

## Transgender Subjectivity and the Logic of Sexual Difference

*P*erhaps it could be argued that gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis read each other askew; indeed, they read each other, and reach for each other, rather queerly. Provisionally defining gender studies as the study of the stakes of sexual identity, sexuality, and their multifarious disruptions, it is easy to see that Judith Butler, at least, one of the foremost thinkers in the field, has a certain profound investment in thinking through psychoanalytic claims about sex and sexuality.<sup>1</sup> Her texts *Antigone's Claim* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, demonstrating a deconstructivist approach that takes seriously Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's remark that "[t]he critique in deconstruction [. . .] is the critique of something that is extremely useful, something without which we cannot do anything" (qtd. in *Bodies* 27), deal with almost nothing but the questions and vocabulary of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this way, she enters into a reputable history of thoughtful feminist and critical encounters with psychoanalysis, a list that includes the likes of Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, and Luce Irigaray.

Conversely, contemporary Lacanians from time to time return gender studies' attention: Butler's texts in particular have stimulated acute readings from writers such as Joan Copjec and Tim Dean. Yet these responses are not precisely reciprocal; Copjec and Dean deal primarily in psychoanalytic vocabulary without taking up the vocabulary proffered by Butler (such as "the lesbian phallus" or "the morphological imaginary") and without sufficiently identifying or attending to the rationale, or the desire, motivating Butler's concerns. Rather, much of their responses could be qualified as "corrective" readings of Butler's readings of psychoanalysis. Perhaps these correctives are warranted, given Butler's own thoroughgoing critiques of psychoanalysis, but more could be gained, politically and psychically, if gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis integrated their energies and their political and intellectual concerns less fractiously but no less queerly, and with just as much desire. What do gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis have to offer one another? Is it possible to integrate the two domains, or do they, as Copjec charges<sup>2</sup> and as Butler herself seems to worry in *Antigone's Claim*,<sup>5</sup> represent fundamentally incompatible approaches?

Gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis share a set of common questions, including: What is a subject? What qualifies a human *as* human? What is the role of sex in the production of subjectivity? What is the role of sexuality in the production of subjectivity? What conceptual differences separate the terrains of "sex" and "sexuality"? In spite of these shared concerns, sexual difference, what it is and what it means, often becomes a point of contention. This antagonism is perhaps most stringently encapsulated in Kate Bornstein's response to Lacanian psychoanalyst Catherine Millot's text on transsexuality, when the former writes, "Gender terrorists are not the leather daddies or back-seat Betties. Gender terrorists are not the married men, shivering in the dark as they slip on their wives' panties. Gender terrorists are those who, like Ms. Millot, bang their heads against a gender system which is *real* and *natural*; and who then use gender to terrorize the rest of us. These are the real terrorists: the Gender Defenders" (236). The discourses of gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis collide to particularly spectacular effect around the questions of transsexuality and transgenderism. What remains to be seen is whether or not these spectacular effects might be channeled into some sort of understanding for a logic of sexual difference for present bodies as well as "the holographic and moving contours of *bodies to come, of bodies as they might come*" (Berger 64).

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud writes that we as human animals are all bisexual (141) and that we are all perverts (160). The radical promise of Freud's words on perversion has not gone unnoticed by gender theorists, who have rightly pointed to certain strident passages in Freud's writings in order to object to a facile vilification of Freud as anti homosexuality.<sup>4</sup> Less attention seems to have been paid, however, to Freud's words on bisexuality and the provocative connections between perversion and bisexuality (bisexuality as related to psychical hermaphroditism and/or physical hermaphroditism, as well as bisexuality as homo- plus heterosexuality).<sup>5</sup> If the condition of human subjectivity as such is bisexuality, and if, as Lacan writes, Freud "posit[s] sexuality as essentially polymorphous, aberrant" (*Four* 176), then why in Lacan's reading of Freud are there only two sexual positions, masculine and feminine? Where Butler might advocate gender play, where Derrida has been said to "dream [. . .] of a sexual relationship, albeit sexed otherwise: not one that is divided into two parts, played by two recognizable partners, but one that is inscribed in multiple ways" (Berger 60), Lacan replies implacably that "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (*Encore* 57) and that there is a feminine way to respond to that failure and a masculine way to respond to it. How do these qualifications, that there is no sexual relationship and that there are only two sexual positions, follow from the conditions of bisexuality and polymorphous perversion? And don't these qualifications make psychoanalysis seem rather sexually impoverished with respect to other perspectives?

For Lacan, polymorphous perversion is the effect of castration, and, in the spirit of a perverse temporality, castration is equally the effect of polymorphous perversion. How is this so? In speaking of infantile sexuality, Freud provides the example of thumb sucking, explaining that in thumb sucking a child seeks a previously experienced pleasure that "is now remembered" (181). Later Freud qualifies, "The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it" (222). For Lacan, finding and refinding objects is not only the infantile, polymorphous precursor to an eventual castration by way of shame, disgust, morality (Freud 191), and the Oedipal drama but also, or rather, the sign that the subject has already been castrated.<sup>6</sup>

For Lacan, as soon as there is an object, evidenced in the example of the infant's turn to the thumb, there is castration. Something, in other words, has been lost. Lacan writes,

*[W]hat makes us distinguish this satisfaction from the mere auto-eroticism of the erogenous zone is the object that we confuse all too often with that upon which the drive closes—this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the petit a. The objet petit a is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object. (Four 179–80)*

Lacan points to Freud's specification that the object can be "any object" (180), commenting elsewhere, "Let us look at what he says—*As far as the object in the drive is concerned, let it be clear that it is, strictly speaking, of no importance. It is a matter of total indifference*" (168). In other words, any object may be one toward which the drive might tend; what seems new here is the reason for such *pulsion*, as well as what is signified by that object around which the drive closes. Here the regression is not precisely, for example, from thumb to breast to milk, but rather from any object to object *a* as "the eternally lacking object." Lacan tells us that object *a* is introduced from the fact that nothing, no thing—no food, no breast, no person—will ever satisfy the drive. Object *a* as "cause of desire" (*Encore* 92) is not the object that the subject seizes, nor is it the aim of desire, but rather, "It is either pre-subjective, or the foundation of an identification of the subject, or the foundation of an identification disavowed by the subject" (*Four* 186). It is, indeed, the foundation of a subject, but a contingent foundation: as Dean explains, "[T]his object counterintuitively (ungrammatically?) appears to precede the subject, to found the subject [. . .]. Yet the apparent foundationalism of object *a* betokens a radically contingent foundation, since as Ellie Ragland points out, '[w]e humans are grounded in objects that are not themselves grounded'" (*Beyond* 194). In insisting that "any object" can stand in as a representative for object *a* and that object *a* is only a further representative of "the eternally lacking object," Lacan distances himself from a reading of Freud that would see a sexual developmental progression or "maturation" from the oral to the anal to the genital drives. Instead, Lacan emphasizes the essential groundlessness of object *a* and its voidlike role in the circuitous motion of the drive (*Four* 181).

