# Being and Transition

Nora Fulton

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (English) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

June, 2025

***Signatory Page***

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Nora Fulton

Entitled: Being and Transition

And submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (English)

Complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

*Dr. Marcie Frank* Chair

*Dr. Trish Salah* External Examiner

*Dr. Manish Sharma* Arm's Length Examiner

*Dr. Ronjaunee Chatterjee* Examiner

*Dr. Stephen Ross* Examiner

*Dr. Nathan Brown* Thesis Supervisor

Approved by _____
(Graduate Program Director)

June, 17, 2025 _____
(Dean of Faculty)

***Abstract***

Being and Transition

Nora Fulton, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2025

This dissertation argues that the two most influential interpretations of "the event" in 20th century philosophy—that of Martin Heidegger and that of Alain Badiou—articulate a pair of views (*appropriation* and *traversal*, respectively) which have come to dominate our understanding of transition, or the capacity of sex, gender, and identity to change. *Being and Transition* tracks the development of these views and the metaphysics of change that ground them, especially as they pertain to the trans subject, or that subject (transgender, transsexual) who undergoes a transition, by enquiring into the way that both Heidegger and Badiou drew their theories of the event from experiences of what they called "transition" in their own thinking. As I show, both the appropriation and the traversal views abandon the idea of radical change that the concept of the event is supposed to open. I apply these views to fields of literature and art wherein radical change remains the question, reading the works of Laura Riding, Catherine Christer Hennix, and others. I advocate for a return to a discourse that can think the ontological claims of the trans subject, which the appropriation and traversal views fail to do. In the process, I outline what I consider to be a new supervention of sexual difference, active but undertheorized in philosophy, trans studies, queer theory, and politics today: a modal difference, or differential relation to change, which renders the split between trans and cis subjectivity a precondition for any thought of sex, gender, and identity.

***Acknowledgements***

First of all, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Nathan Brown, whose mentorship, support, friendship, and faith in me made the entire arc of my doctoral studies possible. There are few people in the world of theory and philosophy as open to and capable of the task of giving oneself over to the thinking of another, in order to take on their questions from within their own terrain. I count myself immensely lucky to have been able to learn from you and with you over these last six and a half years. I am also grateful to the rest of my committee: to the other core readers, Stephen Ross and Ronjaunee Chatterjee, who gave valuable advice over the writing and revision process and throughout my studies; to the external examiner, Trish Salah, whose own work has been a model for me and whose participation in my defence was invaluable; to the arms-length examiner, Manish Sharma, and the defence chair, Marcie Frank, who have been essential to nurturing Concordia University's English Literature doctoral program. I would also like to acknowledge the support of SSHRC funding that I received for the year of 2022-2023, which allowed me to devote myself fully to this dissertation at a pivotal point in its development.

Beyond Concordia, I would like to thank Erin Graff Zivin, for her early interest in my work and her inclusion of me in both the Women in Theory working group and in an associated special issue of the journal *Diacritics*, which featured material from what is now chapter three. Likewise, I'm thankful to Alan Schrift and Shannon Sullivan, who published material from my first chapter in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. I'm grateful to the Brussels and Amsterdam-based Sex Negativity collective for inviting me to present work from my third chapter at the University of Amsterdam in the Spring of 2023. Thanks are owed in particular to collective member Tessel Veneboer, who with Hannah Van Hove also organized a Fall 2022 conference on 'The Anti-Canon' where I was able to present work from what is now my second chapter; this work is set to appear in a special issue of *Textual Practice* under their editorship. I'm grateful as well to everyone who was involved in the 2023 symposium 'Kant and the Untimely Imagination' at MaMa, in Zagreb, Croatia, where I presented work from chapter one; especially Petar Milat, the most convivial and gracious of hosts.

This dissertation grew out of the intellectual and social life of my community in Montreal, especially in and around Concordia's Centre for Expanded Poetics. I owe much to my fellow CEP researchers Paisley Conrad, Aubrey Grant, and Marlene Oeffinger, who travelled with me to symposia and conferences; to Robin Graham, who set an example for me in the program when I began there; to Jesse Ruddock and Georgia Phillips-Amos, Jessica Růžková, and Kelann Currie-Williams, whose constancy as friends and fellow travellers in academia keeps me sane; and to Joshua Weibe, who is a rare friend, collaborator, and basketball talent. I'm thankful to Michael Nardone for his enduring support in poetry, academia, and life; and to Juliette Bertholdo, for new friendship here and in Sion. I'm profoundly grateful to Nicole Raziya Fong, whose faith in me as I started my studies made it all thinkable. Beyond Montreal, I'd like to thank my friends Bianca Messinger and Rainer Hamilton, who made my research visits to Buffalo and New York possible; Lucca Fraser, for her willingness to share perspectives on her own Badiou work, which was essential to the progress of my thinking; and Jackie Ess, who during the pandemic was always open to fielding my math-related questions.

I'd also like to acknowledge the assistance of Lawrence Kumpf and Marcus Pal, who together enabled the work I did with Catherine Christer Hennix's archive in the fall of 2024, which was critical to completion of the fourth chapter of this dissertation. I'm thankful to Catherine herself, too, for allowing me to get to know and learn from her in the last years of her life. Perhaps once or twice a lifetime one will encounter someone who seems to have followed even a strand of the same thread one finds oneself following: Catherine had run it all through the loom when I met her, but she still took the time to go back and meet me where I was at.

And finally, my family. This world is navigable because it's a world I've shared with you: my mom, Carolyn, my step-mom, Janet, her partner, John, my dad, Barry, my sisters Caely and Aislinn, as well as her family, of Eric, Freya, and Ezra, you have always given me a home base for thinking, reading, and living. I want to mark out especially the support of my late step-grandmother, Sheila, who passed away right before the end of my degree. Her support for me and faith in my studies, as well as her constant modelling for me of a feminist, socialist, environmentalist, and literary life, has made me who I am.

Thank you.

***Table of Contents***

***Figures***

# Being and Transition

> “When I analyze my own society, the general problem with which I am dealing is my own problem, and conversely, my own problem is a general one. There is no need to specify the subject, since I am myself the subject. Either I totally ignore the other, or if I acknowledge that my other has something to do with the problem, I mention him; but by specifying him, and him (that is to say, her) alone.”
>
> (Nicole-Claude Mathieu, *Notes,* 25)

### *0.1 – Introduction*

*Being and Transition* studies our capacity to think change in the fields of sex, gender, and identity. The central argument of this dissertation is that we are capable of thinking change in the triune domain that these three fields represent through their points of contact only under two conditions: the first condition is change characterized as *appropriation*, and the second condition is change characterized as *traversal*. The appropriation view holds change to consist of an adaptation of the domain to oneself. The traversal view holds change to consist of a pathing through the domain that allows one to depart from it. As a corollary of this central argument, I also argue in what follows that we presume the existence of such a "triune domain," and to see the entanglement of sex, gender, and identity as a site or location which comes to situate what I refer to as the trans subject. It is toward the triune domain that literature and philosophy interested in the possibility of changes of sex, gender, and identity think, rather than toward the trans subject itself, which this thinking only later "finds" and "makes" a place for therein. Put differently, I claim that when writers and philosophers ask why and how it is that any feature of sex, gender, and identity may or may not be capable of changing, change is pictured only as either an appropriation or a traversal of the triune domain, which is always considered as a region of a larger social, linguistic, or corporeal space, and the feature which is taken to change (or not) is presumed to be an element of a hypothetical subject that can (or cannot) undergo a such a change. This I refer to as the treatment of a given metaphysics of change *as a figure*: a figure that comes to supplant the trans subject to which it inevitably affixes.[1]

[1] I think here of Sarah Dowling's recent work, where she thinks of figuration as the act of "transmut[ing] 'ideas into images,'" by which "their 'interpretable forms' solidify and become recognizable" (*Here is a Figure*, 2), and also as a "'group-speciating Figuration work' by which established systems of meaning-making distinguish, separate, and sort humankinds" (3). I think also of Lee Edelman's idea of the figure, which Harri Kalha summarizes as "a discursive, structural-situational entity" ("Figure," 20), able to "embody for us the telos of the social order" at "points of intense metaphoric investment" (*No Future*, 9, 11).

As a long line of critiques of figuration have shown, the figures of the trans subject produced by the two conditions of our thinking of change in the triune domain, the appropriating figure and the traversing figure, only ever contingently relate to "the trans subject" as it actually is, i.e., to the being of that subject which indisputably has undergone such a change.[2] But *Being and Transition* holds that it is the contingency of figuration's relation to the being of the trans subject, a being whose inconsistent multiplicity always leads it to an evasion of such a relation, that forces us to admit that *being*, and not *becoming,* is the enduring concern of transness. Despite its multiplicity, we must say that the trans subject is understood to be a subject which ceases to be A and commences being B; yet, in regard to the triune domain of sex, gender, and identity, it is the subject whose figuring ceases to be possible in site/location A, and commences being possible in site/location B. Rather than holding that the radical change undergone by the trans subject is undergone truly in the register of either appropriation or traversal, I contend that neither alone allows us to think the radical change of *transition.* In the register of appropriation, change inevitably comes to appear as that which remains a pure potentiality; in the register of traversal, change inevitably comes to appear as that which has always already occurred. Transition should be properly understood as the transformation of the latter register into the former, or the former into the latter: transition changes a capacity to change. The aim of this dissertation is thus to convince the reader that our inability to avoid thinking change through figures which appropriate or traverse, and the inadequacy of these figures to the being of the

[2] As Rosi Braidotti puts it, "figurations are ways of expressing different situated subject positions" (14) and are thus fluid "cartographies of the present" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 271). In Braidotti's influential usage, "figures" are "not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded, and embodied positions. They derive from the feminist method of the 'politics of location'" (13). This approach to the political, she claims, "first developed as a way of making sense of diversity among women within the category of sexual difference" (216). It is no wonder, then, that the trans subject is ineluctably reduced to figure, given its status as a permanent "problem" for that category—yet given this ineluctability, we must then concede that the figural is not as fluid or "pragmatic" as Braidotti leads us to believe.

trans subject who this figurative pair inevitably impinges upon and fails, forces us to return to an understanding of both being and transition as the primary questions, acts and features of the trans subject, whatever these—transness and the subject who bears it—may taken to be.

It must be made clear from the outset that *Being and Transition* is not an enquiry into what sex, gender, and identity, transness or the trans subject "are," or whether or not they "are." To make those kinds of enquiries would be to fall into the trap of figuration that this dissertation diagnoses *prima facie*. "The triune domain of sex, gender, and identity," "transness and the trans subject;" the difficulty of this dissertation's line of research is to preserve such starting points at every step as determinate and yet generic objects of knowledge. They are generic, in that they need to account for the multiplicity and the evasiveness of those whom they would address, and those for whom they would be changeable material; they are determinate in that they imply an exclusion of those whom they do not address so much as make demands upon, and those to whom they would be questionable material, i.e., the equally generic and determinate "cis subject." Presuming a triune domain of sex, gender, and identity also means presuming a point of contact for both "trans being" and "cis being." Both trans and cis subjects, I claim, figure transition in ways that curtail our thinking of it to mere possibility, and to mere enquiry. As the four chapters of this dissertation will show, however, trans subjects and cis subjects enquire into the triune domain differently. As we will see, the cis subject is forced to figure the trans subject *as* their enquiry into the domain, while the trans subject is free to be its own enquiry; but the trans subject is forced to figure the cis subject *as* the domain, while the cis subject is free to be its own domain. The goal of *Being and Transition* is thus not a dismissal of figuration. Rather, this dissertation wishes to secure the noetic means by which we may free appropriation and traversal *as figures* from this binding, so that they be truly thinkable as the elements of a transition.

Why then does this dissertation concern itself with studying, across aesthetic and philosophical history, the very kinds of enquiries that it restrains itself from making? Because these enquiries, made with varying levels of historical awareness and intellectual nuance, are whether we like it or not still *active*—which is to say, they continue to take place, and will continue to take place for as long as we encounter a thinkable world, a thinkable body, and a thinkable selfhood. We encounter the kinds of things which can serve as the elements of a transition in sex, gender, and identity (and the kinds of things which we transform into sex, gender, and identity in order to make this possible) from our births to our deaths. Even in fleeting moments where the subject encounters the dizzying joy of being no one, or being universal, collectively or in solitude, when the suspension of a temporal or spatial situation dissolves our enquiries and the elements they treat as their material, our joy and dizziness is always ready to reveal its hidden aspect, as a knowing of a merely-temporary distance from ontological thinking, and a knowing of its patience for us in our return home to it. *Being and Transition* does not just suggest that we *can* talk in a provisional and non-enquiring way about the transness of the sex, gender, and identity of the trans subject, that we can speak of them and as them without attempting their definition, but it argues that we *must* be able to do so, since this is how we first encounter and pursue the elements of a transness, as they evade the figural: as the elements of a curiously sure *insistence* upon being.

In the four chapters that comprise this dissertation, I engage in studies that explicate the above arguments and show the way that trans and cis practices of reading, writing and critique are carried out under the sway of the conditional pair *appropriation* and *traversal*. In the first chapter, I ground the concept of appropriation in the thinking of the philosopher Martin Heidegger and lay out the problematic of ontological change for the trans subject. In the second

chapter, I read a cis poetic tradition concerned with the question of transition and show that the appropriating figure active therein produces the triune domain as a *schema*, and I show how such a view of change can see it only as possibility, rather than as actuality. In the third chapter, I ground the concept of traversal in the thinking of the philosopher Alain Badiou and lay out the problematic of ontological change for the figure of the trans subject. In the fourth chapter, I read a trans poetic tradition concerned with the question of transition and show that the appropriating figure active therein produces the triune domain as a *topos*, arguing that such a view of change can see it only as a state of completion. To repeat, this is a work interested in how the limitation of the conditional pair *appropriation* and *traversal* donates to us the very occasion to insist upon a certain kind of being. If in the following readings of philosophical and literary works we notice a resemblance between the way that both trans and cis subjects approach the idea of change in the triune domain, and if we notice a resemblance between the way that trans and cis subjects evade philosophical and literary enquires into the being of their sex, gender, and identity, then we will have in hand some evidence that transness and cisness truly do encounter the same domain, the same inadequacy of figuration, and the same revelation of the ontological determinability that makes transition possible. If we experience frustration with a lack of any such evidence, then that frustration may well be the evidence we seek: a shared and fundamental frustration of the subject—trans or cis—to answer to and for itself in the face of an enquiry into its being.

Despite my aspiration to preserve the openness of the variables of this dissertation's objects of study, it is nonetheless true that this project presumes some answers to a range of questions. It presumes 1) that transness does have an essential relationship to transition; 2) that there is a meaningful distinction between being cis and being trans; 3) that transness, transition and the trans subject can be seen in the philosophical and literary traditions which have

historically deformed them; and 4) that one can speak of all this, even if provisionally, in separation from other forms of identity. Another way of putting it is that this dissertation does not exclude these ideas from the trans subject's multiplicity. It goes without saying that this project does not easily sit alongside current approaches in trans studies and trans theory, which often hold transness to be essenceless (1), universal (2), opaque (3), and inseparably conditioned (4).[3] Another way of putting it is that trans studies and trans theory, like gender studies and queer theory, and like the wider world of political, scientific and historical theory, attempts to limit the trans subject's multiplicity, which counts among itself contrary insistences, such as those made upon essence, particularity, transparency and the absolute. We must, therefore, briefly explore the situation in these disciplines, into which *Being and Transition* cannot help but intervene.

### *0.2 – Theory Liberates*

In 2005, the Canadian scholar Viviane Namaste interviewed Montreal-born artist Mirha-Soleil Ross, looking back on their friendship and the social and intellectual milieus they had moved through since the early 1990s. Ross had, with her partner Xanthra Phillippa MacKay, founded *genderpress*, which distributed the notable zine series "Gendertrash from Hell," as well as ephemera such as buttons and stickers aimed at the community of transsexual women their work spoke to. Of these buttons—many of which are now preserved at the University of Victoria's Transgender Archives, whose dedicated trans studies program was the first of its kind

[3] 1: "The prosthesis is not essence. It is transit" (Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, 169). 2: "Fixed kinds such as the trans-gendered, [or] trans-sexual […] body are expressions of a more profound transitivity that is the condition for what becomes known as the human" (Claire Colebrook, "What is it Like to be a Human?" 228). 3: "Opacity […] is a method of solidarity without being grasped. Here I'm suggesting it might be one way to theorize a radical trans visuality that attends to the universal and the particular as non-interchangeable" (Eric A. Stanley, *Atmospheres of Violence*, 88). 4: "Gender is itself a racial arrangement that expresses the transubstantiation of things" (C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 83).

in Canada—one in particular bore the motto of the zine, and has endured as a credo of the trans subject's insistence on its being in the face of theorization: it reads, "Theory Mutilates, Surgery Liberates." The credo articulates the claim that the trans subject is made possible first and foremost through the actuality of a transition (in this case medical), rather than by its possibility, or by conceptual change alone. The credo appeals pithily to the "real" and against the "abstract," the "material" against the "metaphysical," but was also born out of an era in which trans studies was first distinguished as academic discipline distinct from queer theory, a conflict in which Namaste's own work had played a central role.[4] "Theory Mutilates, Surgery Liberates" summarizes the non-academic era that Namaste and Ross speak to in their interview, in which questions of organizing (such as for the rights of trans woman sex workers, and trans women living in poverty) supposedly came before questions of identity and being.[5] But the interview is

[4] Namaste, in *Invisible Lives*, had by then already staged an important early trans critique of queer theory's tendency to instrumentalize, abstract and metaphorize trans subjects when it made broader claims about sex and sexuality. Specifically, she was one of the first to challenge the way that Butler's theory of gender performativity denies to trans people the kinds of existence that they often claim for themselves, and points out that Butler articulated their theory in large part via a reading of the "text" of the documentary film *Paris is Burning*, in which the transsexual woman Venus Xtravaganza is eventually murdered in an instance "trans panic." For Butler, Xtravaganza's death becomes an icon of the danger of the "pursuit of realness" when it comes to identity, "underscoring the phantasmatic promise that constitutes any identificatory move—a promise which, taken too seriously, can culminate only in disappointment and disidentification" (Butler, *Bodies*, 131). Chillingly, Butler claims that "this is a killing that is performed by the symbolic" in the abstract, rather than a killing by whatever very real human being may have done it (the perpetrator has still not been found). Based on this, they describe transsexualism as an "uncritical miming" and "tragic misreading" of hegemonic conceptions of sex and gender. Namaste's critique focuses on the way Butler ignores the substantial differences between those "phantasmatic investments" made by cis and trans people, as well as on the way it ignorantly flattens drag, transvestitism and transsexualism, and the way its patronizing, dehumanizing view of the trans subject as a "mere text" in which we can see concepts at work impairs the reader's ability to see her as a fully-actualized being alongside whom one could march in solidarity on any number of political issues. But even if one puts aside this much-maligned moment in Butler's thinking, their basic claim about the "performative function of the signifier" persists—that "the failure of such signifiers (like 'women') fully to describe the constituency they name is precisely what constitutes these signifiers as sites of phantasmatic investment," and also "what opens the signifier to new meanings and new possibilities" (191). This introduction has already claimed that the evasion of the figural power of appropriation and traversal is the motor of innovation and change for the trans subject. Whereas Butler considers that motor to stem from a failure of figuration, I suggest that it stems from an inescapable capacity for success.

[5] Ross's target is what she considers to be the appropriation of trans woman-led political struggle by trans men in queer theory and social activism, whose commitments she considers to be essentially bourgeois due to the uptake at that point of their "point of origin," lesbian feminism, within academia.

retrospective for a reason. It addresses changes in the position of transsexuality over the preceding decade both in and outside of the academy, specifically in regards to the birth of the umbrella term "transgender," which the authors felt implied an expectation of a wider solidarity on the part of trans women with trans men and nonbinary people under the generic banner of "transness," as well as a broader inclusion of that "transness" within "queerness" or even simply within "feminism."[6] Ross's position in the interview is that this means nothing but an elision of the transsexual woman's particular mode of being, that her capture within "transness" had placed a profound limitation on the possibility of political organizing in her interest:

> VN: You have often stated that people tend to nod knowingly when you make your points regarding the limits of transsexual organizing, but then they continue to organize in the same way. In other words, people do not take your criticisms into account in the work they do. Can you give an example of this?
>
> MSR: It is likely that people nod in agreement but that deep down, they actually don't agree at all. It could be that they don't want to challenge me or other people

[6] This terminological shift from "transsexual" to "transgender" was described by Sandy Stone—often pointed to as the godmother of trans studies—as a break with viewing "the act of passing" as "the essence of transsexualism." It seems that for Stone the "posttranssexual" movement is not a shift to a new, more inclusive essence, but a denial of essence altogether: "not an irreducible alterity but a *myriad* of alterities" (Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back"). On this point, it might be useful to briefly explain this dissertation's decision to use "trans," rather than "transsexual" or "transgender" or any other proposed answer to the problems of essence Stone responds to. Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore held this to be a fundamental decision in the article which went on to found trans studies as a discipline, "Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?"—there, they sought to highlight "the difference between the implied nominalism of 'trans' and the explicit relationality of 'trans-,' which remains open-ended and resists premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix." Whereas those authors and the theoretical tradition they led opted for the latter and its many punctuative variations, *Being and Transition* opts for the former, finding no threat in nominalism. As Joseph Gamble has outlined, "circuitous though its trajectory has been, 'trans' has ultimately emerged as the reigning sign of all that disrupts the sex/gender system in particular. […] It is not difficult to imagine an alternate world, a history that could have been, in which gender variance was marked in English not by 'trans' but by some other word or words. But in the history that has been, 'trans' has proved to be something of an historically overdetermined sign of gender variance" ("Towards a Trans Philology," 29). "Trans," here, is a name for all the foreclosures and attachments to come.

> holding similar opposing views for fear of creating "divisions" or of threatening the image of a unified and cohesive "trans" movement. But that image is illusory anyway. I don't think intersex people, drag queens and drag kings, transsexual women who sleep with heterosexual men, transsexual women who sleep with genetic lesbians, transgender FTM lesbians who sleep with other lesbians, transvestite prostitutes, and heterosexual cross-dressers have much in common personally, sexually, philosophically, or politically. So as long as we don't expose our core differences, as long as we don't show how our respective interests put us in conflict with one another, we won't be able to identify and work on the little bit that we do share in common and that might possibly call for some form of political coalition. (Namaste, 97)

"I am looking forward," Ross concludes, "to seeing current […] identity politics break down. Activists can't go on forever acting in the abstract without, at some point, having the everyday world catch up to them and set their asses on fire. Unfortunately my guess is that it will come with great legal setbacks which will once again disproportionately affect TS women and MTFs who are the poorest and the most disadvantaged" (101). Twenty years later, Ross and Namaste's controversial partisanship seems more relevant than ever: both because the backlash Ross predicted is progressing apace globally, and because her anti-identitarianism and anti-abstractivism has become the default opposition to queer theory and trans studies, even by those who contribute to these disciplines.

Take for example Thomas Billard, Avery Everhart and Erique Zhang's 2022 article "Whither Trans Studies?", which provides an exemplary update of the Namastean critique. Rather than taking aim at queer theory, though, these authors claim that it is "transgender studies

(which) struggles to define itself as a field," because it "faces an identity crisis" in which it spends all its time "debating what it means to study 'trans' topics and what it is that unites them into a coherent scholarly program."

> Much early trans studies writing has taken as its central question, "what does it mean to be transgender?" Trans studies' investment in that question has been less about generating a canon of new theories than it has been about wrestling meaning over what it means to be trans away from other disciplines. And this is not an unimportant question. But its centrality has given rise to ontological and epistemological debates around the expansive and multiple meanings of the prefix *trans*- and what can and cannot be considered a transgender "object," such that it runs the risk of decentering the material conditions of transgender life. (2)

For Billard, Everhard and Zhang, trans studies' flights of ontological fancy, its refusal to restrain itself to thinking at "the intersections of humanistic, social scientific, and biomedical inquiry, incorporating critical and empirical methods from a variety of disciplines to better account for trans materialities," has come "at great cost to the field and the wider trans community" (3).[7] The fundamental problem, they claim, recalling once more the viewpoints of Namaste and Ross, is that the trans studies we have is *merely theoretical*, when what we are in need of is an "applied trans studies" which would concern itself with "a program of research focused on identifiable and pragmatic social, cultural, and political problems of relevance to transgender people, both at the individual and collective level" (4). Just as within the disciplinary formation of mathematics there persists the idea of a separation of "pure" and "applied" mathematical thinking, these authors contend that an applied trans theory is one which would "mobilize the wealth of

[7] This article inaugurated a new, "applied" academic periodical intended as an alternative to the "theory" of the hitherto dominant venue for scholarly work in the field, *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (TSQ).

theoretical and methodological tools available to us to produce scholarship that aims to improve the material realities of transgender existence (and) 'builds structural competency' within and for transgender movements for justice" (12). The article's stated mission is not to supplant trans studies, as Namaste had hoped Dorothy Smith's "institutional ethnography" would supplant the queer theory of the 90's when it came to thinking the transsexual; rather, their hope is to "supplement" and "reorient" theory by forcing it to "recenter the material and open itself up to the empirical" (4).[8] What is not clear is how the "post-disciplinarity" and "methodological pluralism" of an "applied trans studies" would resolve the "identity crisis" we are asked to see as the symptom of overtheorization. How are the supposedly "shared concerns" of the "multiplicity of audiences" that constitute the trans subject so easily "identifiable," and identifiable as "empirical" (7), after all? If the feature that separates applied trans studies from the many disciplinary fields in which our experience has been "coopted" (5) would be that the "applying" is henceforth carried out predominantly by trans subjects, does the question of identity and the ontology of sex and gender it subtends truly become vestigial?

In 2021's *Transgender Marxism*, editor and theorist Jules Joanne Gleeson states that the goal is to ensure that "trans life *itself* comes clearly into view: we are opposed to the entrenchment of a transcendent principle of 'trans' that comes to obscure the particular struggles of trans people to survive in the face of capitalism. […] Our struggle is one that must be understood as intimate, concrete and particular; just as it restlessly casts shadows over more universal questions […] and erodes otherwise tidy attempts at systemic thought" (10). Gleeson,

[8] It is worth noting that one of the problems Namaste hoped to solve was the growing ontological scepticism of queer theory and feminism, even if she didn't feel that this could be combatted via ontology itself. Elspeth Probyn's 1993 *Sexing the Self* is perhaps the most emblematic contemporary example of the critiques of "ontological egotism" and "reification" made by the gender studies of the day, which often counted as collateral damage the claims to being made by trans subjects (*Sexing the Self*, 69, 87).

like Ross and Namaste, asserts the centrality of transition to trans life, but defines it as "a response to its own form of *hunger*" (10), or in other words, a relation to a desire, rather than an assertion of being; the question, it seems, is what we should do in response to this desire. In Gleeson's view, the scholarly, liberal, theoretical approach is to simply use this desire as a writing instrument, to continue in the long tradition of creating "metaphorical figures for the destabilisation of inherited gender traditions," "stand-ins for broader destabilisations" (11). But there she identifies a similar problem to the one diagnosed by Namaste:

> in so far as the transgender woman is seen to be speaking of herself, she is taken to be trafficking in mere particularity. […] In so far as she is taken to be speaking on a more general, more universal register, she effaces her very particularity. As she is brought to bear on all topics of social weight, she instrumentalizes herself—trans as condition, as a way of being, as a mode of life—and is made to bear the burden of the entire gendered order. Whatever she is, the trans woman is always not herself; she is a representation of gender trouble writ large. (12)

Gleeson's goal in *Transgender Marxism* is to collect works that show the intercalation of trans life with the question of the value form under capitalism: for her, "'transgender' is not a staid ontology, or an abstract, regulative identity imposed from without, but a practical truth" (25). Yet in her own entry, Gleeson does provide something of an abstract and theoretical view: concurring with Julie Serano, she argues that the question posed by transition cannot be a "why," but only a "how," and her general answer to the question of that "how" is to describe transition as, minimally, the "amassing [of] a medley of decisive features" (72). Surgery, hormones, a name, a gait, tones of voice, styles of dress: it is the way that a subject amasses these features and many others—predominantly by non-atomistically incorporating themselves into trans community as a

"way of life"—that matters. In its assembly of this medley, a "subjectivity robust enough to weather (the storm)" of transition is attained: this is what for Gleeson merits interest, and not "the 'moment of encounter,'" or the purely noetic affirmation of the sex or gender that one *is* (81). Desire—aleatory, nonteleological—is the mechanism by which decisiveness is amassed, and decisions curated; actualized desire is taken to *be* this robust subjectivity.

In her essay "Gender as Accumulation Strategy," Kay Gabriel claims, as well, that desire is the ground of what is more abstractly called transness. For her, the essence of "transsexual desire" is "to exercise autonomy to the fullest possible extent over our own relationships to the signification of sexual difference" (138). "Transsexual desires aren't good or bad," she says, "they're real," and "the critical question is […] what is to be done given that (trans people) have the desires they do" (144). Here, the "overall object" and the primary site of all signification and struggle over signification is not exactly a way of life, as it was for Gleeson, but rather a control over embodiment (136). Gabriel lays out the Marxist theses which have understood gender as a "sphere of ideology" which restricts that control to capitalistic ends, while at the same time resisting the idea that gender's ideological constitution—its operation as the maintaining of a separation of individuals into groups that aids the extraction and accumulation of value—means that gender must be either fully discarded, or that it can be changed at will via "clumsy wish-fulfillment" (139). Her aim, like Gleeson and the materialist feminist tradition that they both read, is to "displace any would-be ontological ground of the operations of gender in favor of an account of its social origins," but to at the same time show how "[a] purely social phenomenon nonetheless doesn't admit any voluntarist attempt to simply 'undo' its determinative force." But rather than accepting the received view of the materialist feminist tradition, in which trans embodiment is uniquely ideological or "aesthetic," Gabriel insists this is the case for all subjects.

She argues that a real autonomy over embodiment—possible only under communism's abolition of property, borders, the money form and the class relation—would offer both cis and trans subjects the same "liberatory horizon of a pleasurable, disalienated life" (148).[9] The embodiment of trans people in the present, which she thinks collapses the distinction between the corporeal and the aesthetic object, shows but a glimpse of this (149). Yet even as Gabriel points out that "to synonymize gender with the production of value," as many in the Marxist tradition do, "obviates the subject" and "fails to account for the subjective moment either as an irreducible dimension of experience or as the site of politically inflected desires" (150), she insists that there remains a "determination of ideology over the subject" (142), "a priority of desire over the subject" (143), for both trans and cis subjects alike. We can witness again an attempted agnosticism as to the ontological determination of the subject which continues to determine the subject ontologically: what the subject *is* is a "site" of one (ideological) desire or another.

One notices in these recent acts of trans theorization an almost axiomatic rejection of the "ontological." In Grace Lavery's 2023 *Pleasure and Efficacy*, we are told that "trans embodiment depends upon a strategic refusal of any and all demands for ontologization. With all its ambivalences, it thwarts any ontological position, demarcating as it does a social regime under which the body is transformed into language—or rather, by which the body's resistance to being so transformed occasions some form of crisis" (Lavery, 81). In 2017, Eva Hayward's "Don't Exist" "articulates an attack on ontology, on beingness, because beingness cannot be secured" (Hayward, 191). In response to what she sees as the phobic assumption that "sexed ontology […] resists transition," Hayward suggests that "beingness [is] the problem, rather than the solution, for addressing antitrans violence" (192), precisely because of how it "secures," or

[9] "Nontranssexuals too are hailed into subjectivity by the ideological operations of gender; non-transition expresses the force of a desire also" (143).

restricts, the possibilities of sex. Hil Malatino's 2022 *Side Affects* makes a point of advocating for the concept of becoming over the concept of being when it comes to describing the affective dimension of the trans subject, finding the latter more useful because "it offers a way of understanding trans experience that exists to the side of (though not incompatible with) hegemonic understandings of transition" (Malatino, 30). Che Gossett's contribution to 2024's *Trans Philosophy* likewise argues that transition "can never be merely an event, it can only be a perennial and durational struggle the morphology of which changes the stakes and throws into question the very anchors of the social, the political, and the ontology of the subject" (Gossett, 123). This point of view—becoming over being—is the common trajectory of much theorization on transness in the 21st century, carried out by both trans and cis theorists. Jasbir Puar, for example, asserts that "there is no trans. Trans becoming masquerades as a teleological movement, as if one could actually become trans" (62); "*Becoming trans* […] must highlight this impossibility of linearity, permanence, and end points" (63).

In 2019, Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager's "After Trans Studies" staged an attack on the "pure abstraction" that comes with viewing transness as a perpetual becoming, an attack little different from those attacks on queer theory carried out by Namaste twenty years prior. Pillorying the metaphorical excesses of new materialist and posthumanist theories, in which everything from lightning strikes and granite to mushrooms and octopi can be said in some way to be "trans," Chu and Drager reject any "trendy new metaphysics" which would substitute transness with allegories of flux or abolition. But neither do they tolerate any idea of the relevance of thinking about transness "ontologically:" the authors point out that "it's become quite fashionable in the past twenty years to talk about *queerness* or *blackness*, and more recently *transness*, in an ontological way, often in Heideggerian tones. At the same time, it remains the

case that being dumb enough to write a book about *womanness* would get you bounced from all the cool academic clubs faster than you can say 'intersectionality'" (Chu and Drager, 109). In their programme, "transsexual theory" would be concerned at base with the trans subject's normative, rather than purely antinormative, desires, of which "womanness" could be one.[10] At the same time, Chu and Drager attempt to evade the rubric of being by emphasizing that "norms, as such, do not exist. […] That doesn't mean that norms don't structure people's desires; what it means is that the desire for the norm consists, in terms of its lived content, in nonnormative attempts at normativity" (107). Chu's other polemical writings—most of which are in some way aimed at the theoretical indulgences of trans studies—effectively summarize the anti-ontological mood of the field and its exterior:

> It must be underscored how unpopular it is […] today to countenance the notion that transition expresses not the truth of an identity but the force of a desire. This would require understanding transness as a matter not of who one *is*, but of what one *wants*. The primary function of gender identity as a political concept—and, increasingly, a legal one—is to bracket, if not to totally deny, the role of desire in the thing we call gender. ("On Liking Women," 59)

Again, in the place of an ontological ground for sex, gender, and identity we find a discourse of desire: the claim is that the subject changes when desires change, whether that change is

[10] It is evident in Chu's writings that this idea of sex or gender as a desire for an impossible identification is the case for all subjects, and not just trans subjects. Her book *Females* notoriously asserted a sex monism, as did her essay "The Pink," which ends with an address to the cis woman reader: "I don't want what you have, I want the way in which you don't have it. I don't envy your plenitude; I envy your void." In a 2025 retrospective of *Females* Chu claimed that her goal had been to avoid "(falling) into the trap of 'transness,' a dead-on-arrival concept which in its metaphysical form had led us exactly nowhere." In her view, the position she was defending was that "desire was at the heart of trans identification" (https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/our-reasons/).

voluntarist, normative, ideologically constrained or otherwise. The claim, against all appearances, is that this ground, heart, or core somehow escapes being an "ontology" as such.

So, in the discourse of contemporary trans theory a generalized skepticism of ontology reigns, where "ontology" tends to evoke something akin to a received idea of naïve Aristotelian substance ontology. In this discourse one lacks a meaningful way to understand the object of a transition as "true" for the subject: the many subjects who act and live in the name of such truths must always be explained away as those who pause at one station in an infinitely long calvary of thought. In this discourse one lacks a meaningful way to understand the "particularity" of the demands of trans identification: the many subjects who struggle and align in the name of such particularities must be explained away as those who stubbornly block the imminent dawn of a victorious solidarity, the tonsil stones of universality, if not for which… As pithy as it may be, the claim that transness can and must be reduced to the irreducibility of desire (and that this is what will reveal what is "truly" material for us) *is still a pre-ontological reduction, is still a pre-understanding of truth, is still pre-understanding of particularity*.[11] In these claims the trans subject *is* desire; *is* a relation to desire, *is* a mode of desire. Ontology is not done with. One will also notice that the focus on desire in contemporary trans theory tends to be less interested in the coming into being of subject through transition, and more in the already-given existence of a trans desire, to which subjectivity yields or from which subjectivity is constructible. Desire must

[11] An emphasis on "trans life," usually placed in opposition to trans theory, similarly unites many of these examples. See Cassius Adair, Cameron Awkward-Rich, and Amy Marvin's rebuttal of Chu and Drager: "we also desire modes of scholarship that turn away from the contextless battle of independent hero-scholars to the more fragile and multiplicitous work of growing trans life" ("After Trans Studies," 314). It should be noted that though Adair, Awkward-Rich, and Marvin disagree with the argument for the abandonment of a discipline-formational hope made by authors of "Before Trans Studies," they are no different in concluding on the point of desire: "we cannot assume, in advance, that the world will not accommodate our desires. We must again and again find out" (316). "Trans life," when it is used to veto theory and philosophy, is more often than not reducible to time (visible even in the "After" and "Before" of these articles): the time of desire, in its accommodation or non-accommodation. It is not that this is wrong—not at all—but rather that the door remains open to asking after the identity of time; in merely noting the openness of that door, we will have already returned to ontology.

of necessity pre-exist the subject, since it is that which determines what is possible for them. The trans subject must then adapt to a variegated combination among those desire-determined possibilities, whether they be forms of sociality, embodiment, affect, or subjugation—the matters at hand being one's differential capacities for subsistence, one's differential experiences of vulnerability, one's capacity to pass and interface with certain conjunctions of institutional power, one's interpellation into or exclusion from communities and groups, and so on. Indeed, today transition is often taken to be nothing but this navigation, and moreover, to simply be one possibility among the variegation rather than something determining for the trans subject. The shifting of transness's radical claim—that one can change one's sex, gender, and identity—to a more pragmatic one—that sex, gender, and identity are vehicles through which one may desire differently—has done nothing to dissolve the enduring metaphysical question of change: how is this event, a transformation without preceding sign or lasting trace, possible? How can we know, in the absence of sign and trace, that the event of such a change has taken place, or could take place? How is it that we speak (because we do) of a change which is *not* a "mere" mode, a "mere" repurposing, a "mere" performative shift of what is said to change?[12]

Throughout this dissertation, "radical change" will refer to the way that these supposedly "mere" changes, in the event of transition, *are* ontologizations. At the same time, we will see that the fact that we can only ever figure change in the triune domain under the conditions of appropriation or traversal is the very reason that we seem forced ultimately to foreclose the

[12] In this respect, the very meaning of the "mere" will be of continuing interest in what follows: from its Latin root, *merus*, "mere" refers to that which is undiluted, unadulterated, unmixed, while from its Greek root, *meros*, it refers to a part, an allotment, or a division. Together, this etymology has resulted in the logical study of part/whole relationships, "mereology," but also a popular superlative in everyday speech for some limit case of relevance, the most essentially minor and most immediately implied element of a proposition. To be a "mere" X is not to fully be an X, but to be the most minor and immediate element of which one can speak in connection to X, a tautological specification of X by which X can "go without saying"; relevant here is the triune domain's fate as a supplement, always, of some larger surround. The "mere" is the first incipience of the event and that incipience alone, and not the fullness of what the event brings about (*Oxford Etymological Dictionary*).

possibility of radical change for the trans subject. It is our fear of being rationally led to accept the abandonment of the possibility of radical change which leads to the arresting of such a thinking. It is our settling-for (in the case of the trans-affirmative) or our appealing-to (in the case of the trans-negative) the affordances and consequences of the "mere" in "mere change," which leaves the dual conditions of our thinking—the tools by which we can and do ontologize the "mere"—uninterrogated. This dissertation therefore cannot indict the voices of trans theory today for "reducing" the trans subject to "mere desire," any more than it can indict authors of queer theory, as Namaste had Judith Butler, for "reducing" it to "a mere tropological figure, a textual and rhetorical device that points to the crisis of category and the category of crisis" (15). Transness is characterized by the inconsistent multiplicity of its subject: but the journey to and back from the "mere," in which theorization becomes one among many of its surgical procedures, *is* a part of its being.

What would be possible if we could update the received conception of ontology active in trans theory, which has undergirded its retreat into a discourse which holds desire to be transness' only thinkable ground? What would be possible if we were to place the ontological claim of the event as it stands within ontology today in relation to transness and the trans subject? At the very least, we would be freed a little—liberated—to theorize, which means, to continue insisting upon our inexpugnability from the past, present, and future of philosophy, literature, and being. We will set out on this operation remembering for as long as we can that the figure of the trans subject *does not figure the trans subject—it figures a metaphysics of change,* of which there are two. The first I call "appropriation."

# Chapter One, Transition as Appropriation

"In matters of essence there is no progress but only the transformation of the same."

(Heidegger, *Basic Questions*, 49)

### *1.1 – Ontology, Still*

For the last century, ontology has named a philosophical site that we find occupied by the time we get to it—occupied by past and future threats named 'Heidegger.' Those who would "do ontology," or those who would investigate the thinking of being in itself, and ask the question of the difference between beings and Being, have only four choices when it comes to grappling with Martin Heidegger's enduring occupation of this site: they can pretend to forget him, attempt to demolish him, offer to rename him, or try to follow him, even if only in hopes of staging a closure of the lines of thinking he opened from within.[13] Acknowledging this thinker's unsurpassed intervention into ontology as it stood in the philosophical tradition in his time does not mean that there can today be a "saving" of Heidegger from his notorious connection to fascism and fascist thought—nor, it ever-more-increasingly seems, was there a point in the development of his thinking where this could have been possible (Wolin, *Heidegger in Ruins*). There is a clear risk in beginning this attempt at understanding how we are forced to figure change within the triune domain of sex, gender, and identity by investigating the site of ontology, and thus invoking his name, for the trans subject can surely find no safety in a site that

[13] Since this chapter cites from both pre- and post-Turn Heidegger, it should be noted that after the Turn Heidegger begins referring to "Being" (*Sein*) with the archaic German *Seyn*, and in the English this is rendered as "beyng" (and Dasein occasionally as "Daseyn"). With this renaming Heidegger intended to finally discard the metaphysical concept of Being as a "beingness of beings" (with would reduce it to a being; a fault he came to consider himself having made in *Being and Time* despite his efforts) and towards Being as a "rift" (or "between," *Contributions*, 366) that clears away, a rift within which beings can "stand-free," i.e., an occasion for beings rather than a condition for them (Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, 98). In his pre-Turn writings, the central point is that there is a difference between Being and beings: "Being is essentially different from a being" (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 17). The whole problem of how this distinction can be made led to his positing of Dasein as the only being that grasps the ontological difference, since it alone interprets itself through beings: "its mode of being is different from that of the being which it itself is not" (121). In his post-Turn *Contributions*, Heidegger clearly describes how this had changed: by then he felt "there is no immediate difference between beyng and beings, because there is altogether no immediate relation between them" (375). Looking back, Heidegger believed that "the 'ontological difference' as such and the postulation of it with the aim of overcoming metaphysics seem at first to produce the opposite effect, namely, an even firmer entrenchment in 'ontology.' The differentiation is taken as a doctrinal terminus and as the key point of an ontological consideration, and what is decisive is forgotten: the fact that this differentiation is supposed to be a passageway" (367). As we will see, Dasein after the Turn becomes the closure, rather the opening, of the question of ontological difference, as it adjusts Being to itself.

Heidegger occupies. The trans subject's supposed domain, after all, has long been excluded from his vision of the properly ontological (that which is concerned with Being), since the features that are said to constitute it, namely scientific, corporeal, and social determinations, are normally restricted to the ontic dimension (that which is concerned with beings). But if we note that Heidegger cannot be saved, we also must note that the trans subject cannot be saved—saved from ontology, that is, which means saved from raising, from its unique ontic position, an ontological question on its basis. After all, the basic struggle of the trans subject today is against a thinking in which *it is not*: a thinking that holds that the possibilities claimed by the trans subject, the capacity of sex, gender, and identity to change, are no possibilities at all. It is ironic, then, that no other modern philosopher has worked harder than Heidegger at opening the question of "a saving power" in the thought of change, and specifically in regard to poetry's role in such a saving, as a sheltering and a safeguarding of the possibility of change. He is known to have found succor in Hölderlin's immortal lines on this point: "But where danger is, grows/The saving power also." For Heidegger, these lines force us to ask: are these two powers, this capacity to both risk and save the question of Being? Does one term become the other? If so, how would such a change be possible? Given that these capacities are always found together, might the desire for salvation—the dream of rescue from the question—itself be the danger?

The many ambiguities of Heidegger's work demand a wager. It often seems that this is a thinker who sought to convey his thinking in a way that would force readers to replicate his own forms of hermeneutic engagement with poets and other philosophers—for him "every interpretation must necessarily use violence" (*Kantbook*, 141), and we retain the ability to commit that violence on him. His defense of an inexhaustible possibility of interpretation itself frequently seems like a safeguard, an escape hatch planted in his works that allows him to remain

slippery, ambivalent, and adaptable. The wager is that we can overcome this safeguard, and understand the danger the trans subject is in. As in "Patmos," where danger and safety begin in entanglement and end in identity, in Heidegger it can never be a matter of judiciously separating the untainted concepts from the tainted ones, or the moments that are by all appearances incompatible with his political failures from the moments which secure those failures ever more firmly at the foundations of his thought. Where one is, so is the other. Anyone who reads Heidegger in our moment, now that the timed release of the whole of his writings is near to its close, at some point finds themselves "turned around." They find, in the work, a reversal, and thus (it seems) a defense of the possibility of change: at the very least, who or what the site of ontology *is* seems to change when we aren't looking, and for reasons not immediately given. Just as one still must say "Heidegger" whenever one says "ontology," so too must one say "transition" whenever one says "change." Thus, this chapter focuses on the figure of the "turn" and the concept of appropriation in Heidegger's writings in order to show what they mean for our ideas of transition and hence change.

What then does "transition" (*Übergang*) signify in his work? For Heidegger, transition is the transformation of a beginning.[14] To be precise, transition is a movement from one beginning for being and thinking (inception) to another, which occurs in the recognition that the new beginning, an "other beginning," can only be located through a turn to a "first beginning"[15] (Backman, *Complicated Presence*, 66). Heidegger's belief that this first beginning lay for "the

[14] Heidegger's conception of transition is not stable across the 1930's, the highest point of its usage in his writings. By 1939 Heidegger makes clear that "the transition is not progress (*Fort-schritt*), nor is it a slide from the previous into something new" (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, 182; tr. mod. Backman).

[15] "As retrogression to the first inception, the transition to the other inception is a constructive *retrieval* or *retake* of the first inception. […] The other inception is not a 'correction' of a mistake or omission made at the very beginning of philosophy. The unthought and unarticulated background element in the first inception is not something that was in principle accessible for the Presocratics or Plato but was simply missed by them."

West" in Presocratic thought is often mischaracterized as some kind of reification of an Ancient Greek origin for thinking and culture, an origin to which he would have us "return." Rather, as a "turn," transition places the condition for true change *in a change of origin*, the culmination of which would render that origin unrecognizable, and open new possibilities and pathways for thought and being on its basis. In the German, *Übergang* literally means "going-over," and is for Heidegger a surviving (withstanding) of the end of one arrangement of Being which makes possible our placement within a new arrangement; the "going-under" of one arrangement, which arises from the accumulating abandonment (withdrawal) of possibilities for the world's beings which constitutes a transition, he calls "decline" (*Untergang*) (Ma, "Heidegger's 'Untergang'"; Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI,* 128). The pivotal moment of transformation in Heidegger's philosophical life, the "Turn" (*Kehre*) made after his early writings, in which the vestiges of *Being and Time's* systematicity gave way to the meditative and poetic mode of the *Contributions to Philosophy* and its preparatory works, such as *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, was for him a model of this sudden reversal or inversion, of a "going-down" that becomes a "going-over," turning decline *into* transition (Heidegger, *Ponderings XII-XV*, 200).[16] The Turn also marked the beginning of his contemplation of this concept of radical change that he called the Event (*Ereignis*).[17] Though left undetermined by Heidegger, the Event is that which comes from our

[16] "A downgoing or a complete inversion" (124) is "the inversion of the throwing oneself adrift" (64). It is the cessation of Dasein's thrownness.

[17] *Ereignis* has been translated two ways: by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu as "Event," and by Mark A. Wrathall and William Blattner as "Adaptation." The former translation opts to preserve the meditative openness that comes with the concept; the latter aims for a more pragmatic simplification. In German, *Ereignis* normally refers to any kind of "occurrence," "event" or "happening," and derives etymologically from "*Er-äugen*," or to "en-eye," to "come into view," to "put before one's eyes." But Heidegger invents an alternate etymology for *Ereignis*: he claims it comes from "Er-eigen," or to "en-own," to "take ownership," to "come into one's own" (*Cambridge Lexicon*, 24/5). The participle *-eigen* in the latter, "own," is itself a holdover from Heidegger's pre-Turn concepts of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) and inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*), both of which refer to one's "ownmost." *Ereignis* is also closely linked to *Ereignung*, or "appropriation"—a "making proper" or "taking as one's own." Thomas Sheehan, a member of the pragmatist interpretative line on Heidegger, and partisan of the idea that there is no Turn in his work, claims that appropriation should be seen as simply another word in the constellation that

"transition to the other beginning" (*Contributions*, 139), a kind of reopening of pure possibility that would enable wholly other ways of being for Dasein, irrevocably transforming metaphysics, history, art, and the very essence of identity, embodiment, and our belonging to a world. My inquiry at the outset of *Being and Transition* is to ask: what sort of change is Heidegger's Event? How does the transition from one register of ontological questioning (the "what is Dasein" becoming "who is Dasein" prior to the turn) to another (the "who is Dasein" becoming Dasein's "what" after the turn) theorize the problem of transition, and metaphysical change more broadly? How do Heidegger's changing views on the possibility of change touch upon sex, gender, and identity, and in what way does his "non-anthropological" interpretation of the principal subject of both the ontological question and the Event—Dasein—carry along with it a sexed, gendered, and identity-bound position?[18] In other words, what does a theory of the Event after Heidegger have to do with a theory of transition in the triune domain?

Situating Heidegger's Turn within the political context of his idea of transition and its enduring influence in the philosophical tradition is a daunting and necessary task, especially given the increasing application of contemporary fascist thought to the trans subject's place in the triune domain, which has become a staging ground globally for the attacks of various revanchist conservativisms on a dying liberal world order. Far from being retrograde in our

---

"thrownness" organizes, namely, a word for a fundamental situation of Dasein (Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, xv)—he also advocates that *Ereignis* be translated only as "appropriation," pointing to Heidegger's desire to sever the term from its everyday meaning (xvii, 232). The obvious problem with this reading is that it cannot be denied that Heidegger uses two terms, *Ereignis* and *Ereignung*, and not one. As Sheehan himself admits, just because Heidegger disbars us from a temporal understanding of the event does not mean that other senses of it could not be used. A better understanding of the difference of the two terms can be seen in Jussi Backman's summary: "*Ereignis*, event or 'taking-place,' is the belonging together, the correspondence, the correlation, the reciprocal appropriateness and appropriation—in brief, the meaning-generating interplay—between the 'place' and the 'taking,' between human being and being in its differentiation from being" (Backman, 221).

[18] As Heidegger always made clear, the entire purpose of introducing Dasein as a formal indication was to do away with the received model of subjectivity and the subject-object model; I continue in this chapter to use "trans subject" in the indeterminate spirit explained in the introduction, but encourage the reader not to mistake this for an identification of the trans subject with Dasein.

present, or only capable of furnishing support to the enemy, an investigation of Heidegger's Turn at the end of the 1920's and into the 1930's—a very similar moment to our own—shows it to be exemplary of the ways in which philosophy can fail such a moment, and can help us see the value in holding the ground of ontological discourse for the trans subject. Put another way, my argument in this chapter rejects the view, widely held among gender abolitionists and many trans Marxist thinkers, that the total abandonment of such a discourse is the only effective or possible response to such moment. To reach this point, we will move through Heidegger's treatments of change, the way these treatments have been applied to the triune domain by thinkers in his wake, and finally the way he related these treatments to poetics, and the Evental power of the poet.

### *1.2 – Change Before the Turn*

Where and how do we see a theory of change in the pre-Turn Heidegger of *Being and Time*? Why is looking for a theory of change prior to the Turn inadequate, and why do I argue that one must look to the work which took place *at* the Turn instead to find such an element? There are two places we could look in *Being and Time*: on the one hand, we could look for Heidegger's theory of change in his discussion of the sudden "transformation" of the way Being shows itself to us in those moments when a being changes (in aspect or state) from the ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*, "availableness") to the present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit* "occurrentness") and back again. As Heidegger describes it, the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are "modes" of the Being of beings (*Being and Time*, 273): as ready-to-hand, Being appears to us as an array of "equipment" (*Zeug*) which interrelatedly constitute a World of things available for our use; as present-at-hand Being reveals the simple occurrence of these things as mere "entities" or "matter," a kind of reduction attributed especially to scientific enquiry. A "change" occurs—a

ready-to-hand tool like a hammer breaks—and suddenly what we have in hand is no longer the means by which we could fulfill a goal (an "in-order-to," such as the construction of a chair on which to sit and read, etc.), but a lump of wood and a lump of metal. In the example of the broken hammer we can see why Heidegger says that the shift of a being from ready-to-hand to present-at-hand brings about a "distancing" (*Entfernung*): that which was close, the hammer, whose rhythm of use we were lost in, becomes far when it breaks, even if we bring it physically near us for an inspection that might locate the problem which "conspicuously" or "obstinately" enforces a distance between us and the work we had been carrying out in the world (104). This change in our triangulation with beings also occurs from the other direction, as we use the repaired hammer (or find the missing hammer, etc.) to complete our work and turn a pile of branches and a handful of nails into a seat. Heidegger calls this a "de-distancing" (*Ent-fernung*) and holds that our activity as humans is mostly concerned with this latter kind of transformation, the gathering of things into a useful nearness in which we can be absorbed (114). Is either case something we could call change? At first *Being and Time's* radical intervention into substance metaphysics and Cartesian spatiality seems to require such a concept to explain the transformation of farness into nearness and vice versa, relative to the kind of being that we "for the most part" are, "Dasein."[19] But Heidegger is clear that this is "not a change of properties," and "not an alteration of a thing" (103). Presence-at-hand is a simply a "deficient mode" of Dasein's engagement with its world, which readiness-to-hand is a fuller expression of (403).

On the other hand, we could look for Heidegger's theory of change in his discussion of Dasein's oscillation between its existence as an authentic or an inauthentic being, which are also

[19] "Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine. This definition indicates an ontologically constitutive state, but it does no more than indicate it. […] In each case an "I"—not Others—is this entity" (150). "Dasein is ontically constituted by Being-in-the-World" (102).

described as "modes" (377). Just as Dasein's differential spacing of and placement within its world seems to alter the way in which Being is given to it, so too can Dasein's own kind of Being, which is care (*Sorge*)—practically expressible in its concern (*Besorgen*) for intraworldly beings, and its solicitude (*Fürsorgen*) for others—"change" from an inauthentic to an authentic mode, and back again.[20] Dasein's character as care means that Being matters for it, and beings are thus possibilities for it: Dasein's capacity for "resoluteness" towards these possibilities—its ability to withstand the uncertain anticipation of which possibilities might be "its ownmost" among all others—articulates Dasein as authentic, whereas Dasein's capacity for "irresoluteness" in the face of those possibilities—its tendency to continually fall for (*Verfallen*) the kinds of possibility selected for it by others, the mass subjectivity of "the They" (*Das Man*) which chooses what is appropriate for "anyone in general" and no one in particular—articulates Dasein as inauthentic.[21] When Dasein fails to confront its "ownmost potentiality-for-being" (222), which

[20] A term that Heidegger chooses based on a fable by the Roman poet Juvenal: in the fable, the goddess Cura (Latin for both "care" and "concern") shapes the man out of earth (242). As William Blattner notes, care is one of the features of Heidegger's thinking that abruptly disappears after the Turn (*Cambridge Lexicon*, 144).

[21] *Verfallen* is translated as "fallenness" in the translation of *Being and Time* used for quotation in this dissertation, that of Macquarrie and Robinson, which shaped the dominant understanding of the concept in English by commentators like Hubert Dreyfus; as a result, the spatial metaphor of the term has tended to be overemphasized in Heidegger's Anglo-American reception, especially given fallenness' relation to thrownness. *Verfallen* literally means "falling prey" in the German (*Cambridge Lexicon*): as in, "falling for a ruse, joke, or trap." As such, more recent translations of Heidegger, including the Stambaugh translation of *Being and Time*, simply render it in English as "falling prey." But problematically for our purposes, the main translators of Heidegger's post-Turn writings, Rojcewicz and Vallega-Neu, choose to translate the closely-related *Verfall* (which, where it appears in earlier translations ,is usually just rendered as "fall") as "decline," while also translating *Untergang* as both "decline" and "going-under" (Ma, "Thinking Through Heidegger's 'Untergang'"). The sloppiness of this translation decision aside, it forces us to ask whether decline/going-under really should be seen as Heidegger's post-Turn updating of the concept of fallenness, given the close resemblance of the two term's usages in the German. In each case, Heidegger subjects what is normally a term of negativity or moral opprobria to a *détournment*. In the case of fallenness, we are asked to see this phenomenon not as "a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status,'" or a "bad and deplorable ontical property," but as a "positive possibility" for Dasein (220). "In falling, Dasein itself as factical Being-in-the world, is something from which it has already fallen away." It is not that in fallenness Dasein has "lost" itself, but the opposite: fallenness proves that Dasein has already "found" itself, since the very fact that it can "fall prey" to anything within the coercive horizon of possibilities enforced by the They means that it *is*, i.e., it is already in and with a structure of care. In the case of decline/going-under, Heidegger repeatedly notes that it is in fact a sign of what carries the greatest potential, namely, the potential for transition into the Event: "The going-under is the gathering of everything great in the moment of preparedness for the truth of the uniqueness and non-

as Heidegger makes clear is most of the time, Dasein flees its capacity to "[become] 'essentially' Dasein in […] authentic existence" (370).[22] For Heidegger the exemplary case of this is seen in our anxiety in the face of death, which is uniquely the possibility of an end of possibility: in its everyday existence Dasein "lets itself be carried along" by the world and its They, oblivious to the possibility that an end to its possibilities might come (216). At times, though, Dasein is summoned to the truth of this possibility by a "call," which possesses "the momentum of a push—of an abrupt arousal" (316), despite the fact that what the call says, if heeded, is nothing. The reason that death is first among those possibilities that Dasein might claim as its own, the possibility most appropriate to it in its authenticity, is that death cannot be one of the possibilities prescribed by the They, which "cannot die; for death is in each case mine" (477). Again, authenticity and inauthenticity do not "change" what Dasein is: Dasein remains care, and thus a being for whom its Being is a question. Blattner digs into this idea:

> In everything Dasein does, who it is is up for grabs. That is, in acting one way rather than another, Dasein takes a stand on who it is. By throwing myself into combing through Heidegger's corpus for uses of *Sorge*, I understand myself as a scholar. If instead I threw myself into the details of brewing beer, I would understand myself as a brewer. This is to say, Dasein is what it does: "'One is' what one pursues" (SZ 239). Self-understanding is changeable, rather than stagnant. I can give up being a scholar and devote my life

repeatability of beyng. The going-under is the most intimate proximity to the refusal in which the event bestows itself on the human being" (*Contributions*, 180). In Lin Ma's interpretation, decline "emerges as the necessary consequence of the evolvement of the history of Being when Being withdraws. From this standpoint, Heidegger suggests that one can neither disown the actuality of decline nor try to save it because such decline belongs properly to this era. Rather than that, one has to let the devastation take its full course while at the same time looking forward to […] a new inception [beginning] that is embedded in the first inception" (Ma, 69). *Untergang*, like *Verfallen*, is critical to the sensing of something Heidegger considers essential—but rather than remaining a neutral characteristic of Dasein, like fallenness, decline becomes a desired outcome for history, which Dasein should eagerly surrender to; we shall see how this speaks to Heidegger's idea of change after the Turn.

[22] "Proximally and for the most part Dasein is not itself but is lost in the theyself, which is an existentiell modification of the authentic Self" (*Being and Time*, 365).

> henceforth to brewing. What's more, self-understanding is always susceptible to challenge and questioning. This is the sense in which one's being is at issue in living. I (or someone else) can challenge my self-understanding, either by questioning how I pursue my current way of life […] or by challenging my devotion to this way of life at all. […] Heidegger declares in Division II that "the certainty of the resolution means: holding itself free for its possible and always factically necessary retraction (*Zurücknahme*)" (SZ 307–08). One must always be open to retracting one's self-understanding, because the latter is susceptible to criticism, challenge, and rejection. (*Cambridge Lexicon*, 138)

In sum, prior to Heidegger's turn he does not think that Dasein "attains authenticity" or "overcomes inauthenticity" in any kind of final manner. Prior to the Turn, Dasein never undergoes change per se.[23] Because Dasein *is* "authentically" only in moments in which its "ontic" identity or selfhood is revealed as something it can change for itself, rather than something essential to it, in each instance Dasein remains the unchanging condition of that potential. Possibility, properly speaking, is the only thing that can be essential to Dasein.

But we must still ask what the relation of Heidegger's analysis of temporality might be to a theory of change. Heidegger's view of time, and his view of time's relation to or even identity with Dasein (*Concept of Time*, 20), is of course still a hotly-debated topic, the summary of which—even just in his pre-Turn period—would exceed the range of this dissertation. But in

[23] Except, possibly, in its death, which Heidegger does describe in *Being and Time* as "its *transition* to no-longer-Dasein" (281, italics mine). However, I feel we should distinguish this from the kind of radical change that comes to interest him after the turn for three reasons. First, because we are told that "Dasein reaches its wholeness in death"; this is therefore a whole that is completed, rather than a whole transformed. Second, because we are told that "[Dasein] gets lifted right out of the possibility of experiencing this transition and of understanding it as something experienced"; if death is a change that Dasein undergoes, it is only the death (and change) of "the Dasein of Others". And third, because Heidegger is clear that the entity that dies remains the same: "The *end* of the entity *qua* Dasein is the *beginning* of the same entity *qua* something present-at-hand."

*Being and Time* and his earlier writings, such as the 1924 lecture *The Concept of Time*, Dasein's unchanging essence does not mean that a certain kind of "irreversibility" does not accrue for it.[24] "Irreversibility comprises whatever remains of authentic time for this explication [of Dasein's possibilities] to seize upon. This is what remains of futuricity as the fundamental as the fundamental phenomenon of time as Dasein. This way of viewing it looks away from the future towards the present, and from out of the present its view runs after time which flees into the past. The determination of time in its irreversibility is grounded in the fact that time was reversed beforehand" (18). What Heidegger is describing in this dense passage is the inauthentic temporality of Dasein in its everydayness, which (in flight from the finitude that death installs for it) allows Dasein to hold itself to have an irreversible past: what has been done cannot be undone, prior possibilities cannot be returned to, nor different paths taken. This, however, is the principal deception of the They:

> he who exists inauthentically is constantly losing time and never 'has' any, the temporality of authentic existence remains distinctive in that such existence, in its resoluteness, never loses time and 'always has time'. For the temporality of resoluteness has, with relation to its Present, the character of a moment of vision. When such a moment makes the Situation authentically present, this making present does not itself take the lead, but is held in that future which is in the process of having-been. One's existence in the moment of vision temporalizes itself as something that has been stretched along in a way which is fatefully whole in the sense of the authentic historical constancy of the Self. This kind of temporal existence has its time for what the Situation demands of it, and it has it 'constantly'. But resoluteness discloses the "there" in this way only as a

[24] "The 'who'" of Dasein "is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in so doing" (150).

