

Queer Becomings: Deleuze and Guattari's Critique of Static Identity Categories

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## **Abstract**

### Queer Becomings: Deleuze and Guattari's Critique of Static Identity Categories

Nelson Graves

In this paper I argue that trans exclusionary action from cis lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) political pundits is generated and sustained by a need for recognition by the capturing apparatus of the state, thereby conserving heterosexual familial structures and enforcing a need to identify deviant behavior. Anti-trans activists—including those who are often seen as part of the queer community—increasingly find efforts to affirm trans individuals to be a threat to static notions of gender and identity, which, as these anti-trans advocates claim, undermine attempts for integration of cis LGB individuals into the capitalist order. What I take to be at stake in the struggle for trans liberation is less a political issue than a metaphysical one, e.g., how making sexual identities visible to the state cuts off various possibilities of becoming. This paper is not meant to prescribe solutions to the problem of the lack of allyship from cis gay men and cis lesbians, but rather direct to a problem that stems from static identity categories.

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## Introduction

In this paper I argue that trans exclusionary action from cis lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) political pundits is generated and sustained by a need for recognition by the capturing apparatus of the state, thereby conserving heterosexual familial structures and enforcing a need to identify deviant behavior. Anti-trans activists—including those who are often seen as part of the queer community—increasingly find efforts to affirm trans individuals to be a threat to static notions of gender and identity, which, as these anti-trans advocates claim, undermine attempts for integration of cis LGB individuals into the capitalist order. What I take to be at stake in the struggle for trans liberation is less a political issue than a metaphysical one, e.g., how making sexual identities visible to the state cuts off various possibilities of becoming. This paper is not meant to prescribe solutions to the problem of the lack of allyship from cis gay men and cis lesbians, but rather direct to a problem that stems from static identity categories.

The issue brought to light in this paper goes much deeper than merely debating the *biology of the trans individual* as current political discourse tends to follow. I am arguing that we must take a metaphysical approach to this problem—going past static notions of gender and sexuality as extant and to place in question the need for recognition politics. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, it is possible to escape the traps of the political and biological (which in turn generate the terms by which trans people *must* justify themselves) by shaking up the notion of the static categories of sexual identities and aligning it with minoritarian transness. For the purposes of my thesis, I explore Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts, in conversation with other philosophers in the wake of May 68, to bolster a key point in the liberation of queer individuals in France. The thesis leans thus heavily on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-imperceptible, moving away

from a *medicalized understanding of transness*—which stems from a pathologizing of transness, and in this way conditions my argument regarding the movement of trans and gay identities.

Through putting Deleuze and Guattari's work in relation to these other thinkers, I show that first, the codification of sexual desire as homosexual or non-homosexual, or desire to express a certain gender as trans or cis, has created the conditions more precisely for policing these desires; second, and going further, the more authentic desire and its ability to produce and create has been taken from our hands through the crystallization of these categories.

In explaining these issues regarding the emergence of a mainstream understanding of transness and the true level to which transness challenges both binarism and the gender/sex<sup>1</sup> distinction, we come against a larger philosophical problem: that of static notions of identity. The goal of this paper, more broadly is to contribute to conversations of identity as processual, rhizomatic, and in motion, therefore unable to be fully encapsulated by static language. By looking at the current issues regarding hostility from some homosexuals towards wider acceptance of affirming measures for trans people, we see a larger issue surrounding the crystallization of desire as subject formation.

Prevailing theories of gender, such as Judith Butler's groundbreaking and important work on performativity and gender, only refer to previously formulated binary gender categories. I will be going further to explicate how transness generates new identity categories of sexuality and gender/sex. While Butler provides an explanation for how one would transition within a predefined gender matrix (the performative must reference back to one of the two binary

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<sup>1</sup> For this paper I will be using the term gender/sex to encapsulate both terms, for reasons which will come apparent in the later part of this paper.

genders), there is little explanation of how new identity categories, such as non-binary identities, come to exist. In using the formation of the homosexual subject in Guy Hocquenghem's work, we can see a mirroring of the formation of the trans subject. Yet differently and most notably, trans identities go beyond pre-established gender categories and continue to queer what we have come to establish as the gender and sex distinction. What is then at stake in recent conservative attacks surrounding trans affirming care comes into focus to show that this apparent controversy but rather backlash to eroding of highly essentialist notions of gender/sex, something which gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals are no less immune to parroting as part of a larger panic surrounding the deconstruction of binary sex categories. The trans panic of conservative pundits is not a response to the prospect of transitioning, but is rather a reactionary response used to sure up preestablished notions of binary gender/sex structures.

In explaining these issues regarding the emergence of a mainstream understanding of transness and the true level to which transness challenges both binarism and the gender/sex distinction, we come against a larger philosophical problem: that of static notions of identity. The goal of this paper, more broadly is to contribute to conversations of identity as processual, rhizomatic, and in motion, therefore unable to be fully encapsulated by static language. By looking at the current issues regarding hostility from some homosexuals towards wider acceptance of affirming measures for trans people, we see a larger issue surrounding the hardening of desire as subject formation.



*Right-Wing Trans Panic—What is actually at stake?*

In accordance with a rise of right-wing authoritarian policy in the US, there seems to be an apparent rise in gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of the pundit class breaking historical solidarity with the T in LGBT. Masked as mere curiosity, or even more overtly tied to calls to end trans affirming care, these individuals (including fellow philosophers such as Kathleen Stock) seek to distance themselves from trans struggles, both as a means for self-preservation and as a measure to garner support in right-wing spaces. To be seen as “the good ones” speaking out against the tide of the *woke mob*, these individuals seek to curry favor with the majority, having successfully, in their minds, assimilated through liberal political measures such as marriage equality.

Crystallization of desire around established gender/sex categories is exactly what pushes homosexuals away from solidarity with trans people, as societal legibility—which for some LGBs is the ultimate goal—obscures deeper questions about what is metaphysically at stake. Violence perpetuated by LGB pundits towards trans people in this paper offers a concrete case for what is, in fact, at stake beyond trans individuals qua individuals. Rather we can sharpen our critique of these individuals, and of movements which essentialize binaries and stunt becoming in general, beyond self-hatred to the philosophical underpinnings of their behavior, that of a fully reactive force devoid of novelty and merely a mechanism to uphold binaries. Beneath the surface is a panic about gender/sex identity, something which transness successfully calls into question. How can you have a homosexual if the lines between sex, gender, and sexuality become even more blurred past recognition?