Lacan offers a variety of accounts of the "birth" or "origin" of these ungrounded objects *a*. The story of the lamella, as one such example,

is Lacan's playful revision of Plato's myth in the *Symposium* as told by the narrative voice of Aristophanes. Replacing the missing parts as explained by Plato with the figure of the lamella, Lacan writes:

*This lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ—I can give you more details as to its zoological place—is the libido.*

*It is the libido, qua pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexual reproduction. And it is of this that all the forms of the objet a that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents. The objets a are merely its representatives, its figures. (Four 197–98)*

This is yet another narration of castration, this time a rather surreal mythologization where something called a “lamella” (which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “[a] thin plate, scale, layer, or film, esp. of bone or tissue; e.g. one of the thin scales or plates which compose some shells, one of the gills forming the hymenium of a mushroom, one of the erect scales appended to the corollas of some flowers”) transforms into an organ, and where that organ “is” the libido. In fact the lamella-as-libido provides the thin, hymenium contiguity for Lacan between what the subject loses via sexed reproduction and the order of the real, for “[i]t is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction” (*Four* 198). Lacan describes the libido as “essential” to “understanding the nature of the drive” (205), and his usage of a mythical organ to figure a real loss is strategic, for, as he writes, “This organ is unreal. Unreal is not imaginary. The unreal is defined by articulating itself on the real in a way that eludes us, and it is precisely this that requires that its representation should be mythical, as I have made it” (205). In *Encore*, meiosis will serve as the framework to tell the same story, again constituting “a thoroughly obvious subtraction” (66), whose “‘waste’ returns to haunt the libidinal subject in the form of object *a*” (Barnard, “Tongues” 174).

As Suzanne Barnard tells it in her contribution to *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*, the lost object figured in *Four Fundamental Concepts* is “an indestructible fragment of asexual, nonsymbolized libido” (“Tongues” 176), and it is lost to

subjects not yet marked by the cut of sexual difference, therefore subjects who could be described as “asexual” or, better (bringing Freud back and emphasizing the sexual aspect of this so-called asexuality), “bisexual.” As Barnard explains, by the cut of sexual difference, subjects do not lose their other halves, but their “asexual ‘sameness’” (176). Perhaps we could describe this intermediary or rather semimythical state of ex-sistence prior to sexual difference as one of *a*-sexual asexuality, a scene imaginable, too, from a Freudian standpoint if we graft onto it his own account of the bisexual, polymorphously perverse subject. This is a scene that will resurface when we turn to Dean’s account of the queerer aspects of the psychoanalytic narration of sexuality.

Lacan’s account of object *a* seems to pose no threat to any range of queer theories of sexuality insofar as it does not presuppose, for example, that a particular type of object *should* or in fact ever *could* satisfy the drive. Indeed, Lacan repeatedly mocks the institution of so-called genital primacy (*Ethics* 88). And yet none of this talk of objects, lamellas, and libido speaks directly to Lacan’s assertion that there are two possible subject positions, masculine or feminine. Left only with a story of *a*-sexual asexuality, we might be halfway to a Lacanian narration of transgender ontology—not such a radical thought when we recall that Freud was the one who pointed out the constitutive bisexual perversion of the human unconscious. From whence, then, the feminine and masculine subject positions?

No matter where we locate the instantiation of loss in the subject (meiosis, birth, thumb sucking), it is clear that for psychoanalysis we are dealing with a desiring subject, a subject who lacks not simply some locatable object (e.g., a penis) but who lacks being as such. But, according to Lacan, there is not only one way to desire. This is another way of saying that there is not only one way to apprehend the lack in the Other. There are two sexual positions available to human subjects because, as Lacan asserts in *Encore* using the language of logic and mathematical formalization, subjects are positioned differently with respect to one term: the phallic function. There are two sexual positions insofar as every subject is either “all” or “not-all” under the phallic function.

Before falling too quickly into the abyss that can follow from the explication of the phallic function, a few preliminary words are in order on sexual difference as it relates to signification itself: Copjec notes that “[s]ex is the stumbling block of sense” (204), citing Lacan’s own comment that “[e]verything implied by the analytic engagement with human

behavior indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual, but that it makes up for it” (qtd. on 204). Similarly, Renata Salecl writes in her introduction to *Sexuation* that sexual difference “is first and above all the name for a certain fundamental *deadlock* inherent in the symbolic order” (2). In fact, it is impossible to signify sex, and the phallus serves as “an empty signifier that stands for” that impossibility (Barnard, Introduction 10). Feminine and masculine subjects, then, relate to that failure, or *are* that failure, differently, or, as Lacan writes,

*The universe is the place where, due to the fact of speaking, everything succeeds [. . .] in making the sexual relationship fail [. . .]. The epithalamion, the duet [. . .], the alternation, the love letter, they're not the sexual relationship. They revolve around the fact that there's no such thing as a sexual relationship.*

*There is thus the male way of revolving around it, and then the other one, that I will not designate otherwise because it's what I'm in the process of elaborating this year—how that is elaborated in the female way. It is elaborated on the basis of the not-whole. (Encore 56–57)*

What is the status of this hotly contested “not-whole,” and what does it illuminate about the phallic function? Veering into yet another scene of castration, the formulas of sexual difference provide the “logical matrix” (Salecl 2) of the deadlock of sexual difference. As Lacan recounts, the formulas consist of the following: the right side of the formula, which reads  $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$  and  $\forall x \Phi x$ , figures the “feminine” side and can be translated to state that there is not one  $x$  that is not subject to the phallic function and that not every  $x$  is subject to the phallic function. The feminine subject finds “her-self” “not-all” by way of negation insofar as “she” forms part of an open set, open and thereby infinite because it is not constituted by an exceptional figure. No shared trait—aside from the absence of any such shared trait—serves to define the set; no constitutive outside functions close her set. Exceptionally lacking exception, though, and being only loosely linked by virtue of an absence offers/burdens the feminine subject (with) a particular perspective on the phallic function and thus on what grounds the masculine subject, which Barnard describes as “a view to the contingency of the signifier of the Other in its anchoring function [. . .] [S]he ‘knows’ that the signifier of phallic power merely lends a certain mysterious presence to the Law that veils its real impotence” (“Tongues” 178). One of the logical consequences of such a position, of “being in the symbolic ‘without

exception” (178), is that she has a different relation than the masculine subject, not only to the symbolic but also to the lack in the Other.