Situation. So if he who is resolute encounters anything that has been disclosed, he can never do so in such a way as to lose his time on it irresolutely. (*Being and Time,* 463)

Dasein *is* authentically when it sees the irreversible—its past, which it is constantly in the midst of due to it being constitutively "ahead-of-itself" (238)—as that which continues to be possible for it, rather than a settled, "fully actualized" matter; this is why Dasein's past is, authentically, its future (478).[25] When Dasein heeds the call of conscience, it confronts its past, reversing the irreversible (as well as its flight from death) in a way that results in the "breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way" (167)—but this is not the discovery or novel creation of a new way of being.

In fact, authentic Dasein for Heidegger is more akin to that Dasein which ecstatically embraces its "who" as it finds it, rather than that Dasein that truly modifies itself: "the authentic coming-towards-itself of anticipatory resoluteness is at the same time a coming-back to one's ownmost Self, which has been thrown into its individualization. This ecstasis *makes it possible for Dasein to be able to take over resolutely that entity which it already is*.[26] In anticipating, Dasein brings itself again forth into its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. If Being-as-having been is authentic, we call it 'repetition'" (388, italics mine). Extending Blattner's analogy, this is nothing like the Sartrean realization that after a life of unhappy scholarship, say, one was always meant to be a brewer, and still has time to become one, no matter how late in the day this realization may come—rather, the call of conscience summons Dasein back to its past, revealing its history as the true site where something is still possible for it. "In being futural Dasein is its past; it comes back to it in the 'how'. The manner of its coming back is, among other things,

[25] Technically speaking, the "past" and the "self" which Dasein is "ahead of" is that of the They; concepts such as "earlier" and "later" only make sense when founded on the "now-time" of the They (*Cambridge Lexicon*, 760/1).
[26] As he puts it, "a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen" (435). In other words, Dasein is capable, through repetition, of choosing its inauthenticity as fate (438).

conscience. Only the 'how' can be repeated. The past—experienced as authentic historicity—is anything but what is past. It is something to which I can return again and again" (*The Concept of Time*, 19). Thrown into the world, Dasein is, at first, what the They says it is. Dasein does, at first, what the They says one does. Dasein may wish to change—it may be told by the They that, like it (as it), it does not "have time" to do so. But since it is always there alongside itself, Dasein can always return to itself, repeat itself, and choose again those inherited possibilities for itself. Authentic Dasein can from this point of view be seen as an embracing of inauthentic Dasein as *that which still is possible*, and at the very least, that which is "mine." Seen this way, the alteration which takes place, if there is one, is an alteration of the They rather than an alteration of Dasein. "For the most part I myself am not the 'who' of Dasein; the they-self is its 'who'. Authentic Being-one's-Self takes the definite form of an existentiell modification of the 'they'" (*Being and Time*, 268). I.e., "I used to be a scholar, but now I'm a scholar that's a brewer;" or "I used to be a scholar, and could have been a brewer, but now I'm a scholar who could be a brewer." The relevance of this line on change for the trans subject is apparent.

These candidates for a theory of change in Heidegger's pre-Turn thinking each turn out to constitute instead a theory of possibility, or of modes. The works that we can place at the precipice of Heidegger's turn bear a very different relationship to the question of change. Rather than seeing these works as a continuation of his project of fundamental ontology, or a movement into another region of that approach, the Turn was for Heidegger the transition of his thinking to a thinking of transition. It was this reorientation that opened for the first time in his writings the idea of radical change we are asking about, in the event, the dimensions of which we must now uncover in regard to the trans subject and its placement in the triune domain.

### *1.3 – Mirages of Transition*

"Assigned to a body, Dasein is separated in its facticity, subject to dispersion and parcelling out, and thereby always disjunct, in disaccord, split up, divided by sexuality toward a determinate sex" (Derrida, "Geschlecht," 76). And again, "Dasein has a physique: its face, its very body, and its 'identity' attest to the force of transformation. […] Being, as Heidegger says, is *befremdlich*, astonishing. Couldn't this word also be translated as queer?" (Malabou, *The Heidegger Change*, 283) In these examples, drawn from Jacques Derrida and Catherine Malabou, respectively, we can make out a shared search for a discourse of sex, gender, and identity in Martin Heidegger's thinking; they are not alone in this search. Tina Chanter has represented a line of analysis that ties Heidegger's thought to feminist traditions of existential critiques of sexual difference, from Simone de Beauvoir to Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, for whom "Heidegger's way of thinking provides a model for [the] theoretical approach to sexual difference" (Chanter, *Ethics of Eros*, 129). Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin, in *Heidegger, His Life and Philosophy,* describe an aborted collaborative project that would have read Heidegger's use of languages of measure in both his personal letters to lovers and later writings as a coded theory of sexuation (Badiou and Cassin, *Heidegger*, xix). E. Das Janssen's work, straddling queer theory and phenomenology, has "aim[ed] to provide an application of the theories Heidegger developed in his fundamental ontology to the lived human experience of gender," and has attempted to carve out a space for transness therein (Janssen, *Phenomenal Gender*, 30).[27]

Heidegger himself is known for rarely speaking about gender and sexuality. Jill Drouillard, writing on Heidegger's sparse commentary on the matter in 1928's *The Metaphysical*

[27] Janssen has continued this line in his contribution to *Heidegger, Dasein, and Gender: Thinking the Unthought*, edited by Patricia Glazebrook and Susanne Claxton, which compiles works which treat Heidegger's thinking in the context of contemporary LGBTQ+ studies. The premise of this collection, according to the editors, is that "there appear to be good reasons to suspect that Dasein cannot be gender neutral" (Thinking the Unthought, 1).

*Foundations of Logic*, claims that "Heidegger was not interested in *Lebensphilosophie* (life philosophy) and biological constructions of the human being," but also that it would be "in line with Heidegger's historical ontology to conclude that neither sex nor gender are static concepts that defy the influence of history" (Drouillard, "Heidegger," 164). As she notes, *Foundations* is one of the rare texts in his oeuvre where he discusses sexuality and gender explicitly. There, in setting out his "guiding principles" for the investigation of Dasein, he says that

> the peculiar neutrality of the term 'Dasein' is essential, because the interpretation of this being must be carried out prior to every factual concretion. This neutrality also indicates that Dasein is neither of the two sexes. But here sexlessness is not the indifference of an empty void, the weak negativity of an indifferent ontic nothing. In its neutrality Dasein is not the indifferent nobody and everybody, but the primordial positivity and potency of the essence. (Heidegger, *Foundations*, 136-7)

Despite this essential neutrality, "Dasein harbors the intrinsic possibility for being factically dispersed into bodiliness and thus into sexuality. The metaphysical neutrality of the human being, inmost isolated as Dasein, is not an empty abstraction from the ontic, a neither-nor; it is rather the authentic concreteness of the origin, the not-yet of factical dispersion (*Zerstreutheit*)" (138). Interestingly, most of Heidegger's comments on gender and sexuality can be placed at or around the beginning of the Turn, with another notable mention appearing in his 1928-9 lecture course *Introduction to Philosophy*:[28]

> Dasein is in each case factically male or female, it is a sexual [gendered] being (*Geschlechtswesen*). This involves a very particular [way of being]-with and -to one

[28] The question of sex and gender's relevance within ontological enquiry had at least crossed his mind prior to 1928, though, in the notes to his Summer 1923 Freiburg lectures, published as *Ontology, The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Drouillard, "Problem: What is Woman?").

> another. […] The possibilities of human existence that are not determined by sexual [gendered] relations (*Geschlechtsverhältnis*) can only be pointed at. However, the sexual relation is only possible, because Dasein is already determined in its metaphysical neutrality through the with-one-another. If each Dasein, which is factically in each case male or female, were not essentially with-one-another, then the sexual relation as something human would be impossible. (Nelson, "Formal Indication and Sexual Difference," 73, brackets his)

As Eric S. Nelson puts it, for Heidegger "the ordinary ways of grasping sexual and gender differences are too anthropologically fixating and insufficiently formal to disclose the concrete plurality and singularity of ways of existing, including the multiplicity of ways of gendered existing. These pathways cannot be limited to one ideal or form of what it is to be human, female, or male" (73). But more importantly, as Nelson shows, Heidegger's critique of what he saw then as a contemporary revival of "Feuerbachian vulgar materialism" pointed to gender and sexuality only because he held it to serve as an example of an insufficiently formal ontological programme, and in this it presaged "Heidegger's shift from absorbed ontic concreteness to a neutrality that can disclose genuine concretion" (70).[29]

According to Derrida, it is precisely Heidegger's silence on sex and gender that has fuelled the desire of so many to locate it interpretatively in his work, as specious as such readings

[29] "The fundamental thesis of Feuerbach's anthropology, his theory of the human, is: man is what he eats. There is something correct about this thesis, but confusion always results from a half-truth being made into a universal principle." "There is an attempt today to renew this mistake, which does not, therefore, become truer, where one makes the vulgar materialism of Feuerbach more tasteful with the assistance of contemporary phenomenology" (Nelson, 69). Heidegger's point of reference here is obscure, but it is worth noting that what he was naming as a turn to an almost behaviorist view of gender and sexuality—as well as a view of the sexes existing in a supposedly natural complementarity—was contemporary with the development of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, a private sexology research center that pioneered early forms of sex reassignment treatments. The closure of the Institute and the burnings of its archives were carried out by a Nazi student group in May, 1933, just five days after Heidegger joined the party and secured his rectorship at Freiburg University.

may at times be. "Heidegger has remained silent" and thus has "silenced sex," Derrida says, and this "transitive silence" is clearly as productive for interpretation as any other form of "omission, repression, denial, [or] foreclosure" (Derrida, "Geschlecht," 76). Even critics of Heidegger, like Adam Knowles, agree that "Heidegger is […] most silent about what is most essential to him" (*Heidegger's Fascist Affinities*, 33). But Knowles, too, attempts to sexuate his opponent's thought: as he argues, the Heideggerian silence on sex is itself sexed in its reference to Greek discourse, falling squarely on the side of the maleness and power of "keeping silent," in a sexual binary where the feminine is that which cannot restrain its speech (103). Curiously, attempts to retrieve a thinking of sex and gender out of their "essential absence" in Heidegger's thinking have been made both with the aim of weakening him and with the aim of preserving his relevance. Have these various readings struck on something in common? Are their ears playing tricks on them in the silence? If not, how do things stand with the trans subject in Heidegger?

I suggest that the allure of locating such a discourse in the Heideggerian corpus arises not primarily out of the eroticism of the taboo, as Derrida claimed, but due to the dominant conception of transition Heidegger has left us with, the Event, *which holds radical change to be thinkable only as possibility*. My claim is that as a philosopher of transition—a term he begins to use increasingly after his self-described "Turn"—Heidegger does engage in a thinking of the ontology of sex, gender, and identity, since for him transition relates Dasein to the Event, under the sign of which even Dasein's "lack" of an essential sex and gender must necessarily be subsumed and transformed. The problem for those who attempt to locate a discourse of sex, gender, and transition in Heidegger is not that it is absent in his thinking, but that it is found too easily, since it is implicit in Heidegger's conception of change. This discourse, and any discourse of change, Heidegger thought, can only ever consist of "a gazing upon ourselves"

(*Contributions*, 55), and the "passing by" of any "decision" as to what that gaze may reveal (67, 123). The exclusion of sex and gender from the field of what is proper to Dasein is the appropriation of a "self-refusal" that "grounds" (327). This, for him, is transition, which can only be said to "take place" because Dasein's appropriation into the Event is possible; at the same time, the Event takes place only if Dasein's appropriation of its transition is possible. In other words, if for Heidegger the Event raises the question of identity and change, then Dasein's proper relationship to the Event, its access to it and to its own view of itself, is intelligible only through the concept of appropriation. It is in this concept, too, that we see how the first figuration of change has been ascribed to the trans subject as its essential activity.

Derrida and Malabou are usefully compared in how they locate their Heideggerian discourses of sex and gender on different sides of the Turn. For Derrida, this discourse begins with the pre-Turn analysis of Dasein. Derrida starts by highlighting Heidegger's clear disavowal, in *Foundations*, of Dasein being the sort of being that might "be sexed" or "have sexuality." Such categories and traits, the conventional reading goes, are merely ontic determinations of Dasein.[30] Or again, they pertain to the inauthentic existence of Dasein as it stands absorbed in its world, among the generic and everyday selfhood of the They. It is for this reason, Derrida says, that Heidegger strives to preserve "a certain asexuality of being-there" (Derrida, "Geschlecht," 69). There is no biological or psychic positioning on one side or another of a binary sexuation, and no fundamental or "originary structure" for Dasein, but a "being dissociated, unbound, or desocialized" that precedes assignment to sexed and gendered identities and their concomitant normative relations (75). What could capture this ontological nonbinarity? Derrida points to the

[30] See *Community Without Identity*, Tony See, 2009; *Irigaray, Heidegger and the Question of Sexual Difference*, Anne Van Leeuwen, 2010; *Questioning Sexuality*, Gavin Rae, 2024. As Heidegger himself states in *Introduction to Philosophy*, "Sexuality [gender] (Geschlechtlichkeit) is only a moment of this problem and not the primary one (thrownness)" (Nelson, 69, brackets his).

"semantic zone" of the German word *Geschlecht*, which Heidegger uses iconoclastically. Semantically rich, *Geschlecht* can mean anything from gender to sex to the erogenous organs in themselves, as well as "species, genus, family, stock," nationality, race, even "branch" in the arboreal sense; Heidegger especially emphasizes its etymological origin in its "root" word, *Schlag*, which can be translated as an act of embossing or imprinting, a blow, a strike, the leaving of a differentiating mark.[31]

Derrida thus notes that "Dasein is marked twice" (82), subjected to two "originary blows." First, Dasein is marked out by its thrownness into being in general (something like being sexed and gendered in general becomes a possibility for it), and then it is marked out by its fallenness among beings, its being-with (a particular sex and gender determines its factical constitution).[32] As possibilities we "possess," sex, gender, sexuality and identity are simply part of the vast array of what it is possible for the They to say "one is." Derrida affirms that the idea that Dasein is "a being whose own body would be partitioned according to a sexual difference" applies only to its inauthentic existence. "Heidegger's first gesture," he says, "is to observe an order of implication: sexual difference, or belonging to a genre, must be elucidated starting from being-with, in other words, from the disseminal throw, and not inversely. Being-with does not arise from some factual connection, 'it cannot be explained from some presumably originary

[31] Although makes much of the "polysemy" of *Geschlecht*, (*Geschlecht III*, 126) Derrida fails to note that Heidegger consistently uses "*Rasse*" in his discussions of race, and not "Geschlecht" (Nicolai Krejberg Knudsen, "Depopulation," 327). If *Geschlecht* should thus be associated more closely with sex and gender, then, it is principally in terms of these as "identities;" as Knudsen shows, Heidegger's Nazi-period praise of the "German race" stemmed from his view of it being uniquely "characterized by *a lack of identity*" (297). Such an emptying of particularity from identity is rather different from Derrida's view of it as a site where "plurality gathers itself" (71).

[32] The translation of Heidegger's German term for this concept—*Verfallen*—remains contested. For example, earlier translations of *Being and Time*, such as that of Macquarrie and Robinson, emphasize the word's theological connotations by translating it as "fallenness." More recently, Stambaugh has translated it as "falling prey," which places a questionable weight on the sense of the They as some sort of opponent or "predator" for Dasein. In truth, its meaning also touches upon "entanglement" and "deterioration," as well the sense of "falling for" something, i.e., a trick, a ruse, a deception.

generic being,' by a being whose own body would be partitioned according to a sexual difference" (79). For Heidegger, Derrida thinks, factical sex and gender can only ever be a decomposition of Human Dasein and its more original *Geschlecht*. Indeed, Heidegger describes Dasein as being "struck apart into the discord of the sexes," mired in a sexual "strife," as if the actualization of *Geschlecht's* pure potentiality—its capacity-for-sex/gender/sexuality/identity—was the most violent and savage act (*Geschlecht III,* 46). In the end, Derrida does not challenge this view of Dasein's inescapable thrownness and fallenness into sex and gender. His investment is in the preservation (safeguarding) of the disseminating power of the *initial* throw, its aforementioned potentiality as an assumption or assignment-to-come of identity, rather than a confrontation with and modification of what has already been assigned to and assumed by Dasein. "Every proper body of one's own is sexed, and there is no Dasein without its body. But […] the dispersing multiplicity is not primarily due to the sexuality of one's own body; it is its own body itself, the flesh, […] that draws Dasein originally into the dispersion and in due course into sexual difference" ("Geschlecht," 75).

Derrida's reading emphasises that though Dasein's ontic "guise" as a normatively gendered, sexed, and sexually desiring being is contingent to its being-with, this is a necessary contingency, given that Dasein is necessarily being-with. That said, he is not concerned with thinking through a place within ontology for these discrete modes of embodiment and identity, because for him they are only ever evidence of the general decomposition of Dasein's initial potentiality for being-with, and bear no essence of their own. This stance echoes theories of sex, gender, and sexuality which claim that they are "essenceless" in light of their primarily social and performative construction or are reducible to a homogenous plane of domination or desire. Derrida's goal is not the articulation of an ontologically "authentic" asexuality or nonbinarity in

opposition to the "inauthenticity" of a binary sex/gender determinism: in his view, "the asexuality and neutrality that should first of all be subtracted from the sexual binary mark, in the analytic of Dasein, are in truth on the same side, on the side of that sexual difference—the binary—to which one might have thought them simply opposed" (72). What Derrida would have Heidegger advocate for is an understanding of the universality of the sexual mark for Dasein, describing its general inscriptivity as a "difference without dissension" that leads back to an original sexual multiplicity (83). In this reading, Dasein's *Geschlecht* renders it capable only of a transition in reverse, insofar as *Geschlecht* is understood as the mark (of marking in general) which holds open Dasein's path back to its ontological pre-pubescence: the appropriation of this germinal possibility of being sexed/gendered at all as part of its "ownmost," rather than some sex or gender that might be particularly "its own." In this appropriation, Dasein supposedly rediscovers the necessary neutrality of sex and gender identity *tout court,* which Derrida characterizes as a dissemination (*Zerstreuung*) running contrary to its originary dispersion (*Streuung*): this "transcendental dispersion is the possibility of every dissociation and parcelling out into factual existence" (78). Derrida does not challenge Heidegger's segregation of discrete modes of embodiment and sex/gender identity to the ontic, rather than the ontological, plane of analysis. Nor does he attempt to discard the Two of sexual difference: if anything, he subordinates it to the Two of an ontological difference, making visible "two sexual differences" (*Geschlecht III*, 126), a pair of blows weathered by the inevitably and irrevocably having-been-assigned-and-assignable beings that we are. Dasein (unlike the human being) is immune to sex, gender, and identity, and does not transition in the sense of radical change, even if its immunity is the cause of the profusion of its "essencing" (of sex, gender, and identity) as general forms of ontic being-with. "Perhaps another 'sex,' or rather another 'Geschlecht,' will come to be

inscribed within ipseity," Derrida says, but for now it remains the "ontological structure" of "selfhood" (*Selbstheit*) ("Geschlecht," 74).[33]

For Malabou, the discourse of sex and gender in Heidegger is visible more in his post-Turn thinking. Her goal in *The Heidegger Change* is to combat those readings of Heidegger (and those claims of his own) that make him "look like a thinker of the identical" (*The Heidegger Change*, 27), or the Parmenidean.[34] Instead, Malabou attempts to transform Heidegger into a thinker of becoming only, and seizes upon a triptych of terms that she claims the philosopher uses to develop a metaphysics of transition which both underpins his entire ontological project and challenges conceptions of sex and gender identity's supposed immutability. These three terms—"change" (*Wandel*), "transformation" (*Wandlung*), and "metamorphosis" (*Verwandlung*)—are in her view the mechanisms of an ontological convertibility, or a general capacity for "exchange" (*Wandler*), between beings and Being. Malabou sees this ontico-ontologico exchange as a fundamental operation in Heidegger's notion of the Event: there,

> Beingness takes being's place, which 'enters its service.' This originary (ex)change […] corresponds to the going-in-drag (*travestissement*) of essence, and is the most basic resource of metaphysics. This being-in-drag corresponds to a transformation (W, W, &

[33] Derrida does not mean a "new sex" in the sense of a third sex, or any novel sexed identity, but another double mark, and thus another path back to the "first beginning." This amounts to saying, as Drouillard notes, that there could be a different arrangement of being-with—say, one in technology makes possible the derivation of both large and small gametes from any human being's stem cell tissue indiscriminate of their biological anatomy—that would "forc[e] us to reassess any notion of sexual difference founded on reproductive difference" (Drouillard, 164), but would this would still found sexual difference on something. This has been made evidently clear by recent attempts of American fascism to define sex based on the "possibility" at birth of producing large or small gametes. Such a definition is obviously nonsensical, given that "during early development the gonads of the fetus remain undifferentiated; that is, all fetal genitalia are the same and are phenotypically female" (Wizemann and Pardue, *Does Sex Matter?*, 45), but the assumption that *Geschlecht* follows from being-with means that an effective enforcement of such a sociality *would* institute such a mark for Dasein.

[34] A controversial reading, given Heidegger's centering of Parmenides, who famously refuted the possibility of change, as philosophy's "founding father" of philosophy (Badiou, "Heidegger's Parmenides"; in Braver, *Division III*, 30). In *Being and Time*, he claims that "Parmenides was the first to discover" Being as such (*Being and Time*, 256).

> V) of originary mutability into immutability, *Unwandelbarkeit*. The essence of a thing is effectively what in it does not change. (17)

The evocation of transness here is obvious, but so is Malabou's larger investment in the idea of plasticity, or the auto-affective character of essence more broadly. Though sexed and gendered identity is only one type of mutable essencing for Malabou, it is only thanks to Heidegger's post-Turn revelation—that Human Dasein can transform its ways of existing *into* Being—that "we retrospectively understand that transformation is what makes identity, that a body, a gender […] exists only by virtue of its transformability, exchangeability, and convertibility" (73). "The exchange of essences," she says, no matter where it occurs, is thus "archisexual" (72). Hers is a familiar reading: if essence is that which in a thing does not change, and if essence can be seen in the performative scene of sex and gender as the thing which is said to change, therefore the essence of sex and gender must be change and must "be queer."

Malabou's alignment of Heidegger against contemporary beliefs in sex, gender, and identity's immutability emerges from her reading of his shifting of the ontological question after the Turn: away from the difference between Being and beings, and toward the difference between truth as correctness and truth as essencing, explored most explicitly in the Freiburg lectures of the late 1930's, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, and the uncollected writings now published as the *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*. Heidegger sets his sights in these works on the correspondence theory of truth that he says begins with Aristotle, which he claims must be abandoned if the transition is to take place. As he says in *Basic Questions*,

> We are acquainted with the 'essence' of the things surrounding us: house, tree, bird, road, vehicle, man, etc., and yet we have no knowledge of the essence. For we immediately land in the uncertain, shifting, controversial, and groundless, when we attempt to

> determine more closely, and above all try to ground in its determinateness, what is certainly though still indeterminately 'known': namely, house-ness, tree-ness, bird-ness, humanness. On the other hand, we are able to distinguish these things very well, so that we do not confuse a bird with a house. (73)

According to Heidegger, "essence is not manufactured, but it is not simply encountered like a thing present at hand. Instead, it is brought forth in a productive seeing […] out of invisibility into the visible, out of what is unthought into what is henceforth to be thought" (77). Dasein's closeness to the essential is nonetheless, he says, "an original positing" made by "genuine naming and saying," which "does not tolerate a subsequent deduction," nor "comparison of individual cases" (72). Hence, we do not learn about birds by comparing birds, or learn about houses by comparing houses: rather, these essences are "known" to Dasein and "true" for Dasein insofar as they have already come-into-view of it, their presence already the evidence of their becoming-truth. This exchanging of essence from the invisible to the visible which Heidegger calls "productive seeing" "does not admit any foundation" (85). *Ereignis*, Heidegger's "Event," is for him etymologically linked to sight as well, to the manner in which vision both grasps its horizon and seizes upon its own seeing.[35] Changes of appearance, Malabou infers, are thus truly ontological changes, changes of essence, in each case incomparable and singular. In Malabou's interpretation, this confirms "the plasticity of [sex's] essence," as a "device for self-perspectivalizing" and hence a "willed" self-fashioning (*Heidegger Change*, 87).

The ontico-ontologico exchange that Malabou saw in Heideggerian essencing has influenced her broader writings on sex and gender, for example in her 2022 book *Pleasure Erased: The Clitoris and Thought*, which explicitly takes up transness and the history of various

[35] See Note 17.

metaphysics of the sex organ. Where Malabou speaks of the trans subject ("as transfeminist") she speaks of trans men only, but, citing Paul Preciado, she views this subject as *essentially* "neither man nor woman but the mutant […] The question is not: What am I? What gender or what sexuality? But rather: How does it work?" (*Le plaisir efface,* 97, translation mine) By reducing trans subjects from those who could claim sex and gender for themselves as identities to mere "users of technologies" (96), Malabou rejects the entire "dichotomy" between transness and cisness, and says that "in reality, there are not two but a multiplicity of sides, inclinations, contours and borders. A multiplicity of genders and of clitoris. We don't really have gender anyway. Rather, it is gender that possesses the subject, that sets it in motion like a machine would" (95). In effect, then, she claims transness for all subjects: "what woman has not already had her body transformed by estrogen and progesterone? Isn't a cis woman's body always already trans from taking birth control pills or menopausal treatment?" (95) Despite this, and despite repeated interventions from queer and trans movements that have decentered the importance of any particular arrangement of organs for normative sex and gender identity, Malabou still claims that there must remain something unique in the formal character of the clitoris as plastic organ *par excellance*—she discusses its tissue's neuronal restructurability, its virtual relationship to vaginal pleasure, its occlusion by philosophy and history, etc. "Even if it is not necessarily that of a woman, the clitoris remains the enigmatic place of the feminine. Which means it hasn't found its place yet" (21). We can see how this refusal to "admit any foundation" is in turn transformed into a foundation: the feminine, here, is the essentially essenceless.[36] At

[36] Malabou is much clearer about this idea in *Changing Difference*: "The 'essence' of woman is thus neither matter nor form; it is achieved beyond traditional ontological and metaphysical determinations, outside pairs of conceptual opposites, in an exterior destined to exile and erasure. For this reason, the […] impossibility of the figure of the *khôra* becomes the figure without figure of woman, her 'essence' read in filigree" (125-6). See Section 4.5. For her, performative theories of gender allow a "sexual transvestitism (drag, transgender . . .)" to "[intersect] with noetic transvestitism" (133). "A transvestite approach is fascinating, [but] it leaves the idea of the feminine

the same time, Malabou distances herself from "claims about the clitoris which are still too phallic for my taste," such as those made by lesbians and trans men, for whom the clitoris could bear an erectile and penetrative power (116). But a similar enduring essentiality must be denied elsewhere for trans subjects, and for trans women in particular, or else we would lose the constant becoming, the "queerness," that Malabou wants ontico-ontologico exchange to secure. For Malabou, the practices of self-fashioning by which the trans subject might affirm an essential identity can make that identity immanent only to that fashioning, i.e., to the technologies (hormones, surgeries, legal recognitions, dress and appearance in any variety of combination), and not to the subject. But the clitoris cannot be allowed to become "mere technology." Malabou decides upon the undecidability of the clitoris, and in doing so, despite its plasticity—rather, because of it—can appropriate it as "feminine." But here we see an example of the inability to truly think transition and the inconsistent multiple of the trans subject: there are simply women, some with a clitoris made out of a penis, some with a penis that *is* a clitoris, some with a penis that has nothing to do with the maintenance (or not) of an identification with the feminine, who fall far beyond the horizon of what Malabou can allow herself to "productively see."

What Malabou misses in her reading of Heidegger is the immense burden of entering into ontico-ontologico exchange, or the task of decision that lays at the foot of Dasein. In *Basic Questions*, he calls this a form of "distress" (*Not*), the distress of the transition and its between:

> This space […] is that 'between' where it has not yet been determined what being is or what non-being is, though where by the same token a total confusion and

somewhat behind. […] Personally, I have discovered that it is totally impossible for me to give up the schema 'woman.' I cannot succeed in dissolving it into the schema of gender or 'queer multitudes.' I continue to see myself as a woman" (135). Putting aside her subordination of "transgender" to a kind of transvestitism, one cannot help but wonder whether Malabou's professed attachment to a particular "schema" of sex, gender, and identity, too, is what she means by a "noetic transvestitism." If so, why describe it, or any such attachment, as a "travestying" of a more fundamental "figure without figure" that "leaves the feminine behind"?

> undifferentiation of beings and non-beings does not sweep everything away either, letting one thing wander into another. This distress, as such a not knowing the way out of or into this self-opening 'between,' is a mode of 'Being.' […] The distress we are speaking of is therefore by no means indeterminate but is very determined in its needfulness, in that it provides to thinking its essential space, and indeed does nothing else than that. For thinking means here to let beings emerge in the decisiveness of their Being. […] This distress […] is a character of Being and not of man, as if [it] could arise 'psychically' in man as a 'lived experience' and have its proper place in him. On the contrary, man himself first arises out of this distress. (*Basic Questions*, 132/3)

This is a far cry from Malabou's reading of transition, which characterizes it as an aleatory becoming of a "*community* of Dasein's *modes of being,*" each definable only on the basis of their "attunement" (*Heidegger Change*, 251). Unlike in the earlier work of *Being and Time*, in which Dasein is freed for authentic being-in-the-world through its making of its finitude, after the Turn Heidegger understands Dasein's making to be principally a refusal of modes of being, a decision "upon which Being itself first comes to be known as *refusal,* and thus as appropriating event" (*Contributions*, 110). Refusal does not free essence and identity into an open metabolic exchange, as Malabou assumes, where "*Ereignis* […] is the imagination itself" (*Heidegger Change*, 199), as if the Heideggerian Event were nothing more than one moment among many in which a "what" is exchanged for a "how," and where transformation makes only further transformation possible. "Productive seeing" within the horizon of "a look that holds sway" also implies the decision to look or not; there is only one Event for Heidegger, and it is the latter, as a setting and an appropriating of the limits of possibility.

Unfortunately, Heidegger's concept of "decision" is not explored in Malabou's application of his thought to sexual and gender identity. Decision for Heidegger is not a choice, not a selection from an array of possibilities, but a "a decision about what for us and for the future can become true and can be true" (*Basic Questions*, 101). The Event reveals the "total questionlessness of Being" (160), but this does not mean truths are thus exchangeable. In transition, beings literally *are* decisive and *are* the evidence that a decision has taken place—this is distinguished a voluntaristically made decision, or deciding upon an essence. The question Being's resulting questionlessness asks, he says, is new: it is not "what could you do?" or "who will you become?" but can only be "who are you already?" Only the latter kind of question, the transformation of the question of Dasein's "who," can represent for him a *transition*—an appropriation of one's possibilities rather than an actualization of them. In undergoing the Event, Dasein would produce, as proof of the Event having taken place, a new law (schema, body) for itself—but the Event remains something we can only prepare for by the appropriation of it as a possibility. Heideggerian transition is not a change of essence (which anyway would only be a "transformation of the same") because what it prepares will bear no reference to the pre-Evental metaphysics in which "essence" is just one of Dasein's modes of appropriation, and transition is a change "which proceeds from beings as a whole." Yet it cannot be ignored that for him "transition" is something only a "we"—an identity—can "pass through" (163).

### *1.4 – Change After the Turn*

How can Dasein be subjected to the Event *only* on the basis of something like identity, given that as we have seen it is constitutively incapable of bearing the kinds of properties from which a "we" could ordinarily be derived (no "we women," "we transsexuals," certainly)? This

question—which is critical to Heidegger's turn toward just such a faith in identification—is at the heart of the Turn, and the Heideggerian idea of transition itself.[37] As we outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and as Giorgio Agamben reiterates in "The Passion of Facticity," "authentic existence has no content (in Heidegger's thinking) other than inauthentic existence; the proper is nothing other than the apprehension of the improper" (*Potentiality*, 197). As Agamben points out, in *Being and Time* authenticity was "only a modified way in which everydayness is seized upon," through which Dasein "appropriates untruth authentically." After the Turn, though the terminology of *Being and Time* has been discarded, we can see how the basic gesture returns in a changed form: thenceforth, though Dasein is always "simultaneously in the truth and in the untruth" (*Contributions*, 278), for Heidegger the identity of that truth and untruth (and also the potential for the transformation of one into the another) is something foundationally undecidable for Dasein. In other words, he no longer believes that the exchange between the two (the making true of the untrue, and the making untrue of the true, the motor of Dasein's historicity) can be understood through the kind of breakdown that formerly led us to the authentic as a modification of the inauthentic, because we lack the criteria—an external truth to which truth would refer—by which we might decide (*Basic Questions*, 102).[38] Dasein thus decides for undecidability, refusing the contingency of decision—still in hopes of safeguarding its essential potentiality—and in this decision Dasein becomes what for it is its truth, which as we know, is in each case possibility projected from factical existence. The idea of inauthenticity loses its importance in Heidegger's understanding of how Dasein reaches this point in large part because he simply no longer needs it to get there. But what this means is that "truth itself is that wherein what is true has its ground" (*Contributions*, 273), and not some sort of identifiable

[37] Namely, the "we Germans" of his writings in the 1930's.
[38] "Truth is […] a character of beings themselves, and not […] a matter of assertions about beings."

untruth or inauthentic existence. Whereas pre-Turn Dasein carried out a questioning, post-Turn Dasein carries out a reflection (*Besinnung*) of itself.[39] By shifting emphasis to Dasein as the institution of a difference between "what is true" and what it is "to be what is true," what had been Being's appropriation of untruth *as* truth prior to the turn becomes the appropriation of untruth-as-truth *as* Being after it.

> The remoteness of the undecidability is no mere objectively present and irrelevant void but is the essential occurrence of the event as the very essence of the event (of the hesitant self-withholding which, as belonging, already appropriates Dasein) and is the retention of the moment and of the site of the first decision. In the essence of the truth of the event, everything true is simultaneously decided and grounded, beings come to be, and nonbeings slip into the semblance of beyng.

All of this profoundly alters Agamben's interpretation of Dasein's sexual "fetishism," then: if, as he says while taking his own swing at reading sex and gender into Heidegger, "the structure of Dasein is marked by a kind of original fetishism […] on account of which Dasein cannot ever appropriate the being it is, the being to which it is irreparably consigned" (*Potentialities*, 196), then Dasein's greatest capacity is the appropriation of its refusal of that appropriation. In Agamben's reading, our kind of being is an essential "cobelonging of capacity and incapacity," and yet the greatest consummation of this cobelonging, he says, is the capacity *for* incapacity, "an impotentiality" that "no longer retreats […] but is instead appropriated" (203). He calls this phenomenon the "immobility of the possible." Agamben's reading of Heidegger seals away transition entirely, and though this may be closer to the truth, since for post-Turn Heidegger "in

[39] A "calm, self-possessed surrender (*Gelassenheit*, 'releasement') to that which is worthy of questioning." Often also translated as "meditation."

the realm of the essential, what does not occur is even more essential than what does" (Basic Questions, 107), it still does not reckon with the implications of such a theory of change.

Emily Apter claims that the kinds of searches for a Heideggerian discourse of sex, gender, and identity that we have explored so far arose and continue to arise because "we are now in the epoch of regioning differences—a geotopics or geotopology of pronomial differential ontologies—ranging across zones of epigenetics, biomorphology, erogenous centers of nongenital intimacy, and new regionalisms of masculinity, femininity, intersexuality, (and transness)" ("Gender Ontology," 120). Unspoken in this familiar story is the assumption that some event has taken place in the triune domain, and that this domain has changed: suddenly we must find the conceptual tools to reckon with transness, nonbinarity, new forms of sexuality, embodiment, and so on, and so we go to Heidegger to see which tools might serve us in that reckoning. But this story of a "changing" "place" for sex, gender, and identity shows in miniature the way the trans subject is bound to a theory of the event: the real use we can make of Heidegger lies not in some assortment of updateable concepts, but in the way the course of his own thinking shows us the process of such a binding. The assumption is that we today perceive the development of a newly infinite (or less finite) sexual multiple in relation to its "origin" in a sexual two. Yet, as Heidegger himself said, cautioning the reader against viewing his philosophical Turn as an event with an origin in what preceded it: "there is no gradual 'development' here. Even less is there that relation of the later to the earlier according to which the later would already lie enclosed in the earlier" (*Contributions*, 67). It is not that the searches for a Heideggerian theory of change in the triune domain should be abandoned, but that those who look should not shy away from what they find: not Heidegger's hidden views on sex, gender, identity and transition, but their own inability to think transition beyond the

appropriation of the possible, and a reflection of their own distressing—and risky—Heideggerianism. Together, these searches seem to tell a shared story: whatever the result, appropriation is Dasein's path to the triune domain. But what of decision's role in this appropriating capacity, and what of the finite movements available between such appropriations? What of the "sensing" of transition that makes appropriation as preparation for the Event possible? For Heidegger, the fact that transition proceeds by way of appropriation, and prepares us for an event that bears no relation to its anterior (though this is nonetheless the only place in which it can be prepared for) is what leaves transition fully open to decision, and capable of leveraging demands on thought. We must now look closer at the concept of appropriation as such, as the first figure of transition.

### *1.5 – Transcendental Appropriation*

In the aftermath of *Being and Time*, Heidegger set out on a new course toward his thinking of the appropriating Event. This period is often characterized—not the least by himself (Heidegger, *On My Publications*)—as being cloven by a transition: the Turn. In his own words in March of 1932, his prior output had come to seem "alien" to him, "like a path brought to an impasse […] which yet retains the fact that it leads into Da-sein as temporality […] on whose edges stands much that is contemporary and mendacious" (*Ponderings II-VI*, 15). Heidegger felt that his thinking up to that point had been too purely disidentificatory, oriented always away from that which he would correct in the history of philosophy and the scientism of modernity; it had proceeded *via negativa,* but lacked a positive, affirmative, constructive orientation. *Being and Time* was a massive success, but to him it had been too readily "misinterpreted and misused as an anthropology or a 'philosophy of existence'" (16). He even worried that he had unwittingly

"spoke[n] as the learned 'They'"—everything in his work up to that point seemed to him to be a "failure" (35). His shift away "from the understanding of being to the happening of being" (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 233) had begun. It was a shift away from the thought of conditions and toward the thought of the capacity for those conditions to change, to be radically and irrevocably transformed. Where and when did this alienation from himself begin?

Chronologically last among the works Heidegger lists as newly alien to him was *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, an exegesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1929.[40] The *Kantbook*, as it is called, is thus the dead end of the sequence with which Heidegger continues to be most associated, namely the development of the existential analytic up to the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927, but also a turning back from that dead end, where Heidegger encounters the identity condition we are speculating on in this section.[41] I claim that this condition emerges specifically from Heidegger's reading in the *Kantbook* of Kant's two concepts of the imagination's "schematizing" power, and its transformation between the first and second editions of the *Critique* in 1781 and 1787. For Heidegger, the Kantian schema ceases to be the post-empirical application of a rule for the synthesis of the products of the understanding and the intuition; it becomes instead the pre-empirical appropriation of form that allows for the synthesis of the same. Heidegger's argument is that it is the imagination which stands as the "root" of both the understanding and the intuition, a privileging that takes it to be the "soil" in which the other faculties grow. My goal is to show that Heidegger comes to see the schematizing

[40] *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* was the culmination of a 1927-1928 lecture course given at Marburg University, then a center of Neo-Kantianism (Hirsch, "Remembrances"); the rest were published separately, as *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. I cite also from this volume. (The other titles named by Heidegger are *Being and Time*, *What is Metaphysics?*, and *On the Essence of Ground*.)

[41] *Being and Time* was at that point considered a work in progress, but it was never finished. In Heidegger's plan, part one would have been followed by a second part comprised of a further two divisions, and at the heart of one such division would have been the analysis of the *Kantbook* (Braver, 3, 159), which tracked the transformation that the faculty of imagination underwent between the first and second editions of the *Critique* (in 1781 and 1787).

power of the imagination as a way of thinking the production of "ontological" identity from the "ontical" Dasein, and hence its transition via decision.

In Daniel Dahlstrom's characterization, Heidegger had "noticed in Kant's doctrine of schematism a connection between the traditional problem of being […] and the phenomenon of time" (Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Interpretation," 382; "Heidegger's Kantian Turn"). For him, Kant's revision of the *Critique* amounted to a retreat from the question of the creative power of the imagination; Heidegger claimed that his own thought posed that question anew, albeit in the name of temporality rather than the imagination. In carrying out his reconstruction, he found something he had not been looking for: the "productive imagination" that becomes Dasein's "productive seeing," and therefore the mechanism of ontico-ontologico exchange. At the outset of the *Kantbook*, Heidegger still holds that "ontic truth necessarily adjusts itself to the ontological" (11). By the time of the *Contributions to Philosophy* a decade later, post-transition, "the 'ontological,' even when grasped as a condition of the 'ontic,' [is only] something supplementary to the ontic" (*Contributions*, 355). For just as the transcendental imagination in Kant became for Heidegger a "legal activity" that "forms" even as it "unites," turning caprice into rule, ontological truth becomes the event of Being's adjustment to and supplementation of the ontic—appropriation—but at the price of ontic change.

In this section I will explain the importance of the transcendental deduction for the *Critique of Pure Reason* and lay out how the imagination differently appears in the A and B deductions. Once this has been accomplished, I will show how exactly Heidegger performs his retrieval of the productive imagination in the A deduction. Finally, I will track the impact of this retrieval on both Heidegger's Turn and the legacy in his work of the Kantian concept of schema, as it transforms from a dangerous precipice of indetermination threatening the disintegration of

the Kantian subject, into the form of post-Turn Dasein's self-affection. It is this form, the schema, that is the product of the first of the two dominant understandings of transition today: transition as appropriation.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* asks after the conditions which make experience and knowledge possible. Against empiricists who held that knowledge is constituted by experience alone and denied any truths that might pre-exist experience, Kant attempted to show that the subject's access to both truth and experience is conditioned by *a priori* concepts, which compose in the mind a faculty of the understanding: these are the concepts which structure any possible judgement (*CoPR*, 206). These concepts in turn find their "content" first in the faculty of the intuition, which structures any possible sensation according to the two basic forms of space and time. In the Transcendental Aesthetic which precedes the Deduction, Kant shows how space and time are "necessary representations" (158), forms of intuition rather than objects being intuited in themselves or experientially-derived concepts for the judgement of such objects (186). These two structures of possible representation are not equal, however. Since time, the representation of succession (and thus permanence) is "nothing other than the form of inner sense" (163) to which an outside can be related, time is also the "mediate condition" of space (164). And the categories of the understanding relate essentially to these necessary representations: "however, the possibility, indeed even the necessity of these categories rests on the relation that the entire sensibility, and with it also all possible appearances, have to the original apperception, in which everything is necessarily in agreement with the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness, i.e., must stand under universal functions of synthesis" (A111/2). For Kant, synthesis belongs to the faculty of the imagination, which bridges the intuition and the understanding (A79). All that remains is the question of where the imagination's synthesis takes

place, and its relation to transcendental apperception, the most fundamental ground of the subject prior to any "standing or abiding self" (A107). The answers to these questions change drastically between the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason.*

In the first edition, the order of thought proceeds as follows. Kant begins by returning to the conjecture that there are *a priori* concepts and forms of representation at all: if they do exist, he says, "they can certainly contain nothing empirical" (A95). To have them refer to determinate content at the outset would defeat the purpose of the pre-experiential concepts Kant sought. What these concepts "contain" are only ever "the pure *a priori* conditions of a possible experience and of an object of it" (A96). *A priori* concepts like the categories are thus "the pure thinking in every experience" (A97). but not the sources of experience. Intuition cannot be said to be the source of experience either, since "every intuition contains a manifold in itself, which however would not be represented as such if the mind did not distinguish the time in the succession of impressions on one another" (A99). What could give us the truth, prior to experience, of something like a manifoldness (*mannigfaltigkeit*) in sensibility? What the intuition gives us is not even initially grasped as manifold: its multiplicity is so chaotic that it cannot even be thought as a multiple, let alone thought at all. Something else is doing the "giving" then: the imagination, which "spontaneously" synthesizes the manifold of intuition such that it can "be gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way in order for cognition to be made out of it" (A77). This tripartite movement (a synoptic going-through, a reproductive taking-up, and a recognition through combination-with-concepts) is said by Kant to be the "threefold synthesis, which is necessarily found in all cognition" (A98). In both versions of the Deduction, synthesis "in the most general sense" concerns "the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition" (A77). But the A

deduction gives essential tasks to the imagination in each of its three "moments:" first, synopsis, which apprehends the manifold as manifold; second, reproduction, which takes up the manifold as a totality even when its full membership is not given; and third, recognition, which combines the manifold with concepts according to rules, or schemata, allowing it to be taken as a unity.[42]

In the imagination's first moment, apprehension, the imagination must "run through and then […] take together [the] manifoldness" of a given intuition (A100). Synopsis does not mean summary or condensation for Kant—its meaning for him is closer to its etymological roots in Latin: a "coming into view" or a "seeing together" (*Oxford Etymological Dictionary*). Synoptic synthesis is not an apprehension of a whole, which occurs in the third moment, but is instead an unstructured but ongoing riffling. If this first form of synthesis were not by definition always "incomplete," it could not encounter a manifold at all, since what it would have before it could only appear as an unchanging whole—the imagination is already defined by its temporal dimension of ongoingness, as well as by a unity prior to that of the apperceptive I.

When turning to the imagination's second moment, Kant remarks that "representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule" (A101). There seems to be a law instituted by the imagination upon the multiplicity of any manifold it riffles through: as soon as the first moment allows us to take the manifold *as* manifold, its elements can be grasped in their temporal succession and relative magnitude. In apprehending a line of trees as something besides a chaotic flux of sense impressions, certain relations—that each tree follows another (succession) and that each tree is

[42] The example Kant gives in his chapter on the Schematism is the schema of magnitude, "number" (*CoPR*, 274).

separated cumulatively in distance (magnitude)—reproduce the manifold even for those trees which were "before our eyes" but are no longer. The imagination shifts to synthesizing the membership of the manifold: not yet as memory or expectation, but as potential relation (A102). The reproductive imagination is for Kant a necessary condition for our representation and experience of objects, but the membership it synthesizes does not "exist" for any given pre-objectal manifold. Kant explains this distinction through his famous example of cinnabar:

> If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruits, now with ice and snow, then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red; or if a certain word were attributed now to this thing, now to that, or if one and the same thing were sometimes called this, sometimes that, without the governance of a certain rule to which appearances are already subjected in themselves, then no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place. (A101)

Manifolds of appearances "are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations, which in the end come down to determination of the inner sense" (A102). Here the A deduction's first divergence from the B arises: it is left open whether reproductive synthesis may not determine the inner sense too.

This is why, in the third moment, recognition—when the identification of objects comes about through the combination of intuition with conceptual judgement according to the rules of their various schemata—the A deduction is forced to conclude that the imagination grounds transcendental apperception and not the other way around. In the first edition, transcendental apperception is itself something intuited as manifold and thus synthesized in the third moment. It

too possesses a unity which endures in time and encompasses an extension, and like cinnabar, its unity and perdurance depends upon conditioning rules (such as "the concept of body" which "serves as the rule [schema] for our cognition of outer appearances" [A106]). Cinnabar, after all, *is* at once red, black, light and heavy, among many other things. But the mind does not take each of these appearances of the stone in turn—it takes them necessarily as a unity, which we might call the identity of cinnabar. Transcendental apperception is a "pure, original, unchanging consciousness" (A107), but it is also nothing more than "the identity of its action." What is its action, prior to any other? Nothing other than the threefold synthesis Kant has laid out for us. And what could synthesize this threefold? Transcendental, or productive, synthesis.

For Kant, "the principle of the necessary unity of the pure (productive) synthesis of the imagination prior to apperception is thus the ground of the possibility of all cognition" (A118). It seems Kant should be forced to say that transcendental synthesis is more "pure, original, unchanging" than any apperceptive I. If this were the case, then "it would still remain in itself entirely undetermined and contingent whether [appearances] were also associable; and in case they were not, *a multitude of perceptions and even an entire sensibility would be possible* in which much empirical consciousness would be encountered in any mind, but separated, and without belonging to one consciousness of myself, which, however, is impossible" (A122, italics mine). Impossible, yet in this version, necessary. The only remedy Kant could offer for this circularity was the suggestion of an "affinity" between the apperceptive I and the productive synthesis of the imagination, an indelible "resemblance" of one to the other: a *shared* identity (A113). If a new affinity could be produced, then the I would see itself transform irreversibly, without a trace of what it had once appeared to be.

In the B deduction, the order is reversed. Kant begins where the A deduction left off, with the question of the ground for synthesis as such. Transcendental apperception is his new answer to that question: in B Kant holds that "through the I, as a simple representation, nothing manifold is given" (B135). No longer an *a priori* productive synthesis, the transcendental apperception of the B deduction is a "simple (i.e., not composite) representation," and the lone instance of "objective unity," bound to the inner sense as a "subjective unity" rooted *a posteriori* in empirical self-reflection (B140). In effect Kant had shunted the aporia of A out of the pre-experiential altogether: the character of apperception as pure synthesis can in B only be accessed once the I has been determined empirically in some way. His explanatory example of choice moves along with this shunting, for it is now the self that stands in the place of cinnabar: there, he says that objective and subjective unity must precede synthesis because "otherwise I would have as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious" (B135). What was once a counterfactual against the flux of experience becomes a counterfactual against the flux of that which experiences; for Heidegger, this was a retreat from the potential of productive synthesis' auto-affective capacity.[43]

In the standard interpretation, the B deduction resolved the circularity introduced by A—the grounding of the subject in a productive synthesis that guarantees its own unity—not by denying such a ground, but by stating that it is unknowable to us (Allison, "Kant's Deduction," 376). By inverting the order of reasoning and clarifying that subjectivity is not produced by the imagination but produces through it its relation to objects, Kant thought he had answered his critics and found stable footing for his system. In Heidegger's view, A's circularity was a missed

[43] The imagination, too, had been downgraded in importance. In B, the imagination is no longer a faculty of cognition in its own right, but "an effect of the understanding on sensibility" (B152): its discussion, Kant suggests, "belongs not in transcendental philosophy but in psychology."

opportunity for philosophical revolution that Kant had shrunk back from (Kantbook, 117/8). In the concessions B made, Heidegger saw a limited and "merely epistemological" argument about the finitude of the subject. In opposition to this, Heidegger says that "the *Critique of Pure Reason* has nothing to do with a 'theory of knowledge.' If one could allow the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a theory of knowledge, then that would be to say that it is not a theory of ontic knowledge (experience), but rather a theory of ontological knowledge" (11). In his 1929 debate with the Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer, Heidegger stated his sense of his project plainly: "Truth is relative to Dasein. […] But I would say that this transsubjectivity of truth, this breaking-out of the truth concerning particulars themselves, as Being-in-truth, already means to be at the mercy of being itself, to be placed into possibility to shape itself" (198). Let us turn to the *Kantbook* in earnest and show how Heidegger draws this from Kant.

### *1.6 – The Product of Appropriation: Schema*

At base, the *Kantbook* attempts to translate Kant (or appropriate him) into a Heideggerian idiom. Such is the case with the A deduction's threefold synthesis. The first moment of apprehension, with its synopsizing "going-through," becomes for Heidegger an "immediate taking-in-stride'" (125). The second moment of reproduction, with its "taking-up" of what is no longer immediately given, becomes a "retaining forming of the no-longer-now" (127/8). The third moment of recognition, which combines the manifold with concepts, becomes a "reconnoitering," which "explores the horizon of being-able-to-hold-something-before-us;" it is a "preliminary attaching," a "watching out for" and a "preparation" for "pure identification" with the horizonal (130). Because for Heidegger "the transcendental power of imagination is original time" (131), each of its moments is set in relation to a temporal determination: the present, the

past, and the futural, respectively. Just as there is no "end" to time, the imagination's synthesizing productivity is "never accomplished." The imagination is what makes possible our perpetually incomplete engagement with all that can be potentially encountered, but it is its creativity in this encountering—it creates what it encounters and horizonally gathers—that is "essential" (92). Heidegger's controversial interpretation of Kant, in which he would force Kant to accept that "appearances (*Erscheinungen*) are not mere illusion (*Schein*), but are the being itself" (22), similarly rests on translating the braiding of the terms "appearance," "schema," and "image." Whereas Kant and his followers held appearances to be distinct from any unknowable noumenal referent, Heidegger is content to accept them as things in themselves, and referents of themselves only. Appearance for Heidegger means only the "standing-forth (*Entstand*)" of the appearance *as* a being: "the being 'in the appearance' is the same being as the being in itself." In turn, "the pure understanding reveals itself as the faculty of letting-stand-against . . . " (52) Appearances "stand forth," occur, and concepts "stand against," namely, against appearances.[44] In characterizing the phenomenality of objects as ways of "standing," Heidegger again emphasizes their temporal character, in that they "withstand" and endure time, and appear to have permanence only insofar as they are understood and intuited as "standing out" within it.

In addition to that which we intuit and that which we understand, Kant says there must be a "third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter. This mediating representation must be pure (without anything empirical) and yet intellectual on the

[44] As we have discussed, "withstanding" is closely related in Heidegger's post-Turn writings to his characterization of the transition to the appropriating Event as decline (*Untergang*) and distress (*Not*). Withstanding is for Heidegger the only thinkable "overcoming" of these states of dissolution: in withstanding, we are capable of "meditation on being a self and on its essence, an essence determined by assignment and consignment." Through this, "selfhood (is) seized from out of the appropriation and withstands the appropriation" (*Contributions*, 254).

one hand and sensible on the other. Such a representation is the transcendental schema" (*CoPR*, 272). What schemata represent, no matter their object, is a "transcendental time determination"—a modification of the inner sense by its synthesis with the sensible manifold. A schema has nothing to do with any intuition or concept in particular, however; they are merely the guarantors of "the unity in the determination." When applied *a posteriori*, and supplied with empirical content, the imagination produces not a schema but an image (*Bild*). "The image," Kant says, "is a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination," while "the schema of sensible concepts (such as *figures* in space) is a product and as it were *a monogram* of pure a priori imagination, through which and in accordance with which the images first become possible, but which must be connected with the concept, *to which they are in themselves never fully congruent*, always only by means of the schema they designate" (274, italics mine).

It is here that Heidegger concludes:

> if ontological knowledge is schema-forming, then therewith it creates (forms) from out of itself the pure look (image). Is it not the case, then, that even ontological knowledge which occurs in the transcendental power of imagination is 'creative'? […] Does not the finite creature become infinite through this 'creative' behaviour? […] Do beings come to be 'known,' then, in this 'creative' ontological knowledge—i.e., are they created as such? Absolutely not. But to what [is it related] then? What is the known of this knowing? A Nothing. Kant calls it the 'X.'" (*Kantbook*, 85)

Two points are being made here. First, by interpreting Kant's "transcendental object = X" as a "Nothing," Heidegger is insisting that the transcendental deduction can function without reference to a ground beyond appearance. Second, by interpreting Kant's "image" as a "look," the schematism points him to the "pure look," the pure ruling, of circumspection. For him, "the

pure power of imagination gives schema-forming in advance the look ('image') of the horizon of transcendence" (64). As a result, time "procure[s] a look prior to all experience" (73) which serves as the ground of our being-there. A schema is "the representing of the rule" that guarantees the manifold's perdurance (69) and the "making-sensible" of concepts (68), while an image is the possibility of actually sensing that rule/concept; images are capable of changing, but schema are not, or at least, they change only when the image does. "In a sense," Heidegger claims, "pure thinking in itself, not after the fact, is capable of taking in things in stride: i.e., it is pure intuition. This structural, coherent, receptive spontaneity must, accordingly, spring forth from the transcendental imagination to be able to be what it is" (108). Transcendental apperception is all but superfluous to Heidegger's Kant, because for him "the power of imagination is also and precisely a faculty of intuition, i.e., of receptivity. And it is receptive, moreover, not just apart from its spontaneity. Rather, it is the original unity of receptivity and spontaneity, and not a unity which was composite from the first" (107). The "self-affection" that Heidegger claims Kant "shrank back from" (112) is equally a self-intuiting and a self-legislating: to regard this as the root of the spontaneity of imagination and attention would mean regarding essence itself as schematic, rather than as something a schema might give us. Moreover, it would mean regarding oneself as that which gives one one's own rule of identity.

Heidegger's reading of Kant is then still essentially phenomenological: only because there is a "taking-in-stride" can there be a "turning-toward" that which possesses a "look," which itself is always given in advance because of an *a priori* "letting-stand-against" the horizon of all what can be taken in stride (63). At every turn, a body is turning. The "turn" away from actuality and toward possibility, toward the flux of all that cinnabar is not, is what makes our encounter with cinnabar possible in the first place. But this is not to imagine cinnabar *as* what it is not, nor

is it to say it could *become* what it is not: for us cinnabar can only be its possibilities, and has no power to create new ones.[45] At most, the synthetic power of the imagination institutes a "reciprocal preparing-themselves-for-each-other" between concepts and intuitions (44). To return to the question of conceptual understanding: far from being the seat of the subject's knowledge, in the *Kantbook* "the understanding has the 'ground for its possibility' in a 'faculty' which 'looks out in an infinity of self-made representations and concepts.' The transcendental power of imagination projects, forming in advance the totality of possibilities in terms of which it 'looks out,' in order thereby to hold before itself the horizon within which the knowing self, but not just the knowing self, acts" (108). This self-made infinity is always encountered after its making has been forgotten: the apprehending imagination "going-out-to . . . [the horizon] […] is hence a constant standing-out-from . . . [the horizon] (*Ecstasis*). But this essential standing-out-from . . ., precisely in the standing, forms and therein holds before itself—a horizon. In itself, transcendence is ecstatic-horizonal. Accordingly, it may also be understood concisely as follows: what makes an experiencing possible at the same time makes possible the experienceable, or rather experiencing as such" (84). The generalized capacity for identity that Heidegger locates via his reading of the Kantian schema is not an identification with something that the imagination (the temporalization of a "this-there" and its horizon) is not—it does not proffer possibilities for a change of identity as a project that can be taken up. Its identification is "an essential, structural belonging-together" of appearance and being, and of the possible with the actual (45). This is what Heidegger means when he describes the imagination's *a priori* synthesis as "the seed (*Keim*) which provides its ground" (12). The play on words here is intentional: in the *Critique of Pure Reason's* second introduction, Kant says that intuition and understanding are

[45] See the distinction in Kant between the schema and the schema-image.

"two stems of human cognition, which may perhaps arise from a common but to us unknown root" (*CoPR*, 152). To Heidegger, the imagination is this root and ground at once, and no matter the course of its development it necessarily remains germinal.

But what of Kant's theory of change? How does Heidegger incorporate this into his own interpretation explicitly? Why does the culmination of Heidegger's engagement with Kant lead him to the precipice of a profound transformation of his own? In short, for Kant change is real—knowable—only in the phenomenal realm. Anticipating the accusation of idealism, Kant specifically names the problem of change in relation to time: he does not deny the reality of "alterations" (182), but says that it is cognition that orders representations in such a way that change and that which is capable of change becomes visible—for Kant, time is not a thing in itself that can subsist on its own, but a sequencing of "nows" that can determine the inner sense as continuous. Without this continuity transcendental apperception could not function as unchanging ground, and the infinite range possible representations of what lies beyond inner sense would remain disorganized and multiple—the I would not even be able to distinguish itself from its representations. But at the same time, the I is nothing more than its representing, its thinking. This is why Kant says that "there is only one experience, in which all perceptions are represented as in thoroughgoing and lawlike connection" (A110). And this is the duty of schemata: whether the schema in question is a number or a body or otherwise, empirical change in appearance cannot touch or alter the *a priori* condition of imagining such a change: transcendental apperception. So yes, alterations are real, but the condition by which they become thinkable as alterations cannot be modified, any less than the spontaneity of thought itself can be.

For Heidegger it seems that the answer regarding change must be different: in his interpretation, Kant's system never needed to find a ground in transcendental apperception,

because its true identity was the imagination's temporalization of itself.[46] If appearances are to be taken as things in themselves that refer only to a Nothing, then any change in appearance *would* constitute ontological change. One might assume that an identification of time, thought, and intuition—identifying them all as the pure capacity for identification offered by the imagination—means that schematism would be for Heidegger a free activity, a poetic power of gathering essential to the subject/Dasein.[47] This was not (yet) the case. What Heidegger saw in the Kant he had created for himself was instead a radically passive self-affection. One of the examples Heidegger gives of auto-affectivity concerns the dimension of pleasure in Kant.[48] "Even in the 'base' feelings of pleasure," he notes, "a peculiar basic structure appears. Pleasure (Lust) is not just pleasure for something and in something, but rather it is always at the same time enjoyment (*Belustigung*), i.e., a way in which human beings experience themselves as enjoying (*Belustigt*), in which they are happy (*Lustig*). Thus, in every sensible […] and nonsensible feeling is found this clear structure: feeling is an instance of having a feeling for . . . , and as such it is at the same time a self-feeling of that which feels" (110). "The free, self-affecting of the law"—that in the absence of ground (either for appearances or for thinking) that which is given and the way that the given modifies itself is always a law, a schematization, of its own being—this is for Heidegger the truth of Kant's "pure spontaneity." There is in every experience, sensible or no, "a self-submitting, immediate, surrender-to […] pure receptivity"

[46] "Time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity" (132). "Time and the 'I think' no longer stand incompatibly and incomparably at odds; they are the same" (134).

[47] As Pavel Reichel points out, Heidegger first describes temporal ex-stases as "horizonal schemata" for Dasein in *Being and Time*, and this is extended beyond Dasein to beings in general in his 1927 lecture course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Reichel, *Being, Entities, and Schematism*, 26; Sheehan, *Making Sense*). According to Reichel, "this doctrine […] implies that being can be 'schematised' or expressed in distinct ways, and more importantly explains how being can be expressed in a multiplicity of ways." Explaining the "regional multiplicity" of unitary Being on the basis of schematization thus reveals beings as their own rules, i.e., essentially self-figuring (94).

[48] See Jean-Luc Nancy, "Kant's System of Pleasure."

(112). There must then be only one experience for Heidegger as well: submission to the given, and recognition of the given's role in the constitution of that which submits to it.