On January 10, 2023, demonstrators shut down an event hosted by McGill University's Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism entitled "Sex vs. Gender (Identity) Debate in the United Kingdom and the Divorce of LGB from T" hosted by Robert Wintemute—known for his involvement with the LGB Alliance, a group known for advocating against trans rights in the UK. Under the guise of a critical conversation, Wintemute was invited to discuss whether it should be easier for trans people to change sex markers and names, which understandably drew ire from both students and community members who saw the more nefarious nature of Wintemute's apparent curiosity. The LGB Alliance is an ostensibly homosexual organization, but has used the mounting pressure against trans individuals in the UK to distance homosexuals from trans activist movements. Students and community members successfully deplatformed Wintemute, yet, not without cries that protesters were silencing free speech ("McGill University Faces Backlash for Anti-Trans Talk" 2023). But as trans people and allies of the trans community know, good faith curiosity does not take the form of well-polished speaking engagements. Wintemute's event is a manifestation of anxiety that cis gender people feel around trans people. Even homosexuals, who have been allied with trans people since the growth of gay liberation in the mid-20th century, have begun to use recent advancements, such as marriage equality, to decry transness's inability to assimilate into a binary structure of sex and gender.

What Wintemute and others like him make apparent is that the right uses the relatively recent distinction between sex and gender distinction to deny the possibility of transition. Though trans people have used this distinction to some success in the past in order to receive gender affirming care, tools for ultimate liberation of sexuality from patriarchal structures tend to get lost in the constructed binarism of sex and gender which ultimately binds our expression beyond the

established structures. The pragmatic use of bi gender/sex categories ensures access to tools of the state (cohabitation, property, capital), yet take away a possibility for true liberation beyond what has been constructed by capitalist familial structures. The same sex couple maintains legibility if they are monogamous and child-rearing, yet ultimately this acceptance by societal institutions is contingent on its cognate to the hetero-patriarchal nuclear family. Those like Wintemute would like to make this conditional acceptance absolute by distancing from any sort of deviation beyond highly assimilationist measures of homosexual activity. Though, as the binarism produced by crystalized notions of gender/sex ultimately cannot allow for even homosexuality, the reactivity of anti-trans homosexuals is most certainly detrimental to full liberation of sexuality.

Feminist writer and activist Andrea Dworkin's analysis of conservative women—and Dworkin's later alignment with right-wing calls to ban pornography—precisely names a corollary in the women's lib movement to current right-wing reactivity to transness by some LGBs:

“Most women, holding on for dear life, do not dare abandon blind faith... Whatever the values, she will embody them with a perfect fidelity. The males rarely keep their part of the bargain as she understands it: protection from male violence against her person.” (1987, 14).

Here, Dworkin names perfectly the motivations for the taking up trans panic by some LGB individuals that being an attempt to shelter oneself from the onslaught of misogyny. LGBs making panicked claims about the slippery slope of transness, just as conservative women of the 60s and 70s chose to align with the oppressor, are making a deal with a devil, a movement which will never hold up their end of the bargain. We can't protect ourselves from misogyny by taking the side of the oppressor; we must give ourselves the tools to fashion new expressions of gender/sex, to rid the binarism's pull towards the already established to the new territory.

Transness has become the paradigmatic example emerging differentiation, as wider social regard for transitioning has unearthed questions lurking just beneath the solidified categories of sex and gender. At the core of my claim for this paper, I would like to stress that transness is not a methodology and it is not to be co-opted by those who do not seek to transition, but it is rather an example of a concept working against operations which attempt to binarize desires into static categories. Looking to Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of desire as free flowing and uncategorizable as neat static identities, and the individuation which nexuses of desire make manifest, I make the case that we must move beyond notions of gender/sex and sexuality which seek to cut off nuance and generate monoliths of identity. The notion of becoming, or the direction which these desires take away from an established moral center of desire, draws us away from static notions of identity to a more nuanced and radically depersonalized view of the human subject.

#### Part 1: Deleuze and Guattari's Desire and Becoming-Homosexual

The formation of identity as static, essential, and binary categories, ultimately fails to capture the nuance of those placed within. Yet, we must acknowledge that these static categories are produced and perpetuated sociologically, regardless of this lack of nuance. This section will use becoming-homosexual as the main touchstone, as Deleuze and Guattari theorized this form of becoming, and the formation of becomings in general will become apparent. Transness specifically as a type of becoming will be discussed in the second part of this paper.

Desire, as I will explain, cannot be fully captured via a subject *vis-à-vis* object of desire, but rather it is a nexus of desires interacting with and as assemblages, crucially removing an interior

and exterior distinction found in other formulations of desire. Crucially, Deleuze and Guattari's desire offers an account which figures at both a macro level—the political body, and a micro—the body. Desire as theorized in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, rather than being a force of negation or lack, “begins from connection; life strives to preserve and enhance itself and does so by connecting with other desires” which build networks, creating social systems (Colebrook 2002, 93). As Deleuze scholar Claire Colebrook explains, desire does not exist independently from other desiring forces, but is a part of a nexus of desire. These desires seek to be amplified rather than satiated from lack. Desire is this movement towards intensification.

In this drive for intensification in desire, there is an “‘unsticking’ of the social field,” according to Deleuze and Guattari (2009, 74). Shirking previous established categories, “the signs of desire do not let themselves be extrapolated from a signifier,” but can create new categories, thus arguing for an excess over and above the psychoanalytic Oedipal theories of desire (Deleuze and Guattari 2009, 74). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the drive or movement of desires and the connections which these desires make to each other are not governed by inscription into structures as pre-existing identities or signifiers. The signifier of “the homosexual” is not driving desires related to sexuality (as we will see in Hocquenghem).

Interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this unsticking in sexual desire through the term transsexuality<sup>2</sup>, though not applied in a way which resembles contemporary usage:

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<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the term transsexuality seems to exist here as transcending sexuality rather than transitioning from one sex to another. Though, in my summation, the trans subject seems to be doing the same sort of movement in the intensification and unsticking. It is also important to note that “transexual” to refer to an individual is somewhat outdated, though some individuals, such as Grace Lavery choose to use transexual over transgender for various reasons.

“transsexuality does not let any qualitative opposition between a local and non-specific heterosexuality and a local and non-specific homosexuality arise” (2009, 74). Transsexuality, in the sense of immanently eschewing binary sex categories, is anoedipal sexuality; a sexuality based neither on lack or emitted from established symbols. Importantly, the movement away from the Oedipal family illustrated by the term transsexuality is in tension with the established categories of both the homosexual and the heterosexual. Therefore, if we are to adopt a more complex understanding of human sexuality, it becomes prudent, according to Deleuze and Guattari, to never fully rest on static identity, but rather take on an ever moving, unfixed, and de-essentialized notion of sexuality rather than mere negation.