The “anchoring function” lacking to the feminine subject is located on the “masculine” side of Lacan’s formula: “On the left, the lower line— $\forall\chi\Phi\chi$ —indicates that it is through the phallic function that man as whole acquires his inscription [. . .] with the proviso that this function is limited due to the existence of an  $x$  by which the function  $\Phi\chi$  is negated [. . .]:  $\exists\chi\overline{\Phi\chi}$ ” (*Encore* 79). This exception also immediately takes on a truly exceptional status, from the standpoint of the masculine subject who is established by it, for the exception proffers the outside that closes “his” set and the limit that grounds “his” being; it thereby proffers a sort of support not afforded the feminine subject. One figure of this exception would be that of the mythical primal father, he who evades castration and thereby enjoys unlimited jouissance. In other words, the masculine subject is only “whole” or “all” as a result of the fact that he is permitted (permits himself?) the fantasy of one who escapes the very same set that grounds his being: “That is what is known as the father function—whereby we find, via negation, the proposition [. . .], which grounds the operativity (*exercice*) of what makes up for the sexual relationship with castration, insofar as that relationship is in no way inscribable. The whole here is thus based on the exception posited as the end-point (*terme*), that is, on that which altogether negates  $\Phi\chi$ ” (Lacan, *Encore* 79–80). As Lacan makes explicit here, castration/sexual difference is something that fundamentally, if incompletely, makes up for the absence of the sexual relationship. By this logic, the sexual positions borne of sexual difference figure as solutions, no doubt principally unsatisfying ones, for the loss of a sort of relation that was in fact never possible, a relation of One-ness or complementarity, or for the loss of that missing half that Plato tells us, somewhat cruelly, we once had. Importantly, though, nothing in this account specifies that the lost/nonexistent sexual relation was a heterosexual one. As Tracy McNulty has noted, “If the ‘relation’ that is lost is really the relation to the One, to unity or wholeness, then this would be true regardless of sex or sexual ‘orientation’” (pers. comm.).

At least in this *Encore* explanation of the formulas of sexuation, Lacan’s introduction to the feminine side reads quite differently from his introduction to the masculine side. Perhaps in the spirit of approximating form and content, the masculine description is considerably more formulaic. Immediately following his definition of the masculine side, his words

concerning the feminine side posit a proviso that will prove fruitful for the turn to questions of transsexuality and transgenderism:

*On the other side, you have the inscription of the woman portion of speaking beings. Any speaking being whatsoever, as is expressly formulated in Freudian theory, whether provided with the attributes of masculinity—attributes that remain to be determined—or not, is allowed to inscribe itself in this part. If it inscribes itself there, it will not allow for any universality—it will be a not-whole, insofar as it has the choice of positing itself in  $\Phi x$  or of not being there. (80)*

Of course part of what is at stake in this particular citation is the status of the word *choice*. Is it significant that the matter of choice comes up in his description of the feminine side of the formula? And when Lacan states that any speaking subject has the choice to position itself or not in  $\Phi x$ , what is the relationship between the “choice” signaled here and any possibility of “choice” occasioned by Butlerian notions of gender play? Meanwhile, how do Butler’s and Lacan’s regimes of choice articulate with Susan Stryker’s observation that “performativity” and its promises do not always speak to “the self-understanding of many transgender people, who consider their sense of gendered self *not* to be subject to their instrumental will, not divestible, not a form of play” (10)? And what are the differences between the experiences of transsexualism and those of transgenderism when it comes to thinking about “choice?”

Already we can see further sets of challenges, knotting around questions of disciplinary allegiance, contestation, dissidence, identity politics, and ontology. These issues, too, will necessitate delicate unraveling as we continue to explore what Lacanian psychoanalysis and gender studies have to offer one another. Still, it is statements like Lacan’s, above, that offer hope, beyond the fears and objections of theorists like Butler and Copjec, that there *is* room for meeting ground between Lacanian psychoanalysis and gender studies, over and above—in fact, sometimes revolving precisely around—the divisions concerning (and that are perhaps inherent in) sexual difference.

Dean further supports such optimism when he declares that “psychoanalysis *is* a queer theory” (*Beyond* 215), meaning, in part, that Lacanian psychoanalysis has “antinormative potential” (217). One of the principal stakes of Dean’s project is “to think sexuality outside the terms of gender” (185). In accordance with many thinkers, he considers the

debate between essentialism and constructivism, or what he calls foundationalism and rhetoricalism, a false alternative, and he takes a view on sexuality that he describes as “both immoderately antifoundationalist *and* antirhetoricalist” (178). In this way, he takes exception to Butler’s account of sexuality as outlined in *Bodies That Matter*, for, as he argues, Butler’s is a rhetoricalist approach. According to Dean, “rhetoricalist theories of sexuality effectively evacuate the category of desire from their accounts” by failing to take account of “what in rhetoric or discourse exceeds language” (178). Desire will prove essential to Dean’s own account of sexuality; in his project to deheterosexualize desire, Dean develops the notion of object *a* in order to theorize sexuality “outside the terms of gender *and* identity” (222).

Dean demonstrates that a Lacanian theory of desire is “determined not by the gender of object-choice, but by the object *a* (*l’objet petit a*), which remains largely independent of gender” (216). By this move, Dean, via Lacan, goes further than Freud did in his account of humans’ constitutive bisexuality. Dean reminds readers of Freud’s claim that “we’ve all made a homosexual object-choice” (219). However, as Dean makes clear, such a pronouncement presupposes that an object be gendered in the first place; by relying on humans’ “bisexuality,” Freud leaves intact the possibility that objects may be “somehow identifiable as masculine or feminine” (219). Object *a*, on the other hand, is not so easily assimilated to either hetero- or homosexual frames. Dean reminds readers of Lacan’s “unthinkable list” of possible objects *a*—“lips [. . .], the rim of the anus, the tip of the penis, the vagina, the slit formed by the eyelids, even the horn-shaped aperture of the ear [. . .], the mamilla, faeces, the phallus (imaginary object), the urinary flow [. . .], the phoneme, the gaze, the voice—the nothing” (Lacan qtd. in *Beyond* 251–52).

