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Subjectivity Without Sex? The Materialist Trans Feminist Potential in Monique Wittig's Non-Fiction

Emily Cousens

Abstract: In proposing that the categories of sex must be transcended, Monique Wittig's non-fiction is ripe with trans feminist potential. Yet her arguments are beset by a paradox. On the one hand, 'male' and 'female' are presented as purely relational categories with no fixed content. On the other, the category of 'man' is essentialized as possessing a uniquely oppressive consciousness which no 'woman' can achieve. After exploring Wittig's insurrectory 'lesbian' as a category of subjectivity without sex, this article highlights the implicit racism and transition phobia animating Wittig's representation of sex difference and raises broader concerns about radical feminist projects of gender abolition.

IN HER 1980 ESSAY *One Is Not Born a Woman*, published in the materialist feminist journal *Questions féministes*, Monique Wittig makes the following claim:

A new personal and subjective definition for all humankind can only be found beyond the categories of sex (woman and man) [...] the advent of individual subjects demands first destroying the categories of sex, ending the use of them, and rejecting all sciences which still use these categories as their fundamentals.¹

The argument, which runs throughout Wittig's non-fiction, is that no one who identifies as a 'man' or 'woman' has achieved the status of subject, and that every discourse, philosophical, psychoanalytical, scientific, which has been based on the presumption that these ontological fictions exist is not only ideologically but materially violent.² For Wittig, the category of gender signified "the enforcement of sex in language,"³ and the "category of sex" itself refers to those of "masculine/feminine, male/female" that are the product of "the ideology of sexual difference."⁴ While the codification of sex/gender distinction, common in American feminist philosophy in the 1980s, had not been mainstreamed in French feminist thought at the time, Wittig is clear that it is the society's commitment to the categories 'male' and 'female' that creates the illusion of the dimorphic sexed body. Therefore, as commentators have noted, she was early to complicate the distinction, giving her work an enduring value for its non-foundationalist (and therefore proto-queer) account of the category of 'woman'.⁵

From the vantage point of the present, this opening quote reads like a statement for gender (and sex) abolition. When considered in the context of her wider non-fiction, such an interpretation is supported. Wittig writes that “gender” is “an ontological joke” (“Mark of Gender” 81) premised on the attempted “division of Being” through language and as the linguistic marker that supports the sex classes of male and female (categories of sex): if the latter are to be destroyed, gender must be too. How might such an ontological upheaval of the existing sex/gender reality be achieved? The first revolutionary demand is “for everyone to exist as an individual” (“One Is Not Born” 19), and this is possible only by becoming a lesbian.

The canon of second wave radical, revolutionary, and lesbian feminist writing that was connected to the Women’s Liberation Movements in France, the US, and the UK has been largely sidelined within contemporary queer and trans feminist philosophy for its associations with white feminism and trans-exclusionary feminism.⁶ Within this context, it is noteworthy that Wittig’s revolutionary lesbian feminism has been a cornerstone in the development of both queer and trans feminisms. Judith Butler’s engagement with Wittig’s notion of the “heterosexual contract” provided the genesis for their queer feminist analytic: “the heterosexual matrix,”⁷ Paul Preciado’s queer-trans-feminism is heavily influenced by Wittig,⁸ and trans feminism in France owes an intellectual debt to Wittig’s ostensibly non-foundational theorizing on sex and gender.⁹ This article builds on the burgeoning archive of queer and trans engagement with Wittig’s non-fiction to consider the trans feminist potential and oversights in her non-fiction.

Reading (second wave) “feminism against cisness”¹⁰ is important for de-authorizing the weaponization of second wave feminist arguments by gender critical and trans exclusionary feminisms in the present. Exploring Wittig’s trans feminist potential also extends a question about the queer and trans impulses that might begin to be read as a motivational force behind many lesbian and radical feminists’ rejection of normative gender and compulsory heterosexuality. Yet, as Blase Provitola has argued,¹¹ reckoning with the ambivalences Wittig’s oeuvre raises is necessary for attending to the increasingly violent landscape of transphobic feminism within which Wittig’s arguments have also been evoked. Focusing on Wittig’s category of “lesbian” and its relationship to the superstructure she calls “the straight mind,” this article illuminates the implicit whiteness and transition-phobia that undergirds the critique of gender and desire for gender abolition in *both* radical lesbian feminist visions like those of Wittig, and gender critical arguments today.