### *1.7 – Egg Dasein*

Heidegger's interpretation of the schematism stands between his definition of Dasein in *Being and Time*, a "thrown projection" of its own possibilities, and what Dasein would become in the *Contributions*, a thrown projection that *is* only when it refuses what is possible for it by surrendering to itself. In *Being and Time*, Dasein's projectedness is denied any relationship to the teleological, or to the execution of a plan: there, "projecting has nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out, and in accordance with which Dasein arranges its Being" (185). This begins to change in the *Kantbook*, where we are told that "the explicit execution of a projecting, and even what is grasped in the ontological, must necessarily be construction. […] This construction can be understood as Dasein's assault upon the primal metaphysical factum in it, an assault which arises from within Dasein itself" (163). Dasein bears a new identity altogether in the *Contributions*, as

> a projecting of oneself, and a placing of oneself, out into the open realm where in understanding one first comes to oneself as a self. Furthermore, understanding as projection is a thrown projection, a coming into the open realm (truth) which already finds itself in the midst of opened beings, rooted in the earth and protruding up into a world. […] The projector of the projection is a thrown projector—but only in the throwing and through it. Understanding is the carrying out and taking over of the withstanding steadfastness; it is Da-sein, and taking over is the undergoing wherein what is self-secluding opens itself as maintaining and binding. (*Contributions*, 204)

By appropriating itself, Dasein's decision for undecidability becomes a "maintaining" of an "originariness" through the refusal of possibility (289), in which transition is an endless "preparing" for an Event that never comes. This is Heidegger's conception of transition: to think that the greatest possible change is the refusal of the possibility of change, and the surrender to who one already is or finds oneself to be. In the path to this definition of transition we see both the best and worst of Heidegger's legacy philosophically and politically. Prior to the turn, Dasein was nothing but its possibilities; after the turn, Dasein's sacrifice of its possibilities are its origin (the "other beginning"), and thus origin—even if it is only an origin permanently on the horizon—remains its only possibility. In this sense, the Dasein of the *Contributions* is "something overcome" (326), something less and less possible every day. "To make what is true possible—that is what the thoughtful projection of Being has to accomplish. 'Accomplish'? To be sure; but not as a fabricating or devising in the sense of an unrestrained contriving. […] For this to occur a moment of that which is appropriated by Being as appropriating event, i.e., a moment of Da-sein, must be successful" (352). Dasein waits for itself to give itself origin, and it will wait a long time. It was the productive self-legislating passivity Heidegger discovered in his reading of Kant that finally allowed him to think that a decision against radical change could be the most profound transitional event.

Heidegger's transformation of Kant into himself is one instance of a methodology common to nearly all of his monographic studies of his predecessors in the Western tradition, such as his works on Nietzsche or Duns Scotus, or his near-imitational writings on Hölderlin or Trakl: these are methodologies of appropriation.[49] In the *Kantbook*, Heidegger claimed to be

[49] In the first vein, as Charles Sherover puts it, "it is a short step from Heidegger's Kant to Heidegger himself" (Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant & Time*, 221). In the second vein, Charles Bambach notes that even to Heidegger's conservative contemporaries his commentary on the "poet-prophet" appeared as the donning of a "Hölderlin mask" (Bambach, "Who is Heidegger's Hölderlin?").

adding to Kant's three guiding questions of "what can I know, what should I do and what may I hope" a fourth question: "what is the human being?" (145) In his view, "Kant saw that the person is more than the 'I'; [he saw that] the person is grounded in self-lawgiving" (*Contributions*, 43), but he was "not able to see" that he "had no path to the essence" of our "having-in-advance" (56). For Heidegger this path could only lead to the becoming-law of Dasein as identity. This is not the perpetual flux of sex cited by Malabou in her reading of Heidegger's post-transition thinking, nor the endless dissemination of gender cited by Derrida, but transition as nothing but the essentialization of the deferral of transition: the "withholding" of possibilities in preservation of their incipience. It is a fundamentally pre-transition outlook. This figure of transition does not take the form of a remaking but is rather *the appropriation of what is as what could be*: the transformation of the actual into the possible. Just like Kant, after his Turn Heidegger retreated from the essential question for the triune domain, that of ontico-ontologico exchange, after coming near it. The figuration which resulted—transition figured as a retreat into the given, the given figured as schema—is inseparable from the Event as the Heideggerian theory of change.

# Chapter Two, Poetics of Appropriation

"Art is the art of being an identity."[50]

(Laura Riding, *Experts Are Puzzled*, 128)

[50] From a prose piece seemingly titled "An Address to America," which at end reveals its true title to be "Release from the Implications of Origin."

### *2.1 – Recapitulating Appropriation*

In the first chapter, we pinned down the philosophical origins of the first of the two dominant figurations of change which circumscribe the thought of the trans subject today: the name we gave to this first figuration, drawn from Heidegger's thinking of transition across his "Turn," is *appropriation*. When viewed as appropriation, change is not an alteration of a being in its actuality, but an alteration of a potentiality for being: when taken as appropriation, transition occurs as an insistence upon a future "figurative apprehension" (Heidegger, *The Event*, 139) of something already given, i.e., something possibly proper to one's being. Appropriation admits of a "transition" only insofar as this is an "owning up to oneself" (132, paraphrase). A change in appropriation is also said to be entirely prior to any ontic effects or traces of any change having taken place; at the same time, this change in appropriation is pre-ontic only insofar as it renders the ontic ontological. In essence, appropriation is change without change—it is a deferring refusal of change. From the outset our concern has been to track the way that both philosophy and literature embed a figure of change in the triune domain by way of a shared receptacle: the trans subject. In this chapter, we will put concept of appropriative change to work by determining how literature figures change in the trans subject as and through appropriation.

And the trans subject has been addressed more conspicuously in literature than in philosophy. Countless monographs and articles have taken up the "queerness" and "transness" of texts which feature literal changes of sex, from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* to the love poetry of Shakespeare to the many tales of changes of sex and gender in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[51] Emma Heaney has shown the way that changes of sex have been used as literary devices, and has

[51] See Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, and Crawford, "Woolf's "Einfühlung": An Alternative Theory of Transgender Affect;" Bulman, *Shakespeare Re-Dressed*, and Gordon, "A Woman's Prick: Trans Technogenesis in Sonnet 20;" Sharrock, Möller and Malm, *Metamorphic Readings: Transformation, Language, and Gender in the Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses* and Northrop, "Caeneus and Heroic (Trans)Masculinity in Ovid's Metamorphoses."

investigated the way that literature where these devices are operative goes on to shape non-literary conceptions of what it means to change sex. According to Heaney, in literary modernism in particular these devices "revived and reinforced the figural assumption of the trans feminine allegory […] during the period in which trans life was medicalized." As a result, this has led to "the installation of trans women in narratives that are about the conceptual reordering of sex," which "attaches this allegorical association to trans femininity itself" (Heaney, *The New Woman*, 6). For Heaney, the allegorical writing of the trans subject in cis literature represents a "bridging of […] social and bodily experience [that] clarifies the totality of the operation of trans woman as an ontological and historical category. The inclusion of this experience in the understanding of sex further completes an understanding of the historical category of woman" (162). Heaney concludes that "a trans feminist analytic" of modernist literary history that is cognizant of "innovations in technology and the semiotic life of queer sociality" can "propel woman's reemergence" as a site of coherent identification (292). While "woman" may be a coherent site of identification for Heaney, and while this is also the position we are attempting to defend for the trans subject, for her "transness" can only be described as contingent to a particular historical stage of the (cis) literary and scientific subsumption of the trans subject. Something like "woman," or any other identification in the triune domain, is presumably one among many ways of asserting the "historical being" of transness—in this formulation, Heaney is forced to abandon the centrality of transition to transness as an identity (161).[52]

[52] Heaney is more explicit about this in 2024's *Feminism Against Cisness*, where she removes cisness from a dialectic with transness entirely, treating cisness as a "biologizing ideology" of a more basic and universal transness: "Cisness […] has no material basis of its own, only the one it attains via its imbrication in sexual difference" (11). In a recent dialogue with Sophie Lewis, though, Heaney abandons even the possibility of an investment in the category of "woman": "I should have written 'women.' Regret! About 'woman' I have nothing to say, about women, yes." As Lewis puts it, Heaney's work "[suggests] that non-cisness is the condition of all bodies. 'Is a cervix cis?' [referring to an article of Heaney's with this title] No. Is a body cis? Also no. Unless the possessor of the body invests in cisness, an investment which must always, then, be against the body" (Heaney and Lewis, *On*

As we have seen, "transness" must be defended as an inconsistent multiple of which "transition" is undeniably an element, even if it occurs in less literal ways than the simple representation of transition. This is certainly the case in cis literature, where the figuring of sex, gender, and identity's capacity to change—and the binding of the trans subject to this figuring, since appropriation is viewed as her only action—preserves transition as a central question. In this tradition, the trans subject is posed as the question: "is transition possible?" Often, cis authors answer in the negative: appropriation is possible, but appropriation is not change. As an icon of appropriation, the trans subject is granted a capacity for "ontologization" that turns out to threaten both the specificity of transness as such, as well as the decidability of those questions trans subjects pose for themselves. This chapter looks at the way that cis literature, and especially poetry, metabolizes the trans subject and immunizes itself against transition "in advance," prior to the appearance of any metaphorical vehicle of a trans body or trans desire.[53] I claim that one site wherein this phenomena occurs in poetry and literature is *where the transition of the trans subject stands in for the desire for change in a literary canon*. In the following sections, I will survey two lineages of poetics which stage such a forcing of "sex change:" Modernist avant-garde fascinations with "schemata," as well as radical feminist poetries preoccupied with mytho-poetic "rewriting." Afterwards, I will look more closely at two specific examples of each instance of appropriation, in the work of Laura Riding and Monique Wittig.

---

*the Cisness of the Bourgeoisie*). Yet it is tautologically true that bodies are not cis or trans; *subjects* are cis or trans. With "woman" disbarred as a site of identification, and transness foreclosed as that which definitionally circumscribes cisness—rather than simply "not being trans," these authors, and many others today (see Chapter Four), argue that "being cis" simply means a curtailing of transness to white bourgeois existence—what exactly is left to the trans subject when it comes to her articulation of herself on the basis of a transition?

[53] What Heaney calls the "trans feminine allegory" (Heaney, *New Woman*, 19), and what Susan Stryker and others, such as Jay Prosser, have seen as the tendency to depict the trans subject via metaphor, as "figure, dramatizing or metaphorizing the workings of heterosexuality's construction" (Jay Prosser, *Second Skins*, 31).

### *2.2 – Poetics of Appropriation: Modernist Avant-Gardes*

The trans subject appears in the first vein of modernist avant-gardes as a product of appropriation: a schema. The importance of the schema (the diagram, the graph, etc.) for avant-garde artists and writers in the 20th century has been extensively tracked, from Stephane Mallarmé to Eugen Gomringer and beyond (Lars Elleström, "Visual Iconicity"). For Jonas Magnusson, central to this fascination is the consideration of the "blueprint as total object," or the plan as the building, no building required (Jonas Magnusson, "Diagram Artist"). As Katharine Conley notes, surrealist and dada art and literature took up sex, gender, and identity—and "woman" in particular—as subjects operating on schematizeable bases. Conley claims that the male surrealist reduction of woman to schema dominates because of the way these artists attributed to woman a unique capacity for automatism (8)—i.e., for inputs, and for appropriation to novel inputs—which implies an ontology "in flux, in transition" (135). This new, donnable-via-schema "Womanhood," is visible in the case of Duchamp's cross-sex alter ego "Rrose Sélavy," which Duchamp, as well as Robert Desnos and Francis Picabia, used as a device for poetry (Conley, "Rrose Sélavy's Ghosts," 964). Conley describes the typical poem "by" Sélavy: "each one has not only two parts, usually yoked together with the verb *to be* in the style of a mathematical equation, but two identities—one we see and hear and one we think internally and only imagine we have heard. The first playful, surrealistically irrational; the second, following the logic of chiasmus, its corollary."[54] These poems transform the one into the other.

Despite the many ends to which the Sélavy identity was put, it consisted of, at heart, a man "becoming" a woman, or becoming his own feminine muse, to aid in the transformation of

[54] For Desnos, this especially takes the form of a catalogue or list, compiled by the substitution of variables—particles of language based on rhyme or homonymy rather than sense—such as, "61. Apprenez que la geste célèbre de Rrose Sélavy est inscrite dans l'algèbre céleste" (geste/céleste, célèbre/algèbre) (Desnos, *Rrose Sélavy*).

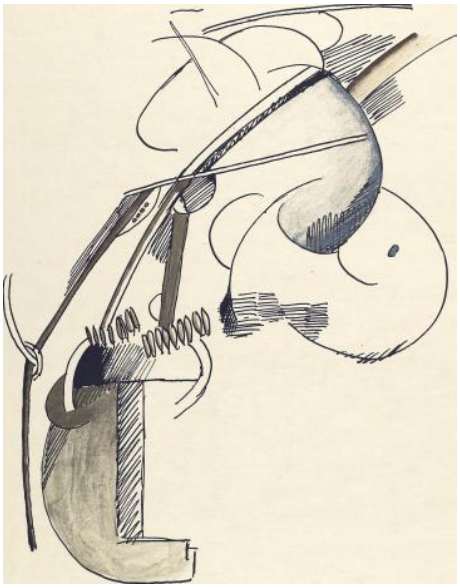
everyday experience into art (965; *Automatic Woman*, 27).[55] The basic gesture of the Duchampian readymade is after all often described as an "appropriation" of everyday objects; Sélavy, too, has been described as such, though more in the register of appropriation as theft that we find levied at any change of sex (Cora Fisher, "The Art of Appropriation"; Allen S. Weiss, "Poetic Justice"). Such a maneuver does not affirm a real change of sex per se, so much as it highlights the obduracy of an unerasable "true sex," in the sense that this is still a man "appropriating" the identity woman. We can see this in Man Ray's approaches to depicting the schema that woman supposedly is: when capturing an image of Duchamp as Rrose, he smoothes her "passing" as a woman through the careful management of photographic technique; with his photo series on the "female impersonator" Barbette, she always photographed in the process of undress, taking the viewer "behind the curtain" of performance (Reznick, "Dismembered Muses," 370); and in his 1920 photograph *The Coat-Stand*, we could add, even the body of a cis woman synthesizes her movable cut-out silhouette with the metal frame of a functional tool, revealing her, and not the outline or the machine, to be the real schema.

In 1917, Picabia published his second collection of poems, *The Daughter Born without a Mother*. Like the book that preceded it, *Daughter* was mostly compiled from the artist's visual and textual contributions to his Barcelona-based visual arts journal *391* (Lowenthal, *Beautiful Monster*, 6/7), and paired its texts with drawings (e.g., *Voilà elle,* left, below).[56] But it also

[55] "She links the poet with his object of art and *is* the object of his art."

[56] Picabia began *391* in the spirit of the earlier New York City-based magazine *291*, of which he also was a contributor. In an introduction an issue of *291* in 1915, its editor, Paul Haviland, wrote of Picabia's drawing "The Daughter Born without a Mother" (pictured at center, below): "We are living the age of the machine. Man made the machine in his own image. […] The machine is his 'daughter born without a mother.' That is why he loves her. He has made the machine superior to himself. That is why he admires her. Having made her superior to himself, he endows the superior beings which he conceives in his poetry and in his plastique with the qualities of machines. Man gave her every qualification except thought. She submits to his will but he must direct her activities. Without him she remains a wonderful being, but without aim or anatomy. Through their mating they complete one another" (Haviland, "Age of the Machine," 1).

combined the poetic and the visual into schemata (in a mode simar to the contemporaneous visual-textual hybridity of Duchamp's companion booklet to *The Bride Stripped Bare*, *The Green Box*, or Man Ray's sketches of cross-sections of mechanisms, such as his *Dessin*) which echo the sense of the schematic we have already explored in Kant, via Heidegger. As we have seen, a schema is a product both synthesizing and synthetic: it produces the empirical through formalisms derived from the empirical. Like his machine art, Picabia's schema-poems combine diagrammatic representations of space and movement with half-clinical, half-ludic linguistic tags or labels. Some abstract the geometrical forms of real devices, while others depict fully imaginary machines and structures.[57]

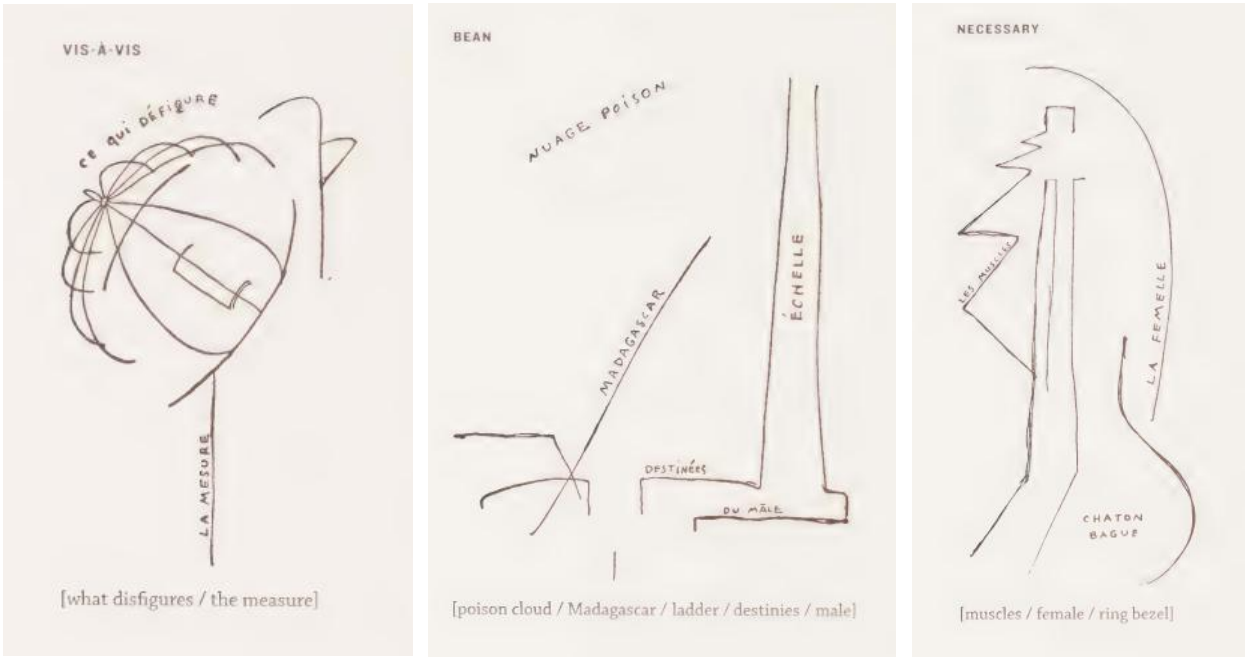


*Figures 1A-B:* "Voilà elle," "Fille Née Sans Mère"

Even the title *The Daughter Born without a Mother* situates it the larger tradition of avant-garde conflations of woman, sex change, and schema. The figure of "the motherless daughter" came to him in his reading of Montesqieu's *The Spirit of Laws*, which relates the myth

[57] Picabia lifted shapes from contemporary science magazines of his day and paired them with poems produced through automatic writing, as was the case with *Daughter's* namesake drawing (Rudolf Kuenzli, *Dada*).

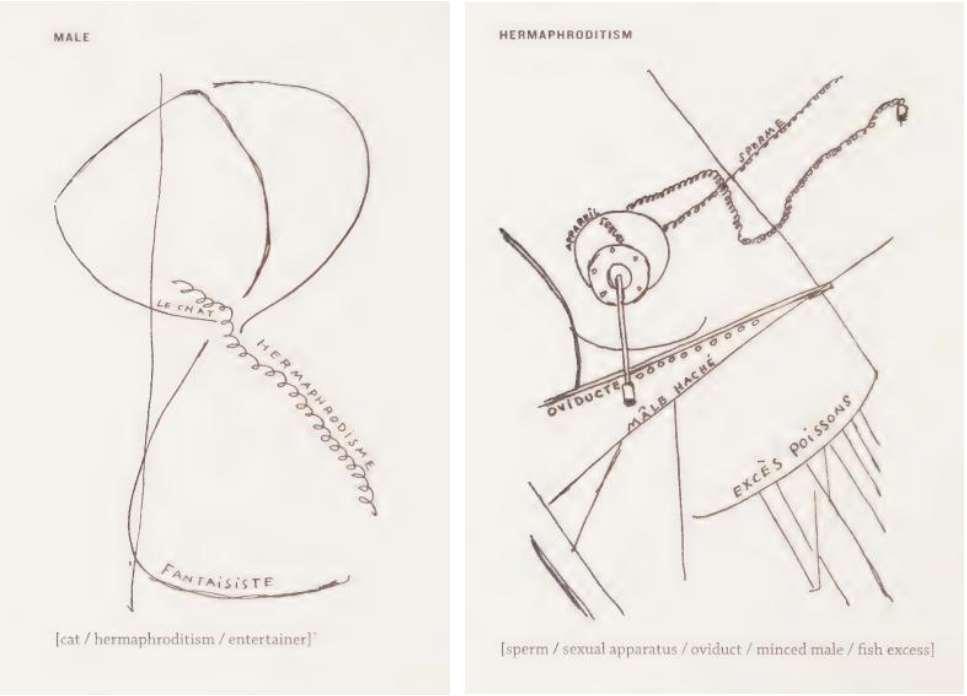
of the autochthonous Ancient Greek king, Erichthonius (Marc Lowenthal, Beautiful Monster; Ziogas, *Ovid and Hesiod*). Erichthonius was said to have been born from the discarded semen of Hephaestus, which Athena wiped off her thigh after avoiding a rape. From the soil where the semen landed, Erichthonius was birthed, motherless. Picabia, however, changes the sex of the myth's subject from male to female. Sex change appears throughout Picabia's purely textual poetry: in "Gear Change," he writes of "my pretty ovary / which I taste with myself" (*Beautiful Monster*, 87); in "Skin" he describes "my true pleasure / footmen in evening dress / over the next two years like goddesses" (74). But if Erichthonius remains in the collection, she is seen best through the collection's schema-poems. All are concerned with an idea of sexual difference, yet all highlight the contingency of their linguistic "labels," any of which could be substituted for any other, changing the range of a schematic appropriation.




*Figures 2A-C:* "Vis-à-Vis," "Necessary," "Bean"

Pieces like "Necessary" take the form of a visual gag, disguising a direct representation of a "womanly" body behind its schematization of an engineering tool, the bezel. "Bean" uses motifs of verticality in the parallel lines of the rungless ladder to associate the paradoxical

concept of "destinies" (one should have but one) with a heroic masculinity.[58] Taken together, both depict the sex binary as unitary in the sense that it is on each side schematic. As the tags found in "Vis-a-Vis," state, the measuring potential of the schema assures normativity by way of the substitutability of its labels, like the swapping of parts in mechanized production.




*Figures 2D-E:* "Male," "Hermaphroditism"

"Male" and "Hermaphroditism" reveal the real undercurrent of thinking in Picabia's schema-poems: the depiction of the hermaphrodite—no longer the mythical god in which two sexes have merged, but a device which combines them—persists as a symbol of transsexuality across the entirety of his engagement with poetry.[59] This hermaphroditizing device, in which subjects are

[58] *Contributions*, appropriation is that which "destines the human being to be the property of beyng" (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 207). For Charles Guignon, Heidegger's concept of destiny (*Geschick*) is not predeterminative, but includes "the idea that some events are more or less appropriate to the current scheme of things;" *Geschick* in German "has 'being appropriate' as one of its meanings" (*Cambridge Lexicon*).

[59] The hermaphrodite, or the androgyne, typically stood for the totalization in a non-total subject (i.e., in a particularly sexed, gendered and identifying subject) of the entire "reunited" triune domain, rather than a literal depiction of, say, intersexuality. Conley describes this as a symbol important to modernist avant-gardes, depicting an "ideal view of reciprocal love." Moreover, it is a "change of one's sex" only insofar as it is the revokable trading of places within a stable dyadic field: "the result is a mirror relation with the beloved or the substitute for the beloved's body (her *corps*), the *corpus* of the text, which reflects back from the page the poet's uncensored

"crushed, or welded into a vast instrument" is the schema-poem itself, making possible both total rearrangement, and total ownership (Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada*, 130).

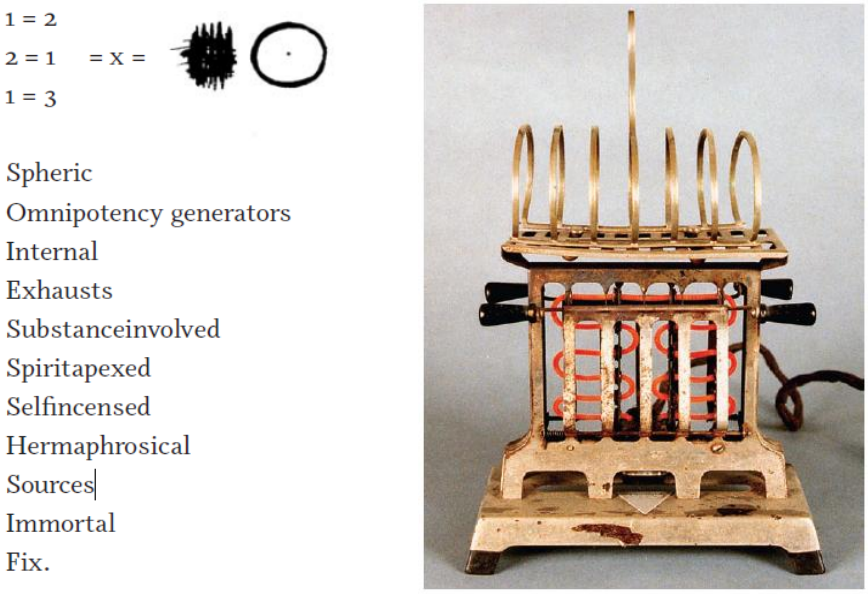
This appropriation was not limited to men, though. Duchamp's Rrose Sélavy persona was after all based on a real person, the artist Baronness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who was possibly also the actual creator of his most famous work, *Fountain*: "R. Mutt" was one of her names used while crossdressing and presenting as a male artist in New York City (Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity*).[60] Among many other instances of embodying the kind of "hermaphrodite" that her male contemporaries obsessed over, Freytag-Loringhoven was known to make and carry with her a plastic cast of a penis, which she would display in her street performances as "proof" of her male sex (*Women in Dada*, 157). These were not just "performative self-enactments" (143), or counter-appropriations, but a "total identification" (156) of and as the field of representation of sex, gender, and identity—the triune domain—in the scene of art, literalizing Picabia's hermaphrodite as a trans subject. Freytag-Loringhoven's engagement with schemata also resulted in poetic production, as in her 1924 poem *Orgasmic Toast*, which appropriated the frame of the "American Beauty" Toaster as form. Gammel claims that for Freytag-Loringhoven, machinic schema such as these were primarily interested in production, and allegorically linked to woman on that basis (as "birth-giving"): their example of this is her invention in the below example of "hermaphrosical," as a "portmanteau word combining aphrodisiacal (sexually arousing) and hermaphroditic (an individual with both male and female organs, as seen in the toaster's yonic slits and

---

thoughts in a process that ideally comes closer to oscillation leading to insight than to appropriation of one by the other" (Conley, *Automatic Woman*, 9). The eunuch, specifically the castrated or feminized man, stood similarly: for example, in his long poem *Unique Eunuch*, where he lists his circle of fellow male Dadaists and Surrealists by feminizing their given names (*Beautiful Monster*, 193, note 10).

[60] In effect, then, Duchamp was posing as a woman posing as a man.

ejection/ejaculation capabilities)" (*Body Sweats*, 348). What this misses—dependent as such an interpretation is on a cis normative conception of womanhood—is the transitive function of number in the poem, where the stable referent of an array of substitutable variables is blotted out in frustration. As schema, the poem can be a totality for those sexed and gendered elements which we may slot into it in a way that the identity "woman" seemingly can't—these elements become variously appropriable parts, for which the schema-poem is the only possible whole, even if this is a whole that remains preliminary, and foundationally open to variation.




*Figures 3A-B:* from "Orgasmic Toast," "American Beauty Toaster"

In the schema-poems of Picabia and Freytag-Loringhoven, changes of sex appear as changes in appropriation, in which the subject adapts the triune domain to themselves rather than the other way around. The implication is that if identification is truly total and appropriation of sexed and gendered potentials in that totality is complete, the transitivity of sex, gender, and identity cannot restrict change to just one possibility for just one subject. This idea is active in one of the major source texts for this literary tradition, Guillame Apollinaire's play *The*

*Mammaries of Tiresias*. In Apollinaire's play, the protagonist Therese's change of sex (from female to male) changes sex itself, and results in her husband being mistaken as a girl by all around him, despite having undergone no alteration himself (Apollinaire, *Mammaries*, 177/186-7).[61] Therese transitions, and this is a transition achieved through sheer insistence, through the mere declaration of her manhood independent of the adoption of any practices or decisions for embodiment; and she is a man. One character asks, "How can we give such beings a name / Though physically she's just the same / To call her man's not playing the game" (187). In the end, she returns to her husband, her "performance" over, is a woman once more, and the essential properties of sex, gender, and identity are left intact, "appropriate" to the roles each have taken up. "It can be fun to switch" the chorus chants at the end, "Just mind you get it right."

### *2.3 – Poetics of Appropriation: Radical Feminisms*

If modernist avant-gardes took the schema as a posable product in which to appropriate temporary transitions of gender and sex, a turn to feminist poetics reveals the same production in the related procedure of feminist rewriting.[62] The rewriting of patriarchal literary canons by women has been a central practice in feminist poetics: in "Writing as Re-Vision," Adrienne Rich claimed that the act of rewriting a male canon, of changing its sex to female, is an "act of survival" for women (Rich, "Re-Vision," 18). Rich called the goal of canonical transformation a "recuperative" approach to women's historical representation in literature: "the girl or woman who tries to write […] goes to poetry or fiction looking for her way of being in the world […]; she is looking eagerly for guides, maps, possibilities; and over and over in the 'words' masculine

[61] Apollinaire inverts the Greek myth, by having Tiresias, a male prophet who was transformed into a woman for seven years, begin as a woman and then become a man.
[62] And in the case of women, literally via dolls and mannequins, for example in the work of Hans Bellmer, Hannah Höch, Emmy Hennings, and more.

persuasive force' of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men" (21). Yet we must also note Rich's relationship with the beginnings of trans-exclusionary radical feminism, wherein the trans (woman) subject is a physical manifestation of the idea of "Woman […] written by men." For example, Rich is thanked profusely for editorial help in the foreword to Janice Raymond's 1979 manifesto of trans hate *The Transsexual Empire*, a text that describes all trans women as mutilated men who aggressively colonize women's spaces with nothing besides the aim of raping and murdering "real women" ("women written by women"). In *Empire,* Rich's formulation about rewriting is cited by Raymond in order to describe the way trans women "appropriate" womanhood.[63] In acts of radical feminist literary resexuation, cis women who reshape the body of the patriarchal canon via their own kinds of appropriation encounter this phobic conception of the trans subject: knowingly or not, they identify with her. How can we understand this encounter as a part of the process Rich describes as "woman […] becoming her own mid-wife, creating herself anew" (25)?

This is not to say that the lineage between feminism, radical feminism, and trans-exclusionary radical feminism is uncontested. Cristan Williams, for example, has problematized such a notion, and tracks a suppressed history of trans-inclusivity within the radical feminism of the 1970's and 80's (Williams, "Radical Inclusion," 257). Sophie Lewis has also attempted to show that radical feminism's supposedly anti-trans foundations are mythical, and in themselves rewrite a far more open history in order to align it with neo-fascist movements against transness (Lewis, *Enemy Feminisms*). One cannot then argue that radical feminist poetics, insofar as this

[63] Sylvia Rivera relates this typical response in her recounting of Jean O'Leary, founder of Radicalesbians, and Perry Brass, a member of the Gay Liberation Front, lumping transsexual women in with drag queens as men who were "'appropriating female' dress, but still had 'male privileges'" (Aleš Debeljak, *Reluctant Modernity*, 325).

can be said to exist in a unified sense, is necessarily allied with trans exclusion—it ranges across far too many different authors and communities, arises from too many different geographic sites of production, works within too many different genres, and takes up too many different kinds of source material to be drawn so simply. Moreover, suspicion about appropriation does not begin with radical feminism, no matter how the concept might color the movement's thinking of the trans subject, and vice versa.[64]

Even before radical feminism emerged as a distinct phase of feminist struggle, we can read similar questions about appropriation of the "male canon." The poetry of H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* raises these questions: ostensibly a completion of the palinodes of Stesichorus, which are mostly lost (Linda Wagner, "Culmination"), H.D. picks up his argument that the Helen in Troy was merely an illusion propagated by men, with the true Helen residing in Egypt during the Trojan War. In this book, H.D. searches for a Helen severed from her "inauthentic" existence as the object of male perception, circulation, and desire: in other words, as a woman made and appropriated by men. As we hear in one of the choral sections that preface each long poem, "Helen must be re-born. That is, her soul must return wholly to her body" (H.D., *Helen in Egypt*, 162). The function of a palinode is to retract an ode: Stesichorus had been in charge of unmaking his odes to (and insults of) Helen, and it is this production—a "real male Helen," to correct "Helen the female illusion"—that H.D. rewrites. In a sense, then, *Helen in Egypt* locates Helen's "true womanhood" by retracting Stesichorus' retraction, "finishing" the narrative of Helen's flight from Troy with the event of a transition which irrevocably changes Helen into herself:

> A sharp sword divides me from the past,
> yet no glaive, this;
> how did I cross?

[64] This has been argued for most notoriously by Andrea Long Chu, in her attempt to rehabilitate Valerie Solanas' misandry in advocating for a monist conception of sex (Chu, *Females*).

coast from coast, they are separate;
I can recall the skiff
the stars' countless host

but I would only remember
how I woke to familiar fragrance,
late roses, bruised apples;

reality opened before me,
I had come back;
I retraced the thorny path… (116)

Though Helen is aware of her many manmade copies, and suspects that she too is "not real" in the manner of something "carved of red cedar" (291), any accusation of artificiality is belied by "'the living grain of the tree' and 'the rose-vein of the wood'" (293). Helen insists on herself as a real illusion and refuses to be "sacrificed" to the "inimical concept" (170) of man, gaining for the first time the capacity to become the woman she already is. In repeating the names of women "subjugated, enchanted, slain and bound to the Master" (218/9), H.D. builds around Helen a feminine Egypt in place of a masculine Greece, a hieroglyphic and separatist landscape supposedly illegible to the sex she is not. But Helen-becoming-Helen through H.D.'s poetic intervention in that separated landscape is what figures her as a trans subject empowered with a new appropriation of herself.[65]

Alice Notley's poetry offers examples of anxieties about appropriation closer to the contemporary of radical feminist critique. *The Descent of Alette* has been read as a case of this, in that its rewriting of the Orphic descent myth replaces the harmonic male voice of Orpheus with the fragmentary female speech of Alette, forcing a change of sex for the hero figure (Christopher Roman, "The Owl of the System"). Alette searches for a lost "original woman"

[65] As Cassandra Laity points out in "H.D., Modernism, and Transgressive Sexualities," H.D. herself was subjected to the modernist fixation on the "androgyne" that we discussed in the previous section (Dickie and Travisano, *Gendered Modernisms*, 52). The poet Frances Gregg dedicated her poem "Hermaphroditus" to H.D., in which she "marvels" at "how all parts of thee attuned" (Gregg, in *Others: A Magazine of New Verse*, 77).

(described as the first mother), whose identity has been obscured by a male Tyrant who hoards and controls the world's knowledge. Knowledge appears in the form of a room full of masks, "masks of principles," "essences"; we linger on the "Mask of… sexuality!" with a "penis nose," "vagina mouth," "nipple eyes," and then masks for the world's male hegemons: "grotesque caricatures," their faces "an overlay" "in lipstick" "& greasepaint." "'There have always been" "such men,'" says the Tyrant. "They must look natural…" "inevitable" (Notley, *Descent*, 126). In contrast to the "invading men" of history, made up like campy drag queens, stands the "lone mask" "of the woman" "who had been headless," "our first mother" (127). For Notley, the idea of the "original woman" is an "empty symbol" (128), but Alette still wants to rescue her (and herself) from this "cliché"—she needs "her voice—" "the headless" "woman's voice—" in order to even answer the Tyrant's questions (136). Alette both is and is not woman while she tracks down this mother figure: at times, she exists only as her "owl self," a symbol of knowledge in Greek myth. When she finally kills the Tyrant, the act is described as a "need" of her owl self, i.e., of her unsexed self, but one "factually" made possible only by her "woman's body" (143). In transforming from owl to woman and back again multiple times throughout the poem, Alette is therefore never more than on the verge of "having" the very gender that occasioned her search for the lost primordial mother within the Tyrant's domain in the first place. Her simultaneous identification with and appropriation of this figure—given to us in the paradoxical form of a mask that represents a headless woman—renders it as perpetually incomplete index of those who could wear that mask, but one still able to function as "origin," thus evincing a model of appropriative change and its ontology of pure appearance.

Notley's *Reason, and Other Women* provides another angle on this. Rather than taking the shape of an epic yet fragmented narrative, like *The Descent*, *Reason* attempts to construct

images in a manner Notley likens to the imbrication of mosaics in the Eastern Roman Empire and its Orthodox church. Through imbrication, the individual tesserae for a mosaic are derived from earlier, destroyed or degraded works and then used in new constructions (James Trilling, "The Soul of the Empire"). The primary text for Notley's *Reason* is Christine de Pizan's 1405 *Book of the City of Ladies,* a prose work in which Pizan stages a historical defense of her sex. Familiar only with the misogyny of her world, she curses God for making her a woman rather than a man, and for allowing something as incomplete as woman to exist. It is at that moment that three living concepts appear—Lady Justice, Lady Rectitude and Lady Reason—who together provide her a history of her sex in the form of a list of ideal women: female monarchs, biblical figures and personages from pagan myth considered to be paragons of virtue.[66] Not only do the three Ladies provide Pizan with evidence that women have their own essential moral characteristics and heroic capacities, they also give her a task. Pizan is to build a city where women can live together, separately from men, whose walls will delineate the "true women" from those women who are a mere deformation or man-made description. Pizan herself had been chosen for the task of laying the city's foundation stones because she was said to be appropriate for it (in the sense of appropriation as correctness), and she asks the reader (assumed to be a woman also) to complete the work. "You among all women have been given the privilege to build the City of Ladies," says Reason. "To lay the foundations, you will draw running water from the three of us as from a clear well, and we will provide you with building materials

[66] Pizan's immediate reference was Boccaccio, whose compendium *De mulieribus claris* (Famous Women) similarly enumerated "upright" women in history, but only on the basis of negative female examples and from a male perspective. See also the *Catalogue of Women*, the literary work of antiquity usually (but doubtfully) attributed to Hesiod which stands as an even earlier progenitor of a wider genre Ioannis Ziogas has called "catalogue poetry" (Ziogas, *Ovid and Hesiod: The Metamorphosis of the Catalogue of Women*, 52). As we will see in this section, the catalogue is formally related to the schema. As an open register of a kind of being which is not itself (but can transform into) that being, the catalogue appropriates what it registers and renders all entrants substitutable with each other: the catalogue is a self-synthesizing manifold. See Section 2.7.

stronger and more durable than any marble sealed with cement. Your city will be beautiful beyond compare and it will last forever" (Pizan, *City*, 27).

In *Reason,* Notley stages a new encounter with these Ladies, and a new construction of their city. She populates her City of Ladies not with grand names, but with people from her own life, abstracted and depersonalized. She finds herself among the city's crowds, too, at every remembered moment and age; troublingly, for her, she also finds men in the city. In the text, Notley aspires to present the activity of reasoning firsthand: as she tries to reason out these contradictory presences in the city, her poems deploy the long line to enable an excess of transcribed thought, and her language is devoid of consistent syntactic markers. We instead find semantic diversions in the form of unfinished ideas, unedited grasping, and uncontrolled rage. Often, the poems in *Reason* adopt prose forms split by lineation, slipping between memory, dream, nightmare, and vision. Like her feminist heroics (*The Descent,* but also *Alma, Or, the Dead Women*), at the level of content, Notley engages in the self-fashioning rewriting called for by Rich; like her aesthetic heroics (the more linguistically experimental *Benediction* and *Disobedience*), at the level of form, she commits herself to establishing what Maggie Nelson calls a "new measure" between the abstract and the concrete, insisting on the immediacy of thought as its own grammar (Nelson, *Women and other True Abstractions*, 155). Content and form; Lady Justice and Lady Reason.

But what of Lady Rectitude? Strangely, she does not appear in *Reason, and Other Women*. Rectitude is the concept of truth as righteousness, correctness, propriety: the appropriate. Notley seems to have banished both rectitude and Lady Rectitude from the city—she insists that this is a concept which has not yet arrived, since its allegorical woman must be "design[ed] without a model" (13). This is the impetus for her return to Pizan: what does the City

of Ladies look like with the walls removed? In attempting to belong to a city that no one in particular any longer belongs to, Notley develops a counter-sainthood to Pizan's catalogue, a sainting of personal experience and a cataloguing of herself, which she associates with *caritas*, or "care." Yet Notley retains faith in the possibility that "Uniconic Women" (as one of the central poems in the book is titled) still possess some essential "womanhood," namely in their necessary escape from the icon, or the schema. This we can contrast to Pizan's faith in "true women:" for Notley, "there are no non man made things" (111) in her city, evidenced by the "doll like women" (164) whose shared gender is an "almost-form" (17), a pollution or poison within thought, something that they have done to their own minds more primarily than to their bodies (97). The pollution seems to be that of gender itself, a narrative pollution about the collective story that woman is supposed to be: "Stories are bodies we keep going on alive only in others minds everyone acts as if this is lovely its inutterably hideous, to live in others. there is a way out // there must be, to leave the icon of symmetry" (27). Notley preserves in contrast to this a reality for sex, and a distinction (if not a determining hierarchy) between sex and gender: in herself she still finds "the prevailing topography of female sex" (158), the "enclosure of our mystery, here i am inside and cant / know it without the old symbols" (24). Her question is not what woman is in and of herself—i.e., independent of sexual difference and the mutability of sex—but is rather "how to close the chasm of the division" of the "old sexual system" where "light and darkness the sexes and all of that ancient lie […] had become so divided and ordered ordered as if that were an order […] enmeshed in the modern details of the socalled equality of emptiness" (175). It is only there that thinking beings "can be into one another and variant cruciform twins point into the inside of the emblem or bema called sex or not and one another can be twins multiples inside am one the unique invisible of the am self" (169). "What was i looking for?" Notley asks;

"certainly not the department of gender / what is a gender what on earth what is earth i was looking for what is earth in a world a modern fabric […] my sex is still involved" (23).

In *Reason* gender appears as an ornamentation of sexual difference, a "reasonless gold" that poetry "speaks for" (20), reasons about, transforms *into* sex. Sex, i.e., reason, thus remains the "only free thing there is" (47), and the only thing linking woman to woman, let alone the only thing capable of crossing the "abyss" that separates woman from man. Only the enemies of Lady Justice emphasize sexlessness: the "obnoxious male warrior" who cuts apart the cut between man and woman (52), the "intellectual" and "poet" who "tops" everyone and everything (48), the "engineers" of a sprawling train system dedicated to the transport and desexing of women, who are all desexed men (53); a world that enforces "no sex and genders no word at all." For Notley, the latter is the greatest danger. For her, woman is no "tint" (102) but is a fundamentally different arrangement of an infinite mosaic of possible properties: "tiny icons embedded in this gorgeous jewelled frame of a larger icon" of Woman, who is "an appearance in front of infinity but with an outward manifestation" (110). Before the infinite, proper and improper women, "we i and woman must battle each other" (123), and Notley describes this "rite of becoming a woman" as a "nightmare" (140). *Reason* still represents a call to defend the city, a defense as never-ending as Pizan's construction—but this defense is carried out not with walls, but with a near-inappropriable infinity, the abyssal moat of sexual difference. Lady Rectitude may not be visible alongside Reason and Justice in Notley's City, but her teachings are still active: "Her wholeness is here and not here" (35). It is the poet who now stands in rectitude's place, deciding upon her own heterogenous composition and maintaining it as a contingent orthodoxy. *Woman puts before herself a test to which she is the only correct answer. This is identity.* Through this self-legislating of essence, the poet sheds the "radiation" and "pollution" she acquired in having

entered into gender; to become "clean free reasonabl" (97), she purifies rather than abolishes the schematic form of identification, readying it for a new appropriation.

For Heidegger, transition inaugurates only an "inceptual unification, the inaugural unity of the appropriating and the appropriated." As we've seen, "Being […] *is* the appropriating beginning" (Heidegger, *The Event*, 128), and not what comes after that beginning. As both the traditions explored above show, the figuring of change as appropriation "consigns" the trans subject to the permanent beginning of literary canonicity, to which we must return in a transition if we are to alter the "essential signs," "grounded" as they are in that unified "domain" (144). But radical change as such is impossible in a transition to origin, wherein difference and the multiple have not yet come to exist. How does one "do it"—transition—"right," or with rectitude? By doing nothing at all.

### *2.4 – Against the Synonymists*

In 1935, under the editorship of British historian Alan Hodge, the Oxford English Club magazine gave a glowing review to the first issue of *Epilogue,* a new literary journal published by Seizin Press; both were the joint projects of the English poet Robert Graves and the American poet Laura Riding (Friedmann, *Mannered Grace*).[67] *Epilogue* was dedicated to publishing work by authors in Graves and Riding's circle, who would pass through their home on the Spanish island of Majorca—from the beginning, however, the journal centered fully on Riding's aesthetical and philosophical vision (Jacobs, "Uninfected Discourse"). Riding's essays and

[67] Born "Laura Reichenthal," she published early poems during her association with the Fugitives as "Laura Riding Gottschalk," taking the surname from her first marriage; she later came to refer to herself as "Laura (Riding) Jackson," switching to the surname of her second marriage, and bracketing her own rewritten surname. I have chosen to refer to her here as "Laura Riding" throughout, both because that the name she used at the time of the Majorca period discussed in this article, and out of an admitted bias for its non-conjugal inventiveness.

poems were placed throughout the first issue, and she, not Graves, was listed as sole chief editor, with him named as a mere "associate." *Epilogue* marked the first appearances of Riding's fusional pseudonym "Madeleine Vara," and by all appearances her urge for collaborative activity sustained the output of the Majorca group *Epilogue* gathered (Jacobs, 809).[68] Having already made a name for herself as a poet in America, the entirety of Riding's thought in the 1930's flowed into her epochal pronouncements in *Epilogue*, on the subjects of technology, politics, history, and religion, all of which she conceived of as a compilation of "what comes after the drama of history:" "a sprawling indeterminacy from which finalities can be discovered and articulated" (806). At the time, Riding believed only poets were capable of articulating this final totality, "a time-surviving truth, and a final unity of values" (808). It was her ambition for closure that the Oxford review praised most of all. The review's compliments were laid especially on Riding's essay *The Idea of God*, a collaboratively written piece (composed via a conversation with the American journalist Thomas Matthews), which used its occasion—one of her many collaborations with men—to embody the whittling-away of concepts of the theological disagreements *via negativa*. It was Riding's favorite project: unification-via-purification, applied to the particular case of sexuality and sexual difference.

In the eyes of the Oxford review, Riding advocated for a salvific fusion of the sexes, and for them this heralded her as a new kind of "woman writer." As the review put it, her work was ushering poetry into a "hermaphroditic millennium"—this misreading did not please Riding.[69]

[68] The ownership of this identity later became a point of tension for her and Graves. In *The Word Woman*, Riding discusses Graves' "appropriation" of a "Riding substance" in both his claims of participation in the Vara pseudonym, and in his later writings, such as *The White Goddess* (207, 208).

[69] This was a phrase she had used in an essay in *Epilogue I*, "Poems and Poets," in a footnote to her commentary on the work of Shelley and Keats (as she reveals in her letters, she especially had in mind Shelley's poem *Alsator, or The Spirit of Solitude*). Riding's commentary concerned her likening of "negative capability" to the domination and feminization of the poet figure by the woman-muse (*Letters*, "Poems and Poets," "The Idea of God").

She responded to Hodge immediately by letter in order to correct his magazine's "silly and dull" interpretation of her thinking (Riding, *Letters*). According to her, Hodge had completely missed the point in her diagnosis of a contemporary "hermaphroditism"—she had intended to gesture to it as a symptom of a civilizational malaise. The growing "sexual equality" of modernity that the review welcomed was for Riding merely "a practical result of the nineteenth century's passion for rationalistic simplification, the object of which was to determine what man was quantitatively and to dismiss all the remaining mystery as irrelevant to human thought. And if woman could be explained as a quantitative duplication of man, so much the less the mystery" (*Epilogue I*). Viewing "the sexes" as categories equal in value and neutral in their differences was for Riding a factual but still contingent result of a history from which eternal truths were yet to be extracted, like a heap of events upon which final meaning had yet to be imposed. In truth, Riding believed—three decades before Luce Irigaray or Julie Kristeva—that sexual difference was fundamentally unbridgeable, and that any gender worth the name must be absolutely singular. In her thinking, the unification of men and women on the basis of a categorical relationship (historical, biological, or social) could only ever be the result of an accidental situation, even if such situations must always be moved through and incorporated into thought rather than denied. Paradoxically, what Riding held to be singular about woman was her identity as an integrated and integrating, synthesized and synthesizing being.

Riding's "hermaphrodite" is thus not a unified figure of a post-sex society, but a "divided being," "part-man, part-woman" only insofar as it accepts rather than transcends its contingent constitution, against the hopes of Hodge. He wrote back to Riding, adopting a stance of panicked apology on behalf of the magazine and a submission to her correction (*Letters*). In return, Riding invited Hodge to spend Christmas with her and Robert Graves at their home on Majorca, and he

so impressed her there that he was permitted to begin what was in essence a discipleship to her. He followed her teachings so devoutly that he took up poetry himself; his writing appeared in all of the subsequent editions of *Epilogue*. His mimicry of Riding even led him to follow her in abandoning poetry, as she eventually did in 1941: he eventually burned his manuscripts, much to her disappointment (*Letters*). Like so many of the men she collaborated with, Riding had allowed an act of appropriation to take place in order to teach, to correct an error, and Hodge was not the first or last man who sought to appropriate, or be appropriated by, Laura Riding. She lived in accordance with her iconoclastic definition sex and gender: "Out of the 'modern' togetherness of man and woman," she wrote, later in life, "woman emerges as the unifier, leaving behind the now dead historical woman—the played out historical role. […] To be a woman finally is to be truth, to make unity" (*Woman*, 56). It was no coincidence that what remained after each of Riding's collaborations was always a unity that resembled nothing other than Riding.[70]

It was through her discussions with Hodge and Graves that Riding first began to develop her dictionary works, the *Dictionary of Exact Meanings* and *Dictionary of Related Meanings* (*Letters*). Spurred along by a desire to systematize and explain what she called in her letters the "objective feeling" of words properly used—a phrase she would eventually also use in *The Word Woman* to describe sex—Riding, Hodge and Graves began to put together compendiums of words they attempted to prove stood in undeniable association and ordered degrees of meaning,

[70] In one of the texts that she wrote with Hodge, "Philosophy and Poetry," Riding says that "a poem consists of a number of elements each of which is significant by its connexion with the others: by the interdependent illumination. The elements connected may derive from the world of temporal experience, but the conditions of connexion are in poetry. And there is no scientific way of clarifying these connexions: one can only say that they are poetic connexions—which means that there exists a single illumination for all the elements represented in the poem. But this illumination is not merely the product of these interacting connexions. In every poem there is present, by the poet, a force of singleness informed with a strength of congruent variety" (*Letters*; Wexler, *Pursuit of Truth*, 100-1). Joyce Wexler calls this an articulation of Riding's persistent equivocation of "the personal and the universal," in which "the study of private truths […] prepare people to define public truths." As is the case with Hodge here, and with Graves, Jackson, and others elsewhere, this "personal," private study often involves the conforming of some male collaborator to what was for her her own decidedly "female" way of thinking.

on the basis of which language use could then be gauged for incontrovertible correctness (Billiteri, *Language and the Renewal of Society*). Just as Riding and Graves had held in their jointly-written *Survey of Modernist Poetry* that "the poem really seems to mean what it says," and claimed that "all we can do is to let it interpret itself, without introducing any new associations, or, if possible, any new words" (*Survey*, 68-9), the goal of the dictionaries was to advance a semi-New Critical line on the autonomy of the poem. As Jeanne Heuving argues, "for the New Critics the poem was importantly a synthetic entity that brought heterogeneous elements into harmonious relationships; but for (Riding) Jackson it was a set of analytic relations that altered existing meanings through decreative techniques" (Heuving, "Really New Poem," 198). The poem's autonomy was for Riding not prefaced on a belief in an excess of potential meanings in a poem as a literary object, but rather on a belief in the singularity of meaning that any true poem would necessarily possess. Riding's analytic approach to linguistic meaning also supported her goals in the triune domain: "the analysis will induce the synthesis […] By taking the universe apart [the poet] will have reintegrated it with his own vitality" (194).

Riding began compiling her dictionaries with children in mind at first, in hopes that these compendiums would offer a proper education to wayward youth led astray by both tired academicisms and naïve avant-gardes (*Letters*; Heuving), but later expanded to a total purification of language, where each word's meaning would be rigorously deduced by what were ultimately the intuitions and deliberations of poets and friends passing through her Majorca home. As the array of possible meanings for words was whittled down by these meetings, however, so was the group: Hodge ceased contributing to the dictionaries after Riding and Graves fled Majorca during the Spanish Civil War, and Graves fell out of the project after the couple separated in 1939 (Friedmann, *Mannered Grace*, 352-3). Yet Riding continued to

compile her dictionaries, and after her marriage to Schuyler Jackson, she composed 1942's *The True Word: A Dictionary and Thesaurus of Coherent Language*, and 1943's *A Dictionary of Analogous Words* (Billiteri). Though Riding's dictionaries were never published, due to the various circumstances of her personality and literary relationships, they became the base of what would become *Rational Meaning*, a massive treatise on linguistics and the philosophy of language. From the 1950's on, she and Jackson would expand this work over the next several decades in her typical style of "collaboration" until its publication in 1997. Of the few scholars who have approached this text, most have read it less as a serious critical work, and more as an "ars poetica," if not a work of experimental writing (Bernstein, "Riding's Reason," 139). Few have attempted to take Riding's *Rational Meaning* at its word.

*Rational Meaning* claims that language creates "the anatomy of truth" (Riding, *Rational Meaning*, xiii), and that this anatomy everywhere undergoes refinement when a subject analyzes their own use of language: for her this is "reasoning," or determining "the rightness of right judgement" (46). The subject is for Riding nothing more than what it says of itself. In her poem "Disclaimer of a Person," this is conveyed in the axiom "I my words am," and proceeds under the assumption that the subject, whether she wills it or not, always means what she says. The idea that from the standpoint of human and historical finitude language use possesses (were one given the time to analyze it) a final, judiciable meaning, is what Riding calls "the linguistic principle."[71] *Rational Meaning* is thus an attack on all attempts within linguistics and philosophy

[71] Reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's parsing of the idea of death in "The Storyteller" (which is itself usefully juxtaposed to Heidegger's parsing). When it comes to literary character, he says, "a man who dies at the age of thirty-five […] is at every point of his life a man who dies at the age of thirty-five," because of the curtailing of possibilities for interpretation brought about for death, even if this is not the case for living beings (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 100). Riding seems to imply that there really is no character but a literary one. Her own fiction doubly confirms this, such as, for example, in her short story "The Secret": "It was nothing new to die. 'So long as we have death, gentlemen, we are safe'" (Riding, *Progress of Stories*).

of language to deny this principle. From Plato to Wittgenstein to Derrida, Riding accuses contemporary theories of language and meaning—both structuralist and post-structuralist—and contemporary uses of language and meaning—both in literature and in everyday activity—of a fatal dissoluteness in admitting the possibility of an infinite multiplicity of meaning for any given word, speech act, or poem. "In principle," she says, "language admits of no compromise: nothing in *it* countenances vagueness adulterating distinctness of thought, or confusion adulterating unity of thought. The distinctness of meaning possessed by every word of a language reinforces and is reinforced by the unity of meaning of which its words are capable in their whole variable potential of joined use" (166). According to Riding, it is the primacy of anatomies of pure thought over anatomies of pure language that has led to the abandonment of the linguistic principle and its "potential" for a complete perfection of human communication and "mutuality of being" (60). Only by "thinking *into* words, not *about* words" can one encounter and order language (and thus the person it disclaims) "as a structure of meaning-values" (387).

For this reason, *Rational Meaning* attempts to remain immanent to its own composition. Hard-won systematizations made early in the book are disproven or altered later. Definitions of various words are proposed, exhaustively developed, and later contradicted. Like Notley, Riding amends in real time her "putting of thought into words," like a stenographer editing her transcription as it happens. To the extent that it bears anything like the consistent systematicity to which it aspires, *Rational Meaning* distinguishes between only four linguistic elements: words, terms, names, and vocables. The syntactical and grammatical features of language (punctuation, conjugation, etc.) are excluded from the body of language, properly speaking. And Riding's four elements are not all equal. "Of a vocable, there is little to know: one does nothing with it except to sound it. With a name, one performs an act of memory, makes an identification. With a word,

one thinks, makes a rational distinction. With a term, one does something that is closer to being a linguistic act than is the use of a name, but this is, still, not a full rational performance. […] Only a word has meaning" (217). The important distinction for her is between words and terms. According to Riding, language consists for the most part of the interadaptation of terms to terms—on this basis she separates these even further, into common terms, open to public use, and special terms, restricted to a private specialization, like the sciences. "What terms mean, or signify, can only be known by a course of external reference" (285). In contrast, words are learned not "from mere gathering of [meaning] from occasions of use" (189), but "by a course of internal reference, a consulting of that given knowledge of the intelligence […] 'replete with recognitions of distinctions in a general existence of which one is a part.'"

It is not that Riding sets terms and words in opposition: in the contrary, "terms have a rational bond with words," are "the living stuff of language" (328), and "there is no doing without" them when it comes to the dictionary's goal of definition (296). Both words and terms are nodes of distinction for Riding, but while the meaning of terms is nothing more than their distinction from other terms, the meaning of words is the "act of thought" "registered" in the word, building sentences as "logically demarcated thought-steps" (185).[72] Unlike words, the meaning of a term is not an "act of thought," but a registration of that term's "impingement" upon the terms that it is not—i.e., the possibility that some other term could have been substituted, getting us closer to "finding the right words." Riding considers the everyday use of language, with its ever-growing array of terms ("people are only saying *more*" [181]), to be

[72] Which can be usefully contrasted to the Saussurean "signified/signifier" distinction. For Saussure "a language is a system in which […] the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of all the others" (*General Linguistics*, 134). In his system, the meaning of any word is "purely differential. That is to say they are concepts defined not positively, in terms of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system," and not "*ideas* given in advance" (137). Riding not only "decisively rejects" this model in Bernstein's view, but "flips it on its head" (*Rational Meaning*, xiii).

thought in its weakest guise, a "sub-linguistic" activity, despite its necessity as the schematic frame in which words can appear. The Quixotic project of *Rational Meaning*, its attempt to ground in one subject a sort of *Principia Mathematica* of language definition, is clearly stated as a moral project, which all subjects should undertake: the prevention of a purely terminological language. "The danger that terms hold for a language," she says, "is in the possibility of their acquiring a character of independency [from words], from a spreading of disorder in the linguistic sensibilities of its speakers. […] Words have their place in a language, but terms must be put, and kept, in their place" (287). Thus, *Rational Meaning* sets out not only to identify "true words," but to appropriate the body of a language, and in doing so, to reorder within a terminological schema according to the appropriating subject, such that impingement ceases to take place. For Riding this activity is the essence of our being: it is the ground of our "unlimited—potentially unlimited—organic experience of existence" (285).

Riding's choice of the word "impingement" to describe the meaning of terms is especially intriguing. She frequently describes language as a "linguistic map" (193) and uses spatial or geographical features as examples in her deductions. Impingement, too, is etymologically grounded in spatiality: from the Latin root *pangere*, it implies an insertion or penetration, a binding or fastening, and in English, by the 18$^{th}$ century it comes to connote encroachment, or a breach of one area by another (*Oxford Etymological Dictionary*). To provide a clear example of this, and of the general style of definition of *Rational Meaning*, I will provide a characteristic case of Riding's reasoning, drawn from a later section of the book, in which she is analyzing terms associated with land and sea, or as she puts it, "land-formations the identified character of which is in relation to their adjacency to waters of the Earth:"

In the company of things that belong peculiarly to the nature of coasts, there are recurrent shapes of a certain type that variations in the development of coastal outlines produce. "Cape" and "peninsula" are terms making reference to two examples of such coastal peculiarities, these found in sufficient number in the geographical world, and with sufficient conformity in shape-character, to be suitable term-subjects. The terms are not linked in any relationship of interreference of difference in signification; they are linked, simply, in their falling within the vocabularistic sub-regions occupied by terms concerned with things coastal as belonging to the general area of things of *land* pertinence. To "cape" and "peninsula," as referring to protrusive shapes of differing types found on coasts, would have to be added "isthmus," the subject of which, however, is of a type differing from both. An isthmus-protrusion does not verge upon water, and it is only viewable as a protrusion when viewed from either one of the two constituents that it links; viewed as in itself a land-entity, rather than as a coastal peculiarity, its thing-identity is of the type of a connective. "Neck," which is a companion-term to "isthmus," is definitely suggestive of protrusion, with the connective aspect of minor stress, a neck being characteristically of narrower breadth than an isthmus—"neck," indeed, is capable of special use as denoting the tapering end of a peninsula that "is" viewable as a connective to a land-body distinct from that of which the peninsula is a protrusive part. "Strait," which in both its singular and plural form has a vocabularistic identity as a term denoting a small but elongated stretch of water between two land-bodies, acting as a connective between two water bodies, has a separate identity as a term denoting a narrow land-connective spanning the distance between two large bodies of land existing in proximity to each other. (But use of the latter is rare.) (407-8)

Riding's attempt to order according to her own insistence the infinite profusion of terms one encounters when beset by maritime thinking is, as she admits, only ever a faith in the potential for a perfection of language use, rather than the attainment of that perfection (414). For her, "as with all occupants of terminological spaces on the linguistic map," terms like coast, littoral, neck, strait, peninsula, shore, etc. "exist linguistically in such quasi-accidental proximity of association that many, in some areas, are to be comprehended as cupboarded stocks of the general terminological stock of the area of their placement" (412). When the insistent subject arranges terms in singular distinction from one another, however, they can be transformed into words once and for all. Before her renouncement of poetry, Riding had hoped that a poem could be the proof of such a transition from term to word. After her abandonment of poetry, as a result of what she called poetry's love of "equivocation" and embrace of linguistic relativism (for her this was a "moral failing"), she set this task at the feet of language users more broadly.

