The Logic of Sexuation in Deleuze and Lacan

Matthew Lovett

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THE LOGIC OF SEXUATION IN DELEUZE AND LACAN

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
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May 2018
THE LOGIC OF SEXUATION IN DELEUZE AND LACAN

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ABSTRACT

THE LOGIC OF SEXUATION IN DELEUZE AND LACAN

By

Matthew Thomas Lovett

May 2018

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Daniel Selcer

In The Logic of Sexuation in Deleuze and Lacan, I argue for an account of sexual difference that responds to a tension in feminist philosophy, namely, the problem of the ontological status of the sexed body. In so doing, I turn to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan. I argue that, rather than being antithetical, the two can be productively read together, in particular with regard to this very question. Ultimately basing my reading in the Deleuzian passive syntheses and dynamic geneeses of Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense as well as in Lacan’s twentieth Seminar on sexuation with respect to the phallic function, I argue that we should see sexual difference as a kind of generative void that propels the subject forward in its perpetual processes of becoming. Thus we get a materialist but non-reductive account of sexual difference or sexuation as a kind of back-turning relation of thought and the body in a constitutively incomplete interplay.
DEDICATION

For my parents, in their inexhaustible patience.
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I have been lucky enough to form both a local and an international Queer Techno Family™ who consistently remind me why it’s important to create anything at all. I am quite certain that, without Hot Mass, Berghain, Movement, or Honcho, without any number of other overcrowded, pulsating sweatboxes, I would feel nothing of the vitalism that Deleuze champions as the essence of philosophy itself. Be it in Berlin, Detroit, Pittsburgh, New York, or elsewhere: I’ll see you on the dance floor.
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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW: SOME TENSIONS

The goal of this dissertation is to articulate a materialist but non-reductive and non-essentialist account of sexual difference, and one that can account for a variety of different subject positions without a normative frame. This is a tall order. As such, it positions itself as follows: it attempts to resolve a tension between Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray by reading together Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan. These may seem strange bedfellows.

There are a few possible prima facie incompatibilities that need to be reconciled before going forward with my argument. As stated, my dissertation will read Deleuze and psychoanalysis, and especially Lacanian psychoanalysis, together in order to respond to the tension in feminist philosophy with respect to the status of the sexed body. Thus this may well seem an unlikely marriage, considering some presumed hostility between Deleuze and psychoanalysis on the one hand, and between gender feminism, sexual difference feminism, and psychoanalysis on the one other. In this section, I want to indicate why I am taking this approach. Once I do this, I will be in a better position to state the overall thesis of my project.

In this dissertation, I will be explaining Deleuze’s genetic ontology in his early work. In so doing, I will be demonstrating his explicit deployment of psychoanalytic terminology in these early texts. However, it is well known that Deleuze’s later work with Guattari is very critical of psychoanalysis in many respects, and much contemporary Deleuze scholarship focuses primarily on these later texts. As I will try to make clear in the following chapters, there are compelling political and theoretical reasons to parse out Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis in these texts. More than this, I will argue that his use of
it is of central and not merely peripheral importance. One thing to be recognized is simply that, especially in *Difference & Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, psychoanalysis provides a major theoretical framework for Deleuze. Second, even in his later criticisms of psychoanalysis, he does not seem to reject psychoanalysis *as such*, only its arguably myopic focus on certain elements to the exclusion of others (as psychoanalytic feminism would concede).¹ Indeed, Deleuze suggests that Lacan himself is the inspiration for his criticisms of psychoanalysis. As Dan Smith argues, “Lacan’s significance … lies in the way in which he was able to push psychoanalysis to the point of its *auto-critique*, and it is precisely this Lacanian critique of psychoanalysis that Deleuze and Guattari take up and pursue.”²

I thus maintain that we get a better understanding of Deleuze’s own project if we understand his relationship to Lacan.³ For Deleuze, Lacan was already embarking on the project he takes up with Guattari. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari write, “we owe to Jacques Lacan the discovery of this fertile domain of a code of the unconscious,” and in *Negotiations* Deleuze maintains, “[I] owed so much to Lacan. But I felt it would all work even better if one found the right concepts, instead of using notions that didn’t even come

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¹ Even in “Dead Psychoanalysis: Analyse” in *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77-123, and “Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis” in *Desert Islands*, ed. David Lapoujade and trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004) 274-280, Deleuze critiques certain incidental aspects of psychoanalysis as a practice (for instance, that it simply falls into the structure of capitalist moneymaking), but his critique is never of psychoanalysis itself. Later, when he tries to move beyond psychoanalysis with Guattari, I would suggest that he is engaging in the same kind of critique of psychoanalysis that Lacan himself was enacting.
³ The more personal aspects of their relationship as what we might call “frenemies” is discussed by François Dosse in his *Deleuze and Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
from Lacan’s creative side, but from an orthodoxy built up around him.”⁴ Respecting this relationship between Deleuze and Lacan, Dan Smith hopes that “perhaps one day, we will be provided with a more complete reading of the way in which Deleuze took up and developed Lacan’s thought—and perhaps the way in which Lacan took up and develops Deleuze’s insights in his later work.”⁵ I hope to do (even preliminary) justice to this relationship in a way that will help us see the reciprocal effects of Lacan on Deleuze and Deleuze on Lacan, and I intend to accomplish this through a very close reading of Deleuze’s work. In closely reading Deleuze’s texts with this relationship in mind, one specific problem emerges wherein we can see this mutually interpenetrating relationship. This is the problem of sexual difference, just the problem that Deleuzian feminists have attempted to resolve. Reading Deleuze and Lacan together will offer the solution Deleuzian feminism has so far attempted to proffer, but in a way that I think better respects key concerns of both gender and sexual difference feminisms. Therefore, the solution to the impasse between these camps is to be found in reading Deleuze and Lacan together.

Thus the bulk of my project is to show how Deleuze and Lacan complete each other with respect to the question of sexual difference. Reading them together will give us a better account of the relationship between becoming, embodiment, sexuation, and cognition than what has been offered by the very compelling and influential accounts from both gender and sexual difference theorists. That is to say, rather than assuming psychoanalysis to be incompatible with Deleuze or with feminist theory, I will

⁵ “The Inverse Side of the Structure,” 324.
demonstrate that, in fact, explaining Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis can help us resolve a central problem in feminist theory while still retaining some of the spirit of both. My argument thus involves a very specific interpretation of Deleuze’s use of Lacan in particular, a use that has central significance in Deleuze and that I intend to make explicit in the course of this dissertation.

I will therefore argue that reading Deleuze and Lacan together will draw out the conclusions of what is only implicit in Deleuze’s early work with respect to psychoanalysis. Moreover, I will also argue that Deleuze helps complete Lacan’s account of sexuation by showing the relationship between becoming, sexuation, and thought. If I’m correct, then perhaps the subject matter of this dissertation can help to enhance and complicate the theoretical work of Deleuzian feminism. Ultimately, I will argue that the version of sexual difference articulated by Lacan in Seminar XX merges with and continues Deleuze’s project and will perhaps correct the dual difficulty that Deleuzian feminism repeats despite itself.6

However, arguing for a productive encounter between Deleuze and Lacan does not preclude another possible, significant incompatibility. As I’ve indicated, most Deleuzian feminism works with specific concepts deployed by Deleuze and Guattari at the expense of the fruitfulness of his engagement with psychoanalysis. “Schizoanalysis,” “becoming-woman,” “assemblages,” “becoming-minoritarian,” and so on, dominate the articles in many influential articles in this domain.7 Furthermore, much feminist thought, Deleuzian

7 For quick reference, I will note that almost every article in Deleuze and Feminist Theory, Deleuze and Queer Theory, and Deleuze and the Body uses this theoretical apparatus, with only one essay in Deleuze and Feminist Theory working primarily with
and otherwise, has a complicated relationship with psychoanalysis. Perhaps one of
Irigaray’s most consistent targets for perpetuating a masculinist perspective is
psychoanalysis, which refuses, she argues, to give the feminine any role at all other than
as absence, lack, incompleteness, and foreignness. Many, including Nancy Chodorow, Joan
Rivière, and Jane Gallop have tried to adapt psychoanalysis into a feminist perspective or
a defense of the feminine. Still others, including Butler, Lee Edelman, and Leo Bersani,
have attempted to change the terms of psychoanalysis to provide queer cultural critique.8
While some feminist theorists still find use in psychoanalysis, Deleuzian feminism seems
to accept Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism of psychoanalysis (at least tacitly in using
concepts that stem from some form of criticism of it). It may again seem out of place to
offer something to this debate that returns to something deemed a phallogocentric relic,
stuck only on the penis/phallus, the lack or non-productivity of desire, and two (rather

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8 See, for instance, Chodorow’s *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1989), Gallop’s *Reading Lacan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,
1982), and Rivière’s “Womanliness as a Masquerade” in *The Inner World and Joan
this, Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous regularly employ psychoanalysis, sometimes against
itself, to achieve a feminist critique of psychoanalysis that still abide by its framework.
Of course there are still others who argue that “the feminine” in Freud and Lacan actually
allows for an escape from the restrictive and impotent positions of the masculine, which I
will discuss further in my third and fourth chapters. Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory
and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and Bersani’s *Homos*
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) show the use of Freud and Lacan for a
queer version of sexuality that is not restricted by the Oedipal triangle, as many tend to
reduce psychoanalysis to.
than multiple) sexes.\(^9\)

Thus another part of my argument will be to show that it is not incompatible with gender feminism, sexual difference feminism, or Deleuzian feminism to draw out the consequences of Deleuze’s engagement with psychoanalysis. In fact, I will argue that this Deleuze-Lacan encounter gives us a better ground for an account of becoming as well as an account of sex.\(^10\) This will allow for a non-reductive but still materialist account of sexual difference, one that, again, aims to reconcile sexual difference and gender feminisms. In reading Deleuze and Lacan together, I will be arguing that there is an intimate relationship between sex and thought, and further that we cannot conceive of thought without sex; in short, the becoming of thought and the becoming of sex are coextensive. However, the complexity and significance of this will only be demonstrated in and through the readings I will offer in Chapters Two through Four.

This argument stems, as I’ve said, from my reading of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, which will be the subject of my next chapter. There, I will argue that we get an account of the genesis of thought via the becoming of the body. This, I will show, cannot be properly understood without understanding Deleuze’s debt to

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\(^10\) This may also help to clarify the role of the unconscious in Deleuze. Christian Kerslake, in his book *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (New York: Continuum, 2007), maintains that we should turn more to Jung than to Freud or Lacan to get an account of Deleuze’s dynamic unconscious. I share Levi Bryant’s criticism that this underestimates the explicit impact of the latter two on Deleuze, especially in the texts I will consider here. Bryant writes, “[I]t seems to me that Freud and Lacan, under a highly original reading, occupy a far more central place in Deleuze’s philosophical project [than Jung].” Bryant, “Deleuze Books Online,” *Larval Subjects* (blog), April 7, 2008, https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2008/04/07/deleuze-books-online/
psychoanalysis. In reading Deleuze and psychoanalysis together, I am not only interpreting Deleuze’s texts, but I am showing how the complementarity of the two gives us a more complete picture of the relation between sex and metaphysics that Irigaray has raised. That is to say, in taking his relationship to psychoanalysis seriously, in reading Deleuze and Lacan together, we can see more possibilities for an embodied, sexed becoming.

Moreover, the account that I will give will demonstrate the material, sexed genesis of the subject. This sexed genesis is also, Deleuze argues, the genesis of thought. He offers an account of the becoming of the subject and the becoming of thought, all of which I will demonstrate to be the site of sexuation. This will lead me to show further that sex also enables and perpetuates thought—or, not only is the subject sexed, thought is sexed, and thought continues to occur in and through these sexed geneses.

So, in sum, the project I have before me has two major goals. First, it will argue that we can read Deleuze and Lacan together to give a robust account of sexuation or sexual difference that is both foundational and embodied. This account of sex is also Deleuze’s account of the genesis of thought. Thus, we have an inextricable link between sex and metaphysics. However, since Deleuze’s account is rooted in becoming, the embodied and foundational account of sex I will give will not be reductively essentialist. I therefore will be accomplishing the second goal of reconciling sexual difference and gender feminisms, without sacrificing the major concerns of either, by reading Lacan and Deleuze together.
CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One

In Chapter One, I will introduce the problem of the relationship between metaphysics or philosophy and sexual difference. Beginning with Irigaray and explaining the historical denigration of women as “irrational” and men as “rational,” I will show how this allows for Irigaray to suggest the project of bringing the always-occluded feminine into discourse. I then, following Braidotti, establish a dichotomy between “sexual difference” feminism and “gender” feminism, represented by Irigaray and Butler, respectively. I suggest that these two thinkers have incompatible positions with respect to the ontological status of the sexed body. I describe a resolution that has been suggested through the work of Gilles Deleuze. However, after demonstrating some problems with Deleuzian feminism, I suggest my own solution, which is to continue to work with Deleuze but engage with his work with psychoanalysis.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, I turn to the work of Gilles Deleuze, specifically his texts *Difference and Repetition* and the *The Logic of Sense*. I argue that he gives a genetic account of the creation of the subject and of thought, and that this genesis is necessarily and always sexed, from the production of the body to the production of thought. This argument depends on a reading of Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis, which is typically ignored. Not only will that imply that sex matters for every subject: it matters for their entire being. Thus, I will begin to craft my argument that sexual difference is foundational for every subject—but as we will see, my interpretation of sexual difference is
Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, I continue my reading of Deleuze by explaining what he means by an Idea, which is a kind of self-interrupting structure that emerges after the end of the passive syntheses and dynamic geneses that I’ve explained in Chapter Two. This will allow me to strengthen my position to argue that sexual difference, as read through Deleuze and psychoanalysis, is both foundational but non-reductive and non-essentialist. It begins in the becoming of the body and marks all thoughts that are produced from these geneses. To again demonstrate the homology between Deleuze and Lacan, I will turn to Lacan’s notion of the sinthome, as a kind of symptom that holds the registers of the subject together, to further dramatize both how the Idea works and how the Idea is sexual. This will also serve the function of intertwining Deleuze and Lacan further.

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four, I shift from Deleuze to a stronger focus on Lacan, in particular his Seminar XX, where he offers his graphs of sexuation. Here, I will argue that we can read Deleuze into Lacan and Lacan into Deleuze to get a robust and fully formed Idea of sex, such that not only are all becomings sexed becomings, sex in fact turns out to be the structure that keeps becoming moving, as it were. Here I will try to offer my account of Deleuzian sexuation, based on a reading of Lacanian castration and the Deleuzian
“aleatory point.” This is all to explain how Deleuze and Lacan together can respond to the tension between Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray that I raised in chapter one.

Conclusion

In my conclusion, I provide a synopsis of the Deleuzian-Lacanian sexuation that I’ve explained in the previous chapters, and I return to the problem of the first chapter to show how my position may be able to better resolve some tensions and difficulties that neither sexual difference nor gender feminism can do adequately. I will thus have attempted to offer my solution to problem of sexual difference for feminist theory and demonstrated the use of that position for certain feminist and queer philosophical and political problems.
CHAPTER ONE

The Problem of Sexual Difference: Irigaray, Butler, Deleuze

INTRODUCTION

The significance of sexual difference, while discussed at least since Plato, was introduced most strongly as a philosophical problem by Luce Irigaray, beginning with her *Speculum of the Other Woman*.\(^1\) For her, sexual difference marks the heart of philosophy itself, inasmuch as women constitute its constitutive exception or exclusion. Irigaray’s view is that there is no philosophy without sexual difference (sexual difference for her correlates to being embodied as “male” or “female”). In what follows, I will further elucidate her position. I will then take up two strands of thought that have emerged in response to her claims: what Rosi Braidotti has called “sexual difference theory” and “gender theory,” terms which will be defined more fully later in the chapter.\(^2\) Broadly speaking, the problem of the body in feminist theory is represented by these two positions, with the former following Irigaray in asserting the ontological primacy of the enmattered body. The latter position maintains instead that sex itself is necessarily and only an effect of and inflected with relations of power. It is in fact *produced* by these relations. In that regard, for gender theory, we might not be able to speak of “a body,” especially a sexed body, at all. The chapter will then turn to a form of feminism that responds to this divide,

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1 There are numerous texts arguing over the status of sexual difference throughout the history of philosophy, including volumes dedicated to feminist readings of Aristotle, Plato, Derrida, and Hegel, among many others. For somewhat comprehensive overviews, see, for instance, Genevieve Lloyd’s *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) or Nancy Tuana’s *Woman and the History of Philosophy* (New York: Paragon Press, 1992).

what I will call Deleuzian feminism. Inspired by the work of Gilles Deleuze (and Félix Guattari), Deleuzian feminism seeks to find a middle passage between this chasm by emphasizing both the materiality of the body along with the flux or becoming of that very materiality. This attempts to allow for matter but not in a way that reduces one to that matter, as Irigaray is accused of. I will show how I find that Deleuzian feminism has found itself in the same difficulty as both gender theory and sexual difference theory; that is, it gets stuck in the same problem it tries to solve by simply repeating the problem of essentialism (sexual difference theory) and historicism (gender theory). As I will argue in later chapters, turning to Deleuze will provide a solution to this problem, but this solution is to be found rather in Deleuze’s engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*.

After laying out the positions of gender, sexual difference, and Deleuzian feminisms, I give a preliminary account of how the I see this resolution through Deleuze and psychoanalysis. Often presumed antithetical to Deleuze’s philosophy, as well as presumed to be misogynistic in nature, psychoanalysis may seem an odd site for reconciliation. I will therefore show why it is necessary and productive to turn in this direction. I will indicate how the assumption of these antagonisms actually ignores the centrality of psychoanalysis for Deleuze. The full elaboration of this will comprise the bulk of Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Thus, explaining the relationship between Lacan and Deleuze will comprise my own attempt at a form of Deleuzian feminism, one that I think offers a better solution to the divide between sexual difference and gender feminisms. More strongly, my argument will be that it is through the very problem of

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3 I will provide salient references below in the relevant sections of this chapter where I am dealing with this concerns in a more sustained fashion.
sexual difference, the problem that splits these two feminist camps, that we can fully appreciate how Deleuze and Lacan merge. In what follows in this chapter I will lay out the problem of sexual difference for philosophy; the tension between gender theory and sexual difference theory; and gesture towards how my sustained readings of Deleuze and Lacan in this dissertation will offer my own solution to this tension.

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

In Speculum of the Other Woman, Luce Irigaray argues that philosophy, subjectivity, and thought itself have “already been appropriated by the ‘masculine.’”

Philosophy, which has historically purported to be neutral and simply “true,” independent of any consideration of the bodies that have produced these theories claiming truth, carries with it the stain of the masculine. This masculine appropriates all and casts the rest in its image. Irigaray argues, “man seems to have wanted, directly or indirectly, to give the universe his own gender, as he has wanted to give his own name to his children, his wife, his possessions.” The history of philosophy, with its supposed neutrality, is inextricably tied to a masculinity that by definition excludes and degrades femininity, and Irigaray claims that its very claim to neutrality is a mark of the masculine pretended-universal.