Monique Wittig's materialist lesbianism

As a genre of knowing, living, and persisting, deeply connected to priorities of bodily self-determination, subjective self-authorization, and survival, in some ways trans feminism is by definition a materialist project. Over the past decade, however, foregrounding the materialist dimensions of trans feminism has, in part, been a response to concerns regarding “trans” being intellectually metabolized as queer’s “unasked-for sequel”¹² and queer and poststructuralist feminist repeated allegorizations of the trans body.¹³ These varied intellectual projects have typically coalesced around three different strands of materialism: those that focus on restoring the body and embodied knowledge to trans studies;¹⁴ those that focus on reproductive labor, social reproduction, and trans women’s relationship to these;¹⁵ and those that focus on priorities for structural change.¹⁶ While I am sympathetic to revaluations of reproductive labor as an important aspect of trans feminism, especially with respect to foregrounding sex worker knowledges, investing one’s philosophical and political priorities in the reproductive economy risks overstating the significance of coercive regimes of production and reproduction to one’s subjectivity, thereby confining potentials for relating, living and loving within the terms of racial capitalism.

The materialist dimensions that I find most promising in Wittig’s approach, by contrast, enquire into the relationship between social change and self-change at the most fundamental ontological level. For Susan Stryker, trans “marks the capacity to transform one reality into another,”¹⁷ and Wittig shares such an insurrectionary impulse, writing that “consciousness of oppression is not only a reaction to (fight against) oppression. It is also the whole conceptual revolution of the social world, its whole reorganization with new concepts, from the point of view of oppression” (“One Is Not Born” 18). Developing an intellectual project she named “materialist lesbianism,”¹⁸ Wittig built on the feminist materialism of her contemporaries in France—Nicole-Claude Mathieu, Christine Delphy, Colette Guillaumin, Paola Tabet, and her partner and occasional co-author Sande Zeig—to develop a critical approach that traverses labor, language, relationality, and subjectivity (“Preface” xiv–iv). For Wittig, both dialectics and classical historical materialist approaches have failed because neither have attended to the lives of women or to subjectivity (“One Is Not Born” 19). Her materialism follows the Marxist understanding of society and history as structured around a class struggle (between women and men) (“Category of Sex” 2–3) yet is specifically “lesbian” because, first it named “the heterosexual contract” as the structuring social relation to be resisted, and second, its subject matter is lesbians and to become a lesbian is to become the revolutionary world-historical subject.¹⁹

Chastising Marxism for its emphasis on structural transformation and oversights regarding self-transformation, Wittig writes that “when an economic transformation took place (end of private property, constitution of the socialist state), no revolutionary change took place, *because the people themselves did not change*” (“One Is Not Born” 17, emphasis added). In the idea that the people themselves need to change, her materialism raises the question of whether we can have structural change, without a change in subjectivity and the signs that constitute culturally specific semiotic systems. In a stark contrast to materialist understandings of the economic base (either relations of production or reproduction) as the site of epochal transformation,²⁰ Wittig seems to propose that our own bodies, naming practices and means of communicating our interiorities, can themselves be the starting place for an assault on structures. As such, in her development of a materialism that refuses a distinction between the textual and the material, the embodied and the economic, and which takes seriously the material violence of naming practices, Wittig’s philosophical approach offers a provocation ripe with trans feminist potential. In raising the question of whether undoing coercive gendering practices is central for any regime that seeks to resist the violences of the present, the overlooked yet vital question Wittig’s materialism raises lies in its proposal that structural change requires self-change at the most fundamental level.