### *Formation of the Homosexual Subject*

Before a discussion of trans subjectivation and the nexus of desire which we have come to call transness, it is important to look to the homosexual subject for two main reasons which I will argue in this section. First, the formation of the homosexual comes from a negation of the heterosexual, rather than existing as a separate category it has become an extant form of heterosexuality as opposed to a freely created novel identity category. Second, the homosexual subject and the hardening of desire in its formation demonstrates similarly how placing free flowing desires within these categories restricts nuance of human sexuality and often creates a battle to maintain the hegemony of already existing binarisms.

The homosexual subject, and thereby the panic in the face of transness, exists via the negation of the heterosexual, and is reflective of a tendency to place the trans subject in opposition with that of cis people, rather making it a deviation from the default (as cis is identifying with one’s sex at

birth), and therefore still carrying a piece of heteropatriarchal gender/sex. Going back to the nature of transsexuality, as Deleuze and Guattari have defined it, we encounter the categories of both the homosexual and the heterosexual as opposed binary categories which transsexuality immanently critiques. Transsexuality makes no qualitative difference between the two, meaning it does not see desires at the level of the individual body to be innately heterosexual or homosexual. While these two binary categories exist in opposition via negation, the pre-established desire for the homosexual and the heterosexual does not exist immanently, but rather is a transcended category imposed on free-flowing sexual desires.

Returning to Deleuze and Guattari's differentiated levels of desire, we can identify desires at the macro level as referring to *desiring machines* which exist at the interpersonal, societal level, in an effort to intensify themselves, coding *local desires*—those which happen at the level of the individual body. The infant's desire for milk, for instance, in the paradigmatic psychoanalytic example of the mother's breast and the child's mouth, can be captured or encoded into the Oedipal relation between the mother and child (Colebrook 2002, 93-4). Yet just as the homosexual and heterosexual impose upon free-flowing desires, the breast has been imbued with several coded meanings, the breast comes to be coded as it both carries nourishment for the child but also can come to take on a sexual notion via the erotization of the maternal.

Desires can be said to exist as flows, or movements, not directed at objects, but object-less assemblages. The breast, which exists as a culturally coded organ, sectioned out from the body, is prior to that quite simply a direction of the drive feeding off excitations, an assemblage which exists as a nexus of desire. Therefore, to make the claim that the categories of the homosexual

and heterosexual, which are ascribed to certain bodies, are focused upon an organ, a singular object of desire (such as a specific gender/sex of partner) does not take into account the ways in which desire is transposed at assemblages rather than specific objects of desire. Sexual or romantic desire for the same sex existing as an assemblage rather than a true object begins to muddy the category of the homosexual, just as we might say that the breast as organ can begin to lose locality when analyzed as a nexus of desire. Rather than persons forming desire, “‘persons’ are formed through the organisation of desire” (Colebrook 2002, 141). As Colebrook explains, people are not formed *ex nihilo* with desires interior to the world which they then express, desires around people (including carried through language) shape them. The homosexual is already shaped by existing desire. The existence of the homosexual then depends on existing in tandem with the heterosexual—this being a code of intelligibility for societal institutions—as without the preestablished heterosexuality there is nothing to denote a deviant sexuality.

Here we can begin to prod at the structures of the homosexual as a static identity. Rather than being a category innate to desires, we cannot sort desires so easily into the homosexual and the heterosexual categories as these desires exist in relation to social desires, such as desires for security for instance. Guy Hocquenghem, argues that in the gay liberation movement, the choice to bring homosexuality closer in relation to the perceived opposite, the heterosexual, does nothing but repeat “the unsuccessful effort to draw the homosexual back into normality, an insurmountable chasm which keeps opening up.” (1993, 54). Homosexuality is more than just attraction to the same sex, really there is nothing that then differentiates, as sexual desire cannot be identified as gay or straight except at the level of transcendent categories which fix moving



desire. The category of homosexuality is devoid of all meaning were we to take it at face value as “opposite” to heterosexual in sexual desire.

Thus, what matters is to recognize that it is not really a true distinction at the level of local desire. Hocquenghem describes this encoding of the homosexual subject as part and portion of the heterosexual as the fashioning of homosexual desire as it stands. Homosexual desire, according to Hocquenghem is not an innate category for desire—meaning it is not a characteristic that can be sorted out as separate from other sexual desires—and therefore leads to questioning the category entirely. For Hocquenghem it is this paradox of the homosexual as “[something] which exist and does not exist at one and the same time” that illustrates it as a “mode of existence [that] questions again and again the certainty of existence” (1993, 54). The paradox of the homosexual subject, for Hocquenghem, is actually revolutionary in the sense that it leaves open the question homosexuality’s relation to heterosexuality. Yet, it also leaves the term homosexuality prey to capture. We can fashion, and could be argued that it has already been fashion, a homosexuality which can neatly fit in heteropatriarchal structures which prioritize production.

Homosexuality can be captured in such a way that the needs for social reproduction are met. If we can mirror the heterosexual in the homosexual, such as through the institution of marriage which exists through recent legal action (cf. legalizing same-sex marriage in the USA with *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015) as a way to protect and produce capital, homosexuality as such does not exist, but rather is an existent form of the heterosexual. As mentioned in the previous section, going beyond the category of heterosexual and homosexual would be needed to actually

generate novel notions of sexuality, not merely a negation of a default. Homosexuality and homosexual desire cannot be seen as ontological at the level of desire as individual, they inform a movement towards, a drive to intensify, but they are not able to exist as static categories as it is not desire directed at a singular object but an assemblage of desires.

Homosexual desire does not exist ontologically, quite simply because the heteronormative sexual desire, likewise, does not exist ontologically or normatively. Therefore, sexual desires, like all other desires, cannot be boiled down to desire directed at a sole object but rather ought to be understood as an assemblage. Legibility must exist to some degree, as we must be able to articulate why one's experience with a partner of the same sex and one's experience with a partner of a different sex are divergent and have differing societal signifiers. Yet, just as tools of legibility for same sex couples in institutions provides a path to navigate these spaces, homosexual desire is only a singular path from which one cannot deviate. But even more nefariously, as Hocquenghem states, to identify desires as homosexual, it is to make them visible, and thus leads to or conditions the ability to police it (1993, 79). It is here, where legibility can take a turn towards policing, that we must begin to investigate static categories. Establishing two opposing categories, one deviant and the other not, then requires actions to maintain the binary.

Foucault's analysis of the creation of the homosexual subject comes to a similar conclusion, that being that it is the "machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain [the homosexual] did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality" in the process, opening the possibility for surveillance as existing in the penal system (Foucault 1978,

44). It is much easier to take what has been made visible via the creation of static identity categories and constrain the way those individuals live rather than suppress them entirely. Heteropatriarchy makes the homosexual visible in order to provide paths in which they can fit into a pre-established familial model, such as through marriage, but again this is the only real path that can be accommodated as others bring the family into the crosshairs. Looking back to the question of why some homosexuals see transness as a threat to their wider societal acceptance, transness directly questions gender/sex binary structures that have accommodated homosexuals, though in a narrow scope. So rather than looking to upend heteropatriarchy entirely, these individuals are holding onto a narrow and policed form of visibility that does not endanger the heteropatriarchal family.