This has implied a denigration or at least subordination of the body to the mind or of affect

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6 For another explanation of this point, see Donna Haraway’s “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988), 575-599. Here she argues that the masculine is a “view from nowhere,” a “God-trick” that denies its locality, situatedness, and embodiment. This also corresponds to the feminist emphasis on the body, that which has been denied by the masculine “neuter.” More on this below.
to reason. Susan Bordo holds that Descartes’ substance dualism is the most explicit articulation of this disconnect and that this has marked the western tradition of philosophy that followed.\(^7\) Indeed, in Descartes’ Meditations his body is not even essential to him, for he is fundamentally a thinking thing; and, while he could think of himself without a body, he cannot conceive of himself as not thinking.\(^8\) In making such a claim, in asserting that reason or the mind could exist without the body, metaphysics has consequently rendered the body inessential, disruptive, troublesome, or sinful.\(^9\) This is why Irigaray can argue that philosophy itself may carry the traces of the sexed body (or its elision).\(^10\)

This degradation of the body has historically been coupled with a general degradation of the feminine as the bearer of irrationality. The troublesome yet familiar analogy of masculinity : reason :: femininity : unreason underlies a whole series of historical problems. These include the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to agential self-determination. In The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir describes how the

\(^9\) There is much more work on the status of the body in Descartes than I’ve indicated here, Bordo, Drew Leder, Karl Stern, and Genevieve Lloyd all maintain, in some form or another, that at the heart of Descartes’ metaphysics is a disavowed, dead, and/or mechanical body and thus the body always remains subordinate, which, Bordo argues, characterizes the entire modern context. See Feminist Interpretations of Descartes, ed. Susan Bordo (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) and Drew Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies: the Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body,” in The Body in Medical Thought and Practice, ed. Drew Leder (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 17-35.
\(^10\) Various iterations of feminist philosophy, post-structuralist philosophy, queer theory, and trans* studies mean that it is no longer possible to refer to “the body” as something simply and unproblematically given, as something that can be referred to only as a mass of flesh with certain characteristics. I say “the body” now to introduce the general problematic that will be discussed. This is also the case for the term “women,” which does not necessarily refer only to female-bodied persons.
feminine is associated derogatorily with the body and irrationality, while the male is disembodied, neutral, and rational. She writes,

It amounts to this: [...] there is an absolute human type, the masculine. Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it.11

She here gives but one example of the assumed correlation between masculinity, reasonableness, and objectivity on the one hand and femininity, embodiment, and irrationality on the other. Irigaray’s critique of the history of philosophy allows us to ask about the relationship between the body and metaphysics. Her argument is that we need a way to positively introduce the feminine into discourse, rather than as simply the negative of or complement to the masculine.12 It requires that we no longer privilege supposed claims to disembodied rationality that is characteristic of a masculinist way of thinking. To bring the sexed body to bear on philosophical discourse thus interrupts and critiques an entire gendered history of thought that has heretofore been rendered invisible. It is not

12 For a few more examples, she argues that, in Aristotle, woman is “deformed and formless” (*Speculum* 167); and, she critiques Rousseau, who argues that women engage in subterfuge “with much skill and care in order to establish their empire over men, and so make dominant the sex that ought to obey” in his *Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin, 1984), 103.
ancillary to the concerns of metaphysics or secondary to the identity of the thinking subject. Instead, it casts a long shadow over the articulation of philosophy itself.

How are we to introduce “the body” into philosophical discourse? What constitutes a body, and what constitutes a sexed body, as is so important to feminist discourse? The definitions of men or women as “sexed” is a primary concern of feminist philosophy (as well as queer and trans* studies, which further complicate this question). Irigaray argues that there are indeed real bodily differences between the sexes (whether Irigaray would admit to more than two sexes remains unclear), and that these bodily differences fundamentally affect modes of thinking, comportment, and being-in-the-world. In This Sex Which Is Not One, she maintains that the female body has always been defined as “other,” as lack, and as dependent on a phallic notion of pleasure. Irigaray argues that the masculine sex thinks of itself or pretends to be “one,” assumed to be complete in having a visibly protrusive penis. The female sex, however, is not one but two: “two lips in

13 While most interpretations of Irigaray’s work insist that her account affords only two sexes (which I believe is her position), some recent work claims that her position can allow for multiple sexes, not the one of phallocentric sex and its “others.” On this, see Danielle Poe’s “Can Luce Irigaray’s Notion of Sexual Difference Be Applied to Transsexual and Transgender Narratives?” in Thinking with Irigaray, eds. Mary C. Rawlinson, Sabrina L. Hom, & Serene J. Khader (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 111-130. Elizabeth Grosz tentatively suggests the possibility of many sexes as a consequence of sexual selection in Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), and also in “Irigaray and Darwin on Sexual Difference: Some Reflections” in Engaging the World: Thinking After Irigaray, ed. Mary C. Rawlinson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016). However, I believe these to be generous readings of Irigaray that are not supported by her own arguments. In the conclusion to her A Politics of Impossible Difference (Ithaca, Cornell University, 2002), Penelope Deutscher acknowledges that Irigaray takes sexual difference and sexual subordination to be primary: “she argues that if women had a less impoverished relation to gender identity, they might be less impelled towards racism, sexism…” (192). Sexual difference (as male/female difference) takes precedence over other forms of difference, and thus it is difficult to extrapolate from this any room for multiple sexes.

14 We could note, for instance, historical claims that a woman who cannot achieve vaginal orgasm is “frigid” despite responding to clitoral stimulation.
continuous contact.”\(^{15}\) This two-ness, multiplicity, or plurality is for her productive of woman herself as not-one: “Woman always remains several.”\(^{16}\) The multiplicity of pleasures available to the female sexed body indicates how

[…] she is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. […] It is useless, then, to trap women in the exact definition of what they mean; […] they are already elsewhere in that discursive machinery where you expected to surprise them.\(^{17}\)

For Beauvoir and Irigaray, there is an intimate link between subjectivity, the subject of philosophy, and being sexed. From this perspective, all subjects are sexed subjects. For this reason, Claire Colebrook has argued that Irigaray’s project entails “thinking the feminine as different from the identity of metaphysics” and thus “Irigaray’s reflection on philosophy’s history is also, therefore, a reflection on the subject,” as a subject who is or is not represented within that history.\(^{18}\) On this reading, the subject of feminism (and philosophy itself) is necessarily sexed. As Colebrook suggests, “for Irigaray, sexual difference is not a topic to be introduced into metaphysics, but determines metaphysics as such.”\(^{19}\)

How can we clarify the relation between sexual difference and metaphysics? It


\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 28-9


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 111.
should be clear that central to this position is the materiality of the body, of corporeality itself. Irigaray’s understanding of the body as sexed is indeed material, as we have seen in her discussion of the vaginal lips and of the variety of sexual pleasures that the female body possesses. Materiality founds the origin of the subject and is not somehow secondary or external to it. Since this is so, the subject is always enmattered or borne of matter; and, Irigaray argues, born by the maternal. The subject is in her very being conditioned by maternal material, and thus the condition of the possibility of the subject is sexed. Here we have the fundamental link between metaphysics and sexual difference: the transcendental (as the condition for the possibility of becoming) is itself marked by sexual difference. As she argues in I Love to You, “respecting natural reality as constitutive of the subject” means that sexual difference and the transcendental are necessarily commingled.\(^\text{20}\) Ignoring materiality as the foundation of the subject is part of what constitutes phallogocentrism. Irigaray’s refusal to ignore or downplay materiality has with it a host of consequences. It refuses the Cartesian dualism; it insists on the importance of desire and sexuality for the subject of philosophical thought; it seeks to give a positive space for the feminine and the maternal; and it attempts to undermine the purported universality that has characterized the phallogocentric history of philosophy and of representation. All this entails an affirmation of sexual difference and an insistence on the difference between the male and female sexes.\(^\text{21}\) Irigaray maintains that “men and women thus occupy different subjective configurations and different worlds,” and it the denial of this that constitutes

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\(^{21}\) This position is of course controversial; indeed, whether or not sexual difference has anything to do with the body, and whether there are (only) two sexes remain at the heart of contemporary queer and trans* studies.
phallogocentrism. If Irigaray is right, the horizon of philosophy, ethics, and politics would all ultimately be bound to sexual difference. Indeed, “sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age.”

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE THEORY & GENDER THEORY

There have been a variety of responses to, modifications, and rejections of Irigaray’s position. Inasmuch as I take the challenge that she offers to philosophy seriously, this chapter will engage only with positions that also consider the possible relationship between the sexed body and metaphysics. In *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Rosi Braidotti offers a helpful distinction between two strains of feminist thought that emerge from Irigaray’s critique. Braidotti calls the view that endorses Irigaray’s position “sexual difference theory,” a term which I will adopt and use throughout this chapter. Sexual difference theorists, while varied, are all concerned to retain the retaining the supposedly primary materiality of the body and its founding relation to the subject; that is, these theorists take sexual difference(s) to be ontologically primary. As Braidotti writes, “it is the specific materiality of the female flesh that is

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22 Ibid., 16
24 I’ll discuss some of the more important ones in this section; but the secondary literature on Irigaray is extensive, constituting many volumes, including three edited books (all of which are referenced in this chapter) and special editions of two journals.
25 Braidotti, 28.
26 For just a few examples, see Chanter’s *The Ethics of Eros: Irigaray’s Rewriting of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Gatens’ *Imaginary Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1995). Elizabeth Grosz also defends this position in *Volatile Bodies, Becoming Undone*, and as well as a various articles I’ll reference more specifically below.
erased by the phallic regime.” Thus, this specific female materiality forms the ground of analysis for feminists of sexual difference. While many second and third wave feminists maintain that any difference between the sexes exists only to continue to assert male hegemony, these arguments commit the same error of denying this very female specificity. As it stands, my interest here is in thinkers who are concerned specifically with the very problem of the body and its materiality that has been elaborated above; that is to say, with those who tarry with the question of the sexed body.

Some critics of sexual difference theory claim it is essentialist, i.e. that it assumes a universal essence that can be attributed to women (and men) and thus that it is deterministic. Queer and trans* perspectives also claim that it does not adequately account for queer desire, reaffirms heteronormativity, and has no place for trans*, intersex or otherwise genderqueer or gender fluid identities. In many contexts, we can see a conceptual opposition to sexual difference theory coming from poststructuralist and social-constructivist interpretations of sex and gender. Most simply, this division between

27Metamorphoses, 45.
28See, for instance, Wittig’s The Straight Mind, and Charlotte Bunch’s “Lesbians in Revolt” for arguments that claim that sexual difference is a product of male supremacy; for arguments that femininity is a product of male supremacy, see the work of Mary Daly, Germaine Greer, and Sheila Jeffreys (and other second wave lesbian feminists), to name but a few. Julia Serano lays out some of these latter positions nicely in her “Putting the Feminine Back into Feminism” from Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Feminism and the Scapegoating of Femininity (New York: Seal Press, 2007), 319-343.
sex and gender attributes to “sex” the anatomy of the body, but it claims that this materiality has no necessary or deterministic bearing on one’s identity or gendered behavior.\textsuperscript{30} From this perspective, to be masculine has nothing to do with being male-bodied, and being female-bodied does not imply femininity. This position is what Braidotti calls “gender theory,” and it has been particularly influential in North America and is a direct challenge to sexual difference theory which asserts the ontological primacy of the sexed body.\textsuperscript{31}

One of the most trenchant critics of sexual difference theory has been Judith Butler. Her works \textit{Gender Trouble} and \textit{Bodies That Matter} articulate complex arguments that seek to destabilize the supposed naturalness of sexual difference and the assumed correlation between sex and gender. Butler maintains that there is no necessary link between embodiment and gender expression; furthermore, there are no characteristics that inhere in a person simply on account of her embodiment. Against Irigaray she argues that the matter of the body itself is already marked by discourse and by normative modes of power. For Butler there are no pure bodies of sexual difference and no pure, unmarked materiality prior to power, language, or signification. As she argues in \textit{Bodies That Matter}, “the body is not an independent materiality that is invested by power relations external to

\textsuperscript{30} Butler’s argument differs from this general sociological distinction, inasmuch as she argues that sex \textit{itself} is a discursive production, always already read through the lens of gender. While she argues for this in many places, for a clear and succinct explanation, see her “Performativ\textsuperscript{e} Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” in \textit{Theater Journal} 40 1988: 519-531. I will explain this position more fully below.

\textsuperscript{31} Braidotti. 32. Further discussion of this can be found in Chapter One of \textit{Metamorphoses}. 
it, but is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.”\textsuperscript{32} Butler’s position, drawing from Foucault and Wittig, understands the sexed body not to be something natural or untouched, prior to the workings of power, language, and social construction. She thus critiques both sexual difference feminism, which gives some primacy to the sexed body, and the sociological distinction between sex and gender. Rather than there being sexed materiality and the cultural construction of gender somehow resting on top of this body, Butler maintains that any figuration of matter itself is always already marked by power. She writes that she seeks to “establish the normative conditions under which the materiality of the body is framed and formed, and, in particular, how it is formed through differential categories of sex.”\textsuperscript{33} For her, sexual difference is a discursive category, and to consider bodies as sexed is itself imbued with power. From this perspective, there is no pure materiality prior to cultural inscription: there is no outside to power, and the sexed body is only understood as such because it has already been marked by social, cultural, and linguistic figurations. Thus, one becomes sexed only epiphenomenally.

To put this more strongly: Butler subsumes sex under gender. She writes, perhaps sex “was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.”\textsuperscript{34} She writes further that there is “a sedimentation of gender norms that produces the peculiar phenomenon of a natural sex … which, in reified form, appear[s] as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes which

\textsuperscript{32} Judith Butler, \textit{Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of \textquotesingle\textquotesingle Sex\textquotesingle\textquotesingle} (New York: Routledge, 1993), 34.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{34} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}, 10-11.
exist in a binary relation to one another.” The difference from Irigaray is stark: Butler is arguing that sex is itself an effect of gender. To put it more simply, we exist in a world of gendered norms that precede the existence of the subject. These norms are compulsory and encourage one to repeat or to “stylize” oneself in line with said norms. The effect of this is that we read bodies as always already coded through these gendered norms. For her to say sex was always already gender is for her to say that gender precedes sex and that gender is the power that materializes sex itself. This is how she can suggest in Bodies That Matter that we read Aristotle and Foucault together: Aristotle’s hylomorphism re-read through Foucault means that the form or soul by which the body comes into being is always already the discursive phenomenon of gender.

We have, then, an impasse in contemporary feminist philosophy: sex or gender? Can we claim that there is a body prior to discourse, or that discourse shapes and forms even materiality itself? Is there a fundamental relation between the body and the capacity for thinking, or are bodies themselves produced? There is another tension between these positions: what is the role of desire? For sexual difference feminists, as Braidotti puts it, the “sex/sexuality” complex, or the foundational relationship between the sexed body and

36 Butler, Bodies That Matter, 32-36.
37 The problem of desire is inseparable from feminist and queer theory, and some assert that heterosexual desire is itself a product of male supremacy or oppression. In my view, still the most trenchant analysis of this is in Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” in Signs 5, no. 4 (1980), 631-660, though of course a majority of queer theory is concerned with the social production of desire. For foundational examples of the latter, see Gayle Rubin’s “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” in Culture, Society, and Sexuality: A Reader, eds. Richard Guy Parker & Peter Aggleton. (Philadelphia: UCL Press, 1999), 143-178. and Guy Hocquenghem’s Homosexual Desire, trans. Daniella Dangoor. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
its forms of desire, is more fundamental than the “sex/gender” distinction.\textsuperscript{38} However, for the Butlerian position, desire does indeed play a central role, but desire as \textit{not} wedded to any particularly normative understanding of the body. For Irigaray to claim that the maternal and the feminine are commingled (but not that the feminine is reducible \textit{to} the maternal), and that the multiplicity of women’s bodily pleasures causes her to be always “other” than herself, is to somehow link desire, or at least the desiring body, to the way in which one thinks. The multiple pleasures of her body, its resistance to the phallic One, means that she is “already elsewhere in the discursive machinery” that has been constructed in line with the masculine universal.\textsuperscript{39} This forms another point of contention between sexual difference and gender theorists. Irigaray, in linking the maternal to desire and in assuming a differential relation to be between two sexes, has been accused of having a heteronormative notion of desire. This would ignore other possibilities for desire that would stem from non-normative understandings of the body as such.\textsuperscript{40} If the maternal is not the only way to figure the female body (if we can claim there is such a thing as the female body), desire need not only be figured through the model of two sexes. Many theorists, Bunch, Butler, Rich, Wittig, and de Lauretis among them, argue not only for the specificity of lesbian desire but for a plurality of desires not limited by a heteronormative assumption of penile/vaginal penetration. The centrality of desire for “gender” theorists is such that it can explode the supposedly narrow confines of sexual difference feminism. This is what has made gender theory hold such traction alongside queer theory more

\textsuperscript{38} Braidotti, \textit{Metamorphoses}, 41.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{This Sex}, 29.
\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Hope, Butler & Cornell, and Ofelia Schutte’s “A Critique of Normative Heterosexuality: Identity, Embodiment, and Sexual Difference in Beauvoir and Irigaray,” in \textit{Hypatia} 12, no. 1 (1997), 40-62. For the possibility of a queer Irigaray on this topic, see Lynne Huffer’s “Are the Lips a Grave?” in \textit{GLQ} 17, no. 4 (2011), 517-542.
generally: gender theorists who refuse the sexual binary allow for a multiplicity of desires and a multiplicity of genders. If my body doesn’t define me or how I act, and indeed if my body is itself always already a produced function of a wider matrix of power, we could have a form of gender voluntarism such that anyone can adopt any gender (or create new genders) based on an economy of desire.41 While this voluntarism is a misreading of Butler’s position, gender theory that has followed her has argued for the proliferation of genders (agender, genderqueer, transgender, cisgender, gender fluid), along with various forms of gender presentation that align with sexual preferences (stone butch, nelly bottom) that try to undermine the fundamental distinction that sexual difference feminism upholds and supports. Butler herself explicitly disavows gender voluntarism; but, as she acknowledges, language itself holds the possibility of its own subversion. Hence, in a society dominated by libertarian articulations of choice (e.g., the U.S., where not coincidentally gender theory seems to be most dominant), a brief glance at current non-academic discourse, online forums, or queer spaces reveals an explosion of new desiring identities (requiesexual, akiosexual, sapiosexual, gray-a, asexual) that decidedly reject any relationship between “the body” and its (possibly absent) desire.