Part of what is at stake in Dean’s insistence on object *a* as the queerly “ordering” term for sexuality is his wish to relocate the scene of desire from one revolving around the phallus, which, according to Lacan, is the name for a certain lack borne of the desire of the Other (“Meaning” 83). Dean is sensitive to various feminist and queer critiques of Lacanian terminology, noting that suspicions about such terms as *lack* and *the phallus* are warranted, given, in part, the theological origins of lack and the psychoanalytic legacy of associating homosexuality with deficiency (*Beyond* 248). Master terms such as *lack*, *loss*, *castration*, *death*, and *sexual difference* are not ideologically neutral, and Dean advises caution about how different terms may “imply invidious distinctions or otherwise embed normative ideologies of gender and sexuality” (248).

According to Dean, the limitation of situating the phallus at the center of a theoretical account of desire is not only that the phallus has such a problematic history but that it is a single term; object *a*, on the other hand, “implies multiple, heterogeneous possibilities for desire” (250). Dean wishes to figure desire within “terms of multiplicity” (249) rather than principally according to an “ideology of lack” (247). He cites Lacan’s assertion that “[d]esire is a relation of being to lack” (qtd. in *Beyond* 247) but emphasizes, too, that “the question of conceptualizing desire in terms of lack remains a stubborn problem” for a variety of queer- and feminist-minded projects (248). Dean identifies the latter resistance as having precisely to do with the way that the ideology of lack intersects with castration in psychoanalytic theory (248). In favor of such a scene, Dean turns instead to polymorphous perversion as a site of multiplicity, contending that theorizing desire from the point of excess instead of from the point of lack “makes desire essentially pluralistic, with all the inclusive implications of pluralism” (249).

For Dean, one of the advantages of theorizing desire from the starting point of polymorphous perversion arises from Freud’s understanding of polymorphous perversion as preceding normative—that is, genital—sexuality; in this way, perversion comes to represent a sort of “paradise lost” that “normal sexuality” will try, but never completely manage, to supplant (235). In rehearsing Freud’s decision to classify perversion in terms not of content but rather of “exclusiveness and fixation” (236), Dean will go so far as to suggest that “*the process of normalization itself is what’s pathological*, since normalization ‘fixes’ desire and generates the exclusiveness of sexual orientation [heterosexual or homosexual] as its symptom” (237).

Thus for Dean, polymorphous perversion figures as a model for desire to which he would have subjects return, both foundational and desirable insofar as it predates normalization. This move serves to shift focus from a scene of desire dependent on castration, “one that threatens to return us to the binary categories of complementarity and homogeneity so inhospitable to non-normative sexualities” (*Beyond* 249), to one dependent on a multiplicity of objects. While he knits polymorphous perversion and object *a* together with multiplicity, heterogeneity, and possibility, it seems important to acknowledge once again that primary perversion remains deeply imbricated with loss: it names the “stage” that inculcates desire via the production of objects, and, as we have seen, these objects are always already irremediably lost objects. Primary perversion also figures

loss insofar as it is a lost stage, replaced as it is, to whatever extent that may be, by processes of normalization such as the formation of a sexual (orientation) identity. Perversion thus takes on a curious status in Dean's thought, for from one perspective it constitutes a state of desire that is less lacking—the sheer multiplicity of objects available gestures in this direction. But insofar as these objects all remain lost objects, the opposite could be argued as well: via polymorphous perversion, the subject is more lacking by entertaining more (lost) objects. However, this change in the scenery of desire, from lacking phalluses to abundant objects, represents a provocative and productive development and needs to be read with respect to Dean's own project to make the discourses of queer theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis more conversant: “[T]hough Lacan reads to me like a queer theorist *avant la lettre*, the institutional history of psychoanalysis, particularly in the United States, has forestalled any such alliance. As I've already suggested, a good part of this book's intent lies in forging one—with the understanding that such an alliance might require both parties to renounce some of their most cherished shibboleths” (*Beyond* 226).

While I am in accordance with Dean's assertion that both queer theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis may need “to renounce some of their most cherished shibboleths,” I am interested in going in a slightly different direction than that outlined in *Beyond Sexuality*. While Dean is abundantly clear that he is not interested in gender, he also specifies that sexual difference (which, as we know by now, should not be collapsed into the category of gender) cannot be so summarily discounted: “Let me make clear that I'm not claiming that sexual difference is inconsequential to this account of sexuality, just that it is secondary. Desire emerges before sexual difference” (267). No doubt. Insofar as desire is the other side of lack/loss/castration, desire has been with the subject since the days of the lost lamella. However, what is not of interest to Dean, at least in this text, is Lacan's assertion that masculine and feminine subjects *relate differently* to object *a*. According to Lacan, it is the masculine subject that is principally occupied with object *a*. Queer as it is, could Dean's account of desire be lacking the feminine?

Lacan writes that “the object—from at least one pole of sexual identification, the male pole—the object [. . .] puts itself in the place of what cannot be glimpsed of the Other” (*Encore* 63). By contrast, for the feminine subject, “something other than object *a* is at stake in what comes to make up for the sexual relationship that does not exist” (63). Here again, we see Lacan specifying that via sexual difference, something tries to make up

for the absence of the sexual relation. However, there is a fundamental asymmetry at play in the making up for lost/fantasized complementarity, for feminine and masculine subjects make up for the loss, in part, with recourse to different types of others.

On this point, Dean offers a compelling criticism of Lacan, suggesting that, in placing object *a* on the side of the feminine subject in his sexuation graph (found on page 78 of *Encore*), Lacan betrays a heterosexist impulse that is contested by his actual explanation of the “birth” and function of object *a*: “Although his axiom ‘there is no sexual relation’ counters the heterosexist assumption of complementarity between the sexes, Lacan’s explanations of this axiom are nevertheless invariably couched in terms of male and female failures to relate to each other, rather than in terms of relationality’s failure as such, regardless of gender” (“Homosexuality” 137). Identifying these explanations as instances of heterosexism at odds with Lacan’s own theory, Dean asserts again that Lacan’s theory of object *a* involves “a making other to myself of my own corporeal *jouissance*” such that “there is no way that desire can be, in the first instance, heterosexual” (137).<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the position of object *a* in Lacan’s depiction is a little deceiving. The sexuation graph seems to imply that feminine subjects lose all connection to object *a*, but we could read this instead to suggest that the feminine subject simply is not *as* invested in object *a* insofar as she might be overwhelmed with interrogating the phallic signifier and with a certain queer, inscrutable relation with the barred, lacking Other. To my knowledge, Lacan does not anywhere specify that feminine subjects lose all connection with object *a*; rather, he writes simply that “something other than object *a* is at stake in what comes to make up for (*suppléer*) the sexual relationship that does not exist” (*Encore* 63). Of importance here is that one consequence of sexual difference is that while the masculine subject becomes principally invested in object *a*—wherever he may locate it/them—as one compensation for the lack of the sexual relation, the feminine subject “is ‘twice’ related to the Other” (Barnard, “Tongues” 172). I take this to mean that the feminine subject is related both to object *a* (*autre*, or other) as that “scrap of the real” lost through sexed reproduction and to the Other conceived of as the lacking Other.