Stryker highlights that “a gendering violence is the founding condition of human subjectivity,”²¹ and Wittig likewise understands that the ascription of sex categories at birth violates the body and becoming. She writes that “language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it” (“Mark of Gender” 78) and invests in gender neutral language (“elles”, “on/one”, and “they”) as a means of onto-epistemic and political revolt. Moreover, for subjectivity to be self-authorized Wittig is clear that “there cannot any longer be women and men [. . .] as classes and categories of thought or language they have to disappear, politically, economically, ideologically.”²² Her analysis seems to call for an ontologically alternate sociality, wherein bodies, desires, and relationalities are remade according to meaningfully self-determined, rather than socially prescriptive, terms. This development of a materialism that centers on the inextricability of new ways of being in the world from new modes of being in our bodyminds, reflects Nat Raha and Mijke Van Der Drift’s insight for trans femme philosophy that edging “our bodies towards the unveiling of desire”²³ is “profoundly materialist.”²⁴ Wittig’s materialism contains trans feminist potential in its attention to the linguistic and embodied violences at work in the constitution of reality and her vision for the “class struggle between women and men which will abolish

men and women” (“Straight Mind” 29) is a vision for self-authorization at the level of both categorization and embodied becoming.

Wittig’s critique of the categories of sex understands the violence of non-consensual gendering practices. Importantly, however, for Stryker, what Wittig calls “the mark of gender” is a double bind; both violating and enabling given that “having a gender is the tribal tattoo that makes one’s personhood cognizable” (“My Words to Victor Frankenstein” 147). In what follows, I demonstrate that while Wittig sees undoing sex/gender, which is to say becoming lesbian, as a necessary precondition for non-hierarchical political horizons, her arguments offer little by way of analysis of how sex/gender can be *redone* differently, let alone pleasurably, within existing terms of recognition. As such, her arguments contain the conceptual slippages reflected in gender critical arguments that gender is simply an ‘ideology’ and transition is either false consciousness in the case of trans masculinity or a violent patriarchal trojan horse in the case of trans femininity.

Monique Wittig’s non-binary lesbian

Wittig invests in the lesbian as the only conceptual container she knows that is beyond the categories of sex (“One Is Not Born” 20). For readers in recent years, however, what has been additionally prescient in her analysis is that the lesbian is not only beyond sex categorization, but that she also seems to be outside of gender as a system of relational meaning making more broadly. As Levi Hord has outlined, Wittig’s lesbian can be read today as “an example of a non-binary figure who preserves the specificity of lesbianism outside of its overwrought exclusions.”²⁵ Neither women-identified-women,²⁶ nor women who desire women,²⁷ Wittig’s indifference to sexual difference opens her lesbian to non-binary reimaginings. Described variously as “not women” (“Straight Mind” 32) “a not-woman, a not-man,” (“One Is Not Born 13) and “*not* a woman, either economically, or politically or ideologically” (One Is Not Born 204), Wittig’s category of lesbian appears to operate as a floating signifier indexing possibility for queer, non-binary, and trans becoming outside of heterosexual thought. For this reason, Wittig’s lesbian has been and continues to be a seductive heuristic for readers seeking to imagine and understand themselves outside of the sedimented gender expectations of the straight mind. Wittig’s controversially received claim that “lesbians are not women,” Jacob Hale writes, “resonates with the dreams, hopes, longings, and visions of those lesbians who have resisted the heterosexualizing, feminizing, and wom-anizing pressures of the dominant culture and of some feminist subcultures as well.”²⁸ For Alyosxa Tudor, that same sentence does political work, opening

up the category of woman, forcing an assessment of its exclusions and inclusions which ultimately “moves us in the direction of questioning certainties about gender and its interconnection to sex and sexuality.”²⁹ Butler explains the affective resonance of that line for those like themselves, for whom femininity belonged elsewhere.³⁰ They recall their own “sense of epistemic gravity lift” when hearing Wittig speak in 1979. “If ‘a lesbian is not a woman,’ then a lesbian *is* something else [...] How could a copula do so much work?” (Butler, “Wittig’s Material Practice” 529), Butler wondered, capturing the longing for recognition outside of inherited terms of gendered identity that constitutes the affective appeal of Wittig’s lesbian for non-binary subjectivities today.

