

IN-BETWEEN BODIES: TRANSITIONAL SPACE AND FEMINIST POLITICS

By

ABRAHAM B. WEIL

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Women's and Gender Studies

written under the direction of

Dr. Elizabeth Grosz

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

January 2012

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by ABRAHAM BROOKES WEIL

Thesis Director:

Dr. Elizabeth Grosz

Using common understandings of oppression as a point of departure, this work will explore, and attempt to understand, ways in which oppressions, locally and globally, effect and affect different individuals and specific identities (self-identified or projected) and how those oppressions are constructed, manifested, and sustained. By employing theory that explores networks or assemblages of actions and affects, investigating habits, and pairing these with feminist texts discussing sexism and patriarchy, I offer explanations of the limits to conceptualizing oppression within a structuralist model as well as offer more complicated, nuanced, and effective strategies for the feminist movement. Through coupling the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault with feminist writers and poets Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa, this project endeavors to bring about a political questioning in hopes of adding to the discourse a new model for feminist politics.

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Part One: Mapping

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

A Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

Conceptions of the marginalized subject have come to both fascinate and frustrate current social movements and academic work. The idea of an oppressed, or marginalized, subject has been taken up in a multitude of fashions with limited answers to the ways in which these subjects come to be. Often, ideas of structural and institutionalized oppression have been accepted as the key focus to why these oppressions have been continuously reproduced on a global scale. However, interrogating this coming-to-be of institutionalized oppressions must come to the forefront of feminist critique in order to examine the limits of these understandings and theorize a political and personal future in which we may begin to understand the larger forces at play—that is, our own actions as feminists, activists, scholars and so forth, in the reproduction of these oppressions.

Using common understandings of oppression as a point of departure, this work will explore, and attempt to understand, ways in which oppressions, locally and globally, effect and affect different individuals and specific identities (self-identified or projected) and how those oppressions are constructed, manifested, and sustained. By employing theory that explores networks or assemblages of actions and affects, investigating habits, and pairing these with feminist texts discussing sexism and patriarchy, I offer explanations of the limits to conceptualizing oppression within a structuralist model as well as offer more complicated, nuanced, and effective strategies for the feminist movement. Through coupling the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Friedrich

Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault with feminist writers and poets Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa, this project endeavors to bring about a political questioning in hopes of adding to the discourse a new model for feminist politics.

To begin, in chapter one, I use Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to explore the illustrative model of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, paired with Audre Lorde's concept of 'the erotic' in her essay "Uses of the Erotic." Deleuze, Guattari, and Lorde, each in different ways, identify writing (and the written) as a type of assemblage, a mapping, a space, a force to create what has not been said, or, more importantly, a force to create new ways of thinking, writing, and speaking. Deleuze has famously discussed theory as a "toolbox," suggesting that there are questions, concepts, and ways of thinking rather than regimented methods to be implemented. These questions, concepts, and thoughts are in themselves sites of action as Deleuze affirms that theory *is* a particular type practice. Seemingly in contrast, Lorde has been well quoted in her assertion that "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.*"¹ However, it is important to interrogate the meaning of this statement as well as to bring forth the erotic as a site for theoretical and political action. Chapter one will consider the ways in which Deleuze, Guattari and Lorde discuss powerful, interconnected spaces that bring about an ambiguous intersection of deliberate action and arbitrary chance.

In Chapter two, I will turn to German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his concepts in *The Will to Power*. Here, I discuss his theories in relation to structures of power, as well as a brief discussion of how they have been misread by groups in order to excuse massive oppression. I will argue, similar to Deleuze, that Nietzsche's concepts of

• I wish to thank Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Gerson, and Jasbir Puar for their careful readings and support in the completion of this project.

¹ Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing, 1984. Print.

the will to power and the interconnectedness of subjects and objects can help us to understand the proliferation of hierarchy and production of minority and majority groups. Though Nietzsche's primary concern in this work seems to be that of "thinking" rather than one of mainstream politics, I assert that his disruption of binary logic is helpful in rethinking active and reactive forces and how binaries can in fact be thought of as multiplicities. To illuminate these ideas, I use Chicana and queer theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's impactful work in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* to discuss what Anzaldúa calls "proliferation" in juxtaposition to the will to power. I will also use Anzaldúa's discussion of the 'la mestiza,' whom she describes as the bearer of the future, and what will uproot dualistic models of thinking.

The final chapter will create a constellation between these theorists, activists, and authors by examining the concept of a body in transition. Using Michel Foucault's understandings of sexuality, the body, discourse, power and force, I will examine transgender activist and poet Ely Shipley's work entitled *Etymology*, in which Shipley describes his relationship to female-to-male transition and the use of testosterone in becoming masculine coupled with a political discussion vis-à-vis Foucault on bodies, power, force, and the law. Through Shipley and Foucault together, I close this piece with a discussion of what is at stake for feminist politics and scholarship in considering oppression this way. Through a Deleuzian idea of becoming—for instance, the site of hormone injection as an understanding of male or the use of pronouns to reorient a body in interstitial space—I will explore the discussed actions, habits, passions, desires, and memories that re-conceive of a body to establish a more capacious understanding of how subjects create new ways of thinking of self, body, and capacity for transformation as

well as examine the political stakes in doing so. This is not only a commentary on the personal experience, but a political suggestion that subjects have the ability for transformation, transition, and transgression.

In the conclusion, I will use Shipley and Foucault as a point of entry to discuss trans-politics as a sort of becoming. I wish to explicitly examine what this means for feminist politics and academic production. Certainly, there are many examples that might serve to relieve or make-clear this theorizing of a new politics, however, I find feminist knowledge production to be a politically relevant milieu as it has been the home to much scholarship surrounding trans-identities. Importantly, trans-issues are not the only concern of this piece. Rather, I use this as *one* of many examples of new actions, new ways of thinking, and new productions.

Together, this analysis will begin the political task of answering the following questions: What is oppression if we choose to conceptualize it without thinking of oppression as structured? What erotic, intermezzo spaces can be utilized for more nuanced understandings of oppression and thus creating more fluid political action? How do actions produce and sustain minorities and majorities? How does an understanding of these questions offer ways to readdress political and social systems vis-à-vis policy making, representation, and new allowances of speech and action to subaltern positions? What are the effects on identity in a rhizomatic understanding of oppression? And, all of this considered, what is at stake for feminist politics and scholarship?

Hate, Oppression and Structure

In order to lay the framework for such a discussion, some working definitions are required. First, what is hate? *Hate* is generally understood as an emotion of severe

dislike. It is an emotion that may at times be rooted in anger and other times in habit. Its antonym, *love*, is often used as a way to emphasize the extremity of hate. Though defined by such extremity, in many ways, *hate* has become quite colloquial both in thought and action. This work uses “marginality” as a touchstone of access, rather than a result of hate—that is to say, I do not wish to conceive of hate as a state that leaves one marginalized but rather as an action that constrains all acting (perhaps non-acting) parties. To understand hate as an action, rather than a fixed position, emotion, or affect, makes it one of many actions and thus not inherent in the experience of oppression, for indifference or a love for ones own position can be just as potent in these reproductions.

Second, what is oppression? A strict definition suggests constriction. To oppress; to hold down; to restrict from. Its first known use dates back to the 14th century;² it has since become a hot-topic for social movements spanning a multitude of identities. The common assumption of hate and hatred in relation to oppression has been highlighted by these movements, many times suggesting they are inextricable or at the least one is the result of the other. This is a key point to highlight in this work for it is where the split in figures is explicitly clear. Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Shipley all suggest in their work that hate is precisely the locale of oppression whereas Deleuze, Guattari, Nietzsche, and Foucault understand marginality in other ways. Despite this difference (as well as many others), each of these theorists can touch upon similar problems, and identify similar trends that creates a powerful opportunity for reexamining oppression.

² Soanes, Catherine, and Angus Stevenson. "Hate." *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford [England: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

The importance of this definitional work is the often-employed understanding of oppression as a result of hate, and hate as a result of structural and discursive force³—the force social movements must contend with. Instead, I will suggest that we might understand oppression as a series of actions, passions, affects, memories and habits, creating networks and interlinking in uneven constellations resulting in subaltern (and all other) experiences, involving a multiplicity of affects.⁴ I argue that these actions may not always be a result of hate, but rather of memory. As such, I will discuss the opportunity this opens to feminist theory and activism and hope to inspire a more nuanced look at action in order to create a more complex understanding of forces that often go unquestioned, and thus, cast aside.

To understand what ‘oppression’ is, theoretically and practically, it is important to consider the structuralist framing regularly surrounding feminist conversations about oppression. Structuralism relies on the understanding that all systems are determined by emergent structure, so in turn, all systems are structural. The rigidity of such a frame leaves opposing binaries to be contended with. The development of cultural binaries has left the feminist movement with a series of dualisms—for instance: male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, Caucasian/non-Caucasian—to “deconstruct.” Post-structuralism attempts to overcome these and other dualisms, but still relies on the assumption that there are structures to be deconstructed. Instead, I offer that the production of oppression and marginalized subjects, rather than being structurally

³ See Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* for his definition of discourse as it relates to the ‘repressive hypothesis.’

⁴ See Gayatri Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” for definitions of “subaltern.” As I will discuss later, post-Spivak work has constructed the definition of subaltern, perhaps differently than the intention of the essay. For this project, I will use the understanding of the subaltern subject as one who can be measured by lack of access to social, political, and economic resources based on societal understandings or assumptions.

embedded, is repeated and thus remembered and acted out.