I see this difference in understandings of the body as the primary site of contention in contemporary feminist philosophy. Is there a way to reconcile these two views, or are they mutually exclusive? The problem is both philosophical and political. If sexual difference feminism is correct, there is something fundamental about embodiment for modes of thinking, and the political project of feminism must take this seriously. The

41 This is a misreading of Butler, who is, despite using “performance” and “performative” more or less simultaneously (cf. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”), adamant that there is no such thing as gender voluntarism.
politics of sexual difference feminism include mimesis, or an almost parodic exaggeration of the feminine rather than the supposed erasure of gendered difference. This would serve the function of not only embracing and exaggerating the feminine but also revealing the artificiality thereof—but only of the role of the feminine, not of the construction of the female body itself. If gender theory is correct, however, sexual difference figured only as masculine-feminine should not be central to feminist theory or politics, and it could be accused of being essentialist despite itself. Gender theory tends to argue that, since there is no “real” sexual difference or “true” expression of gender, we should maintain a proliferation of gendered identities or non-identities. This would result in “the elimination of obligatory sexualities and sex roles” in an “androgynous and genderless” society.

DELEUZIAN FEMINISM

In response to this tension, a modified form of sexual difference feminism emerged. Its goal was to maintain sexual difference while also attempting to evade the charges of essentialism. Braidotti, Gatens, Grosz, and Tamsin Lorraine have all turned to the work of Gilles Deleuze to express this position. They see a correspondence between Deleuze and Irigaray that can emphasize the materiality of the body while not reducing the subject simply to the body, say, in a form of biological or sexual determinism. Indeed, one of the central points of overlap between Irigaray and Deleuze would be a shared focus on

42 We see this in Irigaray’s writing style itself, for instance in An Ethics of Sexual Difference, where she reads male philosophers against themselves, sometimes taking their language directly but employing it for her own purposes. The aim here is to show what the masculine has taken from the feminine and then obfuscated. Lorraine’s chapter “Irigaray’s Sensible Transcendental” in Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell, 1999) is instructive on this latter point.

“becoming” rather than “being” or “stasis.” For Deleuze, what we see as “beings” are simply hypostatized instances of movements of becoming that are constituted out of a process of “clothed” or “masked” repetition. For Irigaray, the focus on presence, self-sameness, and unity is a function of the privileging of the masculine body (and its purportedly unitary penis) over the feminine with its multiplicity and internal contradiction. Becoming is a central component of Deleuze’s philosophy and has become a cornerstone in many contemporary political uses thereof. We could conceive of becoming as a form of transformation; this process is, he argues, obfuscated even linguistically. In The Logic of Sense, for instance, he substitutes for “the tree is green” “the tree is greening,” with the participle being a better representative of the becoming-green of the tree. Trees are always in a process of becoming more or less verdant due to the constant processes of photosynthesis and so on; thus, the tree never simply “is” but is always becoming in one direction or another. In this regard there is, according to Deleuze, a sort of material dynamism in play.

Here we can see a way in which sexual difference feminists might find a productive use for Deleuze. If we apply this form of becoming to “the body,” we would then be in a position to affirm embodied sexual difference while not consigning the sexed body to something essentially defined. For Deleuze, the embodied subject is constantly becoming,

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44 Apart from Deleuzian feminism, we can see this operative in the post-colonial work of Jasbir Puar’s Terrorist Assemblages (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); the queer “fabulation” of Tavia Nyong’o (personal correspondence, graduate seminar at NYU); and the political philosophy of Fred Evans’ The Multivoiced Body (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), to name a few.
46 This becoming is also referred to as the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, becoming-minoritarian, becoming-Woman, and a variety of other terms deployed in Deleuze’s later work, especially in A Thousand Plateaus.
never statically defined; indeed, it is a subject in process, traversed by multiple forces, affects, and intensities. If the subject is always material, but materiality is always becoming, sexed materiality would itself become. However, from the perspective of the feminism of sexual difference, while there is something appealing here, there is also a drawback, inasmuch as Deleuze’s work “does not rest upon a dichotomous opposition of masculine and feminine subject positions but rather on a multiplicity of sexed subjectivities.”47 That is, if it’s true that everything becomes, we still have an elision of the sexual difference that is so central to this form of feminism. This has led to an attempt by some to reconcile Deleuze and Irigaray. Tamsin Lorraine writes that “at the same time that Deleuze acknowledges that others are always implicated in our flights, he does not insist on recognition of the feminine other in the way that Irigaray does. And at the same time that Irigaray insists on the feminine other, she does not allow, perhaps, the same range of lines of flight as Deleuze.”48 That is to say, perhaps the two can be used to inform and complete each other’s projects: Irigaray could learn from Deleuze to allow for greater possibilities of becoming, and Deleuze could take from Irigaray something of the specificity of experience and embodiment rather than embrace all “becoming” as equally plausible and available.49

48 Lorraine, 19.
49 Irigaray accuses Deleuze and Guattari of emphasizing too neutral a form of becoming that ignores and coopts the female body; that is, she argues that they perform the same erasure characteristic of the history of philosophy. Cf. “Becoming Woman?” in Conversations (London: Continuum, 2008). Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, may suggest to Irigaray that her focus on the body wrongly attributes ontological status to an already formed and perceived body, rather than giving way to becoming. They might also suggest that their distinction between the molecular and the molar, the plane of
When Lorraine uses the term “flight,” she is referring to the concept of a “line of flight” developed in Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Most simply, this refers to the way in which an organized or self-contained identity can “become-minoritarian” or become other than it is. This becoming-minoritarian will loosen the structures of identity that have been imposed from without (by, in various formulations, discourse and power in the Foucaultian sense, Oedipalization in a psychoanalytic sense, or normative models of behavior in a sociological sense). It is through this process that we can open up possibilities for new becomings, new forms of being that are creative, novel, and affirmative rather than simply reproduce restrictive or oppressive structures. Braidotti calls this “becoming-Nomad” and describes it as “undoing the oppositional dualism of majority/minority and arousing an affirmative passion for and desire for the transformative flows that destabilize all identities.” If identity is never constituted once and for all, as gender theory would have it, this position may well be partly satisfying. There would be neither a stasis of identification nor a “body” apart from its process of becoming and transformation. For Deleuzian feminists, however, while emphasizing this process is of political and conceptual importance, it understates the importance of sexed embodiment. That is, it does not take into account the cultural, historical, epistemological, and political situatedness of women. Again we return to Irigaray: the focus on the neutral “becoming”

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51 Metamorphoses, 84.
52 It is worth noting that Butler, whose work I take to be the primary avatar of gender theory, rejects Deleuze & Guattari’s theory of desire as being insufficiently attuned to lack, melancholia, and longing. See her “Deleuze: From Slave Morality to Productive Desire” in Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Contemporary France (New York: Columbia, 1999), 205-216.
still assumes a structural symmetry between men and women and as such continues to erase the feminine from discourse, where she has never had a chance to be recognized. Hence the project of Deleuzian feminists of sexual difference is to reintroduce feminine specificity into the processes that characterize Deleuze’s ontology of becoming. Indeed, Braidotti argues for “the extreme affirmation of sexed identity as a way of reversing the attribution of differences in a hierarchical mode.”\textsuperscript{53} This is akin to Irigaray’s strategy of mimesis, wherein one “jams the machine” in order to reveal the inherent definitional and political limits of the signifier “Woman” without jettisoning it entirely.\textsuperscript{54}

This position has been called “strategic essentialism,” and Braidotti calls it “strategically re-essentialized embodiment.”\textsuperscript{55} The goal of this is to avoid effacing the feminine (by emphasizing it) but not to stop simply with the claim that there is some natural or deterministic essentiality that inheres in someone simply by being female-bodied (whatever the latter might mean). Denise Riley and Elizabeth Grosz, along with Braidotti and others, have taken up this ardently, maintaining that gender theorists like Butler or Joan Scott make the materiality of the body into nothing more than a discursive fiction.\textsuperscript{56} The claim that the sexed body is produced by power and that sexual difference is

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Nomadic Subjects}, 169.
\textsuperscript{54}\textit{This Sex}, 78.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 171. For more on strategic essentialism, specifically with respect to Irigaray, see Naomi Schor’s “This Essentialism Which Is Not One” in \textit{differences} 2 (1989), 38-58 and Denise Riley’s \textit{Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{56} See again Riley’s “Am I That Name?,” and Grosz’s “A Note on Essentialism and Difference” in \textit{Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct}, ed. S. Gurow (London: Routledge, 1990), 332-344. In \textit{Bodies That Matter}, Butler does defend herself against this accusation, especially in the Introduction and first chapter, “Bodies That Matter.” Her argument, however, relies on a linguistic analysis that assumes but does not defend the productive power of language on the body, claiming that a discursive structure enmatters the body through the material of language at the same time as that body comes into being.
an effect of this power, strategic essentialists would argue, still only serves to continue the
myth of sexual neutrality and renders the body an inert, passive surface onto which culture
is inscribed. This would thereby re-neutralize the body, as it were: the materiality of the
body, or the materiality of sexual difference, could come to be known only in and through
discursive productions, thus eliminating it from discourse just as we are trying to bring it
to light.

In contrast to both Butler’s view and that of the strategic essentialists, Deleuzian
sexual difference feminists claim to avoid determinist essentialism by employing the
notion of “becoming.” For this position, “woman” is always in-process by definition.
Braidotti writes, “the ‘feminine’ is that which ‘women’ invent, enact, and empower in our
speech, our practice, our collective quest for a definition of the status of all women.”
This position has strong appeal, since to be committed to a feminist political and
philosophical project implies that we must have a group to which the term “women”
applies. Further, if Irigaray is correct and the feminine has always been defined as the lack
or negative of the masculine, it does seem politically problematic to simply claim that we
are beyond sexual difference or that it is has no reality. As bell hooks posed the objection,
“it’s easy to give up identity when you’ve got one,” implying that, for those subalterns
who have been excluded from history, philosophy, and politics, gaining and asserting an

She argues that matter is always formed, in the manner of Aristotelian hylomorphism, but
that we can rethink this in terms of Foucaultian discourse theory to say that the body is
always already shaped by power. This argument has strong rhetorical force, but it never
explains how the body might actually be shaped as such, and thus ultimately argues that
the body exists for us only through the way we read it. While this may be true, I don’t
think it sufficiently accounts for the becoming of the body, nor does it describe how
discourse shapes bodies. As such, it is too inattentive to materiality, while sexual
difference feminism may be too attentive to it.

57 Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, 188.
identity must occur before any deconstruction of that idea could be acceptable.\textsuperscript{58} However, as I see it, this is not what gender theorists argue. If we look at Butler’s formulation of the performativity of gender, as well as the claim that matter is never given without power, we do not find any claims that “there are no women” or that “there is no sexual difference.” Instead, it would be more accurate to say that there are many sexual differences. For instance, Anne Fausto-Sterling gives a very detailed analysis of the ways in which the body comes to be read as sexed, and the ways in which normative understandings of the sexual binary contribute to the elision of various forms of intersexuality.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, it is very difficult to define what is meant by “women” and who the referent of this term is. With the proliferation of sexed (and non-sexed) identities, many young queers refuse such terminology altogether.\textsuperscript{60} While strategic essentialism does not want to claim a normative understanding of “being a woman,” it seems difficult to avoid this in its very assertion of sexual difference as referring fairly simply to “men” and “women.”\textsuperscript{61}

The assumption behind strategic essentialism seems to be that, in order to be

\textsuperscript{58} bell hooks, \textit{Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics} (New York: South End Press, 1999), 28. Notably, hooks herself responds to this objection she poses by rejecting essentialism and endorsing intersectional and subversive identity politics opened up by post-structuralism.


\textsuperscript{60} I say this from experience, less from any official documentation.

\textsuperscript{61} There is a difficulty in sexual difference feminism in dealing with the question of transgenderism, transsexuality, or intersexuality. One exception to this is Gayle Salamon’s \textit{Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality}. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). There is also a tension between trans* theory and some feminist theory with respect to the need for a correspondence between body and identity, and there is also a strong suspicion in some second wave feminism (and conservative political discourse) of the legitimacy of trans* embodiment (called TERFs, Trans*Exclusionary Radical Feminists). See, for instance, Janice Raymond’s notorious \textit{The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male} (Boston: Beacon, 1980), where she suggests, not uniquely, that transwomen seek only to take advantage of women’s spaces, only to violate them. I will return to this in my conclusion.
effective, we must assume that there are some shared characteristics between women across time, histories, and cultures.\(^\text{62}\) However, these commonalities are in many cases fictitious, assuming compatibility or shared experience between women that does not exist. *Strategic essentialism* is not the same as *essentialism*, though, so we could potentially absolve this position of essentialist leanings by saying that it is merely a political strategy that works with existing categories. This false idea of a female essence may useful because the world *treats* women as though there is such a shared essence; that would mean that this tactic does not rely on assuming the truth of essentialism but only manipulates it for political purposes. I argue that this is a misstep for both political and philosophical reasons. If strategic essentialism is just a political position, then it very easily amounts to the ignoring or reducing of particularities under the guise of a form of sameness. We can see this through concrete political examples. In the introduction to *Undivided Rights*, the editors collectively argue that the mainstream women’s rights movement in the United States (which of course claims to represent women) really only represents the interests of white women.\(^\text{63}\) They show how women of color have been punished with forced abortions and forced sterilizations, and how “family planning” often indicates a way to regulate the bodies of lower income women of color as a form of “population control.” This is in contrast to the argument of “mainstream” pro-choice advocates whose corner tenet is “freedom of choice.” As an example, since many women

\(^\text{62}\) Margaret Whitford avows strategic essentialism against its critics that if attributing to women ‘a body’ “is interpreted as essentialism or phallogcentrism, it is because what has been lost sight of is the horizon. It is to fix a moment of becoming as if it were the goal.” From *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), 143.

of color have had sterilization forced upon them and since many white women request to
be sterilized but are denied ("oh, you’ll change your mind"…), there can be no easy
consensus on the topic of “voluntary sterilization.” As they argue, “those white pro-choice
advocates in the mainstream movements for contraception and abortion … have been
unable to see how what may be reproductive freedom for them is reproductive tyranny for
others.”

So what happens on the level of the political is in fact often the elimination of
difference in the service of sameness, and this elimination has as its consequence very
little political gain. In the example just given, whatever “advances” might be made by
mainstream reproductive rights movements were done so by excluding consideration of
many groups of women, thus making it rather difficult to call that “progress” except for
only a few.

Strategic essentialism thus ends up relying on a form of descriptive essentialism
that it denies, because it must assume that there is a set of essentialist assumptions that
consistently influences women’s social experience. Thus, it unintentionally reaffirms the
essentialist position, because it requires some truth of essentialism to make its claims
plausible. Historical, queer, lesbian, trans, post-colonial, and critical-racial perspectives all
indicate that there simply is no universally shared female essence or experience, even at
the level of embodiment.

For this reason, while Deleuzian feminism that has
championed strategic essentialism is to be admired for its political goals and for its

64Ibid., 18.
65For only a few examples, see Uma Narayan’s “The Project of Feminist Epistemology:
Perspectives from a Non-Western Feminist” in The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader:
Intellectual and Political Controversies, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge),
213-224; the Combahee River Collective’s “A Black Feminist Statement”
(http://circuitous.org/scaps/combahee.html) and C. Jacob Hale’s “Leatherdyke Boys and
their Daddies: How to Have Sex Without Women or Men” in Social/Text 52/53 (1997):
223-236.
insistence that the concrete materiality of bodies not be ignored, it seems to me that ultimately it would have only limited political use. Insisting on bodily “sexual difference” as an ontological bedrock seems difficult when there are no universal commonalities between members of these sexed groups.

On the other hand, later Deleuzian feminism has moved away from strategic essentialism by way of emphasizing the language of flows, intensities, and connections. That is, it has moved to emphasize becoming more radically than strategic essentialists have. This is case with more recent Deleuzian feminism, which operates with the language offered by Deleuze and Guattari but without such explicit reference to sexual difference.

If we look, for instance, to Tamsin Lorraine’s chapter “Feminist Cartographies and Minoritarian Subjectivity,” we see her employ the same Deleuzian language of becoming, in this case through the language of forces and vitality that she draws from his work with Guattari. Without further explaining that specific terminology, I would just like to point out where I see her argument as problematic but not because of a tacit essentialism. Instead, her argument here does rely on a strategic use of sexual difference but one in a different way than strategic essentialism. Lorraine argues that we could reconceive of a

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66 I do not mean to claim that Deleuzian feminists would themselves claim it acceptable to use strategic essentialism in a way that would somehow benefit some group over another, as in the example I gave above. However, what I do claim is that strategic essentialism as a position does this, both politically and theoretically, in a way that could never be adequate to actually achieve the goals it desires.

67 I would consider Grosz to be the figure who most strongly adheres to Irigaray’s position; but, the work of Puar, Colebrook, and Olkowski, for instance, seems to have decidedly moved beyond this position towards the “new materialism.” For more on some of the tension between feminist theory and new materialism (itself an entire sub-debate), see Sarah Ahmed’s “Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the ‘New Materialism’” in European Journal of Women’s Studies 15, no. 1 (2008): 23-39.

68 Lorraine, Deleuze and Guattari’s Immanent Ethics: Theory, Subjectivity, and Duration (Albany, SUNY Press, 2011), 57-79.
“subject” not as an identity but as a connection of flows or a connection to the world characterized by gradations of intensity. “Sexual difference” is thus just an effect of a normative instantiation of gender roles via the nuclear family or Oedipalization (anathema to Deleuze and Guattari) and we would do better, she argues, to see ourselves as bundles of affect, temporarily organized into identities but always becoming in and through connection with the world around us. Feminism, with its concerns with identity politics and gender and sexual difference, she argues, is antithetical to this view but also necessary for it. This view of the subject would not rely on essentialized identities or static views of the body. However, at the same time, Lorraine suggests, “dissolving sex and gender binaries would dissolve feminism’s object of analysis and thereby dissolve feminism itself.”

Thus she writes, “sex and gender are still fully operative as categories of designation … in just about every social practice one can imagine, as well as in the orientations lived by embodied subjects”; “they are critical points of intervention.” Her claim is that we do, historically, need these categories, despite their wrongheaded deployment of certain terminology, because, after all, without them feminism would have no ground (which would seem to be something of a problem). As I see it, this position elides the materiality specificity of the body under the guise of becoming. Lorraine concedes that we still refer to ourselves in and through the categories of “sex” and “gender,” but she maintains them to be necessary only for temporary political goals. The argument implies that this mistake is something we acknowledge and attend to as needed, but it marks only a step in an overall process or flux. Sex is thus reduced to a site of political intervention, one site of becoming among others that has, again, a strategic role.

69 Ibid., 79.
70 Ibid.
amid this efflorescence. In arguing for a liberatory model of flux and change, this again
does away with sexual difference before it has even been recognized. Rather than strategic
essentialism, we have strategic nominalism.

I argue then that Deleuzian feminism has taken two different positions. First, the
view of strategic essentialism that, despite itself, still remains essentialist. Second, in
shifting away from this language, it has taken a position more akin to the view of gender
theory: that sex has no essence at all and that it comes to be as a temporary effect of
forces, (hopefully) soon to be swept away. This latter view does not do enough to state the
importance of sexual difference, as I will argue in the chapters that follow. Thus, the
strategies of Deleuzian feminism have been both too essentialist and too strategic, as it
were. In short, Deleuzian feminism has actually ended up replicating the very same
tension between sexual difference theory and gender theory: sex becomes all or nothing. I
want to suggest instead that we can get a better account of becoming, and a better account
of sexual difference, by reading Deleuze differently.