For those whose identities have been forged in the crucible of misrecognition, Wittig’s lesbian without identity—a category of subjectivity without sex—offers an alternate imaginary. Lesbians are presented as epistemic warriors breaking with the social contract that ties women to men, and therefore maintains women as women and men as men. Kevin Henderson concludes that “Wittig’s figure of the lesbian worked to destroy the binary and heterosexist categories of man and woman in order to open up feminism to more radical futures” (Henderson 210). That the lesbian’s revolutionary potential is derived from their break from coercive gendering practices leads Provitola to consider whether trans people might occupy a central place in Wittig’s world, as “the ultimate ‘runaways’ from the universalist regime of sexual difference” (Provitola 395). Wittig sought to affect a major break at the level of epistemology by advancing lesbians as a category of potentiality without fixed content. Although the language of cisgender and non-binary were not available in Wittig’s time, her lesbian clearly expresses the desire to occupy a different gender, one not characterized by a binary relationship to a man (Hale 98). As Biddy Martin noted, however, sexuality without sex/gender is a queer utopia that leaves women and the femme metaphysically stuck, the continual ground against which a more figural and playful masculine crossings can take place.³¹ In what follows, I will highlight that Wittig’s critique of cisnormativity and her proposal for gender abolition admits neither of more clearly trans feminist futures, nor of more racially just ones.

The straight mind/cisnormativity and the prohibition on transition

Wittig names “the straight mind” as the superstructure that produces sex classes in alignment with, and in the service of, heterosexuality. Wittig explains that “straight society is based on the necessity of the different/other at every level. It cannot work economically, symbolically, linguistically or politically

without this concept" ("Straight Mind" 29). The central categories of difference that operate in the service of the straight mind, however, are "man" and "woman" meaning that the straight mind "is also the cisgender mind and might thus be renamed the cishetero mind."³² Framing the straight mind as productive of *cis*normativity is instructive precisely because Wittig's discussion presents sex categorization as more fundamental than sexual practices, both as the site of structural violence and resistance. Achieving class consciousness, and becoming a lesbian, is not to rearrange one's erotic desires, but to recognize the coerciveness of one's own subject formation under conditions of cisgendering, and to begin this process of constituting oneself anew.

For many commentators, given how apparent Wittig's anti-(biological) essentialism is,³³ gender critical adoptions of Wittig's arguments require an intentional misapplication of her thought. Yet Wittig herself seems to stall when it comes to following through on the trans feminist horizon she sets up when she writes that "at least for a woman, wanting to become a man proves that she has escaped her initial programming. But even if she would like to, with all her strength, she cannot become a man" ("One Is Not Born" 12). Why, given Wittig's investment in self-actualization and resistance to unchosen sex categorizations, she appears to argue against trans men is initially unclear. Wittig might be using a narrow definition of 'man' as an entirely relational linguistic category rather than one characterized by a felt relationship to masculinity and the male body. Therefore, perhaps a woman can become a man in embodiment and subjectivity yet would still not be classified as a 'man' according to the logic of the straight mind. This interpretation is supported by her contention that sex exists only as "the political category that founds society as heterosexual. As such it does not concern being but relationships" ("Category of Sex" 5). Yet such an argument translates as a distinction between cis and trans men given that men do exist in Wittig's ontology, but men who were assigned female at birth do not. This argumentation reifies the cis/trans distinction and reproduces the logic of the cis mind according to which cis masculinity is somehow more ontological, or more real, than trans masculinity. While Wittig's gender abolitionism avoids biological essentialism in offering the category of lesbian as a non-sexed, non-anatomically distinguished subject, her analysis offers no space for available significations of sex to be invested in.

Wittig, who according to Provitola was known among close friends as Théo (Provitola 394), may have been writing from the vantage point of an egg theorist, which would mean her arguments are "premised on the idea of impossibility of transition, of transition as something that happens only