Theory and Practice

For feminist concerns, the relationship between theory and practice must be understood as inextricable and connected at all times, rather than a totalizing result of one another. This involves not only considering theory as a form of practice and visa-versa, but using theory *and* practice to address political concerns rather than seeking answers or change in one or the other. Here, I use Deleuze's description as an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice to indicate the foundation of perceiving these actions. "Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, a practice is necessary for piercing this wall."⁵ Again, it is key to employ theory and practice as active forces, moving from one point in a network to another, indefinitely, creating powerful, indeterminate linkages. The Foucauldian-Deleuzian system of building knowledge is to be conceived in a multipart, multidirectional network of concepts, not a rigid line drawn between 'problem' and 'answer.' Understanding theory and practice in this way is essential in acknowledging and changing repeated habits. Similar to the patterns that can be observed in intellectual production, society (re)produces thought (perhaps most often through language and action) that contributes heavily to our understandings of "norms" as well as the ways in which we understand and accept hierarchy.

⁵ Michel, Foucault, and Deleuze Gilles. "Intellectuals & Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze." Interview. 1972. Print. Deleuze to Foucault, 206.

A New Constellation

What can feminist political agendas gain by reconceptualizing oppression without structure? Without the reliance on structuralist modes, ‘identity’ can be pushed to a more useful place. Rather than an institutionalized oppression, binary oppositions can be understood as a formation of habits, actions, and memory. This understanding allows, at any time, to create a new linkage within this constellation. Representation, then, is not needed to give a voice to those lacking access for they are not constrained within the oppressor/oppressed binary, but rather, those subjects are able to act within the “power-relation” that gives space for movement and new actions. It is an anti-structural understanding of oppression that creates “lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. [Further,] comparative rates of flow on those lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitute an assemblage.”⁶ These assemblages of race, class, gender, and so forth create opportunities for beings to connect and create new constellations, offering equal access to those currently “marginalized” under structural models.

Throughout this exploration, I will continue to employ a constellation metaphor, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the rhizome, to enforce the concept of a working model of action. The constellation or network will be viewed as an assemblage—its interconnectedness and reliance juxtaposed against its randomness and difference. Stars exist in networks, perhaps causing patterns, at different proximities and different scales of brightness (sometimes invisibilities). I will use this to suggest that in

⁶ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987. Print. Page 4.

many ways, oppression can be viewed as a part of a constellation network of subjects or bodies: despite similarities in these subjects around the world, all have different access, abilities, recognition, and so forth, but remain connected nonetheless. This then, might suggest that despite differences in ‘access,’ we can consider the ‘value’ of subjects neutral. This highlights the lack of access to subjects, or groups of subjects, and allows other actions to be taken by those subjects and groups.

The constellation will be used to help rethink oppression as well as a new model of feminist politics and scholarship. Our current, overwhelming, understanding of oppression as a structural force deems it immovable from structure and limits action to the confines of that structure. To introduce Deleuze and Guattari’s model of the rhizome and tree, we can understand the way networks between species—human or non-human—might function. That is, rather than the “rooted-ness” of a tree, or its parts in a horizontal relation, the rhizome moves, from place to place, irreducible to a single location (or even many locations) which might inspire movement between beings and texts and beings and actions, suggesting that by molding and shifting our thoughts surrounding power, we open up opportunities to reassess how we construct and conceive of selections, dominance, hierarchy, memory, and so on. The goal: to eventually readdress gender, sex, sexuality, race, etcetera in order to create discourses around power, visibility, and ideas of "morality" that can be determined by the connections of "and" rather than any of the parts that currently carry the forced definitions of “or” and their ability "to be." Allowing connections to be formed by and, rather than or, allows connections to exist where language may not yet, in an infinite matter, and in any direction or multiple directions.

The use of “and” does not limit itself to an option (*x* or *y*, where *x* or *y* are “to be”) but incorporates all options and linkages (*x* and *y* and *z* where *x* and *y* and *z* are).

This rethinking, however, is not intended to ignore the very sobering experiences of many. The pervasive violence and threat of violence to marginalized groups globally is one that cannot be overlooked, particularly as it has historically been associated with subjects highlighted in feminist concerns. Rather than discount these atrocities, feminists must question how and why these violent and painful relations continue and begin working to uncover a better understanding than a sense of structural inequality and inevitable harm. This view limits feminist action to the reproduction of these atrocities and posits feminism as a reaction *to*. This is where the idea of networks—again, through rhizomes, constellations, or any other externally interconnected force—can be most beneficial. “To be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to new uses.”⁷ Remembering the connections of “and” these stems become something new, still connected to the previous, or what has come before. Politically, this both acknowledges prior experiences while producing new ways of penetrating and creating.

In a discussion of Foucault, Deleuze articulates his assertion that statements are never hidden, however, are never readable; they are disguised and this can result in a false sense of power. These statements, then, remain hidden until the conditions to make them readable, and sayable, manifest. Deleuze says:

The same holds true for politics: politics hides nothing, in diplomacy, legislation, control or government, even though each cluster of statements assumes a certain method for intertwining words, phrases and propositions. We need only know how to read, however difficult that may prove to be. The secret exists only in order to be betrayed, or to betray

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, 1987. Page 15.

itself. Each age articulates perfectly the most cynical elements of its politics, or the rawest element of its sexuality, to the point where transgression has little merit. Each age says everything it can according to the conditions laid down for its statements.⁸

The suggestion here that what we often think of as transgression has little value when considering the ways in which each age articulates precisely what it can is important to examine. Statements are made true through a regime of other statements, thus, this always acting political change seems to reflect the bodies this work will later employ. This, taken with a clarification between power and power-relations may perhaps illuminate a central component for complicating these structural models. Through an understanding of power and power-relations, feminists are afforded a platform from which to begin an affirmative mode of social change. Though feminism has sought to address power since its earliest times, feminism now must not think of a new ways to address power—in what terms and what modes of thinking. Considering networks of human and non-human beings as a constantly moving, interlocked, affected and effected (while affecting and effecting), rhizomatic structure—that is to be constantly entered and exited, forming external connections and interruptions that are always different, rather than embedded—it is clear that no habit or understanding is truly able to be traced or represented. Rather, these ‘understandings’ can only be attributed to a continuous belief that what came before was correct. For feminism, this means that the production of new actions is essential to moving forward rather than a need to represent or alter past actions.

Deleuze says, “Between the visible and the articulable a gap or disjunction opens up, but this disjunction of forms is the place—or ‘non-place,’ as Foucault puts it—where the formal diagram is swallowed up and becomes embodied instead in two different

⁸ Deleuze, Gilles. Translated by Seán Hand. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988. Print. Page 54.

directions that are necessarily divergent and irreducible.” He speaks of a doubling which allows us to see stark dualities between subjects. Within this gap, where the visible and articulable are we might illuminate a space where assemblages form for their political and social agitations.⁹ This diagram opens a place in which newness might emerge and the importance of these complications rests where feminism can begin to produce new ways of thinking, acting, and transforming. Rather than a reliance on embedded, emergent structures, we can observe external connections and actions and theorize and politicize in a place where we are not confined by our history, and instead are active in our own experiences, individually, and how those experiences become lived, rather than represented in order to achieve a machine in which beings are afforded equal access in the same way that they are currently afforded equal power.

⁹ Deleuze, 1988. Page 38.

Part Two: Space in Motion

There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change.

Uses of the Erotic, Audre Lorde

*In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, on, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an **assemblage**.*

A Thousand Plateaus,
Gilles Deleuze and Félix
Guattari

Audre Lorde's description of the erotic leaves much unsaid. In a dissension from her often prescriptive and political work, she creates a more fluid understanding of this ambiguous, yet powerful space that she repeatedly calls "the erotic." The short chapter calls for examination of every word as each is intentionally chosen to interrupt common assumptions and connotations of eroticism in order to call attention to a uniquely affective space in which change—both political and personal—becomes highlighted. She writes: "The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire."¹⁰ As she describes the erotic in the epigraph, it can be examined as an interstitial space, perhaps between or in the midst of anger and hate, where love can grow, and if only in fleeting time and space, its interconnectedness brings about a powerful opportunity.

¹⁰ Lorde, 1984. Page 54.

A different examination of interstitial space can be found in Deleuze and Guattari's work with the rhizomatic space. This chapter takes together the erotic and the rhizome for their crossover in a discussion of interconnectedness. The conceptualizing of the book as an assemblage becomes the point of departure in which they begin their use of the rhizome. They discuss lines of flight, at different speeds, which is helpful to their explanation of interconnectedness. Of the rhizome, they summarize the identifying characteristics:

[U]nlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc.¹¹

They go on to describe a messy, malleable overflow of acting forces constantly open to be entered, passed through, and exited, never locatable in any of those points. The rhizome portrays endless interconnectedness that results in strength. This reliance on and connection to difference (or even sameness) in all directions is precisely the political model feminists should strive for and the specific interest in its use.