In this dissertation, I will maintain that there is a link between sexual difference and
metaphysics, and I will also maintain that Deleuze’s ontology allows us to retain sexual
difference and materiality in a way that contributes to a feminist political project.
However, in my view the problems with Deleuzian feminism as I have articulated it here
are twofold. Either Deleuzian feminism it takes “the body” as sexed to be something given
(even if not unproblematically and even in its emphasis on becoming) and thus ignores the
way in which “the body” itself becomes or is constituted.71 Or it retranslates the language

71 Of course, for Butler, the body becomes constituted, as well. However, Butler gives no
account of the way in which materiality comes to be. She seems to argue that language
and matter are coextensive and that language and the body do not come to be separately.
of discursivity into the language of material becoming, which has the effect of
nominalizing sexual difference, as we see with Lorraine’s claim that sex exists simply as a
“category of designation.” These are the same difficulties that emerged from both sexual
difference and gender theory. I argue, then, that we must read the body as itself produced
and never as merely given, and I also think that this account of becoming needs a better,
though not essentialist, understanding of sexual difference in order to properly respond to
Irigaray.

To explain and develop my position, I turn to Deleuze’s arguments in Difference
and Repetition and The Logic of Sense to show that, for him, the body is produced out of a
complex process of repetition that only secondarily or epiphenomenally gives rise to what
we recognize as “the body,” “the ego,” “an identity,” and so forth. This production, I
demonstrate, is necessarily tied up with sexual becoming. Thus I claim that sexual
difference does play a key role in ontology, but we would be wrong to think of sexual
difference as being simply the differences between “men’s” and “women’s” bodies as
determined by anatomy, chromosomes, or hormones. It would similarly be wrong to
simply forget about or reduce sexual difference to one pit stop in the Wide World of

Of course, I agree that no body comes to be in a vacuum and thus that the body is always
interpellated. However, stating that contemporaneity does not show how that body
actually interact, and that is something I aim to show here. From a Deleuzian perspective,
the interpellation of naming the girl “a girl!” may or may not have anything to do with
the way in which the body of the “girl” comes to be, as we will see in the three syntheses
in Chapter Two.

72 Gender theory of course argues this, as well. I would argue, though, that the Butlerian
position simply is too inattentive to embodiment, despite her insistence that we think of
matter as always already materialized. What I will argue is that, through Deleuze, we can
find a way to talk about the materiality of the body in a non-reductive way that needn’t
confine us to the configuration of the body as always already sexed (even though, for
psychoanalysis, all subjects are sexuated). These claims will be borne out in the bulk of
my dissertation.
Becoming. As I will show, in some way sexual difference is necessary for every subject.\(^{73}\)

In the chapters that follow, I will argue that this has both philosophical and political significance: philosophical because it would articulate an ontological role for sexual difference, and political because it would, in a Deleuzian fashion, affirm a variety of becomings not restricted by a preconceived “image of thought.” While this is the goal of all Deleuzian feminism, I maintain that its insistence on the materiality of the female body runs the risk of falling back into essentialism, while the language of flux and flows runs the risk of eliminating difference in the name of it. The account I find in Deleuze’s early work will show that it is sexual difference as an Idea, both material and psychic, that more effectively allows for difference and is generative of difference. As such I see my project as proceeding in the spirit of Deleuzian feminism, inasmuch as it is an intervention into the sex/gender debate that emphasizes materiality and becoming. In order to make this claim, though, it is necessary to be attuned, as I argued earlier in this chapter, to Deleuze’s sustained engagement with psychoanalysis, particularly his relationship with Lacan. In this way, my argument will depart from Deleuzian feminism, though I maintain that this intervention ultimately enhances, rather than fully breaks from, it.\(^{74}\)

\(^{73}\) This is, of course, opaque, but the goal of this dissertation is to explain this. Further, I should also note here that for “sexual difference” to be necessary for every subject, it means that it is not “external” to every subject, as an accidental difference in genitalia (which is actually meaningless in terms of sexual difference) but actually the core of every subject.

\(^{74}\) My intent in this dissertation is to show how Deleuze and psychoanalysis work together, and how they can produce, as I said, a better account of becoming and a better account of sexual difference than Deleuzian feminism has offered.
ON DELEUZE AND LACAN

I dealt with this concern primarily in my introduction, wherein I try to demonstrate how I can situate my project with respect to some commonly perceived tensions between the major figures I’m working with in this dissertation. Having said that, I am only indicating here that in my next chapter I will turn to a sustained engagement with Deleuze as a response to the tensions above. As I’ve said, it is my interpretation that we can best understand the passive syntheses of Deleuze through his use of psychoanalysis, particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis. This has the added benefit of building concerns of sex, or the sexed body, into his generative ontology. As I wrote above, Deleuze builds directly from Lacan, which is evident in his text, and which I will draw out explicitly in the next three chapters. More important, though, is the very productive way in which the two can be read together, specifically with regard to the problem of sexual difference. Again, I will argue that the two can be fruitfully intertwined to complete each other’s account in giving a robust, material, yet non-reductive, account of sex. Thus, and this will be demonstrated in and through my argument, with respect to sex, we will see that Deleuze builds in a way grounds Lacan; and, moreover, Lacan completes what Deleuze develops.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have demonstrated a fundamental tension in feminist philosophy with respect to the status of the sexed body. I have, following Rosi Braidotti, called the opposing sides “sexual difference feminism” and “gender feminism.” I have also argued that some have turned to the work of Gilles Deleuze to resolve this tension. However, I
argue that the use of Deleuze offered by most Deleuzian feminists simply replicates the difficulties of both sexual difference and gender feminisms without resolving them. I thus explain why and how I find it salient and productive to turn directly to Deleuze’s own texts, in particular his psychoanalytically inflected work, to argue for a new form of Deleuzian sexuation, an argument whose significance will take the next three chapters to parse out.

In my second chapter, I will turn away from Deleuzian feminism to explain Deleuze’s account of the genesis of thought in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. Doing so will bring together several key concerns for this dissertation touched on in this chapter. First, it will speak directly to the constitution of the body, which, as I explained earlier, is a central point of contention in contemporary feminist (and queer) theory. I will argue that it is only through a process of genesis and synthesis that “the body” comes to be organized, and thus that to speak of “a body” somehow statically given misses these dynamic elements. This is done through a close reading of Chapter Two of *Difference and Repetition* and the last third of *The Logic of Sense*. However, Deleuze’s account does not mean that we must ignore the materiality of the body, so in that regard it is not indifferent to matter; however, it complicates an understanding of materiality such that it will become difficult to speak unproblematically of a “sexed body.” In explaining the formation of the body, Deleuze also suggests, through the language of psychoanalysis, the formation of virtual and psychic elements and objects. Ultimately, Deleuze argues, it is through this process that we eventually get the production of thought out of materiality (which is always produced in and through sexual elements). That is to say, for Deleuze, the body comes to be as a surface, which prefigures the generation of thought. In so doing,
thought comes from the body: here we have, in its elementary stages, the link between metaphysics and sex, or thought and the body. This will give us the foundational core of what I will eventually call “Deleuzian sexuation.”
CHAPTER TWO
On The Sexual Genesis of Thought: Deleuze & Psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION

In my last chapter, I presented a closely linked cluster of problems: the relationship, raised by Irigaray, between sex and metaphysics, as well as the problem of sexual difference for feminist theories of the body. I explored several of the ways in which some feminist theorists have turned to Deleuze to find resources to what I characterized as an impasse between sexual difference theory and gender theory. I suggested that Deleuzian feminism repeats the same tensions it meant to solve, but also that turning to Deleuze differently may well provide a solution to this impasse. That is what I aim to do here. My argument will be that Deleuze’s materialist account of the generation of thought makes possible a response to the aforementioned cluster of problems through one cohesive (if multilayered) argument. Specifically, Deleuze’s psychoanalytically inflected account of the passive syntheses of time of Difference and Repetition and of the dynamic geneses of The Logic of Sense brings together the body, sexual difference, and thought as necessarily co-implicative. Demonstrating this will require a close reading of important section of these texts. The goal of this chapter is to show how Deleuze gives us an account of the becoming of sexual difference, which will allow me to demonstrate necessity of sexual difference for his project. This will also provide the ground for my argument in my final two chapters, explaining why I think it is important to hold on to a notion of sexual difference, rather than writing it off as a historical relic or an essentialist trap. While Chapter Three will present my argument for the lasting significance of sexual difference for Deleuze’s project (via an interpretation of what he calls the Idea), this chapter will
show how sex is fundamental for him in all stages of his generative ontology and thus that it is central to his whole project. This chapter will thus depart from a discussion of feminism (Deleuzian or otherwise) to elaborate the role of sexual difference in Deleuze’s work, which, I argue, is necessarily informed by psychoanalysis.

Both “becoming” and “difference” are key themes of Deleuze’s body of work (either with or without Guattari), as Deleuzian feminists recognize. It is one of the primary aims of Difference and Repetition to elaborate a concept of difference itself and the becoming of differences, rather than to begin with the identity of already established terms.¹ To discuss becoming on Deleuzian terms does not mean that we should view it as a simple trajectory, wherein we begin at point A and develop smoothly to point B; instead, becoming is a continual production or a continuous flow that never reaches a static endpoint. It is for this reason that Deleuzian feminists find value in a certain kind of “subject in process,” which is to say a non-essentialized subject who is herself perpetually in the process of becoming. On this model, at the same time as something becomes, it is simultaneously becoming-different. This is rather than simply becoming what it will eventually be (e.g., there is no Aristotelian telos, nor is there a Whiteheadian “actual object,” which is “internally determined yet externally free”).² When discussing difference

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¹ Deleuze argues that most of the history of philosophy has only conceived of identity and then derives difference from this, which he explains in detail in Difference and Repetition. As just one example, we could see this in Aristotle’s Categories, where he defines primary substance as “that which is neither predicable of a subject or present in a subject.” (Cat. I.5, 2a11-13). Aristotle here takes a self-identified, singular entity as his primary substance or category, and only then are differences predicated of it.

² Aristotle of course discusses his version of teleology throughout his work, though we could see it most clearly explicated in the opening pages of the Nicomachean Ethics (I.1, 1094a1-17) or his notion of “final cause” in the Physics (II.7, 198a15-198b10). For Whitehead’s “actual object,” see his Process and Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1978), where he discusses these throughout. By “internally determined and externally
in Deleuze, we should be clear that he is not simply discussing difference between positive terms (as in “this chair is different from the table”) or even in negative terms (as in, “this chair is not a table”). Instead, Deleuze insists that difference is a condition of identity itself, and it is his project to articulate how difference is generative of these becomings. Difference, that is, underlies any identity and continues to swarm around it, being simultaneously its condition and its undoing.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes the process by which bodies, subjects, and identities form, a process that both prefigures and shatters that identity. With respect to the question of the relationship between sexual difference and thought, this means that the becoming of the human body and human thought must be explained through this generation.\(^3\) It is through this framework which I will explain in detail that we can understand what significance sexual difference has for Deleuze’s project. This will further indicate what use Deleuze may be in Irigaray’s estimation of the relation between sexual difference and philosophy. For Deleuze, sexual difference is not already extant or formed (e.g., “male-bodied” or “female-bodied”) but only comes to be through what a multipartite process. Furthermore, Deleuze’s reading of sexual difference is not simply genital embodiment; instead, as in psychoanalysis, sexual difference is a subject position, a psychical orientation that is necessarily linked to a co-constituted embodiment. Earlier, I free,” sketchily, he means that an object that exists (or concresces) will always become what it is “intended” to be, but the modality by which it reaches this end is itself open. \(^3\) Some may reject the use of the term “human” as though it reifies a certain kind of being rather than marking a temporary place on the plane of organization that is always underwritten by the plane of consistency (see, for instance, the posthumanism of Rosi Braidotti or Donna Haraway). I do not deny that Deleuze may well reject humanism and the primacy of the subject; but, arguing that does not mean that Deleuze does away with provisional identities at all; and, indeed, when Deleuze describes modes of becoming including the terms of sexuality, memory, and thought, it is difficult to explain how he would not have meant what we identify as “human.”
stated that the goal of this chapter was to show how Deleuze gives us an account of the becoming of sexual difference. Put more precisely, its goal is to explain the genesis of the (sexed) body and of thought in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* in order to grasp the conjoined material and psychic dimensions of sexual difference.

I will argue that this genesis is primarily sexual, and that all thought that emerges is marked by a sexual sense; as Deleuze maintains in the *Logic of Sense*, “there is nothing the sense of which is not also sexual,” which is to say, all (human) becomings have their origin in sexed becomings.\(^4\) I will argue that this formulation allows Deleuze to offer a materialist but non-essentialist account of sexual difference. To further specify, the focus here will be primarily on part of Chapter Two *Difference and Repetition*, wherein Deleuze explains what he calls “passive syntheses of time,” and the final quarter of *The Logic of Sense* where he describes “dynamic geneses.” These sections offer, in my view, the clearest explanation of Deleuze’s account of the becoming of the body as sexed, or of the body as necessarily infused with sexual significance. These sections will also allow me to demonstrate Deleuze’s productive use of the language of psychoanalysis rather than simply his difference from it. My claim that these texts offer a genetic account of thought stems from my reading of Chapter Three of *Difference and Repetition*, which I will explain shortly.\(^5\) In what follows, I will be explaining Deleuze’s understanding of the

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\(^4\) Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas and trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia, 1990), 233. All further citations from this will be abbreviated in the text as *LS*.

\(^5\) Deleuze identifies these syntheses as syntheses of time because he is simultaneously trying to articulate the constitution of temporality itself. If becoming, change, intensive variation underlie all apparently static beings, becoming must be its own time, not the background in which change occurs: it is the time of production, the “pure and empty form.” While this chapter is not focused on the temporal elements of time, I should state
genesis of thought by going between the aforementioned accounts in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. I understand the three passive syntheses from the former text as mapping more or less directly onto the dynamic geneses of sense in the latter. Correspondingly, I will switch between the terms used in both. For instance, I read what Deleuze calls “metaphysical surface” of *The Logic of Sense* to be identical with the plane of thought generated in the third synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition*. Both texts, in other words, are concerned with the question of how thought occurs, and how it emerges from materiality.

The framework of the chapter will be as follows. First, I will situate the general project of Deleuze via an engagement with his doctrine of the faculties in *Difference and Repetition*, showing how Deleuze argues for the genesis of thought and its origins in sensibility. I think this is necessary not only for understanding Deleuze’s project in general, as but also to see how his work can provide the framework for my response to the issues I identified in Chapter One. Second, since the rest of this chapter and dissertation will be engaging with both Deleuze and Lacan, I will define what I take to be the most important psychoanalytic concept for this project (and for Deleuze in these texts): the Lacanian phallus. Third, the remainder of the chapter will explain and justify my reading of the syntheses of time with the dynamic geneses, or the creation of the physical/sexual surface of the body and the subsequent production of the metaphysical surface, i.e., the

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6 In this is implied a divergence from Jay Lampert’s reading of the syntheses of time in his book *Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy of History*. He reads the psychoanalytic account of the syntheses to be all contained within the third series of time, that is, with the future; I, however, read this psychoanalytic account to be a recapitulation of the same three syntheses of past, present, and future elaborated earlier in the chapter, which I think is justified by a joint reading with the aforementioned series in *The Logic of Sense.*
surface of thought. Thus, this third section will be primarily exegetical and synthetic, attempting to make sense of Deleuze’s three syntheses of time with respect to the generation of thought out of sensation, or, in other terms, the generation of sense from the body.⁷

My strategy in what follows is thus as follows. First, I will show how Deleuze argues for a model of thought that is not based on the recognition of some coherent object and instead is produced through a kind of difficulty or tension. Second, I will show, more specifically through psychoanalysis, how this kind of thought emerges through these discordant faculties via the passive syntheses and dynamic geneses. Third, I will show how this indicates the necessary link between thought and sex. In later chapters, I intend to show that the difficulty or tension that forces thought beyond recognition is sex. All of this is necessary to show how the Deleuzian position responds to the original problem that Irigaray raised between philosophy and sexual difference.

DELEUZE’S DISCORDANT DOCTRINE OF THE FACULTIES

First, we need to understand the general orientation of Deleuze’s project that underlies his account of the passive syntheses. This involves both an attempt to conceive of difference before identity and an account of thought beyond the model of recognition. I will here outline what is called Deleuze’s discordant or differential doctrine of the faculties, which will set the stage for what will be later elaborated through the syntheses of

⁷ Of course, “the body,” or even the body as “a surface,” is only an aftereffect of the passivity of larval selves as explained in these texts.
time.\textsuperscript{8} The fundamental structure of the genesis of thought, for Deleuze, involves a series of moves from the faculty of sensation to the faculty of thought. I am therefore trying to show how Deleuze’s project accounts for the production of thought, which I will eventually show to be necessarily connected to sex. As it stands, what I present in this section is intended to situate Deleuze’s syntheses in their difference from the history of philosophy, primarily through a contrast with Kant.

In articulating his doctrine of the faculties, Deleuze is setting himself against Kant, who in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} also outlines a doctrine of the faculties. In so doing, Kant is trying to deduce the necessary conditions for possible experience; or, as he writes, he seeks to determine “how subjective conditions of thinking should have objective validity.”\textsuperscript{9} Kant wants, that is, to determine how knowledge can be objective and not merely contingent or relative. In the A Deduction, Kant argues that there are three subjective faculties that perform syntheses that allow for these necessary conditions; that is, Kant locates these conditions \textit{in the subject}. In order for a unified experience to be possible, the subject must undertake a threefold synthesis to unify the manifold of experience; without this, there would be no unity, but only disjointed, scattershot, disconnected data. Kant argues that these three syntheses are that of “apprehension of the representations […]; of the reproduction of them in the imagination; and of their recognition in the concept.”\textsuperscript{10} What Kant means is this: the external world contains a manifold of unorganized data (or, at least, we cannot know if it is organized outside of our

\textsuperscript{8} By “faculties” I mean ability or power; here, I am referring to what we could call subjective mental faculties, which is derived from Kant.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., A97-98.
perception of it); the intake of this data through our sense perception is *apprehended*, or “run through” and taken together through apprehension. Then, in order for there to be any meaningful connection between what was taken in at one moment and the next, that which was previously apprehended must be *reproduced* in the imagination. Without this, we would have merely atomistic, disjointed perceptions with no apparent connection. Finally, we have the *recognition* of all of this accumulated, connected data under the aegis of a concept. That is, we can identify a mass of perceptions as, e.g., “a body” only inasmuch as the concept of body acts as a rule for synthesis. The synthesis of the imagination, in short, provides objective necessity to an otherwise disordered intake of data. Thus, in sum, we synthesize sensation into cognition, and these syntheses are the necessary conditions for experience.