### *Becoming as Identity*

Now that we have thoroughly critiqued homosexuality as a static category made visible in order to be policed back into heteropatriarchal familial standards, we can move on to explaining a better mechanism for understanding identity. Homosexuality and other identity categories are rather becoming, as I defend here. I sketch out exactly how homosexuality is better accommodated through what could be called becoming-homosexual. As I will illustrate becoming creates the conditions for identity which is radically depersonalized, meaning desires at the societal level figure into the formation of local desires at the level of the subject, which will then help us understand how human identity categories are better understood as a *movement towards* or *in proximity to* a locus of meaning rather than innately a member of that identity class.

With Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming, the movement of desire is not crystallized, but rather illustrated as part of the concept difference itself. Becoming refers to a direction of the drives in which desire flows without stifling. In the chapter "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible..." in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari insist that multiplicities of affect [intensities of anticipation of perception], such as assemblages of desire, continuously change often crossing over into other multiplicities. Notably they do not pick a singular or axis on which to measure these multiplicities (thereby removing them from the movement in which they exist). "Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline functioning as Anomalous," which means there is a threshold at which the parts of the multiplicity are no longer continuous with the set of other parts. To cross this threshold, or to make a movement towards a different multiplicity or assemblage is to engage in becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 249). If we go back to the homosexual, becoming-homosexual would be the movement away from the assemblage of heterosexual desires towards that of the homosexual.

Most importantly, in this movement away, there is no way to prefigure how exactly the assemblage will look once it has crossed the threshold. It is not merely, as stated previously, a negation of a pre-existing term, but a movement away, a *line of flight*. As we cannot prefigure the nature of how these cross overs will occur, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it, "no one, not even God, can say in advance whether two borderlines will string together to form a fiber, whether a given multiplicity will or will not crossover into another multiplicity or even if heterogenous elements will enter a symbiosis," a movement away from one multiplicity cannot predict how, or even if it will, enter into the other (1987, 250). All of the various elements which make up a multiplicity, such as that of an assemblage of desires, have no predictable outcome—

on this account of the mathematically infinite potentialities of these drives, and to merely negate, such as in binary systems, tries to pre-figure these patterns (where the boundaries are, etc.).

Becoming, then, is in the movement itself rather than the destination or any quantitative or qualitative measure anterior to what actually occurs. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, “becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity” according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 273). Rather than seeking to enumerate a list of characteristics, for example, becoming is a movement from one heterogeneous set to another in an unpredictable manner. So, if we are to take the homosexual, for instance, there is an indefinitely definite movement and crossover from the heterosexual to the homosexual. Yet, there is no way to predict the outcome of this crossover. We cannot as such prefigure how homosexuality manifests.

Becoming begins for Deleuze and Guattari with becoming-woman, as for the duo, becoming-woman must be the threshold crossed first for all other becomings. This claim is quite contentious, as it may seem as though they are instrumentalizing female identity as a mechanism for liberation of identitarian desire, yet according to Colebrook, “becoming-woman is...the opening of a desire that is pre-personal, anti-oedipal and directly revolutionary” (2002, 143). Here, Colebrook is not stating that becoming-woman is the gateway for some sort of ahistorical desire, but rather, she is stating the opening which becoming-woman directs desire is towards liberation. If we are to visualize becoming as an orientation away from the standard notion of the human constructed historically as a consumer under capitalistic societies, i.e., the rational human man who produces for a heterosexual family, the first deviation that takes place or rather the first

level of differentiation within the heteropatriarchal structure is that of the assurance of reproductive reason gender/sex: the woman and the man.

What Colebrook is bringing to the forefront is that any initial deviation must pass through this first stage of patriarchal differentiation before going to other becomings so that they may be discernable as becomings rather than merely part of the same multiplicity. If we are to conceptualize becoming-homosexual, as Deleuze in his forward to *Gay Liberation After '68* describes Hocquenghem's work (not his person), it is rather this opening towards a new sexuality, shaking up the concept of human sexuality entirely, but what first must be differentiated in order to make sense of the concept of the homosexual must be the distinction between man and woman, otherwise there is no way to parse what it would mean to be in a same-sex relationship (Deleuze 2022, 1-5).

Becoming-woman as a movement away from "man," importantly is an affirmation rather than reaction, that is to say it is not seeking to retain the old but secure its difference in relation to the previous term. So, in the movement away from the centralized man of capitalist consumerism and heteropatriarchy, becoming-woman is not in opposition to man but a new term entirely. Yet, this term exists as an accepted part of the gendered binary, as it is built in to the consumerist family. Woman is accepted as differentiated from men insofar as she is able to fulfil duties to the home and to her husband. As Guattari states in his article "Becoming-Woman," the category of woman is the sole accepted deviance from the masculine, and therefore any deviance is taken to be the feminine, with the masculine being default in the binary:

“Outside of this exclusive bi-pole, no salvation: or else it’s the plunge into the nonsensical, to the prison, to the asylum, to psychoanalysis, etc. Deviance, various forms of marginalism are themselves coded to work as safety valves. Women, in short, are the only official trustee of a becoming-sexed body” (2009, 229).

To restate our main point: Differentiation in capitalist structures must be made visible and dealt with. Visibility can be followed by policing. Gender/sexual difference is made visible and then policed to fit neatly into the male and female, but it is first policed as though it is female. Just as gay men are taken to be effeminate and trans men are treated as victims, sexual differentiation treats non-women who deviate from prescribed gender/sex norms as though they are women they are policed via the same means. One could argue, therefore, that these experiences of policing of the sexed body beyond merely classification of male and female are then couched in misogyny. Misogyny becomes the policing force for anyone who deviates from man at all, as any deviation from man is characterized as becoming-woman.

Then, how exactly does becoming exist in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s transsexuality? For Deleuze and Guattari, transsexuality conceives of the complete evasion of capture into either homosexuality or heterosexuality. Becoming-homosexual is an opening for transsexuality for Deleuze and Guattari, but is not any sort of end in itself. To remain in the disjunction, in the threshold between terms, in constant movement, we might turn to their discussion of the schizophrenic individual, their paradigm for the need for moving beyond transcendent binaries as necessary for an affirmation of the complexity of assemblages:

“He is and remains in disjunction: he does not abolish disjunction by identifying the contradictory elements by means of elaboration; instead, he affirms it through a continuous overflight spanning an indivisible distance. He is not simply bisexual, or between the two, or intersexual. He is transsexual. He is trans-alivedead, transparentchild. He does not reduce two contraries to an identity of the same; he affirms their distance as that which relates the two as different.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2009, 76-7).