Deleuze and Guattari describe much of what the rhizome *is*, but also what it is not. Remembering the assertion that the rhizome connects at any point and to any point, different or the same, we come to understand different states of being (or not being) as neither singular or multiple and as non-emergent. They state that “[u]nlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines; lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, 1987. Page 21.

metamorphosis, changes in nature.”¹² This describes constant movement and connection that results in change and transformations. It cannot be reduced to a new production of identity politics, but rather something all-together different. Likewise, this is an important point of convergence with Lorde, who warns of the misuses of the erotic, cautioning: “It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with its opposite, the pornographic.”¹³ Here, she approaches her concepts in a very different way than Deleuze and Guattari, however, similarities can be drawn from both. The first examination of the rhizome and the erotic yields three important conclusions: First, both are not localizable and unarrestable. Second, both are interconnected, not through new thoughts but rather new ways of thinking. Connections that produce new modes and new methods are essential for feminism to consider. Here, in the rhizome and the erotic, we see unlimited connection and production, working at different speeds, and in different ways to ignite a newness of being, not to reproduce what once was. And third, both are always differing, changing and molding—a nod to what a feminist politics may strive to be. That is to say, in critical observance of these characteristics of the rhizome and of the erotic, feminist politics can strive for interconnectedness as an opportunity that opens up possibility for change and the proliferation of difference, for each connection *is* different and constant.

In exploring the effects of oppression globally, locally, affectively, and on the body through creating an understanding of repeated actions, habits and memories, my goal is not to determine "right" or "wrong" but rather how these works can be understood

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, 1987. Page 21.

¹³ Lorde, 1984. Page 54.

together to create a comprehensive, productive conversation. Here, we turn back to Deleuze and Guattari for a more specific distinction discussed between the use of "to be" and the use of "and":

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and...and...and..." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be."¹⁴

In their use of the rhizome as a diagram, and with Lorde's use of erotic space, we can understand the way networks between beings might function. This passage is central to this project and highlights the claims made for an interconnected model for feminist politics. The "uniquely alliance" element seen in the rhizome is the model I hope to inspire through this discussion. Through this idea, movement between texts and beings becomes possible and a molding and shifting of thoughts surrounding power, opportunities open to reassess how we construct and conceive of selections, dominance, hierarchy, memory, and so on to, again, readdress gender, sex, sexuality, race, etcetera in order to embrace difference as that which has been selected, for all, by all.

Audre Lorde employs eroticism to describe movement, interstitial space, actions, and ideas. She says:

For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt—examining what those ideas feel like being lived on Sunday morning at 7A.M., after brunch, during wild love, making war, giving birth, mourning our dead—while we suffer the old longings, battle the old warnings and fears of being silent and impotent and alone, while we taste new possibilities and strengths.¹⁵

Similar to the Deleuze and Guattari's use of the book as a rhizomatic assemblage, for Lorde, poetry takes that which cannot yet be spoken, shifts, molds, unravels and redoes to

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, 1987. Page 25.

¹⁵ Lorde, 1984. Page 39.

create strength and give name to that which until that point had been nameless. Though Lorde is by differs from Deleuze and Guattari in many of her concepts—particularly in terms of identity—she discusses the interconnectedness of being in a rhizomatic formation rather than one of structure and sediment. In this way, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari offer a model that can be used when discussing Lorde and her understanding of ideas and experience. As she states, there a no new ideas (or experiences, oppressions, etc.), but new ways of thinking about them and new combinations of old thoughts allowing new connections to be formed, indefinitely. This brings us to a central question of this work: What is oppression if we choose to conceptualize it without structure? This is where we can begin to describe subjects as a metaphorical constellation. This should be understood both in its scientific chartings of distance and proximity, as well as the way we understand stars—their beauty, their brightness, as fire. To adequately address this constellation, an exploration of actions used to maintain oppression is necessary.

Power and Power-relations

To begin this task, a discussion of power and power relations brings to bear one way in which hierarchies are maintained. Deleuze describes the connections and confusions between power and violence:

Power does not come about through ideology, even when it concerns the soul; it does not necessarily separate through violence and repression, even when it weighs on the body. Or rather, violence expresses well the effect of a force on *something*, some object or being. But it does not express the power relation, that is to say the *relations between force and force*, ‘an action upon an action.’¹⁶

From this it can be extracted that the reduction of power to the location of violence does not adequately explain the dynamics of power involved, thus leaving the dualistic model

¹⁶ Deleuze, 1988. Page 28.

of oppressor/oppressed unquestioned in attempts to understand the effect (and affects) of violence. Rather than the ultimate enforcer of oppression, it is important to recognize violence as an action (or habit) that serves as *one* way of reproducing (perhaps enforcing) certain understandings of oppression. Simply, violence is not a result of oppression nor does it result in oppression, but rather an action that serves to maintain it as a form of discipline. This is not to say that violence is the counterstance to end the enigma of oppression, but rather to acknowledge more powerful understandings in order to be acquainted with that violence as undeserved, thus making it a measure of access—violence experienced by the marginalized subject becomes the same as the limits of access outlined in so-called “institutionalized oppressions.”

An understanding that violence does not equate oppression is a central topic for feminists to consider when theorizing violence effecting certain populations or access to resources in relation to another (oppressing) subject. Here, Foucault and Deleuze offer us an alternative to accepting power as a unilinear force. This position has often been criticized by feminist scholarship for its erasure of a subaltern subject. Gayatri Spivak asks and answers the question of the subaltern subject in its access to power in the influential essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*,¹⁷ suggesting that we will never know the subaltern for when they have a voice they are no longer subaltern—further, for Spivak, producing intellectual work that suggests all subjects have power, knowledge production can serve to further shadow these subjects. It can be drawn from Spivak’s critique that she disagrees with the production of power-relations that Foucault and Deleuze discuss. It is important to note that Spivak utilizes much of Foucault’s work, though she criticizes his assertions in *Intellectuals and Power* regarding representation, where she suggests a

¹⁷ Spivak, 1988.

Derridean method in addressing intellectual production that does not cause erasure of the subaltern. However, it is important to acknowledge, that if the frame offered by Deleuze and Foucault is followed, it becomes true that theoretical action and practical action work simultaneously, and asymmetrically, to accept the subaltern and move beyond the identity-based, intersectional model that has been produced in much post-Spivak work (that has reduced the subaltern to a marginalized subject rather than a more nuanced understanding), through action and piercing walls between theory and practice.

A frequent touchstone for these ‘forces’ producing these immovable oppressions is ‘violence’; or violence acted simultaneous with (or as a result of) forces and power-relations. The two, however, are differentiated in an important way: “Violence acts on specific bodies, objects or beings whose form it destroys or changes, while force has no object other than that of other forces and no being other than that of relation: it is ‘an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or future’; it is ‘a set of actions upon other actions.’”¹⁸ By separating the way in which feminists (similarly, other activists and theorists) conceive of violence and force, affects can be understood as important political strategies afforded not only to those with majority access, but also to those minority subjects who identify a sense of lack. Through this separation, feminism gains access to the same forces and actions said to be withheld from marginalized subjects. In this way, Deleuze re-imagines that “each force has the power to affect (others) and to be affected (by others again), such that each force implies power relations: and every field of forces distributes forces according to these relations and their variations. Spontaneity and receptivity now take on a new meaning: to affect or

¹⁸ Deleuze quoting Foucault, 1988. Page 70.

to be affected.”¹⁹ In other words, forces act and are acted upon in a power-relation, rather than a form of unilinear power, and become new lines of flight and new ways of being.

It follows that power-relations become unstable, moving, affecting forces that Deleuze describes as something that is not known, but rather an operational network of all things within a series of other networks, moving through both oppressive and oppressed forces equally.²⁰ From this, the suggestion can be made that the forces interact, tying the dominated to the dominators, relying on each other, inextricably *and* asymmetrically, until new forces are formed. This, again, motivates a certain understanding of what it means to be oppressed insofar as if a subject considers oppression as a position, it allows the understanding there *is* an oppressor, whether that oppressor actively engages, or not. It follows, the oppressed requires a form of representation—“a voice”—to speak on its behalf. Often, this produces the construction of an “expert,” which in itself reproduces the forces of power creating a never-ending hierarchy, leaving little space for lasting action. Complicating this dualism between expert/non- must arrive at the forefront of feminist politics; rather than a relief of the binary between the oppressor and the oppressed, it is a necessary complication of feminist concepts of identity and fluidity through acts, power-relations, and agitations.

These investigations of power, force, affect and violence lead to questions of body and acts that must be essential for feminist theory and practice when addressing political concerns surrounding sexism, racism, homophobia, and so on. Deleuze acknowledges Foucault’s contributions in *The History of Sexuality* as offering “how we can believe in a sexual repression operating within language if we concentrate on words and phrases but

¹⁹ Deleuze, 1988. Page 71.

²⁰ Deleuze, 1988. Page 27.

not if we isolate the dominant statements, and especially the verbal procedures in use in churches, schools, and hospitals, which simultaneously search for the reality of sex and the truth in sex.”²¹ By isolating acts rather than identities, subjects become more nuanced. As Deleuze continues, it is often assumed that these ideologies and repressions are considered to be part of a system, organization, or structure, but seldom considered in themselves to *be* those structures. This distinction is essential to a re-thinking of minoritarian/majoritarian politics insofar as it allows oppression to be a measure of difference, rather than a regulating institution.