Moreover, Kant maintains that the subject is at the center of this process: each of these is undertaken by a conscious subject. More strongly, there must be *one and only one* consciousness that performs these syntheses; without this, he argues, we would have no unity of experience. This is what Kant calls the “transcendental unity of apperception,” or “the ‘I’ which must accompany all my representations.”¹¹ This of course seems intuitive: how could the me of yesterday and the me of today seem to have had the same experience without this unity? Kant thereby makes the unity of the subject the condition of the possibility for experience as such. On the side of the object there must be some Object = X that is the transcendental correlate to any empirical object (*qua* unified), and on the side of the subject there must be this transcendental unity of apperception, the unifying subjective

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¹¹ Ibid., B132-133.
condition for the possibility of unified experience. The object is unified by the form of an object in general; the subject is unified by its own transcendental unity, which Kant claims to deduce as a necessary condition. Thus, for Kant, we have unified subjects and objects, and the syntheses by which these unities occur seem to be in a seamless arc.

Deleuze, on the other hand, questions this relationship between the faculties, arguing 1) that there is no unified transcendental subject, since the subject is produced only as an aftereffect of subterranean processes of repetition; and 2) the faculties do not operate in concert to form thought but only through discord and violence. According to Deleuze, thought does not occur “easily” or “naturally,” but instead it must be “forced to think,” which implies it is not an easy or natural occurrence. This account is given in contrast to what he calls the traditional “image of thought.” To clarify: Deleuze claims philosophy has been grounded on a series of symmetrical “subjective presuppositions” (DR 132), or allegedly self-evident qualities of thought, those that “everyone knows and no one can deny” (DR 130). The four presuppositions I will discuss here correspond to the first four postulates that accompany the common “image of thought”: 1) the principle of a

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12 I should note here that Deleuze will also use the term object = x in his work, but it will carry with it a different meaning. For Kant, the object = x is the form of an object in general which provides the objective correlate that makes any object of experience possible. Deleuze argues instead that there can be no object = x of this sort. Instead, for Deleuze, any possible object = x in the Kantian sense must be generated. I will explain how this occurs (via his language of “static genesis”) in Chapter Three. When Deleuze uses the term object = x, he is referring to a kind of element that causes the resonance and failure of different kinds of series. That is, rather than guarantee objective consistency, Deleuze’s object = x interrupts any kind of arc that Kant suggests and introduces discord and disunity into the production of thought. Recognition is not Deleuze’s model, but instead thought is the generation of the new. This note is of course very opaque and complex, and it will become clear only in what follows in this chapter and the next.

13 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia, 1994), 139. All further citations will be abbreviated in text as DR.
universal thinking nature, characterized by a “naturally good will” that tends towards truth; 2) the ideal of “common sense,” or the claim that a universal “good sense” is distributed equally among all thinkers such that thought is the exercise of a universal capacity; 3) the model of recognition whereby each faculty harmoniously sets upon the same object “for everybody,” thus establishing both a unity of the faculties in an identical subject and a “philosophical concept for… common sense” (DR 133); 4) the form of representation as the mode of thought as such, wherein the previous postulates are unified under the banner of that which “everyone knows and no one can deny.”  

We thus have a single image of thought that subtends philosophical discourse. In simpler terms, the “image of thought” indicates that, ultimately, if properly attuned, all of our thoughts may set themselves over the same truth. Deleuze instead wants to show how thought proper is not simply setting itself over a common object but something jarring: thought proper is transformative, not simply recognizable. As I will show in later chapters (the ground for which will be developed here), this account that is necessarily connected to the disruptive force of sexual difference.

In opposition to the unity of the faculties of representation that bear upon one object in a single, identical subject (unified under the presumption of “common sense”), Deleuze seeks a differential theory that allows for a thought as “trespass and violence” (DR 139). Deleuze distinguishes between things “which do not disturb thought and … those which force us to think,” holding that this “forcing to think” emerges from “the contingency of

14 The first three postulates form a “doxa” that represent two problems (or “dangers”) for Deleuze: 1) the transcendental becomes derivative from the empirical; that is, Kant, e.g., first outlines the experience of the object and, from this, then traces out the transcendental conditions whereby this experience could occur; and 2) this leads to a “complacency” resting on the presupposed value of this Image of thought, precluding any possibility of radical or revolutionary critique.
an encounter” that gives rise to “involuntary” thought (DR 138-9). Thought for Deleuze is not simply, say, allowing yourself to focus on something you can’t recognize to make it clearer, or to be challenged by words you don’t yet know. Thought proper happens only before the formed subject can recognize something at all. That is, thought (as “non-dogmatic”) does not emerge from something we “do not recognize”; instead, it stems from a contingent (or “aleatory”) encounter with that which “can only be sensed,” not brought under the purview of the harmony of all faculties (which is to say, without the presumption of the transcendental unity of apperception) (DR 139). That means that the object of this “fundamental encounter” cannot be recognized by or subsumed under the different faculties (it cannot be remembered, understood, etc). In this way, this object is also, in a sense, insensible, because it cannot be grasped by the empirical faculties of sensation. It “really gives rise to sensibility with regard to a given sense” (DR 139, my emphasis). The object of the encounter “is not a sensible being but the being of the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible” (DR 140). To say that this object is imperceptible does not mean that we do not have some connection to it. It simply means it is prior to and constitutive of whatever we eventually can perceive. Thus, to claim that this object of the encounter is insensible is not to reinscribe it within the domain of representation or identity. It is not recognizable by our faculties: I cannot sense it and then identify it. Instead, it marks the beginning of sensibility, activating it by the forcing-to of its own internal limit. Sensibility thereby becomes a “transcendental exercise” (DR 140). It is not merely empirical, holding itself over sense data to be taken up by a subject; instead, it conditions and enables the possibility of apprehending anything and subsuming it secondarily under the banner of
recognition. As we shall see, even the self that may recognize is foremost comprised of passive selves and larval subjects, of a multiplicity of passive elements that contract to form the optical effect of a self. In other words, the “I” which would claim to represent or recognize the object cannot be presumed here. In sum: Deleuze outlines a general trajectory that distinguishes his project from Kant’s in order to demonstrate his own view that thought occurs only through this violent or volcanic relation, i.e., something happens that escapes the bounds of recognition, and that incites the progress of the faculties beyond themselves. My argument will be that this account is necessarily sexed. But to get to that claim, we need to further understand how Deleuze sets up his own project. What follows I will eventually also fold into my account of Deleuzian sexuation.

The fundamental encounter with the being of the sensible is, in fact, an encounter with what Deleuze calls *intensity*. Deleuze writes:

> for it is not figures already mediated and related to representation that are capable of carrying the faculties to their respective limits but, on the contrary, free or untamed difference in itself; not qualitative opposition within the sensible, but an element which is in itself difference, and creates at once both the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise within sensibility. This element is *intensity* (*DR* 144, my emphasis).

That which forces sensibility to its limit, then, is *pure difference itself*. Indeed, the limit of sensibility could not be given by an object of empirical sensibility, not least because it

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15 Very briefly, when Deleuze writes of “intensity” he, in a sense, is opposing it to “extension,” or of a body that is extended in space. Extended bodies are composed of (but not identical with) intensities; intensity could be seen on a gradation, for instance like temperature. It refers to a “difference of potential” (*DR* 222). In other words, intensities refer to qualitative differences (shade of a color) while extension refers to quantitative differences (the dimensions of an object).
would then be operating over something already subsumed by it. Pure difference itself, that which brings about the possibility of sensible difference, draws the faculties to their limits and reveals them their fundamental discord:

> each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its dissolution, at which it falls prey to a triple violence: … of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and that which it alone is able to grasp, yet also that of the ungraspable (from the point of view of its empirical exercise) (DR 143).

The fundamental encounter reveals the fundamental differencing of the faculties (of sensation, imagination, memory, thought) the domain over which each is operative, and how each fails. This means that, for Deleuze, we cannot assume a seamless arc of experience as Kant has it. Instead, while he traverses the same line as Kant, Deleuze wants to show how each faculty itself is insufficient, that is, how it fails. The incitement of this “volcanic” line begins in pure difference that may eventually coagulate into something identifiable; however, that itself is still subtended by intensity that shows that the identity is inexhaustible, forcing the faculties beyond themselves.16

Deleuze writes that this encounter with the being of the sensible “moves the soul,” or problematizes the object of this encounter (DR 140). This problem is associated with

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16 To take an example from Dan Smith, we could think of becoming distracted: perhaps I am trying to focus on something specific, but the murmur of white or background noise behind me may eventually take my favor. The focus that I’m attempting to have is in fact comprised of and subtended by these other little perceptions that may shift my focus elsewhere. This example demonstrates just what Deleuze might be going for: even if we are focusing or “recognizing,” say, a professor’s lecture, the sea of noise behind me is what enables that auditory possibility and also enables it to be overtaken and for my attention to shift. These little intensities of sound behind me are part of the same sonorous chain that I can pick the lecture out of, but at the same time, those intensities can interrupt my focus and direct it elsewhere. Cf. Smith’s “Deleuze, Kant, and the Theory of Immanent Ideas” in Essays on Deleuze (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), esp. 119-121.
“transcendental Memory,” the sense of which we will elaborate later in the second synthesis of time (DR 140). Remember that Kant argues that we must reproduce any apprehension from one moment to the next, which implies a consistent carrying-through of memory. Deleuze instead argues for a kind of memory that does not necessarily set itself over something that has actually been sensed. He writes: “sensibility, forced by the encounter to sense the sentiendum, forces memory in its turn to remember the memorandum, that which can only be recalled. Finally, the third characteristic of transcendental memory is that, in turn, it forces thought to grasp that which can only be thought” (DR 141, my emphasis). Thus, Deleuze’s outline of the faculties is as follows: the fundamental encounter with intensity incites a violence against sensibility that forces it to its limit and incites the first synthesis of imagination; this violence is transmitted to transcendental memory, and eventually to thought: each faculty is brought to its respective limit. It provokes the transcendental employment of imagination and memory; the encounter with the limit of sensibility does not recall any real object, it does not unify all the faculties over something recognizable, but it grasps instead “that which from the outset can only be recalled, … the being of the past as such and the past of every time”; this is the pure past of what will be called the second passive synthesis (140). We are confronted, too, then, with that which can only be thought. Here we have Deleuze’s position in its contrast to Kant: rather than a harmony of the faculties, we have their disjunction. It is a problem (something unfamiliar and unrecognizable) that is provoked by this encounter

17 Deleuze: “sensibility transmits its constraint to the imagination, when the imagination in turn is raised to the level of transcendent exercise … With regard to memory, it is not similitude in the reminiscence, but on the contrary, the dissimilar in the pure form of time which constitutes the immemorial of a transcendent memory. Finally, it is an I fractured by this form of time which finds itself constrained to think that which can only be thought” (DR 144).
that *forces us to think*. This disruption of the faculties reveals “divergent projects in which … each faculty is in the presence of that which is its ‘own,’” which simply means that, against Kant, Deleuze’s account of the faculties does not set itself harmoniously over one object. (*DR* 141). Transcendental memory, as a result of the encounter, thus gives us not unity but the divergence of faculties, not the reconstitution of a past object but what Deleuze calls the “pure past” itself as condition of and coextensive with the present. It thus breaks the logic of “common sense” which “hinges” each of the faculties together over one representational object. Thought emerges only from this genetic process, from the fracturing of the faculties due to an originary violence or disruption. Thought, that is, emerges via the fundamental encounter, transmitted along a “forced and broken connection which traverses the fragments of a dissolved self” (*DR* 145). Deleuze’s position here differs starkly from Kant’s: in Deleuze we have a “forced and broken connection” versus Kant’s unified arc of experience in a harmonious use of the faculties. For Deleuze we have “fragments of a dissolved self” versus Kant’s “transcendental unity of apperception.”

The aim of the rest of this chapter is to elaborate the precise way in which thought emerges out of sensation, that is, to show how Deleuze’s discordant doctrine of the faculties works and how it constitutes an argument that links thought and sex. My contention, again, is that this is most properly understood as a sexual genesis, articulated along the lines of psychoanalysis. In what follows, through Lacan and Klein, I will introduce some psychoanalytic terminology needed to properly parse Deleuze’s syntheses. I will then explain Deleuzian sexual genesis by elaborating how the three syntheses of
time also account for the bodily or sexual production of thought which will require an engagement with the dynamic geneses of *The Logic of Sense*.

**THE LACANIAN PHALLUS**

Since my argument hinges on Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis, I want to be precise about the psychoanalytic terminology that is indispensable for this account. Most importantly, I need to explain what is meant by the Lacanian phallus, as it will not be possible to make sense of Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis in what follows without this. I will maintain that the phallic function, its relation to language and desire, and the mediating role it plays between thought and the body, provides the primary link between Deleuze and Lacan. As I will argue in this chapter, and in more detail in Chapters Three and Four, we can read Lacan and Deleuze together to get a more complete account of sexual difference and its significance. My goal in this section is to explain what Lacan means by the phallus and the phallic function so that, when we turn to the syntheses/geneses, we will be able to see how this account figures centrally in Deleuze. Furthermore, without an account of the phallic function, it would be impossible to understand Lacanian sexual difference, to which I turn in my last two chapters.

The Lacanian phallus is, like many subjects in Lacan, a subject of intense debate and confusion. It is often equated simply with the masculine in general, with the actual Father, with the erasure of the feminine, with the penis and its alleged supremacy. While my goal here is to explain the phallic function, it is not to defend Lacan against his many

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18 In this section, I aim to show what the phallus is; this will help make sense of what is to come in my explanation of Deleuze’s syntheses. Afterwards, I will have a brief note bringing out more explicitly how the phallus relates to Deleuze’s project in both texts.
critics. However, since I am trying to bring Lacan and Deleuze to bear on feminist philosophy, I need to explain how it can respond to the strongest feminist misreading aimed against the Lacanian phallic function.\textsuperscript{19} Nancy Chodorow maintains that, for Lacan, The father is symbolized by his phallus … Sexual constitution and subjectivity is different for he who possesses the phallus and she who does not. […] As the phallus comes to stand for itself in the theory of desire, and not even to stand in relation to the mother’s desire, the woman becomes not a subject in her own right—even one who can never have the phallus—but simply a symbol or a symptom in the masculine psyche.\textsuperscript{20}

The claims here are clear: the Lacanian phallus denies feminine subjectivity altogether; desire is described only on a masculine basis; and power and sexuality are defined exclusively through the phallus, which is correlated with the male body. If this were so, we could easily see how this would not be a favorable position for feminists, nor would it be useful for a project like Deleuze’s, which affirms the proliferation of difference. In order to see what role the phallus plays in Lacan (which will then allow us to see its role in Deleuze), we should, of course, turn to Lacan himself.

\textsuperscript{19} The phallic function will be of key importance in the final chapter on sexual difference, since sexual difference is determined only with respect to the phallic function, according to Lacan. Furthermore, inasmuch as my claims will be that Lacanian/Deleuzian sexual difference can have something productive to add to feminist debates, I should proffer some defense of Lacan against accusations of anti-feminism (though these are of course extensive).

\textsuperscript{20} Nancy Chodorow, \textit{Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 188.
First and foremost, for Lacan, the phallus is not the penis, nor does the phallus have any inherent relationship to being male or male-bodied.21 Instead, “the phallus is a signifier,” the signifier of desire, the signifier of the desire of the other, and the signifier of the lack in the other.22 In “In Memory of Ernest Jones,” Lacan writes, “the phallus … is the signifier of the very loss the subject suffers due to the fragmentation brought on by the signifier.”23 Lacan also writes, in Seminar XIX, “what the phallus denotes is the power of signification.”24 Furthermore, in “The Signification of the Phallus,” he argues that the phallus is a signifier not included in the set of all signifiers, and, even more confusingly, that it “comes to symbolize the place of jouissance.” While this is very opaque, it is at least evident that Lacan does not intend simply to say that the phallus is the penis. Indeed, it’s not even the case that the phallus “belongs” to anyone (male or female), not least of all because the phallic function has effects for both “men” and “women.” The phallus, in fact, belongs to no one, because the phallus as signifier “functions as the signifier of the lack of being that determines the subject in relation to the signifier.”26 Rather than indicating

21 As for the relationship between sexual difference and the phallus, this will be explained in Chapter 4. Why the phallus has come to take on such significance is arguably not necessary. As Lacan maintains in Seminar XX, the “apparent necessity of the phallic function turns out to be merely contingent” and in Chapter Three I’ll show how he may overcome this arguable phallocentrism (87). Those who claim Lacan supports an a priori male dominance misunderstand both the nature and the role of the phallus in Lacan’s work. More on this will come in Chapters Three and Four.
23 Ibid., 599.
26 Ibid., 594-5.
some sort of impregnable completion, the phallus indicates the lack in the speaking subject.

What, though, does all this mean? Why is the phallus a signifier, and what does it have to do with lack? Why is it related to language? In the typical reading of the Freudian Oedipus complex (which Deleuze will rework in his own way in *The Logic of Sense*), the relationship between parents and child goes something like this: the child has an uninterrupted relationship with the mother and loves her; however, eventually the father steps in and breaks up this relationship (that is, he says “No!,” what Lacan calls the “non-du-père”). In being separated from the mother, the child also sees that the father has a penis and the mother lacks one (that is, she is castrated); the child thus assumes the father castrated the mother, and fearing that for himself, identifies with the father and the father’s power and displaces his love onto another.  

I describe this not to imply that Lacan ultimately upholds the Oedipus Complex (indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, Lacan claims, “I have never spoken of an Oedipus Complex”), but to show the framework out of which the discussion of castration emerges, for the “castration” of the phallus is a central tenet in Lacan’s work. Castration implies lack.

What, then, is castration for Lacan? In “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire,” he claims, “castration means that jouissance has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire.” To explain this, let’s return to the model of the mother and child before the interdiction of the father (his “no”

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27 I’ve chosen this simple example of Oedipus to show how even in a standard reading, what the phallus implies is lack, not plenitude. The way in which Lacan deals with the phallus as lack will be will be prominent in Chapters 3 and 4.
28 *Anti-Oedipus*, 53n.
29 Ibid., 700.
which breaks up their unmediated relationship wherein all the child’s needs are met). The *jouissance* of the child, as the sense of immediate bodily satisfaction, is interrupted and taken away. The child must sacrifice a part of its *jouissance* inasmuch as it must see itself as a separate entity. Lacan puns on *non-du-père* with *nom-du-père* inasmuch as, once the father says “no,” he is eventually *named*, and named specifically as the cause of the desire in the mother. That is, the child originally “thinks” that the mother wants only him. However, the child realizes upon separation that the mother desires other things, and that the child is not the sole source of fulfillment. The mother lacks, that is she desires, and *the phallus becomes the signifier of that lack.*

This break not only implies lack in the mother *but introduces lack into the child, as well.* When the child’s demands are no longer met, thanks to the parental interdiction, we shift into the register of *desire*. Desire, for Lacan, is always rooted in lack and in the sacrifice of *jouissance* that the child must undergo. Moreover, inasmuch as desire is inaugurated by language, desire is always in the register of language or of the symbolic. The *jouissance* that is lost in castration is projected into the other, which for Lacan is always the other of language. The child comes into language, learns to speak, learns to express its desire, *because it must desire*, because it is no longer “complete.” The subject of language is therefore always castrated and always lacking.