Note that we see the prefix “trans” meaning to exist beyond a dualistic set of categories in question. Deleuze and Guattari are attacking binary static identities directly. To address the complexity of multiplicitous desires, we must, as the paradigmatic schizophrenic of Deleuze and Guattari, hold no term static or in opposition. Becoming is this escape from binaries, from the pull of the proximity of another category.

## Part 2: Desiring Production, New Becomings, and the Performative

Up to this point, we have discussed thoroughly the importance of *desire* and *assemblages of desire* in the formation of nuanced depictions of identity categories through *becoming*. Yet we have not touched on a vital characteristic of desire which drives the formation of these categories: *desiring production*. As Deleuze and Guattari are not concerned with lack in their analysis of desire, there is something which propels being from desire rather than acquiring that which one lacks. Desire becomes is a force of creation rather than detriment. It is a tool for liberation rather than the mirroring the existing state of identity as negation. In this section I will look to desiring production as a key concept for understanding novel identity formation. I will do this in relation to Judith Butler and their critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s desiring production. Rather than merely being beholden to binary categories of gender, for example, desiring production is an apparatus which fashions new identities, achieving over and above competing conceptions of gender/sex a possibility for identities outside of the gender binary.

### *The Novelty of Desiring Production*

Desire, as discussed previously, strives to amplify and connect itself to other desires, according to Deleuze and Guattari. It is this very basic characteristic of desire which generates novelty, as



in connecting with other desires there is a source of creation. As Claire Colebrook writes, “[these] connections and productions eventually form social wholes; when bodies connect with other bodies to enhance their power, they eventually form communities or societies” (2002, 91).

It is the connections and productions of desires understood as bodies connecting with other bodies that Deleuze and Guattari posit as a fluid nexus (*plane of immanence*) that creates larger social structures. The implication is that the social whole is that plane of immanence which is itself created from connections of desire, that itself takes up other or pre-existing desires to produce interests, collectivized and organized forms of desire (Colebrook 2002, 91).

Depersonalization of the individual and their desires, then, can be taken as the local desires being taken up and organized by social, from the outside in (vs starting from interiority). The connections which desires make, namely, the folds of desire, realized through the fold, a plane of immanence, are the basis for desiring production, and what we will take is the basis for the production of new becomings.

What creates discernable identities, therefore, is the organization of desire. We have now reversed the precedence of structure over signification (vs Oedipalization). The social whole takes these free-flowing desires and consolidates them in such a way that the category is made legible and is then open to the possibility of policing or of capture. For example, as Hocquenghem argues in *Homosexual Desire*, these multiplicities folding in desires can only be parsed a posteriori, the homosexual is made after the fact, after the organizing of making the homosexual visible (50). For those who are deemed homosexual, desires have already been organized for them. Yet, in accepting right away the static identity of homosexual one is

subsuming identity to a reactive gesture. It is not contending with the reality of the constant movement of desires, a behavior which Deleuze and Guattari call reactive rather than creative.

Desiring production functions at the stratified levels of desire—local and social—just as all desire does. Social institutions shape desire by organizing desires of bodies, the process by which desiring machines (assemblages of desire) connect to other desiring machines. Importantly, this can also happen at the local level *on* the body. Here is where one takes charge of reactive forms of identity, those which have been organized for them and seeks to “forget.” Drawing from Nietzsche’s claim to the importance of forgetfulness and a need for the qualitative over the quantitative, Deleuze in his book on the philosopher, asks us to resist “mechanistic interpretation,” quantifying the unquantifiable. In order to move on from reactive identities, to throw off suppressive forces, we must learn forgetting (“remember to forget”) or, in other words, engage in a decoding or de-organization of desires, which will in turn be productive and new (Deleuze 1983, 42-4). Forgetting, liberating the present from the gravity of the past is vital in liberating desires that have been suppressed in the straightjacket organization of disciplines of society, such as the case of human sexual desire and the case of gender/sex expression within the gender/sex binarisms.

It is only by forgetting, that being forget to intensify (“forget to remember”), that we can have novelty, or new organizations of desire. Deleuze and Guattari, though critical of social wholes which shape desire, are not stating that these are necessarily nefarious entities. Society must have desires organized in order to operate, and desires are drawn to each other to form larger social connection, but as I will discuss going forward, it is novelty and multiplicity which Deleuze and

Guattari are seeking to instill. Rather than notions of identity based in negation of the already established, we need new identities that are becomings, radically able to cross the threshold, to forget, and to not prefigure.

### *Desiring Production and Trans Identities*

Now we can look to the formation of becoming for trans identities using desiring production and the organization of desire at both the macro and micro levels. For transness specifically, the nature of the trans individual was formulated clinically through a process of negation, pathologizing gender/sex non-conforming behaviors. Transness, however, is much more than a need to transition to the other binary gender. It is a liberation of a nexus of desire from the chains of pre-established gender/sex. Take the case of nonbinary trans individuals, for example who do not have a prefigured transition. Nonbinary trans people cannot look directly to other nonbinary transitions as a rule and are not looking to fully negate the gender/sex that they were assigned. It is more than subscribing to a new third gender category, but a chance to engage in novel becoming. The same can be said to a lesser degree with binary trans people, those who transition to the opposite binary gender/sex than the one which they were assigned at birth.

Seeking to characterize human gender/sex and sexuality beyond traditional clinical notions, Deleuze and Guattari's desiring provides us with tools to explain the formation of trans identity as processual, non-static, and radical. More broadly, providing desire as a means to convey the complexity of transness through desiring production gives us the means to critique the nature of static categories of identity in general, through a regard for what is *new* rather than conformity or mere negation of the *status-quo*. We can then understand transness as more than merely seeking

to transition, but also as a creative force, just as the creative force of becoming-homosexual gives us a path of production beyond static categories and cannot be prefigured, the same could be said for transness.

### *Desiring Production and the Performative*

While I have made a case for emergence of gender/sex-based identities through desiring production and the non-static forms of identity such as becoming, Deleuze and Guattari's formulation has been critiqued by numerous gender theorists, most famously by Judith Butler. Their model of gender/sex expression, *performativity*, exists through a model of interpellation, that being the body reacting to the imposed symbolic world. As I will argue, this particular model of gender does not offer a clear mechanism for the emergence of new gender/sex identities, such as those of nonbinary trans individuals.