Dean’s reading of Lacan’s representation of sexual difference suggests there may be something to Butler’s critique that the Lacanian notion of sexual difference enjoins compulsory heterosexuality, if not in the formulas themselves, then at least in one way of reading the sexuation

graph representation. In both *Bodies That Matter* and *Antigone's Claim*, Butler performs readings of the subject's entry into the symbolic via sexual differentiation, and two of her principal charges are that Lacan's symbolic is normative and that the assumption of a sexed position enjoins compulsory heterosexuality. In *Antigone's Claim*, Butler turns from matters of discourse and materiality to the scene of kinship in order to explore how psychoanalysis might both/either compel and/or inhibit the forging of new kinds of community ties, ties that Butler subsumes under the promising header "radical kinship." Since this text provides a deeper reading of the Oedipal scene that she found so troublingly heterosexist in, particularly, chapter 3 of *Bodies That Matter*, I will concentrate my response on this somewhat more recent text.

Butler's investment in the possibility of imagining new forms of kinship ties has a strong affective and political attraction, which she wields to good end, for example, in her listing of the ways that "kinship has become fragile, porous, and expansive" (*Antigone's* 22). Butler cites the mobility of children who, because of migration, exile, refugee status, or situations of divorce or remarriage, "move from one family to another, move from a family to no family, move from no family to a family, or live, psychically, at the crossroads of the family, or in multiply layered family situations" (22). She points to the blending of straight and gay families, to gay nuclear families, and to straight or gay families where a child may have no mother or no father, or two mothers or two fathers, or half-brothers as friends (22–23), asking: "What has Oedipus engendered? [. . .] What will the legacy of Oedipus be for those who are formed in these situations, where positions are hardly clear, where the place of the father is dispersed, where the place of the mother is multiply occupied or displaced, where the symbolic in its stasis no longer holds?" (22–23). No doubt this is a time of potentially unprecedented familial mobility. Some would evaluate these realities as the sign of a crisis in "family values"; others would celebrate the more positive effects of the new types of ties and encounters. In this text, though, Butler is also taking aim at a particular strain of psychoanalysis that would seem unexpectedly to ally itself on some levels with defenders of the heterosexual nuclear family. Butler references such positions as she has encountered them, including psychoanalysts opposed to or at least worried about gay adoption as a possible source of psychosis for the adopted children, Jacques-Alain Miller's alleged opposition to male homosexual marriage on account of its likely infidelity, and others' suggestion that autism can be traceable to lesbian parenting (70). Butler concludes,

“These views commonly maintain that alternative kinship arrangements attempt to revise psychic structures in ways that lead to tragedy again, figured incessantly as the tragedy of and for the child.”

I, too, would object to the efficacy or relevance of such concerns, for many reasons. As one objection, these views appear to share the assumption that something like “gender” needs to accord to (or succeed in according to) a sexual position. In other words, these views, where they exist (meaning both in some Lacanians’ readings of sexual difference and in Butler’s reading of Lacan’s understanding of sexual difference), suggest once again that gender accords with unconscious sexualization. What, for example, is a “lesbian” according to those concerned about autism in children? What if an apparently “woman”-loving “heterosexual” “man” could be said to be unconsciously “feminine?” If “he” is in a relationship with a subject also describable as unconsciously “feminine,” is “he” a “lesbian?” Perhaps this divorcing of gender from unconscious sexualization sounds like another queer utopia and is for this reason, for some, unviable, but I think it is the logical consequence of Lacan’s claim that “[a]ny speaking being whatsoever, as is expressly formulated in Freudian theory, whether provided with the attributes of masculinity—attributes that remain to be determined—or not, is allowed to inscribe itself in [the woman portion of speaking beings]” (*Encore* 80). I would like to join Butler in imagining sexualization otherwise than as a scene of compulsory heterosexuality. However, I do not think that doing so requires locating a loophole in the Oedipal narrative, as Butler does in her interpretation of the Antigone story. For while Butler is quite right to lament and fear the compulsory heterosexuality that provides a potent backdrop to many societal norms and ideals, no one knew better than Lacan that, as he put it, “[i]deals are society’s slaves” (qtd. in Dean, *Beyond* 229).

In her argument, Butler seems to cast the Oedipal scene as the only available solution within psychoanalysis to the failure of the sexual relation, as in her observation that, for Lacan, the symbolic is “the realm of the Law that regulates desire in the Oedipus complex” (*Antigone’s* 18). True, all subjects enter the symbolic, but the Oedipal drama is a principally “masculine” (and indeed a principally “obsessional,” if not a principally heterosexual) solution to the failure of the sexual relation, one that hallucinates an object as prohibited. But as we have seen, there is not only one solution to the failure of the sexual relation: there are two! In this way, Butler is quite right to turn to Antigone as an alternative to the Oedipal solution. In Butler’s reading, Antigone helps us envisage new forms of

kinship and, correspondingly, the “possibility of social transformation” (24). Butler indicates that Antigone’s own position in her family represents one of kinship incoherence (22), insofar as Antigone could be read to love her brother incestuously (6), and insofar as her father is also her brother. Butler notes that she is not advocating incest per se as a new, radical form of kinship (24); rather, in reflecting on the end of Sophocles’ play, she writes, “In this light, then, it is perhaps interesting to note that Antigone, who concludes the oedipal drama, fails to produce heterosexual closure for that drama, and that this may intimate the direction for a psychoanalytic theory that takes Antigone as its point of departure” (76). Perhaps Butler is exactly right on this count as well. Perhaps psychoanalysis *should* take Antigone as its point of departure. Through the figure of Antigone, Butler explores a non-Oedipal solution to the failure of the sexual relation, one that in Lacan’s reading entails a specifically feminine encounter with the signifier. However, she does so without avowing that this solution was available to subjects from the start, that it was not the Oedipal drama that engendered it.

