
is bound to fail. Yes! the Repressed  
emerges. And when it's expressed  
reveals the Self's constructedness:  
Prohibition's Identity  
must fail at self-same Unity.  
Paternal Law's a bumbling whim  
who aids us in o'erthrowing him!

The differences that now emerge  
within these Schools—as they diverge—

regard a quarrel over whether  
one now can ever just recover  
some Sexuality before  
the Law, or in Self's true core  
or after Law, post-genital.  
(But then it's paradoxical  
that Polymorph Perversity  
in both views theoretically  
trumps any Sexuality.)

Yet no agreement here at all  
about the nature of the Law:  
the psychoanalytic Subject  
would be produced within the Matrix  
conjoining with elusive Substance.

Wittig's existentialism  
assumes an essentialism:  
there's a Subject who's pre-social  
yet it seems the Law paternal  
is really quite less unitary  
than Structuralist Imaginary.

But the quarrel seems to turn on  
the ancient articulation—  
subversive Sexuality  
of unknown temporality.  
It grows before the Law's imposed?  
Or after Law has been opposed?  
Or during Law in constant fight?

Now it seems here we should invite  
an insight, which I'm sure you know  
derives from old Michel Foucault  
who claims that Sexuality  
is Power's own Ancillary  
(against a naïve postulation  
of any great Emancipation  
of some new Sexuality  
which from the Law somehow is Free).

But we must argue after all  
that both "before" and "after" Law  
are modes of temporality  
and each is made discursively  
and each involved within the terms  
of Hegemony's wicked norms.  
So there's no radicality  
in any Sexuality  
that could escape the reigning Lex  
of prohibitions around Sex.

And, too, by now I'm sure you'll know  
such prohibitions (says Foucault)  
would make the Subject—whose production  
is of and in this prohibition—  
could have no Sexuality  
but Power's Subjectivity.  
For Power rather than the Law  
would saturate quite nearly all  
though its differences relational

both productive and juridical.  
And hence the Sexuality  
as Power's Subjectivity  
is not a simple replication  
and not the Law's mere repetition  
repeating Law's economy  
of Masculine Identity.  
To mute the possibility  
of any Subjectivity  
which thwarts intelligibility  
expands then quite effectively  
what's created culturally.

A Sex that is post-genital  
has undergone some critical  
and Feminist interpretation  
and Lesbian appropriation  
of post-sex Sexuality  
that's purported to be free.

Through a process exclusionary  
Power's pattern regulatory  
restricts the meaning seen to be  
Heterosexuality  
and Homosexuality  
and any sites of a Transgression  
as well as resignification.

That both Heterosexism  
and Phallogocentrism

augment themselves through repetition  
of ontological position  
and even of their inner logic  
and thereby their own metaphysic—  
this does not always just imply  
that Repetition ought to die.  
If Repetition must persist  
within the way that we exist  
as Culture's own Identities  
then we must pose some inquiries  
about what kind of repetition  
might further as a new subversion  
and call the System into question.  
If there is Sex and Personhood  
but only as they're understood  
by Power as it dictates terms  
for working only in its norms,  
then what's the possibility  
of holding the Identity  
but playing with those terms' inversion  
and acting out their own subversion?

Whereas Foucault's ambiguous  
about how Power's practices  
would play out so discursively  
to produce a category  
and Wittig says that the Construction  
is joined to Human Reproduction  
yet other forces help produce  
the Subjects for their certain use

for reasons we can scarce deduce.  
The Sciences are so infused  
with Power and are so reduced.  
And Medicine's conjoined with Law  
in ways that aren't yet clear at all.

It seems to me discursively  
there is so much complexity  
to Gender's form as a construction—  
a promise or an invitation?  
How the regulatory fiction  
facilitates its deconstruction!

Nor is it just a failed project  
of critiquing the Law's compact  
as if critique political  
undoes the forces cultural.