exceptionally, not casually.”³⁴ This interpretation builds on the work of Grace Lavery who applied the longstanding trans subcultural category of the “egg” (the retroactive designation of one’s gender before transition/hatching) to critique the transition phobia haunting much queer and psychoanalytic theory. Lavery notes that egg theories are characterized by abstraction, universalism, and the sublimation of desire into structural critique. Premised on the need to contain transition, regularly through the postulation of gendered expressions and desires as thwarted homosexual desires, egg theories contain a contradictory dialectic that requires “ontology be both virtual and plastic” and therefore “transition is both impossible and inevitable.”³⁵ Such a lens offers one interpretation of the contradictory logic whereby the category of man is, for Wittig, both an ontological fiction, and an ontological absolute: cis masculinity is foundational to the category “man” such that no woman, lesbian or otherwise, regardless of the force or depth of desire, can become one. Wittig simultaneously presents male and female as political categories with no grounding in the body, yet ossifies and essentializes sex difference with the result that neither men nor women are “able to leave this fate that lies in the body they were born with” (Tudor 363). While as Clare Hemmings notes,³⁷ affective dissonance is a pre-condition for feminism, and there are many ways of feeling out of step with the normativity of heteropatriarchy, in Wittig’s analysis all gender trouble becomes reduced to heterosexual trouble. Extrapolating from Andrea Long Chu’s own egg/pre-transition interpretation of gender dysphoria as being what feminism feels like, we might read Wittig’s displacement of the violence of coercive gendering regimes onto capitalism and heteropatriarchy, as reflective of an egg epistemology. While Wittig is acutely aware of the violence of coercive gendering regimes, she remains unable to conceive of modes of survival, recognition, or pleasure, within their term. Moreover, while Wittig appears to make space for trans masculine desires, even if to arrest them, that there is no corresponding consideration of trans feminine desires underscores the masculinist prerogative contained within the category of “lesbian.”

Katherine Costello reads Wittig’s lesbian differently, arguing that the trans subjectivities accommodated by the lesbian’s refusal of the cishetero regime include trans women and trans men. However, Wittig’s explanation of her apparent prohibition on transition suggests otherwise. She writes that “becoming a man would demand not only a man’s external appearance but his consciousness as well, that is, the consciousness of one who disposes by right of at least two ‘natural’ slaves during his life span” (“One Is Not Born” 13). In this line, Wittig argues against the possibility of a non-phallic masculinity

and essentializes masculine consciousness as defined by the domination and degradation of women as wives and mothers. Such a comment sidelines the history of black men being chattel slaves, and white women's investment in this, from her analysis of the straight mind. Moreover, it highlights the implicit whiteness that underscores her representation of women as uniquely stripped of subjectivity, "the eternal Other," and men as the dominating class: these are presented as both social and categorical truths ("Category of Sex" 3–5). Elisaabeth Paquette has counted forty-five occasions in which Wittig employs the terms "slave" or "slavery" in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1992), further clarifying the ethnic and cultural egoism that buttresses Wittig's analysis. Therefore, it is the elision of the historical conditions for the production of the categories of sex that underscores both Wittig's indifference to race and her transition phobia. Wittig may, as Costello notes, offer an anti-identitarian philosophy of sex, but these identities depend on the possibility of a world in which the cishetero regimes of operation have ceased to exist, but also on one in which they never took hold in the first place.

Wittig's emphasis on language as a central vehicle for social transformation rigidifies the categories of sex, which then take on a universal, unchanging character supported by a prohibition on transition. To become a lesbian is not to become a man or woman, and the important trans feminist horizon of enabling these categories of sex to signify differently, both so that the present can be survived,⁴⁰ and that the instability that attends to all categorizations can become a site of potentiality and possibility, is elided. Wittig paradoxically presents the sex class 'men' as both an effect of the straight mind and therefore a historical and mutable category, and the system's author and benefactor. In the process, she negates the colonial histories and Enlightenment ideologies that created the straight mind and the categories of sex in the first place. From the very origin of the modern world, of the Western world system, there were never simply men and women.⁴¹ The sex classes of normal men and women, then, which Wittig's project is aimed towards escaping, can be traced back to the invention of Europeanness and "were developed further and redefined by notions of normal psychological and sexual development, intelligence and race."⁴² Sex differentiation is intimately entangled with heterosexism, but it is not reducible to it; its emergence secured the contours of racial difference in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Positing, without historicizing, the straight mind/cisnormativity, we see the white supremacist implications of not attending to what Diane Detournay names "the racial life of cisgender."⁴³ For Detournay, the cis/trans distinction within white trans feminist analyses relies on the displacement of race as "the

question of race deconstructs the sex/gender coupling upon which the definition of cisgender depends” (Detournay 58). Wittig, too, in advancing a project of gender abolition which is unmarked by race effects a racialized set of maneuvers, positing Being as denied to *all* subjects under the regime of the straight mind, yet achievable through a linguistic revolution in the categories of sex alone.