The phallic function is that which introduces lack into the subject, that which alienates a subject from herself by making her *non-coin incidental*. Speech is in a sense an attempt to make up for the lost *jouissance*, and thus the phallic function is what instates speaking subjects as lacking subjects. This is what allows Lacan to say the phallus is “the bar with which the demon’s hand strikes the signified, marking it as the bastard offspring
of its signifying concatenation,” as well as “the phallus is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole.”\(^{30}\) What Lacan intends to say here is that the phallic function is what instates language (and therefore lack) in the subject, and that, in a sense, the phallic function is an “extimate” signifier, both a signifier yet outside of the “concatenation” of signifiers that make up language. The phallic function inaugurates us into language, and it also keeps us invested and circulating within language: inasmuch as the subject is a hole or a lack, this lack is never sutured, and language continues to circulate. The phallic function “designates meaning effects as a whole” inasmuch as it is the condition for the possibility of meaning taking place \textit{in and through} the working of the signifier.

When Lacan says that the phallus is a bar that “strikes the signified,” he is indicating his revision of Saussurean linguistics, which famously introduced the “bar” between the signifier (or the word or sound image) and the signified (the concept or “meaning” to which the word refers). In this model, the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary; that is, there is no necessary reason that “my sister” should mean “a female-bodied person who shares the same biological parents as I do.” That allows for him to define language as \textit{differential}, or negatively constituted only by the differences between terms and not their positivity. Lacan adopts this general structure and asserts the priority of the \textit{signifier} over the signified; that is, meaning is and can only be constituted through the play of signifiers, through words that relate to each other with no necessary connection. Meaning is not \textit{necessary} but distributed through the intersection and

\[^{30}\text{Ibid., 581, 579.}\]
interlocking of signifiers.\(^{31}\) That there is no necessary meaning to a word can be shown in many ways, including the simple ways in which words change over time (e.g., the word “gay”). More than that, though, we can see how meaning is never determined except in its placement in a sentence. If we take the phrase, “I expected …,” we really do not know what to make of this until after it has been completed. If I am going on a first date and my date says, “I expected you to be on time,” I understand disappointment in this; if he says, “I expected you to be more boring than you were,” I understand something different. The meaning of the sentence is determined only by the signifiers that surround it. This is why the phallus is the tool that a “demon” uses: it eliminates the possibility of static or centered meaning, which a necessary connection would imply; it “dethrones” the signified in favor of the play of the set of signifiers.

While the effect of the phallic function on the sexes has not yet been made clear, I hope we can at least see that it does not, from the Lacanian position, have anything to do with masculinity or femininity as we typically conceive them. If the phallus as “no” has any meaning at all, it is not necessarily as paternal power but instead, again, as the signifier of lack, of the incompletion in any and all speaking subjects. Both “men” and “women” are determined with respect to the phallic function; but, the subject position adopted therefrom is a position with respect to the signifier, with respect to what kind of jouissance is or is not given up. The phallus itself does not mean anything about what kind of behavior is or isn’t socially accepted by men or women (read as male or female-

\(^{31}\) The priority of the signifier is very important for Lacan’s understanding of the unconscious as “structured like a language,” inasmuch as, for him, it is signifiers and their various concatenations that manifest themselves in symptoms. The signifier at the heart of the unconscious and the effects it generates may well be meaningless, but that does not make it any less important. The subject of language indeed does not, and cannot, know.
bodied), nor does it imply that there is no such thing as a feminine subjectivity that is constituted in favor of a masculine subjectivity. What Lacanian sexual difference actually means for “men” and “women” remains to be seen, but I hope I have at least explained the ways in which it is not what, for instance, Chodorow makes of it.

We can thus say 1) the phallic function is what introduces lack and language to the subject, and therefore the phallus becomes the name of desire as desire of the other, and 2) the phallic function casts a shadow over the entirety of language and meaning as a whole, inasmuch as it is the signifier that “designates the signification process itself,” “it is the signifier of the way in which the signifier makes things signify.” The phallic function thus performs several operations, all of which are important to make sense of Deleuze in what will follow. It is like the displaced object which causes resonance, that which makes meaning possible. As I will make clear in what follows, the Lacanian phallus provides the structural element that links the three syntheses of *Difference and Repetition* and the geneses of *The Logic of Sense*. It is this function which unites body and thought, the physical with the metaphysical. Inasmuch as the phallic function is also what determines sexual difference, in later chapters it will also allow me to show how sexual difference continues to have an important and disruptive function for every subject.

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33 As I will explain in what follows, the phallus is the object = x, the dark precursor, that which distributes sense, and that which causes the disjunctive series to resonate. Furthermore, the linguistic function of the phallus will be of central importance in linking the body to thought.
34 I mean “disruptive” here in the manner of a disruptive encounter as described in Deleuze’s doctrine of the faculties.
THE SEXUAL GENESIS OF THOUGHT

Now we can turn to a more detailed explanation of Deleuze’s three syntheses and their relation to the sexualgenesis of thought.35 We should keep in mind that these syntheses are to be read as the fruition of Deleuze’s account of sensation, memory, and the way that contrasts with Kant, as explained earlier. As I have repeatedly indicated, my interpretation is that these syntheses are best understood with reference to Deleuze’s use of psychoanalysis. I will thus show what each synthesis of time is in and through Deleuze’s psychoanalytic articulation of it, an account typically ignored in the critical literature. I consider this section to be primarily an exegesis of Deleuze, but it of course is informed by different sources. While it is well known that the notion of passive synthesis is central in Deleuze, it is often gestured to or acknowledged without substantial exegesis. One of the best accounts, in my view, is Daniela Voss’ Deleuze and the Transcendental Conditions of Thought, which is a book-length treatment of the syntheses and the generation of Ideas therefrom.36 Some texts that consider it more exhaustively are the aforementioned text of Jay Lampert; James Williams’ and Joe Hughes’ reading guides to Difference and Repetition; and Keith Faulkner’s Deleuze and the Three Syntheses of Time. Faulkner’s text deals almost exclusively with the psychoanalytic account of these syntheses, though in a way very different than mine; indeed, his account is in a way more about the relationship between Freud’s tripartite structure and Deleuze than about the generation of thought via psychoanalysis. Considering that my goal here is to read Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense together, I consider my reading here to

35 Daniela Voss, Deleuze and the Transcendental Conditions of Thought (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013),

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be in its own way novel and thus it does not directly engage this literature, though it
remains indispensably informative. Chapters One and Two of Aaron Schuster’s book are
the only texts I’ve encountered that give sustained readings of the syntheses on the model
that I’ll give here, linking together the two primary Deleuze texts I work with. There are,
though, brief gestures to a combined reading in David Lapoujade’s chapter “Three
Syntheses (Or “What Happened?”) in Aberrant Movements. What I present here is
intended to accomplish three things: 1) an elaboration of Deleuze’s account of the
production of thought as opposed to Kantian recognition; 2) a demonstration of how this
account of the faculties establishes the sexual surface of the body; 3) a concurrent
demonstration of how it follows from these tasks that we must read sex and thought as co-
implicative. That is, I will show how Deleuze offers an account of sex that necessarily
produces thought which is marked by it. Each of the following discussions will follow the
same pattern. I will articulate each synthesis of time and then show how each synthesis
plays out in the development of the sexed subject via psychoanalysis. Each of the three
syntheses constitutes a necessary moment in what I argue is a Deleuzian account of sexual
difference.

A. First Synthesis/First Series of Sexuality

As Deleuze has set his position in opposition to Kant’s, we begin with the passivity
of sensibility, or Deleuze’s version of the gathering together of the manifold. In Difference
and Repetition, Deleuze writes, in “biopsychical life,” we have a “field of individuation in
which differences in intensity are distributed here and there in the form of excitations” (96).
These “excitations” are encounters with what we earlier called intensity: they are
discrete bits of unidentified difference, the being of the sensible as described earlier.\(^\text{37}\)

This encounter with excitation, or the “free form of difference,” must be “bound in such a manner than its resolution becomes systematically possible” (DR 96). But what does it mean for excitations to be bound? On Deleuze’s account, this binding is what comprises the first passive temporal synthesis, the synthesis of habit: “this binding is a genuine reproductive synthesis, a Habitus” (DR 96). This binding correlates with the work of apprehension in Kant’s doctrine of the faculties: binding gathers together moments of evanescent materiality, that is, of intensity or pure difference. This is not an active taking up by a subject or by an organism and subjecting it to a principle; it is instead a passive repetition. At this point, no subject has yet been formed, but instead only tiny passive repetitions, each of which constitutes a “passive, partial, larval, contemplative, and contracting ego” (DR 97). This binding is involved in the production of a surface. Deleuze writes: “an animal forms an eye for itself by causing scattered and diffuse luminous excitations to be reproduced” and to thereby localize and identify a surface (DR 96). First, we have the encounter with intensity or with the pure form of difference; this is already worked up into an excitation which is itself then repeated or bound; and, through this repetition or binding, we get the establishment of a localized surface. “The eye binds light, it is itself a bound light” (DR 96). It is from this passive or larval repetition of certain excitations that they are contracted into greater differences: from the contraction of light-excitations, we get the eye, which is itself comprised of these bound intensities. This is why the first passive synthesis is also a synthesis of primary narcissism. These larval egos, which are the tiny passive selves that contemplate, contract, or bind excitation into one

\(^{37}\)“It is difference in intensity… which constitutes the being ‘of’ the sensible” (DR 236).
localized surface, are involved in “the fulfillment of a self-image through the contemplation of something else”; the eye forms itself, “draws itself from what it contemplates” (DR 97). Thus, the identity of the eye is developed only after many smaller, invisible repetitions of tiny passive “egos” that contract the same sort of excitation into a receptive surface. Further, this eye is itself a difference “drawn off” from the contractions of intensity. It is also important that these passive, binding, larval selves that constitute a surface are not themselves receptive: “the passive self is not defined simply by receptivity – that is, by means of the capacity to experience sensations – but by virtue of the contraction which constitutes the organism itself before it constitutes sensations” (DR 78).

Sensation (say, the sensation of seeing or feeling) is itself constituted only by the repetition of these passive selves in their bindings of excitation, or of the gathering together of differences.

The entire human organism is composed of thousands of these tiny larval selves. These selves we can also describe as “habits.” They are habits inasmuch as they are the habitual repetition of a certain sort of binding in a certain location that constitutes a receptive surface. For the body to become the body, that is, intensities become concentrated or contracted in certain locales. This constitutes the first synthesis of time, time as a lived present. The encounter with intensity only gives us discrete, evanescent instants. Binding, however, gathers together these intensities, contracts them into a unity. So, from encounter with intensity A to encounter with intensity B, we have a “succession of instants,” which “does not constitute time … it indicates only its constantly aborted moment of birth” (DR 105). The repetition of these instants through binding, however, synthesizes these instants into the “lived, or living, present” (DR 70). The repetition of
instants is contracted or bound together constitutes the living present as happening “now,” that is, a general field of contracted or synthesized instants. To translate this into more recognizable language, we could say that an organism exists in and through this binding, such that the future exists as a need (e.g., for nourishment or for sleep). There is a kind of chronological nature or rhythm to the organism. Deleuze makes this a bit clearer when he writes, “the present extends between two eruptions of need, and coincides with the duration of a contemplation” (DR 77). The human organism has needs, and these needs require satisfaction prior to and independently of any subjective requirement. Indications that this may be so could come from negative cases, for instance in fatigue or jetlag which show interruptions in our “biological clocks.” The interval between need and satiety, that is between the demand for satisfaction and the reaching of that satisfaction, constitutes the lived present.38 There is a kind of organic retention and projection that happens in and through this first passive synthesis.

Two things are of note here. First, this synthesis forms the surface of the body. Moreover, the fact that Deleuze describes the synthesis in terms of “need” brings further into relief the first step of Deleuze’s account of sexuation. In The Logic of Sense, Deleuze describes these bound surfaces of the body constituted through the first synthesis as “elective bodily zones” (LS 196). This “bodily zone” is an “erogenous zone,” a certain territory of the body that “is defined by the extension of a singularity or … by the distribution of a difference of potential or intensity” (LS 225). This singularity is

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“represented most often by an orifice surrounded by a mucous membrane” (LS 225). This erogenous zone is constituted by the repeated binding of intensities on the surface of the body along a gradation of maximum and minimum. Certain areas of the body that surround orifices (mouth, anus, vagina) tend to be the localizations of more intensities that diffuse as they spread further out from that orifice. Deleuze argues that it is this binding that creates these zones and thus creates the surface of the body itself: “it does not even suffice to say that the erogenous zones are cut up on the surface, since the surface does not preexist them” (LS 197). The binding of intensities builds up the possibility of a surface, but these intensities are not in the depths or heights; they are “surface operations.”

The first passive synthesis is the synthesis of habit or of the lived present. It synthesizes discrete bits of intensity or materiality, or it contracts these into each other. In terms of the sexual surface, we can see this same synthesis operating in the formation of erogenous zones. Intensities are synthesized around a singular orifice from a gradation of maximum to minimum, forming the constancy of a lived partial surface. That is, an erogenous zone is not characterized by a mere succession of discrete sensations but instead it becomes a localized field. It is only because of its binding and abiding that it can be an originary locus from which we seek satisfaction in external objects. This also gives us an example as to how extension is composed out of intensity. Thus, the first synthesis provides the first step toward understanding a Deleuzian account of sex, and we have already seen how even the surface of the body cannot be taken for granted or as given.

The binding of erogenous zones is constituted by tiny larval selves, narcissistic egos that fulfill themselves in their own “self-image.” The erogenous zone “becomes” what it is through its own binding of itself. Correspondingly, in seeking this satisfaction, it
“is inseparable from a partial object ‘projected’ onto the territory as an object of satisfaction” (LS 197). We thus see here in Deleuze a pre-genital sexuality characterized by the formation of erogenous zones and their corresponding satisfying objects: they satisfy themselves via their own objects. Erogenous zones are “auto-erotic,” “characterized by the object of satisfaction … and by the little narcissistic ego which contemplates it” (LS 197). The orifice is satisfied by its own object, hence the erotic charge of seeing, urinating, eating, defecating, hearing, and so on. Inasmuch as the erogenous zone has an object for itself, we could see this as an “active synthesis,” as the active projection of the body towards “real objects.” Deleuze writes, “active synthesis is defined by the test of reality in an ‘objectal’ relation” (DR 98). This active synthesis, a direction towards an actual object, is founded on the basis of this passive binding.

However, this reaching out to reality is not all. Deleuze writes, “on the other hand and at the same time” as the child reaches out to an object to satisfy the needs or desires of its erogenous zones, it “constructs for itself another object, a quite different kind of object which is a virtual object … which then governs and compensates for the progresses and failures of its real activity” (DR 99). This production of and direction towards a virtual object inaugurates the transition to the second passive synthesis, the transcendental synthesis of memory which will also introduce new kinds of sexual objects and mark the second stage of sexuality.

**B. Second Synthesis/Second Series of Sexuality**

So far, we have seen the constitution of the lived present, which manifests itself in the formation of bound or delimited erogenous zones. This present, however, is itself conditioned. Rather than our everyday understanding of the present as that which “is” and
the past as that which “was,” Deleuze argues that in fact the opposite is the case. He asks: “how does the present pass?” For if “a new present were required for the past to be constituted as past, then the former present would never pass and the new one would never arrive” (DR 81). If all were simply the lived present, there would be no “new” present; instead, all would be given in the continuous synthesis of the lived present. Further, the present, that which seems to be, actually is not: as soon as we point to it, it’s already passed away. The present, then, in order to pass, must be past at the same time as it is present, and in fact it is the past, not the present, that is preserved, despite our everyday experience. The present must be past and present at once, for it were only the lived present, we would only have the present; and moreover, the present would only be evanescent. We thus approach the “problem of coexistence”: if the each present is simultaneously past, the entirety of the past must coexist with each present (DR 81-2). In order for a present to pass, it must, in a sense, already be past. If that is true, then each present must be accompanied by the past in general: it is not the past moment as individual, as a “former present,” that characterizes the past-character of the present. If this were so, the present would have passed into the past on its own, for the individual present would have simply moved without being past into the past. Instead, then, we have the present as accompanied by the past in general, the pure past “which was never present” (DR 83).

Here we have the characterization of the second synthesis, or of the element of the past: “each past is contemporaneous with the present it was” (the present must

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39 We may see here Hegel’s “Sense-Certainty,” but Deleuze’s argument is not going to be Hegel’s. Whereas Hegel argues that the “now” is a plurality that contains all other nows, Deleuze will argue instead that the now must presuppose a past that makes the present possible.
simultaneously be past in order to pass), “the whole past coexists with the present in relation to which it is past” (each past must exist at the same time as the present it was), “but the pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present” (DR 82). If the past is contemporaneous with each present, and each present is simultaneously past, and if the present passes, the present must presuppose a past in order to move into it. This “pure past” was never present. This “pure past” is transcendental inasmuch as it is the condition of the possibility of the present’s passing. Thus, underneath the repetition of binding or contraction that constitutes the lived present, there is another repetition, namely the repetition and contraction of the pure past, or of the past in general that pre-exists and coexists with every present. Thus, the present is only the maximal contraction of the entire past; and this entire past is repeated at varying levels of contraction underneath the passing of each lived present. Inasmuch as this “pure past” is not accessible to us as active agents, Deleuze describes the method by which we can “save it for ourselves” as memory (DR 84-5). This is an involuntary memory: we cannot recall up to ourselves something we have never experienced or something that perhaps never existed at all. Instead, it “pops up” as “never-lived” but perhaps as “the present present which it could be” (DR 85). The pure past, then, is presupposed for the passing of the present, and it also forms the element whereby we can actively remember events in our experience. Furthermore, it remains available to us via the sudden shock of an involuntary memory. Deleuze gives the example of the memory of the town Combray in Proust’s writing: a sudden experience, a taste of breakfast or a madeleine, brings back the memory of this past town Combray, “not as it was or as it could be, but in a splendor which was never lived, like a pure past…” (DR 84-5). That is to say, the shock of a sensation (here taste) brings forth a memory of place that
may not or need to be accurate: it exists in a past that never was present. Any form of nostalgia could indicate the same. As opposed to Kant’s synthesis of reproduction, Deleuze’s second synthesis does not reproduce anything that was actually experienced; instead, it brings along the past in general.