If someone's Sexuality  
is constructed culturally  
within all Power's own relations  
well then our very postulations  
of any Sexuality  
outside Power's Hegemony  
are an impossibility  
not practical politically  
postponing the possibility  
of thinking Sexuality  
subverting its Identity

within the given set of terms  
determined first by Power's norms.

Within such norms to operate  
then would not simply replicate  
uncritically the same relation  
of Power with its domination.  
Instead the Law in replication  
might refuse all consolidation  
and offer up a new subversion.  
Rather than Sexuality  
equal to Masculinity  
and Phallus's proclivity  
we can somewhat more playfully—  
through subversive operation—  
re-perform identification.

So if in Rose's explanation  
any such identification  
is truly (Rose says) phantasmatic  
then really it's axiomatic  
that one can perform Identity  
in ways that show its fantasy.

If there's no exit radical  
from its constructions cultural  
it's still for us to ask the question  
how one might act one's construction.  
Are not there forms of repetition  
that aren't just idle imitation

not merely social Reproduction  
building up Law's consolidation?  
But what are new configurations  
and what convergent matrices  
would undo these interstices?  
The truth of Power's hierarchy  
in modern Sexuality  
is not the simple augmentation  
of crystal-clear consolidation.  
Since they're contested sites of meaning  
Sex and Gender invite re-reading  
as each is Multiplicity  
holding the possibility  
of working to subversively  
perform their lack of Unity.

Proposing no Ontology  
and no Phenomenology  
I don't endeavor to lay out  
what Gender's being's all about.  
Yet I presume that to "be" Gendered  
is just a construct that is rendered—  
an object of investigation  
that maps out Self as a construction  
within the bounds political  
in the mode ontological.

So to call Gender a "construction"  
is not making any assertion  
that it's ergo artificial



where this is oppositional  
contending with Reality.  
But as a Genealogy  
I seek within this inquiry  
to know that discursivity  
within the plausibility  
of the relational Binary.  
And now I am eager to wager  
that configurations of Gender  
assert their own Reality  
to augment their Hegemony.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir  
(within her classic oeuvre) are  
these thoughts you may have read before:  
A woman's not as woman born  
but she becomes as she would learn.  
"Woman" simply marks the processes  
of acting liminal statuses  
without an end or origin  
and therefore it always is open  
to a radical intervention  
as well as resignification.  
Even when Gender would conceal  
in forms that often may feel real,  
well this congealing's simply social  
not guided by some Telos final.

So Gender's just a repetition  
or really a stylization —

a set of acts that over time  
congeal along an ordered line  
producing somehow appearance  
of a Being with a Substance.

To do the genealogy  
of Gender as Ontology  
would deconstruct thus the Appearance  
into such acts sans a Substance  
and locate these acts within frames  
built by Power for its own aims  
conforming to the names it names.

To show as mere contingency  
what seemed like a necessity  
has been one of the major parts  
of Criticism after Marx.

But now this task must intersect  
with the Gender of all Subjects  
admitting possibility  
foreclosed by Power's policy  
which structures its Ontology.

So later my analysis  
investigates the Structuralist  
account of Difference Sexual  
as this may still prove possible  
contesting modes of Power, for  
the presumed coherence of Gender

and sex's univocity  
(within the system binary)  
are now revealed as idle fictions  
which just allow consolidations  
of Power's Masculinity  
and Heterosexuality.

Also we must view the Body  
not as such a surface ready  
to receive Signification  
but a scene of a contestation —  
a blurry set of boundaries  
controlled by Power's functionaries.

No! Sex is not Identity  
but a performativity  
which is in fact not a "to be."

And when Gender has been denaturalized  
and its social construction realized  
and the terms of Gender re-mobilized  
so that the terms that once had crystallized  
even in the Feminist enterprise  
can now all be somehow re-stylized  
then can Gender Trouble be strategized,  
reconfigured, performed, and satirized.

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