At some points, one might be led to wonder if Butler’s configurations of the allegedly sedimentary symbolic might owe a bit more to Claude Lévi-Strauss than to Lacan’s own reformulation, as for example when she writes,

*The Elementary Structures of Kinship was published in 1947, and within six years Lacan began to develop his more systematic account of the symbolic [ . . . ]. On the one hand, we are told that the rule of prohibiting incest is universal, but Lévi-Strauss also acknowledges that it does not always “work.” What he does not pursue, however, is the question, what forms does its nonworking take? Moreover, when the prohibition appears to work, does it have to sustain and manage a specter of its nonworking in order to proceed? (Antigone’s 16–17)*

Perhaps, in contrast to Lévi-Strauss, Lacan is more explicit: the form the nonworking of the incest prohibition takes is femininity. Feminine figures testify precisely to the failure of the prohibition, for, as Copjec eloquently plots out, “Lacan answers that the woman is not-all because she lacks a limit, by which he means she is not susceptible to the threat of castration; the ‘no’ embodied by this threat does not function for her” (226).

While the “universal” incest prohibition does not “work” for the feminine subject, this does not necessarily mean that she has incestuous

relations with or desires toward someone in her family (which may be composed as radically or as porously as permitted by the limits of our imaginations)—though she very well may, and I see no reason to shy away from Butler’s suggestion that Antigone’s desire for her brother Polynices is incestuous: “Is it perhaps the unlivable desire with which she lives, incest itself, that makes of her life a living death, that has no place within the terms that confer intelligibility on life?” (*Antigone’s* 23). Nonetheless, I would emphasize that incest as one possible disruptive form of radical kinship is not the only stake here. Rather, according to Lacan, *no* object—mother, father, brother, sister—is marked as prohibited for the feminine subject. Not only is incest not prohibited; *no one thing* is prohibited. Thus, for the masculine subject, the point is not that he need necessarily be a heterosexual, ostensibly “biological” boy barred access to his heterosexual, “biologically” female mother, but that he be a subject who has fallen under the blow of some prohibition and by consequence takes up a position as unconsciously masculine. And as McNulty has noted, “To believe that [the prohibited object is] the mother is a specific symptom, a particular way of resolving castration [. . .] by attributing it to the father and thereby making it ‘avoidable’ through obedience or submission to norms. [In other words,] it also reveals the ideology of norms as a way of avoiding castration” (pers. comm.). On the other hand, for the feminine subject, the point is perhaps even more radical: regardless of her “gender,” the feminine subject is she to whom no prohibition is addressed. No universal can be made of or for her. The relief given the masculine subject, composing prohibitions as limits, does not transpire for the feminine subject. Instead, the nonworking of the prohibition is what ushers the feminine subject toward . . . maybe (who knows?) her brother/half-sister/stepmother/adoptive cousin/grandfather, and definitely toward a contingent encounter with the symbolic. With this in mind, I would suggest that Antigone’s claim on a future for kinship, or a future for relationality, as well as a future for psychoanalysis, has just as much, if not more, to offer by way of what she does as a feminine figure confronting a symbolic that she is “totally, that is, limitlessly inscribed within” (Copjec 227) as with what she does as a would-be incestuous figure that “represents not kinship in its ideal form but its deformation and displacement” (Butler, *Antigone’s* 24).

Curiously, then, if we attempt a still more fragile point of contact between Lacanian psychoanalysis and gender studies, a contact on the question of femininity, we open onto the sort of radical clearing wished for and envisaged by gender theorists’ calls for a safer, more just world

for queer and transgender subjectivities and relations. What has been overlooked in Dean's narration of desire and disavowed in Butler's reading of kinship is the possibility and exploration of a feminine perspective. The feminine perspective brings with it a relation both to the radically contingent *and* to intractability, or the real, precisely by virtue of the fact that the feminine subject is not afforded the same sort of support and limits by the phallic function spared the masculine subject. And as Dean rightly cautions, "[A]ny queer or feminist political theory that refuses to acknowledge intractability will remain less effective than it otherwise might be, because it will ceaselessly encounter the real as an unfathomable blockage of its political aims" (*Beyond* 92). In other words, to respond at last to the question I raised above, as to whether or not psychoanalysis may seem rather sexually impoverished with respect to (some) other perspectives, I would like to argue that no, it does not. On the contrary.

Where psychoanalysis may appear limited resides in part in what I interpret as the too easy capitulation of the terms *feminine* and *masculine* to "gendered" readings. This happens both for gender theorists reading and sometimes writing psychoanalytic texts and for psychoanalytic theorists reading and writing psychoanalytic texts. As we saw earlier, some Lacanians participate in a logic of sexual difference whereby it magically turns out again and again that subjects with apparently female genitalia "are" "women," and so on. Butler damningly maps out the consequences of such readings with respect to family relations:

*And when there are two men or two women who parent, are we to assume that some primary division of gendered roles organizes their psychic places within the scene, so that the empirical contingency of two same-gendered parents is nevertheless straightened out by the presocial psychic place of the Mother and the Father into which they enter? Does it make sense on these occasions to insist that there are symbolic positions of Mother and Father that every psyche must accept regardless of the social form that kinship takes? (Antigone's 69)*

It seems important to imagine a queerer future for Lacanian psychoanalysis wherein terms like "the desire of the mother" and "the law of the father," still very much in currency, might be replaced (not, of course, without haunting remainders) by some new terminology that would better reference the psychical functions these terms index. But terminology shifts alone will not a queer theory make of contemporary deployments

of psychoanalysis; we must also bear in mind Dean's rigorous reminder that objects *a* emerge outside of and in excess to the frame of gender. And with respect to sexual difference, we must insist on the ways in which, for Lacan, the terms *masculine* and *feminine* signal two different logics, two different modes of ex-sistence in the symbolic, two different approaches to the Other, two different stances with respect to desire, and (at least) two different types of jouissance. Nothing here indicates "gender" as we might more conventionally conceive of it.