Riding's definition of the elements of any definition, "true words," has the knock-on effect of disbarring from her system the possibility of the synonymic, or multiple words "essentially" sharing in common meanings. Terms, as we have seen, can "share" in meaning (negatively, in the sense that some array of terms will equally fail to fit the space of the thought-act only a word is appropriate to), if only through mutual impingement. But as she says, "the element of distinction in the meaning of a word is the central element of its actuality, the radical of its identity as a word;" to forget this "diverts the mind from serious acquaintance with the word in its full meaning-strength" (278). Subjects therefore "share" in an equal "meaning-strength," also called "meaning-force," or again, what we are calling insistence, when they use a word "correctly," and they may even use that same word in contradictory ways (since a word's meaning is still for her context-specific [e.g., the construction of a sentence], and hence a

"*personal* decision" [559] of the subject), but they can never substitute one word for another in a statement while preserving that statement's truth, let alone change or invent the meaning of any word.[73] Just as Riding in *Epilogue* had argued that modernity had combined maleness and femaleness in a totality that was actually only the totality of maleness, "synonymists set down what are intended to be a two-in-one combination of definition and distinction, but leave the knowledge-seeker suspended between vague generalization and experimental specification that itself loosely interprets—that is, generalizes about—distinction, rather than identifies it" (274).

Riding's attack on synonymy, which she wages by surveying various historically influential thesauruses, dictionaries, and compendiums ranging back to the 18th century, looks in particular at the group of terms associated with transformation: *change, alter, vary,* and *modify*, among others. Synonymy assumes that multiple words can share in the same definition and thus can be used interchangeably. Riding sees the impossibility of this in the case of change especially, because the definition of change—which for her centers on the idea of a "loss of identity" in the thing changed and the "making or becoming essentially different" of the thing that changes—is what grounds the very concept of "interchangeability." If on the assumption of synonymy one were to substitute "change" with "alter" in a sentence, for example, one would have to hold that no change had taken place even though one's capacity for holding such a position is grounded in the word itself: either these words do not have identical meaning—"the event of a loss of identity"—or only one is the word that one was looking for (273). What is lost in synonymy is a "linguistically habitable ground;" synonyms "[corral] words into the imaginary enclosure of an assumed basic identity of meaning, within which they are to be seen as stomping,

[73] Here "force" means the ability to accrete and arrange the terminological in a process of self-definition (557). But it also relates to the force of "the mind's premonitions of a knowable real, a sameness in experience of unknown meaning knowable as being itself."

prancing, shuffling, variously moving about, with random effects of difference in meaning-behaviour within the containing pen of sameness" (277).

So for Riding the very idea of a synonym—or shareable identity more broadly—is a breach of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, which holds that any two objects that share the same collection of attributes, properties or features *in toto* (for her, the same meaning) must be considered the same object/word, and cannot be treated separately (Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*). "Where substitution has […] actually occurred, as with 'they have changed the seats and desks in the schoolroom,' 'change' crosses into the meaning-area of a different word —*is* a different word from 'change' in such a statement as 'They have changed their attitude to newcomers,' or 'They have changed the shape of the cups'" (274). "Change means what it means;" for the Riding subject the meaning of change happens to be the "effection" of "an oppositeness in a characteristic feature" of a being (191). The Riding subject views language not as an infinitely reinterpretable or mobile system of signs, but as a finalizable and decidable appropriation, an eventual arrangement of all that is sayable by the subject.[74] In purifying language of its terminological bulk, it finds little to say besides the minimal of its own identity.

### *2.5 – An Objective Feeling*

For Carla Billitteri, *Rational Meaning* reveals Riding as a modern "Cratylist," or someone who holds the position that meaning is ungroundable in a shared language and unrelatable to any sort of stable social or physical reality. For Billitteri, Riding's theory of

[74] Riding often describes this as the winnowing-away of a conversation into a "telling," most notably in her book *The Telling*, "a refutation of anything or anyone in particular." In her preface to the first edition of *Progress of Stories,* she allegorizes this as a dinner party from which people progressively filter out: "in a little while, there would be just a few of us telling one another the exact truth." "I insist on our all speaking the same conversation. And will those who are incapable of this please, please go away now, if you have not already gone away."

language and her belief that poetry represents "the forceful summoning of an 'eternal form'" in the Cratylic situation is a universalist, democratic, and "Emersonian" position, which "advances the proposition that the language needed resides within us, in our minds, and that the story to be told concerns the oneness of humanity and the sameness of souls that only appear to be separate and different" (Billitteri, 91, 94). But how can this view align with Riding's distaste for the "hermaphroditic millennium," and her rejection of shared identity? In *Rational Meaning*, it is clear that the poet's power to summon meaning as something eternal-until-revision is as much a risk as it is a boon: as she says, "language everywhere opens up the interior of existence to complete occupation—which can occur 'in' any language if its laws of meaning are observed to the full of the human mind's loyalty to itself" (495). Her claim that poetry's use of language shapes existence in itself—even deforms it, whenever it synonymizes meaning—can be found everywhere in her pre-renouncement poetics. We see it in *Epilogue*, where she named the "free injudicious use" of poetic language as a fundamental cause of civilizational decline and moral degeneration: "poets are those among us who have 'always' existed," she says.[75] "The ages of time represent degrees of [their] wakefulness merely; the difference between this age and the so-called preceding ages is merely one of degree of [their] wakefulness. Life has been lived in terms of time only insofar as poets have not achieved full wakefulness: history represents the bad dreams of poets" (*Epilogue III*). Or as she put it later, "poetry is a substitute for being" (*The Promise of Words*, LRB). The danger of poetry in her estimation is that it makes possible a disloyalty to oneself, a refusal to admit that one can ever be done with saying what one is.

Here we must turn to one of the few cases in *Rational Meaning* in which Riding claims to have fully deduced a true word, as well as a word capable of saying what some of us, for now,

[75] This text, titled *The End of the World*, was originally an address to the Oxford English Club made on Hodge's invitation. It was later adapted into an essay for *Epilogue*, titled *The End of the World, and After* (*Letters*).

are—that word is "woman."[76] The claim that the word "woman" stands apart from the rest of language occurred to her long before to *Rational Meaning*, appearing first back in "The Idea of God." It was there that she diagnosed the so-called "hermaphroditism" of her time, in which "man now wills to be so comprehensively man-like and woman-like" (*Essays*, 7) that women "prostitute their identity" in imitation of men. She argues that this is a symptom of the "odiousness" of the concept of sexual difference, and difference in general, to man: "to know something one must identify one-self with it," she says, but "woman is something other than man. She is the contradictory being by whom man attempts both to identify himself with the something else, and to exorcize it; and she apparently yields to the contradiction. *But she is not in herself contradictory*" (6, italics mine).[77] Riding's narrative of the history of sexual difference goes like this: man's compulsive exorcism from himself of everything that is not man, which he thinks he does in order to set the infinite multitude of non-man at a knowable distance from himself, ends up establishing that distance as the horizon of what he can know. Woman, who was the first fundamentally non-man element, served as the being of man's horizon, which has progressively shrunk for him while it has grown for her. At the end of history, "the end of the world," suddenly aware of how bereft he is of truth, man turns to woman and sees in her the whole of being and givenness, the divine itself—and so he tries to imitate her, "makes experimental identifications of himself with [her] […] in order to enjoy the dramatic sensation of his personal uniqueness" (10), and is in effect "feminized" by his submission to her as his totality

[76] The only other true word she deduces, she claims, is the word "God."

[77] The association of woman with contradiction has long been of relevance to feminist phenomenology. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir concludes that "woman's very being is opacity; she does not stand in front of man as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity; she assumes herself as both *self* and *other*," as "a contradiction with disconcerting consequences" (*The Second Sex*, 755). This formulation can be usefully contrasted with Riding's idea of woman's mingling of both subjective and objective feeling, explored below.

(in that he now occupies the position she had at the outset, as receptacle).[78] Despite man's "womanish" imitation of the universal, Riding thinks that in the end "he cannot 'be' what he is not, be more than he is." "Woman herself remains intact" throughout this narrative, "in the same way that truth remains intact" (6).

Woman for Riding is located, but not created, by man's "imaginative seeing," his limited capacity to "[see] only what he understands."[79] Since he does not understand woman (and in Riding's opinion never can), woman *is* what he does not see—and man sees less and less every day, as his "modernistic monism" advances, and woman multiplies. Riding claims that man's imaginative seeing consists of two affective registers, which she calls subjective and objective feeling. In subjective feeling, she says, the authority in the act of identification and understanding is internal to that which sees, identifies and understands: the knower's knowledge belongs to them, and is proper to them. In objective feeling, the authority in the act of identification and understanding is external to that which sees, identifies and understands: the knower belongs to what they know, and are appropriated by it. If subjective feeling is the source of the identificatory activities of desire, pleasure, taste and aesthetic appreciation, objective feeling is something wholly other, a "pure suspension of experience" and activity—this suspension, this hiatus, she calls sex.[80] Sexual difference, or man's intimation that there is

[78] Riding links this explicitly to the imminence of the second world war and the rise of fascist movements (*Letters*).
[79] See Section 1.5.
[80] Clearly, Riding's use of the word "sex" in "The Idea of God" refers mostly to the act of copulation, rather than to "female" and "male" as categories of identity, but the objective/subjective feeling distinction still manages to gesture to the sex/gender distinction, decades prior to the popularisation of that division by sexologists like John Money in the 1950's. As Gill-Peterson shows, the sex/gender division was introduced into sexology to explain the non-biological (psychological) "conviction" of transgender and intersex patients that they possessed a sex that did not align with their biological (corporeal and social) existence; the former became the supposedly newly mutable terrain of gender, while the latter came to be the supposedly curtailed immutable terrain of sex (Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child*, 97). The irony here, given that the impetus to introduce this division lay in the need to deal with the way that the conviction of patients laid a claim on immutability, is made evident in the research of Gill-Peterson, as well as in other scholarly work tracking the history of this division in sexology, such as that of Jules Gleeson, C. Riley Snorton, and others.

another sex, is man's only objective feeling. Woman *is* this objective feeling. In her, conversely, "the two kinds of feeling […] operate without interference. […] She yields to subjective feeling, but in so doing defends against human understanding that aspect of her which is accessible only to objective feeling." In other words, woman is different because she can see what she doesn't understand. Riding's is therefore no biological conception of sexual difference; neither biology, nor socialization, nor any element of human existence can appropriately mark it out. In truth, she says, "women are not really comfortable in wearing human personality. They may feel all the human sympathies, be humanly knowing and efficient—but they do not feel comfortable. No matter how actively they assume traditional male roles, they are always something 'different': they are women" (17). The idea that "woman is as much of a human being as a man" is, according to her at this point in her thinking, "a social levelling" of woman's being.

In *The Word Woman*, written conterminously with *Rational Meaning*, and published in 1993, Riding says that women "can only be women fully through an internal realization of their meaning as woman. The standing [of woman in society] does not matter, for standing does not last… Not a respectable human standing, but an active consciousness of themselves, should be the object of women's endeavor on their own behalf" (*Woman*, 72-3). For Riding, women are not defined by a set of practices or behaviours, nothing that could be "proper" to "one's own," so much as they are defined through their insistence on their being as woman: "feminine behaviour is indiscriminate behaviour" (*Essays*, 184). Still, Riding insists that "when a woman meets another woman she knows what she is," "in a way in which she cannot immediately know what any man is, or a man any other man: she knows that the other woman is a *woman*; whereas with a man the question of 'What is he?' can only be answered by saying what he does—what

particular kind of activity he represents" (*Woman*, 69).[81] Rather than being free for the world of generic activities, "woman has two works to perform: a work of differentiation, of man from herself, and a work of unification, of man with herself" (52). "Her complete, her final, activity is truth-telling: the elucidation of man and the coherent unification of him with herself" (73). From an alien standpoint beyond the world of the human (of men), woman synthesizes the productions of man—language most of all—with and through the "objective feeling" of her sex, that externalizing relation to the "silence and idleness" beyond the horizon which passively appropriates anything that might attempt to know it (*Essays*, 13).

There is therefore no possibility of a change of sex per se in Riding's work: even if woman is the sex that indiscriminately changes, "woman is not changing man, or bettering his behaviour; she is fixing his identity." There remains an ontologically "unchangeable" difference (93). Riding advocates not for a critique of this fixity, but for a kind of sexual difference accelerationism, a hurrying to the end of man's world: "[woman's] object in letting [man] behave toward her as he pleased has not been gradually to make him behave better, but to know decisively what man is" (*Woman*, 58). If man is "historical time" (*Essays*, 34), that "contemporary concept dump" (*Woman*, 194) accumulating failed attempts to think difference and become different, then woman is merely "biding time" (49):

> She is holding the ends of time together until man grows accustomed to the stretch—a stretch he has made himself, in forcing himself between the unreal limits of an absolute, all-identical whole. He must find a place in this whole if he is to find a place at all. But in making the stretch he has almost forgotten the geography of his being. Woman, in

[81] See Chapter One's discussion of Malabou on the "transfeminist subject" as a mere user of technology. For Riding, the ontological schema of "being = doing" is actually just that of the identity "man." Woman's identity is foundationally, i.e., ontologically, different, such that even if she uses the same technology, and carries out the same activity, her identity remains "woman."

> flaunting the female mask before him while still asserting the more positive aspects of her identity, is helping him to remember his geography: that he stands impossibly between woman the different appearance and woman the inescapable finality with which his own difference must be made compatible, if he is to be more than a freak of time. (121)

In *Rational Meaning*, this geography of being is a "linguistic map" of terminological impingements upon woman, and thus upon sex. Therein lies the word woman's supposedly unique and uncontestable "truth:" its "rational distinction," its thought-act, is to be the identity of what it is not. It turns out to be man, in presuming a universal substitutability with himself, which is mere term. If man is history, and history is but the "bad dream of poets," then the end of poetry would also be the end of man—a formula that sheds some light on Riding's, and Hodge's, desire to abandon poetry.

Heuving claims that in her poetic practice Riding "struggles to realize a new human universality, based on changed gender relationships" (Heuving, 205). In "Postponement of Self," she quite clearly describes the act of gender identification itself as a question:

> I open a new door to me,
> Arriving, arriving, not yet, not yet,
> Yet yet arriving, till I am met.
> For what would be her disappointment
> Coming late ('She did not wait').
> I wait.  And meet my mother.
> Such is accident.
> She smiles: long afterwards.
> I sulk: long before.
> I grow to six.
> At six little girls in love with fathers.
> He lifts me up.
> See.  Is this Me?
> Is this Me I think
> In all the different ways till twenty.
> At twenty I say She.
> Her face is like a flower.
> In a city we have no flower-names, forgive me.

But flower-names not necessary
To diary of identity. (*Collected Poems*, 59)

Despite her remark in *The Word Woman*, that "it would be impossible for a woman honestly to prefer to be a man" (*Woman*, 69), Riding's speaker in *Postponement* "says She" only after breaking with an appropriation of the father's identity as her own—this "She" is an utterance that, in insisting upon identity, is not "accidental" like the mother's.[82] In "Disclaimer of the Person," too, speech inaugurates being: "I am because I say," says the speaker, "I say myself. / Myself is all that was not said, / That never could be said, / Until I said 'I say.' / I say. / I say myself. / How am I now who was not, / Yet who never was not?" (251) The paradox of change is in Riding's poetry "solved" by seeing and appropriating the incipient act of identification as the only firm identity: as woman's identity. This "final agreement of thing with thing" is both the poem's occasion and an event deferred, delayed, postponed. In the hiatus, she asks:

But is this I interior,
The smothered whole that lurked unlive
Till obvious fragment sought
Its late entire and matching?
Or the outer stranger, proofless,
Come from stealth into defiance
And with heart incongruent
Suspicion's devilish shadow
Which the lies are made of,
For truth-proud reason to declare untrue?
This is I, I: the I-thing.
It is a self-postponed exactitude,
An after-happening to happen come.

The unique truth of "woman" in Riding's philosophy of language rests in its being both term and word, both substitutable and singular, but also the ground of these distinctions—it is a schema.[83]

[82] A statement which can also be taken to mean: "no woman could prefer to be a man, because any woman who would prefer to be a man is a man."
[83] See Chapter One, Section 1.5.

Sex, which only woman has, is in other words a meaning that is not yet, and which appropriates subjects purely through their "unqualified insistence" upon it (*Woman*, 78).

As Jane Malcolm puts it, "Riding's theories on gender, for which her poems are a cryptic locus, easily are lost in the philosophical rigor, or 'hardness,' of her prose works. Yet, Riding's compulsion to purify language, to trace meaning back to its origin in words themselves […] finally is rooted in her understanding of authentic language as feminine and of woman as the source of linguistic 'truth'" (Malcolm, *Gendered Ethics*, 65). Malcolm, like others, characterizes this as "a futile attempt to 'unsex' her relationship to language." In the works that emerged from Riding's collaborations with male writers, we can see that it is not that she fails to unsex herself—rather, her unsexing requires her to take the position of a Midas of sex, sexing as women, appropriating to her own sex, all those who attempt to know her. This is not to say that her appropriation of and by her collaborators *changes* their sex—how could it? They are men, and men do not have a sex of their own. But in her presence, rigorously, rationally, they can finish becoming what they are not yet; this, she insists, is woman.

### *2.6 – Ontologization, Lesbianization*

With the question of woman's supposedly "immediate recognition" of woman in hand, and Riding's pushing of the lexical schemata of the dictionary to its logical breaking point, we can return to tracking appropriation's literary manifestation in feminist rewritings of canon and myth. Not only that, but Riding's binary, heterosexual rationality begs the question of the possibility of a homosexual equivalent. And few authors touch on a closer array of points than the lesbian author Monique Wittig.

We can summarize a few examples. In her 1985 novel *Across the Acheron* (*Virgile, non*) we encounter the elements of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* having undergone a change of sex: instead of Virgil leading Dante on a tour of the ontological order of the cosmos, a woman named Manastabal leads the narrator (Wittig) on a tour of the ontological order of the triune domain, embodied by the city of San Francisco. Instead of the circles of hell, they dip into and out of urban streets, where women are being tortured at the hands of men; instead of purgatory, they hide out in a lesbian separatist leather bar, where butches await a coming onslaught of heterosexist violence; instead of paradise, they finally reach the utopic scene of the kitchen behind the bar, where seraphic bodies have discarded sex and gender differences in order to feast, sing and celebrate. Wittig and her partner Sande Zeig's 1976 *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary* (*Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes*) is a text in the style of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, but which alphabetically defines words in a post-apocalyptic world (closely resembling the West's mythic past) where only lesbians have survived. Many of the personages we meet in the story these definitions piece together are male heroes and gods who have become female: Ares appears as a "her" whose worship involves the ritual searing away of breasts; the journey of the Argonauts after the Golden Fleece is now the journey of a troop of Amazons hunting down the pubic hair of a Orpheus-stand in named Orphire; the entire conflict of the Trojan War, in this new recollection, is part of a long-running conflict between lesbian tribes. 1973's *The Lesbian Body* (*Le corps lesbien)* likewise contains acts of transfiguration: phantasmagorically narrating an act of lesbian love-making, the split protagonist (both the lover and the beloved) identifies herself with figures such as "Ulyssea," "Achillea and Patroclea," and the mathematician "Archimedea" (*The Lesbian Body*, 21, 32, 155). As the novel progresses, their

bodies are catalogued and "itemized" (97), their parts listed out with increasing particularity, as if to reveal a shared "lesbianness" that could ground them.

In each of these works, radical change emerges from the breakdown of a part/whole metaphor with a schematic form: the nested maps of *Across the Acheron*, the enumerated dictionary of *Lesbian Peoples*, and a listed inventory in *The Lesbian Body*. The transgressive effect of Wittig's rewritings of Greek myth and the European literary canon depends on a conception of change that likens it to an act of insistence upon a new appropriation—a change of proper ownership—which she stages in map, dictionary, and inventory-schemas. The feature which unites these schemata is their character as wholes, whose parts are an array of possible variables. By taking up *as already lesbian* the parts which comprise wholes like "Homer" and "Virgil"—parts which range from their works to their characters, their gods, their homelands and even their later renaissance admirers—wholes can be said to simply *be* lesbians. Judith Butler referred to this as Wittig's "imperialist strategy" of "lesbianizing the entire world" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 163).[84] Yet it is not that the sex and/or gender changes from male/man to female/woman. In the case of gender, Wittig held that lesbians are not women, and therefore have no gender, on the grounds that their exteriority to economic social exchange between men excludes them from the definition of "woman" shaped by patriarchal domination (Provitola, "Wittig's Legacy;" Wittig, *The Straight Mind*, 32). In the case of sex, she sought to abolish the efficacy of the category both biologically and socially through the exhortation of all subjects

[84] Wittig's call is to "assault the so-called love, the heroes of love, and lesbianize them, lesbianize the symbols, lesbianize the gods and the goddesses, lesbianize the men and the women" (*The Straight Mind*, 87); she clarifies that this is a call "not to feminize the world (which would be as bad as its masculinization) but to make the categories of sex obsolete in language." The section in brackets were added to the French edition of *The Straight Mind* (Crowder, "Straight Mind to Queer Theory," 502). Still, Butler fears that if this lesbianization could be accomplished, "lesbian" would become just as compulsory as any heterosexual identity (*Gender Trouble*, 173). Their approach conversely calls for a "permanently problematic" identity, insofar as identity is possible at all (174).

towards lesbianness, as the only position possible beyond an essentialist binary that can set the formerly opposed sexes into a "dynamic relationship that could transform them" (49).

The conventional interpretation of Wittig's view, summarized by Kevin Henderson (and reminiscent of Riding), is that "only women are sexed" (Henderson, "Becoming Lesbian," 194). In this interpretation, Wittig's appropriation of male literary figures as lesbians is not a change of their sex, but the granting of a sex to them (the only sex there is) for the first time. However, in Wittig's own words, "gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sex*es*" (*The Straight Mind*, 60, italics mine). Wittig clearly considered sex/gender distinction to be both active and relevant to lesbianness, and she says the same of gender's singularity as she does of sex: "there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the 'masculine' not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general." Those who debate Wittig's allegiances within discourses of gender abolition and materialist feminism continue to pick and choose among readings of her work in order to render an image of her in their likeness (Provitola). They, like Wittig herself, engage in acts of mereological appropriation, in the hope that, by transitive function, a change in a part's identity will result in a change in the identity of the whole—it is this belief that can turn even Osiris, that deity of male virility and fatherhood, into a lesbian whose breasts one can smear one's vaginal juices across (*The Lesbian Body*, 78/9).

Liedeke Plate considers the appropriation of mythical figures within feminist literary history a way of addressing "issues of canon formation, cultural identity, and collective memory, identifying strategies of supplementation and reparation;" with this goal, Plate says, comes a "hermeneutics of distrust" characteristic of feminist rewriting (Plate, *Memories*, x). Distrusting the historical record and its erasure of women's thinking at the hands of the men who composed it, acts of feminist rewriting challenge social, economic, and personal identities through

allegories of their wholesale alteration, as if the inversion of a binary sex/gender system will implicitly reveal the contingency of what makes an identity claimed in that system *proper to oneself* (55/6). The assumption is that such an inversion will result in either a real change of identity in the present, by correcting a false identification or focus on identity, or will result in a more authentic embrace of identity as it already exists, by widening our understanding of an identity at its origins.[85] In contrast to instances of feminist rewriting that center on an imaginary retroaction, in which an occluded matriarchal history is uncovered or invented, Wittig's rewriting and "hermeneutical distrust" centers on the very nature of sex and gender identification. Her interest in comparing or even conflating the decomposability of sex, gender, and identity to/with the decomposability of language has been much-discussed (Butler, "Material Practice;" J.A. Szymanski, "Domination, Utopia, and Polysemy"), but less attention has been paid to the mereological claims this technique implies: that any appropriation implies a part/whole relationship, and that logic in turn depends on the mathematical grounds for articulating inclusion and exclusion, belonging and non-belonging.[86] A mereology is a propositional description of inclusion and exclusion, and the text is no exception.

None of Wittig's texts go further in the direction of mereological investigation than *The Lesbian Body.* In the novel's dense and graphic prose, lesbian sex is depicted as a co-, un-, and re-making of parts without wholes: the bodies of the lovers—whose number is notably put into question by use of the pronoun "j/e" (replicated sufficiently in the English translation as "m/e"

[85] Among many examples of the former, see Toni Morrison's retelling of Othello, *Desdemona,* which centers on an invented relationship between Othello's wife and her African maid, Barbary (Morrison, *Desdemona*). Among many examples of the latter, see Margaret Atwood's retelling of the Odyssey, *The Penelopiad,* which centers on the wife of Odysseus and her rule of his kingdom (and complicity in slavery) in his absence (Atwood, *The Penelopiad*). Plate focuses on retellings of fables, reading Rich, H.D., Angela Carter, and more.

[86] Wittig herself admits this: "If ultimately we are denied a new social order, which therefore can exist only in words, I will find it in myself" (*Straight Mind*, 45).

and "m/y" in its possessive form, but quite inadequately as an italicized "*I*" in its adjectival form)—are dis- and re-assembled, digested and disgorged, in turns. The body is broken down in stages, from limbs to organs to tissues to molecules to atoms and beyond, before being rebuilt. "You are on your back lying in the foul thing that cannot be seen," the narrator says to her lover/identity, "you become disarticulated, your bones in collision your muscles breaking off as they come up against each other, one of your legs falls torn off from the pelvis, you lose strength, you weaken" (*The Lesbian Body*, 112). "I gather you up piece by piece," she continues. "I reassemble you. I lick each of your parts sullied by the earth. I speak to you. I am seized by vomiting, I choke, I shriek, I speak to you, I yearn for you with such marvellous strength that all of a sudden the pieces fall together, you don't have a finger or a fragment missing." Even the "vibratile cilia" of the uncountable bacterial flagella within the addressee's body is ascribed a collectivity; the lover's blood, "mingled" with the spilled blood of the narrator as she is killed and reborn ceaselessly, endures as identifiably that of the lover. Despite the particularizing violence Wittig wields upon the wholeness of the body, she encounters a curiously intractable resistance to change: namely, no matter the level of part-isolation, there remains an identity to which the speaker is drawn desiringly, which is also her own (105). There is in this, too, the violence of fusion: "in your body and in m/y body joined together, our homologously linked muscles," "two bodies which now constitute one organism" (108).[87]

Wittig interrupts her stretches of prose with blocks of capitalized, offset lists of the identifiable parts of bodies, organs, tissues and fluids.[88] Sometimes these blocks are grouped thematically, for example around bones ("THE BRACHIALS THE CIRCUMFLEXES THE

[87] In the original French Wittig uses the word "*homologie*," or homology, rather than "*homologue*," bringing this closer to the word's mathematical sense. See Chapter Three.

[88] A device she also employed in her novel *Les Guérillères*, the prose of which is interrupted by a list of names, including feminized names of the men of the Platonic dialogues.

MEDIANS THE ULNARS THE SACRALS THE LUMBARS THE SCIATICS THE FEMORALS, THE SAPHENOUSES THE TIBIALS THE PLANTARS") (*The Lesbian Body*, 60) or joints ("THE FIBRES THE FIBRILS THE LIGAMENTS THE TENDONS THE EXTENSORS THE SUSPENSORIES THE FLEXORS THE ADDUCTORS THE ABDUCTORS THE SYNERGISTS THE ANTAGONISTS") (87); at other times, the principle of organization of their elements is more abstract, grouping them by intrabody fluid movement ("THE PULMONARY THE COAGULATION THE CLOTTING THE CONCRETIONS THE CLOTS THE SOLIDIFICATIONS") (75) or markings on the body's surface ("THE WOUNDS THE FOLDS THE GRAZES THE WRINKLES THE BLISTERS THE FISSURES THE SWELLINGS THE SUNBURN THE BEAUTY-SPOTS THE BLACKHEADS THE HAIR FOLLICLES THE WARTS THE EXCRESCENCES") (51). These lists do contain at least one invariant, and a clue for their purpose: the first element of the first list and the last element of the last one is the same—"THE LESBIAN BODY." In addition to suggesting that the lists form an unceasing refrain, the end leading to (and being) the beginning, this lone instance of repetition introduces a paradox well-known to mathematicians. If *The Lesbian Body's* lists schematize the parts which make up the whole of the book's namesake, the lesbian body, then this whole would be one which includes itself as a part. There is another exception among the various list blocks, specifically in the third-to-last list, exceptional both for its lack of a theme and for its shift into a more mathematized approach to the enumerating of the (in)appropriable:

> THE OESOPHAGUS THE BRAIN THE
> CIRCULATION THE RESPIRATION
> THE NUTRITION THE ELIMINA-
> TION THE DEFAECATION THE RE-

PRODUCTION (XX + XX = XX) THE
REACTIONS PLEASURE EMOTION
VISION SMELL TASTE TOUCH
HEARING THE VOCAL CORDS THE
CRIES THE WAILINGS THE
MURMURS THE HOARSENESS THE
SOBS THE SHRIEKS THE VOCIFERA-
TIONS THE WORDS THE SILENCES
THE WHISPERINGS THE MODULA-
TIONS THE SONGS THE
STRIDENCIES THE LAUGHS THE
VOCAL OUTBURSTS THE LOCO-
MOTION (126)

Here, the function (XX + XX = XX) captures the paradox Wittig is interested in, by gesturing to all of the parts of the whole that the lists comprise as totally interchangeable variables (lesbianization as an "object = X"). It offers a formula for the way appropriation transforms identity into what it indexes: it implies that no matter what parts are swapped into and out of the lesbian body, that body remains self-identical to its lesbianness, and therefore unchanging—this, at base, is the refusal of radical change that the figure of appropriation requires. This formula throws into question her thinking on the number of sex and gender, however, as well as the proper subject of her enquiry. Are we to read this XX as a shorthand for the naïve chromosomal definition of female sex that so often becomes a point of retreat for sex-essentialist radical

feminists?[89] Does the formula qualify the term that precedes it, "REPRODUCTION," and promise a self-perpetuation outside of heterosexuality? Or, given the scission of lineation ("RE-PRODUCTION"), and given its uniqueness as the only non-linguistic element out of all the lists in the novel, is the formula meant to be read as a shorthand for the listing procedure taken across the entire work?

### *2.7 – Number and Identity*

Wittig saw *The Lesbian Body* as "a reverie about the beautiful analysis of the pronouns *je* and *tu* by the linguist Émile Benveniste" (*The Straight Mind*, 87), referring to the "Subjectivity in Language" section of his *Problems in General Linguistics.* Wittig's play with pronouns in *The Lesbian Body, The Opoponax (L'Opoponax)*, and elsewhere represents an attempt to banish the implicit masculinity of impersonal pronouns such as the "they" and the "one," and aims for an emancipatory "particularization" of the male sex that had hitherto stood as the figure of universality—this play is the principal lens through which readers have come to understand her inheritance of Benveniste's thinking.[90] However, in going back to Benveniste, we can see that

[89] In a 1998 reading of how Wittig understands the heterosexual (and what we would now call cissexual) category of woman, to which Wittig's lesbian is supposed to fundamentally not belong, Jacob Hale claims to identify 13 characteristics rankable by importance and frequency of reference to women in her writing: XX chromosomal expression is ranked fifth. Hale then shows how across her writing, Wittig does tend to attribute characteristics the same characteristics to lesbians as she does to women in her descriptions of them (Hale, "Are Lesbians Women?," 115). Hale goes so far as to point to *Across the Acheron* as a point in which Wittig's position on the distinctness between woman and lesbian changes, where she admits the continuing reliance on the category: not that to be a lesbian one must satisfy all of the characteristic parts of a categorical whole, but that one could, and refuses to.

[90] Also relevant for our purposes is Benveniste's monumental *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, which in a similar vein as Riding and Wittig's dictionary work, had attempted to compile an "inventory" not of "institutional realities as they were defined by lexical correspondences between languages," but an inventory of points of variability in "the genesis and development of the vocabulary that refers to those realities" (*Dictionary*, xi). For example, in his study of the way that Indic and Iranian documentation of lines of kingship diverge, he notes that each struggle with the same "problem of philology," in how they can account for exogamous inheritance. "*We can represent the situation figuratively by a schema* indicating the relationships after the lapse of two generations. We have to remember that following the principle of exogamy, the two different sexes always belong to opposed moieties [parts]: therefore marriage must always take place between members of opposed moieties" [180, italics mine]. What is this schema? In one respect, it is the "genealogical tree" Benveniste provides to visualize the

equally at issue is the mereological question of appropriation: "Language," says Benveniste, "is so organized that it permits each speaker to *appropriate to himself* an entire language by designating himself as *I*" (Benveniste, *Problems*, 226). For Benveniste, the personal pronouns "I" (*je*) and "you" (*tu*) are unique linguistic elements due to their lack of reference to any determinate concept or object. They are fully reversible, purely indexical, polarized positions within a language, and, for him, the primary occasion for both language use and subjectivity. "Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a subject by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to 'me,' becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition in language, of which the process of communication, in which we share, is only a mere pragmatic consequence" (224). In other words, personal pronouns are parts which do not compose any possible whole. These pronouns are unique as words for other reasons as well: in "The Semiology of Language," Benveniste describes three possible relationships between semiotic systems: relationships of generation, where one system creates another (his example is mathematics), relationships of interpretance, where one system describes another (his example is language), and relationships of homology, where one language system bears a structural identity with another (his example is ritual) ("Semiology," 17).

> The kind of homology may vary: intuitive or rational, substantial or structural, conceptual or poetic […] Two linguistic structures of different makeup can reveal partial or extended homologies. All depends upon the way in which we lay down the two systems, the parameters which we use, and the fields in which we perform. According to the situation,

problem [182]. In another respect, the schema is the dictionary itself. Both require the same "effort of adaptation" [183] that Benveniste suggests is the engine of filiation in language, and in social formation more broadly.

> the homology established will serve as a unifying principle between two fields and will be limited to this functional role, or it will create new kinds of semiotic values. Nothing assures the validity of this relationship in advance, nothing limits the extent of it.

I and You, which refer for Benveniste to a universal situation in communication, are not homological with one another, so much as they make the appropriation of homologies, the identification of them as possible identities for the self and the other, possible.

Outside of the list sections in *The Lesbian Body*, the speaker often enumerates her lover/identity negatively, as the lone thing that can both resist and mirror appropriation:

> *I* do not know your shoulders your white neck your shadowed eyes, *I* do not know your palms your exact cheeks, *I* do not know your belly, *I* do not know your breasts your light brown nipples, *I* do not know your back your wide shoulderblades your well-developed buttocks, *I* do not know your brown armpits your pubis your quadrangular fleece, *I* do not know your vulva, *I* do not know your square teeth, *I* do not know your wrists, *I* do not know your sharp voice, *I* do not know your straight nose, *I* do not know your lips, *I* do not know your ears, *I* do not know your hair, *I* am destroyed for you, *I* sleep, *I* dream or else *I* am awoken, *I* breathe, *I* produce cyprine, I do not desire you, *I* am forgetful in everything and of everything that concerns you, *I* am not distressed, *I* am calm peaceful flaccid quiet incurious neutral full of composure. *I* am an integral body blocked off from itself. (137)

Here the limits of the English translation, in which the universalist aspiration of Wittig's "*J/e*"—replicable only in possessive usage, and signified elsewhere through the italicization of "*I*"—occludes the fact that Wittig's pronomial subject is intended to never be singular, but always

multiple, a whole containing itself and another as parts ("I" and "you" in Benveniste's sense). But these are not just any "I" and "you"—they are a lesbian "I" and "you," and the question of how this fact can be secured given the pure indexicality of the pronouns is the whole question of *The Lesbian Body*. Wittig's (XX + XX = XX) is the schema she produces as an answer. Rather than gesturing to some kind of stable footing of definition, it captures the shiftable being of Benveniste's speaking subject in its internal reproduction, and shows the "I/you" to be two identical variables (two [= X]'s), blank spaces into which the reader can insert content for their enquiry into what it is that can be said to be proper to the lesbian identity its subjects appropriate for themselves and insist upon as common to all. Even if it appears that the list sections of the novel are where questions of ownership and knowledge (and ownership of knowledge) are abandoned, where the elements of the lesbian body are always conveyed as free-floating via the use of definite articles (always "the clitoris," never "a clitoris"), the absence of the possessive pronoun and the play of the "*J/e*" secures them as material for the reader's enquiry. Without attention to the tropes of mythic changes of sex found more obviously in Wittig's other work, this project—to lesbianize the definite article, to transform the very "the" by which parts can be counted into a sexual act accomplished through an ontologization of lesbian sexual identity—may be less obvious, and is certainly less obvious in English. This may be a difference in interpretation in addition to a choice of translation; the last sentence in the above prose section, "J/e suis un corps intègre tout obstrué de lui-même" could more literally be translated as "an integral body all obstructed by itself." It seems that what blocks off the "j" from the "e" in the integral syntagm is its own counting procedure's attempt at specificity without repetition (besides the unique first and last term of "the lesbian body" itself, which affixes itself as origin to all possible parts). The lesbian thus counts as a part of itself "THE HAIRS" as well as "THE

HAIR" (40), "THE CLOTS" as well as "THE CLOTTING" (76), "THE SHOULDERS" as well as "THE SHOULDERBLADES" (141, 153). It insists that a particular obstruction of the universal path from the singular to the multiple, encountered through the lover, *is* that multiple, that universal, the essence of its identity.

*Lesbian Peoples* is also concerned with the way that appropriation figures change. Just as *The Lesbian Body*'s list of parts contain the name of the whole, so does her dictionary contain a definition of "dictionary:" "the arrangement of the dictionary allows us to eliminate those elements which have distorted our history during the dark ages. […] This arrangement could be called lacunary. The assemblage of words, what dictated their choice, the fiction of the fables also constitute lacunae and therefore are acting on reality. The dictionary is, however, only a rough draft" (*Dictionary*, 43). Much as Riding aimed in her dictionary projects to include revisability and spontaneity in the text's composition, Wittig's dictionary is also held to be a draft (*brouillon*), in the sense that it reconstructs (constructs) a lesbian history contingent to the perspective of its own fictional epoch, known as the "Glorious Age." From Golden to Silver to Bronze, Iron, Soft Stone, Steam, Concrete, and High-Speed Steel, the various historical ages are conveyed in the dictionary as "transitions" "not achieved without difficulty" (1). The definitions of this dictionary's "lesbian words" thus change with the ages, and the contestations of the innumerable scholars and writers cited in the work (some entirely fictional, such as the Gallic "Julienne Bourge," or real authors inserted into Wittig's constructed world, such as Charlotte Guest) are treated with the rigor and revisability of a scientific journal. "Wife" and "Woman" are noted to be obsolete since the Glorious Age began, yet they still belong to the dictionary. In the dictionary entry for "Language," notably, the greatest thing altered by the passing of the ages is the "original language" of the "ancient" lesbians, which was not purely linguistic, but a hybrid of

"letters and numbers" in which meaning was "completely adjusted" by those who lived in permanent representation" (94). In keeping with the tautological insistence of the appropriative gesture, Wittig even cites her own writing from *The Lesbian Body*, specifically in relation to this dimension of an arbitrary "numbering" at the origin of lesbianness.[91]

One unfortunate result of engagements with Wittig's thinking having been restricted mostly to studies of her "discursive materialism" (Butler, "Material Practice;" Adjarian, "Allegory of the Possible") is that her concern with multiplicity and number, i.e., with the non-linguistic promise of counting procedures—from the potentially-infinite itemization of *The Lesbian Body* to the potentially-infinite appendix of *Lesbian Peoples*—is left unquestioned, and her interest in the metaphysical questions of mereology, embodied in her own formalizations of the text, is missed entirely. In readings that center her discursive materialism, her technique moves unilaterally in the direction of the singular, towards a "deconstruction" of discourse. Given her claim that "discourse *is* reality" (*The Straight Mind*, 26), this deconstruction is considered to promise a political liberation in the shift from abstraction from particularity. And what could be more abstract and apolitical than the alignment of literary objects like Wittig's texts with mathematics and mereology? Yet critiques in this vein are risky. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her reading of the "sex-change" of Derrida's *Glas* in "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," argues that the translation of forms of identification like "woman" and "lesbian" into mathematical or mereological concepts relies on a "mathematico-sexual metaphorics of invagination" and ignores the "calculable impact of a 'different body'" (Spivak, *Displacement*, 189). To this end she leverages a confused analogy likening the concept of set-theoretical belonging with a simple Venn diagram, comprised of circles labeled "Men" on the left,

[91] Its link to the numeral "7," discussed later in this section (32).

"Women" on the right, and "Left-Handed People" in the overlapping center.[92] This, for her, is the formalizing gesture at the core of Derrida's (and Blanchot's, among other male thinkers she mentions) search for an "indefinitely trans-sexual I/we." Her judgement is that such a split pronoun, opened by the search for a "'female element,' which does not signify 'female person'" (174) "can still not speak for the clitoris as the mark of the sexed subject." Why? "Perhaps because we have a 'different body'" (184), she says, retreating to biological essentialism. Spivak's fear is that a schematic understanding of female identity can be nothing more than a "male appropriation of a woman's voice," and she decries the wager of insistence, that one can "[legislate] becoming a woman at the stroke of a word" (188), as the effacing of an inescapable "material" difference (190). The transphobic undertones of Spivak's 1983 argument are perhaps excusable from the vantage point of the present, but similar claims continue to circulate, both in the vulgar form of trans-exclusionary radical feminisms, and in supposedly "trans-sympathetic" readings of high theory and philosophy (Provitola).[93]

Yet neither can we swing to the opposite pole, in which both essence and number is sacrificed for "properly materialist" critique. Such a view is at the core of Judith Butler's diagnosis in *Gender Trouble* of Wittig's "tragic mistake" in linking "the homosexual point of view and that of figurative language, as if to be a homosexual is to contest the compulsory syntax and semantics that construct 'the real'" (Butler, *Gender Troubl*e, 174). We must note that Butler is only able make this claim because they do not seem to notice the non-linguistic formal dimensions of Wittig's work, where the numerable, mereological object (the map, dictionary, inventory, where changes of sex can occur a priori simply by altering an inclusion) installs

[92] Spivak somehow reads this to show that, if the results of mathematical figuration are to be trusted, there would be more left-handed people than either men or women.

[93] And transphobic overtones, e.g., the "transvestite underwear" she claims one would need to satisfy Derrida's desires (177). We saw this as well in the case of Catherine Malabou's theorization of the clitoris. See Section 1.3.

appropriation as an ontological capacity prior to language and discourse. Butler's fear is that essentializing the figure of the lesbian as Wittig does would also essentialize the dominant power which excludes it (and thus "counts" it as excluded)—heterosexuality—as its condition. They worry, as many others have, that "(anyone?)" could become a lesbian in Wittig's sense, both "women and men." Instead, they favor a "thoroughgoing appropriation and redeployment" of "categories of identity" like woman, female, etc., in ways that would "permanently problematize" identity—as we have seen, this amounts to nothing more than reducing questions about the ontology of sex, gender, and identity to questions about language and discourse. If anything, what Wittig's lesbianization essentializes is appropriation as the identity of radical change, a claim that Butler implicitly agrees with, as stated above. Seen from this angle, "lesbian" is simply one among an infinite number of purely generic identities possible for the subject, which can transform anything into normative properties for woman, at the level of both gender and sex.[94] Butler's anti-essentialist critique continues to inform interpretations of Wittig and queer literature as a whole, such as in Annabel Kim's recent monograph on anti-identitarian French feminist fiction, *Unbecoming Language*. There they claim that "the ostensibly human lesbian body pointed to in the title is in fact a foil for the body of language, which emerges (or rather, is submerged) as *the actual lesbian body*. For Wittig, the idea of a lesbian body is laughable and impossible, as it sets up lesbian as an essential identity. […] Wittig's point in *The Lesbian Body* is to show the impossibility of there being a lesbian body save in language, save through the assembly and ordering of words" (Kim, *Unbecoming Language*, 208, italics mine). Yet what is actual about the "actual" lesbian body? What actualizes it, since actualization is the event of a transition, from possibility to actuality? If there is a "raw, originary state" that

[94] As usual, the idea that Wittig's lesbianization is a radical change open to anyone, of any sex or gender, is overstated: it may be obvious to note, but "male" pronouns and bodily situations appear nowhere in her works.

writing's violence can reveal (209), it is not the "real body alive with potential," but the subject which insists on the ever-deferable, ever-revisable consummation of its potentiality in the field of sex and gender.

With these two poles of pro- and anti-essentialism in mind, it is much to Wittig's credit that *The Lesbian Body* refuses to cordon off anything "mysterious" or immune to appropriation, yet also refuses to cease insisting upon an identity, even if as a mere draft.[95] She accomplishes this dual refusal by structuring her works and their depictions of changes of sex according to a meditation on number, rather than discourse. For Wittig, female subjects depart from womanhood and retroactively appropriate sex and gender characteristics (erogenous organs, kinds of copulation, family roles, social roles) not through a new "self-naming," as Butler sees it (*Gender Trouble*, 173), but through a new self-numbering. At the end of *The Lesbian Body*, after the many acts of counting undertaken by the speaker and her lover/identity have been exhausted—they have so far counted everything from pumpkins, to veins, to the iron links of chains—the narrator pines for her Archimedea, and in the last prose section finds herself among an "assembly of women" who are split into numbered groups. It is the seventh group that the speaker fixates on: "an increasingly large circle forms around them. Each bears the number seven marked on the front of her shoulders. You are one of them. Among the spectators I can like everyone else contemplate your neck your slender nape the effect produced by the violet inscription of the number seven on your translucent skin" (*The Lesbian Body*, 159). The women of group number seven (described as a troupe in a circus) begin to sing. The other women join in, and then the search for the lover/identity begins all over again, returned to incipience, as the narrator seeks her paramour amidst the multiple, "the throng." Iconographically, "7" can be

[95] Wittigian insistence typically staged appropriation as negation: as Butler relates, "At a lecture at Vassar College, Wittig was asked whether she had a vagina, and she replied that she did not" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 201).

viewed as an inverted "L," and hence gives a clue to constant quarry of the book, something akin to the "essence" of the lesbian as nothing besides its pure self-naming/numbering; as in, "I am one."[96] It is important to compare this picture to how Wittig relates numericity to sex and gender elsewhere: in the *Mark of Gender*, she claims that "gender is an ontological impossibility because it tries to accomplish the division of Being. But Being as being is not divided. […] So what is this divided Being introduced into language through gender? It is an impossible Being, it is a Being that does not exist, an ontological joke, a conceptual maneuver to wrest from women what belongs to them by right: conceiving of oneself as a total subject through the exercise of language" (*Straight Mind*, 81). Is this another instance of contradiction in the thinking of a writer for whom contradiction was no great obstacle to thinking? Is *The Lesbian Body* an image of a folly, a story about insistence's failure rather than a story about its true generativity? Viewed as the product of an appropriation, Wittig's writing shows how the nature of division itself is the problem; yet she insists on an enduring possibility for essence and identity in non-linguistic mereological systems, non-linguistic notations of Being, from mathematics to music to choreography, as our only ways to avoid making and repeating the same ontological joke.

*The Lesbian Body's* production of lexical schemata through both its formal structure and its mytho-poetic rewriting gives us an example of the ways that mathematical thinking can bleed into the thinking of change in the triune domain, without making that bleed appear as an abstracting enemy or a cheap explanatory metaphor. Wittig's importance both as an author and a

[96] This transformation of the numeral into a limit point of particularity and an aesthetic marker of lesbianness (number's particularity-without-wholeness as the recognizable "beauty" of the lesbian) is reminiscent of Naomi Schor's study of the concept of "detail" in aesthetic history, and its relation to the feminine. For her, detail, or the "minor elements" which compose the whole of an art object, "has been traditionally connoted as feminine." She defends "the need to affirm the power and the positivity of the feminine particular," but also critiques the "fetishization" of "part objects," and argues that their "degendering" and "defeminizing" may only ever be a reinscription of "masculine […] prerogatives." As we have seen, a similar tension is palpable in Wittig's work (Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 90, 97).

philosopher is constantly being re-evaluated, and it may be useful to examine more deeply the presence of this legacy in her own interventions in the Western philosophical canon, which of course is deeply informed by the history of mathematics.[97] In discussing Aristotle's table of opposites from his *Metaphysics*, Wittig is careful to note that a portion of the table is a vestigial remainder from Pythagoras' system of number, such as "Limited/Unlimited," "Odd/Even," and "One/Many"—these she seems to excuse from the critiques she leverages upon oppositions like "Male/Female," "Good/Bad," or "Light/Dark:" "as soon as the precious conceptual tools resting on division (variations, comparisons, differences) were created, they were immediately […] turned into a means of creating metaphysical and moral differentiation in Being" (50), she says. "From terms whose function had been to sort out, to classify, to make measurement possible (in itself a work of genius) they were translated into a metaphysical dimension." Originally, she says, mathematical concepts were "a technical, instrumental series corresponding to a division needed by the tool for which [they] were created." The tool for which the lesbian is created is the "total subject," and also the "totaling subject:" the subject who counts, who develops from out of herself her own notation for a count, and in doing so, appropriates a standpoint within that counting, the count's beginning, as her own. *The Lesbian Body* exhibits the same kind of genius that Wittig admires in mathematical thinking: the genius of the measure of the infinite. It also pushes us to the threshold of the second dominant figuration of change, and its relation to mathematics, to which we shall now turn.

[97] Such a project has recently been undertaken in part via the work of Laura Riding (Anirudh Sridhar, *Poetry's Resistance to the Mathematisation of Reality*).

# Chapter 3, Transition as Traversal

> "Point by point, a body reorganizes itself, making appear in the world ever more singular consequences."
>
> (Badiou, *Logics of Worlds,* 503)

### *3.1 – Transitory Ontologies*

From the outset, we have sought to maintain the trans subject as a determinate and yet generic object of knowledge: we have said that it must be maintained as an inconsistent multiple, but one for which transition can and does occur. At the end of Chapter 2, we saw how the writing of appropriation foundered on the maintenance of this point, specifically in the dissolution of the mereological, where part/whole relationships gave way to the formalism of number. When transition is thought as appropriation, the trans subject is taken to be only an altered identification with a field of possibility—if the trans subject makes a claim to being beyond identification, it appears in the appropriative frame only as either evidentiary of that relation's non-uniqueness for all subjects, or as a naïve at best, reactionary at worst setting-into-amber of the possible. My dissertation claims that change is thought today in two ways, and that transition has been given another name besides appropriation: traversal. Like appropriation, traversal too has roots in philosophical developments relating to ontology, and in a specific philosopher's theorization of change as event. Just as we came to understand "schema" as the product of appropriation, in this chapter we will come to understand the product of traversal: "topos." Whether or not traversal opposes appropriation or represents a mere refinement of it, the figuration of change as traversal has equally come to shape, dominate, and regiment our ability to encounter the trans subject; traversal, like appropriation, differently but equally disbars the actuality of transition. Only the philosopher Alain Badiou can provide us with resources to think what occurs after the end of this trail. And just as the philosopher of appropriation drew his evental theory from his undergoing of a Turn, Badiou, the philosopher of traversal, drew his evental theory from ruptures in his own thinking.

Badiou's work has been characterised by the throughline of his commitment to the relevance of mathematics and logic for philosophy, but also by that line's multiple breaks. Both he and his readers have identified a first break with the Lacano-Althusserian orientation of his earliest writings from 1966 to 1969 as a founding member of the *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, culminating in works such as "Mark and Lack" and *The Concept of Model* (Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, xiv; Hallward, *Subject to Truth*, x). Second came his break with the Marxist party-form orientation that coincided with his militant Maoist political activity from 1970 to 1979 as a founding member of the UCFML, and culminating in pamphlets associated with that group's activity, like *Theory of Contradiction*, as well as the seminars given at the Paris 8 University Vincennes-Saint-Denis from 1975 to 1979 which became *Theory of the Subject* (Badiou, *ToS*, vii, xxiii; Robert Boncardo, "Periodise and Pass Beyond" and Jan-Jasper Persijn, "To What Question").[98] Third, his break with the mono-political subjectivity and rhetorically topological formalism of *Theory of Subject*, and his concomitant turn toward the rigorous systematization of a quartered subjectivity through the axiomatized proof structure of ZFC set theory, culminating in *Being and Event* in 1988, and *Conditions*, in 1992 (Badiou, *B&E*, 4).[99] And fourth, though not named as such by him, his break with the strict toolset of set theory in *Being and Event* and turn toward multiple alternate paths in the same destinationless direction, such as through the

[98] Founded with Natacha Michel, Catherine Quiminal, Sylvain Lazarus and others, the UCFML, or *L'Union des communistes de France marxistes-léninistes*, was a Maoist group which focused on organizing immigrant laborers for collective action, in the form of both factory and rent strikes (Boncardo and Cooke, "Long Live the International Proletariat," 1140). Its sister group, *Foudre*, was specifically devoted to intervening in art and culture, with an anti-fascist ethos (François Dosse, *The Sign Sets*, 152).

[99] Zermelo-Frankel with the Axiom of Choice (ZFC) is the axiomatization of set theory Badiou prizes above all others. Roland Bolz has argued that Badiou's reasons for deciding upon ZFC over other axiomatizations—principally that it offers the resource of the empty set, but also disallows the self-belonging of sets (Hallward, 73)—ignores alternate approaches which with different axioms (even the ones ZFC forbids) that can yield the same functional results (Bolz, "Mathematics is Ontology?" 128). Tarski–Grothendieck set theory (TG), for example, builds upon ZFC by providing an axiomatization of something like a universal set, which Badiou denies the possibility of, called a "Grothendieck Universe" (Brown and Pąk, "A Tale of Two Set Theories").

mathematics of category theory in 2006's *Logics of Worlds*, or through the mathematics of order theory in 2022's *Immanence of Truths* (Badiou, *LoW*, xxiv; Vladimir Tasić, "Badiou's Logics," 25). If one pivot among all these has been more generative philosophically than the others, it must be that which followed *Theory of the Subject*, given that that book's dead-ends (the "still-born" notion of the purely topological subject, in his words [Badiou, *B&E*, 4]) resulted in the explosive inventiveness of the *Being and Event* trilogy. On the cusp of this transition, in *Theory of the Subject* Badiou provides a representation (a "topology" [Badiou, *ToS*, 118]) of his variety of "Turning," which he likens to a "torsion," and characterizes as a "materialist dialectic" (117):

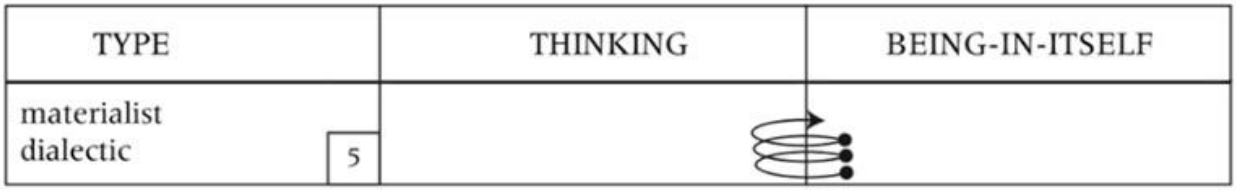



*Figure 4:* from "Philosophical Topology"

The immediate referent of the term "materialist dialectic" is the concept developed by Louis Althusser, who reversed the classical Marxist concept of "dialectical materialism" in *For Marx* as a part of his wider reworking of Gaston Bachelard's understanding of the "epistemological break." As Badiou puts it, "for the true materialist, all totality is particular" (217); this "particular" is for him always a contradiction. In both Badiou and Althusser's visions of the dialectic, its two terms are never equal in their contradiction—they are radically unequal, and this is the motor of their antagonism. Althusser's claim is that "unevenness is internal to a social formation because the structuration in dominance of the complex whole, this structural invariant, *is itself the precondition for the concrete variation of the contradictions* that constitute it, and therefore for their displacements, condensations and mutations, etc., and inversely because *this variation is the existence of that invariant*" (*For Marx*, 213). This, for Badiou, is

translated into the notion of "topological" (in)variance. We might also think of his theory of the event in relation to the epistemological break: for Althusser the break involves the imposition of "new lines of demarcation" in "the 'space' where the ideological and the scientific merge" (*Spontaneous Philosophy*, 99). Putting aside Althusser's investment in the freeing of science from the ideological, what is important for our purposes is that "each time we have drawn a line of demarcation, it has been to *make something appear* that was not visible before our intervention." "This operation […] is not a speculative game. It is an operation that has *practical* effects. What are they? Let us summarize them in one word: the *line* […] has as its practical effect the 'opening of a way'" (100). The line of demarcation between two uneven terms becomes the path of traversal, which has as its product that 'space' it splits.

What distinguishes the materialist dialectic is that each point at which a rupture can be said to occur—points which Badiou tends to index to his own turns, like the student movement of May '68, or the defeat of French communism in Mitterand's election, etc.—must be characterized both by its location in the real, as a real change in being and not in thought alone, and as an occasion for a traversal of the boundary between being-in-itself and the thinking of being-in-itself: "materialist is whoever recognizes the primacy of being over thinking" (*ToS,* 117). It is Badiou's subject that is "found—or not" in this traversal. At this point, though, both the event and the subject still depend upon a certain "unicity," in that the event is the self-identification of the subject (even if only through retroaction [126]) as a new point of antagonism which appears as a rupture in the old: "just as there is only one subject [the proletariat, the heterogeneous], there is also only one force, whose existence always surfaces as an event [revolution, abolishment]" (142, 184). The "topology of the subject" must therefore be "figured in non-orientable surfaces" (35), i.e., as the "outplace of a place," and "the other force of a force"

(45), since it and only it exists as heterogeneous to its place (98). While Badiou addresses the Two throughout *Theory of Subject* ("there are two sexes" and "there are two classes" being fundamental propositions), it always appears as two uneven terms of one contradiction, or of one dialectic—two sides of one folded plane (190). The event, the traversal of a untraversable boundary, is what gives us the "trace of the subject" (142).

This changes by the time of *Being and Event*, where the fundamental proposition is "the one is *not*"[100] (*B&E,* 23). After Badiou's mid-turning turn, the One is only ever a multiple that has been "counted-as-one:" the event is the dissolution of that One and the interruption of its count, which reveals the excessive pure inconsistent multiple which the One occludes (345). But as Peter Hallward summarizes, "from within the situation, the existence of an event cannot be proved; it can only be asserted.[101] An event is something that can be said to exist (or rather, to

[100] Badiou does not simply argue that in place of the One, "the multiple is"—this, for him, would still "lose being" (28), or reduce the "pure multiple" to oneness, such as in "multiplicity" as a predicate or "multiplicity" as a totality. Rather, for him "the multiple is *solely* the regime of presentation," "retroactively legible therein as *anterior* to the one" (24). To "gain being," we might say, we must find a way to persist in thinking the multiple *as* multiple—only set theory, he thinks, can accomplish this, since it thinks the multiple without requiring a set of all sets, or a set which includes itself, and gives no determination of the being of a set other than the multiples which are its elements. Hence his famous declaration that "mathematics is ontology" (4), or rather, "metaontology" (14). Badiou's main intervention in ontology is to suggest that ontology is a situation like any other, but one which aims to be the "presentation of a presentation" (27). It is only in ontology, therefore, that we can think the *inconsistent* pure multiple as such (101).

[101] In *Being and Event*, a "situation" is a presented multiple (24, 522); in practice, every presented multiple also involves its simultaneous representation, the "state," or "the state of the situation" (94, 98). Presentation is the count of what "belongs" to a situation, the enumeration of a pure multiple as a *consistent* multiple (as an element of a set); representation is the count of the count of presentation, and thus the count of what the situation "includes," enumerating the consistent multiple as the *one*-multiple (as a part of a whole) (97, 98, 99). It is the representative power of the "state" which ensures the appearance of the normal and the natural (the well-founded and well-ordered character of those sets whose elements are said to both belong and be included), by staving off the dissolution of the One that would arise when the count of presentation fails. As Badiou puts it, "*the State is not founded upon the social bond, which it would express, but rather upon un-binding, which it prohibits*" (109). But at the same time this failure is in a sense inevitable, because of the excess of the pure multiple: the count of the count of presentation (representation) can always include in a situation more than the count of presentation can say belongs to it (84). This amounts to the postulation of "the existence of an inexistent" (68). Through his reading of set theory, Badiou concludes that the axiom of the null set, which some but not all axiomatizations of set theory use to ground the notion of "set" as an empty determination, gives us the sign of this inexistent: he identifies this with "void," the sole unique term which the pure multiple is a multiple *of* (86). In *Logics of Worlds*, the terminological place of "situation" is replaced with "world."

have existed) only insofar as it somehow inspires subjects to wager on its existence. […] Since the event has no present and leaves no durable trace, the temporality of the event as such is necessarily confined to the time of a future anterior: thanks to a subjective intervention, the event 'will have been presented'" (*Subject to Truth*, 115). Like Heidegger's Dasein, Badiou's subject is "that which decides an undecidable"—it does this when it insists that an event has taken place (*B&E,* 407). But this decision can be made, Badiou thinks, only from "the standpoint of an indiscernible," or from where the inexistent can contradictorily appear in a situation. In the *"nomination"* of the event *as* event, "one can thus force an indiscernible to the point that the extension in which it appears is such that an undecidable statement of ontology is veridical therein, thus decided" (203, 428). But unless the subject can persist in its indiscernibility, as that which is subtracted from the situation, its decision will annul both the event and the subject.[102] "From the standpoint of the decision, you no longer have anything other than a term of the situation. The intervention thus appears […] to consist of an auto-annulment of its own meaning. Scarcely has the decision been taken than what provoked the decision disappears" (202, 207). After *Theory of Subject*, the subject, in its fidelity to a decision for undecidability (fidelity being nothing more than the procedures it carries out on the basis of the event having occurred, i.e., "in its name") (384), is now the "trace of the event" rather than the reverse (*LoW*, 468). This subject is also no longer a two-faced One, but unique according to the four distinct kinds of truth,

[102] Compare to his statements in *Theory of the Subject*, which remain closer to Derrida's idea of *différance*: "everything exists thanks to what is lacking from it" (82). "Only that which is missing from a Whole can give it consistency" (64). Or at least this is the emphasis Madhavi Menon gives the proximity in her book *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism*, which, in line with the examples from contemporary trans theory we have already surveyed, sees Badiou's "indifference to differences" as useful for positing desire and its traversing effects as the only workable universal. This she feels "allows us to be indifferent to a regime of difference in which a body" (*Indifference*, 21) and can "actually reconceptualize how to traverse differences without designating them as identitarian particulars" (41). This strikes me as a selective reading at best. What only deepens after Badiou's turn to *Being and Event* is Badiou's demarcation of love from desire. (See Section 3.7.) Rather than a traversal that ignores differences, his model of the subject more and more becomes an "erasure" of differences. See Note 103.

namely politics, science, art, and love.[103] In Hallward's view, what changes in the break between *Theory of the Subject* and *Being and Event* is that Badiou "is no longer waging a struggle for the strict elimination of the state" (*Subject to Truth,* 98): rather than seeing any of subject-to-truth as a truly new change in the situation which grounds the state (as any kind of "suppression of a presentation" [B&E 408]), Badiou no longer believes that a decision for the event can come about purely through the insistence on the new, but instead believes it comes about through the "supplementation" (407) or the "generic extension" (417) of the old by the indiscernible.