Violence and the Erotic

Though Audre Lorde’s use of the erotic speaks of the many similar points in Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome vis-à-vis interconnectedness and action, her approach is radically different. Lorde discusses violence and force, particularly as it is experienced by women, and more specifically by women of color. Overtly, she explains her response to violence (racism, sexism, homophobia) is anger. Eventually, Lorde arrives at the understanding that the oppressor/oppressed dualism does little to eradicate oppression, violence, hatred, or marginalization, but she does so by naming hegemonic—white, heterosexual, upper-class, so forth—categories as the frequent (perhaps always) location of the negative experiences in her life and those she identifies with. Her sense of identity politics seemingly reflects solidarity with those who have had similar experiences. In fact, it can (and perhaps should) be drawn from her stance that she believes certain experiences can not be understood by those in dominant social positions. For Lorde, anger becomes a tool. She gives hope to those who have felt violence and thus anger: “If I look at my most vulnerable places and acknowledge the pain I have felt, I can remove

²¹ Deleuze, 1988. Page 29.

the source of that pain from my enemies' arsenals. My history cannot be used to feather my enemies' arrows then, and that lessens their power over me. Nothing I accept about myself can be used against me to diminish me."²² This vulnerability is key in acknowledging the effect of violence both on bodies, but also internally. Here is where the erotic space and the rhizome relate: for Deleuze and Guattari's mapping of the rhizome, histories—thought perhaps departed from—are not erased, but rather considered as an interconnected part of movement and growth and for Lorde, remembering the pain does nothing, moving forward is radically unstoppable.

In her discussion of violence, Lorde discusses "silence" as a repeated action that has led to physical and affective violence experienced by marginalized subject. For Lorde, silence has come to her as a result of fear; fear of violence, or even death (metaphorical and actual). She prescriptively states: "My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences."²³ This highlights the interconnectedness of action and demonstrates the necessity of a new, action-based feminism yielded through the bridging of differences and the transgression of violence and silence.

Breaking silence must not only be related to speaking, but rather being. Speaking is perhaps one act, of many, that should utilize openness and movement. Remaining aware of acts as constantly entering and exiting, from all directions and at all times, must be the basis from which we interrogate (perhaps investigate) current understandings in

²² Lorde, 1987. Pages 146-147.

²³ Lorde, 1987. Page 41.

order to continue with new becomings and new ways of being. As Lorde closes her section on silence she reminds us that “[w]e can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and our selves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid.”²⁴ This is a direct call for speech, but should still be understood as more than the act of—speaking takes many forms. For Lorde, action gives the opportunity to liberate. It becomes a mode in which to create a new linkages in this constellation while always remaining connected to our past. With these actions, new ways of thinking once again become possible. In an obsolete politics of structure, silence and violence are shared tools in which the end result is an erasure of difference, and a continued memory of muted marginalization.

Of the erotic, Lorde says: “It feels right to me”—she uses this in the sense of deep meaning, reaching through the surface to find an indescribable peace that cannot be contended with. She explains her unarrestable location of such a feeling: “I find the erotic such a kernel within myself. When released from its intense and constrained pellet, it flows through and colors my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all my experience.”²⁵ This production of what feels right offers a new exit from what has been known as patriarchy, as heterosexism, as classism, and so on. If it can be manifested in these in-between cracks and utilized to its full capacity, the erotic (and the rhizome) can offer a space or understanding of a way in which we may begin healing the pain we have inherited from our ancestors and begin to teach our children new ways to live, love, sing, dance, and thrive.

²⁴ Lorde, 1987. Page 42.

²⁵ Lorde, 1987. Page 57.

Part Three: Borders and Power

The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in the healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but on that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, or war.

Borderlands, Gloria Anzaldúa

Physicists believe in a “true world” in their own fashion: a firm systemization of atoms in necessary motion, the same for all beings—so for them the “apparent world” is reduced to the side of universal and universally necessary being which is accessible to every being in its own way (accessible and already adapted—made “subjective”). But they are in error.

The Will to Power, Friedrich Nietzsche

This chapter continues to build the discussion of how we, as a society, have come to understand oppression and comes to terms with how we have arrived there. Gloria Anzaldúa and Friedrich Nietzsche perhaps depart from radically different standpoints, but this is particularly what makes their work relevant when taken together. Both write of a mechanistic world, believed to be “True,” as well as the need to move beyond this, to create an Overman, or *la mestiza*, who is the only one to transcend and be the Truth in a future to come. In both, an arrival at this point through the action of affirmation inspires revolution, while reminding us to love, not for the sake of others but for ourselves.

Overman and La Mestiza

To begin briefly, historical misreads of Nietzsche that have suggested he calls for a dominant race must be thwarted. This reading, made by groups with interest in genocide or an equally dominant schema, is in fact in opposition to the suggestion he makes of the will to power and the overman. This driving force to power (and truth) rather than domination is one of ambition, and a move beyond authoritarian power and also one that is not easily attained. He describes his vision of a master race, the overman:

Not merely a master race whose sole task is to rule, but a race with its own sphere of life, with an excess of strength for beauty, culture, manners to the highest peak of spirit; an affirming race that may grant itself every luxury—strong enough to have no need of the tyranny of the virtue-imperative, rich enough to have no need of thrift and pedantry, beyond good and evil...²⁶

Here, he describes an important intersection with Anzaldúa's discussion of *la mestiza*.

Anzaldúa speaks of *la mestiza* both abstractly, as she will be and personally, that which—perhaps whom—she (Anzaldúa) is. This move from other to self is not one that creates a duality between the two, but rather envelops one in the other; *they* become *she* and *she* becomes *they*. Like Nietzsche's overman, this is a process of affirmation, and one that is not easily obtained. She describes:

As a *Mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs on Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.²⁷

Anzaldúa describes this existence as one that emerges from the navigation of borders and margins. This is an important distinction from Nietzsche's overman. For Nietzsche, the overman will be something to come in the future, precisely because he overcomes. For Anzaldúa, *la mestiza* has learned how to pilot toward another self through experience. Both are not constrained by good/evil, white/black, human/non-human, but they discuss this race as the one that will thrive in luxury and peace. Nietzsche describes the overman (stronger) as that which becomes the master of the weaker, without sympathy, patience,

²⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. Trans, Walter Arnold Kaufmann, and R. J. Hollingdale. *The Will to Power*. New York: Random House, 1967. Print.

²⁷ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999. Print. Page 102.

or tolerance, and by whatever means necessary, thus a means uninterested by laws and regulations.²⁸ It is a mistake to read this mastery as a violent one, since it is clear that the overman will have no use for violence, and only for affirmation; not domination by force, not a becoming from other, but an *overcoming* through will and active force—that is, the affirmation that everything one does, one would do it again, willing it to return eternally.

Anzaldúa states explicitly that the master of the future will be *la mestiza* in the way that she has described her as one that transcends current capacities and creates a new way of being in the world. For her, living in and moving through the “borderlands” forms her perspective and also her drive to feminist politics. These margins are non-places of shifting identity, never localizable, always changing, acting and being acted upon at all times. Here, the important convergence with Nietzsche is the development of a figure not reliant on power in the authoritarian sense, but one that exists in highest capacities of pleasure—not happiness as a byproduct creation of power, but pleasure in the deepest sense of affirmation and proliferation.

Minority and Majority

How do actions produce and sustain minorities and majorities? And, perhaps more importantly, how does an understanding of these questions offer ways to readdress our understandings of political and social systems? Anzaldúa offers many sobering accounts of violence, erasure, submission and continued marginalization, but never to apologize for them. Often, she recognizes herself (as queer, as Chicana, as feminist) both a victim and perpetrator in these affairs. She does not pity the subjects of this violence, but rather she encourages a transcendence that is possible thorough living, affirming, and

²⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. Trans, Walter Arnold Kaufmann, and R. J. Hollingdale. *The Will to Power*. New York: Random House, 1967. Print. Sec. 630.

the new consciousness of *la mestiza*. Though acts and affirmations, she describes a constant will to overcome previous experiences, remain in constant movement, and formulate new understandings of herself in relation to all else.

Returning to the important distinction between Nietzsche and Anzaldúa's arrival at overman and *la mestiza*, respectively, Anzaldúa describes a particular faculty, which suggests a development of tools in the coming of *la mestiza*. She describes that "[w]hen we're up against the wall, when we have all sorts of oppressions coming at us, we are forced to develop this faculty so that we'll know when the next person is going to slap us or lock us away. We'll sense the rapist when he's five blocks down the street. Pain makes us acutely anxious to avoid more of it, so we hone that radar."²⁹ The faculty to which she refers, she calls *la facultad* and defines as a spiritual toolbox developed as a penetrative force to dominating systems of patriarchy and like-oppressions. The key in *la facultad* is the origin from which it rises: in desolation. Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as physical manifestation of despair but also where one learns if they have the capacity to develop *la facultad*, endure, and become beyond minority and majority—both and neither. It is, in her experience, an active power that has manifested from the mistreatment of her as she sees herself in all others. She affirms this as a sense of power and suggests that it is source of future strength for politics and society.

Though Nietzsche does not address specifics of sexual assault, he discusses suffering in the capacity that it allows one to endure, affirm, and master. The weak, those who do not develop such a faculty, then do not possess the traits of the overman or *la mestiza*. Nietzsche, like Anzaldúa, does not see the overman without suffering. He insists:

²⁹ Anzaldúa, 1999. 61.