What would it look like to consider transgender identity as an expression of the logic of sexual difference? What are the implications of such a move? This depends in part on what, generally speaking, we mean by the word *transgender*, and how it relates to the term *transsexual*. In the foreword to the *Transgender Studies Reader*, Stephen Whittle uses simply the word *trans* instead of either *transgender* or *transsexual*, reflecting the popular shift to the usage of a new, apparently more all-encompassing term. As he writes,

*A trans person might be a butch or a camp, a transgender or a transsexual, an MTF or FTM or a cross-dresser; they might, in some parts of the world, consider themselves a lady boy, katoey, or even the reclaimed Maori identities whakawahine or whakātane. Some communities and their terms are ancient, such as the Hijra from Northern India, but many are more modern. The word "trans," referring to a "trans woman" or "trans man" (of whatever subtype of trans identity) is a very recent take on the umbrella term "transgender." (xi)*

While I am moved by the suggestiveness of a term like *trans* for forging politically motivated identificatory alliances, I would like to narrow down my own definitions of *transgenderism* and *transsexualism* in the interest of a provisional amount of coherence, but with the expectation that no one definition of either of these words could satisfy or suffice. I would like to define the transsexual subject as a person who identifies with a gender that is not consonant with the gender assigned at birth. In some cases, but certainly not all, the transsexual subject will go to whatever efforts possible (hormone therapy, sex or genital reassignment surgery, etc.) to "pass" as that gender. Inasmuch as the transsexual subject strives to pass *and/or* (for not all transsexuals strive to pass) identifies with one gender

or another with an apparent degree of certainty, he or she is psychically no different than any other subject who lines up under one banner or the other.<sup>8</sup> *Ostensibly* “nontranssexual” subjects also strive to pass; they also identify with an apparent degree of certainty with one gender or another. In other words, “transsexuality” is not in and of itself any more extreme a type of symptom than is “man” or “woman.” Where transsexual subjects’ experiences may be different from those of ostensibly nontranssexual subjects, of course, arises in part from the fact that the latter have not, so far, proven particularly welcoming: from under the meager protection of their banners, they have not yet realized that they have no monopoly on the psychic experience of the semblance of “gender certainty.” Oftentimes, the upshot of this false monopoly on a piecemeal “certainty” is that transsexual subjects—particularly those who do not rigorously fit the demands of the public’s “incessant need to gender every person they see as female or male” (Serano 117)—are excluded, objectified, exploited, scapegoated, and silenced.

Transgenderism presents a slightly different situation, and this is the one with which this article has been occupied. For it could be argued that the transgender subject—as someone who is not necessarily or only very strategically invested in “passing” as one gender or another (e.g., someone who could be described as “bigendered” or “gender-fluid” [Serano 27]), as someone who may be invested in embodying a gender that would attest to what he or she may define as the constructedness of gender (e.g., “genderqueer” [Serano 27])—would be the human subject as such, the unconsciously bisexual subject for whom sexual difference is only ever an incomplete, unsatisfactory solution to the failure of the sexual relation. In this way, transgenderism would figure as a solutionless solution to the impasses of sexual difference, a sort of unconscious scene of undecideability, but an undecideability fundamentally shared by all human subjects, no matter their seeming “gender.”

But there is another way of reading transgenderism, or another transgenderism available to subjects, wherein transgenderism figures not as a solutionless solution to the impasses of sexual difference, but rather as an expression of the logic of sexual difference: a feminine solution. Hysteria as it is defined by Lacan is a profoundly feminine phenomenon and is characterized by the question, “Am I a man, or am I woman, and what does that mean?” The hysteric tends to interrogate societal norms at large, oftentimes embodying a subversive attitude that arises in part from a profound suspicion that her own sexed and sexual body is incommensurate

to cultural injunctions regarding gender identities. As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan writes, “Lacan saw the hysteric as embodying the quintessence of the human subject because she speaks, as agent, from the lack and gaps in knowledge, language and being” (164). The hysteric is, in some senses, interested in nothing *but* the lack that, for example, Dean may be read to circumvent by focusing on the apparent multiplicity of object *a*. The failure, deadlock, and trauma of sexual difference returns for the hysterical/feminine transgender subject, irreducibly, in her insistent interrogation of the phallic function and in her very queer relation to the lacking Other.

Our question, then, might read as follows: what will the feminine/transgender subject do confronting a symbolic that she is “totally, that is, limitlessly inscribed within” (Copjec 227)? For this, we do not have to look far—we might consider Antigone, or, if we wish to be more timely, we might pay attention to art, writings, memoirs, and scholarship by various present-day transgender or, sometimes, transsexual-identified subjects. If part of the point this essay is trying to make, though, is that there is something transgendered about the human subject, and that this transgenderism transcends notions of gender, it follows that we need not be restricted by rigid definitions of gender identities to encounter the question, “Am I a man, or am I woman, and what does that mean?” Feminine subjects identify in multiple directions. More importantly, they demonstrate another sort of agility as well: “[Lacan] implied that for all the difficulties woman had with speech and the signifier, mistrusting its promises because they de facto fail her, a certain freedom to play was available to woman [. . .] [A]ccording to Lacan, ‘Women are less enclosed by discourse than their partners in the cycle of discourse’” (MacCannell 198–99). When we recall that discourses are “forms of the social tie” (Lacan qtd. in MacCannell 235) and that discourses as social ties move to cover over the lack of the sexual relation, we could argue by extension that the hysteric feminine subject in particular is structurally well situated to cycle through and fall between the cracks of discourses. Preoccupied as the hysteric is with the very question that discourse wishes to mask, she may be particularly well situated to “do something” to the social tie itself. And yet, despite (but also because of) her “freedom to play,” the feminine/transgender subject’s speech does not stop insisting that discursive flexibility, lest it be mistaken for a merry-go-round of liberating multiplicity, is a flexibility borne of and about at least two overlapping lacks: castration and a certain exclusion. Feminine/transgender speech materializes (sometimes, painfully silently)

hollowed out by the deafening significance of what it “is” to “be” a (divided) (feminine) subject, a truth that echoes across gender divides *and* blurs.