After Badiou's turn to the *Being and Event* trilogy, the concept of the "materialist dialectic" persists as a diagnostic tool, though it, too, has changed. In *Logics of Worlds*, he clarifies that "the materialist dialectic says: 'There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.'[104] The 'except that' *exists* qua subject. In other words, if a body avers itself capable of producing effects that exceed the bodies–languages system (and such effects are called truths), this body will be said to be subjectivated" (*LoW*, 45). To say merely that "there are only bodies and languages," to abandon truths, is for him the pronouncement of the materialist

[103] In every case, Badiou's subject is not a One—the subject is a multiple, rather than an individual psychological subjectivity in the average sense. As we've seen, in *ToS*, there is for Badiou only the political subject, the proletariat. In *Being and Event*, he begins to hold that there are four kinds of subject, according to the kind of truth they bear a fidelity to. In *Logic of Worlds*, he further divides each of these subjects into "faithful," "obscure," or "reactionary" subjects, or subjects which attest to an event, occlude an event, or deny an event, respectively. In *Logics of Worlds*, in particular, the idea of a subject's fidelity appearing in the way it necessarily bears a "body" grows in importance, but this body is in each case specific to the formalism of a truth: if the "organization" of proletariat was the body born by a specific political subject, the "bi-sexed body" is that born by the amorous subject (*LoW*, 77). And notably, faithful, obscure and reactionary subjects relate to "their bodies" differently: in its faithful form, the body is "erased;" in its obscure form, the body is "full;" in its reactive form, the body is "denied" (62, 67). Badiou's anti-identitarianism leaves the latter two categories (each of which readily admit of application in historical transphobias, for example in the Lacanian attribution of the transsexual's desire for "full speech," and in the fascist bio-essentialism which attributes to the transsexual a "denial" of the realities of the body) as the only possibilities for the "body" of the trans subject, unless some form of a Two can be preserved for it.

[104] A slight modification of his statement in *Being and Event*: "There is only the void, and the Ideas" (157). The multiple itself is such a "legislative idea" (59).

dialectic's evil twin: "democratic materialism." "Democratic materialism only knows individuals and communities," Badiou says, "that is to say passive bodies, but it knows no subjects" (50).

> Where the materialist dialectic advocates the correlation of truths and subjects, democratic materialism promotes the correlation of life and individuals.[105] This opposition is also one between two conceptions of freedom. For democratic materialism, freedom is plainly definable as the (negative) rule of what there is. There is freedom if no language forbids individual bodies which are marked by it from deploying their own capacities. Or again, languages let bodies actualize their vital resources. Incidentally, this is why under democratic materialism sexual freedom is the paradigm of every freedom. Such freedom is in effect unmistakably placed at the point of articulation between desires (bodies), on the one hand, and linguistic, interdictory or stimulating legislations, on the other. The individual must be accorded the right to 'live his or her sexuality' as he or she sees fit. The other freedoms will necessarily follow.
>
> […]
>
> It turns out, however, that in the materialist dialectic, in which freedom is defined in an entirely different manner, this paradigm is no longer tenable. In effect, it is not a matter of the bond—of prohibition, tolerance or validation—that languages entertain with the virtuality of bodies. It is a matter of knowing if and how a body participates, through languages, in the exception of a truth. We can put it like this: being free does not pertain to the register of relation (between bodies and languages) but directly to that of incorporation (to a truth). This means that freedom presupposes that a new body appear

[105] A slight modification of his statement in *Being and Event*: "Human is that being which prefers to represent itself within finitude, whose sign is death, rather than knowing itself to be entirely traversed and encircled by the omnipresence of infinity" (149).

> in the world. The subjective forms of incorporation made possible by this unprecedented body—itself articulated upon a break, or causing a break—define the nuances of freedom. (34)

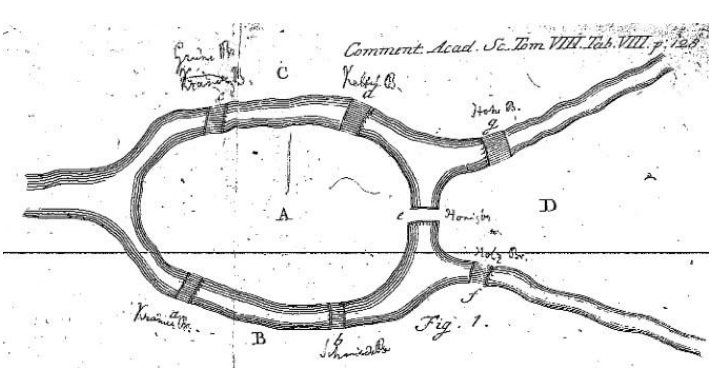
It should be apparent that Badiou's theory of the event—the forcing of a truth, the reorganization of a subjective body—is replete with tools for our thinking of transition. But in this passage the entirety of what his philosophy might offer the trans subject is identical to all that it withholds from her. For in Badiou's system, at each point of his turning, the idea of something like what we mean by "the trans subject" can only be nonsensical, since what it would claim for itself—the truth of a transition, an "ontological remnant" of the event (Hallward, *Subject to Truth*, 124)—flies in the face of his idea of the subtractive essence of the true. Understanding why this is the case requires understanding the background of his theory of the subject in the concept of topology it formed within and eventually broke from.

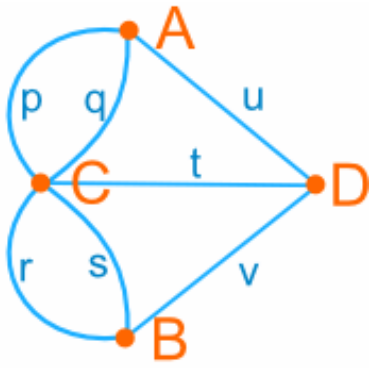
### *3.2 – The Product of Traversal: Topos*

If traversal is a "figure" of change, what is that figure's "background?" As we have already seen, for Badiou it is a mathematical background—a background we will need for our exploration of the ways in which the triune domain has been "topologized."

The word "topology" first appears in Johann Benedict Listing's 1847 paper *Vorstudien zur Topologie* as a replacement for the field of mathematical study that Leonhard Euler had called "*geometria situs*" in the 18th century (James, *History,* 304). Latin for "geometry of place," Euler himself had in turn lifted *geometria situs* from the work of Leibniz, where it referred to his proposal for future "investigations into the foundations, development, and formalization of geometry" (De Risi, "Analysis Situs," 1). Euler's continuation of Leibniz's speculative project is

best seen in his 1736 resolution of the Königsberg Bridge problem: based on the seven bridges that spanned the Pregel River in the canal city of Königsberg, the problem asked how one could construct a walk through town that crossed each bridge only once. Such a construction was known intuitively to be impossible, but its impossibility had not been given the form of a proof. Recognizing that the features of the landmasses were irrelevant, Euler reduced them to nothing but points and rendered the bridges as connections between those points.




*Figures 5A-B:* "Königsberg 1" and "Königsberg 2"

In performing his reduction of map to graph, Euler was able to show that since by definition any path would need to be a straight line with an even number of invariable points (two, a beginning and an ending), and given that each point in the graph happened to have an odd number of connections to other points, there was no possible solution if each connection could be made but once. This approach was refined by mathematicians like Listing and Carl Friedrich Gauss, who used it to determine the "topological invariants," or "Euler characteristics," of sets of points, in figures such as knots, orbits, and holes. In the Königsberg problem, the vertexes of the graph are these invariants that, as a set of points, must persist across transformation (across deformations, simplifications, or mappings onto other sets of points) for it to retain its identity. Much later, this early conception came to ground what is sometimes referred to as point-set topology or general topology, under which many other distinct fields of topology are grouped (*History*).

The shift from classical to modern topology is usually said to occur with Henri Poincaré's publication of *Analysis Situs* between 1895 and 1904 (Poincaré, *Papers on Topology*, 1). Poincaré's breakthroughs were also concerned with the theorization of invariance, but instead of testing the deformability of sets of invariant points, they tested the deformability of sets of homologies, or "fundamental groups" of points. As "manifolds of substitutions" homologies could describe what is invariant in the "spaces" or "interiors" of mathematical objects in higher dimensions than points alone could describe (Poincaré, 4). By grouping homologies ("cross-sections" or "cuts" one can make in an object when considered as a manifold), Poincaré was also able to show the possible range of transformation for these objects. Poincaré's long-unproven conjecture concerned the "fundamental" nature of these groups and dealt specifically with the possibility of dimensional transforms of spheres. Any single cross-section of a sphere, as we know, will share a homology with both all the other possible cross-sections of that sphere, and any other sphere: a two-dimensional circle is the homology of a three-dimensional sphere. A space is called "homeomorphic" if, no matter how differently one distorts the object (e.g., through crumpling the sphere, denting it, etc.), all of its homologies can be substituted with each other under the conditions of the morphism. With mathematical objects more complex than spheres, the invariance of a fundamental group across a morphism (torsion, compaction, tightening, etc.) requires more and more complex algebraic tools to notate.[106] For Poincaré, the manifold, or empty space of a mathematical object considered as a topos, is the invariant that as a group of homologies must persist across transformation (scissions, suturings, or penetrations by

[106] The conjecture dealt with a "three-sphere": just as a circle is the homology we derive as cross-section from a three-dimensional sphere, a three-dimensional sphere is the homology we derive as a cross-section of a four-dimensional sphere. Poincaré's conjecture was that any closed (finite) three-dimensional manifold would indeed be homeomorphic with a three-sphere (Poincaré, 9). In 2006, the mathematicians Richard S. Hamilton and Gregori Perelman proved that the conjecture was true (James Carlson, "The Poincaré Conjecture").

other manifolds) for it retain its "identity." Poincaré's approach, known in his time as "combinatorial topology," has come to be known as "algebraic topology" (*History*).

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics, topology is "the area of mathematics concerned with the general properties of shapes and space, and in particular with the study of properties that are not changed by continuous distortions" (*Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*). The word "topology" combines the Ancient Greek root words *topos* and *logos*, which are themselves definable as "place, region, area" for the former, and "discourse, language, reason" for the latter (*Oxford Dictionary of Etymology*). Topology is in effect the study of the limits of transitivity through the basic terms of interiority and exteriority, and the study of the ways that arrangements of the point-reducible surfaces can divide the interiors and exteriors that they are they are notatable as. Yet unlike mereology or formal logic, topology studies transitivity by deploying change experimentally through the figuring of the mathematical object (Cotnoir and Varzi, "Mereology"). It does this to establish failure points of transitivity, invariants, which are its objects of study, moreso than the topoi which are their vehicles.

Topology has had a fertile metaphorical life outside of mathematics. In the 2010s, theorists in the humanities began to speak of a "topological turn" in the general study of culture and the subject (Papadimitriou, *Geo-Topology*). In the 2012 introduction to *Theory, Culture & Society's* special issue on the topic, the editors claimed that there has "not simply [been a] transposition of topological ideas onto the field of culture," but a need for these ideas to explain the rise of "transitive modes of relating" at the end of the neoliberal era (global communication, migration of labour, etc.). Advocates of the turn also hoped to identify "an epochal transformation in the intersection between the form and content of cultural expression. […] The becoming topological of culture does not simply correspond to how culture imagines topology;

instead, our proposal is that topology is now emergent in the practices of ordering, modelling, networking, and mapping that co-constitute culture, technology, and science. In short, a distributed, dynamic configuration of practices is organizing the forms of social life" (Lury, Parisi, Terranova, 5). The editors associated their approach with the thinking of Gilbert Simondon, for whom "the individual body must be thought as a chrono-topological ensemble whose complex becoming is made from successive crises of individuation; the becoming of the being consists in this noncoincidence of chronology and topology" (Simondon, trans. mine, *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*). But the sense of a topological turn also found credence in the various new materialisms of the 2010s, where it readily allegorized various logics of becoming.[107] The pre-Socratic philosopher Thales claimed, "place (*topos*) is the greatest of things, for it contains all things" (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*). One can see how topological thinking flourished in a time where the boundaries of the self and the world were said to be—truthfully or not—more fluid than ever, even if "it is the topology that is fluidly changing, not the object" (Lury, Parisi, Terranova, 54).

As with any ambitious historicization, there has been a complimentary reaction against the idea of a topological turn from those who seek to discipline the illiberal use of mathematical terms beyond their context, including by philosophers with little to no actual knowledge of topology's "proper" mathematical application. "If topology has any bite, any force or effectiveness in social theory," John W.P. Phillips warned,

> then this is so to the extent that in these altered contexts its distinctive character is preserved. This will be necessary whether it is considered in terms of its

[107] Among many examples, see Karen Barad, for whom "agency is 'doing' or 'being' in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices—iterative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetimematter relations" (*Meeting the Universe*, 178).

> transformative/transgressive potential or in terms of its explanatory capacity. […] That is not to say that topology cannot be stretched almost beyond recognition; but its distinctive properties—its invariant properties—must remain. It should still be (mathematical) *topology*. (Phillips, 134)

In such a reaction, the aim seems to be to discipline those who would lift concepts from mathematics, that supposedly most "objective" tradition of human thought, and deposit them into the supposedly "subjective" hermeneutical openness of the humanities. Such scolding is not unique to the uptake of topology from mathematics in particular, but it makes a particular kind of irony clear: resistance to the deformation of topology by theory and philosophy, or the vulgar metaphorization of one field by another, is in itself a kind of topological thinking, which dreams of finding the topological invariants of topology itself. Topology, then, seems uniquely immune to disciplining, and has remained slippery in the face of attempts to discard its way of reading non-mathematical ideas.

### *3.3 – Topological Regimes*

Parallel to this debate, the return to Lacan initiated by Slovenian psychoanalytic theory began to rehabilitate their master's deployment of the topos as a "matheme" of subjectivity itself, from tripartite Borromean knots meant to model the subject's real/imaginary/symbolic emplacements, to Möbius strips said to capture their conscious and unconscious dimensions (Friedman and Tomšič, *Topological Perspectives*). In some respects, Lacan is the primary site of the transmission of mathematical topology into theory and philosophy: as Owen Hewitson puts it, from the beginning of his career Lacan was invested in the universalizing character of mathematics, and held a strong version of the claim that "human subjectivity has the structure of

a topological space" (Hewitson, "Why Topology Matters;" Lacan, Seminar IX, *Identification,* 145).[108] Other scholars and theorists of psychoanalysis such as Ellie Ragland and Will Greenshields concur that this submission of the subject to mathematical formalization was an early guiding principle for Lacan, even if his knowledge and application of mathematics was at first purely autodidactic and metaphorical.[109] However, late in life Lacan struck up a friendship and prolific correspondence with a group of mathematicians working in topology in the 1970's (Pierre Soury, Michel Thomé, and Jean-Michel Vappereau) and through them, became even more committed to the formalization of ideas along mathematical lines. The influence of this encounter—from which an extraordinary collection of correspondence and explanatory doodles survives—can be felt throughout his later writings, and most of all in Seminar XXVI, *Topology and Time*. Greenshields, writing on the importance of topology to Lacanian psychoanalysis and paraphrasing Jacques-Alain Miller's agreement with his master, says that Lacan held topological demonstrations to be "[the] writing or presentation of the impossible," which is "called upon to present [the logic of a signification] on the condition that it is not subject to this logic. […] Topology is inextricably bound to the signifier without, for all that, being of the signifier. It is a presentation of the failure of presentation that must somehow avoid this very failure that sees every presentation become a re-presentation" (Greenshields, 33). However, for non-mathematicians like Lacan and Miller, the association of topology with aporia, contradiction, and impossibility is, if not a selective metaphorization of the gestures one can spot in the

[108] "I am proposing that one should admit in a fashion which no doubt involves a concealment, something hidden which is going to have to be carried forward, rediscovered where it is, one should pose that there is a topological structure regarding which it is going to be a question of showing how it is necessarily that of the subject, which means that there are certain of its loops which cannot be reduced." When in Seminar IX Lacan says that "there is indeed some medium, and to put it better, some instrument for this unbelievable transmutation between the object of desire and the existence of the subject and which is precisely the phallus" (173), the implication is that the phallus is his name for topological invariance. The way in which the subject "has the phallus" can be accounted for only in such a "topological model" (10).

[109] Explored in Greenshields' *Lacan: The Topological Turn* and Ragland's *Jacques Lacan and the Logic of Structure*.

mathematical history, then at least only the *occasion* for topology as a thinking, and not its substance, nor its creativity.

In psychoanalysis, too, the sway of topology holds. Geneviève Morel has been interested especially in Lacan's application of the mathematical concept of "compactness" to his theory of sexual difference.[110] For Morel, "Lacan's hypothesis of compactness consists of the supposition that the topological structure of embracing one another (to the extent that this relates to the Other) is a compact one," where "with the male side, there is a requirement of the infinite; with the female, we move from the infinite to the finite. But we are dealing with the same compact space, in other words, the space of sexual jouissance." According to Morel,

> [this] *structure* indicates the way in which a woman will approach the question of how she can be attained. How can we understand this? If the compact space allows one to transform the infinity of the big Other into the finite, we no longer need an infinite number of open sets: we are able to cover our space of sexual jouissance (represented by the compact space) with a finite number of sets. These open sets, Lacan says, represent women: '… these spaces can be taken, one by one—since it is a question of the other side, let's put them in the feminine—one by one'. If we take each woman—open set—one by one, we will attain the compact space linked to the existence of the Other [and introduce] contingency on

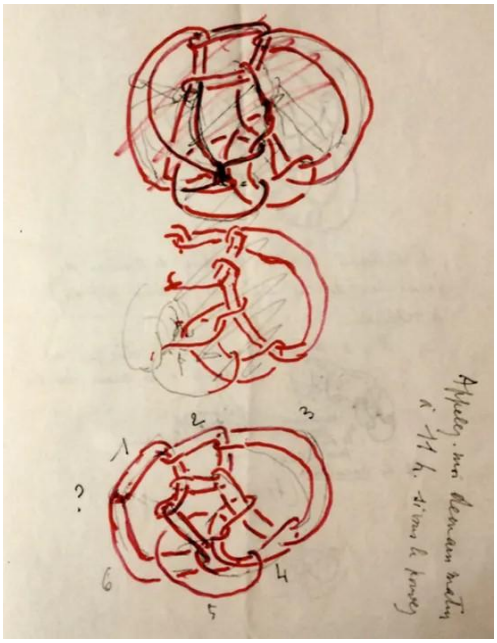
[110] In mathematics, a topos (or set, knot, category, etc.) is said to be "compact" if it is closed, i.e., if it is bounded and contains its own boundary. All finite topoi are compact, but so are some infinite objects, like the real number line: though infinite, it contains no "space" for the insertion of values it does not already contain, since it contains all possible numbers in an ordinal sequence. Similarly, in a compact topos, you will not find a point from its exterior in its interior, whereas in a "noncompact" or open topos, you could. In fact, a seemingly noncompact topos can be shown to be compact by way of a "covering," or a surjection between it and a finite number of other noncompact topoi, in effect segmenting it into treatably compact areas (where a "surjection" is a function which maps all of the points of one topos into at least one of each point in another topos) (*Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*).

the woman's side as something fundamental. (Morel, "The Hypothesis of Compactness," italics mine)

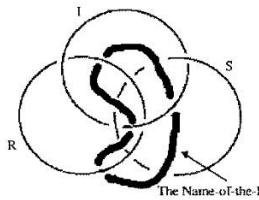
Alenka Zupančič concurs: for her, desire is "the necessarily distorted *structural* topology where the subject of the unconscious dwells. This subject is never neuter; it is sexed, since sex(uality) is nothing but a configuring of the signifying minus and of the surplus-enjoyment: a configuring which cannot escape contradiction, the latter being the logical consequence" (Zupančič, *What is Sex*, 62, italics mine). In these readings, sex and sexuality reflect something irreducible, something "already transformed" in the topos that the subject is; Joan Copjec describes this as an irreducible division, irrecuperable and yet foundational to the subject, invariant for it (Copjec, "The Sexual Compact," 35). Any demand for a "restructuring" of this division—a demand that the trans subject makes—can appear to these theorists only as "sham," a demand to which the structure of sexuality is "not answerable" (39). We can note in these deployments of topology by psychoanalysts a constant slippage between the "topological" and the "structural."[111] For Morel, Zupančič, Copjec, and other heirs of Lacan, topological thinking usually lasts just long enough to confirm the "structuring" power which they had already attributed to the "unstructured" void, which they see as a determinately present "negativity." Nothing is more forbidden to them than accounting for mathematics' capacity to "invariantize" (read, ontologize), even if the very fact that mathematics extends beyond topology, and develops ways to transform its objects into fundamental "irreducibilities," as is the case with "categories" (Leinster, *Basic Category Theory*, 168), should force them to see therein a determinately present "positivity," no matter the disagreement that such a result might find with the axioms of psychoanalysis. By restricting their

[111] A point affirmed, but as is usually the case, not problematized, by Samo Tomšič: "The overlapping of homology and homotopy [directed] Lacan's teaching to a progressive identification of topology and structure: 'Topology is not "made to guide us" in the structure. Topology is this structure - as a retroaction of the chain order of which language consists'" (*Capitalist Unconscious*, 59).

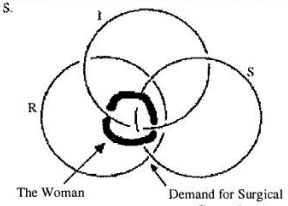
thinking to topology-as-structure alone, the "necessary contradictions" found at the limits of transitivity become the essence of structure in general—and sex most of all.



KEYS TO TRANSSEXUALITY




This new formalization makes it possible to situate the transsexual position as follows: in the absence of the knot constituted by the Name-of-the-Father, RSI would be freed unless knotted by a fourth ring, the subject's identification with The Woman. This fourth ring, however, only holds the Imaginary and the Symbolic together; the real is unknotted, and the transsexual's demand is thus for correction that will adjust the Real of sex to the knotted I and S.




45

*Figures 6A-B:* "Lacan's Letter to Pierre Soury," "Keys to Transsexuality"

The same critiques of the "topological turn" in the humanities have been aimed at the "topological return" in psychoanalysis: objections have called it little more than a rhetorical movement, appealing to the supposed rigor and objectivity of mathematics to mask the analyst's caprice and ignorance of the field.[112] In psychoanalysis we hear that the drives are topological because they "find their object only at the edge," like "a ring within a larger ring" (Lacan, in Zupančič, 115); we hear that the Other is "toric" (torus-like) because such a form "allows the fundamental relationship of internal exclusion to be sustained" and enables us to "seek this exterior area in the interior" (Miller, in Ragland, 31); and most infamously, we hear that

[112] See Jakub Mácha on the wider use of topological metaphor (Mácha, "Conceptual Metaphor Theory"). See also Robert Groome, who calls for psychoanalysis to depart from an "abstract position" where topology is an "icon" or "ornament," or only a feature of historicization, and move to a "concrete position" where topology is a "supplement" to clinical practice, where the presentation of topoi is "not only functional, but calculable according to a *matheme* and deducible according to a psychoanalytic logic" (Groome, https://www.topoi.net/topology).

topology is key to understanding the "psychosis" of transsexualism because, like an incorrectly completed math problem, we transsexuals "give the wrong answer, by default, to the question" of sexuation's knotting (Millot, 54). If it is impossible to imagine that psychoanalytic theorists would not still be making such claims had the mathematical study of topology never occurred, it is even harder to think that they can entertain any limit for topology's discursive efficacy.[113]

Actual mathematicians seem to care little about such debates, either way, and recognize little of their own interests in them; nor do they have any favors to grant those who would position them as invigilators of philosophy and theory (Arkady Plotnitsky, *Lacan and Mathematics*). Mathematized or not, *topological thinking* responds to an enduring ontological question about the persistence of identity across change. This question asks whether change is possible, whether it can be said to occur at all, whether it can be willed, predicted, or prepared for. It asks, at bottom, if "invariants" can be found in the subject, the self, the body, and the community, and if, without such invariants, subjects, selves, bodies, and communities would cease to be entirely. The latter question is not too far from one of the most fundamental questions of the philosophy of mathematics, which asks whether mathematics discovers or creates its objects: are topological invariants found or invented? What about identities, sexes, or genders?

[113] There have been simultaneous attempts at "depathologizing transexuality in Lacanian psychoanalysis" by authors like Sheila L. Cavanagh, Patricia Gherovici, Oren Gozlan, Shanna Carlson, Ann Pellegrini and Avgi Saketopoulou, and so on (Cavanagh, "Transsexuality as Sinthome," 27). All of their critiques amount to the same basic gesture: they suggest that Lacan's attribution of a unique and fundamental psychotic identification to the trans subject in *Seminar XIX* (the "madness" of wanting to free oneself from error [*Seminar XIX*, 9; the transsexual woman is of course gendered as male throughout by Lacan]) is in truth *non*-unique, and should be seen in some respect as a universal condition for all subjects. Leaving aside the fact that such feints ignore the unevenness still present in that kind of "universal pathologization," and paper over the real distinctions between psychotic and other forms of experience, they do little to disrupt the topological dogmatism that underpins the claim. Perhaps the most interesting of these approaches is that of Pellegrini and Saketopoulou, who attempt to pivot towards a psychoanalytic framework closer to the thinking of Jean Laplanche. Laplanche is notable for his claim that it is gender which precedes and is organized by sex (*Gender Without Identity*, 121). Still, in his writings and their application of them, the power of psychoanalysis still lies in its "decoding" of a "primary identification" or "assignment," which both dissolves the trans subject into a general condition of a split in "the sexual," and precludes any serious treatment of identity or the claims of transition as such.

Can topological invariants be avoided when one thinks of the place of a subject? Does topology allow us to model radical change, or does it seal it away? Topological thinking's answer to these questions, as we have seen, is that invariants (essences, singularities, identities, etc.) can only hold under the condition of *the notatability of their deformation*, which in each case *traverses a topos.* If we are to challenge the reading power of topological thinking as we did with schematic thinking, then we have to challenge this view. But the path to such a challenge is not through the mere rejection of topology and its approach to invariants: such a rejection would also reject the possibility of radical change. We must prove that "topos" alone cannot capture the traversal it claims to be the only possible product of, and show that that production, too, can be traversed: it can vary its invariants.

And we find a sign of this is in the fact that mathematics has not stopped developing; there, topology has not remained merely a theory of the notation of the limits of flux. As Fernando Zalamea has pointed out, philosophy and theory tend to discount the active, contested nature of pure mathematics, and prefer to orient themselves around shopworn figures from a distant, "settled" mathematical past, if they orient themselves around mathematics at all (Zalamea, *Synthetic Philosophy of Contemporary Mathematics*). In recent decades, topology has also become less and less a distinct field of mathematics, as it has been subsumed by one of its "offshoots," category theory. Category theory can be said to take the concerns of both set theory and topology, along with many other areas in mathematics, and treat them *as* mathematical objects—categories, with varying capacities for morphism into one another—in the same way that Euler's proto-topology once treated the vertices of the Pregel River. Tom Leinster defines "category" as "a system of related objects," which become bound together in a kind of "map:"

> Typical examples of what 'object' might mean are 'group' and 'topological space,' and typical examples of what 'map' might mean are 'homomorphism' and 'continuous map', respectively. […] Categories are themselves mathematical objects, and with that in mind, it is unsurprising that there is a good notion of 'map between categories'. Such maps are called functors. More surprising, perhaps, is the existence of a third level: we can talk about maps between functors, which are called natural transformations. These, then, are maps between maps between categories. In fact, it was the desire to formalize the notion of natural transformation that led to the birth of category theory. By the early 1940s, researchers in algebraic topology had started to use the phrase 'natural transformation', but only in an informal way. Two mathematicians, Samuel Eilenberg and Saunders Mac Lane, saw that a precise definition was needed. But before they could define natural transformation, they had to define functor; and before they could define functor, they had to define category. And so the subject was born. (Leinster, 9)

As we have already previewed, topology, which Lacan saw as a correction of Freud's "merely topographic" maps of the psyche (not to mention his own graphical schemata), has in turn steadied the ladder for a correction of "merely topological" products, in which change, as categorification, becomes a stable feature of the landscape.[114]

Some examples of recent developments in this vein may be found in the work of the German mathematician Andreas Floer on Symplectic Field Theory, in which he developed "a set of techniques which makes it possible to extend certain aspects of […] finite-dimensional manifolds to infinite-dimensional examples" (Cornea, Ginzburg, Kerman, Lalonde, *New*

[114] Such as his graphs of desire, as Amanda Holmes has tracked (Holmes, "Lacan's Graph of Desire").

*Applications and Generalizations*), or the work of Alexander Grothendieck on coverings and sheaves, which allow us to take the infinite possibility for homeomorphism that exists in between open sets and determine within it a locally finite transform.[115] If these ideas have not yet entered discourses beyond mathematics, to be foisted on trans subjects in the way topology's ancestor-concepts have been, then perhaps it's because they could disallow the kinds of claims that vulgar topology allows its users to make regarding the (im)possibility of change for such subjects. Are we, in philosophy and theory, prepared to think again the being of a non-linguistic category, as category theory asks us to? Are sex, gender, and identity thinkable as categories? My wager is that Badiou's turn away from topology, and his traversal of set theory to category theory, shows us that categorification will be applied to the triune domain whether we are prepared for such an application or not. And this is because, as Zalamea says, mathematics itself is a

> fluctuating, evolving activity, full of new *possibilities*, springing from disparate cultural realms, but always managing to construct precise *invariants* for reason behind the many relative obstructions that the mathematical imagination is always encountering. […] Without this back-and-forth between obstructions and invariants, mathematics cannot be understood. The wish to reduce, *a priori*, the

[115] As Zalamea puts it, "a sheaf is a type of mathematical object that allows for the global gluing of whatever proves to be coherently transferable in the local" (162). More concretely, a sheaf "bundles" the homologies derivable from one topological space (as a "presheaf") and applies a morphism to them such that they can be identified with some other bundling of homologies from some dissimilar topological space. The applied morphism, or map between those sheaves, is the mathematical object we are calling a category, for which sheaves become elements (Goresky, "Primer on Sheaves," 1). For Zalamea, who notices the homophony of the concept between mathematics and phenomenology, "sheaf serves as an *interchange* […] between the real and the imaginary, between discovery and invention, and allows us to capture the *continuous transformation of an image into its obverse*" (*Synthetic Philosophy of Contemporary Mathematics*, 338). Badiou seems to be somewhat ambivalent about sheaf theory, and does not delve into it as he does the Grothendieck topoi that they fundamentally describe (LoW, 295), but acknowledges that the introduction of the concept of the "sheaf" into mathematics post-1950's could name an event of equal importance to that of Cohen: "a fundamental correlation between the transcendental and certain forms of coherence internal to the multiple-being constructing itself under our very eyes, little by little;" "a sheaf of appearing towards being" (197).

> doing of mathematics to one side of the balance or the other is, perhaps, one of the major, basic errors committed by certain philosophers of mathematics. The transit between the possible, the actual and the necessary is a strength specific to mathematics, and one that cannot be neglected. To consider that transit as a weakness, and to therefore try to eliminate it, by reducing it either to contingent or to necessary circumstances (another version of an either-or exclusion), is an unfortunate consequence of having taken sides in advance. (*Synthetic Philosophy of Contemporary Mathematics*, 13-14)

From this point of view, the topological regimes we have been discussing, which all subjects have been said to think, desire, and change within, are not simply in desperate need of change themselves—they have changed already. If the triune domain has been irrevocably topologized in the loan-mathematical senses we have discussed, and if it can at any remove from mathematics be projected to follow its developments, then the very notion of the "topologically invariant" can change as well. The possibility of *a change of invariants*, the *ne plus ultra* event of a traversal's insistence, would be for the trans subject just such an invariant. With this image of the philosophical inheritance of mathematical concepts of topology in hand we can now proceed to interrogate Badiou's theorization of change as "traversal."

### *3.4 – The Identity Politics of Indiscernibles*

Badiou's commitment to anti-identitarianism, though eccentrically founded, mimics a more general worry on the part of philosophers and theorists of his generation about a supposed contemporary inflammation of identity politics, especially where sex and gender are

concerned.[116] The idea of making political demands or claims to existence via identification—*as* woman, *as* black, *as* gay, etc.—is anathema to Badiou. For him, identity-based demands and claims are the symptom of the "democratic materialism" of capitalist late modernity, which suppresses the homogeneously multiple being of the human and its forms of subjectivity in its "materialist dialectic" (Badiou, *Briefings*, 61). He opposes, therefore, the idea of the "minoritarian" in which "everything and everyone," including "disparate sexualities," "[deserve] to be recognized and protected by the law" (*Logics of Worlds*, 2). But despite Badiou's criticisms of a self-legislatory autonomy granted to sex, gender, and identity, he does believe that these exist in a certain terrain (which we have been referring to as the triune domain), revealed by a certain kind of truth and a certain kind of event (which he calls the amorous encounter of love). These qualifications, he thinks, manage to safeguard the universal and the multiple while also defending the split of sexuation, in which the necessity of being a "he or she," and only one of these, persists. This encounter, which takes place *beyond* the relation between bodies and languages, as a truth, for him brings about the triangulation of "a new body" for the subject which "deposes" sexual identity altogether (l).

Many of the examples Badiou gives for this kind of encounter relate to its depiction in art. In his text *Cinema*, he discusses film in particular as an arena that makes visible the sexed subject. Discussing Michelangelo Antonioni's 1982 *Identification of a Woman*, Badiou reads a scene in which a woman, Ida—who is romantically entangled with a director who sees her as a

[116] Copjec, for example, considers the discourse of gender identity to be emblematic of the "'cultural construction' movement of historicism," which proceeds "as if the subject were a tabula rasa, a blank slate, on which society, culture, and history could imprint itself." For her, rather, "what every individual inherits is not an identity or identifying property, but a potentiality, a capacity, which does not prescribe in advance what it is a potential for" (Copjec, "The Inheritance of Potentiality"). Silvia Federici, in another key, is emblematic of the view that identitarian thinking "is a problem because it separates us into different groups, each with a set of rights—women's rights, gay rights, indigenous peoples' rights, trans rights—without acknowledging what stands in the way of our being treated with justice," namely capitalist exploitation (Federici, *Periphery, 33*).

double of an actress he wants to cast as his new film's female lead—says to him: "I'm a human being like you. It's only a matter of chance that I'm not the same sex." Badiou claims that

> what is really at issue in the cinema, where sexuation is concerned, is that chance, the capture of that chance, and of all its consequences: being of one sex or the other. What Ida claims is that, prior to the chance determination of sex, there is a humanity that is everywhere the same, a generic humanity, a humanity based on identity or resemblance, not on difference or mystery. […] We can imagine that the chance difference between the sexes does not undermine that paired identity of a humanity of identicality. (*Cinema*, 152)

For Badiou, cinema is uniquely able to think "the triangulation among mystery, disappearance, and decision […] in which the process of identification of a woman operates and ultimately fails" (*Cinema*, 158). But it is in that failure that the new body of the loving subject is formed, in a "chance amorous encounter, whereby two fragments of indivisible humanity suddenly become players in the game of difference and its thinking. The sudden sexuation of everything owing to a chance encounter: this is what leads one, above and beyond the aporias of the sex act, into the labyrinth of identification" (161). Yet "if sex is the contingent supplement that weakens and divides generic humanity," he asks, "is there any hope of connecting that supplement to that genericity?" (153) His answer is yes: "the identification of the other sex, in situations both unique and typical, occurs from within love, or what is assumed to be love. For if that identification were possible, nothing would prevent it from being connected to generic humanity's capacity for identity and similarity. If it were impossible, however, the split would be irreparable, and the very idea of humanity would be hurt, injured as regards the minimum of identity it requires." Not only does Badiou believe that the sexed identity he grants the "new

body" is permissible within his model of the generic, but he further claims that the generic, *and hence every kind of truth*, finds its guarantee *first* in loving subject, in the scene of the Two where man and woman are able to encounter one another *as such*, as Ida said, *by and as chance*.

*Logics of Worlds* is where Badiou most thoroughly treats the "objective phenomenology" of sexed identity. As we know, one of the features of Badiou's "turning" is that in the passage to *Being and Event's* sequel, what had been called a "situation" begins to be called a "world." Worlds—multiples counted as one, with their inexistents banished—are what guarantee identity in its appearance, including appearance and identification as "woman." Badiou explains his theory of worldly identity via topological allegory: no matter the "cross-section" one takes of a world, Badiou says, gesturing explicitly to the topological production of homologies, the objects one will find will be exposed, i.e., traversed by a relation of identity to some transcendental operator which remains inaccessible for thought despite its apparent surplus of existence (585).[117] An operator of identity is not an overarching structural principle according to which a world is assembled (worlds are not wholes, despite being closed, and despite their pretentions to the One), and neither is an operator of identity some fundamental material or essence that marks everything that it contains (worlds do not possess foundations, despite being ordered, and despite their pretentions to consistency). "Neither matter (beneath) nor principle (above), a world absorbs all the multiplicities that can intelligibly be said to be internal to it" (308). Identity for Badiou is a fundamental group, a set of homologies; identity's being is nothing but the homologies which are ceaselessly, in thought's reflection of its worldly topos, locatable. This world is depicted as akin to a category-theoretical "commutative diagram," given in the notation

[117] "To exist" for Badiou "means to be in the constituent movement of originary over-existence" of this kind (267); in other words, worldly identity for Badiou is akin for ontic identity for Heidegger.

of implication, where arrows mark identity via morphism, and in aggregate constrain the capacity for "natural transformation" from one worldly topology to another:

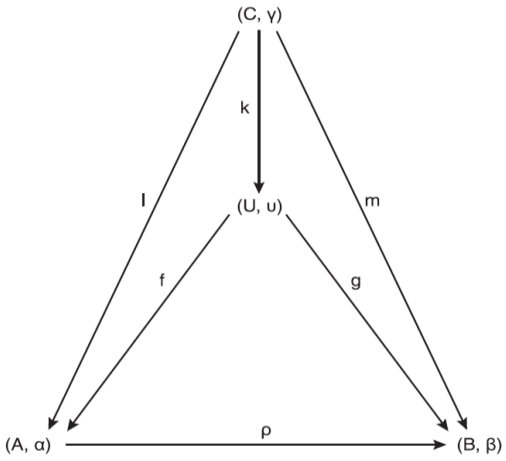



*Figure 7:* "Universal Exposition"[118]

Put differently, a category *is* a world, a topos. It is eminently possible for Badiou that one might speak of something like "woman" as category in this sense: in the commutative diagram, arrows indicate continuous transformations, or possible modifications of fundamental groups into one another. A real change would subject this category/world/topos to *dis*continuous transformation—an event—but would result in a new category/world/topos. But as soon as that is nominated as woman, it too becomes an object under the operation of the old transcendental, and the existence of the event is again up for grabs. An event has already taken place, and

[118] (C, γ) in this diagram refers to an "exponent," i.e., some object in a world which is exposed as existent by a relation between (A, α) and (B, β); (A, α) and (B, β) are both existent objects in a world, with A being composed of its elements, a, and B of its elements, b; p is any given relation between them; (U, υ) stands for a "universal exponent," i.e., that which is exposed by every exponent; in a world of universal exposition, the relation of (C, γ) to (A, α), and the relation of (C, γ) to (B, β), is replaceable by the relation of (C, γ) to (U, υ), as the maximally existent (341). In other words, the universal exponent is the transcendental operator of a world, and the core of its logical completeness. For Badiou, every world is logically complete in this way, but every world also contains the inexistent, which is nowhere exposed in the diagram, despite being "transcendentally identical" with it. A reader might compare this diagram to the schemata of the first half of this dissertation and ask what separates appropriation from traversal if their products are the same—I would remind this reader that the product of traversal, topos, is given retroactively, while the product of appropriation, schema, is given anticipatorily.

woman has already been transformed… but in being woman, she has not: hence Badiou's enduring fascination with Mallarmé's lines, "nothing will has taken place but the place" (xx).

Badiou positions this way of reading the topos as the "metaphor of the visible" in the phenomenological experience of appearance: contrary to post-Husserlian concepts of world, Badiou's phenomenology disbars the possibility of a subject which can "belong" to its world, since for him the subject arises only in the non-mathematizable world-decomposition he calls the event.[119] Events occur because the true being of worlds is infinite and multiple at every strata—they are only ever contingently counted-as-One by a transcendental operator of identity like "woman." Any such count leaves uncounted a range of elements which are included in but do not belong to that world; these Badiou calls "inexistents," which are "suspended between (ontological) being and a certain form of (logical) non-being" (*LoW*, 269). Traversal is quite literally the progress of an *enquiry* (*enquête*)[120] into a world/ly identity, which includes in its count some inexistents of that world. What Badiou does not explain is how the "universal exposition" of the enquiry is distinct from the "generic extension" of a forcing. If in *Being and Event* generic extension lies at the heart of the event's revolutionary promise, and in *Logics of Worlds* universal exposition lies at the heart of appearance's identitarian cowardice, and if the securing of one means the securing of the other, then there is no reason to say that modifications

[119] Maurice Merleau-Ponty holds that we possess a "prelogical bond" with the world, and a range of experience far beyond the world's "essential invariants" (*Visible and Invisible*, 38, 46). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology strove to set subject and object in a relationship of reflection, rather than logical priority; Badiou's phenomenology hold that this reflection *is* the object, and that worlds are purely objective, whereas the subject is entirely non-worldly.
[120] In *Being and Event* Feltham translates *enquête* as "enquiry," which I use here and elsewhere. Toscano's English translation of *Logics of Worlds* translates it as "inquiry," raising only the minor matter of US/UK spelling disagreement. Unfortunately, in the recent translation of *Immanence of Truths* by Spitzer and Reinhard, it is translated even more inconsistently, as both "investigation" and as "search" (one of many problems with that translation). I consider it essential to retain the sense of *enquête* as intentional and finalizable, i.e., something with a decisive dimension, which seems to me lost in the more open-ended senses of "search" or "investigation."

in appearance do not in themselves represent real change, nor is there reason to maintain that the inexistent could not function as the boundary of a world. We will return to this.[121]

The identity of a world is nothing but the traversal of the natural transformations of that world's purported objects *by* its identity—which endures in every possible case of morphism. When it comes to identities and the worlds in which they move, we lack the topos but are flush with homologies, in the same way that we lack the set as a proper mathematical object and yet are flush with elements.[122] But as mathematics understands, homologies can (and must) be treatable as topoi in the same way that any given element can (and must) be treatable as a set. How *do* such traversals endure, if they do not at first imply the subject which arises from them? As objective phenomenological scenes, worlds yield an "overabundance" of identity when we enquire into them, but in their commutation they must still guarantee the Leibnizian principle of the identity of indiscernibles.[123] Enquiring after the conditions for the *end* of an enquiry (after

---

[121] Just as "situation" in *Being and Event* becomes "world" in *Logics of Worlds*, I am suggesting here that "generic extension" in *Being and Event* becomes "universal exposition" in *Logics of Worlds*. Of the two schools of thought on the character of Badiou's trilogy—where in one school, each book is seen as a restatement of the same basic system, while in the other, each book is seen to fill in distinct areas of one wider system—I count myself among the former. The indiscernible of the situation, given the symbol ♀ in *Being and Event*, becomes in *Logics of Worlds* the (U, u) of the categorical topos, which in guaranteeing the logical completeness of a world denies the event; as we will explore, the question is whether in the act of forcing (forcing an extension/exposition), what had been indiscernible necessarily becomes the "transcendental operator" of identity in a post-evental world.

[122] A set cannot be formally defined, since its definition is nothing other than what it collects; of which, when viewed as a set, also cannot be defined as set (*Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*).

[123] In which Badiou finds "admirable insight about the infinite dissemination of worlds and their transcendental organization" (326). The principle of the identity of indiscernibles is usually formulated as "if, for every property F, object x has F if and only if object y has F, then x is identical to y" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Despite Leibniz's attempt to restrict the principle's application to substance alone, and more specifically to a possible substance, or "possibilia," which he thought had been actualized by God in the act of the creation of the world, the principle has come to ground logic in general. In Badiou's view, one can neither deny the identity of indiscernibles (this would be tantamount to a skeptical denial of the commutability of properties) nor deny their existence: "if there are no indiscernibles, if one must rationally revoke the indeterminate, it is because a being is internally nameable; 'For there are never two beings in nature which are perfectly alike, two beings in which it is not possible to discover an internal difference, that is, one founded on an intrinsic nomination'" (*B&E*, 319-320). But unlike Leibniz, Badiou aims to conceive of an indiscernible that is both multiple (disidentical) and generic (identical), and thus able to escape both the "constructivist" binds of language, and an absurdist nominalism in which each thing is nothing other than its name (sibilant with his critiques of the identitarian). Despite Badiou's claims that his philosophy is a "refutation" of Leibniz, for whom "every noncontradictory multiple desires to exist" (316), one

which the intra-worldly traversal of exposition becomes the extra-worldly traversal of extension) means enquiring into the end of a world: "the properly ontological examination of the question of the limits of a world presumes that it is possible to put forward hypotheses on the number of multiples contained in a world, and that this may be done, for the moment, in a manner entirely independent from the actual appearing of these multiples and thus from the identity-function which articulates them onto the transcendental of the world" (331). Badiou must admit that there comes a point at which an enquiry can only continue to be made from beyond the "resources" available within the topos; or rather, enquiry inevitably must don the identitarian contradiction rather than dissolve it, and by extension link the indiscernible with the inexistent. In so doing, the enquiring trajectory extends far beyond that into which it enquires, and detaches itself entirely from it—this, we know, is the subject, but a state of the situation, a transcendental operator, which has *become* a subject.[124]

Badiou's thinking therefore depends on two kinds of traversal. In either case, traversal proceeds by way of enquiry and constructs a subject whose appearing is wholly dissimilar to the normal appearing of objects, or that "constituent movement" that is a world's temporality, history, and the individual human being's evolving forms of identification. Any object—including the objects we are when we are not swept up into the risk of subjectivity—will be apparent only insofar as it is universally exposed to all the other possible objects in its world, and therefore only insofar as it shares with them at least one commutative relation: a shared point of inexistence, a standpoint at the farthest threshold of the world. Badiou's theory of appearance is also pertinent to his ideas about cinema, which for him is alone among the arts for being nothing

---

could paraphrase his own thesis as: every contradictory (inconsistent) multiple desires belonging (existence), even if it is "quite simply an infinite collection of names of the void which is at stake" (322). After all, as he says, "it is the names which make the thing" (510); does not the void change when it gives itself a new name?

[124] Referring to the mathematical meaning of covering, in *The Immanence of Truths* Badiou calls this "uncovering."

but an aggregation of products from those artistic fields which it is not (painting, photography, literature, opera, etc.). Just as philosophy is for Badiou the commutation of truths between the four possible subjective forms (art, science, politics and the amorous), and is for this reason incapable of producing truths of its own (*B&E*, 341), film has much the same function among the arts, and is for him a movement through what it is not (*Cinema*, 88).[125] There are for Badiou similar functions that do nothing more than articulate the transitivity of truths at the rim of each of the four kinds: film for art, mathematics for science, communism for politics, and woman for the amorous (*Conditions*). He repeatedly claims that there is nothing distinct or essential about any of them: in in the latter, for example, "woman" is said to be merely a position, a standpoint within the subject of a love from which enquiries into a world can be made. Badiou claims that "woman" is a position occupiable regardless of the biological sex or "empirical distribution" of the bodies of such a subject, and every amorous subject supposedly bears the fissure of the sexual Two, from which it derives its range and power of movement. "Man is he (or she) who does nothing (in the name) of love," while "woman is she (or he) who makes love voyage, and wants (its name) to be reiterated and renewed" (*Conditions*, 193).[126] From the entirely cisheterosexual standpoint of Badiou's writings on love, he at base believes that the possibility of an amorous encounter with the "same sex" is logically disbarred by the ontology of the pure inconsistent multiple: nowhere, he thinks, can a homological sex truly be found.[127]

[125] "Cinema […] institutes the past of the pass (*la passe*)." By this he means that films, like worlds, institute total closure upon the identity of their elements, as "when Visconti uses a Mahler symphony, all honest people have to admit that they only remember that Mahler symphony now via Visconti" (*Cinema*, 7). The implication of this view is that cinema reinforces, rather than changes, a world.

[126] "One passes—but can one 'pass'?—from one position to another."

[127] Louise Burchill links Badiou's attempts to reconcile this impossibility of the same in the generic figure of the indiscernible with Luce Irigaray, who, despite claiming that women exist in an "economy of the same" only due to patriarchal domination, insists on "defining features or irreducible givens [read: topological invariants] of sexuation" that make women similar in their difference from men ("No Longer Indifferent to Indifference"1174).

What then could Badiou's theory of amorous truth say about the kinds of lesbian voyaging "universally exposed" by Wittig's lesbian epics in the previous chapter, or by the transition of the trans subject?[128] Badiou does claim that his theory of sexual difference has something to say beyond heterosexuality and the couple form, but he tends to phrase this claim weakly, in one of two ways. In the first way, he claims that even in homosexual love the positionalities of "man and woman" persist in some way; similarly, he holds that even in non-pair or polyamorous relationships the form of Two persists, as an aggregate of couples (*LoW*, 420-421).[129] In the second way, he claims that there is no uniqueness to homosexual love at all, since once a Two forms as the subject of a love, the sexual identity and "distinct markings" of gender for those human beings involved cease to matter; like all other subjective constructions, *love's Two is an enquiry into a world, and not an enquiry into the nature or number of its own elements* (*Conditions*, 193). Badiou does not rigorously defend either of these claims—they do not seem important enough to him to be translated into the notational forms reserved what is critical for his thinking. But if we entertain his theory of sexual difference, we see that in a truly homosexual subjective construction, or one which involves a trans subject in love—in each case the amorous world would be composed of two identical and yet distinct sexuate positions, in breach of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles—nothing but pure traversal, minus any homological product, would occur.[130] Such a subject would enquire into a world without the disjunction between commutation (woman) and comparison (man): this amounts to saying that

[128] Badiou calls the epic the "fundamental art that defends the idea of a generic humanity protected by identity," and a "narrative of self-affirmation, the heroic negation of the negative" (*Cinema*, 152).
[129] Less in the sense of classical top/bottom, femme/butch reconstructions of the binary, and more in the sense that the beloved is always for the lover positionally the "woman," or the unknown, for them. See also Brilmyer, Trentin, and Xiang's article "The Ontology of the Couple." Their goal, essentially the same as Badiou's, is to "approach the Couple not as a sociological category, but as a *structure of being*, and the Queer, not as an identitarian category but as a (non)ontological position" ("Ontology of the Couple, 224).
[130] E.g., a set x which contains an element F that is "identical" to a set y that does not contain an element F.

there would be a woman beyond the world of woman and the sexual Two. Far from viewing the trans subject as non-subject, or something foundationally unable to make an enquiry, Badiou must say that this is all that the trans subject does.

### *3.5 – Intuitive Mutilation*

Before we continue, we must briefly address our usage of the word "construction," which is connotation-laden both for queer and trans theory and for the history of mathematics that Badiou deploys. Meditation Twenty-Eight of *Being and Event* describes a view he considers antithetical to his own, which he calls a "constructivist vision of being:" in this view, there can be only knowledge, and no truth, and therefore "no place for an event to take place;" "what is called 'change'" under the constructivist approach "is nothing more than the constructive deployment of (a situation's) parts" (290). Badiou aligns "constructivist mathematics," as well as "constructivism" more broadly (gesturing even to the sense of a postmodern "social construction"), with a mathematical orientation known as intuitionism—the constructivist view is for him what underpins "democratic materialism."

His concept of world is thus not intended to be "mathematical universe-ambivalent." The kinds of worlds he speaks of—"atonic worlds" in which the event is impossible, due the complete absence of points (of decision), and "tensed worlds" in which an event can be forced, due to every degree of appearance being treatable as a point (of decision) (422)—are founded on the basis of non-classical and classical logics, respectively.[131] Tensed worlds make possible the

[131] Badiou actually distinguishes three kinds of logic: "Classical logic, which admits the law of non-contradiction (¬[p and ¬p]) and the law of the excluded middle (p or ¬p); intuitionistic logic, which admits the law of non-contradiction but not the law of the excluded middle; and, finally, paraconsistent logic, which admits the law of the excluded middle but not that of non-contradiction" (*IoT*, 70). To each he ascribes a "canonical model:" set theory for classical logic, topos theory for intuitionist logic, and category theory for para-consistent logic (*LoW*, 183, 532).

occurrence of real ontological change because, as classical logic does, they enforce the law of the excluded middle: enquiry encounters at every step the "(always classical) imperative of binarity or decision" (439). Atonal worlds fail in this because, like non-classical logics, they do not enforce the law of the excluded middle: enquiry encounters only the ordinal infinity of degree, and never the cardinal infinity of disjunction, from which a subjective body can composed. But as soon as a point (of decision [591]) appears within an atonal world, the subject commences being possible: from just one point, that subject can begin to develop "organs" by which it can map, or extend/expose, its world as tensed ("point by point") (433). We might say that it is not subjects which transition, then, but worlds. Does Badiou say this? No. He says something quite different, again though the allegory of change in the triune domain:

> Recently we have witnessed the extension to sexuality of this deep desire for atony. One of the orientations of Anglo-American gender studies advocates the abolition of the woman/man polarity, considered as one of the instances—if not the very source—of the major metaphysical dualisms (being and appearing, one and multiple, same and other, etc.). To 'deconstruct' sexual difference as a binary opposition, to replace it with a quasi-continuous multiple of constructions of gender—this is the ideal of a sexuality finally freed from metaphysics. I will make no empirical objections to this view of things. I am very happy to accept that the figures of desire and the illuminations of fantasy unfold in the multiple—even if this multiple is infinitely more coded and monotonous than the deconstructors of gender suppose. My contention is simply that this infinite gradation, this return to multiple-being as such, does nothing but uphold, in the element of sex, the founding axiom of democratic materialism: there are only bodies and languages, there is no truth. In so doing, the 'world of sex' is established as an entirely atonic world. That is

> because the normative import of the difference of the sexes obviously does not lie in any biological or social imperative whatsoever. What is at stake is simply the fact that sexual duality, making the multiple appear before the Two of a choice, authorizes that amorous truths be accorded the treatment of some points. (421)

What we are calling transition stems from what he calls this "intuitionist desire" for atony.[132]

In mathematics, enquiries are distinguished as being either classical or intuitionist in their approach—Badiou is a partisan of classical mathematics, repeatedly championing axiomatizations and notational systems derived through classical methods, and always militating against intuitionist alternatives. One of the notable characteristics of intuitionist mathematics is that it denies the reality of cardinal, or inaccessible, infinities.[133] Unlike the classical mathematician, for whom mathematics is closer to a speculative process of discovery, the intuitionist mathematician views mathematics as a creative process that is nothing more than the subject's immanent engagement with mathematical thinking—by extension, intuitionism denies things like the truth of "apagogically reasoned proofs," the efficacy of argumentation via the absurd or via negation, as well as the reality of mathematical objects that cannot be comprehended by an "ideal mathematician."[134] For Badiou, intuitionism was born of the same "event-crisis" of Cantorian infinity which led to ZFC set theory, but has traversed the exact wrong path. He describes the intuitionist as she who

---

[132] Badiou does not associate intuitionism only with what has been called discourses of "gender ideology." Interestingly, he also associates it with one of the homes for criticisms of gender ideology: Lacanian psychoanalysis. In *Conditions*, Badiou devotes an essay to showing how Lacan's thinking on sexuation "went wrong" (*Conditions*, 222) precisely when it strayed into a kind of intuitionism, by ascribing to the feminine a place of infinite-but-inaccessible enjoyment, blocked by the function of the phallus. Badiou claims that the phallic function alone cannot "account for the difference of the sexes." For him, "a second function is required, the generic function, or humanity function" (227).

[133] As we know, the event for Badiou never appears as something real within a situation/world; its truth must be forced, in a manner he likens to the production-by-diagonalization of a cardinal infinity.

[134] The founder of intuitionism, L.E.J. Brouwer, called this the "Creative Subject." See Section 4.5.

> *[mistakes] the route* in trying to apply back onto ontology criteria of connection which come from elsewhere, and especially from a doctrine of mentally effective operations. […] However complex a mathematical proposition might be, if it is an affirmative proposition it comes down to declaring the existence of a pure form of the multiple. All the 'objects' of mathematical thought—structures, relations, functions, etc.—are nothing in the last instance but species of the multiple. The famous mathematical 'intuition' can do no more than control, via propositions, the connection-multiples between multiples. (*B&E*, 249, italics mine)

And yet, Badiou's justifications for his having sided with a "classical mathematics is ontology" position over an "intuitionist mathematics is ontology" position have not only been inconsistent but have weakened over time. In a 2007 interview with Tzuchien Tho, he insists that "the logic of being qua being remains classical. There is no contradiction between the fact that the logic of pure being (given in *Being and Event*) remains classical and the logic of the localization or the logic of appearing (given in *Logics of Worlds*) can be non-classical." As Tho points out, for Badiou logic and mathematics had up until then been described as "stratified realms," where "mathematics pertain[s] to being-as-such and logic pertains to 'consistent discourse'" ("New Horizons," 1)—something akin to a mathematics = ontology/being, logic = ontic/existence stance. In *Briefings on Existence*, the work he published between *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*, logic begins to subsume his idea of mathematics-as-ontology, rather than supplement it. There, he suggests that it is logic, not mathematics, which is "set exactly in the interval between Being's equivocity and the constructible univocity in regard to which this equivocity is a sign." Logic is that which "indicates the direction according to which discourse may constructively cross the void between the equivocal and univocal" (*Briefings*, 157). To state that "the logic of

being qua being remains classical" is to already be transported into a certain "localization," and hence a discourse of appearing, and not pure being. When Badiou claims to "distinguish between the theory of multiplicity as such and a theory of multiplicity localized in a transcendental of a world," he distinguishes his position from an intuitionist one by saying that "the intuitionist is attached to concrete experience because they work within the context of […] an intuitionistic world. Instead, pure being or pure multiplicity is necessarily in a classical world" ("New Horizons," 4). To speak of pure being—the inconsistent multiple—as a "world" at all represents, in my view, a confusion of his own terminology.

For example, in *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou uses Heyting algebra to formalize the notion of the worldly "envelope," or the boundary of a topos. As he admits, his notion of the "transcendental" (both atonal and tensed worlds possess a transcendental operator) is a complete Heyting algebra, renamed (*LoW,* 537). He calls this algebra a "categorial reformulation of logic," but this is not quite accurate: in truth it is an intuitionist reformulation of logic—he fails to mention that Heyting *was* an intuitionist—which makes category theory possible. As Lucca Fraser summarizes in "Law of the Subject," Heyting algebra generalizes classical, or Boolean algebra, which can be viewed as a Heyting algebra which satisfies the law of the excluded middle. In Boolean algebra, the fundamental or irreducible unit is the singleton, which had been essential to Badiou's notational demonstration of the concept of "situation" in *Being and Event*; in Heyting algebra, any element can be treated as fundamental or irreducible (or treated as the "generic" of Cohen's forcing procedure), giving us a novel image of ontologization (Kripke, "Analysis of Intuitionistic Logic," 119/20). As Fraser shows, against Badiou's accusation of non-classical worlds lacking the possibility of decision, Saul Kripke proved the decidability of functions within Heyting algebra in 1965, just a few years after Cohen's proof of forcing (Fraser,

"Law of the Subject," 94). Badiou never mentions this. As a result, his selection of one logical grounding over any other appears more and more as an aesthetic preference, rather than a choice inevitable for thought (Tasić, "Badiou's Logics").

Still, Badiou describes intuitionism as "a mutilation, pure and simple" (*IoT*, 71/72)—a claim that carries a different weight when we consider that accusation's resonances for the trans subject and its writing. In his view, this is a mutilation always of some subjective body which might appear as a rupture in the constructible universe, which for him is nothing other than the ideological universe as we know it: a collection of "those things that are already subjected to the dominant language" and those which are "definable immanently." In any universe of the constructivists, "new" constructions can be built only out of "what your world already knows, has already named, organized, experienced. That is indeed the structure of a dominant ideology, as the general preservation of the system in the register of subjective submission: it only tolerates operations on what is well defined and known to everyone in the language that it uses to name things and hierarchize them" (214). We must hear here, as well, the common materialist feminist accusation of transition: that in assuming one can "conform" oneself to a momentarily naturalized array of properties deemed determinate of sex and gender, one actually strengthens that naturalization.[135] Badiou's hostility to intutionism has more recently shifted to a kind of sympathetic pathologizing: intuitionist mathematics is at once that which has "tempted" mathematicians into the "intellectual reactionism" of constructivism, and at the same time an occasionally useful tool in "delaying" the "shift to antagonism" that classical logic eventually

[135] See *Material Girls*, Kathleen Stock, and the aforementioned work by Federici, who, while she acknowledges denaturalization and bodily transformation as an act of resistance against capitalism's desire to transform the body into labour power, is critical of "the trans movement," which she says is "strongly committed to a constructivist view of gender identities, as many undergo costly and dangerous surgeries and medical treatments in order to transition to a different gender" (*Periphery*, 50). Her recommendation is to instead prevent the "regulatory" power of "doctors' knives" (51).

requires, which for him is decision (*IoT,* 72). Currently, Badiou admits of intuitionist and para-consistent logic as stop-gap measures in the face of a decision, the final say of which he still restricts to the "yes or no" of classical logic, rather than the "closer to yes than no" of para-consistent logic or the "yes and no" of intuitionist logic. In *Immanence of Truths* even intuitionist mutilation comes to be described as a part of the "triplicity" of logic, as a part of the "full image" of the "fate of humanity." Importantly, this shift occurs for the third time in his trilogy only as he approaches the truth particular to the form of the loving subject (118/119).