To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.³⁰

This echoes Anzaldúa's *la facultad* suggesting these past actions that feminist politics has seen as systemic domination and destruction, may in fact be the moment of exploration and of endurance. Perhaps then keeping in close mind all actions as interconnected, violence against one (or some) is indeed violence against all and accepting our actions on both sides of this domination becomes key in eradicating it. Similarly, this consciousness and its opportunity for affirmation create not a marginalized subject, but a more evolved one.

Borders, Borderlands and the Will to Power

This discussion of minoritarian and majoritarian identities brings to play the way in which feminist politics must readdress social systems. Anzaldúa's main exploration of the borderlands comments on the dualistic model of us/them, subject/object, self/other that this work contends with; "[b]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary."³¹ Of the border, she makes this point repeatedly, but also reminds that these borders are in a constant state of transition, and in fact they must be. Much like the rhizome, of the borderlands, she discusses those moving in-between, interrupting the us/them and describes the borderlands' inhabitants as "the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, that

³⁰ Nietzsche, 1967. Sec 481. Page 267.

³¹ Anzaldúa, 1999. 25.

half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal.’”³² This interruption becomes a key element in this work as we move forward with consideration of these minorities and majorities. A critical moment in the discussion of borders comes with her interruption of them—her political rupture of what she calls “unnatural.” She uses the border/lands both as a metaphor of division, but also an intermezzo space of possibility and difference. Employing *la facultad* she speaks of a powerful endurance and a capacity for lasting change.

Here I turn to Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, where he locates this concept in a movement from “freedom” to “justice” to “love,” identifying each along the way. In slaves, he says, the will to power is seen in a desire to be free; freedom is the goal. This can be seen in social movements and their call for equality. Beyond this, the desire for justice and the same access to rule as those who govern; power is the goal. And finally, the one who finds themselves in the position to rule through the conviction that it belongs to them.³³ The essential question of the former two goals must be: what kind of equality? What kind of power? This must be interrogated as an avenue to understand the ultimate will to power of the overman; this will to power governs the world and the overman will develop through this will to power. Deleuze says that “[t]he overman differs from man, even nature, and is the other. The overman is a new way of thinking and preserving; not change, but a new kind of change. Through this transevaluation, new values are created and produced and the will to power must derive through these new productions.”³⁴ Thus, the overman is not man as the current way we understand hu(man)s to be. The master race that Nietzsche refers to is not what that changes *from* a current race, but something

³² Anzaldúa, 1999. Page 21.

³³ Nietzsche, 1967. Sec. 776, Page 407.

³⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. New York: Columbia UP, 1962. Print. Page 163.

to come in the future that is a new kind of race. Through this affirmative transevaluation, the overman creates new ways of thinking that are not derived from a sense of tyrannical power or marginalized identity.

The Serpent and the Eagle

La mestiza and the overman are of the future. Both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa discuss the tasks, trials, and ultimate duties of overman/*la mestiza*, but do so with the understanding of the world-in-process and recognize *action* (active forces) as its corridor. Unlike the overman, for Anzaldúa, *la mestiza* incorporates both the past and present, however considers them different than the future. This, in part, is seemingly because her discussion takes up a political stance that differs from Nietzsche's theorizing. Anzaldúa makes her political assertion in the following:

But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—its step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once.³⁵

Again, a rhizomatic politics becomes necessary. Difference is a fundamental component of this politics insofar as forces acting upon one another multi-directionally, and at all points, is what drives this will and what is produced. The will to power is both the driving force of the universe and thus common to all values and acts, but also what differentiates between ways of being. This cannot be understood as a system of structure, but rather as

³⁵ Anzaludua, 1999. Page 247.

an undoing or order. For Nietzsche, and perhaps Anzaldúa, the idea that we have come to know the truth of the world—that is the systemic structure of it—is only an illusion, and points to weakness. This will by no means suggest an avoidance of suffering, but again, the endurance of it. Nietzsche says: “It [the state of power] is essentially a will to violate and to defend oneself against violation. Not self-preservation: every atom affects the whole of being—it is thought away if one thinks away this radiation on power-will.” He explains that this is precisely why he calls it “a quantum of ‘will to power,’” meaning that a quantum of power is selected through its effects as well as its resistance; “It expresses the characteristic that cannot be thought out of the mechanistic order without thinking away order itself.”³⁶ Nietzsche speaks of the overman and the necessity to not take up attention with the law. An undoing of order itself creates an infinitely multi-directional will that constantly effecting and being affected.

An element of this undoing of order can be found in Anzaldúa’s borders. She describes a shifting identity, both participating in society and being affected by it simultaneously, though not necessarily reciprocally. This constant motion foregrounds once more a politics of action. She describes “[l]iving on the borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, and ‘alien’ element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being ‘worked’ on.”³⁷ These border/lands are reminiscent of Lorde’s *erotic* as well as Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome—these non-places where interconnectedness is essential. To return briefly to the constellation being built, Nietzsche and Anzaldúa offer us examples of the possibilities of affirmation and

³⁶ Nietzsche, 1967. Sec. 634, Page 338.

³⁷ Anzaludua, 1999. Page 19.

endurance. Subjects (plasma) held together by actions (gravity), creating networks of thoughts, actions, passions, affects, and so forth in an infinite complexity.

In discussion of a childhood memory, Anzaldúa discusses a body in desolation, in difference, and in-between:

They called her half and half, *mita' y mita'*, neither one nor the other but a strange doubling, a deviation of nature that horrified, a work of nature inverted. But there is a magic aspect in abnormality and so-called deformity. Maimed, mad, and sexually different people were believed to possess supernatural powers by primal cultures' magico-religious thinking. For them, abnormality was the price a person had to pay for her or his inborn extraordinary gift.³⁸

This chapter ends where the next will begin, with a body in process. Here, it is perhaps important to note sexual difference as it applies to this work, and as it descends from much of what Anzaldúa, and certainly Nietzsche consider. We examine that the [human] body is derived from one female and one male, resulting in a male or female body. However in this examination of gender (and sex) something all together different is possible. Actions *may* be understood as elaborate Butlerian performativity (for example, the use of pronouns or testosterone in transgender or queer bodies repeatedly in order to form a subject or body), or they may be seen as realities-in-flux, responding to other actions at all times, or they may be considered a combination of the two, or a combination of multiple—all are essential to investigate. In this vein, Anzaldúa describes the *mita y mita* as a 'doubling,' neither male, nor female, but both. However, in this case, both *is* neither; a combination of male *and* female cannot be reduced to male *or* female. Instead, a rhizomatic affirmation of this difference gives rise to a new way of being, not solely based on a new categorical identity, but a disruption or agitation bringing about an other than the other.

³⁸ Anzaldúa, 1999. Page 41.

Part Four: Becoming Other Than Woman

*...two weeks the rest of my life
into my thigh. And I think
of the six days of creation before*

*god rested, because I too am tired
and because my voice, would it suddenly be
god-like to me, thundering,*

*waking in a deep vibrato as if from atop
a mountain, maybe Olympus, maybe
a lightning bolt shot sharp*

*through my heart because I am
startled, scared, delighted?...*

Etymology [Excerpt], Ely Shipley

The critical examination of in-between bodies as a group for disrupting dualisms vis-à-vis complicated sets of acts is helpful in two ways. First, it suggests an altogether different becoming. Briefly, beginning with transgender bodies as an example of becoming a minority of the minority, we begin to push the dissolution of identity politics and instead recognize these becomings though and by *acts*, not through and as a result of prescribed identities. Second, it inspires an interrogation between categories. In other words, tensions between man and woman are made explicit and require investigation. To return briefly to Foucault and statements, these new ways of thinking reflect this necessary difference. In this way, trans-bodies are by no means a solutions to these

dualisms, but they are (perhaps more importantly) a complicating set of acts that utilize the discussions in the previous chapters. These acts are found within the uses of the erotic, the rhizome, between the borderlands, in will, and in self-affirmation.

Understanding this as a political prescription, a new model of networks of power becomes possible.

In order to situate this language, I use the term “transgender” as an umbrella label to refer to people, or groups or people, who do not identify (or wish to identify) with the cisgendered, hegemonic, categories of male and female as they have been constructed through culture, science and society. Though this includes various intersecting identities, I specifically focus sexually differentiated women and men who identify, internally or performatively, with another gender, meaning rather than the gender has been assigned to them at birth. I use the term “transsexed” to describe a person who has decided to, or is in process of, transitioning.³⁹ This includes, but perhaps is not limited to, top-surgery, bottom-surgery, hormone treatment, and so forth. Considering both gender and sex as constructed, I chose to name both transgender and transsexed, however wish to acknowledge the tensions within these categories themselves, as well as the discourses around them. The prefix “trans-” will be employed as a way of identifying “transgender and transsexed” inclusive to female-to-male (FTM) and male-to-female (MTF) identities, unless otherwise stated. These terms are highly contested within the trans-community. I wish to acknowledge this and allow the terms themselves to remain fluid. Finally, though

³⁹ “Transsexed” as used in: Stryker, Susan. “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage.” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*(1994): 251-52. Print.

Transgender Studies is an emerging field, I have found much of the literature is dedicated to male-to-female trans-communities. For this reason, this work is particularly committed to investigating a larger trans-politics through female-to-male trans-communities, while respectfully acknowledging the large range of gender identities or non-identities in the queer and trans-community.