Ragland cautions as well: “Given that the hysteric’s fundamental question in the signifier is ‘Am I a woman or a man?’ she is at risk of being overtaken by the real in both the symbolic and the imaginary” (69). She later adds more pointedly:

*How, then, does the hysteric reveal a truth worth noting? Subversion for its own sake or acting out is not admirable [ . . . ]. It is, rather, this, that the subject, any subject except a psychotic, is divided. In varying ways, all individuals who are divided suffer from this. The master represses it in the place of truth. The academic puts it in the place of repressed knowledge. The analyst interrogates it. But the hysteric lives it; it is her badge of honor that she lives castration at the surface of her life and discourse [ . . . ]. The hysteric does not say, as poststructuralists would claim, I am man and woman, the difference makes no difference [ . . . ]. For her it is an either/or question.*

*This is the heart of Lacanianism: either/or. Either one is masculine or one is feminine. One is not both, except in the suffering of hysteria. Both is the position of suffering, not liberation. It is this truth of the hysteric to which Lacan pays heed. (85)*

Ragland’s explicit cautions notwithstanding, something seems to slip through the cracks here, and it again references the hysteric’s contortionist cycles, overlappings, and subversions: “One is not both, except in the suffering of hysteria,” Ragland writes, carefully. Consistently excepted, the feminine/transgender subject is perhaps in a unique position to enact social transformation. Being wholly within the symbolic but at an exclusive remove, she may have special affinities with what it means to change that which is “external” by a motion that cuts in immeasurable, infinitesimal directions, inside and out, for “the symbolic is not a set of conditions external to the subject, and [ . . . ], as a result, the subject who labors to change the world is already its product. The notion of a ‘change in the symbolic,’ understood as ‘outside’ the subject, must therefore be supplemented by a ‘change in the subject’ as well” (Shepherdson 39). This recalls Lacan’s explanation:

*There can be no act outside a field which is already so completely articulated that the law is located within it. There are no other acts than those that refer to the effects of this signifying articulation and include its entire problematic—with on the one hand whatever loss [chute] the very existence of anything at all that can be articulated as subject entails, or rather is, and with on the other what preexists it as a legislative function. (Other 125)*

As she who *lives* the loss, “the very existence of anything at all that can be articulated as subject entails,” and as she who is limitlessly inscribed in that symbolic that preexists her, the act of the feminine/transgender subject may indeed “refer to the effects of this signifying articulation and include its entire problematic.”

Might we not also hear in Ragland’s words on the suffering of hysteria queer resonances of the precise sentiment of Whittle, who, while (self-consciously) no more able to stand in as “spokesperson” for a collective transgender community than *The Woman* is able to exist, nonetheless states, “[I]t has been through this articulation of the imposition of gendering on us by others that the position of suffering of those with trans identities has been heard”? Whittle speaks here to an order to which trans identities might be exceptional and to the suffering that implies, and, of course, he speaks of speaking. Just after, he identifies one of the new possibilities opened up for trans people thanks to the increased opportunity for “public articulation of a trans voice and trans consciousness”: “[T]o turn away, ultimately, from the relative safety of queerness and go beyond that to claim a unique position of suffering” (xv). If we are to dream of some liberatory remainder to this suffering subversion, it may—as Butler suggests from a different perspective—be locatable precisely there where *Antigone* speaks her “aberrant” words (*Psychic* 58)—yes, where, sometimes, “gender is displaced” (82), but sexual difference is not. As Slavoj Žižek writes in response to Butler’s *Psychic Life of Power*:

*The Lacanian answer to this is clear—“to desire something other than its continued ‘social existence’” and thus to fall “into some kind of death,” that is, to risk a gesture by means of which death is “courted or pursued,” points precisely towards the way Lacan reconceptualized the Freudian death-drive as the elementary form of the ethical act. Note that the act, insofar as it is irreducible to a “speech act,” relies for its performative power on the*

*preestablished set of symbolic rules and/or norms. Is this not the whole point of Lacan's reading of Antigone?*

At the beginning of this essay, I asked what gender studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis have to offer one another and whether it might be possible to integrate the two domains. To answer quite simply, Lacanian psychoanalysis offers gender studies what I read as a richly malleable framework for thinking through matters of sex, subjectivity, desire, and sexuality. Likewise, gender studies offers Lacanian psychoanalysis readers who are deeply, productively mistrustful and whose compelling perspectives on diverse social issues are driven by passionate commitment. Integration of the two domains can only ever be a scene of fruitful contestation, but it could also go further if contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers were willing to listen to their compatriots' desires and to redefine some of their more exclusionary "shibboleths" (Dean, *Beyond* 226), and if gender theorists were willing to reread psychoanalysis, again.

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## Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this essay, I am using the term *gender studies* to outline rather loosely the study of sex, gender, and sexuality, such that it might comprise both "queer theory" and "transgender studies" as well. However, these fields are not ideologically assimilable.
- 2 Copjec: "I noted already that there was a crucial difference between hers [Butler's] and the psychoanalytic position on sex. I want now to go further by exposing the 'total incompatibility' of the two positions" (209).

- 3 Butler:

*It is why, for instance, it would be difficult to find a fruitful engagement at the present time between the new Lacanian formalisms and the radical queer politics of, for example, Michael Warner and friends. The former insists on fundamental notions of sexual difference, which are based on rules that prohibit and regulate sexual exchange, rules we can break only to find ourselves ordered by them anew. The latter calls into question forms of sexual foundationalism that cast viable forms of queer sexual alliance as illegitimate or, indeed, impossible and unlivable.*

*At its extreme, the radical sexual politics turns against psychoanalysis or, rather, its implicit normativity, and the neoformalists turn against queer studies as a “tragically” utopian enterprise. (Antigone’s 75)*

- 4 See, for example, Teresa de Lauretis’s discussion of “Freud’s negative theory of sexuality” (xi), where “‘normal’ is conceived only by approximation, is more a projection than an actual state of being, while perversion and neurosis (the repressed form of perversion) are the actual forms and contents of sexuality” (xii). See also the introduction to and Paul Robinson’s chapter, “Freud and Homosexuality,” in Dean and Lane, *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*.
- 5 The excellent work of Gayle Salamon is a notable exception. See, in particular, “The Bodily Ego and the Contested Domain of the Material.”
- 6 On the roles of shame, disgust, morality, and the Oedipal drama as forces of castration, Freud writes, “On this view, the forces destined to retain the sexual instinct upon certain lines are

built up in childhood chiefly at the cost of perverse sexual impulses and with the assistance of education” (232).

- 7 Dean goes on to explain, however, that “[a]ll desire entails the presence of the symbolic Other, but since this Other has no gender—there is no ‘Other sex’—desire involves a relation to otherness independent of sexual difference” (137). In this shift, from questions of Lacan’s theory of desire to questions of sexual difference, Dean attempts to clarify desire’s independence from the regime of “gender” but obscures the insight of the formulas of sexuation that “gender” and “sexual difference” are not one and the same thing. Too closely linking gender and sexual difference, Dean runs the risk of mandating “gendered” readings of Lacan, which could in turn result in a theory at times illogically heterosexist. At various moments in his narrations of the formulas, Lacan, too, can be read as too closely linking gender and sexual difference, which is why I have based my meditation primarily on the formulas.
- 8 See Serano.

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