Many nonbinary trans people may describe themselves as trans femme or trans masculine, yet they would not describe themselves as either a woman or a man. These identities complicate previous notions of transition, as there is no clearly defined path to being nonbinary trans. Conceptions of gender, such as Butler's work on the performative and gender, have become popular in progressive philosophy, and dominate queer theory and gender studies, yet have not been able to explain adequately how exactly new notions of gender identity can be created in an already established gender binary. Herein lies the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's desiring-production: there is an explanation for the generation of new categories of gender/sex beyond a need for visibility in pre-established categories. Desiring-production is the prevailing force for identity, as becoming rather than static. These identity categories in movement are in conflict

with other prevailing notions of both gender and sexual orientation, including Butler's work, which sees the formation of sexed bodies as being in response to a "heterosexualizing imperative" that seeks to form boundaries of the culturally intelligible (Butler 1987, 22-3). Aside from a sort of chicken-or-egg problem where there seems to be no way to pinpoint where the heterosexualizing imperative is generated, there also seems to be no straightforward way to accommodate for nonbinary identities, aside from a sort of visible eschewing and mixing of feminized or masculinized signifiers. I take this to be only a piece of what nonbinary trans people see as transition.

Aside from this lacuna in their theory of gender, Butler has previously critiqued Deleuze and Guattari's desiring-production in their book *Subjects of Desire*. They make two major critiques of Deleuze and Guattari's theories of desire: a) Deleuze and Guattari offer a notion of pure desire which is ahistorical and b) there is an appeal to an original state of nature which is constrained by society, much like social contract theory. I will be tackling these two points by explaining the depersonalization of desire by Deleuze and Guattari, which until now I have spoken very little about.

Butler seems to take the channeling of Deleuzian desire through power, such as through the force of law, as "[appearing] to undermine his original project to historicize desire, for his arcadian vision of precultural libidinal chaos poses as an ahistorical absolute" (Butler 1987, 215). In addition to their claims of ahistorical chaos of desire, they continue by saying: "Just as individuals are said to possess certain desires for pleasure (Bentham) or property (Locke) which are subsequently inhibited by the constraints of a social contract, so Deleuze's conception of an

originally unrepressed libidinal diversity is subject to the prohibitive laws of culture” (1987, 215). Here I find that Butler is not a fair in their interpretation of Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s who they erase) notion of desire by ignoring the depersonalization of desire. There is no legitimate critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s desire at the level of the individual by comparing them to Bentham or Locke, because the whole point of this formulation of desire is to complexify the nexus of desires between the local and the global.

For instance, as Claire Colebrook helps us see, the two are not looking at the level of individual interests (desires for property for instance) rather, the goal is to explain how these interests are formed in the first place. In her work to explain ideology in relation to desire, Colebrook says:

“A group of bodies connect to expand their power; this is desire. That same group of bodies forms an image of themselves as the very ground of human life; this is interest. It is by this process that particular investments, such as the collection of bodies of a certain tribe, can be coded as a universal interest: the local investment in whiteness becomes a global investment in ‘man’” (2003, 93).

We see that Deleuze and Guattari are not arguing for an original unrepressed libidinal diversity, there could be no way for that is possible if there is even more than one body existing together. The duo is not asking us to return to a state of unrepressed desire, but rather to analyze how the local becomes the global. Their work to explain capitalism or communism must be done starting at the concrete links between bodies, which in turn is contingent on historical factors.

To reduce what Deleuze and Guattari are doing to something similar to the power of law, would also be to miss the point. Institutions on the macro level, such as marriage, are not using power in the strict sense, but rather coding desire. For Deleuze and Guattari, *power is desire*, as Colebrook again helps us to see. For instance, Colebrook gives the example of bourgeois

marriage as a means for transferring property between families, this takes desire, the desire for connection of bodies, and creates an interest (2002, 92). The call to liberate libidinal forces then, and the Nietzschean concept of forgetting, is not looking to return to a state of pre-historic before times where there were no social institutions and all desires were free. Deleuze and Guattari are not explaining the formation of social structures as a negative entity, but rather as the product of desires interacting. Therefore, to construe their form of liberation of desires to be based solely on a return to a world without power or structure is to be missing the point of their analysis entirely.

Now after having responded to Butler's critique of Deleuze and Guattari, we can look to what might be lacking in their analysis of gender, namely a mechanism for the generation of new identities. Butler takes visibility to be key to their concepts of performativity, such as through their example of the gender parody of the cross-dresser, which can only operate if there is an already visible static image of the hegemonic identity of woman (1993, 171-91). For Deleuze and Guattari, in the instance of the becoming-woman, part of the modality of becoming minoritarian, performativity cannot be fully operational as it is nomadic and must be visible to the other. To go even further, nonbinary subjects and other new identities have no mechanism for visibility in Butler's system. They stand in contrast to Butler's strategic essentialist notion of gender/sex which raises an issue in Butler's gender performativity, that being there is no mechanism for the new, i.e., for new gender expressions. The reactive nature of gender and sex subject formation, for Butler, provides no room for new gender expression or really any expression that does not have a pre-defined imperative. Though it provides mechanism for binary

transgender identities, it provides little in terms of liberation of desires treated at the macro level, which have been coded by capitalist interests.<sup>3</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari insist that the coding of desire, as in the instance of the coding of homosexual acts as criminal and the formation of the homosexual (or what Butler may call the “heterosexualizing imperative”) is operating to make these desires hegemonically visible or intelligible desire, and this is precisely the problem. Regardless of what imperative is forcing visibility, for Deleuze, it is the need for visibility itself that causes issues. What can be made visible is rendered static, and thus able to be coded into the apparatus of the state for instance. Butler’s need for visibility does little to condemn or sidestep the concern for policing of identity, which seems to be a problem in the particular instance of the lack of cis LGB solidarity with trans people. If gay men, for instance, are able to wield a visibility (marriage being the biggest visibility) over and against that of trans people, then there seems to be no other option but to make the trans subject visible through the mode of these heterosexualizing imperatives, which leaves us unable to embrace trans identities outside of pre-established gender binaries, man and woman.

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<sup>3</sup> In their later work *Who’s Afraid of Gender*, we see Butler dive in more explicitly into the gender and sex distinctions in an effort to problematize the distinction, noting that 1) gender is not to culture as sex is to nature and 2) there are colonial and racial legacies attached to the separation of the two (Butler 2024 188-9). We can see the battleground for this distinction in the controversy surrounding who can participate in women’s sports, with a cadre of sex-based testing, such as hormone and chromosomal tests, implemented to control participants. Yet what Butler is addressing in this volume is the proliferation of anti-trans sentiment and the foreign importation fallacy, rather than the emergence of varied gender/sexed identities.