### *3.6 – Immanent Traversal*

The subject is a topos. Among its truths, the subject counts love, wherein sex and gender become decidable. Let us apply these claims. In, for example, the case of facial feminization surgery (FFS)—a series of reconstructive procedures that aim to make a trans woman's face more consistently recognizable as that of a woman—a topological situation of the body is indeed laid out "point by point": the surgeon shows the subject where bone needs to be shaved away, where scalp tends to need to be refitted, and why this or that approach is better than others when it comes to ensuring that one is perceived as what one truly is. As Eric Plemons says,

> first considered by patients and operating surgeons as an auxiliary procedure in support of the 'real' change of sex enacted by genital surgery, now patients who undergo FFS and the surgeons who perform it assert that […] FFS itself transforms patients' bodily sex. To claim that facial reconstruction enacts a change of sex is to posit a model of sex […] that departs significantly from the mid-twentieth-century model upon which the diagnosis of transsexualism was developed and its genital-centric surgical treatments established. Divorced from

> an essentialist logic that fixes the truth of sex in discrete anatomical forms, the transformative efficacy of FFS doesn't take place in the closed space of the operating room, nor is it located in the discrete and individual body of the patient herself. Instead FFS works when others recognize and respond to a postoperative patient's face as the face of a woman. (Plemons, *The Look of a Woman*, 2)

What is the thinking behind this historicization of transition? There is often an "old model" to which the "new model" stands as successor, as in Plemons' view of the space FFS has carved out for itself as central among the decisions of the trans subject.[136] In the "old model," there was a localization of certain primary sites for sex's capacity for change, listed in ordinal sequence, descending through other locales of lesser effect or urgency; the expectation is that one will traverse these locales linearly.[137] In the "new model," localization has multiplied—discarding the "essentialist logic" of ordinality and its "discrete" formalization of the body; the expectation is that one's traversal will be open-ended, infinite, and adaptable to the taste, desire, and intuition of the trans subject, and who creates these sites for themselves.[138]

In FFS and other practices of transition, cis embodiment often is considered a model for the trans subject. In his early work *The Concept of Model*, Badiou throws into question the very idea of "model": he reminds us that "the concept of model does not designate an outside to be formalized, but a mathematical material to be tested" (Badiou, *Concept of Model*, 47). This does not just mean that the model is always distinct from what it models, but that models survive,

[136] The reception of the rise of FFS as a "core" component of medicalized transition has interestingly received the most critique from with communities of trans people and trans scholars (Ashley and Ells, "Facial Feminization").
[137] In the parlance of the 90's and early 2000's, this was usually called a "roadmap," and more recently, a key diagnostic for what has been critiqued as "transmedicalism," or "translegalism," or any other conception of transition as a finite and institutionally-prescribed process.
[138] Take for example the spate of subscription-service HRT delivery start-ups of recent years, who offer CSA-style access to a fully customizable transition pathway: apps and services like Solace, Folx, Trace, Plume, etc.

change, and are created only through their own complexification. "The problem is that of the history of formalization. 'Model' designates the network (*réseau*) traversed by the retroactions and anticipations that weave this history: whether it be designated, in anticipation, as break (*coupure*), or in retrospect, as remaking (*refonte*)" (55). Even at the beginning of his thinking, it is the mathematical topology behind the concept of model that interests Badiou: his diagnosis of its "artifice of variants" takes the form of a "musical metaphor: these discourses are the variations on a theme which is not given (which does not figure amidst the variations, nor in the head, nor elsewhere)" (8). We encounter a similar diagnosis much later, in *Logics of Worlds*, where Badiou gives his clearest distinction between being and appearing:

> Ontological identity does not entail any difference with itself, nor any degree of difference with regard to another. A pure multiple is entirely identified by its immanent composition, so that it is meaningless to say that it is 'more or less' identical to itself. If it differs from an other, […] it differs absolutely. […] [But] a being, once worlded, is and is not what it is, and since it differs from those beings which, in an identical manner, are of its world, it follows that differences (and identities) in appearing are a matter of more or less. The logic of appearing necessarily regulates degrees of difference, of a being with respect to itself and of the same with respect to others. (Badiou, *LoW*, 117-8)

Badiou felt that *Being and Event* did not fully address the way multiple-being exists in a situation/world as something counted-as-One—the One is, after all, the only consistency for which the Event could be a radical change. He thought that *Being and Event's* "metaontological" project needed, in a sense, a "metaontic" accompaniment, which *Logics of Worlds* would provide, principally by establishing an "objective phenomenology." The first principle of

objective phenomenology is that "every atom of appearing is real," even if that atom appears only through an impure consistency attained by the count of intraworldly identity and difference (196, 537). Despite the shift in terminological and mathematical armature between *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*, one thing remains unchanged: Badiou's recourse to figures of the triune domain, and especially of Woman, as explanatory analogies.

Woman simultaneously connects and divides Badiou's ontology, functioning as supplement and rupture: in his phenomenology, she is both what fails to appear and what is exemplary of appearing. In his ontology, she is the condition of possibility for the event, the forcing of a generic indiscernible within a situation—this indiscernible is symbolized through the customary icon of the female sex, ♀. In *Logics of Worlds* the category-theoretical topology of being-there (the "logic of appearing") is analogized through a "feminine world:" Paul Dukas and Maurice Maeterlinck's opera *Ariadne and Bluebeard*. Badiou opposes therein the rebellious Ariadne's feminine "true-being" to the docile femininity of Bluebeard's other five subservient wives, and also to the wordless figure of a character of questionable femininity, named Alladine (137, 116). Here we see most clearly how Badiou is in invested in two kinds of Woman: a true and a false Woman, which cannot but appear as a neighbour to distinctions between cis and trans womanhood. By investigating Badiou's figuration of Woman, we can not only unsettle his patrician ideas about sex and gender but also argue for their paradoxical utility for a trans theory that would reclaim a discourse of the ontological for its thinking.

The 1907 Dukas opera adapts a play by Maeterlinck that stands in a long line of interpretations of the Bluebeard story, which are usually traced back textually to Charles Perrault's 17th century anthologization of even earlier oral tales (Suschitzky, "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," 133). In Perrault's version, Bluebeard is a profligate aristocrat whose previous wives

have disappeared, and his newest wife comes to discover that they have all been murdered, with their bodies having been hidden in a series of secret rooms in the castle. After the final wife traverses, with increasing horror, the nested doors and abattoirs of the castle, her brothers arrive to kill Bluebeard and rescue her. In the Dukas/Maeterlinck version, however, the final wife, Ariadne, goes to the castle already knowing its true nature.[139] This time the five wives preceding her—Mélisande, Sélysette, Ygraine, Bellangère and Alladine—have not been murdered, but are imprisoned in the pitch darkness of a forbidden treasure vault in the keep. Ariadne eventually frees them from the vault and overthrows her husband (with the help of a peasant uprising), but despite their newfound freedom, the other wives refuse to abandon Bluebeard and decide to stay with him. Alladine does not make a decision, because she is silent. Only Ariadne leaves.

Badiou's detour through this opera is essential to his formalization of the transcendental operator of identity discussed previously in this chapter. For him, a transcendental "designates the constitutive capacity of every world to assign to what abides there, in that world, variable intensities of identity vis-à-vis what also abides there" (Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 596). Multiple-being only *appears* (women appear, in this case) only insofar as the multiple has been indexed to some transcendental (as Woman), to a "scale of degrees" of difference-to-others and sameness-to-oneself that make possible the complex logical relations of disjunction, conjunction, and dependency between those degrees (119). It is thanks to this logical ordering of the multiple that an "ontological rank" becomes manifest, such that every transcendental makes visible in its world a minimum (the semi-existent, that which has the least existence/appearance), a maximum (that which exists/appears absolutely, in an excess of appearance), and an envelope (that which stabilizes the closure of the world: for us, that which is inexistent/does not appear in its world,

[139] Whose namesake in Greek mythology was adapted from an earlier Minoan goddess, known as the "Mistress of the Labyrinth" (Christopher Francese, "Ariadne," 97).

another name for the indiscernible) (112). But for Badiou, *Ariadne and Bluebeard* concerns freedom as much as identity: as he says, the opera is "essentially about […] the fact that it is not enough for freedom to be (in this case under the name and the acts of Ariadne), but that freedom must also appear" (115). This is no unsexed freedom of a "generic humanity," however. In Badiou's reading, it is the darkness of the vault in which Bluebeard's wives are trapped that stands for appearance: the vault is their "world" and thus the only place they are women. It is from this vault that we hear the wives sing their collective "phenomenal song" before they are seen on stage.[140] "Becoming a woman" means ending up in this vault of identity, the only place from which the song can be heard. If Ariadne's opening of the vault at the climax of the opera strives for an "ascent towards the light and something like the manifestation of a becoming manifest of being, a vibrant localization of being-free in the palace of servitude," she cannot make the other women see that their new freedom is ontologically real, a part of their very being (116). Unlike the presentation of being in itself, in representation, which is the objective phenomenology of worldly topology, "there is no infinite ascension towards the light of being-there" (139). One either appears or one does not.

Ariadne fails to intervene in this world, Badiou thinks, because she does not make the dominant term, its transcendental, apparent. But what is this term really? It cannot be the literal figure of domination—Bluebeard, Man—since the conjunction of Ariadne with him is "incomparable" to his conjunction with each of the other wives; these two subsets occupy and reveal different envelopes of the world. Badiou instead says "this dominant term is femininity as such, the unstable dialectical admixture of servitude and freedom" (133). Ariadne's presence as a "real woman," her "true-being" shorn of appearance, "interrupts the series of feminine fates," but

[140] "Phenomenal song" is a technical term for diegetic singing in opera (Suschitsky, 133).

cannot change it (115). Her song at the end of the opera, in which she begs the other women to leave the castle with her, is cast by Badiou as a "femininity-song" in contrast to the phenomenal song, as if one could hear in its melody the transcendental organization of the vault. Unlike the diegetic song of Bluebeard's wives, Ariadne's threnody is non-diegetic. As Badiou points out, in the staging of the opera Ariadne is made so hypervisible during the femininity-song (it is a notoriously long and difficult part to sing) that the song "detaches itself" from her. Between "those who subjectively have nothing in common with Ariadne, who make up her exterior, her absolutely heterogeneous feminine 'ground,'" and "the new feminine world" that Ariadne points to in her imperatives of disobedience and flight, all of these women remain enveloped by the feminine, which is "merely the captive repetition of their own there-identity, the scattered material for a global supremacy" (137, 140).

Badiou is not the first to unearth a retrograde feminism in this opera.[141] But the crucial point is that in his system, since Ariadne is the maximum of this world, she must have a reverse that is the minimum of the world. Who or what is this minimum, the near-inexistent, nil degree of woman, whose very proximity to invisibility is made visible? It is not Mélisande, Sélysette, Ygraine, or Bellangère—in Badiou's phenomenology everything that appears appears maximally, and though "less true" than Ariadne, all of them appear under the same operator: hence why Ariadne fails in her quest to share with the wives who decide to stay her "truer," freer female sex. According to Badiou, the actual minimum, and Ariadne's actual reverse, is Alladine. Alladine is the only one of the five wives who does not speak—hers is a mime role in the opera. Her identity as woman is thus constitutively different from the others, both essentially included of the feminine world, and on the verge of absorption into its envelope as an element which does

[141] See Suschitzky and Austin B. Caswell, in "A Feminist Opera?"

not belong. What then is the reverse of Alladine? It is not, as one might think, Ariadne again.[142] "The reverse is what is maximally 'alien' to what is given, the synthesis of what is entirely exterior to it" (593). It is "the degree of appearance of a being-there in a world, the envelope of the region of the world constituted by all the beings-there whose conjunction with the first takes the value of zero (the minimum)" (136). The reverse of Alladine, since she is the boundary of Woman, is not the figure that traverses that boundary, Ariadne, but the boundary itself.

Through his notation of the reversal of the reversal, Badiou shows that Alladine's reverse is the inaccessible transcendental operator of the femininity-song, the appearance of Woman and boundary of her world, at the cusp of which Alladine is barely visible as female. This is why, for Badiou, conflict and change within appearance has "nothing to do with an immanent dialectic between being and being-there, or between essence and existence" (151). Ariadne the "true woman" and Alladine the "false woman" are not opposed in themselves: they are opposed by and to a world. This is also why he considers so moving the moment in which Ariadne embraces Alladine at the closure of the opera, both of them helpless to be anything other than what they are: "the conjunction of Ariadne and her reverse Alladine is reduced to mere tears, the nothingness of all affirmation" (168). Alladine cannot speak and thus cannot even answer Ariadne when she asks her if she desires her freedom. In Badiou's conception of this irreducibly feminine world, the question "do you want to be free?" also means "do you want to be a woman?" and "do you want to exist?" It is no coincidence that when Ariadne tries to sell

[142] Badiou claims that in category theory logical reversal does not function like negation does in classical logic, as a transitive relation. "The reverse does not have all the properties of classical negation. In particular, the reverse of the reverse of a degree of appearance is not necessarily identical to that degree" (107). See Section 3.5.

Alladine on the promise of what lies outside the castle, it is described as "the blue countryside" and "the vaults of azure"—that inescapable shade of the beard of the lord of Orlamonde (121).[143]

Badiou reads a painting by Hubert Robert, *The Bathing Pool*, where this same blue continues its traversal of the feminine: in this painting a group of women in various stages of undress lounge in the water near a ruin which includes a statue of a man whose genitals are obscured by cloth. They are encircled by columns of that sfumato blue which symbolized for Ariadne her freedom, a "vague" blue (205-211).

*Figure 8:* "The Bathing Pool"

Whereas Badiou concluded that in the world of *Ariadne and Bluebeard* "woman semi-exists" because of the non-relation between Ariadne and Alladine, he decides that in Robert's world, the non-relation of the lone male statue among the women bathing means that "without a doubt, the

[143] The name of Bluebeard's castle in Maeterlink's version, Orlamonde, resonates orally with Badiou's sense of a worldly envelope, or infinite boundary: "*hors*" being the term for "outside," or "exterior," "*la*" meaning "there" or "place," and "*monde*" translating to "world."

masculine sex inexists" therein (184, 209). This time the minimum of a "feminine world" is not the most invisible woman, the least-woman, as Alladine had been taken to be, but instead the statue with its "veiled organ," the least-man, who somehow is "not displaying the masculine sex" differently from the ways the "non-masculine" elements of the painting (the blue columns, the blue water, the blue discarded clothing) fail to display it. Yet no reason is given for Badiou's decision that *this* is a painting-world girded by inexistent maleness while *that* was an opera-world girded by semi-existent femaleness. Couldn't Alladine's subordination to the envelope make her a masculine element, rather than feminine one? Why does the statue's veiled organ function as the dominant term in the painting, while the women's veiled organs do not? One is veiled by stone, the other by water—both are veiled by what they are: paint. We do not hear the pitch of Alladine's voice, that feature so often the determinate of whether the trans subject passes as one sex or another. In every world—in every encounter with the trans subject—the undecidable is decided upon.

My intention is not to chastise Badiou for some unconscious transphobia in his decisions, even if he has quipped about "transsexualism" being akin to "homeopathy" (*Saint Paul*, 13).[144] Rather, I want to suggest that the way Badiou views the ontological status of changes in appearance as radically "up to our decision" yields a phenomenology which evades some of the traps that trans theory repeatedly finds itself caught in—by digging even more deeply into them. If one decides to position the reality of sex and gender purely within appearance, one ends up with a tautological performativity. If one decides to position the reality of sex and gender purely within being-in-itself, one ends up with a tautological insistence. Badiou instead decides that a change to Woman, as a change to the being of an amorous subject, occurs within being-qua-

[144] To be precise, Badiou mocks the "cultural-marginal-homeopathic-media-friendly transsexual" alongside a host of supposedly "postmodern" ("democratic materialist") identity positions.

being *and* within being-there-as-appearance, in a kind of vertical symmetry.[145] The possibility remains open that Alladine and Ariadne *are* the same thing—women—without appearing to one another as such. The decision that Badiou makes between the opera and the painting is the same one that must be made between Ariadne and Alladine, and between what we might call cis and trans articulations of womanhood—this, I contend, is a sexual Two, a "true" sexual difference, that Badiou's binarity gives us the model of but fails to extend. Cis subject, trans subject, enquiring into the same triune domain: two identical multiples, which, in deciding against the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, *remain* decidably two. Is such an idea incompatible with the requirements of Badiou's system?

> The postulate of materialism ('every atom is real') requires that the 'it's one' be sustained by some one-that-is (*un-qui-est*). It will not be in vain to refer to it as the unease (*l'inquiet*), to the extent that it is indeed there where logic draws its consistency from the onto-logical that thought can enter into its most fecund unease (*in-quiétude*) (the one-who-studies [*l'un-qui-étudie*])." (Badiou, *LoW*, 219)

In *Logics of Worlds* Badiou affirms that it is only by viewing the forced and real consistency of phenomenal appearance as our lone egress and ingress on being, which also means taking seriously the mathematics as well as the arbitrariness of who counts and is counted as a woman, and that the conditions for radical change can truly arise.

What passes between Alladine and Ariadne in their farewell embrace is an uneasiness with this fact: traversing their world, following the demarcating line that gives the transcendental of inclusion and exclusion as it separates woman from not-woman, can make one fecund,

[145] To repeat, this is the idea that a "phenomenal" alteration is not simply a sign of a "noumenal" alteration, but *in itself is* that transformation in, or is decidably so. Fabio Gironi has explored a similar concept from the perspective of analytic philosophy and describes it as akin to an "ontic structural realist" perspective, in which "there is nothing to know but structures" (*Naturalizing Badiou*, 93).

pregnant, with the necessity of change. Ariadne's and Alladine's traversals point in different directions—Ariadne's leads out of the castle, and Alladine's leads into its bowels—but in each case, they head into the same blue, the same azure. There seems to me no better way to articulate the properly ontological dimension of transness and cisness as decisions for the possibility of radical change: a cleavage in our enquiry; "thought that has entered fecund unease."

### *3.7 – Two Amorous Worlds*

Badiou's account of "amorous truth" is not just supposed to explain how love, sexuality, and sexual difference are possible, but also to explain how the humanity of the subject in any of its truths is possible. We have already gestured to the elisions of Badiou's theory—his attempts to dismiss non-cisheteronormative modes of loving, desiring, and differing on the basis of sex, and his silence on the place of transness among the four truth procedures. Is there even a place in his system for the trans subject and its transition given his anti-identitarian commitments? If so, where, given that transness clearly has at the same time aesthetic, scientific, and political dimensions? My answer to this question is yes: the trans subject does have a place, and it is in the amorous event. I suggest that Badiou's "sexual Two"—what he insists is a binary of "male" and "female" positions—can be retained *only if the Two in question can be understood to be a binary of cis and trans positionality*.

> Badiou says in *Logics of Worlds* that he stands
>
> between psychoanalytic pessimism, on one hand, and neo-religious recuperation, on the other, while maintaining (as they both do) that to think love is a major task, and a difficult one. What sets me apart from the first is that I think it is entirely inexact to treat love as though it belonged to the order of failure; from the second,

> that my approach to love is not at all spiritual, but formal. What we need to invent is something like a mathematics of love, without thereby falling into the infinite classifications of Fourier, who only envisages a universal erotic order. (463)

This brief reference to Charles Fourier occurs in a footnote to the sections of *Logics of Worlds* where Badiou develops the idea of amorous truth he first proposed in *Being and Event*. For Badiou, "the world of an amorous truth […] makes appear an absolute Two, a profound incompatibility, an energetic separation" which he notates as "$m \perp f$: there is no relation between the sexes" (73). "Far from 'naturally' regulating the supposed relation between the sexes, love is what makes truth of their un-binding (*dé-liaison*)" (*Conditions*, 187). Here we encounter the strange exception that Badiou grants the amorous subject, which we discussed above in relation to the broader question of identity: for him, "the difference of the sexes serves as the support which makes it possible for a subjective formalism to amorously take hold of a body that an encounter has brought forth into the world—in a manner that is entirely independent of the empirical sex of those who commit themselves to it" (*LoW*, 423). How is it that those individuals who encounter one another in/as a loving subject can have an "empirical sex," prior to the encounter, and how can this sex bear any kind of relation, even if one of independence, to the "difference of the sexes" which goes on to "support" the binary sexuating event that for Badiou "takes hold of the body" of that subject?[146]

The contradiction that amorous truth affirms is the possibility that two completely disjunctive beings can share some property known to (and counted by) neither, "an indiscernible

[146] In contrast, Badiou's conception of political truth explicitly denies that any "empirical ideology," say, distributed differentially among individuals swept up into the subjective formalism a political body, could ever "support" that body. Unlike the "amorous body," which is constitutively cloven by sexuation, the "political body that carries a new subject, […] creating, through the consequences of its act, a new truth" (503) is unsupported (and unsupportable) by any symmetrical "empirical" relations already given to individuals, as sex and gender are.

part of their existence" (*B&E*, 340)—i.e., "sex." "The event (the amorous encounter) triggers the upsurge of a scene of the Two, encapsulated in the statement that these two species have something in common, a 'universal object' in which they both participate. […] 'There exists *u* such that *m* and *f* participate in *u.*'[147] […] No one knows what this *u* is, only its existence is affirmed—this is the famous and manifest contingency of the amorous encounter. The body which comes to be constituted is thus a bi-sexed body, tied together by the enigmatic *u*" (*LoW*, 30). Badiou attempts to clarify that despite his chosen lettering for these subject positions, *m* is not necessarily the place of man, nor *f* necessarily the place of a woman; they "could just as well be called something else" (*Philosophy and the Event*, 63). "No empirical, biological or social distribution is acceptable" in the identification of these two positions, he says, and "the fact that there will have been two positions can only be established retroactively," after the end of a love (*Conditions*, 183).[148] But a love for him *is* always comprised of an *m* and an *f* positionality—"nothing in the experience is the same from the position of man or from that of woman"—and these two positions, whatever may fill them, remain "purely disjunctive" before, during, and after the event.[149] What, then, does this event change?

---

[147] Compare to Badiou's notation of identity: "the degree of identity between two beings x and y, conjoined to the degree of identity between y and z remains bound by the identity between x and z" (203). What appears as the pre-evental "mere appearance" of identity in politics is, in love, a post-evental "ontological truth" given by sex.

[148] As Burchill notes, "Biology may well […] not furnish a criterion by which the sexuate positions can be distributed universally, but biological bodies, as distinguished by the "differential trait[s]" that they bear, would seem to correspond—'fairly often' at least—to the nominal positions love attributes retrospectively to the individuals taken up in its process. The position 'woman' would, in short, be occupied by and large by women, the position 'man' by and large by men. […] This is the reason Badiou stipulates that nothing on the level of sexed being has any pertinence for the definition of categories of sexual difference. Bodies outside of love are sexually neutral, as it were, completely enclosed in their singular narcissistic sphere or 'brute animal sexuality'" (Burchill, 1177).

[149] Despite the heterosexual values he repeatedly gives to these formalisms and their allegorizations, Badiou claims that queer modes of desire can still by accounted for by his thought: in fact, he says, desire in the amorous encounter is always homosexual, but only in the sense of a masturbatory attraction to one's own position within the disjunction. For him, this is the case even if a "couple" is empirically heterosexual; in the amorous encounter, "the heterosexuality of love pass[es] through the homosexuality of desire." As Brian O'Keefe has shown, though, this is no rebuttal: Badiou still insists that there is a "so-called 'heterosexual' desire and pleasure" that is "universal" (O'Keefe, "Being in the World," 36), but thinks that it, as well as homosexual desire, is properly an instance of amorous truth only if traversed by love, which is, in each case, heterosexual.

In truth, the *m* and *f* positions are nothing but two different counting functions for the multiple: a "for every x, Φ(x)" for man, and a "not every x Φ(x)" for woman (212). They are two modes of enquiry. Badiou describes these opposed enquiries in various ways. He says that "the position man supports the split of the Two, an in-between where the void of the disjunction is fixed," while "the position woman makes the Two endure in wandering" (194). He says that "the feminine representation of humanity is at once conditional and knotting, which authorizes a more complete perception and […] a more direct right to inhumanity; whereas the masculine representation of humanity is at once symbolic and separative, which may incur some indifference, but also a greater ability to conclude" (197). He says "for the male position, *each [truth] metaphorizes the others*, this metaphor meriting the immanent affirmation, in each type, of humanity;" "for the woman position, love […] *knots the four [truths] together*, and that it is only as conditioned by love that H, that is, humanity, exists as a general configuration" (196-7). In Badiou's eyes, "it is the amorous relationship," a temporary hiatus in the divergence of these two enquiries, "which refers, at the most sensitive point of individual experience, to the dialectic of being and event" (*B&E*, 232). Love is an encounter, but not with those who are "in" love—it is their encounter, as a Two, with a world, where the Two's enquiring can begin. Love's encounter ends, he says, as soon as the loving subject itself becomes countable (*Conditions*, 189), but for so long as the Two restrains its to its world, its being extends/exposes infinitely in the amber suspension of evental romance.

So, why the need to so pointedly distance himself from Charles Fourier? The French utopian, known best for his influence on Marx's theory of alienation, was described by Karl Grün as the "mathematical socialist" of his time (*Communism and Utopia*, 221). As the pre-eminent "mathematical communist" of our time, Badiou's footnote likely had in mind Fourier's

*Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux*, which extended the eccentric thinker's proposed utopian society, "Harmony," into the blueprinting of sexual relations and sex's place in society and labour. The text describes a scene of the amorous in which love is a compound sentimental and sexual encounter that provides humanity with formulae for the composition of Harmony's various social orders; this, Fourier thought, would disalienate love from the productive capacities of the subject, to which it was the very engine. Badiou characterizes Fourier's attempt to mathematize love as limitless in its infinity and limited in its fixation on the erotic (*LoW*, 530). To the contrary, though, Fourier is always entertainingly precise about the exact structures of divisibility he latches upon in the field of the amorous. For example, Fourier supposed there to exist exactly 810 distinct kinds of personality, correlating in different degrees to what he thought were 12 basic desires (*Utopian Vision*, 39). For him, there were eight possible intensities of love, from those familiar to us, such as monogamous and unrequited love, and on to those not-yet-realized, such as "ultragamous" and "omnigamous" love, each split into a sentimental and erotic forms (366). He held there to be six types of sexually desiring and loving beings, the bulk of which were comprised of "damsels," who engage in loves both compound (a mixture of sentiment and eroticism) and simple (merely one or the other). Alongside them stand "vestals," who abstain from love, "heroes/heroines," who seek it out, "genies," who donate it, "faeries," who play matchmaker with the desires of lovers, and "priests/priestesses," who play accountant to the prices and rewards of making and breaking amorous attachments.[150] He makes clear that each of these positionalities could in principle be occupied by either sex, but just as Badiou tends to claim that his disjunctive sexuate positions *m* and *f* just happen "fairly often" fit the inclinations

[150] At different points in Fourier's composition of the text, these roles are given different names, such as fakirs rather than genies, adventurers instead of heroes/heroines, and pontiffs/matrons instead of priests/priestesses.

of men, in the first position, and women, in the second (*Philosophy of the Event*, 62), Fourier admitted the general tendency for men to be heroes, and women damsels, etc.—fairly often.

Fourier's plans for Harmony were no doubt erotically fixated, but always simultaneously aimed toward a more general ethics. The "vice" of cuckoldry, for example, was for him severe enough to be articulable into fourty-nine distinct varieties, each ranked in their sinfulness according to his own ordinal system, but the criminality of cuckoldry lay entirely in its dependence on a deception, an affront to the "sacred flame" that the entire structure of Harmony's amorous world was supposed to guard: truth, and truth-telling (362).[151] The ways one might breach the commitments implied by any loving liaison derived from Fourier's complex axiomatics were each counted and weighed differently, and infidelities were always in principle convertible to other systems of number in the amorous order: damsels were allowed exactly seven infidelities, but seven infidelities bore the same weight as three infidelities and one inconstancy, and a homosexual affair only counted as half an infidelity, as did affairs which last no more than three days (367).[152] Far from being inborn traits, though, for Fourier "everyone [would] be assigned to the exact rank that his behavior merits" (373), and Harmonians would, he thought, frequently change their position within the hierarchy, just as he thought his utopian workers would change their occupations every two hours to preserve a "passionate attraction" to their labour (231).[153] Fourier aimed to perfect and link commodity consumption and production by arranging people in what he called a "passionate series," or "phalanx," for example grouping those who love to eat bread in couples relative to their disagreements over the amounts of salt they take with it, or the sizes they tear a loaf into. This way, disagreements with the specific

[151] "The Bantering Cuckold," "the Fatalistic or Resigned Cuckold," "the Regenerating or Conservative Cuckold," "the Cuckold for His Health," and so on.
[152] If one conducted exactly twenty-seven homosexual affairs of less than three days, then, one would be just fine.
[153] The price of a breach was expulsion from one's role, or a "demotion," such as from damsel back to adventurer.

tastes of another would enflame one's own tastes, creating immutable and measurable chains of production and demand. He believed "the passionate series must be *contrasted, interlocked*, and kept in a state of *rivalry* and *exaltation*" (230), treated like an active but friendly battleground, if unfriendly battle and true disaccord within humanity were to be avoided. Like Badiou, Fourier saw the multiple as inconsistent, ever-divisible, in principle always countable and orderable, but also always open to the event of change (228-9).

Badiou's disidentification with Fourier betrays an anxiety with the open-ended creativity made possible by mathematization of love, sex, and identity. If one truly thinks one can axiomatize the amorous, why is another array of axioms not permissible?[154] Why "decide" upon one, and traverse its implications, over another? At least in part, Burchill suggests, because "Badiou decries the [idea of] multiple gender positions" (Burchill, 1173) even as he claims to be a partisan *of* the multiple. As we have seen, Badiou believes that there does exist an incontrovertible "factical" sexual duality, a binary "material marking" distributed among humans that is "radically nontransitive" (1182) (i.e., not open to change, even if its positioning can change). He often calls this an example of the necessary "polarization" of the multiple (*Conditions*, 281; *LoW*, 483). But whereas the polarizations of political, scientific, and artistic truth eventually come to be radically transformed (even if in the case of the political the class polarity has been particularly long-lived), that of amorous truth remains split by an unchangeably "sexual" Two. The objections of those who appeal to the overwhelming material and conceptual diversity of primary and secondary sex characteristics and the socio-sexual identities which have taken them up throughout human history and cultures—their decisions for their Two; or their decision against the Two (which itself repeats its logic)—can only be viewed by him as banal.

[154] See Note 99.

But Burchill has shown that Badiou has turned toward a view in which "truth processes can no longer be considered as indifferent to sexual difference," where "'woman' qua a category of sexed being or a sexuate position would now accede to the status of a subjective body-of-truth;" after this turn, Badiou scholarship would have to think the distinctiveness of a category like woman: "a woman coresponsible for an amorous passion, a woman artist, a woman mathematician or physicist, or, even, a woman philosopher?" (Burchill, 1166) Needless to say, such a turn would require him to forfeit his anti-identitarian stance in which a claim like "only a homosexual can 'understand' what a homosexual is" is for him a philosophically "catastrophic statement" (*Saint Paul*, 13).

Both Badiou's and Fourier's fascinations with the intersection of love and number may seem equally absurd, especially to those who would claim to free or subtract sex and gender from the modelling of any metaphysics whatsoever, let alone to those who would cleave to a traditional and conservative metaphysics, whether scientific or religious. But can Badiou and Fourier's intersection ever *fail* to be locatable? To say that the amorous can evade numericity, as we saw in the case of Wittig, seems inadequate. Despite Badiou's frustrating inability to think beyond cis-heteronormativity, his thought retains an attraction for those who would grapple with both the productive errancy of identity and the constructive erotics of the identical, which, as Badiou puts it, "has no resolving dialectic" (*IoT*, 539), even while it "[carves] out, in the infinity of a situation, a finite temporal singularity in which is expressed […] infinite humanity, sexuality included" (541). So, provisionally, what modification to Badiou's formulae could retain their potential while resolving their impasse? If any name will suffice when it comes to the disjunctive positions Badiou names *m* and *f,* why not give them the names *t* and *c,* as trans and cis positionalities? What kind of things are man and woman? They are genders. What kinds of

things are male and female? They are sexes. What kind of things are homosexual and bisexual? They are sexualities. At the moment we lack a word for precisely what "kind of thing" transness and cisness are, even while these terms bear clear descriptive power. But in fact, these are terms which envelop all of the above: we are trans women, cis bisexuals; transsexuals and cissexuals—but we only appear as such retroactive to the encounter of the trans subject and the cis subject.

"Trans" and "cis" have come to represent an undeniable split in the way the triune domain is thought, or at least a split effective enough to merit attacks the very existence of this binary—always the best evidence of something's existence. As Kadji Amin puts it,

> the use of cis as an identity was intended to mark the otherwise unmarked normalcy of those who did not desire transition. Its effect, however, was to ossify the opposition between trans people and the rest. Quickly, the cis/trans binary was reinterpreted as an ontological truth. […] We may generatively extend [Judith Butler's] questioning of the status of heterosexuality within lesbian theorization in 1998 to the role of cisgender today. […] What is the background figure of cisgender at work here? When we refer to normative cisgender, do we know precisely what we mean? Have we begun to construct cisgender as a normative monolith in order to set into relief the variegations of trans identity as the unambiguous and uncontaminated forces of gender opposition? In short, are we idealizing cisgender as uncontaminated by any gender trouble whatsoever, just as we have idealized heterosexuality? (Amin, "We Are All Nonbinary," 109)[155]

Applying Badiou's model of the amorous to *c* and *t*, we can only respond: yes. We *do* know what we mean when we say "cisgender," and *do,* in our traversal of the split this division introduces,

[155] See Note 52.

idealize or "ontologize" our enquiries as subjectivities. Transness and cisness are neither sexualities nor sexes nor genders; they are not identities in themselves, and, despite wishes to the contrary, are unable in and of themselves ground a community or a countable ontological consistency, "each to their side." But given, *t*, there is *c*: cis are those subjects who have yet not transitioned. And what are *c* and *t* definable as, if not disjunctive positions from which the amorous world—love, sexuality, sexual difference, and sexed identity—is for the first time (every time being the first one) encountered? They are, in other words, the two paths of ingress upon the amorous world possible for subjects today. The split in the Two is preserved by *c,* while the Two's capacity to wander is guaranteed by *t*; one can pass from one to the other, retaining in this passing a unilaterality concomitant with the sense of the encounter; neither position takes for its axiomatic resources the material of the other, and yet both share the same infinite array of possible material for axiomatization, that process by which the dialectic of being and event continues. The only problem is how, in its traversal, the trans subject preserves its disjunction: the truth that it, unlike the cis subject, has already transitioned.

# Chapter Four, Poetics of Traversal

"I'm the passerby with no partner who prolongs her journey."

(Esdras Parra, *Collected Poems,* 210)

### *4.1 – Recapitulating Traversal*

In the literatures of appropriation discussed in the second chapter, we saw that change in the triune domain takes place through insistence upon a possibility for change; the appropriation of this possibility as the proper being of a subject is productively seen as the change it insists upon. We called the image of this productive seeing a "schema," borrowing from the Kantian/Heideggerian sense of the term, and we explored the ways that "insistent schematization" is the activity of appropriation. We saw how textual objects like dictionaries, canons and literally schematic drawings function as horizons appropriable by productive seeing, expandable indexes of variables whose presumed totality stands in for that of sex, gender, and identity. Changing such an index also means changing what can potentially be a variable: expanding the horizon of a schema amounts to changing all that the subject *is not* into what it *is*. When change is thought to be act of appropriation, the trans subject's supposedly foundational eventality—its essential relation to the taking-place of a transition—is just such a horizon; its appropriation is possible for every subject in principle but is disbarred by the subject's finitude, provisionality, and revisability, something "merely potential." The trans subject is simply that subject which owns/is owned by this "mere potential," and insists that it is what is proper to them. This amounts to thinking that the trans subject's ability to insist on a proper-to-be for its sex is as good as transition itself, that this insistence *is* that transition. For those who deploy the appropriative model of change in defense of transness, the trans subject's appropriation of sexed possibility as its very being—its identification with a deferred project, necessarily incomplete, yet labile for those reasons—is its success.[156] For those who deploy the model against transness, in moods ranging from the dismissive to the exterminative, the same description is read as

[156] See Jules Gleeson, "In Defense of Transnormativity," and Austin H. Johnson, "Transnormativity."

failure, corruption, theft, or monomaniacal deception.[157] Yet neither outlook is able to claim that a real change in or of the triune domain occurs in transition; as a result, the metaphysics of change that the trans subject had been made ambassador of evaporates, its diplomatic status revoked overnight.

With Martin Heidegger's transition-as-appropriation model in hand, chapter two surveyed a cis literary landscape in which cis poets and novelists insisted upon and thus remade sex, gender, and identity as schemata. With Alain Badiou's transition-as-traversal model in hand, this final chapter will survey a trans literary landscape in which trans subjects attempt to locate their traversal post-facto, thereby rendering that landscape as topos. As I have emphasized throughout this dissertation's preceding chapters, my goal is not to show that there is a good Badiouan "traversal view of change" should oppose a bad Heideggerian "appropriation view of change," let alone that either view truly grasps the kind of transition at stake in the evasive and inconsistent multiplicity of the trans subject. Traversal, like appropriation, equally names a surrender to the grand inveighing against the possibility of radical change which characterizes our moment. Though I have along the way sought to show that some nutrients persist in the arid appropriative landscape of the first and second chapters which might feed our faithfulness to the subject's capacity for transition, in this chapter we enter a far more desolate terrain. For neither is our final step here to show that trans subjects, once freed from figuration (and writing) by cis subjects, able to figure (and write) themselves, inevitably affirm the actuality of transition—quite the contrary. Trans subjects, just like the cis subjects in the mirroring chapter of the dissertation's first half—against whom a prefixual difference is asserted and with whom a essential identity on

[157] See Sheila Jeffreys, in *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism*.

a certain ground of the triune domain is maintained—we, too, bear an equal facility when it comes to formalizing and writing the miasma of doubt as to the possibility of radical change.

As I have suggested, in the idea of transition as the traversal of some topos, "cis" and "trans" end up naming a newly visible Two, a Two that "transcends" the old Twos of sex (male/female), gender (sex/gender) and sexuality (homosexual/heterosexual). The old Twos are not made obsolete by the new, but are yoked to its co-determining power, which is its cohomological power. Once derivative of its predecessors—where transness named a nonnormative relation to sex or gender or sexuality, and cisness the normative relation—this new Two incorporates its preceding ontological levels—where transness comes to name the noncis relation to sex or gender or sexuality, and cisness the nontrans relation.[158] How does the trans subject explore this terrain, wherein, as is the case in mathematics for Jean Cavaillès,

[158] B. Aultman, in 2014's "Cisgender," gives the traditional definition of "being cis," and rationale for its use: "The terms man and woman, left unmarked, tend to normalise cisness—reinforcing the unstated 'naturalness' of being cisgender. Using the identifications of 'cis man' or 'cis woman', alongside the usage of 'transman' and 'transwoman', resists that norm reproduction and the marginalisation of trans people that such norms effect" (61-62). Marquis Bey, in 2022's *Cistem Failure,* updates the definition: "the distinction between cis and trans is a nebulous one invested with uncertain and competing political registers and sociocultural understandings. Like sex and gender themselves, there is no transparent criteria for when one stops being cis and crosses into an unwavering transness. What follows, in other words, when we heed that the majority of trans people have no transition-related surgeries, either due to lack of access or desire? What happens to cis when we note that trans does not seem to have a clear meaning, especially when we don't rely on medico-juridical criteria? What is the threshold, the line, clearly demarcating cis from trans?" (30) See Note 57. Writing of their own "irreverent" relationship to sex, gender, identity and the cis/trans binary, Bey positions "nonbinariness" as an alternative. "This is not to say I 'am' nonbinary but, more pointedly, to say I seek a nonbinaristic relationship to my own understanding of my gender—an attempted unrelation to gender, as it were. So, it matters less what pronoun one uses for me; I am, ultimately, pronoun indifferent. That capaciousness is simply another attempt to express an irreverence and disdain for the gender binary and the ways it might inhere in pronouns. What I ultimately want to do is decline gender. So, really, use whatever pronouns for me that you want" (12). Many trans subjects claim just such a "nonbinaristic relationship" to various aspects of the triune domain, of course—the question is, why would it not make sense to say that cis subjects can also claim this kind of relationship? In the idea of cis and trans as a sexual Two that we have established, I would suggest that this is entirely sensical, and at bottom irrelevant to the question of transition. What is not possible (for now) is a "nonbinaristic relationship" to the sexual Two of cis and trans, for this is a Two not of difference, but identity: what we are trying to think is a Two in which, for example, literally nothing distinguishes a cis woman from a trans woman as women. Claiming nonbinariness as an "unrelation" to difference, disdaining the idea that *any* sex, gender, or identity determination could be "correct," still functions as a relation to the triune domain like any other, and imagines itself to be correcting something about the state of an engagement with that domain (e.g., "it is correct to say that such things cannot be correct").

"advancement" or "progress" comes only by way of "internal saturation," "level by level" (Cavaillès, *On Logic*, 128)?

### *4.2 – To Hav*

We are forced to say: the triune domain changes only as it is traversed, and in so doing, one can only bridge the tight depths of old foundations, rather than escape them entirely. But the demonstrations we seek for "traversal" need not be more complex than the concept seems. There is, in the writing of the trans subject, a long history of figuring transition through the imaginary of "travel:" transition itself appears as a "journey," grapples with concepts of "departure" and "arrival," meditates on "border crossing," "exile," "homecoming," and narrativizes the subject variously as "flaneur," "expat," and even "migrant" in the triune domain. This tendency appears most clearly in the Welsh author and travel writer Jan Morris, whose memoir of her transition, *Conundrum* shaped middle-class, white, and Western ideas of transsexuality in the 20th century.[159] The trans studies scholar Joshua Falek has recently attacked Morris precisely for her embrace of this "straightforward metaphor" of travel as a parable of "transsexual embodiment." "Hypostasizing and analogizing transition as a linear process that departs 'from somewhere (to get away from a specific body/place)' to arrive 'somewhere else (a place more habitable),' these narratives facilitate a mainstream intelligibility of transsexuality premised on liberal temporalities of personal development" (Falek, "Everything I Wanted Not To Be," 134/5). As Falek is aware, this critique is not new, reaching back to Jay Prosser's own reading of *Conundrum*'s legacy in "Exceptional Locations: Transsexual Travelogues," as well as Aren Aizura's more recent study of the global biomedical tourism industry's relation to the

[159] See Stephanie Burt, in "The Conundrum of 'Conundrum.'"

contemporary means of transition, *Mobile Subjects: Transnational Imaginaries of Gender Reassignment*. But Falek attempts to show that even in these critiques there remains an "ontological confluence of Orientalism and anti-Blackness," where the exotic sites of gender "derangement" made possible by "the East" always "depend on an a priori anti-Blackness in their juxtaposition of an Orientalist elsewhere with a 'Black nowhere.'" Scolding Aizura for not going far enough in dismantling "the 'transgender-as-immigrant' analogy, [which,] too, evacuates the immigrant's grammar of suffering by deploying it as a metaphor for (white) trans people's suffering," Falek's project becomes to "expand upon Aizura's critique by way of asking what would happen if we were to contend with the trans travel narrative by positioning anti-Blackness not as ancillary [to transness] but as the scaffolding of the modern world" (139).

Morris' *Conundrum* has been expounded upon endlessly. Its early distinction of sex and gender from a trans point of view summarized a view that now seems bygone:

> to me gender is not physical at all, but is altogether insubstantial. It is soul, perhaps, it is talent, it is taste, it is environment, it is how one feels, it is light and shade, it is inner music, it is a spring in one's step or an exchange of glances, it is more truly life and love than any combination of genitals, ovaries, and hormones. It is the essentialness of oneself, the psyche, the fragment of unity. Male and female are sex, masculine and feminine are gender, and though the conceptions obviously overlap, they are far from synonymous. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, gender is not a mere imaginative extension of sex. "Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental reality than sex. Sex is, in fact, merely the adaptation to organic life of a fundamental polarity which divides all created beings. Female sex is simply one of the things that have feminine gender; there are many others,

> and Masculine and Feminine meet us on planes of reality where male and female would be simply meaningless. (*Conundrum*, 25)

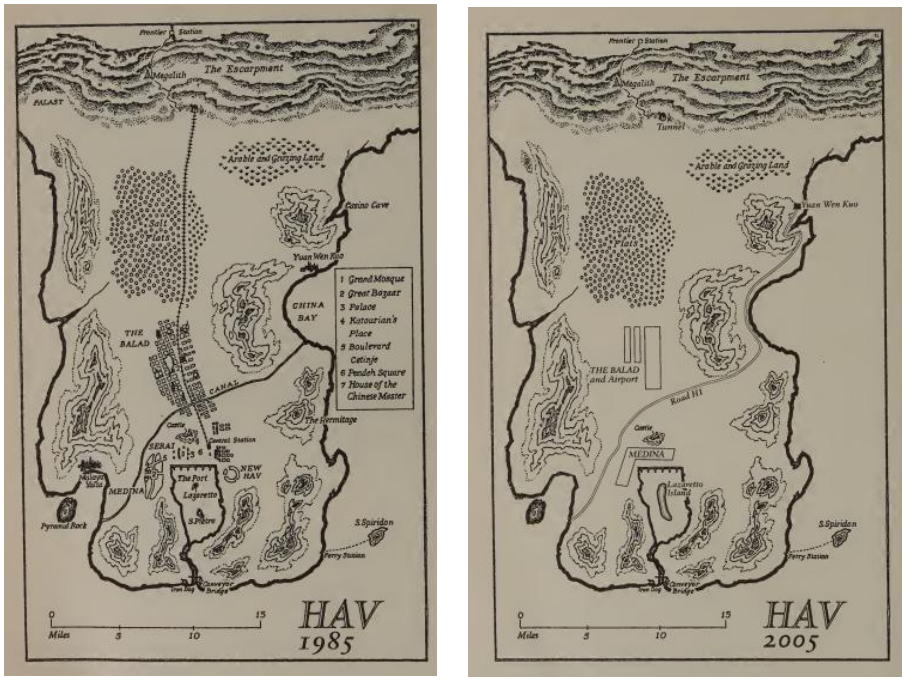
Though the sex/gender distinction clearly has gone on to be formative for discourses of transness, as we've seen, it is rare today for it to be posed in such a Platonic register. By now it goes without saying that trans subjects would be ill-advised to universalize Morris' ideas about the "cause" of her transition, in which "travel was the first and foremost the method through which she 'expended' her [male] libido" enough to abandon it. In her recollection, her identification with locales like a "feminine and feminizing" Venice became a model for "her ideal, her impossible indigeneity, her womanhood" (Falek, 141); simultaneously, her disidentification with and disdain for a masculine "Black Africa" that seemed to be "everything [she] wanted not to be" (142), allowed her to transition, as Falek says, to "transition against Africa" (144). According to Falek, Morris' is a narrative of transition that "indexes libidinal investments evident of a relationship between anti-Blackness and her gendered actualization," and makes transition itself appear to be a racist "'screen' for her 'fantasies of self-improvement'" (143). Just as Millot had done in her transphobic screed, Falek psychoanalyzes Morris, only this time via Melanie Klein, literally infantilizing her by reading her as akin to the baby who mistakenly identifies the mother *as* her nurturing milk (i.e., Morris writing her transition upon the "imaginary surface" of Africa) while remaining incapable of truly identifying *with* the mother (i.e., Morris not recognizing what Falek defends as the uniqueness of black suffering). It seems that Falek's real critique of Morris, and of other trans subjects who use the frame of travel to understand transition, or understand it in isolation from other forms if identification, is that she dares to claim for the trans subject an absolute "placelessness" prior to her transition, which she feels in Africa and flees from just as she sees it and flees from it in herself.

To Falek, that kind of placelessness should be reserved for blackness alone. They apply the full battery of Afropessimist theory to Morris, attempting to show that her traversal of Africa was less about disidentification with man, and more about identification with whiteness: in their reading, it was not her own placelessness within cisness she discovered in Africa, but that of a racial Other. And yet, they fail to note that "placelessness" is not at all something uniquely associated with Africa for Morris—in fact, it is a theme running through many of her books. In *Fifty Years of Europe*, she describes "placelessness" as central to her Welsh identity, quoting the Marxist poet Hugh McDiarmid: "The rose of all the world is not for me, / I want for my part" (*Europe*, 101). Here placelessness is an effect of inclusion but non-belonging within a whole (c.f. Alain Badiou), which she locates in the Welsh word for homesickness, "*hiraeth*" (Gwenffrewi, "*Hiraethi* Jan Morris"). It is perhaps articulated most directly in *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*, where, among other things, she recounts Sigmund Freud's 1876 stay in the city, frustratedly dissecting 400 eels in hopes that he could locate their genitals (97), Isabel Burton's burning of her husband Richard Francis Burton's unpublished sexological writings (136), and the many historical changing-of-hands of the city, which reveal "nationality [as] a cruel pretence. There is nothing organic to it. As the tangled history of this place shows, it is disposable. You can change your nationality by the stroke of a notary's pen; you can enjoy two nationalities at the same time or find your nationality altered for you, overnight, by statesmen far away" (122).[160] Shockingly (or not so shockingly), Falek does not seem to be aware of Morris' wider output as an author beyond *Conundrum*, in her popular travel writing before and after her transition. There, rather than in her memoir alone, is where the fuller scope of her idea of transness becomes

[160] We might think of Chapter 3's discussion of Euler's elegant topologization of the bridges over the Pregolya River, in Königsberg. One would need to refer today to the Pregel River, in Kaliningrad, which *does* now have an even number of bridges, and hence can be traversed as the problem asks: two were destroyed, and two more were joined together, making a singular path through town possible.

visible: where the trans subject carries out a singular enquiry, not into her transition, but into the world (in which there are indeed other forms of identity: race, class, ability, etc.; each fundamental from their own perspective) that it reveals.

Morris was also the author of two mirrored novellas, together titled *Hav,* which may allow us to approach the question of the problematics of traversal from another angle. The *Hav* novellas are fictional travelogues, set in an imagined city—the eminently Trieste-like "Hav"—which Morris claims to have visited, first in 1985, and next twenty years later, in 2005. Hav is a kind of Istanbul/Constantinople-esque locale, a doubled node of East/West junction, set "somewhere on the Mediterranean," which, due to the geographical difficulty of actually accessing it, had been left curiously undisturbed by exterior forces of homogenizing globalization when the Morris-analogue narrator first stumbles upon it. With no airport and with its shipwreck-prone coast, the only way in is a narrow tramway through the mountains. In its layout, Hav proper is an interstice of the multiple identities that have occupied it over time in a patchwork of various districts: there is a British Hav, a Russian Hav, an Arabic Hav, and Chinese Hav, all with their own histories convincingly interlaced with those from the real world. New Hav, set apart from the old city, is divided into French, German, and Italian zones, where bureaucrats of Hausmannization bump shoulders with Seljuk governors and Celtic nomads of the iron age. Every resident of Hav is a partisan of a different threading of these histories, and all are eventually shown to contradict themselves, mixing up one or another of Morris' invented dates, or misremembering the traditions of the city. Morris as narrator attempts to map this place for herself, both prior to its opening to world, and after it.




*Figures 9A-B:* "Hav, 1985," "Hav, 2005"

When Morris returns after the passage of two decades, the first novella having ended with her having to flee the city after uncovering plans for a Western-backed regime change (the "Intervention"), "Peninsular Hav" is radically changed. As she learns, the years that followed saw both a slow shift to what we might call a neoliberal restructuring of the city-state from its exterior, and thereafter, the development of a legitimating political discourse of essential identity from its interior, led by the new ruling class, the Myrmidons (descendants, they claim, of stranded Cathar crusaders), who have turned Hav's historical lack of essence *into* its essence:

> Here in the Office we have all perused your book, and we feel that you have an instinctive sensation, a gut-sensation as it were, for the fundamental identity, one might say the basic soul, of our beloved country.'
>
> 'I thought the book was banned,' said I.

‘Banned? Oh dear me no, certainly not. For one reason and another it has been difficult to obtain in recent years, but as you see, we certainly have our hands on it here’ - and reaching up to his desk he showed me a well-worn copy of *Last Letters from Hav*.

‘There is one memorable passage which checked us of your empathy for the Hav meanings, and encouraged us to have the League of Intellectuals send you their invitation. It occurs on page 99:

The page evidently had a marker in it, for he immediately opened it there. ‘Would you care, dirleddy, if I reminded you of your own words? They are greatly moving to any true Havian, I think. You may remember that they demonstrate the return of fishing-boats into our harbour, and this’ (he cleared his throat and put his monocle in his eye) ‘is how they run:

*‘ … the boats all have engines nowadays, but they often use their sails, and when one comes into the harbour on a southern wind, canvas bulging, flag streaming, keeling gloriously with a slap-slap of waves on its prow and its bare brown-torsoed Greeks exuberantly laughing and shouting to each other, it is as though young navigators have found their way to Hav out of the bright heroic past.’*

‘Those are your own words, dirleddy, and sublimital words they are. They bring the tears to my eyes to read them’ - and he took out his monocle and wiped it, to demonstrate the fact - ‘because they seem to see through the tumbled years into the bright heroic times of our beginnings. As though young navigators have found their way to Hav out of the bright heroic past. There it is, dear Miss Morris, there is the truth of us. There is the beauty of our condition, as we sail, shouting and laughing at one another, brown-

torsoed into our newly reborn city. Thank you. You write as if you are yourself writing out of the soul of Hav, and that is why you are here as our honoured guest today.'

I don't suppose his was quite the sort of figure I had in mind when I wrote the piece (which I had forgotten all about), but I let that go. (*Hav*, 212/3)

As Morris is horrified to discover, Hav's deputies have anchored their new identity in no other text besides her own fictional first travelogue.

The new overseers, who remind Morris of "ideologues of apartheid" she had met long before, then relate to her the changes undergone by their city. "Fundamentally, they said, the change was revelatory. When the Cathar Perfects had assumed power, after the withdrawal of the Intervening Force, they had made public the results of secret scholastic research which they had undertaken down the centuries, and which made apparent for the first time the profoundest origins of the State" (214), "which proved without doubt—*we repeat, without doubt, Ms Morris*—that the ancient Cathar families of Hav, the Perfects of the ancient cult, shared the same ethnicity. In short, that our Cathar theocracy could claim unquestioned and legitimate descent from the Myrmidon warrior people who first came to Hav with the hero Achilles" (216). It is precisely the figures of wandering and placelessness which have come to be the absolute guarantors of worldly identity, a traversal crystalized in "as it were, two aesthetics, one spiritual, one secular. […] On the one hand there is the mysterious aesthetic of the maze, which has been for many centuries the inspiration of Havian art and philosophy. It was itself perhaps introduced here from Crete—the Cretans themselves, you may remember, sent eighty ships to Troy. On the other hand, there is the more absolute aesthetic of the Myrmidonic tradition, bold, warlike, glittering." By coming to treat the maze as an "immemorial symbol," for example in the professionalization of the traditional sport of roof-running, where competitors attempt a parkour-

like cityscape traversal, Hav now "occupies a particular transcendental position in the world at large, peculiar to itself," and understands this as "how it has maintained its separateness down the centuries" (217). During her short return to Hav, Morris struggles to recall her journey two decades prior. She tries to track down the people she had met the first time, all of whom seem strangely unable (or unwilling) to help her piece together the elements which led her to the brink of the event of the Intervention. In the end, once again, she comes close enough to uncovering a truth about Hav to get herself ejected from it—a secret alliance between the Cathars and the Arab states they claim to oppose, known as the "Holy Compact"—and is deported unceremoniously. Just before this, however, her suspicions are confirmed by the exiled 125th Caliph, whom she had met previously. Back then, surprisingly cosmopolitan in dress and manner, he had revealed to her that Hav's inaccessibility was a construction he maintained, to give reason to his exile. The new accessibility of Hav was also his doing, but now he appears to her in the orthodox dress and demeanour she had expected. Again, her flirtation with him is successful enough (he is especially enamoured with her height) to reap something like an answer: when she questions him about the Compact he replies only by quoting Omar Khayyám: "Ah, Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire / To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire, / Would not we shatter it to bits - and then / Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!" (293)

In *Hav*, Morris treats mapping as an amorous procedure, and figures change as traversal. In the city-state are concatenated objects of reflection of the peculiarities of her own transition, but which in total fail to testify to the transition of the reflected subject.[161] It need not be testified to, because it is the reason that there is a traversal at all.

[161] The last thing she sees is the hypermodern tower at Hav's center, topped by a large M: "The great 'M'! 'M' for what? 'M' really for Myrmidon, or 'M' for Mammon? For Mohammed the Prophet? For Mani the Manichaean? 'M' for Macdonald's, or Monsanto, or Microsoft? 'M' for Melchik? 'M' for Minoan? 'M' for Maze? Or, could it possibly be, I wondered as we droned on through the darkness, and I fell into an uneasy slumber, 'M' for Me?" (297)

### *4.3 – Poetics of Traversal: Parra via Cavaillès*

Even for the trans subject, figurations of change as travel call into question the idea of a locatable resting point, relative as any such point would be to a developmental field for the human organism thoroughly structured by cis existence. It is put in the customary way by the Venezuelan poet Esdras Parra (1929-2004), writing after her transition:

> I think I arrived late to my youth and my life. I write this and I'm the first to be surprised. But there's a lot of truth to these words. I come from the mountains and this circumstance, perhaps, has determined my way of being and my perspective of the world and what has happened. I come from a remote place and, in a figurative sense, my path toward myself has been long and torturous. A path that has as its end the discovery of one's own conscience should be that way, arduous and difficult. And, as far as achievements or maturity can measure, I believe I haven't gotten there yet. And, much worse, I think I'll never get there. (Parra, *Collected Poems*, 352)

Born in the state of Mérida near the border with Colombia, in the small town of Santa Cruz de Mora, Parra was an author of novels and short stories. After moving to Caracas to study Philosophy at the Central University of Venezuela, she rose quickly in the Venezuelan literary scene of the late 60's and early 70's.[162] With Alfredo Silva Estrada, Ida Gramcko, and José Napoleón Oropeza, she helped to found the journal Imagén, and worked as the literary editor and cartoonist of the newspaper *El Nacional*, as well as a coordinator at the Revista Nacional de Cultura. In 1978, Parra moved to London, and when she returned to Caracas in 1982, she was a

[162] https://eldiario.com/2021/09/11/esdras-parra-poeta-relampago-y-piedra/

woman. Predictably, her standing in the literary culture of Venezuela never recovered during her post-transition life. She lost all her sources of employment and publication save her semi-anonymous post at *El Nacional*, was disowned by her family, and became a laughingstock of the Latin American literary world.[163] Infamously, the Cuban poet Guillermo Cabrera Infante began spreading a hoax to explain Parra's transition that became the accepted narrative for decades, claiming that she had changed her sex after having fallen in love with a lesbian poet who couldn't love her as a man, and in the end didn't love her as a woman.[164] The joke was obviously funny enough to bring it to the attention of the Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa, who wrote a play based on it, *Al Pie del Támesis* (*On the Bank of the Thames*).

The act of travel—travel to a place where surgical or legal transition was possible, or to a place where it is affordable for the non-wealthy—has long been central to the conceptualization of transition (Aizura, *Mobile Subjects*). This kind of anabatic-katabatic movement appears often in Parra's writing. However, contrary to the liberatory metaphorization that travel has had in the poetic tradition, Parra's poetry is in-built with a radical doubt regarding the relationship of traversal to the question of change.[165] As in *Este Suelo Secreto:*

> The ship has not split
> any ocean but memory
> whose winds pull you
> against the wall
> and the land you've measured
> palm by palm

[163] Wilfredo Hernández, "De La quinta Dayana a Cheila, una casa pa' maíta: Representaciones de la transexualidad femenina;" Amauri Francisco Gutiérrez Coto, "Is There a Transgender Literature in Latin America and the Caribbean?"

[164] Though she never challenged it publicly, and very rarely even discussed her transition and transness directly in her writing, this story has been described as a lie by all of Parra's friends, and especially by José Napoleón Oropeza, who until his death in 2024 was the executor of her estate and managed the publication her unpublished writings and drawings. https://www.cinco8.com/periodismo/el-grandioso-enigma-de-esdras-parra/

[165] See Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry in a Global Age*; George G. Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism*; and Arapoglou, Fodor and Nyman's *Mobile Narratives: Travel, Migration, and Transculturation*. In the context of queer history specifically, see Joseph Comer's *Discourses of Global Queer Mobility*, Aizura and Plemons, cited above, and the *GLQ* special issue *Queer Tourism: Geographies of Globalization.*

which put an end to your solace
and continues leaving saplings
will not desist from its purposes
though it lacks mastery of its tongue.

Heaven descends
onto the floors of your garden
the earthly doors come open
on their wooden hinges
and there are mornings without pity
encounters that arrive
late to the home
foliage that rustles
while you sleep
rivers that cross each other
with their misfortune
or pretend to travel around the world.

[…]

But the rain doesn't move you
does not make an example of piety
like taking a foot between your hands
the errors that cause panic
the indifference that calms
in proximity to being the woman you are
and not anyone else. (*Collected Poems,* 166-172)

The rivers only "pretend to travel" the world—the saplings which cover a land that had previously been "measured palm by palm" become, after the speaker's surveying, the wooden doors of a home they arrive "late" to. In Parra's poems, symbols of traversal tend to appear in reference to their concludable character ("the journey's end in the waning day" [235]; "the final stage of your pilgrimage" [65]), and analogize the anxiety as to what might follow the end of a traversal: including the possibility that the object of transition might be canceled by that traversal ("the true illusion / whose movement takes form/in the forsaken earth / where I sink my feet / and I look above to the / emptiness of the snow" [255]).

Travel as an act of cancellation is implicit where Parra's speaker states, "I cross the black ravine / point out to you that which I do not see," "mine the desire for what's next" (259). The

absence of a horizon in the poem from which these lines are drawn becomes the "substance of the universe," in which the infinite profusion of "other paths" leave the speaker only this decision: to continue on, or to "bind" herself "to the shadow of smoke" (256), a "place" that will "never leave me," even if it is but a "courtyard." This is importantly an interior to some larger space: "the interior / of your discord / which is your home" (62). It is not that the trans subject fails to locate a stable "home," but on the contrary, in its plumbing of the interior, perpetually on the brink of a new departure, it finds it always already has:

> I move no further than rebellion
>
> […]
>
> I limit my sustenance to a search
> strike ceaselessly against the heavy door
> and believe its sound to be sharp
> without renouncing my furious horizon
>
> all that remains is the undetectable wall
> of my interior surveillance
> and the path whose dust covers my bones. (258)

The "furious horizon" is not renounced or transgressed: it remains as an "undetectable wall," carried along as an "interior surveillance" and "search." Traversal becomes not an accomplishment of, but an obstacle to, transition: it retracts, in its completion, the sought destination of a new sex *as* new. The relevance of the connotation of geographic movement in the prefix "trans" has of course been a perennial zone of both resistance and reclamation in trans studies and trans theory.[166] Given its symbolic inescapability for the trans subject, it is easy to see how traversal's figures become a workable material for the poet, a set of customary symbols, not inherently representative of transition, but inherently dependent on a conception of space and time that is topologized and topologizing.

[166] See Amin, in "Whither Trans Studies?", among many others.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the importing of a mathematical concept like topology into the thinking of transness never yields a regime of analogy capable of keeping up with its object. When transition is visible and thinkable only as the traversal of a topos (a body, a homeland, a world, a space of performance) the noncontradictory facticity of transness—that a transition has taken place—doubly loses itself: it both is forced to reckon with itself as the trace of a traversal that always remains questionable, and forced to reckon with itself among all other forms of identity formalization, which likewise come to appear as deformative traces of the same shared topos. What becomes the stable point of reference in this subject's enquiring movement, then, if it is not transition? In what way does the poetry of this subject become a replication of traversal's usurpation of transition? Parra attempts to write without that stable point of reference. Her poems call instead "for the sedentary horizon we cannot trespass / for the time of joy lost and full / separated from the constellations" (306). To call this a writing that sees transition as infinite, as a constant becoming, would not be right. Indeed, where such a becoming appears in her work, it appears only as the movement of a negation, a "darkness" that "denies all passage" (158). It is "the horror of the end"—namely, the end of the journey that the trans subject knows they have already nearly forgotten taking—which even now is "unfolding." Like the aforementioned world-straddling rivers, "the streams" which "sowed by destiny" "return to the place / from which they came" (39), "the steps that return to their source," despite having become "resurgent, made greater" (312); the flesh, too, at every station "return[s] to its origin" (303). This for her is "the simple horror of the flesh" (100), which never ceases to have, at-long-last and only-for-now, a sex, a gender, an identity.