Etymology

In his poem *Etymology* Ely Shipley describes his relationship to the use of testosterone injections. He begins with “Testosterone, strange that you’d let me give birth to my own body...”⁴⁰ as an immediate entry point to a becoming of something different, and yet the same. His discussion of a forever boyhood (perhaps manhood, or a constant puberty) separates his understanding of (his own) gender while allowing the reader to hear the exhaustion he will endure. The voice—his voice—becomes a measurement in the poem of change; a new sound, a new him. He then retreats to a memory, telling first of his ambiguous sex and then an earlier “memory” of himself as a boy, picking a flower. His flower becomes a symbol of deeper understanding of his body in-process and somewhat of a touchstone between his injections at the beginning of the poem and a readiness for them at the end.

I use this poem as a way to bring together figures discussed in this work and foreground a conversation of the location of transgender within feminist scholarship. For this, Deleuze’s discussion of becoming is particularly useful. He says that “[b]ecoming isn’t part of history; history amounts only the set of preconditions, however recent, that

⁴⁰ Shipley, Ely. “Etymology.” *Boy with Flowers*. New York, NY: Barrow Street, 2008. Print. A full version of the poem can be found in the appendix.

one leaves behind in order to ‘become,’ that is, to create something new.”⁴¹ To create something new relies on the majoritarian/minoritarian networks and subnetworks. Deleuze explains the homogeneity of the majority, which is precisely why a becoming is not possible; “majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.”⁴² In the minority, however, creativity and newness are possibilities. As aforementioned, sexual difference regulates male and female; however, it does not adequately describe becoming something new. Rather than transitioning to a “man” the way “men” are “men,” this is a becoming-other-than-woman.

Shipley describes the use of testosterone in becoming other as an action, to be taken the rest of his life, to facilitate this permanent state of newness and change, not performatively, but in a new way each time; as an *act* not an *acting*. Affectively, Lorde is helpful in highlighting the spirit of transition, that is, the erotic space of knowing oneself as different and thus becoming that difference. Anzaldúa’s explicit discussion of in-between, marginality and border-life is perhaps the space this in-between body might occupy in this becoming. *La mestiza* belongs not to one or the other, but both; Shipley describes not a man, not a woman, but both. Finally, Nietzsche’s affirmation and will are found both in the frustration and clarity that Shipley evokes in this transition. Citing hardships as well as peace, he affirms the transition as an action of the will to power. At this point, I look to Foucault’s writings on sexuality, force and the body to bring into relief a future for feminist politics understood in this constellation of intermezzo, eros, power, and proliferation.

⁴¹ Conversation with Toni Negri *Futur Anterieur* 1(Spring 1990), translated by Martin Joughin.

⁴² Deleuze and Guattari, 1987. Page 106.

Foucault and “Transgender”

Michel Foucault’s work has been a useful site for feminist thought and inquiry. In re-conceptualizing oppression, Foucault’s rejection of “the repressive hypothesis”⁴³ based on three overarching doubts is vital. He describes this as an assumed trend in society to believe that society’s relationship to sexuality was that of repression and a decline, or rather, a prohibition, in the discussion of sex in sexuality had occurred. Foucault argues instead: “There is a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex—specific discourses, different from one another both by their form and by their object: a discursive ferment that gathered momentum from the eighteenth century onward.”⁴⁴ In other words, Foucault suggests that far from repressed, society has produced various actions (what he calls discourses, especially truths, knowledges, disciplines) in relation to sex, creating new understandings of sex and sexuality. However, this does not ignore the marginalized groups produced through these discourses. The importance to feminists in this is to observe the way in which we might understand these regulations in relation to the actions taken. This again, hints at a more affirmative model of oppression where we can understand society’s relation to certain restrictions and consider them in the context of the larger ‘apparatus’. Foucault asks: “What are the effects of power generated by what was said [about sex]? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them?”⁴⁵ His answer is creation. Similar to this work, he clarifies that his goal is not to decide between positive and negative standpoints

⁴³ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction, Volume I*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print. Page 10.

⁴⁴ Deleuze, 1988. Page 18.

⁴⁵ Deleuze, 1988. Page 11.

in relation to sexuality, but rather, he is interested in the ways which sex and sexuality move a society and are created by laws, norms, ideas.

Foucault's discussion of power and knowledge is highlighted in Deleuze's writings, where he cites Foucault's contribution in converting phenomenology to epistemology in *The Use of Pleasure*:

For seeing and speaking means knowing [*savoir*], but we do not see what we speak about, nor do we speak about what we see... Everything is knowledge, and this is the reason why there is no 'savage experience': there is nothing beneath or prior to knowledge. But knowledge is irreducibly double, since it involves speaking and seeing, language and light, which is the reason why there is no intentionality.⁴⁶

Observing these as interlinking, interwoven power-relations unravels the idea that one may not "know," or be silenced. He says that knowledge, power, and self (as ontologies) cannot be reduced to, but also always hold implications on one another. If everything is knowledge (Knowledge is Being), perhaps, the reflection of privileged knowledge allows for new knowledge to split—as in a network, rhizome, or constellation—into another direction. This is specifically what feminists must do in relation to perceptions and concepts of oppression. This understanding opens feminism to an accelerated understanding of language, action, and the powerful repetition (read: reification) that has limited political action to a structural, top-down model. By understanding some of the points and connections between power, knowledge, violence, discourse, and language, we restate the central inquiry of this paper: What is oppression if we choose to conceptualize it without structure?

⁴⁶ Deleuze, 1988. 109.

Transgender Spatiality

Returning to transgender politics as an example of an emerging discourse in sexuality, an examination of power-relations, and as a rhizomatic relationship to gender and space I examine this question not to arrive at an answer, but rather to provoke a new way of thinking of oppression on the body. Performatively and actually, the appearance (passing) and the realness (internal), of female-to-male transition—also becoming-other-than-woman, or any other becomings—highlights action as a powerful politics. If something society holds as so fundamental can be changed in such a corporal *and* affective way, what other changes are possible through a new form of knowledge? Remembering knowledge as being, Foucault describes knowledge as power:

Perhaps, too, we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands, and its interests. Perhaps we should abandon the belief that power makes people mad and that, by the same token, renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge. We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another.⁴⁷

Combining this sense of knowledge with Nietzsche's will to power, knowledge-as-power becomes a new action. This knowledge-action is at the core of a new feminist action; an evolution of thought and knowledge in relation to race, gender, sexuality and so forth that allows a new way of conceptualizing oppression that does not lock the oppressor to the oppressed, but rather measures access and sees action as a pathway to equity. Foucault says, "[T]his power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege,' acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions – an

⁴⁷ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon, 1977. Print. Page 175.

effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated".⁴⁸ This understanding of power as an action rather than an embedded structure offers a thinking of oppression and the relationship to power as always acting/being acted upon, and multidirectional. It is important to note that these powers are not always readable in the same way, however, they always exist and it is their existence that affirms a move beyond dualistic models of oppression. A critical notation in Foucault's conversations with power surrounds prohibition and law. He examines the understanding of law on the body and on discourse. Though with power, subjects often do not have access to the same *languages* of power in the confines of biopower.

To highlight the ideas in this chapter, here, I take a turn to four spaces relevant to the discussion of trans-bodies. Using Foucault's work with prisons as a point of departure, I turn to public restrooms, hospitals, prisons, and airplanes as examples of binary power-relations between male and female that both regulate the body and constrict action by means of surveillance and punishment. Foucault regards punishment as a kind of political tactic; a space where prisoners are intentionally set up to begin self-monitoring through a series of disciplines and punishments. As an arrival from this thought, I use Shipley's recognition of these tactics in his navigation of control in everyday space. Together, I use them to make clear the difficulties in agitating the aforementioned dualisms, but also the importance. In a discussion of oppression, and the disruption of two-and-only-two categories, these examples offer a way in which through new acts, new ways of thinking are formed.

The understanding of which restroom (male or female) one belongs in and the fear in entering the unknown highlights the power of habitual practices in society as well

⁴⁸ Foucault, 1977. 174.

as the biopolitical power such categories hold. Hostility and violence are an often reality for trans and gender non-conforming individuals in public space, however, restrooms occupy a particular space insofar as the universal engagement with them serves as a constant example of the larger implications of two gender categories—a simple explanation being that not everyone can be classified by these two categories, emotionally, physically, or affectively. Even in the case of individual stalls, the politics of selecting restrooms make known the two options as they have been implemented. Following the “rules” becomes a remembered action allowing only those who intentionally act, or become aware, to select difference, producing a new memory, unfamiliar to the current discourse, and complicating this binary through acts.

Widely addressed in the trans-movement has been the lack of sufficient health care for trans people. In particular, insurance seldom covers medical expenses or specialists, often sought by individuals in transition. However, this important issue often masks the everyday inadequacies of hospitals, in particular emergency rooms. The lack of understanding and services for trans people in these hospitals has the potential to turn a moment of (medical) need, into another site of a constricted binary. Issues surrounding language, room availability, continued hormone treatment, and so forth make hospitals a clear instance in need of new actions. Similar to the other institutions discussed, the immediate classification of gender (as sex, or in addition to) in accordance with structural legal documentations leaves trans bodies again without a more nuanced understanding, and thus a reductionist classification. The particular interest in hospitals as a space of this continued binary suffering is that is most often a location utilized for assistance, or to make better that inherently relies on others to achieve this. In this way, the interface of

the medical profession and the bodies they must come to understand is immediate. The interruption of the male/female split in such as space is important to observe as a new act. Increased visibility of medical need, as well as a call for a more complicated understanding of gender. Despite legislation suggesting discrimination cannot be based on ones gender identity, the lack of education in the interruption of these hegemonic categories is certainly vital in creating new understandings. An enhanced view of difference as something to be affirmed must take place in order to bring about societal changes.