### Part 3: Gender, Sex, and the (Im)possibility of Transition

Thus far we can see static notions of identity, such as *the* homosexual or *the* trans subject, come to exist in a coding of a local desire, in the case of the homosexual that being an attraction to the same sex, a homosexual act, etc. Therefore, instead of seeking to code static identity categories, as these static categories cannot capture both the movement and the diffuse nature of both the macro and micro notions of desire, Deleuze and Guattari offer the notion of *becoming*. Taken in its radical level and applied to every identity category, the notion of becoming rather seeks to unsettle the coded desires as seen in the instance of the homosexual for Hocquenghem. Deleuze and Guattari are not attempting to refashion the woman or the homosexual, but instead to make the category nomadic, highlighting how contingent these categories actually are. They are offering an account of identity which gives primacy to desiring production, the local desire that creates the subject. This notion differs greatly from that of gender theorists such as Judith Butler, who see the primacy of identity in the interpellation of the subject by power, which is merely a piece of the complexity of the generation of identity categories. Yet, what can best be seen in the need for identity as nomadic rather than mere static interpellation comes from a distinction often taken for granted in both philosophy and queer theory: gender and sex.

Pragmatically, this distinction has been used by queer individuals to create a certain level of visibility for deviation from their sex assigned at birth, gender being how oneself identifies, and sex being the immutable. This sharp distinction, addressed by Butler in their later work *Who's Afraid of Gender?*, is a relatively recent formation popularized by physician John Money and his work at the Gender Identity Clinic based at Johns Hopkins University. Money's goal in creating this distinction was to justify and perpetuate a perceived need to "correct" ambiguous genitalia in

infants and in the process “named a problem arising from a discrepancy between bodies and sex assignment, which means that sex assignment does not only or always describe the preexisting reality of sex” (Butler 2024, 199). Aligning sex with the natural and gender with the social ultimately is used to reinforce the masculine and feminine binary, and has often been used as a way to assuage the need for affirming care for trans people (though in some cases has been co-opted to justify transition in early clinical interventions). In addressing the nuance between these two categories, how gender leads to a social legibility of sex, trans theorists such as Grace Lavery see the anxiety surrounding transition, by both LGBs and heterosexuals, to stem from the all or nothing nature of sex and the assumed impossibility of transition. For it is exactly this anxiety surrounding this perceived impossibility which leads to a necessity for the pathologizing of the trans body by both medical and political institutions.

### *Perpetuation of a Binary*

Transitioning through means of gender affirming care in the medical field often still requires a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a pathologization of feelings of uneasiness with one’s gender assigned at birth. Identifying feelings of gender dysphoria accords with a common split made in sex and gender, where transition is meant to alleviate a disaccord between the two. The ease to begin hormones or proceed with affirming surgeries is often much easier for those who transition from one binary to another, but for those who would like to proceed with these treatments, though are nonbinary trans, there seems to be much more of an issue: nonbinary cannot accord with binary sexed humans. Maintaining a split between the interior (gender) and the exterior (sex), is necessary to alleviate dysphoria in many clinical spaces as the treatment is to provide

care which would give affirmation of the opposite gender rather than to fashion a body which one is satisfied to inhabit.

Though trans people and advocates have used a sort of strategic duplicity in explaining transition through pathology, this often leads to a loss of complexity in transitions more broadly and a complete erasure of nonbinary trans individuals, much akin to the faux visibility of homosexuality in the popular phrase: “I was born this way.” Here, one is trying to express that these identities not a conscious choice (though much more can be said about this framing), rather than truly saying that we are innately homosexual or heterosexual from birth. This phrase is often used by queer people to be visible to a straight public, pragmatically helpful—much like marriage—though missing some nuance.

Outside of the medical establishment, the sex and gender distinction is taken up by conservatives as a means of denying transition outright, rather than providing any sort of alleviation for trans people via medical pathologization. For TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) such as philosopher Kathleen Stock,<sup>4</sup> there is a necessity in keeping the sex and gender distinction, as this provides a mechanism for *an inner and outer world*, one that can be lauded as materially real, the other not. In her book, *Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism*, Stock argues that sex is the exterior arbiter and gender is the internal will for expression. For Stock, there is little reason to take one’s internal desires seriously as it does not accord with biological reality

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<sup>4</sup> Many TERFs do not identify with the term often using the term gender critical to hide their moral panic regarding trans individuals in public spaces. TERF is used almost exclusively by those who are calling out transphobia from self-described feminists, yet I think it is important to go even further to not even associate TERFs with feminism whatsoever, somewhat making the term a bit inaccurate. As TERFs do not actually advocate against misogyny, rather cloak essentialist talking points in historically feminist vocabulary, I don’t find it helpful to even continue to call them *radical feminists*, yet this is the term which has stuck and therefore is the term that I will be using to describe individuals including Stock.

(Stock 2021). She is guilty of both a fallacy of nature vs artifice and interior vs exterior, a common mistake for conservative anti-trans pundits. Stock's primacy of the outer world does not provide a significant enough rebuttal for Deleuze and Guattari's depersonalization of desire—taking from the local to societal—one that illustrates that it is these very desires (which Stock would state exist solely as part of the internal world of one's thought) that exist in reality immanently amongst a plane of desires which shape the body. Bodies, in fact, are policed into two sexes, as evidenced by Money's violence against intersex infants, and these very policings continue to affect an individual into adulthood, even for non-intersex individuals. The internal world of gender and the external world of sex can only account for the roles necessary for sustaining the nuclear family and are necessary for the continuation of these familial structures.

A gender/sex divide cannot account for the complexity of human experiences beyond the two poles of the masculine and feminine. Deleuze and Guattari see a need to break down all binary thinking, including that of gender/sex, as this frees coded desire, creating new sexes and genders. Even their concept of becoming-woman does more than duplicate a binary. As it is the only form of sexed deviation accepted within the social order, becoming-woman can be used as a way to break down these binaries. In Deleuze and Guattari's examination of Virginia Woolf and the women novelist, the two seek to both formulate becoming-woman as a concept, but also uncover the need for escaping dualism. Particularly it is the figure of the girl, who "do not belong to an age group, sex, order or kingdom, they slip everywhere," that helps illustrate the imperative for extricating the multiplicity beyond dualism, traversing through dualism machines, or what Deleuze and Guattari see as the mechanism for turning flows of desire to dualistic structures.

She is a block of becoming, and the only way to get around the dualism is to exist contemporaneous to each opposable term (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 277).

Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari's need to liberate *a thousand tiny sexes* requires a breakdown of binary intent on both what is perceived to be gender and sexed characteristics, and the two are able to accommodate novel formulations of gender/sex and sexuality. Separating gender out from the complexity of human biological sex (as evidenced by the constant erasure of intersex individuals) does nothing more than to maintain these binaries). Philosopher Mat Fournier in the article "Dysphoric assemblage: How Gender Binary was Never Supposed to Work" sees gender as a dualism machine as described in *Thousand Plateaus* to maintain the need for a duality between sexes (organized bodies). Gender is the mechanism which can raise a child to the social roles of a gendered adult, sex being what determines these roles from birth (2022, 133). Gender in itself is the mechanism for maintaining the binary, and often helps enforce duality in sex.