Why is this called a “synthesis”? In one sense, this is because the present as lived present depends on a lower level contraction or synthesis of this past. In another sense, though, it seems as though it synthesizes or draws together the first synthesis. A return to the sexual and psychoanalytic accounts will help us clarify this. In the formation of erogenous zones, we have a binding of intensity localized in a field that constitutes partial surfaces. This has two results, as we saw earlier: the formation of an actual object of desire (the object which we strive towards to satisfy this erogenous zone) and the constitution of a virtual object. The first synthesis of habit, that is, points in two directions, one of which is the passivity of the second synthesis: “the first synthesis is extended in the form of a second passive synthesis which gathers up the particular narcissistic satisfaction and relates it to the contemplation of virtual objects” (DR 108-9). The second synthesis synthesizes the bindings that constitute the erogenous zone and gives them direction towards the virtual object. This also allows us to understand involuntary memory: we cannot recall up to ourselves something we have never experienced or something that perhaps never existed at all. Instead, it “pops up” as “never-lived” but perhaps as “the present present which it could be” (DR 85). Is this not what happens in the return of the
repressed in dreams? Pre-genital excitations pop up, unrecognizable, as a past never experienced.40

Thus, the possibility of the erogenous zones’ being directed is a result of the second passive synthesis that gathers and organizes them. However, what is this virtual object which is contemplated or construed? Deleuze writes, “in pre-genital sexuality … it is always the virtual which is contemplated or observed” (DR 100). Further, “the virtual object is a partial object” (DR 100). It is virtual, in one sense, because its aim is not the satisfaction of a need. If the binding of intensity around the mouth has formed it as an erogenous zone, it may be because the mouth is the site of nourishment, or the anus the site of necessary excremental processes. However the binding into the forming of an erogenous zone is subtracted from need.41 It is now oriented around a sexual and not a preservative drive. It is partial because each erogenous zone or drive is oriented towards its own object. As we can see, Deleuze’s argument here is building up the component elements of human sexuality, which will eventually produce thought.

By “pre-genital,” Deleuze is referring to the stage of development prior to the genital stage, prior to the phallic attempt to unify the body’s erogenous zones under one image of the body centered on the genitals (generally understood to direct heterosexual, reproductive sex acts). So, at this stage, erogenous zones have directed themselves towards objects to satisfy them. These active advances, though, can succeed or fail. The

40 Later, we will see how this is also the repressed and the return of the repressed: This is how “Eros tears virtual objects out of the pure past and gives them to us in order that they may be lived” (DR 103)
41 To foreshadow, I should remind us that of Lacan’s formulation that desire is demand minus need, or that desire has the structure of demand but without the necessity of need. This also indicates that, while a need can be satiated, desire cannot be. See “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire.”
child thus creates the virtual object to “compensate” for these progresses or failures.

Thumbsucking, for instance, becomes a virtual center that substitutes for the body of the mother. When Melanie Klein writes of “good” and “bad” objects, she means that the child had originally demanded the continuous attention of the bottomless depth of the mother’s breast (DR 99). However, through the sometimes satisfaction of this desire, these zones become erogenous or sexual rather than self-preservative. The aim is no longer the satisfaction of a need but a sexual drive. If the first synthesis deals with need, the second moves beyond this. Thus, the virtual object becomes possible for the child as a satisfaction of this sexual drive: it does not fulfill a need but compensates for its superficially liberated sexual drives. This “virtual mother,” the object constituted by and for the child’s contemplation is, I will argue, an image of the object, both good and bad. For each erogenous zone, then, we have a corresponding virtual object that we contemplate in order to compensate for the success or failure of our real-life strivings. The good object, though, has “retreated into the heights, where it cannot be touched” (LS 191). This is because it is know as good only once it’s gone. You don’t know what you’ve got until you’ve lost it, as they say, hence the “good object of the heights.”

Here, through the constitution of these virtual objects, we have the second series of sexuality. While the first series was constituted around the materiality of the erogenous zones (of singular orifices and bound intensities), the erogenous zones themselves support a second series: “this time, a series of images is projected over the zone, that is, a series of

42 The child does not yet know it has been separated from the mother; that is, there is no division of surface, yet, which is to say it is pre-castration.
43 Deleuze: “desire finds the principle of its difference from need in the virtual object” (DR 106).
44 Deleuze: “These partial or virtual objects are encountered under various names, such as Melanie Klein’s good and bad object” (DR 101, his emphasis).
objects capable of assuring for the zone an auto-erotic satisfaction” (LS 225). These objects {	extit{need not be actual}}. The virtual object of contemplation in thumbsucking is the orientation for the satisfaction of that drive. It is because of the projection of a virtual object, of an image over the zone, that thumbsucking becomes possible. This second series of sexuality is the series of virtual objects, of the {	extit{image}} of the zone and its objects. These virtual objects “belong essentially to the past,” inasmuch as they are “contemporaneous with [their] own present” (DR 101). They are not {	extit{former}} presents, because they are {	extit{images}} projected over zones, not actual objects or events that have passed. Deleuze argues that “it is from the height of my contemplation of virtual centres that I am present at and preside over my passing present” (DR 101-2). Because these intensities have been bound into erogenous zones, and because these erogenous zones have been liberated from self-preservation and have constituted sexual drives that seek their own satisfaction, I can have a {	extit{virtual series}}, a scene in which my present can pass for me. In my contemplation of the virtual mother, I must somehow “be aware” that the mother {	extit{is not there}}, and thus time has passed for me.\footnote{We can of course liken this to the “fort-da” game of Freud’s {	extit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}}, where the child throws a toy to repeat the coming and going of the mother.}

What role do these virtual objects play in the sexual genesis of thought? We here approach the problem of {	extit{phallic coordination}}. We have moved from the binding of intensities to partial erogenous zones, and from erogenous zones to the construction of virtual objects as images projected over and for these zones. We now face the problem of {	extit{coordinating}} this body in the genital phase of the development of the sexual surface: the orientation of all of these disparate and perhaps competing erogenous zones “around the phallus as the image imposed on the genital zone” (LS 225). How are we to understand
this coordinating “phallus”? It seems to me that there are two complementary ways. In one sense, the phallus is the Lacanian phallus: the ultimate virtual object, the unstable, displaced inaugurator of meaning, and the always absent “object = x” that orients and undermines systematicity (DR 103). This Lacanian phallus is never experienced, never found, and always in the “pure past.” However, I think, with respect to the sexual development as Deleuze has it, this Lacanian sense is secondary; it emerges later, after the attempt at phallic coordination. The role of the Lacanian phallus as explained above will come into play shortly. First, I need to further explain the attempt at phallic coordination, the image by which bodies attempt to and fail to be unified.

Here is what Deleuze says about the “good object of the heights”: it is “by nature a lost object. It only shows itself and appears from the start as already lost, as having been lost.” It is always and only re-found, yet is also already there (LS 191). Thus, this good object is indeed a virtual object, qua object of the pure past. What is it, if not the Lacanian phallus? It is the images of the Oedipal series: the object as “coexisting series, maternal and paternal” (LS 226). The stage of phallic coordination attempts to unify the partial surfaces of the erogenous zones into a unified whole in the manner of the good object of the heights, the virtual parental image. That is, the good parent who satisfies, the one you can never find, only in nostalgia. As Deleuze writes, “the child receives the phallus as an image that the good ideal penis projects over the genital zone of his body” (LS 203). The good penis of the heights, as the virtual object of the pure past that always accompanies every passing present, accompanies all passing presents of the bound erogenous zones and (attempts to) coordinate them in the genital phase, that is, to unify all the partial objects
and partial drives that have formed. We have, then, an attempt at synthesis that is both temporal and sexual.

The sexual series I have described in *The Logic of Sense* is as follows:

1) The binding of intensity around a singularity forms an erogenous zone, which is first passive synthesis of time: “a synthesis of *succession* which may be *contracted* as such” (*LS* 225).

2a) The projection of an image over the bound erogenous zone allows for the construction of the virtual objects in an attempt to at phallic coordination, which is also the “liberation” of the sexual drives from need. This is also the second passive synthesis of time. The virtual object is partial, displaced, and *only remembered*: it is the site whereby the present as contraction of intensity can occur. “It gives rise to a synthesis of *coexistence and coordination*” (*LS* 225).

2b) Finally, this second sexual series *also* involves the coexistence of the “parental image” taken from the virtual “good object” described by Klein. The attempt at unification is thereby brought about by the parental images: instead of the virtual objects being divided among their correlative zones, the parental image intervenes at the stage of phallic coordination. So far we have the first series of connection (the establishment of surfaces) and the second series of conjunction (unification of these surfaces via phallic coordination).

Deleuze’s account so far is thus accomplishing what I’ve tried to emphasize as a twofold task: it is responding to the Kantian syntheses, and doing so by establishing a new set of sexual syntheses. So far, we have seen the way Deleuze’s account of sensibility is set against Kantian apprehension as the synthesis of the present, as well as the way
Deleuze’s account of memory is set against reproduction as the synthesis of the pure past. We have also seen the surface of the body as formed and has formed primarily as sexual: the erogenous zones precede “the body.” Deleuze has also explained how the erogenous zones create the possibility of sexual desires independent of the demands of need. The creation of virtual objects to satisfy these desires even in the absence of need demonstrates this. We are beginning to see how Deleuze will offer an account of sex that will respond to the problem raised in Chapter One. What remains is to see how this account then leads to the production of thought, or the way in which thought is produced from and marked by sex.

C. Third Synthesis/Third Series of Sexuality (Oedipus & Castration)

The double meaning of the second series (the superimposition of the parental image over the image of the erogenous zone) gives rise to the third serial form of sexuality, which coincides with the third synthesis of time. If the first two sexual series respectively represent a connective and a conjunctive synthesis the third constitutes a “disjunctive synthesis” (LS 226). In the attempt at the coordination of erogenous zones around the genital zone, we have the attempt at unification of these two different series with their two temporalities. The parental or Oedipal images of this later series (virtual objects of the pure past) are superimposed over the pre-genital series of erogenous zones (the bound lived present). We thus have an attempt to unify two series that, despite whatever similarities they may have, are characterized by their differences, both in content and in temporality. The attempt at coordinating these two series results, Deleuze claims, in a mismatch between the two series, based on the incommensurability of these differences: “however much the two series may resemble one another, they do not
resonate by their resemblance, but rather by their difference” (LS 228). The series cannot be fully molded together, because the attempt at mapping the parental series over the pregenital series is marked primarily by a difference. The mismatch of forces here causes oscillation and amplification, or resonance, as when competing frequencies cause greater amplification by external force.46

As Deleuze writes in Difference and Repetition, these two series form “coexist in relation to a virtual object of another kind” (104). This virtual object of another kind is the phallus. It is here that Lacan’s phallus comes into play more explicitly. Indeed, as Deleuze writes, it is in this stage that the phallus undergoes a “transformation” and “has become the object = x,” or the term which causes resonance (LS 231). In order to explain this, we should more fully elaborate Deleuze’s reading of Oedipus. According to Deleuze, the phallus as image projected over the genital zone is meant to “mend the wounds” of the partial body of local erogenous zones, of the body of introjected bad objects, and to direct it towards identification with the good object, the penis of the heights (LS 201). Furthermore, this attempt to unify the body of the child is also “supposed to reestablish a surface on the body of the mother herself and bring about the return of the withdrawn father” (LS 201). The mother, if we recall from the first genesis of the depths, is comprised for the child as a series of projected partial objects; the good penis of the father is found as withdrawn or elevated in the heights. Oedipus thus attempts to unify the body of the child, and in so doing, to correspondingly unify the body of the mother (to undo its own aggressive schizoid breaking up of it) and to bring the father (as good penis) back from the

46 Considering Deleuze’s language of intensity, he does mean something specific here in terms of vibration, oscillation, force, and so on. However, it remains a useful metaphor in terms of describing a tension or pressure that forces an amplification.
heights to bring about this completion. As Deleuze writes, “the maternal body of the depths comprised a multiplicity of penises as partial internal objects; and especially, the good object of the heights was, as a complete organ, both penis and breast” (LS 204). The good object is complete and, upon its return, the child “thinks,” could unify both its body and the body of the mother.

It is the failure of this “pacifying” movement of Oedipus that brings about the castration complex that turns the libido back on itself and thus produces the metaphysical surface, or thought. Why does the Oedipal attempt at (re)unification fail? Deleuze writes “the superego as the good object begins to condemn the libidinal drives themselves” (LS 205). In the pre-supercificial genesis, the good object stole away to the heights and passed down its judgment from on high. It allowed the formation of the sexual drives inasmuch as they were organized on the surface, and not the aggressive-destructive drives of depths. However, in the Oedipal attempt at unification, the child actually sees too much. It reveals to Oedipus not only that the mother needs to be “mended” from her status as composed of tiny, re-projected partial objects, but also that she “is wounded like a castrated body.” Further, inasmuch as it is the nature of the good object to be withdrawn (that is, to be in the heights, so as not to be corrupted by the “bad” introjection and projection of the child), the child, in its attempt to bring the good object “back down,” so to speak, tries to depose the father as good object, i.e. commits patricide (LS 205-6). In the Oedipal stage, the child seeks a unification of his own body under phallic coordination. However, in so doing, he also reveals to himself the body of the mother as castrated, thus the phallus as the property of the father. This is only to be found via this knowledge of the castration of the mother, hence Deleuze’s ostensibly counterintuitive claim that the phallus “may be searched for
and discovered only on the side of the mother” (DR 103). Simultaneously, the child brings about the death or deposition of the father. This is the origin of the castration complex, that is, of the desire for restoration of the mother and fear of vengeance from the father.

That the father-as-good-phallus is to exist only as withdrawn should remind us that it is to be found in the sphere of the pure past: it is its nature never to be found where it is, never to be found at all, but only re-found. In this way, the phallus has become the Lacanian phallus as object = x, a past that was never present but always and only withdrawn into the heights. This phallus as the object = x now has an (at least) double sense: excess and lack. In the attempted Oedipal reconciliation, the phallus is invoked as an agent of coordination of various partial erogenous zones around the genital zone. It is excessive, in that it exceeds the non-organization of the erogenous zones and superimposes itself over them. However, in the attempt to unify his own body, the child also recognizes the lack of the phallus in the mother: she is castrated and so she lacks the phallus (LS 227-8). The phallus, as always not in its place, never found where we look for it, the virtual object of another sort, “evades its role” and contributes to the “common dissipation” of maternal, paternal, and self-images (LS 227). In this way, in the attempted coordination of the body in alignment with the phallus which is revealed, in fact, as

47 There are a few possible reasons for Deleuze to identify the phallus with object = x. For one, x is a variable: as something never found in its place, never determined, and always other than itself, it can have no identity. Another reason is the Kantian parallel. For Kant, the transcendental object = x acts as the objective determinant for the recognition of an object in general; for Deleuze, as for Lacan, the object = x destabilizes the possibility of recognition. If we go back to the image of thought, recognition is not the model that Deleuze is after. The phallus as object = x ensures that the “identity” of the object is always an aftereffect of an earlier play of difference, and, further, that this “identity” is never stable. While both Deleuze and Kant use the object = x as a transcendental condition, they are different precisely because Deleuze objects to Kant’s claim that the object = x provides or establishes the necessary consistency of the formation of any object whatsoever.
castrated, “the phallic line merges with the trace of castration, and the excessive image no longer designates anything other than its own lack, as it takes away the child’s penis” (LS 228). Thus, in the third series of sexuality which Deleuze calls the disjunctive synthesis, the attempted synthesis of parental images with the body of the child, it is the phallus as object = x that causes these series to resonate by their differences and inscribes the line of castration onto the body. As Schuster puts it, “this is the significance of the castration complex for Deleuze. The phallus of coordination becomes the phallus of castration, so that instead of unifying and restoring, it signifies a separation and a cut”; “Deleuze gives the phallus a speculative meaning: … it at the same time symbolizes the gap between body and mind.”

It remains to be seen both how this trace of castration on the body produces thought and how this development of the castration complex and the genesis of the metaphysical surface corresponds with the third synthesis of time. For Deleuze, thought can be produced when the ego becomes narcissistic. This is a secondary narcissism, rather than the narcissism of the thousands of larval egos of the first passive synthesis. How does this narcissism occur, and what does it mean? Let us return to the earlier stages of the dynamic genesis and their corresponding syntheses of time. First, we have a binding of excitation in the formation of an erogenous zone distributed in a field of intensity around a singular point; this binding constitutes the lived present, the passive synthesis of habit. Second, these erogenous zones entail the liberation of the sexual drive from the self-preservation drive and thus the formation of an image of the zone and a corresponding

48 It is in this way that the phallus as object = x is also the “dark precursor” of Difference and Repetition, “which ensures the communication of peripheral series,” which “lacks its own identity” and induces a “forced movement” (117-120).
49 Shuster, 82. My emphasis.
virtual object; this virtual object belongs to the “pure past,” inasmuch as it is not an object of experience or of binding. Its nature is *never to be present*. Finally, in the third sexual series of the dynamic genesis (but we are not yet to the third synthesis of time), the attempt at the phallic coordination of the erogenous zones with respect to the genital zone occurs. However, in this process, the phallus as object = x presents itself as object of the pure past, the Lacanian phallus, never in its place. It reveals itself as excess and lack and doubles its (non)sense. Thus, this attempt at coordination *fails*, and the phallic line on the body is translated into the line of castration. The child had originally turned to the virtual object in the second series in order to compensate for its failures “in reality”; now, due to the paradoxical nature of the phallus as object = x, the child has failed at coordinating his body, failed at restoring the mother, and failed at bringing the father back from his repose in the heights. Not only this, but through the child’s attempted reconciliation, he has in effect castrated the mother and killed the father: this is the outcome of Oedipus, according to Deleuze.

In this way, the libidinal energy that was originally directed towards partial objects, then virtual objects, then to Oedipal reconciliation, *is now turned back onto the child itself*, onto its ego. After displacing the libido from the real object to the virtual object, and the failure to find satisfaction in this virtual object, the child’s ego substitutes itself for both objects and thus becomes narcissistic. Deleuze summarizes this process in *Difference and Repetition*:

> The essentially lost character of virtual objects and the essentially disguised character of real objects are powerful motivations of narcissism. However, it is by interiorizing the difference between the two lines and by experiencing itself as
perpetually displaced in the one, perpetually disguised in the other, that the libido returns or flows back into the ego and the passive ego becomes entirely narcissistic.

The narcissistic ego is inseparable … from a constitutive wound (110).

This wound is, of course, the wound of castration, called the “narcissistic wound” throughout The Logic of Sense. The phallus as object = x causes a resonance between the two prior series, induces a “forced movement,” a movement beyond the physical surface into the metaphysical surface (LS 239).

When the ego sets upon itself as its own narcissistic object, the libido that was originally directed towards the satisfaction of the erogenous zone and sexual drive becomes desexualized. This is the move from Eros to Thanatos: from the investiture of objects, virtual or actual, to “speculative investment” (DR 111, LS 238). The ego turned back on itself eliminates the risk of failure and moves beyond the sexual-physical surface onto the metaphysical surface, that is, the plane of thought. Deleuze writes, “while the passive ego becomes narcissistic, the activity must be thought” (DR 110). This desexualized energy that invests the plane of thought constitutes the “pure and empty form of time,” that is, the static time of the third synthesis (DR 110). Why is this the “pure and empty form of time”? When the ego turns back on itself, it contemplates itself: we have an active I operating over a passive self. Deleuze had worked out this “empty form of time” earlier in the text via Kant. Basically, the “I think” as the formal determination of the content filled “I am” requires the condition of determinability, which, in its fundamental sense, is time. Time is the universal schema whereby and by which the content of intuition can be brought into accord with the categories of the mind. The empty form of time is the general condition whereby the I can affect the self (DR 85-88). Thus, the narcissistic ego,
in turning back on itself, constitutes this empty form of time whereby thought becomes possible. The displacement of desexualized energy onto a metaphysical surface instead of the sexual surface constitutes the “full amplification” of the resonance of the incommensurable series (erogenous and Oedipal) (LS 240). Thus, Deleuze argues, it is all in the same movement that there is a reflux of Eros onto the ego, that the ego takes upon itself the disguises and displacements which characterize the objects in order to construct its own fatal affection, that the libido loses all mnemic content and Time loses its circular shape in order to assume a merciless and straight form, and that the death instinct appears, indistinguishable from that pure form, the desexualized energy of that narcissistic libido (DR 113).