Heightened security in airports (particularly in the United States) has imposed new regulations on bodies, particularly based on perceived identity. Developments in technology have made it so that individual bodies can be scanned and detected; this development has been marked as a measure of safety for citizens traveling in airports. However, for trans people, airports and airport security can be a space of conflict when legal identifications do not present themselves as in joint with gender presentation. Since a gender identification of male or female is required to fly, trans people are presented with two options: to select the gender specified on their legal documents or select the gender with which they identify. Clearly, and most problematically, this leaves no room for subjects who do not wish to select male *or* female. The conflict between ones gender identification and legal classification has many implications and carries with it the possibility of discrimination and may even prohibit the individual from moving freely as their fellow (cisgendered) travelers. Similar conflicts arise with racial profiling, however, the uniqueness of gender (or gender ambiguity) is an uprooting of what is considered to be fundamentally “true.” That is to say, that unlike discrimination based on purely in

(mis)assumptions, trans bodies additionally face being placed in a non-category. Though this is problematic for a day of travel, it is useful in highlighting the *need* for another, or more, categories. More importantly, it interrogates the need for a gendered category for a passenger. The challenges put forth by trans bodies are important in the understanding of trans bodies as a disruption, once more, of this gender binary.

Docile Bodies

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault deals, at length, with how the prison system can to be. By extracting a long, layered history, Foucault demonstrates ways in which bodies become regulated within the prison system. Though it is without the genealogical tracings of Foucault, I argue that today, prisons are a concentrated site for regulation of in-between bodies. As an institution, the prison sets the precise conditions for what Foucault calls the “docile body.” That is, one that “[m]ay be subjugated, used, transformed and improved.”⁴⁹ For trans-bodies, the modes of categorization, constant surveillance, management of resources and disjuncture between self and other highlight a societal angst toward bodies unable to be categorized by female or male. Through categorization of male and female prisons, strip searching, withholding of hormone treatment, violence and so forth, trans bodies in prison highlight a particular form of discipline and punishment. Though, undoubtedly, all bodies are regulated within these institutions, trans bodies in particular bring attention to the subjugation of those existing in-between or away from not only from authorities, but from other prisoners as well.

Though these experiences (and many others) of subjugation, punishment, and attempts to make trans bodies conform are certainly locations of intolerance, they also offer a certain agitation. As we have been speaking of it, politics must be seen within a

⁴⁹ Foucault, 1977. Page 136.

constellation of acts in which multidirectional and fluid understandings emerge. The importance of interconnectedness cannot be understated. These connections, comprised of all things, are precisely the value in this model and the benefit of it over a structural one. These acts pose the opportunity to complicate simplistic models such as the male/female binary (along with other constricting binaries). In each of these instances, where attempts to regulate trans bodies occur, the proliferation of this difference suggests the power in acts. For no matter how prevalent these categories are, acts producing memories make space for ruptures of difference. To reiterate, the suggestion is not that trans bodies are the resolution to the larger entanglements of oppression, but more importantly that they offer one way in which current understandings are altered, through action, causing change.

Earlier, we discussed “hate” as an intersection to oppression. The term “hate-crime” and its relationship to bodies that do not possess the hegemonic traits of female or male are subject to this hatred on a daily basis. Whether hate manifests as an affective violence of disrespect or mockery, or a physically assaulting violence, it is a reality within this constellation that has two major effects: the first, the production of a memory of fear. Again, Anzaldúa’s *la facultad* comes to play as bodies that differ become aware of the threat of violence. The second, and perhaps more politically powerful, is the creation of a moment of acknowledgment. By attempting to punish this body, it must be recognized as different. As trans-scholarship, activism, and politics continues to gain more visibility (a brighter element of constellation), these moments of acknowledgement become new actions, making visible bodies that for many years have been cast in shadows.

The relevance to feminist scholarship in relation to trans-politics is one of education as a tool and action for subverting many of the dominant memories within society based on identity. Foucault says: “Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse.” This reminds us immediately of the constellation metaphor in relation to access through an affordance to each individual to enter and exit these discourses. Importantly, he continues: “[b]ut we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.”⁵⁰ Society demonstrates well the differences of access and prohibition on bodies, however, education is a tool that allows for new knowledge to be produced, changing the ways in which society feels affectively toward and thus regulates individuals. The political power manifested in such an education turns us to feminist knowledge production and scholarship as a way of re-thinking and inventing new offerings to assemblages, free of structural demands and dependent on a will to power, truth, and equity. For this reason, the next chapter will turn more explicitly to feminist scholarship and observe ways in which in-betweenness may serve to nuance concepts of societal networks and oppression by moving beyond identity politics.

⁵⁰ Foucault, 1977. Page 227.

Part Five: (Trans)itioning Scholarship

The multiple must be made, not by always needing a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available.

A Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge.

Uses of the Erotic, Audre Lorde

I write for a species of man that does not yet exist: for the "masters of the earth."

The Will to Power, Friedrich Nietzsche

In a few centuries, the future will belong to the mestiza.

Borderlands, Gloria Anzaldúa

*And I am struck
hard by the beauty of you. I am
again an eight-year-old boy, simply*

Etymology, Ely Shipley

I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning.

The History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault

Western society, and in fact much of the world, has forced people who exist outside of two-and-only-two genders into two hegemonic categories: male or female. Both are regulated by an understanding of performative roles, rules, and norms and have been understood as embedded in structures and institutions aimed at reinforcing them as an essential and unchanging part of identity. Furthermore, through the divisions within traits of masculine and feminine, masculine identities have become dominant (physically, mentally, emotionally, physically, politically, and so forth) over feminine identities. For individuals who chose (or do so by any means) to break these constrictive molds, the consequences can be viewed abstractly difficult, possibly violent, and certainly volatile. These interruptions are also a part of the larger constellation and in many ways aggravate

current understandings of gender and sex. In this way, transposing a sense of agitation to a larger political arena is useful insofar as the disruption of “what is” leaves possibility for new ways of being. Understanding these acts (and these subjects) as always acting and being acted upon leaves political change open. As Foucault discusses power acting on as well as being enacted by subjects, we can understand this power as forming and being formed simultaneously. Considering power among other acts, categories are constantly being agitated, constantly transforming and reminding feminist politics and scholarship to do the same.

Transgender and transsexed individuals (as indeed many others do) have agitated the embedded and dominant forms of thought in relation to binary oppositions in order to rethink the understanding of the bodies and roles of male and female as unchanging, suggesting a more fluid and flexible understanding of what bodies and genders mean in contemporary society. Through activism and the production of scholarship, I highlight the knowledge-actions of trans people, activists and advocates that have been integral in the assembly of gender scholarship across the social sciences (and perhaps beyond). Through new ways of thinking in research and activism, new interstitial spaces have been created for trans-people to live as transmen and transwomen, men and women, or simply as subjects. This “living” is perhaps a positive and a negative reality. It is important to recognize the essential need for safety and services that trans politics seeks to access, but also important is an understanding of what these differences are capable of. Rather than the creation of a new category for identity politics, we must take these disruptions as opportunities to critically examine the way in which a subject comes to be. That is, that rather than striving for a romanticized version of equality, understanding the set of acts as

a politics of difference. These actions have the residue effect of new language, legislation, and institutions that must reconsider binary understandings of gender, but they also must not be reduced to one-dimensional markers of identity. The production of scholarship and law in consideration of these multiple categories offers insight to the power of an acting politics and must continue acting, as such. In the cases of hospitals, prisons, airplanes, and restrooms mentioned in the previous chapter, the interruption of thought in order to produce new ways of thinking the hope for an action-based politics.

In recent years, activists, scholars, and researchers as well as politics, societies, and communities have discursively shaped the term “transgender” to reference a multiplicity of identifications, both personally and politically. It has developed a fluidity that is both supportive and reflective of the subjects that it has come to represent. It is a term that has come to be used to describe a range of beings not contained to any strict categorization, but rather those occupying non-places, in-betweens, and borderlands. These spaces have come to represent many groups complicating binary thinking and must be affirmed as a space of action-based politics and knowledges. In its flexible categorization alone, “transgender” represents the constant, never-ending pushing of fixed ideas of gender and sex as they have been produced in lives and literature in more recent years through action and becoming of difference. It is through this discourse of language and action surrounding transgender and transsexed bodies, politics, rights, and representations that we continue to produce knowledge and activism that challenges “structural” gender constructs. This (scholarship, legislation, representation, so forth) is not without its limits, however, which is precisely the charge to feminism: to continue

creating and affirming new acts as a way of releasing oppressor/oppressed and opening new subjects to spaces once inaccessible.