The history of the straight mind

For the straight mind to be epistemically valuable to contemporary analyses, the logic behind the differentiation that the straight mind reproduces as natural needs to be attended to. Trans, intersex, and anti-colonial forms of knowledge restore the process of sex differentiation to such a critical, historical, and political accounting. The category of normative womanhood was constructed through nineteenth-century European racial science, which served the purpose of locating European civilizational development in the body and took sexual differentiation as its measure.⁴⁴ It was captive young black bodies themselves that provided the basis for such ‘research,’ as C. Riley Snorton’s archival recounting demonstrates.⁴⁵ As such, the category of sex has a deeper, more complex and acutely material history than Wittig’s appeal to “the straight mind” as its *source* can allow. For Cedric Robinson, Marxist materialist histories neglected to acknowledge the histories of racialization that predated capitalism in the project of European civilization.⁴⁶ Wittig’s materialist theorization admits of a similarly universalizing ahistoricity; the ideology of racialism for which the categories of sex provided the vehicle, remains absent from her analysis.

Intersex bodies have also served as the testing ground for language as coercive surgeries have been performed on infants since the mid twentieth century, in the name of securing sex differentiation, heterosexuality, and normative white gender. The colonial legacy of this desire for identifiable sex difference in the case of white non-binary bodies is evidenced through the continued experiments on “Black and Brown people medicalized as intersex in Papua New Guinea, the Dominican Republic and southern Africa in the explicit searches for conditions including ‘true hermaphroditism,’ while white children in the US were operated on with ‘corrective’ goals to make it seem like white intersex didn’t exist.”⁴⁷ Sex categories *are* a product of one type of oppression, the violence of cisgendering, but to have a sex, and be sexually diagnosable in the first place, has been a white, European, endosex distinction. There is no history of sex without the history of sexual differentiation, which in turn is a history of racial differentiation within the context of

colonization and empire. Bodies are not simply the docile recipients of violent categories; they have also been its testing ground.

Wittig's trans feminist insights regarding the materiality of language in relation to the category of sex are minimized by her to bear witness to the fact that the categories of sex are historical and racial arrangements, but also ones that admit of different and possible, even pleasurable, futures. If it is to achieve its analytical and political purchase, an analysis of the sex categories 'woman' and 'man' cannot proceed by explaining hatred towards the feminine by recourse to the sex class 'men.' Jamey Jespersen has precisely elucidated the way that transmisogyny has operated as an "overarching colonial power-structure" which has remained relatively uncritiqued and unnoticed by historians, allowing it to bleed well into the present."⁴⁸ The straight mind is an oppressive structure which oppresses and denigrates those who occupy the category 'woman,' but its conditions of possibility are a complex amalgam of extractive capitalist and colonial histories.

Conclusion

Wittig's non-fiction, while not exemplary of a tradition, raises important questions regarding the trans feminist potential in radical, lesbian, and materialist feminist writings from the 'second wave' and in contemporary gender abolitionist projects. Her materialist ambitions involve a challenge to coercive gendering practices and for individuals to attain subjectivity and escape false consciousness requires questioning their gender assignment and moving away from it. The biggest provocation of Wittig's materialism is the question of the relationship between categorical change, self-change, and social change. Yet while Wittig envisions a future populated by subjects without sex, precisely what sex is and how it can be transcended remains insufficiently theorized. Her indifference to sexual difference understands sex categories to be simply derivative of oppression. Wittig's abolitionist desires reflect a familiar white radical feminist fantasy that neglects to acknowledge that sexed and gendered differences, for many, can be the site of eroticized embodiment, pleasure, and future longings.

That Wittig both advances a materialist feminist case for gender abolition and non-binary subjectivities, while seemingly stalling to recognize the fact that sex/gender self-authorization includes becoming men and becoming women, exposes the prohibition on transition that underscores her analysis. Given that many gender critical feminists can agree that coercive gendering practices are violent, their ambition too is a gender abolition of sorts, attending to the colonially inflected prohibition on transition in the

work of second wave thinkers like Wittig offers a more robust method for understanding the aspects of radical feminist transphobia that these arguments often subtly possess.