#### *On the (Im)possibility of Transition in Philosophy and Queer Theory*

If gender's extraction from sex exists insofar as it effaces multiplicity in service of a binary, the prospect of transition between the two still seems possible *prima facie*. Though the *gender as social* and *sex as biological* schema used by institutions does not in itself bar one from transitioning, many view the act of transitioning as being one that only alters gender and not sex, it is the notion of the impossible full transition, or the impossible biological transition that continues to perpetuate itself in anti-trans spaces. *There's no way to change your chromosomes* is often a retort used by right in their recent attacks on trans people. Even in progressive spaces, this distinction between gender and sex continues to go unquestioned for what many see as a

need for visibility, which can contribute to a similar sort of uncritical image of transition as only traversing the social rather than biological. The nature of sex and gender within the fields of both philosophy and queer theory seem to be at issue regardless of political leaning, and have much more to do with common beliefs regarding the possibility (or rather perceived impossibility) of a transition, whether it be a binary or nonbinary transition.

According to Lavery, there seems to be an unstated anxiety present in queer theory, telling of both societal and institutional attitudes, regarding a perceived “impossibility” of transition. Lavery illuminates how even in queer theory, there has been a history of hostility towards trans bodies, stemming from a constant redirection of gender/sex nonconformity to homosexuality. Starting with the work of Freud, Lavery points to the Judge Schreber case, most notably his delusions regarding his need to become a woman in order to save the world. Freud does not even address the possibility of transness, only a sort of stunted homosexuality, which already suggests a blind sight in the foundation of queer theory texts based on Freud’s psychoanalytic literature. Yet, this is only the start of a pattern which queer theorist Eve Sedgwick continued in her essay “How to Bring up your Kids Gay” where she claims that transitioning from male to female is a symptom of heteropatriarchy which is meant to render the homosexual extinct. Similar ideas can be found in lesbian circles with the concept of Butch flight, or the idea that butch lesbians are being encouraged to transition to men and therefore no longer be homosexual. These anxieties for queer theory range from lack of acknowledgement to hostility towards trans people. As queer theory is a majority homosexual rather than trans field (though the two are not exclusive), Lavery comes to the conclusion that it is the perceived impossibility of transness in the first place, that it

is merely misdirected homosexuality, which is dangerous for trans people even in progressive queer spaces (Lavery 2023, 125-30).

Homosexuality in the queer community has become the foundational rather than part of the multiplicity of experience, a sort of first step before all others, and therefore anything which challenges gender/sex is enveloped by the anxiety of persecution. Lavery in her investigation of this pattern in queer theory coins the term egg theory, egg stemming from an internet term meaning a trans person who has not hatched yet:

“Egg theory is not generally ethical, but technical. One simply cannot. Which among us, given the chance, would not? But of course, it is not so simple; indeed, the categories at issue are endlessly complicated, existing on different ontological orders (sex and gender, for example), and battened by chaotic forces so powerful and incoherent (desire, say, or sexuality, or socialization) that to attempt something like a sex change would not so much be malicious as it would be gauche” (Lavery 2023, 116).

As Lavery explains, we don't know there was an egg until the chicken has hatched, and it is this very temporal doubling of the trans subject, including what I take to be rigidity in the gender/sex distinction which has created a distaste for what is perceived as an always imperfect transition.

Lavery continues to complicate this notion of sex and gender, choosing to call herself transexual rather than transgender. For Lavery, sex is not an all or nothing category, which comes to challenge the need for a gender category. Trans people often change their sex, either by taking hormones or surgery to change secondary sex characteristics. Chromosomal notions of sex offer little help as a person who has the sex characteristics of a female could carry a Y chromosome, which would make them biologically male according to some. Transness takes us away from a passive or reactive notion of gender/sex by acknowledging the nuanced, intertwined nature of what we have now solidified as distinct categories. For philosopher Janet B. Watson in her

article “Trans\* Teratologies,” “the journey of the trans and intersex self is at once deconstructive and reconstructive” (2022, 88). The constitutive elements that have come to signify gender/sex are both shed and imbued with meaning, bodies are morphed and changed using medical intervention.

### Conclusion

In the face of the deconstructive nature of transness, gayness can only continue to exist in denying transitioning as a real possibility, by denying the processual nature of gender/sex categories to affirm the static and legible. Therefore, what continues to be at stake in my argument is twofold: 1) the category of transness in itself decodes the notion of binary gender in affirming one’s ability to change gender/sex; and 2) transness as desiring-production creates new genders/sexes in the process of decoding gender. As homosexuals have made strides in visibility, through marriage for example, trans people are expected to follow a similar path of visibility.

However, by going through the same channels that homosexuality has taken to exist within liberal-capitalist structures, transness loses its possibility for imperceptibility and must exist within pre-established gender norms i.e., medicalizing transness as solely a process through which one alleviates pathologized gender dysphoria in order to transition to a binary gender. This project, in its refusal of a narrative of trans recognition politics, is also calling for a similar refusal of visible sexual identities, such as homosexuality. Rather than seeking to exist in conformism to the terms of the state or the economy, we must seek the becoming-imperceptible, as Deleuze and Guattari state, so that we can no longer be prey to capture.



Guattari writes in a piece called “I Have Even Met Happy Drag Queens” the following:

“The question is no longer to know whether one will play feminine against masculine or the reverse, but to make bodies, all bodies, break away from the representations and restraints of the ‘social body,’ and from stereotyped situations, attitudes and behaviors, of the ‘breastplate’ of which Wilhelm Reich spoke” (2009, 225).

Here it seems that he is using social body, *corps sociale*, not just to mean the social fabric, but the body fashioned by society—all of the predetermined roles and constraints that gender may take. I am not proposing a solution to the lack of allyship from cis gay men and cis lesbians, but I am rather directing to a problem that stems from static identity categories. Here Guattari is doing just that. He is directing us to eschew the masculine and feminine entirely. Rather than be reactive, to take these binaries as givens, we fashion our bodies. Experiment and delight in the experiments of others. Find liberation not in the shadow of the old, but in fashioning a new path.

Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* call for becoming-imperceptible, or “the immanent end of becoming” (1987, 279). This end is not exactly a finality, or an end of movement, but rather it is the intended result of decoding desire, the nomadic inability to be captured, to not be read by capturing apparatuses. Moving away from recognition politics, can only bring us part of the way in the understanding of novel identities, such as nonbinary identities. We must explore what is *creating*, not just what is being *negated*. A liberated desire and its ability to produce and to create has been taken from our hands through the crystallization of sexual categories, now is the time to take it back.

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