This "horror" is akin to a fear that in having transitioned one will have ceased to be trans. It is a horror identical with "joy," or arrival (287). "This dilemma," Parra says, "accumulates like

the / days you should traverse with your back turned / toward sunset. / As soon as midday arrives with its double rigor, / what is present in it is shaken with the ultimate / flash" (212). Midday—a recurrent term in her poetry—is less a temporal signifier than one of place, indicating the point at which the subject's shadow disappears below their feet, the previously awaited-and-surrendered-to binding to one's shadow, accomplished. Rather than describing a perpetual middle phase for some hoped-for transformation, Parra's midday is point at which hope has "been survived" (288). She describes how those "who [protest], who [divert] from their certainties" and "[sense] the coming end" "[project] it against the cleared midday" and open thereby a "time without surrender," which "follows its own path" (307). The midday is thus the interior's most interior point. To the extent that there is in transition a traversal, its paths lead us, unnervingly, always to what is already our "interior," about which nothing untrue can be said, even if "the silence / opens your willingness / toward the interior / toward the depths / of your borders" (193). In all of this, we are forced to think of how it is that the interior of a space can project the kind of shadows—the contingencies of sex, gender, and identity as they stand in a given present—to which the subject binds itself, its transition being "the adventure of its union to horror / the intolerable discoveries / of misfortune / that put an end to your devices" (148). This interior is, like all topoi, identifiable as such only by homology, and thereby cohomologized with an interior which is not ours: that of cisness. Is it therefore our home, which looks so much like yours, which is just as discordant as yours, that we count the number of steps from wall to wall within? Or do we map our home by failing to map yours? What cis and trans subjects measure is this shared capacity for binding, our "assembly with a like number / of possibilities" whose "interior difficulty […] each time grows larger" (193). How much more thoroughly must our cohomology be demonstrated?

Cavaillès' idea of mathematics proceeding by way of demonstration gives us another way to understand what is meant by the subject's binding to its own interior: for him, "the demonstrated adheres to the demonstration to the point of being indistinguishable from it" (Cavaillès, *On Logic,* 71)—we saw this in the deviation of the category, which arose through the demonstrative power of the continuous map, from topological theory. The essence of this kind of formalization is that it creates as it moves, never demonstrating totally its object:

> we can keep driving in spikes as we climb; if the demonstrative link consisted in them, we would have to add more and more, indefinitely. In reality there is no essential distinction between the hardened rings that seem to mark the terms and the movement that runs through them. But this movement does not halt: demonstration, *in the very act of positing the goal*, extends and ramifies the created domain with new combinations which it establishes as soon as they become possible. Ultimately it cannot be linked back to some undemonstrated term. (68, italics mine)

If this is a burden that the traversal view places on the trans subject, it is also, perhaps, a means for its survival. Cavaillès describes mathematics as a "Riemannian volume, closed and yet without any exterior" (67), where "change means an increase in volume via the spontaneous generation of intelligible elements" (65).[167] It is not irrelevant that mathematics becomes analogized—that something true about it can be said—only through its own products. The categories of the triune domain which transition alters, themselves socially arbitrary and historically contingent, saturate the interior of the subject and are progressively saturated by the subject *step by step*. Parra describes the transitioning subject as the one who remains enduringly

[167] A Riemannian volume, or a manifold to which a Riemannian metric can be applied, is modeling of topological interiority where a smooth (continuous) manifold is given by the collection of its interior products/spaces.

*infinite* thanks to the finite process of their "unraveling" or "unfurling" categories of identity, which are in the end nothing more than their products.[168] It is not, then, that the traversal view is the one in which we must say transition has no clear end point, or has no predetermined path; these are mere commonplaces of contemporary discourse around "trans life." Rather, transition binds a subject to an infinite form of their own making, whether that be sex, gender, identity, or the name. Whereas our traversals are finite—in our successes and in our failures; finite either way—it is through them that we demonstrate *that* we are by demonstrating *what* we are, and these things, these products we ourselves have fashioned, are what is infinite. Or as Cavaillès puts it, "the infinite is the elimination of the arbitrary: the arbitrary choice of an example, the arbitrary point at which a research or construction must supposedly stop" (124).

Micha Cárdenas claims that Parra's writing "offers an algorithm for becoming human" (Cárdenas, *Poetic Operations*, 27). Echoing Badiou's intuitions, Cárdenas feels that the tendency of Parra's poems to orbit around the impossible (through her recurring use of the imagery of cancelled transits and failed journeys, as we've seen) is not a refashioning of a constitutive negativity, so much as a positive appeal made to a universally shared condition, shared by all precisely because of the impossibility which subtends all subjective identity constructions. To Cárdenas "the goal of struggle" in general, and transition in particular, is to articulate this universal condition of impossibility, "to be able to feel our tender humanity and share it with another." In her view, "impossibility is a condition that exceeds the bounds of logic, which also finds resonance in the trans experience of exceeding the bounds of gender that are said to be

[168] "And now, at the threshold of old age or perhaps already far along into it, I ask myself if there was an important detail that made this journey more awful than for others. Or if there was in me, in my destiny, in my dreams, something I ignored on the journey, that was in a way decisive and that placed me in the context of my life. All of this, like life itself, continues to be a mystery to me, a mystery that I will never be able to unravel no matter how much I struggle. Therefore, I have no alternative but to accept it and accept myself in my ineptitude, without bitterness, without resentments, without laments" (*Collected Poems*, 352).

inviolable" (29). But, properly understood, without a logic, without a demonstrative, notational form, impossibility cannot be spoken of at all. When one reads Parra—her poems full of forests burned to ash, architectures occluded by frost, seas encircled by storms, and most of all bodies "adorned by doubt/threaded with pain" (20), a thread of "pure reality" (222)—one hears rage more than tenderness.[169] Specifically, the rage of surety:

> And when you step forward
> through the chasms
> you don't turn your head
> you adhere to the vision
> of the trench and the void
> you extend your hands
> to touch the shadows
> and you smile
> though there is a long way still
> and you do not slow. (*Collected Poems*, 27)

"Chasm," "trench," and "void" denote interiors measurable only by the body in its extension. We've seen that Parra often likens this interplay of absence and limit to houses, rooms, and other built enclosures: "my house without quarrels traversed at times by / a vastness," "a house occupied by self-confidence / by the color of its movements." (287) Only within these does construction occur: like "stone [putting] itself together at the heart of the ash." The concatenation of limits is what allows Parra to give evidence: a transition took place, because it is still necessary. On this basis the subject advances. In its demonstration (its writing) of self-overcoming, it can transform a constructed, finite traversal into a discovered, infinite interior, which it can be confident it has already arrived at, as late as it always is.

To have this confidence, Cavaillès might say,

[169] "This is the source of my hostility / this trunk, these live coals, this gentle torch / by night I run the risk of internal order / I ask that the path beneath my feet spill / its treasures / I ask for water, absolute light / here is my wasted body / hope surrounds me / a rock / a winter / a seed of pure energy" (*Collected Poems*, 250).

> is not to see already, or to deny the event in its radical novelty, reducing it to something already-seen, the regular manifestation of a permanent essence. The dialectic of prediction is that of rule-governed action. It involves both a refusal of abandonment to the domination of time, and an insertion into the rhythm of this time through which something happens, across a necessary thickness of duration independent of that of consciousness. It presupposes movement as irreducible and therefore the risk of a departure from oneself, of an adventure towards the Other, at once already there and not already there, and which may disappoint even though one expects it, an Other that works at its own pace. (*On Logic*, 123)

Just as we challenged the idea of an "irreducibility" of sexual difference, which amounts to a claim for nontraversability in both the old model (of sex categories like male and female) and the new (of modal categories like cis and trans), for Cavaillès the irreducible is always a feature of some hiatus in the progress of a demonstration.[170] Likewise, the history of logic is the history of a "process of separation," but not a separation of "matter—original singularity—and form—the current meaning (*le sens actuel*)" (74), "which, projected into the absolute, would seemingly be applicable throughout the entire concatenation, like a continuous fault line running through the nodes of local distinctions" (75). Such a view is "illegitimate" "because it misrecognizes what it generalises, [namely] that which drives the necessarily progressive passage from the act to its meaning: there is no meaning without an act, and no new act without the meaning that engenders it." *What is separable from the demonstration, and what perpetuates the demonstration, is the hiatus in the demonstration*.[171] Thought—especially mathematical thought—is this act of

[170] "This is the *moment of the variable*: by replacing the determinations of acts with an empty place where a potential substitution can be made, one progressively raises oneself to a degree of abstraction that yields the illusion of an irreducible formalism" (75).
[171] Akin to Badiou's pre-Being and Event "motor of the subject." See Section 3.1.

separation, which "inaugurat[es] a new system of interconnection (*liaison*) on the basis of the old one, understood no longer as one particular phase within a larger movement, but as an object of reflection" (71). In the internal saturation of mathematics, and we might say, in the multiple of the triune domain, what Cavaillès calls a "liaison-act"—a "judgement of identity" given through demonstration—"is no sooner effectuated than it becomes a liaison-type" (73).[172] Here we can see a way to understand the enduringly noematic dimension of transition: "[these] successive independent breakings-off each of which extracts from what came before the imperious outline of what will necessarily come to surpass (*dépasse*) it" (74). It is only in its notation of a demonstration, whether strongly or weakly formulated as such, that the traversing subject can locate what would be for it a point of decision: the place of a true midday.

### *4.4 – Poetics of Traversal: Hennix via Kristeva*

There are few authors more ideal for tracking this idea of notation than the Swedish artist Catherine Christer Hennix. Born in 1948, in Stockholm, Hennix was a polymath: a musician and composer, poet and visual artist, psychoanalytic theorist and transsexual woman, an intuitionist mathematician and convert to Sufi Islam. She was raised in family immersed in the world of American jazz music: her mother was a composer who hosted musicians like Eric Dolphy, Archie Shepp, Idrees Sulieman, John Coltrane during their Northern European tours, and her older brother, Peter, was a part of a Swedish jazz ensemble of his own, which Hennix joined as the drummer (Hennix, *Unbegrenzt*). While still in Sweden studying mathematics and linguistics, she became involved with forms of international avant-garde music besides jazz through her work as a member of the Elektronmusikstudion (EMS), an early center for the development of

[172] From the French, "liaison" could also be translated "bond," or as "tryst" in that word's oldest sense: an "assignation to one's proper place in a courtly event," such as in a hunt (*Oxford Etymological Dictionary*).

electronic music technology, which designed synthesizers and recording techniques for the electronic work of composers such as John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen (Boon, *Politics of Vibration*, 84). In the late 1960's, Hennix traveled to New York City, where she met La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela, Henry Flynt, and other artists associated with the Fluxus and Downtown art and music scenes, and during a visit in 1970, Young introduced Hennix to the Hindustani musician Pran Nath, who later took her on as a disciple and trained her in the performance of raga and classical Indian traditions of just-intoned harmonics.[173] In the following years Hennix divided her time between New York and Sweden, where she began her first musical ensemble, under the influence of both Pran Nath's teachings and Young's ideas about the sine wave as a compositional material: the Hilbert Hotel, later renamed the Deontic Miracle.

By 1976 Hennix's studies in mathematics had taken her to the UC Berkeley, where against the prevailing winds of classical mathematics she aligned further with the intuitionist approach of the Dutch mathematician L.E.J. Brouwer, especially through her Russian contemporary, and eventual collaborator in that tradition, Alexander Yessenin-Volpin. After completing her doctorate in mathematics and staging her landmark confrontation of sine wave generation and raga in her influential proto-drone music piece "The Electric Harpsichord," Hennix began a mathematics teaching post at SUNY New Platz and lectured intermittently, including at MIT, on computational artificial intelligence. In the early 80's, Hennix returned to Europe and began a sequence of engagements with Lacanian psychoanalysis, attending the

[173] In *The Artithmetic of Listening*, Kyle Gann explains the distinction between just intonation tunings and the equal temperament tunings that came to dominate European classical music by the 1800s: as "the basis for all music" when thought of as harmonies of pitch, just intonation is found trans-culturally in "the practice of tuning pitches [within the harmonic series] to pure whole-number ratios" (21). In other words, notes are tuned purely against one another. Equal temperament instead uses a twelve-tone system where notes are tuned to a set octave system: "All twelve keys give exactly the same interval pattern, which is supposed to be the tuning's great glory: the fact that no key is distinguishable, in terms of relative pitch, from any other" (104).

seminars of theorists like Jacques Alain-Miller, Francoise Roques, and Monique David-Ménard in Paris (Boon, 111; Hennix, *Other Matters*), and collaborating closely with then-partner and photographer Lena Tuzzolino on novel interpretations of Lacan's writings, which transformed them into didactic and immersive multimedia artworks.[174] By around 1992, around the same time that the two staged the only completed instance of this project in their "Parler Femme" show at Museum Fodor in Amsterdam, Hennix had transitioned, and struggled increasingly to find venues open to the kinds of durational sound and light installations she had staged in the 1970's. Hennix's studies in intuitionism with Yessenin-Volpin culminated in 2001 with the publication of what she considered her most important mathematical treatise, which claimed to disprove Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem.[175] She moved to Berlin in 2010, bringing along another long-running ensemble of hers, the Chora(s)san Time-Court Mirage, formed with Hillary Jeffrey, Marcus Pal and others, and by the end of that decade moved again, to Istanbul, both due to economic precarity and because of her conversion to Islam. There, Hennix spent the last years of her life studying the musical, religious and poetic practice of the *maqam*, the Perso-Arabic harmonic scale and philosophy of music.[176] She died in November, 2023.

---

[174] https://artmap.com/stedelijk/exhibition/catherine-christer-hennix-2018

[175] Titled "Beware the Gödel-Wette Paradox!," only "part one" of the proof exists, which is around 300 pages long. The argument concerns extending the intuitionist mathematician Eduard Wette's attempts to disprove the possibility of arithmetic and number theory to the theory of inaccessible cardinals that grounds the Gödel paradox, claiming them to be inconsistent. Wette is not taken seriously within mainstream mathematics, as Paul Bernays' judgement makes clear: "The proofs involved in Wette's work are extremely complicated, and are only described by him, but not actually given. This description provides too little to go on for an accurate verification. Moreover, although Wette's deliberations make a strong impression of intense intellectual effort, facility with foundational techniques, and attention to detail, the possibility of an error cannot be excluded in such extensive investigations" (Bernays, "On a Symposium on the Foundations of Mathematics," 28-29).

[176] A *maqam* is played according to an *usul*, or a rhythm of playing the range of a *maqam's* specific chromaticism. Normally, this would take place alongside the reading of a poem. (In fact, "sometimes authors actually notated *usul* using the notation specifically reserved for poetic meter either as a substitute for or as an addition to a specific system of [musical notation]" (Anne E. Lucas, *Music of a Thousand Years*). The history of the development of the *maqam's* modal system (both sonic and affective, since each flourish of tonal change is said to evoke some specific emotional state) and the notations developed to capture it is complex. It is ironic that a music so concerned with the categorization of transformation itself arose, as Lucas shows, from a series of "radical transformations of culture […] in relation to exogenous events and world history, [where] the standing cultural

It is Hennix's musical output that has been the anchor for the little scholarly attention she has attracted so far: in 2022, Marcus Boon published *The Politics of Vibration,* the first monograph which has attempted to engage with her "algebraic aesthetics" (Boon, 89), if only from the point of view of sound studies. According to Boon, Hennix's music offers "the possibility of liberatory counterinstrumentalizations [of musical score and notation] that are nonetheless grounded in the real order of the universe. By real order, I refer to an order not dictated by tradition or by any particular ideology of science, but rather an order to be discovered in and through practice and experimentation," namely, mathematics (Boon, 81). Pointing to Fluxus' broader interest in liberating music from score, and score from music, Boon shows how for Hennix, music is the construction of a place.[177] For her, it combines the determinate-yet-open performance space, constructed on the basis of an ideal and freely receptive subject, with the closed-yet-indeterminate variability of the harmonic interval, the real wave form of sound that is articulable in mathematics. Structured as such, the kind of consistency that the score was meant to secure could supposedly be retained, and the threats of a scoring that would hamper intuition and improvisation, avoided. Boon suggests it was Hennix who took the emancipation-of-the-score drive of Fluxus further than anyone else, even to the point of its abandonment, as she moved further and further away from the idea of the score, while attempting to preserve its

order [had] input into the process of adaptation and reinterpretation in the establishment of a new order" (18). As Hennix often pointed out, one of the etymological meanings of *maqam* is "place," especially in relation to the identification of sites of prayer and burial: for her this captured the idea of a "specially designated space within another space from which a kind of performance takes place" ("Conversation"). The *maqam*, like her own music, was meant to open a place from which it can be recited—"re-sited"—namely, a change, the meaning of which the performer is sure. Hennix found in *maqam* the image of an object which can give to itself its own essential place.

[177] One recurring concern of Fluxus musicians was to transform the score from an individually composed master script aiding in the incarnation of the art object of music to an art object in itself. Natilee Harren summarizes: "In the final instance, artistic form reimagined after the model of the score no longer relied on a piece of paper or a text but on the idea of a transmutable and resilient form that *travels*" (Harren, *Fluxus Forms*, 12). But this does not only relate, as we will see, to traversal: "Eventually, the score model is released from its attachment to a founding text and turned into an operation or activity of reading in which any material whatsoever may be appropriated as a kind of notation open to interpretation and reinscription" (21).

effects as features of the place (80). For Hennix, who quipped that the degree of artistic freedom in a society is directly measurable by how long one can make sounds in public before being expulsed (95), the discipline of identifying what counts as place gives structure enough.

The idea of playing in and for a non-existent place is given a utopian gloss by Boon, who views the avant-garde musical tradition as a democratizing and humanist force.[178] He associates these goals with Hennix, reading them through the influence that Julie Kristeva's concept of the chora had on her. For Kristeva, the chora is a foundational region of being wherein "'discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, […] [are] arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body;" these "energies," by which she means a psychoanalytic conception of desires rooted in discrete drives, "[articulate] a chora: a nonexpressive totality'" of subjective space which "exceeds the body" (Boon, 114, quoting from *Revolution in Poetic Language*).[179] For Kristeva, the chora precedes developmentally the establishment of any "traversable" boundary between subject and object, which is for her is more related to the determination of the "thetic order" through which all signification must pass and upon which all conceptions of negativity depend (Kristeva, *Revolution*, 51, 216).[180] She likens the dualism of the thetic order to the analog/digital distinction in computational number theory, or the relating and translating of continuous and discontinuous compositions of a waveform of sound. Whereas the thetic phase

[178] Boon: "Drones, embodying and manifesting universal principles of sound and vibration, in a fundamental sense belong to nobody, and invite a sense of shared participation, collective endeavor and experience" (Boon, "The Eternal Drone"). Boon addresses the fact that this utopian interpretation of drone in the West during the 70's was also contested, and inherently contradictory. To Tony Conrad, for example, basing music on mathematical determination was inherently "antidemocratic." To Young, the exact same determination was championed as "democratic in the sense of being constructable by anyone who understands the principles" (Boon, *Politics*, 82).
[179] In a footnote, Kristeva cites René Spitz's description of the fusion of the drives through infancy as akin to the interactions between "carrier waves" (256).
[180] "A positivizing phase of a subject mastering the verbal function" (126). Kristeva never consistently defines the thetic, but links at least once to the subject's existentiality (130), implying that it is an "ontic" topology in comparison to the "ontological" topos of the chora.

describes the sorting of continuous and discontinuous drive energies each to their side, supposedly resulting in our very perception of a subject/object divide, the chora remains as a trace in each, a trace "both analog and digital," since it is that which is "made up of continuities that are segmented" into the very "stases marked by the facilitation of the drives" which came to obscure it (66). This segmentation of the chora's undecidably continuous/discontinuous being for her is a developmental, prelinguistic process triggered by the human organism's first encounter with the other, who makes the first "alteration" of the facilitating power of the drives possible for the first time: a facilitation from beyond the body, which marks from then on the body as a *place* for language (67).[181]

Boon considers Julia Kristeva's concept of the chora the lens through which Hennix understood the union between audience-subject and performance space as a unitary "topos." Together, these elements form a topological site, in which audience and performers come to "share a subjective form" across their emplacement amidst the infinite potential conjunctures of just-intoned harmonics. This Boon contrasts to "the topos of the subject" as a lone individual, "with its lingering existential decisionism" (Boon, 107). If subjectivity is a topos for Hennix, Boon concludes, it is anything but the kind of "rigid topological structure" that could make decision possible. Yet according to Hennix, "the trajectory" of her artistic practice is "to pass through the chora and arrive at […] a site at which free choice, in relation to sexual difference,

[181] Kristeva's immediate reference for this is Lacan's writings on "the mirror stage." Similarly, the chora is "pre-Oedipal," nothing more than the "nonsymbolized state of the drives" (Bedient, "Shattered Signification"). For both Kristeva and psychoanalysis, the experience of logical contradiction thus has to stem from a phasal-developmental view of the human organism alone—who through (non)recognition of the Other encounters contradiction through drive symbolization—and not from, say inherent features of number itself. In this way, psychoanalytic views of contradiction's relationship to the subject do not stray too far from conservative psychological models, like, say, that of Jean Piaget, who believed that "the progress of conceptualization and the construction of classes and relations which enclose objects inside a framework that is still fairly open in overall structure but susceptible to local organization" (Piaget, *Contradiction*, 298) stems entirely from the prelinguistic experience of a "perturbation" of "a state of equilibrium (physical and biological as well as cognitive)," such as the breaking of a pattern or the skewing of a proportion, for which the subject develops "incomplete compensations" (xv).

but no doubt other things too, could be made" (115). Returning to Kristeva's influence, Boon claims that for Hennix "music […] is a trans-feminist vibrational practice" (116), which "implies the reversal of [the] production of sexual difference and the possibility of a freedom in relation to gender." "Practices of deconstruction of the law of gender, associated with queer and trans communities," for him "imply exposure to or immersion in the chora," a "'passing through the chora,' […] not 'to the other side,' but perhaps resting in it without attachment or without conceptualizing;" in this reclining, "the chora [becomes] a topos. The topos could be a topos of sexual difference, that is, a site in which various iterations or transformations of 'male,' 'female,' and 'neither of these' can occur (115).

This, in essence, is the vision of transition as a traversal. There is a "passing"—always "through," and never "to" (for this would invite decision)—that is dependent on topological metaphorizations of sex, gender, and identity, taken as interiors in relation to exteriors (which are always other interiors) with an ability to bear and make punctures and penetrations.[182] Given that Hennix herself rarely spoke of her own transition and transness, and never foregrounded these aspects of her biography, what are we to make of this enlistment of her work as a "transfeminist" application of the Kristevan chora?

### *4.5 – Hemming the Chora*

In Plato's *Timaeus*, *χώρα* (*khōra*), often translated as "space," describes a third "kind" of thing distinct from either form, which is self-identical and unchanging, and matter, which is resemblant to forms and always changeable. *Khōra* "exists always and cannot be destroyed," providing a "fixed state for all things that come to be," whether those things be intelligible or

[182] In this way, we might consider whether our understanding of "passing" in its connotation for the trans subject inherently depends on the traversal view of change.

sensible ("Timaeus," 1255). For Plato/Timaeus, the *khōra* is neither of these: it is the "wetnurse of becoming," implicit "of necessity" in all things as their "place," without which they could not be said to exist. *Khōra* is thus a shadow-like receptacle, and Plato/Timaeus uses this conjecture to explain the transformation of geometrical shapes into one other, to explain "how these bodies [various isohedrons] turn into one another" (1257) through their mutual agitation when they are "deposited" in their place, and through this agitation "from time to time become unlike their former selves and like the other kinds" (1260) while "neither […] ever comes to be in the other in such a way that they at the same time become one and the same, and also two" (1255). According to Derrida, Plato's use of the concept of *khōra* "seems to defy that 'logic of noncontradiction of the philosophers'" precisely because of its neutrality, being neither "passive" nor "active" in its receptacality (*On the Name*, 89).[183] The *khōra* is just as much "born" as the chasm, the between in which change and approximation to form occurs, as it is that which "gives birth" to the shape that it divides: "*Khōra* must not receive for her own sake," but instead must "merely let herself be lent the properties [of that] which she receives" (98). Derrida therefore affirms for *khōra* the "sexual type" (92) of the mother, the womb, and the procreative role accorded to it by Plato, even while he modifies its role, to be that which allows us to speak of non-existence, emptiness, and the negativity of the space of inscription: "*Khōra*, so as to give place to them, all the determinations, […] does not possess any of them as her/its own. She possesses them, she has them, since she receives them, but she does not possess them as properties, she does not possess anything as her own. She 'is' nothing other than the sum or the process of what has just been inscribed 'on' her" (101).

[183] Derrida happens to describe this as a "schema" of the *khōra*. "The schemata are the cut-out figures imprinted into the *khōra*, the forms which inform it. They are of it without belonging to it" (95). See Chapter 1.

Derrida maintains that the "*Khōra* is not a subject," and does not "support" a subject (95), yet throughout his essay, he makes a point to refer to the concept with the feminine pronoun "*elle,*" or as an "it/her," and even argues that the *Timaeus* depicts a Socrates who imitates his interlocutors by "effac[ing] himself," or rather, by "feminizing" himself, akin to the way that the *khōra* is held as feminine in Derrida's reading via its voluntary process of "self-exclusion." "Socrates thus pretends to belong to the genus of those who pretend to belong to the genus of those who have (a) place, a place and an economy that are their own" (108). By "becoming a woman" by becoming "receptive" in this way, Derrida takes Socrates to say something like

> *therefore I who resemble them, I have no place* (je n'ai pas de lieu): in any case, as for me I am them, that does not mean that I am their fellow. But this truth, namely that they and I, if we seem to belong to the same *genos*, are without a place of our own, is enunciated by me, since it is a truth, from your place, you who are on the side of the true *logos*, of philosophy and politics. I address you from your place [*place*] in order to say to you that I have no place [*place*] […] You alone have place and can say both the place and the nonplace in truth, and that is why I am going to give you back the floor. In truth, give it to you or leave it to you. To give back, to leave, or to give the floor to the other amounts to saying: you have (a) place, have (a) place, come. (108)

For Derrida, then, to "travel back to" or "travel through" the *khōra* really means to engage in the kind of intervallic pace of place-trading that he associates with the dialogic Socrates, who progressively and irreversibly gives up his p(l)ace by taking the p(l)ace of some other subject or thing or kind, until finally he has no p(l)ace, which is woman's p(l)ace. Here change means and requires a location of retreat from "one's place," which makes it available to others (available *as*

place *because* it is empty). Just as we saw in Derrida's reading of *Geschlecht*, what is envisioned here is a transition in reverse, which stipulates that any subject searching for a true site in the triune domain will find it only by walking backwards, away from all possible sites.

Kristeva's approach is in some ways similar to Derrida's: as she put it a decade before him, "the *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration […] and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm" (*Revolution*, 26). For Boon, the chora's supposed "transfeminism" lies in its (and rhythm's) infinite capacity for change. This is what separates Hennix's musico-theoretical outlook, he claims, from something like the totalizing musicology of Alain Daniélou, whose *Tableau comparative des intervalles musicaux* attempted to give "a menu or cookbook" of all possible intervals (Boon, 79). It is the travelling being of the chora—thanks to which the subject's "'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated" (*Revolution*, 60)—which reveals such foundationalist approaches to music to be "reactionary:" they seek to notate the unnotateable. Hennix's goal of "evolving [the] frames of musical structures, rather than trying to obtain completeness" in what they would notate is to him both truer to the nature of the chora, and more liberatory. What Boon leaves out is that, unlike Derrida, Kristeva saw the chora not as some cosmic, infinitely evolutionary space to traverse but rather as an "instinctual" act of "transposition" (64), "an objective *ordering* (*ordonnancement*)" of "a modality of significance," "which is dictated by natural or socio-historical constraints such as the biological difference between the sexes or family structure" (26).

If Hennix, like Kristeva, used the idea of the chora "to relativize the classic terms 'subject' and 'predicate' and see them as mere 'subsets' […] of a more general relation which is actually in play between two indissociable modalities," it is because "signification (*Bedeutung*) is a process in which opposable 'terms' are posited as phenomena but can be identified" as "two faces" of a "break" (55). This, for Kristeva, is the entire structure of change: "discrete and permutable elements" with "concrete position" are, across a biological and filial development, inevitably "displace[d]" "within the homogeneous element of language;" they traverse language, which is itself the trace of a pre-linguistic traversal of the chora, but they cannot return to it. "The *transformation* (from drive to signifier)" is not an outward expansion into new forms of being, but "an intersyntactical *division*"—an internal saturation. In describing the place-trading of invariant elements within a homogenous interior, Kristeva provides the kind of topologically-shaded image of change with which we have become familiar, as that which initially "produced the speaking subject" and which "comes about only if it leaves that subject out. […] But when this subject reemerges, when the semiotic *chora* disturbs the thetic position by redistributing the signifying order, we note that the denoted object and the syntactic relation are disturbed as well." Certainly, the chora describes the subjective form of the pre-linguistic subject, the subject that has not yet encountered the "thetic order," in a manner akin to Freud's description of the "polymorphous perversity" of the infant's non-zonal organism.[184] But Kristeva likens the chora to a "vocal or kinetic rhythm" that stands in step with the thetic, in that it marks time for the subject: "the semiotic chora is […] the place where the subject is both generated and negated" (26). It is thus not that the choric/thetic distinction replicates a linear developmental model:

[184] The thetic break is "a positivizing phase of a subject mastering the verbal function" (126). Kristeva never clearly defines the thetic, but it is generally described as a post-choric plane of encounter with the interval-limiting boundary field of the symbolic in the psychoanalytic sense. She also links the thetic with the subject's existentiality, implying that it is an "ontic" topology in comparison to the "ontological" topos of the chora (130).

Kristeva describes it as akin to the analog/digital distinction in music and information theory, and thus to the relating and translating of continuities to discontinuities. Whereas the thetic describes the arrangement of the continuousness of drive energies into the discontinuousness of subjects, organs, and words, the chora remains as a trace in each, a trace "both analog and digital" (66). It is not clear then that the chora is a "space" one can "return to" in the ontologically transformative way Boon suggests—indeed, we are never fully able to leave it. "Only the subject, for whom the thetic is not a repression of the semiotic chora but instead a position either taken on or undergone, can call into question the thetic so that a new disposition may be articulated" (50). It is only because the chora has been obscured by the thetic (and appears as an obscurity of it) that we can "challenge the thetic's regulation of choric rhythm," so any "return" to the chora is really just a re-articulation of a boundary and a new thetic order.

A view of Hennix's work beyond her music can both refine and challenge this fraught application of the concept of the chora to sex, sound, notation, and place. Her visual art practice, especially as presented by her 2018 retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, titled "Traversée du Fantasme," dealt explicitly with the conjuncture of questions of transition within the psychoanalytic and philosophical lineages Kristeva had intervened in. Among other standalone pieces, "Traversée" displayed the full series of her category-theoretical "colour equations," a consistent part of her output since the 70's.[185]

[185] This show was also notable for "reconfigure[ing] and remodel[ing] her own historic works through the lens of contemporary and evolving discussions around gender noncomformity," addressing the "bathroom bills" of the growing politics of trans eliminativism as what she called a form of "urinary discrimination" (https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/catherine-christer-hennix). This was achieved simply, for example through the substitution of signage for public restrooms with her own intuitionist notation (which we will explore in the following sections). In her description of her intentions: "This logic ranges from the sense it extracts from the unreadable to the sense it extracts from the unthinkable and unimaginable. It strains our abilities to think that commonplace bathroom protocol is part of the origin of what is, in the end, unspeakable. To think that through to its logical end yields an important connection between aesthetics and ethics" ("Interview").

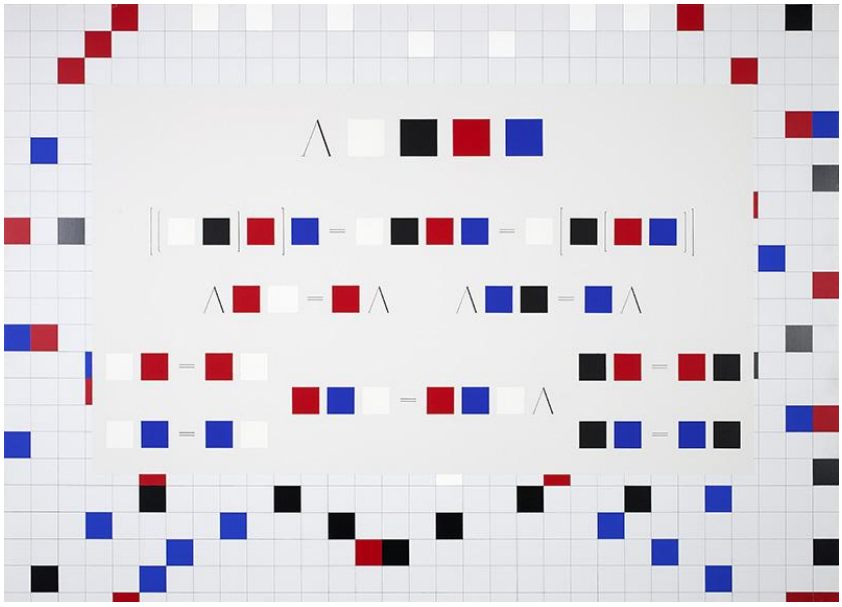


*Figure 10:* "Colour Algebra with Undecidable Word Problem"

In *The Yellow Book*, Hennix had developed a mathematical treatise-cum-illuminated scroll, in which equations describing certain kinds of homotopies she had claimed to extract from a variety of historical texts are depicted using a "formal (binary) ontology" of white and black squares."[186] Hennix uses these symbols to depict "two distinct species of limit ordinals," or two different segments of the real number continuum which then "give rise to two [families of] natural number series" (365). These two "species" are pictured above, with the interior logical statement impressed upon its own notational "background," from which it was conjugated. Whatever she may have claimed them to be, Hennix's notational artworks treat their elements, the gridded squares, like "boundary operators" for the traversal of a thought through some index, akin to the encounter with boundaries Kristeva stipulates as inherent in the speaking subject's emergence from the chora.[187] Hennix echoes her thinking: "space is inseparable from the array of signs with

[186] *The Yellow Book* was published 1989, and compiled an array of works, including those from the 1976 installation "Toposes & Adjoints" (Stein, "Being = Space x Action"). The homotopical "translations" range from the fragments of Parmenides to the Vedas, from the aphorisms of Wittgenstein to the poems of Hölderlin, and more.
[187] "□" is the symbol Hennix uses to signify an event: when treated as a topos, or a space in which events take place, she signifies it as "E'□," or "the subjective event." For as long as the subject "attends" to □, signified by the

which it is designated. Undifferentiated space is described by its empty array of signs. […] Signs are boundaries. They *presuppose* space! Each formula expresses a possible boundary" (320). For Hennix "what exists, what surrounds Being, is a text. It is through the action of the text that Being as Thought becomes a Form in many variables. […] A text is an arrow along which a natural transformation of Being into co-Being occurs. A text presupposes space. Space exists as Being. Being generates space. Space carries geometry as Being carries space. The geometry of a Form in many variables is called a *site*. It is formally denoted by a category together with a topology" (324). The notation derived from her readings of religious and philosophical texts, many of which deal with the metaphysics of change, should thus be read as attempts to record a single subject's encounters with what were for them possible sites for initiating (locating) a transformation which has already taken place.

In effect, this is how intuitionist mathematics imagines the invention and subsequent co-translation of distinct "mathematical universes" to take place. For intuitionists, the existence of any such universe is grounded in the capacity of the subject to draw upon a presumably infinite wellspring of demonstrability. Hennix, like Brouwer (who she addresses in many of her works), names this the "Creative Subject." It is through this Subject—a temporally-situated being akin to an idealised mathematician, presumed to possess infinite memory, attention, and time to think through problems—that the process of separation that we saw Cavaillès describe is carried out. In non-intuitionist, or classical mathematics, this kind of ground is not a given, and is instead accomplished through an axiomatization internal to each model or system (Heyting,

sequence "$\Box *_{(x, y, z)}$" it produces a "freely developing" "submanifold": "$\Box^{N}$" This she calls the "constant event." (Spencer Gerhardt, *Ticking Stripe*, 164-5). To be clear, transition would be the emergence of the subjective event from the constant event, given a submanifold drawn purely from the triune domain.

*Intuitionism*).[188] The Creative Subject is held to inaugurate mathematics with two "acts:" first, to "[completely separate] mathematics from mathematical language and hence from the phenomena of language described by theoretical logic, recognizing that intuitionistic mathematics is an essentially languageless activity of the mind having its origin in the perception of a move of time. This perception of a move of time may be described as the falling apart of a life moment into two distinct things, one of which gives way to the other, but is retained by memory. If the twoity thus born is divested of all quality, it passes into the empty form of the common substratum of all twoities. And it is this common substratum, this empty form, which is the basic intuition of mathematics" (4-5). And second, to "[admit] two ways of creating new mathematical entities: firstly in the shape of more or less freely proceeding infinite sequences of mathematical entities previously acquired […]; secondly in the shape of mathematical species, i.e. properties supposable for mathematical entities previously acquired, satisfying the condition that if they hold for a certain mathematical entity, they also hold for all mathematical entities which have

[188] Arend Heyting, developing the ideas of Brouwer, showed that a "satisfactory theory of the continuum on an intuitive basis can be obtained without using the notion of an arbitrary law," or an axiomatics; in its place, one can derive "generators" of things like the real numbers. Generators are formulae for counting which may be extended indefinitely, but when stopped, yield a real number preceded and followed by a continuum. As Heyting stipulates, "a real number-generator is never ready at hand; we never possess more than a finite part of its defining sequence. This leads us to think of a real number-generator as in a constant state of growth" (*Introduction*, 32). It is this "limit" to the sequence of generation that makes possible the establishment, too, of an order relation, and the sense of the continuum. Such finitude is not intrinsic to the continuum itself, so much as to the mathematician: hence intuitionism's subjectivism. Sketching a possible skeptic in dialogue with his work, Heyting pre-responds to this critique himself: "by admitting this concept you introduce into mathematics the notion of time and a subjective element that do not belong there. An infinitely proceeding sequence proceeds in time and the way in which it proceeds may depend upon choices, that is upon voluntary acts of the choosing subject." "I agree to that; yet if we examine the proofs […] we see that they only depend upon the possibility of indefinitely continuing the sequences; we never used the fact that their continuation was governed by a law; hence it must be possible to consider the continuation without demanding that a law governs it. For instance, in the definition of the sum of two real number-generators, the n-th approximation of a+b is known as soon as the n-th approximations of a and b are given. Hence, if a and b are infinitely proceeding sequences, a+ b is an infinitely proceeding sequence. To arrive at the notion of an ips [infinitely proceeding sequence], we need not introduce new ideas, in particular not the notion of choice; the word 'choice' is used here as a short expression for the generation of a component of the sequence" (33). It is this idea of choice that we should have in mind when we apply Badiou's concept of the "decision" of the subject to the trans subject, and the amorous procedure. For Badiou's own relationship to Heyting's work, see Section 3.5.

been defined to be 'equal' to it, definitions of equality having to satisfy the conditions of symmetry, reflexivity and transitivity" (8). Brouwer describes this as akin to an infinite tree of nodal decision points, where at each node the Creative Subject either affirms the "species" (identity) of the mathematical entity or holds such an affirmation to be absurd.

In its traversal of these nodes, the subject is said to generate an index that is either "sterile" or "non-sterile" (15).[189] The non-sterile index constitutes an infinite path, say, on the way to the figure of the real number continuum: it is the secured yet incomplete morphism of the figure, an "arrow." The sterile index, by contrast, is the finite path which encounters some obstacle; even if an obstacle is encountered at $n^n$ point within the nodal tree, sterility "cascades" to all previous nodes of decision. This is akin to the idea of a halting point in computation, the domain in which intuitionist mathematics has found the most application. But unlike in computational theory, the sterile index formed by the Creative Subject is always *less* determined than the non-sterile one: as Van Dalen notes in his commentary of Brouwer's Cambridge lectures, "sterilization is subject to the condition that the descendant of a sterilized node is itself sterilized. The figures assigned to nodes are predeterminate," but "sterilization is, in general, not a predeterminate process" (16). This is why, as Hennix says, "one's relation to noemas never becomes an algorithm" (*Other Matters*, 157). The non-sterile index may secure a concept of transitivity for the intuitionists, but the leap I take Hennix to be making is to recognize that traversal commences with sterilization, or what from a traditional point of view is the failure state of the transitive. In making that leap, she identifies Brouwer's Creative Subject and

[189] Consistently been translated as "sterilization" in English versions of Brouwer's writings, *Hemmung*, from the German, predominantly refers to restraint, or inhibition: or even chastity, if it carries any sexual connotation. It is also the root word of the English word "hemming."

Kristeva's speaking subject as being essentially one; by extension, the same must be said of the chora and the real number continuum, through which categorization/symbolization passes.

As Spencer Gerhardt has put it, Hennix's "'algebraic images'" depict topological spaces. Remembering Hennix's subject/topos analogy, we must likewise say they depict a subjectivity, or an array of possible molds through which the subject might transform itself. Just as in category theory "the only structure preserved by functions is identity," these images show the logical conditions by which we can "transfer properties from one category to another, and hence results and constructions from one area of mathematics to another area." In his view, what unites the fields of mathematics that Hennix draws upon is that each "is concerned with expressing continuity as a primitive notion, rather than as an additional layer of structure added upon a discrete or extensionally defined collection of objects" (*Ticking Stripe*, 139). I would qualify this by saying that while this may be true in her mathematical work, when one looks at her art, the arduous development of a notation of a continuity tends to be that which brings about the staging of a radical break in, and therefore a transformation of, some continuum. How exactly does Hennix's art convey this?

### *4.6 – Notational Art*

Hennix's notational elements are described in different ways across the *Yellow Book* and the other places in which they appear across her oeuvre: at one time the squares are said to depict or be "universes" (in the mathematical sense), and at other times, topologies, ontologies, categories, and sets.[190] The sources that Hennix "translates" into this notational system are never

[190] In mathematics the term "universe" refers to the set (or topos, or knot, or type, and so on) which includes all possible elements of a specific model of mathematics (Streicher, "Universes in Toposes"). Note that a universe does not refer to a universal set (or universal topos, or knot, or type, and so on), a concept which violates Gödel's incompleteness theorem.

directly named, and her goals remain opaque and inconsistent when it comes to their relation to those sources. Occasionally Hennix claims to be identifying sequences latent in the sources she works with, while at other times her goal is "to instruct" the texts, "subjecting them to the primary processes of semeiosis, [and] in particular, […] the sources of/for homosemeiosis" in intuitionism (*Other Matters*, 306-7). Yet the intentions of her notational project do not matter as much as what their actualization into various "works" say about the nature of the subject. It is clear that, for her, subjective continuity is preserved only through the transformation-into-topos that her art exemplifies: such is the meaning of the arrow-functor often used to map her squares, which, as we have seen, in category theory depicts a morphism, a modeling across which something always-already modeled travels. As Gerhardt explains, "Hennix interprets a model," *any model,* "as an arrow between categories. However, under her non-standard interpretation of a topos, a functor (a morphism described by an arrow) realizes a state of consciousness, or is an interpretation of mental states." This psychic dimension of the arrow-functor explains her statement in the *Yellow Book* that "philosophical problems can be analyzed as stacks of arrows," like the compressed strata of models through which the subject seeps (*Ticking Stripe*, 161).

For her, "the world is formed of arrows. Each arrow is a fact—a mental fact. A mutual fact," absorbing the facticity of what it marks as transitively linked. In the *Yellow Book*, the black squares are said to "[designate] the *continuum of empty arrows,*" the aforementioned stack of logically necessary morphisms shorn of its content; the white squares are said to "[designate] the *unit space* of a constant arrow," or the interval of change required to pass between any given isolatable "sheaf" of that stack, as a kind of domain in and of itself (352). What's more, the implication arrow is again used to conjoin these differently "arrow-dense" categorical squares. But these should not be taken as either a redundant repetition, or as stray atoms of a single

traversal; rather, they evince one or another cloven half of the "Twoity" that Brouwer's Creative Subject was meant to name, the teetering steps at the threshold of which the grasping of a morphism can halt or fall back on itself.[191] The categories, the squares, are compressions of these steps. For Hennix, any kind of mathematical continuum (the real number line, logical space, etc.) is nothing but a "continuum of tactics of attention" which enables the stepwise mathematical thought required to maintain subjective continuity across change. Ultimately, this results in "the freedom of the Creating Subject to create non-mathematical entities." Traversing mathematics by way of its invention of a notation, the subject "comes to intuit [that] the fundamental process of a waveform repeating in time 'corresponds to a point in her life-world where a moment of life falls apart with one part retained as an image and stored by memory while the other part is retained as a continuum of new perceptions'" (*Ticking Stripe*, 103).

Importantly, to the array of black and white elements in her notation-art Hennix eventually added the colors red and blue, referred to in *Notes on Toposes and Adjoints* as "chromatic topologies."[192] Given that the black and white squares alone can complete any job when it comes to the depiction of continuous variation across categorical and topological

[191] For Brouwer, the basic form of mathematical intuition is "Twoity," that is, the subjective experience of the falling away of a previous moment in time and its retention (or not) in the successive moment in time. This, for him, is how all mathematical operations proceed, which never, despite the non-temporal presumptions of classical mathematics, take place all at once - even in computing (Brouwer, Cambridge Lectures). Most critiques of Brouwer stem not from the intelligibility or power of his proofs, but from the fact that they lead to violations of what Paul Churchland has called certain "superempirical virtues" valued by science (Churchland, *Neurocomputational Perspective*), especially that of "ontological simplicity" (Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*), or the avoidance of superfluousness (the ZFC model of set theory does not require two axioms of replacement, for example, but needs only one). Contrast to a recent critique of Brouwer's Twoity, which claims that it unavoidably leads to "an overabundant mathematical ontology," and "an ontological explosion" (Bentzen, "Brouwer's Intuition of Twoity and Constructions in Separable Mathematics").

[192] The term "chromaticism" obviously denotes for Hennix its application in music, as a description of tone (such as the chromatic scale), as well as its application in mathematics, where it usually describes objects characterized by bounded groups. In its specific use to describe topologies, "chromatic" emerges as a term in the work of Daniel Quillen, where a "chromatic topology" is composed only of stable homotopies using only "weak equivalences" (Hirschhorn, "The Quillen Model Category of Topological Spaces").

transformations, it would seem that their coloration is superfluous, or a concession to the aesthetic seduction of framing notation as an aesthetic work. Yet from the late 70's on, Hennix increasingly works in the quadrupled form of the black/white blue/red double binary. In general, she claims that "Dialectics is an unordered pair <■ □> spanning a tactical configuration" (*Poësy Matters*, 214). This "tactical configuration" seems to describe what is essentially a rhythm of encounter, and of transition:

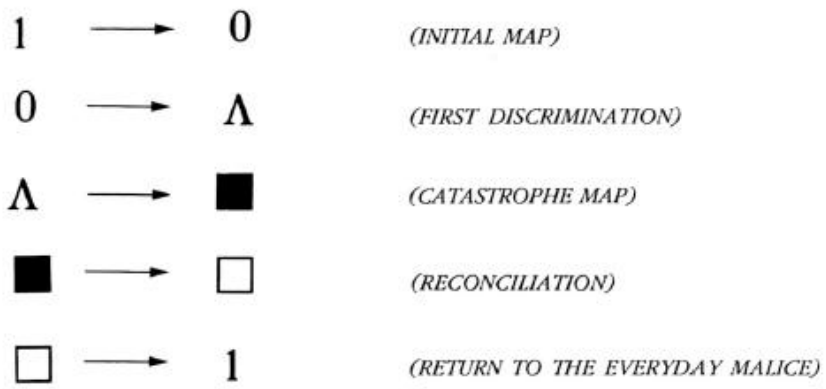



*Figure 11:* "Tactical Configuration"

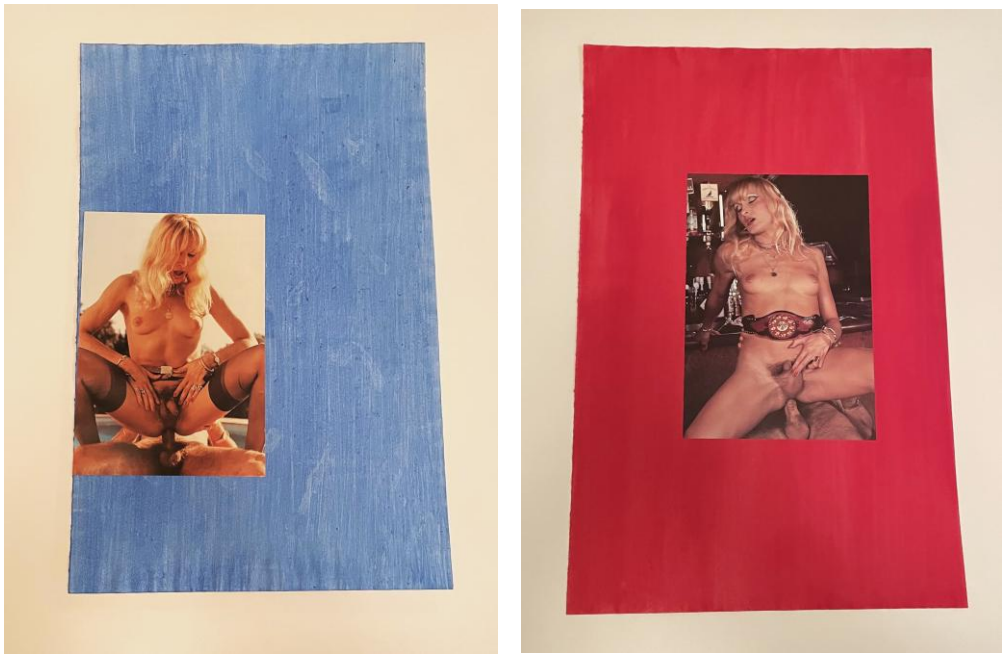
At the "limit" of this rhythm, Hennix says, "colors appear."

A clue to the reasoning for her shift to associating color with sex and change can be found in the way that this coloring figures prominently in her psychoanalytic treatise ~~*La*~~ *Séminaire I*, which deals with Lacan's Seminars XX and XXIII, and was, again, written during or in close proximity to her transition. By "coloring in" Lacan's schemas of sexual difference, in ~~*La*~~ *Séminaire I* Hennix intended this chromatic binary to function less as a pair of "subobjects," as the "colorless" white and black squares do, and more as "subfields," in this case in the wider field of sexuation. It must be noted that the coloring of Lacan's tables, too, is self-consciously superfluous, since the kinds of difference that such a color abstraction implies for the viewer are already implicit in the formula. For Hennix, this kind of gesture is linked to the mathematical

generation of a homotopy, which, as we recall from the previous chapter, notates the possible deformations of a topological space by which we derive its invariants. Hennix's 2011 exhibition at the Grimm Museum in Berlin, featuring her "7 Homotopies (How One Becomes the Other)," evoked similar ideas, suggesting homotopical relationships between sound and colored light waveform installations. By the time of the gathering of these works in "Traversée," the red/blue binary had taken on explicitly sexual connotations, with her linking her notation art (including that produced long before her transition, and without the addition of coloration) to debates about bathroom signage and broader anti-trans legislation emerging globally at the time.[193] According to Hennix, "the subject surrounds itself with obstacles to its own realization as a loving and sexually fulfilled creature," and the kinds of sinthomatic construction Lacan has in mind in Seminar XXIII make impossible a return to "the Cartesian subject with its sexless existential endpoints—the recurrent, incessant cover-ups of the truth of the subject" (209, 210).

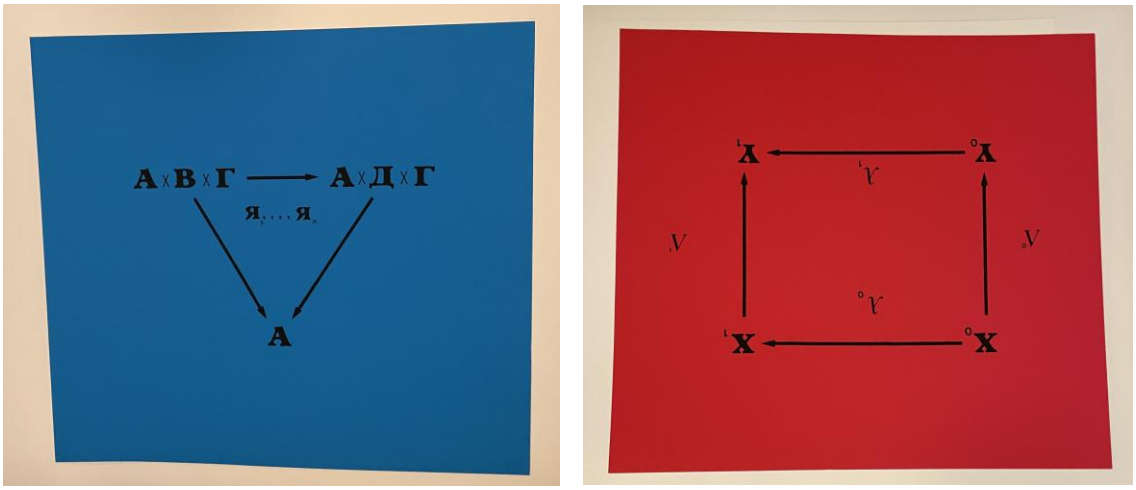
In newly discovered artworks, the association of the red and blue colorways to the depiction of the trans subject are confirmed:

[193] Reminiscent not unintentionally of Lacan's earlier discussion of washroom signage figures in "Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," where the signified (the proper sex for each restroom) becomes doubled, evincing the way that "the signifier enters the signifier" and "no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification." Lacan himself linked the binary male/female washroom designation figures to the "near-universal" "urinary segregation" in human cultures; Hennix refers to anti-trans anxiety in these spaces as "urinary discrimination," in a similar key (Hennix, *Unbegrenzt*, liner notes). See Note 185. For Lacan, it is not that there is a kind of androgynous ground, a "shared homeland" as he puts it in Seminar VI, which such signage and rules of propriety cleave in two, but that there is no ground absent the signage. Removing gendered significations above the doors would not reveal an unsexed/undifferentiated site of reflection of the human body and its animal needs, pissing included. ("The subject, throughout the course of his life, has to rediscover himself, namely has to discover what has escaped him because being beyond, outside everything, that the form of language more and more, and in the measure that it develops, allows to pass, allows to be filtered, rejects, represses that which at first tended to be expressed, namely from his need. This articulation at the second degree is that which as a being precisely shaped, transformed by his word, namely this attempt, *this effort to pass beyond this transformation itself*, this is what we are doing in analysis, and that is why one can say that just as everything that resides, of what must be articulated, at the soliciting level is there at 0, as a predetermined account, pre-existing the experience of the subject, as being that which in the other is open to the operations of language, to the first signifying homeland that the subject experiences in so far as he learns to speak") (*Seminar VI*, 105).



*Figures 12A-B:* “Untitled 1,” “Untitled 2”

These works, lost until recently, were to be part of a 1995 exhibition commissioned by the Emily Harvey Foundation in New York. They would have appeared among others which interweave trans pornography with the abstraction of her usual topological formalisms. Hennix was in the process of reassembling these works when she died: in her personal archive, they were grouped with more recent works using the commutative diagrams of category theory:




*Figures 12C-D:* “Blue Print,” “Red Print”

Chromaticism is not here an obstacle to the subject's self-realization, not merely grouping-into-sex that must be fled (Hennix's focus on Brouwer's description of "fleeing properties" comes to mind) but a vehicle for the change of grouping. Cisness in red and transness in blue.[194] In their very material they question the role of notation: they overlay tempera, her four-color monochrome, on carbon transfer "cutocolor" sheets, which prior to digitization were frequently used by working mathematicians for moving segments of formulae from page to page. But they also question the viewer and disdain the idea of offering a declarative comment on sex, gender, identity, and transness, other than the insistence, of course, that there is a subjective continuity (the same woman) on both sides of this Two. Hennix put this exhibition together soon after transitioning and sent it to the Foundation from Amsterdam; evidently these pieces, like Hennix's own transition, were too shocking for the curators, and the show was never put on.

Her color/sex/transitional homotopies appear in her poetry as well, and specifically in her Nō dramas.[195] First composed in the 1970's, these plays take up the Japanese form of Nō and are given a running commentary by Hennix via her algebraic art. In the play "Teisho," three characters—the form-determined traditional figures of Shite and Waki, as well as a Chorus—sit in a shrine, the Hegikan Roku.[196] In Nō, a Shite-Waki duo is comprised of a masked actor referred to as the Shite, which literally means "the doer" or "the one who acts," and an unmasked

[194] In discussing the typography of her notation, such as in Figure 10, Hennix insists that there be "no black vertical separating red and blue" (*Poësy Matters*, 218). There is, however, no blended or "fuzzy" region, either. In a 2018 interview, when asked about the literal relationship of her use of color to sexual difference, her reply is, as usual, mercurial: "INTERVIEWER: Going back to the colors, I would say that there's more logic than just wanting to restrict yourself, because if you look at the black and white that's certainly one kind of binary, of presence and absence, but there's also the binary of blue and red, which you use generally in your work to indicate a gender binary. CCH: Well, no, not really. It may look like that, it can be used as that, but it doesn't have to be used as that. No, the actual source, if you want the phenomenological source, is the colors of the sky. So, it's blue, it's red, it's black, it's white, depending on the constellation or the clouds. Yeah, I encourage people to look up rather than looking down, so I chose the colors of the sky as my guidance" (Sunday Seminar).

[195] The tempera paintings referred to above were also titled "4-Color Nō."

[196] This site also figures in the music of Hennix's Deontic Miracle ensemble, whose performances are described as "models" of the shrine.

Waki, which means "side" and can also refer to a cut or division, i.e., that which incites the acting/doing of the Shite/the play. As Royall Tyler notes, the Shite and the Waki are also distinguished by the fact that Shite actors usually play both male and female roles, while Waki actors only play male roles; the Waki tends to represent a silent onlooker, functioning as a stand-in for the audience (Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas,* 65).[197] Traditionally, the chorus (*jiutai*) in Nō establishes the boundary of the stage by their position in a line at its periphery. In Hennix's "Teisho," Shite sits in the center of the stage behind a screen, as, during his dialog with the chorus, Waki silently approaches in a spiralling circle that passes alongside stations demarcated by the three pines outside the "shrine."

**Shite:** I have entered this body

**Chorus:** Disgraceful. Something Other

**Shite:** By the efforts

**Chorus:** Disgraceful. Something Other

**Shite:** Of my ancestors' accumulated illusions

**Chorus:** Every Intension. Disgraceful
Every Intersection. Disgraceful (Hennix, 193)

While Shite and the Chorus converse—and as Tyler notes, the Chorus also often interprets Shite's statements, "describing the setting, revealing the shite's thoughts and inner feelings, or relating events as they unfold" (Tyler, 25)—stage directions describe Waki's approach. Shite and Chorus discuss color.

**Shite:** I was awakened in the Moon as the
blue Lady of Mental Events

[197] Like Kabuki, Nō actors usually are men no matter the sex of the roles they play, and certain actors specialize in the performance of female roles. Troupes of professional Nō performers originally included both men and women, derived as it partly was from forms of dance practiced by female Shinto shrine attendants, but women were banned from officially practicing the art in 1629 by governmental decree (Tyler). Only in 2004 did the institutions of Nō transmission in Japan begin to consistently admit some small percentage of women.

My body being gradually produced
by the ten winds as it was entering
projections of diamonds

**Chorus:** Lotus vessels. Illusions in Blue
Diamonds sparkling like thunderbolts (194)

Shite describes himself, his "disgraceful" body, as being "contradicted by Realities of all colors," and yet it is one, arbitrary and blue, that has awakened him. Having reached Shite's seat, Waki takes his place, trades places with him, and begins his own dialogue with the Chorus.

**Chorus:** Dissimilar is permanent

**Waki:** Like the ten times

**Chorus:** Remaining forever unchanged

[…]

**Waki:** Sound is permanent (196)

Waki points out that among the ten shearing gusts of wind that buffet Shite, and the ten bloomings of the pines that drew him to the shrine's interior, one must decide upon one: "*one* among nine combinations." To Waki, sound (speech included) creates "spaces / not contradicted by Reality," unlike the contradictory "space" of Shite's body. This fact forces Shite to "confess," but not to confess a contradictory being: the confession only relates "the non-emptiness of our / Minds." With this realization, Shite returns, now unmasked, and "is gradually transformed;" Shite speaks no more, instead emitting only *katsu*, the ritualized cries of pain, contrition, and self-scolding that in Nō and Zen Buddhism recenter the subject's attention. As Shite dances, Waki leaves the stage, and the Chorus falls into a loop of debate with itself, unable to any more distinguish being from Non-Being, or the void from the "No-Void."

As Henry Flynt says in his introduction to the Nō dramas, Hennix's plays were meant to be "imagined" rather than staged. But Flynt's interpretation of the plays takes them far too

confidently at face value. For Flynt, the combative "anti-artist" writing from his perspective in the 1970's as a close collaborator of "Christer Hennix," these writings are no more than impressively "authentic" applications of a non-Western traditional art form to the ideas about performance and sound that both thinkers were interested in at the time. To him, "Waki, hearing the antiphon on whether sound is permanent or impermanent, latches onto the phrase that sound is permanent; but because his attention wanders, he misses the key declaration that sound is impermanent. So all that Waki can glean, and utter as his pronouncement, is that sound is permanent. In angry dismay, Shite exits" (187). But Flynt is playing fast and loose with the text: at no point in "Teisho" does Waki's "attention wander"—his exit is triggered by continuing his spiral procession in on himself, "reaching the Waki pillar," and Shite's exit takes place long before. Flynt focuses on the *katsu's* connotation with anger and reads it through Shite's furor at Waki's preceding statements, but this is merely one meaning of the *katsu* among others. There is no assertive reply regarding sound's "impermanence" from Shite or from the Chorus, which Waki "misses." For Flynt, so used to operating in the polemical mode, Shite and Waki can only be "combatants," and Waki's "presence radiates [a] disinsight" that "batters" Shite. In his reading, "the discourse of Shite and the Chorus has given Waki the chance to reconsider who he is. In other words, every person faces a problem of inauthentic consciousness. […] Every person is faced with the option to mold him or herself to externally supplied identities," and "most people take the path of subordination" to "constraints or determinants [or] conditions" for their being. Waki, says Flynt, believes that "only by molding himself to identities supplied by fashion" can he escape his fundamental worthlessness (186).

Like Badiou, the only transformation that Flynt can present as revolutionary is a transformation that leaves behind identity—yet Hennix's own ideas are different. It is true that,

as she says, "Waki's role is invariably to remind us that ignorance is still the most common of all human experiences, and that the search for liberation is closed affair for a minority;" all of the characters in her Nō dramas besides the Wakis, she says, are "Supreme Beings," or "model subjects" who cycle through the "dialectics [of the] unordered pair" represented by black-square/white-square notation (216). Waki, then, is the only conduit through which color—something like sex, gender, and identity—can flow. These deformations of "the supreme being's intensional world" are "visible as colors" not because they obscure something absolute about the subject, but because they evince *a transition in which the "non-ordinary" becomes ordinary*.