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Notes

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1. Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman" (1981), *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 19–20.
2. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind" (1980), *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1980) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 25.
3. Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," *The Straight Mind*, 79.
4. Therefore, I will use sex/gender when referring to the categories of sex to signify that these are not biological categories but social and political ones, and that the assignment of categories of sex and their social expressions cannot be separated for Wittig. See Wittig, "The Category of Sex" in *The Straight Mind*, 2.
5. Josh Andrew Szymanski, "(Re)Reading Monique Wittig: Domination, Utopia, and Polysemy," *Hypatia*, 38:3 (2023): 549–71.
6. Finn Enke, "Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s: Toward a Less Plausible History," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5:1 (2001): 9–29.
7. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) (New York: Routledge, 2006), 208n6.
8. Monique Wittig is the first dedication in Paul Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto* and a key interlocutor in *Testo Junkie*, for example. Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto* (New York: Columbia U P, 2019); Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2013).
9. I write "seemingly non-foundational" because, as this article will discuss, cis-masculinity does in fact ground the category of "male," in Wittig's analysis.
10. Emma Heaney, ed., *Feminism Against Cisness* (Durham: Duke U P, 2024).
11. Blasé A. Provitola, "TERF or Transfeminist Avant la Lettre? Monique Wittig's Complex Legacy in Trans Studies" in *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 9:3 (2022): 387–406.
12. Emmett Harsin Drager and Andrea Long Chu, "After Trans Studies," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6:1 (2019): 105.
13. Criticisms of the allegorization of the trans body by queer theorists include Viviane Namaste, "Undoing Theory: The 'Transgender Question' and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory," *Hypatia*, 24 (3): (2008): 11–32; Emma Heaney, *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* (Evanston: Northwestern U P, 2017); Jules Gill-Peterson, "Queer Theory Killed Venus Xtravaganza: What's Trans About Queer Studies Now?" Lecture. Duke University (2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9exOFxVLSE>
14. See Emily Cousens, *Trans Feminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).
15. See Nat Raha, "A Queer Marxist Transfeminism: Queer and Trans Social Reproduction" in Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke, eds., *Trans Gender Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), 85–115; and Heaney, *The New Woman*, 14.
16. See Jules Gill-Peterson "The Trans Woman of Color's History of Sexuality," *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 32:1 (2023).
17. Susan Stryker, "Foreword," *Out of the Ordinary: A Life of Gender and Spiritual Transitions*, Jacob Lau and Cameron Partridge, eds. (New York: Fordham U P, 2017), vii–x.

18. Wittig, "Preface," *The Straight Mind*, xiii.
19. Wittig, "On the Social Contract," *The Straight Mind*, 34–35.
20. For examples of the idea of the reproductive economy as the site of structural transformation, see Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971); Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: The History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-1977* (London: Pluto P, 2018); Sophie Lewis, *Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation* (London: Verso, 2022).
21. Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix," *When Monsters Speak: A Susan Stryker Reader*, McKenzie Wark, ed. (Durham: Duke U P, 2024), 147.
22. Wittig, "The Straight Mind," *The Straight Mind*, 29–30.
23. Nat Raha and Mijke Van Der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures* (London: Pluto P, 2024), 12–13.
24. Her fiction was, as various commentators have observed, "filled with lesbians who are undone, remade, and undone again," and bodies coming apart, then being "passionately disaggregated and reassembled." See Kevin Henderson, "Becoming Lesbian: Monique Wittig's Queer-trans-feminism," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 22:2 (2018): 197; and Judith Butler, "Wittig's Material Practice: Universalizing a Minority Point of View," *GLQ*, 13:4 (2007): 528.
25. Levi C.R. Hord, "Specificity without Identity: Articulating Post-Gender Sexuality through the 'Non-Binary Lesbian'," *Sexualities*, 25:5–6 (2020): 615–37.
26. Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," in Linda Nicholson, ed., *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 153–57.
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