The point I wish to elaborate through this examination is that the discursive creation of trans as a category represents, in theory and practice, through repeated passions of self, production of activism and understandings, and memories of past pain and affirmations in spite of, there has been significant advances in gender scholarship with reciprocal effects throughout several academic disciplines in their understanding of “gender” and “sex” as unfixed categories. Again, this genealogy lends itself to multiple groups, not solely trans, where active forces bring newness to scholarship. Through acting, in (re)turn, those disciplines have acted on, helping to shape trans-identities, activism and visibility. The presence of trans-existence has in many ways, required conversation around issues of trans-bodies vis-à-vis political and social action. Taking Foucault’s understandings of discourse, trans-bodies not only exist in society as something different, but also reflect society and the desire for new models of binary-oppositions of gender.

By disrupting notions of gender and sex as categories, trans-identities have had an enormous effect on the literature produced within academia. It is through these discourses that we are able to build knowledge that benefits all communities by inserting different, new ways of thinking. In a discussion of discourse and its abilities, Foucault states that: “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of

tolerance.”⁵¹ In this way, trans-communities enter and exit society through discourse, both producing power and undermining it. Returning to Anzaludua’s *mestiza consciousness* we are reminded of *la facultad* and the development of a new ways of thinking. Trans-struggles highlight this in a unique way of occupying the in-between spaces she examines. In seeing through the serpent and the eagle, trans-bodies see through male and female in the creation of a new consciousness, one that interrogates and affirms current ways of thinking, molding and shaping them in new ways and allowing docile bodies to engage in complicated acts and transition to a new political being.

The possibility of deconstructing the binary system through sets of acts and power-relations positions trans-people in a critical point in theory and society. If gender and sex can both be transitioned or transgressed, then the categories of male and female cannot be seen as always fixed and unchanging (remember this work’s earlier discussion of sexual difference in regards to becoming-other-than-woman). In this way, trans-people face a unique position in that they are not only observed for their societal gender and presumed sexuality, but also for the willingness to change something that society has deemed “unchangeable.” To do so “successfully,” that is to say, if one is able to pass as their desired gender or non-gender, contains a separate set of risks and regulations, since “passing” is precisely that. Using gender as a vehicle is progressive, inventive, and dangerous insofar as it opens up possibilities of newness through a multiplicity of spaces, but also combats with regulation and punishment. It is important to note that this must be an active vehicle, that is, not one of repetitive performance, but one that acts in a rhizomaitc form, constantly creating newness and possibility.

⁵¹ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print. Page 101.

Turning briefly to Foucault's assertion of discourse as two-fold, the production of knowledge surrounding trans-identities is, in part, a result of the presentation in kinships, media, religious and political institutions, societies, and so forth—as Foucault states, the power of discourses are great, as they “are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power. But also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.”⁵² He continues that discourse produces and reinforces power, but also makes it possible to undo. The meeting of power and resistance work in opposition, but also together to form subjects and knowledge while offering an interrogation of both. This is relevant to this continued, interconnected, set of acts in particular because of the constant acting and acting upon. This thinking of discourse and power creates a more capacious understanding of politics, acts and action, allowing subjects to be created, but also to create themselves through constant movement; affects creating actions, which in turn develop into habits, and thus memories.

One important political and personal attempt at understanding people in their complexities was the development of intersectionality in an effort to address the numerous ways in which any subject is affected by politics, society and space. As a way of producing multiple, diverse, and in-process subjects, intersectionality has offered an approach to structures, politics, activism, and research that aim at more inclusivity than traditional methods. Many researchers have approached intersectionality methodologically in research, theory and activism. Academic fields such as Women's and Gender Studies have aided in the progression of intersectional methods.

⁵² Foucault, 1990. Page 101.

Intersectionality, as an approach, has strong roots in women-of-color activism and theory as it attempted to focus on the stories of those facing multiple oppressions.⁵³ These theorists opened up possibilities of understanding oppression on various levels as it is experienced in and around the body/self in relation to society/other. Furthermore, intersectionality highlighted the understanding that these oppressions were deeply rooted (together, not separately) and suggested the ability to form connections between activist, theorists, and subjects in general.

Intersectionality was later posited in its use in legal structures, which opened up more ways of observing the multiple oppressions one faces and the reality of consequences.⁵⁴ However, this also produces a salient understanding of the category of woman/women, leaving gender variance unaccounted for in much of the literature, law, and societal discourse through a categorization of male or female. In attempts to classify gender (and sex) within intersectionality, trans-bodies complicate our understanding of male and female as fixed and unchanging. Intersectionality (as an approach and understanding) fails us in unlocking the oppressor/oppressed dualism discussed through Deleuze, Foucault, Lorde and Anzaldúa. The never-ending list of oppressed identities does little to facilitate active force in thwarting them. Rather, it is a constant reactive force leaving little room for new ways of thinking. Rather, considering identities and actions in constellation, wakens the possibility of an affirmative political and social stance, disrupting representation and producing new knowledge through scholarship, discourse, and society.

⁵³ Intersectionality: hooks, Lorde, Davis, Dill, (later) Crenshaw.

⁵⁴ Crenshaw, 1989.

In this way, I argue that the presence of trans people pushes the social sciences to research ways that sex and gender are not fixed. Through this research, I suggest that trans-people benefit through access to resources and information that has not historically been available demonstrating forces acting on and acting on as well as Anzaldúa's discussion of creating a culture as well as being cultureless. As one advances the other, a circular constellation effect allows researchers and activists the opportunity conjure new ways of thinking, and create space and access for trans-people today and in the future. As it was discussed, this is not an attempt to collapse an identity within the mis-en-abyme of intersectional politics, but rather to recognize the complications in this understanding and bring forth new scholarship that addresses these bodies without essentializing a third category. This is by no means an easy task, and this work does not offer an easy explanation of how this must work, but does hope to inspire a careful examination of what these in-between bodies offer feminist scholarship and activism.

As the stories of trans people continue to emerge and unfold in scholarship and activism, it begs an understanding as to when society will accept and understand trans identities on a large scale and whether this can occur in an affirmative stance, or if it will be reduced to another identity for identity politics. Categories outside of identities considered "normal" carry strength in their ability to disrupt those categories and present alternate ideas and connections—this disruption is an active force to be understood in a rhizomatic model. The space of becoming, then, is perhaps the more powerful element of trans as a fluid category. Shipley suggests that for the rest of his being, testosterone every two weeks becomes necessary. In this way, the identity is never arrestable as it is always changing. The constant change, and affirmation of this change, is key in a proliferation of

an action-based politics, not rooted in hegemonic identities, but rather in constant becoming. Trans people have required cisgendered people, scholars, medical professionals, institutions and so forth, to reexamine their conceptualization of the body, gender, and sex. Though many scholars speak at length of the binary system and suggest that there is a no way to oppose it, I argue that trans-identities *do* oppose this binary system, or further, exist both within it and outside (Anzaldúa) through a permanent disruption of the body, for evening in “passing” these bodies are subject to punishment on account of difference. The escape from identity politics is not in “male” or “female,” but in “*to*.” The body in-between male and female represents the powerful space highlighted in each of the works discussed here. It is the unarrestable, fluid, changing, intermezzo, erotic, powerful space that can be critically examined by feminist politics as a new model of change. The misconception that trans-identities are “unreal” lies strongly in line with a knowledge that has not yet been produced. As Nietzsche notes of the overman in the epigraph, it is the knowledge of a being that does not yet exist.

The discursive reform of conceptualizations of gender and sex based on trans identities has been largely beneficial to the academic community. The benefit to trans communities, and to all those of difference, is not representation, but rather an understanding of difference. Through these interruptions of binary understandings, feminist politics must make room to conceptualize oppression outside of a dualistic model—this model has become obsolete in its ability to represent power appropriately. In examination of the research on gender as it contributes to trans studies, as well as the reciprocal affect that trans-studies has had on a societal conceptualization of gender it is clear that the trans movement has challenged norms and broken boundaries contained by

sex and gender, foregrounding a model to complicate other constricting dualisms; perhaps, then, it will be the task the overman, la mestiza, the nomad, the erotic, the new feminist to actively affirm difference through lines of connection to bring new understandings of access and oppression.

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Appendix

Etymology

Testosterone, strange that you'd let me
give birth
to my own body

even though I know I've always been
a boy, moving
toward what? Manhood? A constant

puberty? I could replace my menses
with a thick needle
filled with your fluid, thrust every

two weeks the rest of my life
into my thigh. And I think
of the six days of creation before

god rested, because I too am tired
and because my voice, would it suddenly be
god-like to me, thundering,

waking in a deep vibrato as if from atop
a mountain, maybe Olympus, maybe
a lightning bolt shot sharp

through my heart because I am
startled, scared, delighted? Testosterone,
you are the Magnetic

Fields, Elvis, and molasses, the first time
I heard Nina Simone sing, unsure of her
and my own sex at age 13. You are

an eighteen-wheeler ripping through
a hail storm, the umpire breathing
over the catcher's shoulder until
the ball burns into the mitt
and there is the deep growl
ascending, *Strike one!*

And I am struck
hard by the beauty of you. I am
again an eight-year-old boy, simply

[Continued]

admiring a tree in the school-yard, my only
friend, who lifts me
and lifts me so that I can pick

its single spring
flower, the lowest one, maybe
for my mother, maybe my father –

but end up placing it inside
my first and only dictionary, a gift
from my father on the first day

of that school year. And later
when it has dried, wilted, I
remove it. Only a stain left, small

shadow, the handprint
of a child quieting the words
it covers, tucks into his

memory, already knows by heart,
and keeps there, where they wait for him
until he is ready.

[End]