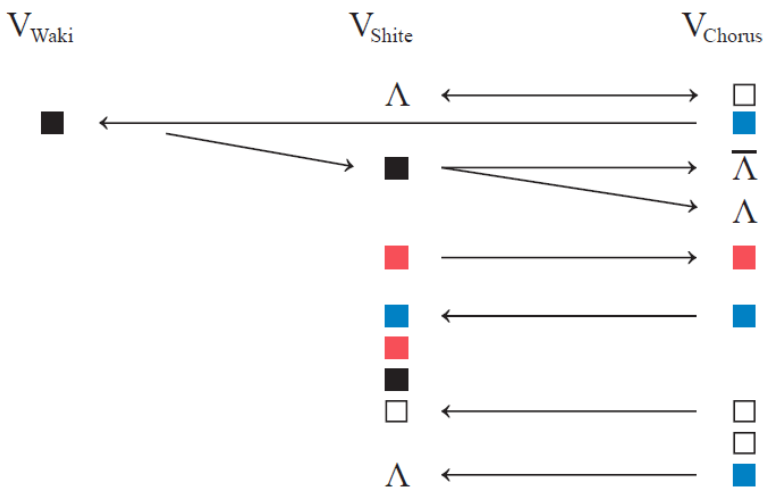
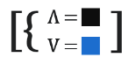



*Figure 13:* from "Model Subject"

Hennix here shows the way that the decision for a contingent blue frees Shite into dance and allows him (is it "him" any longer?) to emit a kind of sound that fills his place so completely as to eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding: full speech.[198] In the second line of notation

[198] "Full speech is speech which aims at, which forms, the truth such as it becomes established in the recognition of one person by another. Full speech is speech which performs (*qui fait acte*)" (*Seminar I*, 107). Hennix symbolizes this as "V," or a "word-algebra" (*Poësy Matters*, 214), whereas "empty speech" is symbolized as "Λ," or the empty word, referring to "an experience (denotation) of epoché, i.e., an experience of a presuppositionless world governed only by languageless 'laws' of pure intuition" (27). In its Lacanian reference, one can see how Λ might not mean literal silence, but also normative, everyday language use, including that of normative (sex) identity.

above, interrupting the endless two-way oscillation between Λ (emptiness, [216]) and □ (event), blue travels from the Chorus to Waki, making him the conduit for its traversal back to Shite, a thereby back again to the Chorus. By the final line, the event is a unilateral transformation of blue into what, for Shite, is emptiness.

Shite, then, operates as an avatar for the author, allowing her to think through a situation in which she finds her subjectivity being constantly given notations that are not her own: by psychoanalysis, by pornography, by history. "Assembling my language / In equational classes," Shite-Hennix says in the play that follows "Teisho," "Mu-Ki-Do," "I unfold myself in / Their dimensions till // I become degrees of / Unsolvability, tracing / Any configuration" (201). And it is in Hennix's "Afterwards" to the Nō dramas that the notational substructure is "revealed," as she translates the action of the text into her color algebra.[199] The "blue world," the world of "Being," the world of the "Lady of Mental Events," stands in a homotopical relationship with the red world of "Reality," the "accumulated illusions" and the "gradual production of the body." Waki, contra Flynt, is identified as neither; he is signified with a black square, which is also used at the point where Waki and Shite trade places. As Hennix says, the black square, that "continuum of empty arrows" with nothing of its own, the gulf that notational separation creates, must also be identified with "the eternal drama of enlightenment" (218). As Shite unmasks, his final utterance—"The beautiful lady with a scullstaff / and drum"—is given a different notation:  In this open equation (bounded only externally) Shite advances, traverses, *in blue*, choreographing the vertical symmetry between these two "sheaves" of the drama. The worldly ignorance of the Waki, which includes the impermanence of sex, gender, and identity to which it unknowingly clings and molds himself, becomes visible as a possible coloring of the

[199] It is worth noting that this supplement was composed after her transition.

intensional—i.e., the topological—domain of Shite's being when it is modeled by Shite *as subjectivity*. Blue has long symbolized the infinite, the transcendent, and the creative in the tradition of European romanticism (Novalis' *bläue Blume*, Hölderlin/Waiblinger's *lieblicher Bläue,* Hugo's "blue thistle"), but for Hennix it stands transformed, appearing as contingency, division, and the superficiality of the finite.[200]

And not only here: in Hennix's long poem "Das Niemandsmal (No-Man's Memorial)," the subject struggles against having been "Consumed by / numbers," "Burned by the / Word, / Burned by the / Beginning // Burned by the / Principles" of (Western, European) history. Yet like "the un- / inscribable / rewriting it- / self by it- // self each / time it / encounters / Itself" (124), the subject "re- / Turn[s]" to the site of impossibility and witnesses their transformation, already achieved, like "blue corn" ripening out of "volcanic ash." As if taking it as material, and as sustenance, they subsist thenceforth on "Blue corn tortillas" and spend their days "hunting down the / Blue Deer" (167).[201] Though literally translated as "No-One's Memorial," in correspondence Hennix always referred to the title of this poem as "No-Man's Memorial." It was also printed this way in an earlier and much different version by Etymon Editions, in which a certain passage appears not present after later rewritings:

> Failing the
> Other
> that is
> Not:
>
> Each word
> a broken lad-
> der,
> each word an
> abnegation—

[200] See Badiou's reading of this symbol (*IoT*, 102).

[201] Contrast to contrary usages of "red" in her poetry: "After revealing the / existence of / exact sequences // I drown in the / darkness in my / heart // The sky dotted // with / red hail" ("Snow in a Silver Bowl," *Poësy*, 64).

Not is
what has been
left for us to share—as our only share ("Das Niemandsmal," First Version)

Hennix's imagery of the volcanic red failure state of the pre-transition subject returns in the end in this version, but was excised from her collected works with an explicitly Lacanian coloring:

Nourishing the
Incurable

[…]

Assigning
Parity in the
calm of
doom—the moment
of categorical
re-
versal brought by the

Corn Dance
arriving at
its last step,
crossing infinity.

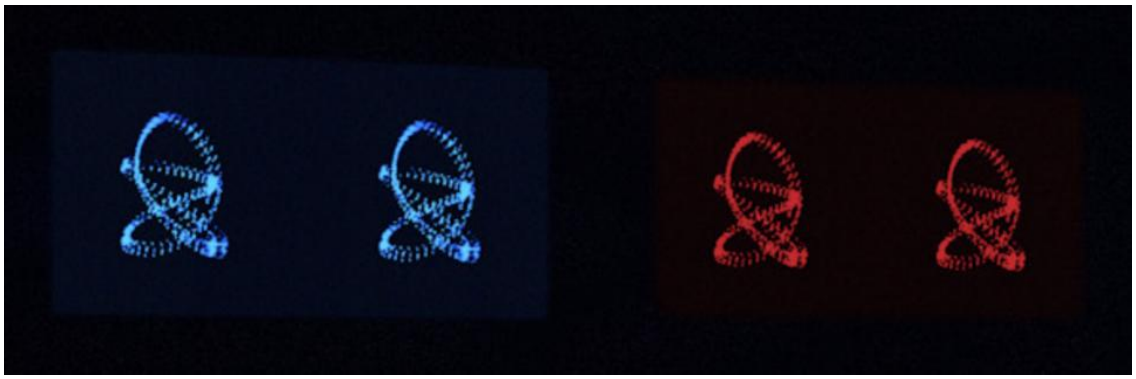
Hennix writes that what the notational versions of the Nō dramas establish line by line is a "model subject," which is immediately subjected to logical interference after its establishment, just as any wave-form like sound or light is. In these poem-dramas, we witness a subject in formation, which makes a choice that stabilizes its being according to a form, through a continuum of "toposes generated along infinitely proceeding […] sequences."

In another of her Nō pieces, "To Snatch from the Moon w/ the Hand," a character named Tsure, a "blind traveller," states that

True existence is the miracle of choice.
My *only* choice as a point of departure and—as a
Point of entry.
Yet, in this intermittent
Darkness no point distinguishes itself as an
Entry-point—the breaking point that shall allow me to catch my

> Breath. I'm entirely lost although I've travelled along the
> Path: following every turn of my staff, following every cardinal
> Point as I followed every signpost; all along this trail
> Blinding the ground with my tapping stick—
> Erasing every track by which I could have returned from here but
> Not from there.[202] (250)

The chorus (here called the "Choire," but etymologically still linked to the chora) is again sent into a paralyzing recursion by the arrival of Shite and its arbitrary decision, which they can only narrate in infinitely extending loops: "Progressively, track by track // Progressively, crack by crack;" "I saw myself / See myself finally / See myself" (251). When Hennix writes traversal, uncertainty and doubt—evidenced by the alterations made to her poetry over her post-transition life, as we have seen—always gives way to certainty and truth, but only once transit can be secured as loop: as an arrival, no matter the subject's choice, before the homotopical *en face* of the chromatic Two.



*Figures 14A-B:* "Topos 1," "Topos 2"

### *4.7 – From Sexual to Modal Difference*

Any monist universalism will want something like the Kristevan chora to persist as a common refuge for all, as a non-exclusive wellspring of, or homeland for, transitivity and

[202] The *tsure*, like the *shite* and *waki*, is a customary role in Nō. A *tsure* always accompanies a *shite*, and is played by a *shite* performer, often acting as its shadow, echo, or reflection.

renewal, the renewal of the interval. Kristeva herself could never permit this or see it that way: as "the place where the signifying process, rejecting stases, unfolds," her notion of the chora could never make possible this sort of affirmative gesture of inclusion. If her chora is wave-like, it is only the finite wake left behind in the subject's movement, the ripple formed by the subject's negating of its own form through its (biological, social) development. Movement and development here are really the same thing: "in traveling the chora's lines of force, the process of the subject runs the risk of becoming the very mechanism of the chora's operation, its 'mode' of repetition, with no signifying substance of its own, no interiority or exteriority—no subject or object, nothing but the movement of rejection," says Kristeva. "When the signifying process strives to correspond exactly to the logic of this mobile and heterogeneous chora, it ultimately forecloses the thetic. But in so doing, heterogeneity itself is lost; spread out in its place is the fantasy of identification with the female body (the mother's body), or even the mutism of the paralyzed schizophrenic" (*Revolution*, 182). Boon reads this homogeneity for a common transitivity, but for Kristeva it evidences a kind of failure state of choric development, a pathologizing diagnosis of a certain way of relating to the chora not dissimilar from the topologically-analogized pathologization of transsexuality we explored in the previous chapter.[203] Hennix's writings, though, suggest that if one wants to account for change, one must "double" the chora. In addition to the Kristevan chora, which makes possible a subject of pure movement (pure development) but renders them always perspectivally motionless to themselves, naturalizing the intervals of negation that form their capacity for identification—a cis subject—there must also be said to be a chora *founded* by the subject that can withstand this movement (and development), which Kristeva would hold to be a subject trapped by failure and fantasy. In

[203] See Note 113.

this subject's withstanding—its holding of attention and faithfulness to its enquiry, which splits the chora and brings about a miracle of division within its infinite place-trading—a new notation, *identical in every way with the old one*, forms out of this capacity for disidentification an unassailable identity. This is the trans subject.

There is for Hennix, in other words, the red chora and the blue chora, the cis chora and the trans chora: these are the *Two Non-Orientable Surfaces* of Hennix's most poem-like Nō drama, "One Darks, Two Darks." A mixed-media piece, *Two Non-Orientable Surfaces* was meant by Hennix to accompany this text, both as an artwork in itself and as a depiction of the "actors" in the play: it exists as two pairs of red and blue moebius-strips of fabric hung from hooks on a wall. Composed in 2001, this later iteration of her Nō drama practice evidenced even more changes of her point of view on the form. Not only is the text now designed to be read in a loop (previously only a trait of her Choruses), with "at least three consecutive cycles" in a given performance but no repetition of any "text-part" in any single cycle, but the stage directions for its characters have also profoundly altered the Shite/Waki dyad. As Hennix directs, "the texts are not fixed for each character, but are freely interchangeable between all participating characters." But "the choice of the latter, as well as their number, must be fixed in advance, as must the distribution of text-parts among them within any cycle." "Even indication of the choice of characters, such as *shite, waki,* etc., is given with the text-parts—meaning that the director is free to assign any text-parts to any of the possible characters that have been chosen" (259). The ideas of choice, assignment, and the "bending and the binding braid" of red and blue, of the sex one chooses/chooses to recognize and the sex one does not choose/does not choose to recognize, "[anneal] together" (260) in the thinking that the text is meant to antagonize, embodied in "One Darks, Two Darks" by the echolocation of two occupants in empty space. These occupants ask

whether or not they can be heard, and whether or not they are there at all—for them, this is the same question. "Being (on stage)" in this way appears "as a *distribution*" of the sounding of a choice in space. "Being," Hennix says, "emerges as a convolution of space with a non-vanishing action potential, a site of spontaneous identity exfoliations fueled by a phantom energy" (261).

In contrast to Kristeva's image of change—to repeat, a displacing of the concrete position of the opposition or boundary between permutable and discrete elements (continuous and noncontinuous elements) within a homogeneous element, like language—as an always-eventually-feminizing, always-eventually-impregnatory place-trading of form, Hennix proposes a doubling, a second chora. Hers is an identical image of change, an identical choric ground for the ontology of sex and the self (and signification more broadly), but one in which there is a decision which places, chooses, and by that light makes appear an opposition of invariant and indeterminate elements (noncontinuous and continuous elements) within a heterogeneous element, like number. In this view, in transitioning one does not move *back* to—if only for a moment—*the* chora, as if back to a womb. Rather, insofar as one transitions, one traverses a self-imposed boundary and names this movement as a place newly bounded. At the same time, we must admit that the subjectivism and intuitionism of this model of the subject denies the final reality of non-"noēmatic" truths; it asserts that one is only a subject when such a traversal occurs, and vice versa. Indeed, the homonym between the prefix "noē" in Ancient Greek (thought, repose or tranquility) and "nō" in Classical Japanese (meaning skill, capacity or even function) seems to be Hennix's starting point in her interest in Nō as a dramatic and poetic form.

Even if Hennix's plays, poetry, music and artwork can be said to creatively deploy the mathematical debates we have explored, they still force us to return to our starting point for this entire investigation: the attempt to salvage Badiou's idea of the loving subject as a Two, in order

to explain why any conception of transition as traversal preserves something of a Twoity. Whereas Badiou's Two remains, despite his denials, yoked to a cut of sexual difference reducible to certain biological and cultural constellations of masculinity and femininity, we have insisted that in any conception of change as traversal there endures a different cut. We call this the cut of *modal* difference (modal, model), a difference of cis and trans sex, gender, and identity—*a difference of sexual difference*—which forces us to think how we might distinguish those who are identical on the basis the fact that *they change into the same differently*.[204] Does Hennix's freeing of its material into aesthetic play not risk turning it into the kind of "mere metaphor" we have already identified as self-defeating in those who wield the mathematics of topology as an analogy for the workings of sex, gender, and identity transition? Is not the goal of the trans subject to avoid "mere metaphor"—to not "be like an *x*," but to "be an *x*"? Does thinking of transition as traversal bring us closer to recognizing the possibility of radical change than appropriation had?

In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva describes analogy as the "field," the "place" of love; it is our primary example of analogy "raised to the level of cause" (272).[205] The kinds of analogies

[204] In her introduction to Badiou's *Concept of Model,* Lucca Fraser identified the relationship between "model" and the metaphysics of change this way: "If semantics *is* the articulation of the scientific in mathematics onto the ideological, if it is the ideological reproduction of the scientific given, then the epistemological break must be that which emerges from and transforms the possibilities of this kind of articulation; it must be 'that by which a mathematical region, in taking its place as a model, finds itself *transformed*, tested, and experimented upon, as concerns the state of its rigour or generality': this, for Badiou, is precisely what takes place in the work of *formalization*, the production of the formal apparatuses of which models are models" (Fraser, *Concept of Model*, xxiv). According to Badiou, the category of model "thus designates the retroactive causality of formalism on its own scientific history, the history conjoining object and use. […] The problem is not, and cannot be, that of the representational relations between the model and the concrete, or between the formal and the models. The problem is that of *the history of formalization.* 'Model' designates the network traversed by the retroactions and anticipations that weave this history: whether it be designated, in anticipation, as break, or in retrospect, as remaking" (54-55). *Concept of Model* was written as a part of Althusser's "Lecture Courses for Scientists" series, but was never given, due to the interruption of the 1968 student protests. The book predated the "turn" that would shift Badiou away from Althussero-Lacanian philosophy of science, and towards a fully mathematized systematization of philosophy. See Section 3.1.

[205] This book was also a part of Hennix's personal archive and was heavily underlined by her.

deployed by the loving subject, which always center on the questions of number (are we One or Two?) and questions of act (do we choose, or does something choose through us?) always indicate for Kristeva the "uncertainty concerning the reference" of the analogy. This uncertainty leads her to diagnose a "narcissistic economy" behind all such analogies: if love is approached metaphorically, elliptically, it is not to preserve its purity, but to stretch out its already thin substance. That we can only ever identify or name love as a "*being like* . . ."—Badiou famously analogizes it as "being like an immortal," among many other metaphorizations—means that for Kristeva love "is not only *being* and *nonbeing,* it is also a longing for *unbeing* in order to assert […] not an ontology, that is, something outside of discourse, but the constraint of discourse itself. The 'like' of metaphorical conveyance both assumes and upsets that constraint, and to the extent that it probabilizes the identity of signs, it questions the very probability of the reference" (*Tales of Love*, 273). Kristeva's later writings on love do not explicitly reference the concept of the chora; despite her analysis of the chora's metaphorization as feminine receptacality, the possibility of love's metaphoricity as chora is never raised. She does explore how we can think the effects of love's traversal on subjects—what *travels* between the two (and always the *two*) subjects of love, given the uncertainty and meagreness of its reference. In truth, this travel describes in concrete terms the same kind of place-trading that is constitutive of the chora prior to the thetic break: after coming into contact with what it is not, the subject indeed can think in terms of a "couple" that would function as a source or common ground for love and for identity in love. As soon as there is a couple, as soon as there is more than one subject, transference becomes fixed, and "one is in love with what resembles an ideal that is out of sight but present in memory" (269). One might say that, unfortunately, cis and trans subjectivities are in each case "still in love with one another," or still amid their *liaison*.

And "a simple reversal" of this dominant model cannot break the current of transference and allow the subject to change itself to better accommodate love: it is not enough to "[set up] an inner foundation, a 'mood,' a basis for discourse—in place of an outer one, the referent," as if the subject is merely, in the end, "an inside facing a referential outside" (274).[206] Rather, what is mysterious about love is that the subject can choose to trade its place with that which it does not know the place of: ultimately, it may become this unknown itself. Yet in or against this, the subject can at the same time never be sure, and can only insist, and decide the undecidable. Such is the "climax of destabilizing-stabilizing identification"—the eruption of orientation toward the beloved, an orientation so perfect that it suddenly seems possible one becomes them—that Kristeva points to as the transformative power of love.[207] It is this that "[places] love in concert with […] homologation." "There, on account of the subject's modification—the questioning of the subject in amatory experience—a modification of its being and of being is carried out; they are opened out, if you will, unfurled." Kristeva accurately predicts the becoming-ontology of "stylistic variants of the *cure* [referencing 'the talking cure']" that "spread out before us" as "amatory codes," shaping being to forms of loving, but she lacked a way to understand the topology of that "spreading." As Brouwer and Hennix would say, this spreading is nothing more

[206] We might compare this to what we have seen of Badiou's conception of love, which, though it denies grounding love in the couple-form, since for him lovers enquire into a shared world rather than in to each other or their relation to one another, still depends upon some kind of unified site of enquiry that sublates what in the dominant conception would be the idea of "love in itself."

[207] Take for example the "lesbianism" Kristeva attributes to Stendhal, as she reads his observation that he has "a woman's skin." In life Stendhal could relate to women only via his own feminizing and identificatory "chastity," but Kristeva believes it is his image of his body as in the first place divisible into parts that shows that he "believes in Woman with a capital W" (*Tales of Love*, 362). Kristeva's critique is akin to the formulation of a "morphological imaginary" in Judith Butler's "The Lesbian Phallus." Butler notes that "the phallus governs the description of its own genesis and, accordingly, wards off a genealogy that might confer on it a derivative or projected character" (*Bodies that Matter*, 82). When phallic power is taken to be lesbian, "it is and is not a masculinist figure of power; the signifier is significantly split, for it both recalls and displaces the masculinism by which it is impelled" (89). This "impelling," a "recalling" and "displacing," is formally identical to the movement of intuitionist Twoity.

than the undoing of a compaction, the separation of two indexes, one non-sterile and fixed in its infinity, and the other sterile, freed into its finitude.

In "Poetry as Philosophy, Poetry as Notation" (1985), Hennix describes poetry as "notation for possible worlds, the material notation standing for the objectification of their possibility" (*Poësy Matters*, 25). For her—not just for her own mathematically-informed poems, but the full range of her reading, from forms like the haiku to the ghazal, or from the concrete writing of Fahlström to the free verse of Mallarmé—"each poem presents a problem (which is not necessarily unique), the difficulty of the problem being its *degree of unsolvability.*" Poetry, lacking any "primitive notations" reserved for it alone, thus expresses "a fragment of an uninterrupted calculus which is employed for the purpose of capturing the expressions of the distinguished type (Cf. L.E.J. Brouwer)" (26-7). But how can "type" be distinguished at all within something that flows, as Hennix claims the ideal drone of *rag* does, without end? Always, she says, by way of "two (incompatible) cognitive kinds of symbolic forms," which both must eventually encounter "the ultimate silence created by a poem's decaying afterimage" which "[make] a boundary situation of human existence." After this, "the possibility of being guided by conventional meaning […] breaks down. The meaning of words ceases to be verifiable, only fragments of a private language remain in circulation," and "everything must now be mixed together" anew by an "encounter" (27). "The more immediate, the more 'authentic' an encounter with reality becomes, the less can be anticipated by that encounter. To bring any system of beliefs to bear on the course of such an encounter would be the same as annihilating its entire potentiality. Its 'freshness' depends on its incorruptibility, on its immunity to beliefs about the course of the future" (26).

The cis and trans subject meet occasionally, which means now and then, in amatory encounter, and enquire into the place of transition in their traversal. Eternity is inaugurated, yes, but the transition that occasions it is annulled, or infinitely extended. The two subjects intermix, lose ground, and eventually must build a new notation from the old. If only they could detach from one another—only then could they be free to be what already they are.

### *5.1 – Conclusion*

In certain places of the world, in a certain moment before whatever the present is turning into, a certain kind of person would occasionally reduce a wide and contradictory swath of political, ethical, and metaphysical standpoints on sex, gender, and identity to a single refrain: "trans people exist." The certainty that *there is* transness, that transition *occurs,* is indeed an essential starting point for any theoretical or philosophical work that concerns the trans subject. Yet the prevailing sentiment today, as an era of liberal de-singularization shifts to (or reveals itself as) an era of fascist re-essentialization, is that the refrain of "trans existence," let alone philosophy and theory carried out in the trans subject's name, is no longer adequate to the moment, if it ever was. For all the optimism and discursive bravura that at one point attached to this synecdochal phrase, it has also been the target of scathing critiques since its inception. It has been held to err in hoping that the recognition of existence could impart a greater facility or possibility for that existence, to err in thinking that a merely discursive existence would be a prize greater or more important than those prizes which might improve "material conditions," to err in reducing to a tautological truth a mundane fact, and in treating that reduction in itself as radical, to err in assuming that the subject of the refrain, a trans subject, can be described with a single term of reference, and most damning of all, to err in claiming that trans subjects "exist" in the way that cis subjects do, and are therefore not truly distinct. In other words, it risks claiming that there is a common ground of being for transness and cisness as they exist, such as that of the "subject," and thus consents to capture by a philosophical tradition "not our own."

One must admit that it is far easier to justify acting in the name of a non-identitarian universal that happens to include transness than it is to think and speak of transness in its particularity, as a specific mode of sexed and gendered "existence," or as a specific form of

"subjective" identity—even if this is a particular that, as we have tried to maintain, must be kept determinate and yet generic. It is far easier to, say, justify making medical access to the means of transition freely available for all than it is to justify making those available for trans people purely on the basis of their transness, as the activism around and fate of informed consent shows. It is far easier to argue for the protection of trans people from housing and employment discrimination under the broader argument of civil rights for all than it is to argue for programs or laws specifically designed for trans people discriminated against on the "abstract" ground of their transness. Whether it is a question of optics for the design and marketing of a cultural event, or a question of the peopling of an institution with an eye to "inclusion," or a question of the message-finagling required to maintain lines of solidarity, tactical decisions aimed at efficacy always seem more urgent, relevant and finalizable than philosophico-theoretical decisions that aim at maintaining conditions for the thinkability of existence—those conditions which the trans subject transforms into her being. Yet whether one adopts an anti-identitarian stance in principle or only pragmatically, transness will remain, like so many other predicates of the subject, an element in the worlds that our actions are directed towards. This means that when one hears the word "transness," one will already know, broadly, something of a separable history and segment of humanity, one with an array of techniques and experiences that play out upon a common terrain, even if the borders of that terrain and those who occupy it are messy, shifting, contradictory or uncomfortable. And when one says the word "transness" one will be liable to be understood, or to at least not be questioned; for the trans subject, moreso than for other identitarian positions, this tends to mean essentially the same thing. What's more, as civilizational collapse progresses, and transness—ever taken by its enemies as a sign of wider social and collective decline—returns to its sacrificial function, questions of "justification" and

"efficacy" lose substance: so what if it is easier to justify or argue for this pragmatism over that idealism, today? Action for liberation carried out in the name of a universal will be no less stymied by force—non-philosophical force—than action carried out in the name of a particular.

It is amid this collective levelling, this stymieing blockage, that the trans subject continues to exist, and continues to bind this existence to the ground of her being. And therein, the possibility of doing a little theorizing, and doing a little philosophy, persists. At bottom, philosophy happens when we try to think again the given, the simple, and the immediate, from within the movement of thinking that the subject already finds itself dragged along by. Philosophy shows to the subject the conceptual weapons it already possesses and reveals to it the decisions it has already made. *Being and Transition*'s critique of the philosophical underpinnings of the two dominant figurations of change today, appropriation and traversal, and its articulation of the concept of modal difference from which this split figuration derives, has been carried out in that same spirit: to think what is already active in our thinking as subjects, trans or cis. It has attempted to show that identity, essence, and being are not staid, reactionary forces. Nor are they purely "defensive fictions," always reducible to or replaceable by monisms of desire, life, or force. *Being and Transition's* claim is that on the contrary these ideas remain with us as active energies, unpredictable materials, and indispensable ingredients in the multiple of the subject. The problem is not a thinking of identity, essence, or being—the problem is a thinking of an identity, essence, or being that cannot change; *truly* change. And only the trans subject can locate and insist upon the truth of this change, *its* change. We cannot discard this idea, for in so doing we would lose the multiple, and the indestructible being of the truth: change occurs.

On this, all of the trans subject's enquiries, all of her loves, all of her militancies, insist.

***Bibliography***

Adair, Cass, Awkward-Rich, Cameron, and Marvin, Amy. "Before Trans Studies." *TSQ*. Vol. 7, No. 3. Duke University Press, 2020. 306-320.

Adjarian, M.M. "Monique Wittig and the Allegory of the Possible in Across the Acheron." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies.* Vol. 39, No. 3. 2018.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities.* Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, 1999.

Aizura, Aren Z. *Mobile Subjects: Transnational Imaginaries of Gender Reassignment*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Allison, Henry E. Kant's Transcendental Deduction: An Analytical-Historical Commentary. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster, The Penguin Press, 1969.

———. *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster, James H. Kavanagh, Thomas E. Lewis, Grahame Lock, and Warren Montag, Verso, 1990.

Amin, Kadji. "We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents," *Representations*. Vol. 158, 2022. 106-119.

———. "Whither Trans Studies?: A Field at a Crossroads," *TSQ*. Vol. 10, No. 1, 2023. 54-58.

Apollinaire, Guillaume. "The Mammaries of Tiresias," *Three Pre-Surrealist Plays*. Trans. Maya Slater, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Apter, Emily. "Gender Ontology, Sexual Difference, and Differentiating Sex: Malabou and Derrida," *philoSOPHIA*. Vol. 7, No. 1, 2017. 109-124.

Arapoglou, Eleftheria, Mónika Fodor, and Jopi Nyman. *Mobile Narratives: Travel, Migration, and Transculturation*. Routledge, 2018.

Archey, Karen and Lawrence Kumpf. "Catherine Christer Hennix: Traversée du Fantasme," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Online, 2018. <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/catherine-christer-hennix> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Ashley, Florence and Carolyn Ells. "In Favor of Covering Ethically Important Cosmetic Surgeries: Facial Feminization Surgery for Transgender People," *The American Journal of Bioethics*. Vol. 18, No. 1-2, 2018. 23-25.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Penelopiad*. Penguin, 2005.

Aultman, B. “Cisgender,” *TSQ*. Vol. 1, No. 1-2, 2014. 61-62.

Backman, Jussi. *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Postmetaphysical Unity of Being.* SUNY Press, 2015.

Badiou, Alain and Barbara Cassin. *Heidegger; His Life & His Philosophy*. Trans. Susan Spitzer, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Badiou, Alain and Fabien Tarby. *Philosophy of the Event*. Polity Press. 2013.

Badiou, Alain and Tzuchien Tho. “New Horizons in Mathematics as a Philosophical Condition: An Interview with Alain Badiou,” *Parrhesia*. Vol. 3, 2007. 1-11.

Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event.* Trans. Oliver Feltham, Continuum, 2005.

———. *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*. Trans. Norman Madarasz, SUNY Press, 2006

———. *Cinema*. Trans. Susan Spitzer, Polity Press, 2013.

———. *Conditions*. Trans. Steve Corcoran, Bloomsbury, 2008.

———. “Heidegger’s Parmenides,” *Division III of Heidegger’s* Being and Time*: The Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver. MIT Press, 2015. 21-38.

———. *Logics of Worlds.* Trans. Alberto Toscano, Continuum, 2009.

———. “Mark and Lack,” Trans Lucca Fraser and Ray Brassier, originally published 1969.

———. *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism.* Trans. Ray Brassier, Stanford University Press, 2003.

———. The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics. Trans. Lucca Fraser and Tzuchien Tho, Re.Press, 2007.

———. *The Immanence of Truths*. Trans. Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer, Bloomsbury, 2018.

———. “Theory of Contradiction,” Trans. Alberto Toscano, originally published 1975.

———. *Theory of the Subject*. Trans. Bruno Bosteels, Continuum, 2009.

Bambach, Charles. “Who is Heidegger’s Hölderlin?”, *Research in Phenomenology*. Vol. 47, No. 1, 2017. 39-59.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007.

———. "TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings." *GLQ.* Vol. 22, Nos. 2-3. Duke University Press, 2015. 387-422.

Bedient, Calvin. "Kristeva and Poetry as Shattered Signification," Critical Inquiry. Vol. 16, No. 4, 1990. 807-829.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, 1969.

Bentzen, Bruno. "Brouwer's Intuition of Twoity and Constructions in Separable Mathematics," *History and Philosophy of Logic*. Vol. 45, No. 3, 2024. 341-361.

Benveniste, Émile. Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society. Trans. Elizabeth Palmer, Hau Books, 2016.

———. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. M.E. Meek. University of Miami Press, 1971.

———. "The Semiology of Language," Trans. Genette Ashby and Adelaide Russo, *Semiotica*. 1981. 5-23.

Bernays, "On a Symposium on the Foundations of Mathematics," *Bernays Project*, No. 28, 1971.

Bernstein, Charles. "Riding's Reason: An Introduction to Laura (Riding) Jackson and Schuyler Jackson, 'Rational Meaning: Toward a New Foundation of Words," *College Literature*. Vol. 24, No. 3, 1997. 138-150.

Bey, Marquis. *Cis-Tem Failure: Essays on Blackness and Cisgender*. Duke University Press, 2022.

———. "The Trans*-ness of Blackness, the Blackness of Trans*-ness," *TSQ.* Vol. 4, No. 2. Duke University Press, 2017. 275-295.

Billard, Thomas J., Avery R. Everhart and Erique Zhang. "Whither Trans Studies? On Fields, Post-Disciplines, and the Need for an Applied Transgender Studies," *Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies*. Vol. 1, Nos. 1-2, 2022. 1-18.

Billitteri, Carla. *Language and the Renewal of Society in Walt Whitman, Laura (Riding) Jackon, and Charles Olson: The American Cratylus*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Bolz, Roland. "Mathematics is Ontology? A Critique of Badiou's Ontological Framing of Set Theory," *Filozofski Vestnik*. Vol. 61, No. 2, 2020. 119-142.

Boncardo, Robert and Bryan Cooke. "'Long Live the International Proletariat of France!': Alain Badiou and the SONACOTRA Rent Strike 1975-1979," *Philosophy Today*. Vol. 62, No. 4, 2018. 1139-1163.

Boncardo, Robert. "Periodise and Pass Beyond," *Reform, Revolution and Crisis in Europe. Routledge*, 2019. 129-147.

Boon, Marcus. "The Eternal Drone," *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, ed. Rob Young, Continuum, 2003.

———. *The Politics of Vibration: Music as a Cosmopolitical Practice*. Duke University Press, 2022.

Braidotti, Rosa. *Nomadic Theory*. Columbia University Press, 2011.

Brassier, Ray. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Braver, Lee, ed. *Division III of Heidegger's* Being and Time*: The Unanswered Question of Being*. MIT Press, 2015.

Brilmeyer, Pearl S., Filippo Trentin, and Zairong Xiang. "The Ontology of the Couple, or, What Queer Theory Knows About Numbers," *GLQ*. Vol. 25, No. 2, 2019. 223-255.

Brouwer, *L.E.J. Brouwer's Cambridge Lectures on Intuitionism*. Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Brown, Chad E. and Karol Pąk. "A Tale of Two Set Theories," *Lecture Notes in Computer Science Intelligent Computer Mathematics,* 2019. 44-60.

Bulman, James C. *Shakespeare Re-dressed: Cross-gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Burchill, Louise. "Of a Universal No Longer Indifferent to Difference: Badiou (and Irigaray) on Woman, Truths, and Philosophy," *Philosophy Today*. Vol. 62, No. 4. Philosophy Documentation Center, 2018. 1165-1187.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 1993.

———. "Wittig's Material Practice: Universalizing a Minority Point of View," *GLQ*. Vol. 13, No. 4, 2007. 519-533.

———. *Gender Trouble.* Routledge, 1990.

Cabrices, Rafael Osío. "El grandioso enigma de Esdras Parra," Cinco 8, Online, 2021. <https://www.cinco8.com/periodismo/el-grandioso-enigma-de-esdras-parra/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Cárdenas, Micha. *Poetic Operations: Trans of Color Art in Digital Media*. Duke University Press, 2022.

Carlson, James. "The Poincaré Conjecture," *Clay Mathematics Proceedings*. Vol. 19, 2010.

Carlson, Shanna. "Transgender Subjectivity and the Logic of Sexual Difference," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. Vol. 21, No. 2. Duke University Press, 2010. 46-72.

Caswell, Austin B. "Maeterlinck's and Dukas' 'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue': A Feminist Opera?", *Studies in Romanticism*. Vol. 27, No. 2, 1988. 203-220.

Cavaillès, Jean. *On Logic and the Theory of Science*. Trans. Robin Mackay and Knox Peden, Urbanomic, 2021.

Cavanaugh, Sheila L. "Transsexuality as Sinthome: Bracha L. Ettinger and the Other (Feminine) Sexual Difference," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*. Vol. 17. No. 1. Routledge, 2016. 27-44.

Chanter, Tina. *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*. Routledge, 1995.

Christer Hennix, Catherine. *Poësy Matters & Other Matters*. Blank Forms Editions, 2019.

Comer, Joseph. *Discourses of Global Queer Mobility and the Mediatization of Equality*. Routledge, 2023.

Copjec, Joan. "The Inheritance of Potentiality," *E-REA*. Vol. 12, No. 1. 2014.

———. "The Sexual Compact," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*. Vol. 17, No. 2, 2012. 31-48.

Cornea, Octavian, Viktor Ginzburg, Ely Kerman, and François Lalonde. "New Applications and Generalizations of Floer Theory," BIRS, Report, 2007.

Chu, Andrea Long and Drager, Emmett Harsin. "After Trans Studies," *TSQ.* Vol. 6, No. 1. Duke University Press, 2019. 103-116.

Chu, Andrea Long. *Females: A Concern*. Verso, 2019.

———. "On Liking Women," *N+1 Magazine*, Issue 31, 2018. <https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-30/essays/on-liking-women/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

———. "Our Reasons," *N+1 Magazine*, Online, 2025. <https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/our-reasons/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

———. "The Pink," *N+1 Magazine*, Issue 34, 2019. <https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-34/politics/the-pink/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Churchland, Paul. *A Neurocomputational Perspective: The Nature of Mind and the Structure of Science*. MIT Press, 1992.

Clapham, Christopher, James Nicholson, and James R. Nicholson. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Colebrook, Claire. "What Is It Like to Be a Human?", *TSQ*. Vol. 2, No. 2, 2015. 227-243.

Conley, Katharine. Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism. University of Nebraska Press, 1996.

———. "Rrose Sélavy's Ghosts: Life, Death, and Desnos," *The French Review*. Vol. 83, No. 5, 2010. 964-975.

Coto, Amauri Francisco Gutiérrez. "Is There a Transgender Literature in Latin America and the Caribbean?", *Chasqui*. Vol. 49, No. 1, 2020. 276-294.

Cotnoir, A.J. and Achille Varzi. *Mereology*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

Crowder, Diane Griffin. "From the Straight Mind to Queer Theory: Implications for Political Movement," *GLQ*. Vol. 13, No. 4, 2007. 439-502.

Crawford, Lucas. "Woolf's *Einfühlung*: An Alternative Theory of Transgender Affect," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*. Vol. 48, No. 1, 2015. 165-181.

Dahlstrom, Daniel. "Heidegger's Interpretation of Transcendental Imagination," *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

———. "Heidegger's Kantian Turn: Notes to His Commentary on the '*Kritik Der Reinen Vernunft*'", The Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 45, No. 2, 1991. 329-361.

Debeljak, Aleš. *Reluctant Modernity*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.

Dekker, George. *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism*. Stanford University Press, 2004.

Derrida, Jacques. "Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," *Research in Phenomenology*. Vol. 13. Brill Publishers, 1983. 65-83.

———. *Geschlecht III: Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*. Trans. Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo, Chicago University Press, 2020.

———. *On the Name*, Trans. David Wood, Stanford University Press, 1995.

de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Bode and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, Vintage, 2011.

de Pizan, Christine. *Book of the City of Ladies*. Trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards, Persea Books, 1982.

De Risi, Vincenzo. "Analysis Situs, the Foundations of Mathematics and a Geometry of Space," *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. M.R. Antognazza, Oxford University Press, 2019. 247-258.

de Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Roy Harris, Bloomsbury, 2013.

Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.). *Helen in Egypt.* New Directions. 1961.

Dosse, François. *History of Structuralism, Volume 2: The Sign Sets, 1967-Present*. Trans. Deborah Glassman, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Drouillard, Jill. "Heidegger on Being a Sexed or Gendered Human Being," *Symposium: The Human Being*. The Heidegger Circle, 12, 2022. 162-165.

———. "Problem: What is Woman?: The Hermeneutics of Sex/Gender Facticity," *Heidegger, Dasein, and Gender: Thinking the Unthought*. Eds. Patricia Glazebrook and Susanne Claxton, Rowman & Littlefield, 2024.

Dowling, Sarah. *Here is a Figure*. Northwestern University Press, 2025.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future*. Duke University Press, 2004.

Elleström, Lars. "Visual Iconicity in Poetry: Replacing the Notion of 'Visual Poetry'", *Orbis Litterarum*. Vol. 71, No. 6, 2016. 437-472.

Falek, Joshua. "'Everything I Wanted Not to Be': The Specter of Africa in the Trans Travel Narrative," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. Vol. 35, No. 1, 2024. 134-162.

Federici, Silvia. *Beyond the Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, and Reclaiming the Body in Contemporary Capitalism*. PM Press, 2020.

Fisher, Cora. "Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Rum: The Art of Appropriation," *The Brooklyn Rail*, Online, 2008. <https://brooklynrail.org/2008/10/artseen/pipe-glass-bottle-of-rum-the-art-of-appropriation/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Flores, Jordan. "Esdras Parra: la poeta que se convirtió en relámpago y Piedra," *El Diaro*, Online, 2021. < https://eldiario.com/2021/09/11/esdras-parra-poeta-relampago-y-piedra/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Forrest, Peter. “The Identity of Indiscernibles,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, 2010. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-indiscernible/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Fourier, Charles. *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*. Trans. Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, Beacon Press, 1971.

Francese, Christopher. “Catullus’ Ariadne in the Twenty-First Century,” *The Classical Outlook*. Vol. 85, No. 3, 2008. 97-100.

Fraser, Lucca. “The Law of the Subject: Alain Badiou, Luitzen Brouwer and the Kripkean Analyses of Forcing and the Heyting Calculus,” *Cosmos and History*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2, 2006. 94-133.

Friedmann, Elizabeth. *A Mannered Grace: The Life of Laura (Riding) Jackson*. Persea Books, 2005.

Friedman, Michael and Samo Tomšič. *Psychoanalysis: Topological Perspectives New Conceptions of Geometry and Space in Freud and Lacan*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

Fulton, Nora and Catherine Christer Hennix. “No One is Ready: A Conversation with Catherine Christer Hennix.” *O Bod*, Online, 2023. <https://www.obodmag.com/issue3/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Gabriel, Kay. “Two Senses of Gender Abolition: Gender as Accumulation Strategy,” *Feminism Against Cisness*, ed. Emma Heaney. Duke University Press, 2024. 135-157.

Gamble, Joseph. “Towards a Trans Philology,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*. Vol. 19, No. 4, 2029. 26-44.

Gammel, Irene. *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity*. MIT Press, 2002.

Gann, Kyle. *The Arithmetic of Listening: Tuning Theory & History for the Impractical Musician*. University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Gerhardt, Spencer. *Ticking Stripe*. Blank Forms Editions, 2024.

Gherovici, Patricia. *Please Select Your Gender.* Routledge, 2010.

———. *Transgender Psychoanalysis.* Routledge, 2017.

Gil-Peterson, Jules. *Histories of the Transgender Child*. Minnesota University Press, 2018.

Gironi, Fabio. *Naturalizing Badiou: Mathematical Ontology and Structural Realism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Glazebrook, Patricia and Susanne Claxton. *Heidegger, Dasein, and Gender: Thinking the Unthought*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2024.

Gleeson, Jules Joanne and Elle O'Rourke, eds. *Transgender Marxism*, Pluto Press, 2021.

Gleeson, Jules Joanne. "In Defense of Transnormativity," The Boston Review, Online, 2022. <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/in-defense-of-transnormativity/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Gordon, Colby. "A Woman's Prick: Trans Technogenesis in Sonnet 20," *Shakespeare/Sex*, ed. Jennifer Drouin, 2020.

Goresky, Mark. "Primer on Sheaves," Institute for Advanced Study. Online, 2011. <https://www.math.ias.edu/~goresky/LectureNotes.html> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Gossett, Che. "The Art(s) of Ecstasy: Black Trans Art in the Afterlife of Slavery," *Trans Philosophy.* Eds. Perry Zurn, Andrea J. Pitts, Talia Mae Bettcher, and PJ DiPietro, University of Minnesota Press, 2024.

Gozlan, Oren, ed. *Current Critical Debates in the Field of Transsexual Studies.* Routledge, 2018.

———. *Transsexuality and the Art of Transitioning.* Routledge, 2015.

Greenshields, Will. *Lacan: The Topological Turn*. Dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Sussex, 2015.

Gregg, Frances. "Hermaphroditus," *Others: A Magazine of New Verse*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1915.

Groome, Robert. "Why Topology and Psychoanalysis?", PLACE, Online. <https://www.topoi.net/1374.html> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Gwenffrewi, Gina. "*Hiraethi* Jan Morris: The Welsh-Nationalist and Antinationalist Writing of Jan Morris Following Her Memoir *Conundrum*," *TSQ*. Vol. 8, No. 3, 2021. 368-385.

Harren, Natilee. *Fluxus Forms: Scores, Multiples, and the Eternal Network*. University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Halberstam, Jack. *Female Masculinity*. Duke University Press, 1998.

Hale, Jacob. "Are Lesbians Women?", *Hypatia*. Vol. 11, No. 2, 1996. 94-121.

Hallward, Peter. *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Haviland, Paul B. "The Age of the Machine," *291*, Nos. 7-8, 1915.

Hayward, Eva S. "Don't Exist," *TSQ*. Vol. 4, No. 2, 2017. 191-194.

Heaney, Emma and Sophie Lewis. “On the Cisness of the Bourgeoisie,” *Pinko Magazine*, Online, 2025. <https://pinko.online/web/on-the-cisness-of-the-bourgeoisie> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Heaney, Emma, ed. *Feminism Against Cisness*. Duke University Press, 2024.

———. “Is a Cervix Cis?: My Year in the Stirrups,” *Asterix Journal*, Online, 2025. <https://asterixjournal.com/is-a-cervix-cis/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

———. *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory*. Northwestern University Press, 2017.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Questions of Philosophy*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, Indiana University Press, 1994.

———. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. Richard Taft, Indiana University Press, 1990.

———. *Sein und Zeit.* Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 1927.

———. *Being and Time.* Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Blackwell, 1962.

———. *Being and Time.* Trans. Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Press, 2010.

———. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event).* Trans. Albert Hofstadter, Indiana University Press, 2012.

———. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, Yale University Press, 2000.

———. *Mindfulness*. Trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary. Bloomsbury, 2006.

———. *Nietzsche, Vols. III and IV*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi, HarperCollins, 1991.

———. *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Trans. John van Buren, Indiana University Press, 2008.

———. *On My Own Publications*. Trans. Scott M. Campbell, Indiana University Press, 2025.

———. *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s* Critique of Pure Reason. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Indiana University Press, 2977.

———. *Ponderings II-VI: Black Notebooks, 1931-1938*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indiana University Press, 2014.

———. *Ponderings XII-XV: Black Notebooks, 1939-1941*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indiana University Press, 2014.

———. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter, Indiana University Press, 1988.

———. *The Concept of Time*. Trans. William McNeill, Blackwell, 1992.

———. *The Event*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indiana University Press, 2013.

———. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Trans. Michael Heim, Indiana University Press, 1984.

Henderson, Kevin. "Becoming Lesbian: Monique Wittig's Queer-Transfeminism," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. Vol. 22, No. 2, 2018. 185-203.

Hennix, Catherine Christer. Archive. Blank Forms, New York. Accessed November, 2024.

———. *Poësy Matters and Other Matters*. Blank Forms Editions, 2019.

———. "Sunday Seminar," *Sonic Acts*. Recorded Lecture, 2018.

———. "Unbegrenzt," liner notes for *Unbegrenzt*, Karlheinz Stockhausen, recorded February, 1974, Blank Forms Editions, 2020.

Hernández, Wilfredo. "De La quinta Dayana a Cheila, una casa pa' maíta: Representaciones de la transexualidad femenina," *Cuadernos de Literatura del Caribe e Hispanoamerica*. Vol. 22, 2015. 69-90.

Heuving, Jeanne. "Laura (Riding) Jackson's 'Really New' Poem," *Gendered Modernisms.* Eds. Margaret Dickie and Thomas Travisano, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. 191-216.

Hewitson, Owen. "Why Topology Matters in Psychoanalysis I & II," *Lacan Online*. Online, 2015. < https://www.lacanonline.com/2015/01/from-the-bridges-of-konigsberg-why-topology-matters-in-psychoanalysis/, https://www.lacanonline.com/2015/03/why-topology-matters-in-psychoanalysis-part-ii/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Heyting, Arend. *Intuitionism: An Introduction*. North-Holland Publishing, 1956.

Hirsch, Elisabeth. "Remembrances of Martin Heidegger in Marburg," *Philosophy Today*. 1979. 160-169.

Hirschhorn, Philip S. "The Quillen Model Category of Topological Spaces," *Expositiones Mathematicae*. Vol. 37, No. 1, 2019. 2-24.

Holmes, Amanda. “Lacan’s Graph of Desire—Two Lectures,” *Centre for Expanded Poetics*. Recorded Lectures, 2020.

Jacobs, Mark. “Modernism as ‘Uninfected Discourse’: Laura Riding, Epilogue (1935-7) and Focus (1935),” *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*. Eds. Peter Brooker, Andrew Thacker, Oxford University Press, 2009.

James, I.M. *History of Topology*. North-Holland Publishing, 1999.

Janssen, Das E. *Phenomenal Gender: What Transgender Experience Discloses*. Indiana University Press, 2017.

Jeffreys, Sheila. *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism.* Routledge, 2014.

Johnson, Austin H. “Transnormativity: A New Concept and Its Validation through Documentary Film About Transgender Men,” *Sociological Inquiry*. Vol. 20, 2016. 1-27.

Kalha, Harri. “What the Hell is the Figure of the Child?”, *Lambda Nordica*. Vol. 16, No. 2-3, 2011. 17-46

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Keisel, Theodore. “The Drafts of ‘Time and Being”: Division III of Part One of *Being and Time* and Beyond,” *Division III of Heidegger’s* Being and Time*: The Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver. MIT Press, 2015. 151-173.

Kim, Annabel L. *Unbecoming Language: Anti-Identitarian French Feminist Fictions*. The Ohio State University Press, 2018.

Knowles, Adam. *Heidegger’s Fascist Affinities: A Politics of Silence*. Stanford University Press, 2019.

Knudsen, Nicolai Krejberg. “Depopulation,” *Research in Phenomenology*. Vol. 47, No. 3, 2017. 297-330.

Kripke, Saul. “Semantical Analysis of Intuitionistic Logic I,” *Formal Systems and Recursive Functions*, eds. Michael Dummett and J.N. Crossley, North-Holland Publishing, 1963. 92-130.

Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller, Columbia University Press, 1984.

———. *Tales of Love*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1987.

Kuenzli, Rudolf, ed. *Dada: Themes & Movements*. Phaidon, 2006.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Yale French Studies*. No. 36-37, 1966. 112-147.

———. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and Its Interpretation. Trans. Bruce Fink,* Polity Press, 2019.

———. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IX: Identification*. Trans. Cormac Gallagher, Karnac Books, 2002.

———. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX: …Or Worse.* Trans. A.R Price, Polity, 2018.

———. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge (Encore).* Trans. Alan Sheridan, W.W. Norton, 1998.

———. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXVI: Topology and Time.* Trans. Dan Collins, APW, Online. <http://apwonline.org/library.html> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Laertius, Diogenes. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Trans. R.D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library, 1925.

Laity, Cassandra. "H.D., Modernism, and the Transgressive Sexualities of Decadent-Romantic Platonism," *Gendered Modernisms.* Eds. Margaret Dickie and Thomas Travisano, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. 45-68.

Lavery, Grace E. *Pleasure and Efficacy: Of Pen Names, Cover Versions, and Other Trans Techniques*. Princeton University Press, 2023.

Lee, Anne E. *Music of a Thousand Years: A New History of Persian Musical Traditions. University of California Press*, 2019.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Discourse on Metaphysics*. Trans. Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereya, Oxford University Press, 2020.

Leinster, Tom. Basic Category Theory. University of Edinburgh, 2014.

Lewis, Sophie. *Enemy Feminisms: TERFs, Policewomen, and Girlbosses Against Liberation*. Haymarket Books, 2025.

Llosa, Mario Vargas. *Al Pie del Támesis*. Alfaguara, 2008.

Lury, Celia, Luciana Parisi, and Tiziana Terranova. "The Topological Becoming of Culture," *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 29, No. 4-5, 2012. 3-35.

Mácha, Jakub. “Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Classical Theory: Affinities Rather than Divergences,” From Philosophy of Fiction to Cognitive Poetics, ed. Piotr Stalmaszczyk, Peter Lang, 2016. 93-115.

Magnusson, Jonas. “Hilma af Klimt: Diagram Artist,” *Kunstkritikk*, Online, 2013. <https://kunstkritikk.com/hilma-af-klint-diagram-artist/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Malabou, Catherine. *Changing Difference*. Trans. Carolyn Shread, Polity, 2011.

———. *Le plaisir effacé: Clitoris et pensée*. Bibliothèque Rivages, 2020.

———. *The Heidegger Change: On the Fantastic in Philosophy*. Trans. Peter Skafish, SUNY Press, 2011.

Malatino, Hil. *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad*. University of Minnesota Press, 2022.

Malcolm, Jane. “‘That breeding silence she’: Laura Riding’s Gendered Ethics and the Limits of the Word ‘Woman’”, *Arizona Quarterly: Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*. Vol. 65, No. 3, 2009. 61-85.

Mathieu, Nicole-Claude and A.M. Sheridan-Smith. “Notes toward a Sociological Definition of Sex Categories,” *International Journal of Sociology.* Vol. 5, No. 4, 1975/1976. 14-38.

Memon, Madhavi. *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Millot, Catherine. *Horsexe: Essay on Transsexuality*. Autonomedia, 1991.

Morel, Geneviève. “The Hypothesis of Compactness in Chapter One of *Encore*,” *Journal of the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research*. Vol. 5, 1995.

Morris, Jan. *Conundrum*. New York Review of Books, 2002.

———. *Fifty Years of Europe: An Album*. Penguin, 1997.

———. *Hav*. New York Review of Books, 2006.

———. *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*. Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Morrison, Toni and Rokia Traoré. *Desdemona*. Bloomsbury, 2024.

Namaste, Viviane K. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered*

*People*. Chicago University Press, 2000.

———. "The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality," *Sociological Theory*. Vol. 12, No. 2. American Sociological Association, 1994. 220-231.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "Kant's System of Pleasure," *Pli*. Vol. 8, 1999. 149-163.

Nelson, Eric S. "Heidegger, Formal Indication, and Sexual Difference," Eksistenz, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2022. 65-77.

Nelson, Maggie. *Women, The New York School, and Other True Abstractions*. University of Iowa Press, 2007.

Northrop, Charlotte. "Caeneus and Heroic (Trans)Masculinity in Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Arethusa*. Vol. 53, No. 1, 2020. 25-41.

Notley, Alice. *Alma, Or, the Dead Women*. Granary Books, 2006.

———. *Benediction*. Letter Machine Editions, 2015.

———. *Disobedience*. Penguin, 2001.

———. *Reason and Other Women*. Chax Press, 2010.

———. *The Descent of Alette*. Penguin, 1992.

O'Keefe, Brian. "Being in the World According to Badiou," *The Comparatist*. Vol. 44, 2020. 25-45.

O'Neill-Butler, Lauren and Catherine Christer Hennix. "Interview with Catherine Christer Hennix," *Artforum*. Online, 2018. < https://www.artforum.com/columns/catherine-christer-hennix-discusses-her-retrospective-at-the-stedelijk-museum-238305/> Accessed April 19, 2025.

Onions, Charles Talbot, G.W.S. Friedrichsen, and R.W. Burchfield. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. Oxford University Press, 1966.

Papadimitrou, Fivos. *Geo-Topology: Theory, Models and Applications*, 2023.

Parra, Esdras. *The Collected Poems of Esdras Parra*. Trans. Jamie Berrout, Independent Publishing, 2019.

Persjin, Jan-Jasper. "To What Question is the Badiouan Notion of the Subject an Answer?", *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Vol. 43, No. 1, 2017. 96-120.

Phillips, John W.P. "On Topology," *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 30, No. 5, 2013. 122-152.

Piaget, Jean. *Experiments in Contradiction*, Trans. Derek Coltman, Chicago University Press, 1980.

Picabia, Francis. *I Am a Beautiful Monster*. Trans. Mark Lowenthal, MIT Press, 2012.

Plate, Liedeke. *Transforming Memories in Contemporary Women's Rewriting.* Palgrave Macmillan. 2011.

Plato. "Timaeus," Trans. Donald J. Zeyl, *Complete Works*. Hackett, 1997.

Plemons, Eric. *The Look of a Woman: Facial Feminization Surgery and the Aims of Trans-Medicine*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Plotnitsky, Arkady. "On Lacan and Mathematics," *Œuvres & Critiques*. Vol. 34, No. 2, 2009. 143-162.

Poincaré, Henri. *Papers on Topology: Analysis Situs and Its Five Supplements*. Trans. John Sitwell, University of Edinburgh Press, 2009.

Preciado, Paul B. *Counter-Sexual Manifesto.* Trans. Kevin Dunn, Columbia University Press, 2018.

Probyn, Elspeth. *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies*. Routledge, 1993.

Prosser, Jay. "Exceptional Locations: Transsexual Travelogues," *Reclaiming Genders Transsexual Grammars at the Fin de Siècle*, eds. Stephen Little, Kate More, Bloomsbury, 2016.

———. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. Colombia University Press, 1998.

Provitola, Blase A. "TERF or Transfeminist Avant la Lettre? Monique Wittig's Complex Legacy in Trans Studies," *TSQ*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 2022. 387-406.

Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer Tourism: Geographies of Globalization," *GLQ*. Vol. 8, No. 1-2, 2002.

Rae, Gavin. *Questioning* Sexuality: From Psychoanalysis to Gender Theory and Beyond. Edinburgh University Press, 2024.

Ragland, Ellie. *Jacques Lacan and the Logic of Structure: Topology and Language in Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 2015.

Ramazani, Jahan. *Poetry in a Global Age*. University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Reichel, Pavel. *Heidegger's Late Marburg Project: Being, Entities, and Schematisation*. Dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Essex, 2016.

Reznick, Jordan. “Dismembered Muses and Mirrors That Bite: A Trans Perspective on Gender Variance in Surrealist Art,” *The Routledge Companion to Surrealism*, ed. Kirsten Strom, 2022.

Rich, Adrienne. “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,” *College English.* Vol. 34, No. 1. 1972.

Riding, Laura and Robert Graves. *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*. Haskell House, 1969.

———. *Essays from ‘Epilogue’ 1935-1937*. Carcanet Press.

Riding, Laura. Archive. State University of New York at Buffalo, New York. Accessed September, 2023.

———. *Experts Are Puzzled*. Ugly Duckling Presse, 2018.

———. *Poems of Laura Riding: A Newly Revised Edition of the 1938 to 1980 Collection*. Persea Books, 2001.

———. *Progress of Stories*. Persea Books, 1994.

———. *Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words and Supplementary Essays*. University Press of Virginia, 1997.

———. “The Promise of Words,” *London Review of Books*. Vol. 17, No. 17, 1995.

———. *The Telling*. The Athlone Press, 1972.

———. *The Word Woman and Other Related Writings*. Persea Books.

Roman, Christopher. “The Owl of the System: Alice Notley’s Queer Poetics in The Descent of Alette,” *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*. Vol. 6, No. 2, 2015. 211-223.

Ross, Mirha-Soleil and Xanthra Phillippa MacKay, “Gendertrash from Hell,” Vols. 1-4. *genderpress*, 1993-1995.

Saketopoulou, Avgi and Ann Pellegrini. *Gender Without Identity*. The Unconscious in Translation, 2023.

Salamon, Gayle. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

Sawelson-Gorse, Naomi, ed. *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender and Identity*. MIT Press, 1998.

Schor, Naomi. *Reading in Detail*. Routledge, 1987.

See, Tony. *Community Without Identity: The Ontology and Politics of Heidegger*. Atropos Press, 2009.

Sharrock, Alison, Daniel Möller, and Mats Malm, eds. *Metamorphic Readings: Transformation, Language, and Gender in the Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Sheehan, Thomas. *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Sherover, Charles M. *Heidegger, Kant & Time*. Indiana University Press, 1971.

Simondon, Gilbert. *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*. Éditions Jérôme Millon, 1995.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity.* Minnesota University Press, 2017.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick. Indiana University Press, 1983. 169–95.

Sridhar, Anirudh. *Agon: Poetry's Resistance to the Mathematisation of Reality*. Dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy, Oxford University, 2018.

Stanley, Eric A. *Atmospheres of Violence: Structuring Antagonism and the Trans/Queer Ungovernable*. Duke University Press, 2021.

Stein, Charles. "Being = Space x Action," *Io*. Vol. 41, 1988.

Stock, Kathleen. *Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism*. Fleet, 2021.

Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto," *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, Routledge, 2006.

Stryker, Susan, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore. "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?", *WSQ*. Vol. 36, No. 3-4. The Feminist Press, 2008. 11-22.

Suschitzky, Anya. "'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue:' Dukas, the Light and the Well," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1997. 133-161.

Szymanski, J.A. "(Re)Reading Monique Wittig: Domination, Utopia, and Polysemy," *Hypatia*. Vol. 38, No. 3, 2023. 549-571.

Tasić, Vladimir. "Badiou's Logics: Math, Metaphor, and (Almost) Everything," *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*. Vol. 7, No. 1, 2017. 22-45.

Tomšič, Samo. *The Capitalist Unconscious*. Verso, 2015.

Trilling, James. “The Soul of the Empire: Style and Meaning in the Mosaic Pavement of the Byzantine Imperial Palace in Constantinople,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*. Vol. 43, 1989. 27-72.

Tyler, Royall. *Japanese Nō Dramas.* Penguin, 1992.

Van Leeuwen, Anne. *Irigaray, Heidegger and the Question of Sexual Difference*. Dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy, The New School for Social Research, 2010.

von Freytag-Loringhoven, Elsa. *Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*. MIT Press, 2011.

Wagner, Linda Welshimer. “‘Helen in Egypt’: A Culmination,” *Contemporary Literature*. Vol., No. 4, 1969. 523-536.

Weiss, Allen S. “‘Poetic Justice’: Formations of Subjectivity and Sexual Identity,” *Cinema Journal*. Vol. 28, No. 1, 1988. 45-64.

Wexler, Joyce Piell. *Laura Riding’s Pursuit of Truth*. Ohio University Press, 1979.

Williams, Cristan. “Radical Inclusion: Recounting the Trans Inclusive History of Radical Feminism, TSQ. Vol. 3, Nos. 1-2, 2016. 254-258.

Wittig, Monique and Sande Zeig. *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary*. Avon Books, 1979.

Wittig, Monique. *Across the Acheron.* Peter Owen Publishers, 1987.

———. *Les Guérillères*. Trans. David Le Vay, Beacon Press, 1985.

———. *The Lesbian Body*. Trans. David Le Vay, Avon Books, 1973.

———. *The Opoponax*. Trans. Helen Weaver, Daughters, Inc., 1976.

———. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays.* Beacon Press, 1992.

Wizemann, T.M. and Mary-Lou Pardue, *Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* National Academies Press, 2001.

Wolin, Richard. *Heidegger in Ruins: Between Philosophy and Ideology*. Yale University Press, 2022.

Wrathall, Mark A., ed. *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Yassour, Avraham. “Communism and Utopia: Marx, Engels and Fourier,” *Studies in Soviet Thought*. Vol. 26, No. 3, 1983. 217-227.

Young, Julian. “Was There a Turn in Heidegger’s Philosophy?”, *Division III of Heidegger’s* Being and Time*: The Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver. MIT Press, 2015. 329-348.

Zalamea, Fernando. *Synthetic Philosophy of Contemporary Mathematics*. Trans. Lucca Fraser, Urbanomic, 2012.

Ziogas, Ioannis. *Ovid and Hesiod: The Metamorphosis of the* Catalogue of Women. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Zupančič, Alenka. *What is Sex?* The MIT Press, 2017.