This ego that contemplates itself it is “active but fractured” (DR 110). It is fractured by the empty form of time, the condition whereby it can affect itself. It is also fractured by the incommensurability of the resonance between the sexual series: it cannot bring itself into harmony with itself, and thus it operates over a self smashed to pieces (DR 89). The straight line of time is the line of the future, the uneven cut, the time of the new where the same no longer circulates.

Deleuze calls this “I” a “caesura,” a break or pause or gap that “subsumes and draws together … unequal parts” (DR 89). These unequal parts are the operations of the previous two syntheses, and this form of time is itself a synthesis because it tries to bring together the virtual and the real, or the past and the present. They are, however, distributed unequally, since there is no strict cohesion between the Oedipal images and the formation of pregenital erogenous zones. This operation of the fractured or caesural I over the shattered self (shattered by the forced resonance induced by the phallic object = x and the
failure of phallic cohesion) further characterizes the metaphysical surface. This attempt at synthesis, the attempt to contemplate itself, *also fails* because of the unequal nature of the previous syntheses.\(^5\) Thus, when the self is “smashed,” it is shattered into *intensity*, that first element that was bound in the formation of the lived present and the erogenous zones.\(^\) The plane of thought or the metaphysical surface is populated by the contents of this shattered self, by the materiality of intensity and the fragments of the virtual. In this respect the third synthesis is the temporality of the future: the pure past is fragmented, the bound zones of the surface of the body are shattered, and we are left in *a game of chance*. This is why Deleuze likens the future to the “dice-throw”: the future is a *game* “with no pre-existing rule, since the game bears already upon its own rules and since the child-player can only win, all of chance being affirmed each time and for all times” (*DR* 116).

*For all times.* This is the synthesis of the Eternal Return, the return of the empty form of time as the site of thought, eternally recurring because of the failure of the third synthesis to unify the previous sexual series. The answer to the problem of the future depends on the question asked, so to speak, and the question asked is determined by the subterranean workings of the passive syntheses worked out through the dynamic sexual geneses. Once the self is shattered, the future is open and, in a sense, unbound: we are left only to affirm “the all of chance.” In this way, time is no longer circular and synthetic, as it was in the

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\(^5\) In another apt summary, Shuster writes that this production “is located neither in the bodily depths with its schizoid splittings (as in the case for Klein), nor does it coincide with autoerotism and the gratuitous pleasure of the sexual drives [stages which I have explained above] … It is, rather, in line with Lacan, situated at the end point of Oedipal development” (84).

\(^\) This *produced* intensity has a different nature from the earlier form of intensity, however, the significance of which I will discuss in the next chapter. This difference has been noted and discussed thoroughly in Joe Hughes’ *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation*. 

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previous series: it is a straight line, but a divided or broken line. Fittingly, time post-castration complex is, therefore, a cut.

Deleuze’s account of the third synthesis of time provides an account of the possibility for thought outside of the model of recognition and outside of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception. What’s more, we have seen how thought is necessarily sexual and necessarily rooted in the becoming of sex. Aaron Schuster recapitulates this whole process when he writes that this process circles “back to the primate body-in-pieces, then to the physical surface of pregenital sexuality, and onward to an abstract and incorporeal plane.”52 The production of thought occurs all in this movement, and it occurs endlessly and ceaselessly: cycling through these geneses, linking together the originary psychosomatic and psychosexual elements and producing thought with each new encounter. Thus, the account Deleuze offers of thought is coextensive with the formation of sex, from erogenous zones to what I’ll argue in the next two chapters is a fully determined Idea of sexual difference. Furthermore, I will make the case the structure of sexuation that occurs in this process is, in fact, what forces thought to think. In other words, it is the generator of the Eternal Return of difference.

In Deleuze’s account, what follows these syntheses is the formation of what he calls the fully determined Idea. In fact, Ideas are present throughout the entire genesis, and it is to these Ideas I will turn in the next chapter. First, though, I need to return to the Lacanian phallus to better elaborate its role in the account I’ve given above.

52 Schuster, 84-5.
ON THE PHALLUS AS THE OBJECT = X

I earlier identified the Lacanian phallus as the Deleuzian object = x. This deserves more attention both in itself and because this claim will be important for my interpretation of the Deleuzian Idea in Chapter Three. In “Series Six on Serialization” of The Logic of Sense, Deleuze describes the way meaning is distributed throughout different series by using Lacan’s reading of Poe’s “The Purloined Letter.” 53 I will briefly explain Lacan’s reading 1) to show how the phallus operates as distributor of sense and 2) to further justify my claim that Deleuze and Lacan’s projects converge. To briefly summarize, in Poe’s “Purloined Letter,” we have two series of events. First: the Queen, in her room, receives a letter implicating her in some infidelity; hoping to hide it from the King, she puts it in plain sight on a table so he will be unawares. A governmental Minister sees this, replaces the letter with another, and takes this letter with no resistance from the Queen (for fear of giving herself up). Thus the Queen is aware of this switch but can do nothing. In this first series, we have the Queen who knows, the King who does not know, and the Minister who

53 Lacan’s reading of this text is, unsurprisingly, controversial. After Lacan’s 1956 presentation of his reading of Poe’s story and its 1966 publication, which offered a psychoanalytic reading of the text alongside a famously difficult coda that articulates his understanding of the structure of the signifying chain, Derrida in 1975 published a highly critical response to Lacan’s reading, arguing that Lacan forces a tripartite structure onto the text, and eliminates the framing of text and its context in order to disingenuously make it fit within his reading. Further, Derrida suggests that, for Lacan, the phallus always refers to the penis, despite his claims to the contrary. Perhaps most famously, suggests against Lacan’s claim that “a letter always arrives at its destination,” that a letter easily can be lost or not delivered. These arguments and commentary on them can be found in The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, & Psychoanalytic Reading, ed. John P. Muller & William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988). While this controversy is not especially salient to my argument, primarily because Deleuze follows Lacan’s reading (and because Derrida’s argument was published six years after The Logic of Sense), I should indicate that Deleuze is adapting Lacan to demonstrate both his account of serial form and of the object = x that displaces those series in their difference. As such, I read Deleuze as following Lacan directly, at least for these purposes.
knows and steals. Second: The Minister has the letter at his apartment and the Queen sends the police for months to search for it, to no avail. The detective Dupin is hired, being an especially gifted sleuth, and he visits the Minister. Dupin immediately finds the letter (hanging in plain sight on the mantel), takes it, and leaves.

What does this story tell us, according to Lacan (and Deleuze)? Deleuze summarizes the movements of the story nicely, as he acknowledges each triad forms a series, and each position in one series mirrors a position in another. He writes that in the first series we have the king who does not see; the queen who is relieved to have hidden it; and “the minister who sees everything and takes possession of the letter” (LS 38). In the second series, we have the police who find nothing; “the minister who thought of leaving the letter in the open in order to better hide it”; and “Dupin who sees everything and takes back the letter” (LS 38). Each member of each series corresponds to another: the queen to the minister, the king to the police, the minister to Dupin. As Lacan puts it, “these terms derive their privileged status from the fact that they correspond … to the three places which this decision assigns to the subjects that it separates out.”

Focusing on these “three places,” we can see that each subject has its position in the series only with respect to a term which distributes them. In this case, it is the letter which determines this: each subject has its role (knowing, ignorant, attempting to hide) with respect to the letter which establishes his or her place. The letter, quite literally, is not found in its place, and sets into motion the production of and contrast between another series.

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54 Ibid. 9.
55 Of course, for Lacan the fact that it is the “letter” that distributes the positions is quite important, for the “letter” or materiality of the signifier is what determines the position of the subject both in terms of the unconscious and in terms of sexual difference. For more here see both Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” and “The Instance of the
What this means is that each of the terms in the series has its place only by virtue of displacement in relation to the other terms, and that this is determined by the figure which does the displacing (which turns out to be not to be found, even when it is in its place). Furthermore, “there is always a blurred excess of signifier,” Deleuze writes \((LS 40)\). The signifier means more than simply one thing, and the meanings it has are determined by its position in a series, in which it is contrasted to other elements. Finally, Deleuze argues, “we reach … a very special and paradoxical case, which ensures the relative displacement of the two series,” and “[t]he letter in Lacan’s commentary … is one such case” \((LS 40)\). What I would like to suggest, then, is that the term that distributes sense is the object = x, synonymous for Deleuze and Lacan with the phallic function. Deleuze writes,

we must say that the paradoxical entity is never where we look for it, and conversely that we never find it where it is. As Lacan says, \textit{it fails to observe its place}. […] It behooves [this element] to be in excess in the one series … and lacking in the other\(^{56}\) …: split apart, incomplete by nature or in relation to itself. Its excess always refers to its own lack, and conversely, its lack always refers to its excess. But even these determinations are still relative. For that which is in excess in one case is nothing but an extremely mobile \textit{empty place}; and that which is lacking in another case is rapidly moving object, an \textit{occupant without a place}, always supernumerary and displaced \((LS 41)\).

\(^{56}\)In this case, the excess would be in the first series, where everyone is looking for it; in the second series, the lack would be that no one is looking for it. But, in either case, it is the original animator, both being and not being where it is and isn’t.

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Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud” in \textit{Écrits}. I’ll return to this more in Chapter Four.
What is this other than the function of the phallus, that signifier of lack that sets into motion “meaning effects as a whole”? This entity, the object $= x$, is always displaced, yet it is this displacement, this non-place, that causes different series to resonate. Deleuze reads Lacan here as showing how these two series diverge with respect to each other, “determined by the terms’ distance from this element which is always displaced, in the two series, in relation to itself” (LS 40-1). The phallus as object $= x$ causes sexual series to communicate, never to match up, and to project the plane of thought. Thus, the phallus as organizer of meaning and the play of the signifier introduces a sexed meaning into the plane of thought. How this phallus does this with respect to thought will be explained in much greater detail in my next chapter.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has articulated the sexual genesis of thought in Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense. It argues that the model for the genesis of thought has its ground in Deleuze’s chapter “The Image of Thought,” wherein he describes a process through which thought is “forced” to think based on a fundamental encounter with sensibility. In that chapter, he writes “it is always by means of an intensity that thought comes to us. The privilege of sensibility as origin appears in the fact that, in an encounter, what forces sensation and that which can only be sensed are one and the same thing” (DR 144-5). I argue that this encounter with intensity is best understood through the working out of the series of sexuality as articulated somewhat in Difference and Repetition and more fully in The Logic of Sense. My claim has been that the three sexual series that constitute the dynamic genesis, along with the failure of the third series that inaugurates
the castration complex which produces the metaphysical surface, give us a coherent way
to understand the production of thought out of sensation, as well to understand the
temporal syntheses of *Difference and Repetition*. The first temporal synthesis corresponds
to the binding of erogenous zones; the second temporal synthesis corresponds to the
establishment of virtual objects or images of contemplation for the liberated sexual drives;
the third temporal synthesis corresponds to the effect of the castration complex, resonance,
and forced movement that establishes the plane of thought or the metaphysical surface.
This metaphysical surface is populated by a field of intensity, the remnants or contents of
the self shattered by the pure form of time.

Inasmuch as it is produced via these sexual series, *thought remains always sexual*. As Deleuze writes, despite the desexualizing of the libido of the narcissistic ego, in
investing in an object of thought, this desexualized energy “invests or reinvests an object
of sexual interest as such and is thereby re-sexualized in a new way” (*LS* 243). That is,
thought is still and always characterized by a sexual sense, inasmuch as it is produced out
of the sexual. If we return to the doctrine of the faculties, we can trace this genetic line of
thought more explicitly. Thought is induced by the disharmony of the faculties, by the
encounter with the being of the sensible. The violence of this encounter is transmitted
from sensibility to imagination (first synthesis of the present) to memory (second
synthesis of the pure past) to thought (third synthesis of the future), dividing the faculties
and setting each over only its own object. In this way, the faculties cannot be synthesized
by Kantian recognition, but instead shatter the self and open it up to thought.

Further, this account yokes together sex and thought. For one to become sexed is
not simply to be born as a kind of body: “the body” does not come to be *neutrally* but
always in and through certain psychic and social mechanisms. Thus, we can still account for matter or materiality but to do so in a non-essentialist way. The body becomes and continues to become, and can never be taken simply as a material given. Moreover, this implies that sex is never simply a matter of embodiment but is necessarily tied up with sensations, desires, virtual objects or phantasms, and thought. As I will develop in my next two chapters, this indicates a kind of psychoanalytic interpretation of sexual difference as both psychical and material, or what is called “sexuation.” We also see the link between sex and metaphysics or sex and thought: Irigaray is right to the extent that sexual difference is inextricable from the questions of metaphysics, because metaphysics is necessarily produced out of sex. However, my argument diverges from Irigaray by insisting on the production of sex in its relation to thought, rather than its givenness.

Another goal of this chapter has been to indicate the fundamental importance of Lacan for Deleuze. The phallic function in Lacan serves the same role as the object = x or dark precursor in Deleuze: the always-absent term causes divergent series to resonate. Inasmuch as Lacan links the phallus with language and with sexual difference, this connection will allow me to explain not only that sexual difference is central for Deleuze, but how. Exactly what it means for sex and thought to be necessarily commingled is the task of the remainder of this dissertation.

More precisely, one will ask: how, after this originary sexual genesis, does thought continue? How can it happen more than once? Moreover, how can I link all of these different uses of “sex” into one account of “sexual difference”? In Chapter Three, I will begin to suggest an answer by explaining how sexual difference can be understood to be an Idea in the Deleuzian sense. Ideas emerge as the outcome of the passive syntheses and
dynamic geneses explained above; thus, if sex marks this process, it also marks all resultant Ideas. That is, I will argue that sexual difference is present at all stages of the genesis of thought, traversing each and becoming more determined throughout this progression. I have, of course, also been focusing on the psychoanalytic account of these syntheses. In my next chapter on Ideas, I will further this argument by showing how Deleuze and Lacan can be read together yet again, via what I will describe as coextension of the Deleuzian Idea and the Lacanian sinthome. This will allow me to show how Deleuze and Lacan together give us a more complete account of the relation between sexual difference and thought. I will show, in short, how sex forces thought to think, and, moreover, how sex perpetuates thought.
CHAPTER THREE

Ungrounding Grounds: Deleuzian Ideas & the Lacanian Sinthome

INTRODUCTION

In my last chapter, I explained the three syntheses of time that form the fundamental components of what I’ve called Deleuze’s generative ontology. Deleuze argues that the subject and the subject’s faculties are produced through a series of “encounters” that transmit one faculty to another. This discordant relation establishes both a domain of these faculties and a domain of time. In demonstrating Deleuze’s argument, I’ve also tried to show how this process is necessarily sexual, or arranged around different forms of a developing sexuality. Thus, I argue that for Deleuze thought is necessarily and always sexual (which is not to say, of course, that we only think about sex). From an encounter with materiality to the production of thought or the metaphysical surface, Deleuze consistently sustains a connection between being, sex, and thought. What remains to be seen is what it means to think, and what it means for thought to be concomitant with sex.

What emerges from the third synthesis is what Deleuze calls an Idea. It will be the purpose of this chapter to explain what Deleuzian Ideas are and how they follow from the failure of the third synthesis. Using the psychoanalytic reading given in the previous chapter, I will demonstrate that Ideas traverse all three faculties and that they become progressively determined through this generation. That is, Ideas have their origin in sensibility and move through memory into thought. Ultimately, this will lead me to conclude that we need to see sex as the progressively determined companion of thought. This means that Ideas always remain inseparable from sexuality. To do this, I will follow
Deleuze’s chapter “Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference” in *Difference and Repetition* and combine this with a reading of his essay “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?”

The chapter will proceed as follows: first, I will explain what Deleuze means by Ideas, how they arise, and how they function. Second, I will turn to his discussion of structure in the aforementioned essay to demonstrate the relationship between Ideas and structure. This is because Deleuze argues, first, that Ideas must be identified with the virtual, and, second, that “the reality of the virtual is *structure*.”¹ This will require further understanding of a term introduced in the third synthesis, the “aleatory point.” Demonstrating how this structure operates will allow me to continue my argument from Chapter Two and show that the phallic function continues to structure Ideas and their operations. Thus, third, I will use this explanation from Chapter Two to show how the phallic function plays a structural role in the generation of Ideas. I will therefore argue that sexual difference comes to be determined as an Idea or a structure and that Ideas all are generated from sexed and sexual elements.² In a sense, I will be operating here as I did in the previous chapter: I will present Deleuze’s account and then turn to his use of psychoanalysis to concretize his arguments. Finally, I will turn again to Lacan, drawing a connection from the phallic function this time to his notion of the *sinthome*. Connecting the *sinthome* to the Idea will allow me, in my final chapter, to show how Deleuze and Lacan read together give us a more complete account of the relationship between sexual difference and thought or metaphysics. That is to say, in my fourth chapter, I will take what we have learned from this reading of Deleuze so far to elaborate a view of sexual

¹ *Difference and Repetition*, 209.
² Later in this chapter I will switch between “sexual difference” and “sexuation,” and my justification for that is to be found below.
difference that I will call Deleuzian sexuation. The goal, ultimately, will be to give an account of sexual difference that takes it seriously as a problem but does not make it deterministic, in effect attempting a resolution to the impasse between sexual difference feminism and gender feminism. So far, in response to the problem raised in my first chapter, I have shown how we have a co-development of sex and thought; next, the goal is to show how sex has an effect on thought itself, now that we have seen its conditions.

**DELEUZIAN IDEAS**

When we think of the word “idea,” it may seem fairly self evident: simply, something one thinks about (for instance, if hungry, one may have an idea of food. If feeling creative, one may have an idea of a project one wants to realize. If frustrated, one may have an idea that one cannot seem to bring to fruition). Descartes described ideas as innate, fictitious, or adventitious; Kant describes them as regulatory, naming three (the self, the world, and God). Deleuze, while perhaps drawing from these, offers his own genetic account of Ideas, the basis of which we can find in his account of the three syntheses of time. The process explained there provides the groundwork and the elements

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3 For a very clear introduction to Deleuzian Ideas, see Dan Smith’s “Deleuze, Kant, and the Theory of Immanent Ideas” in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 106-121. Indeed, much secondary literature on Ideas in Deleuze makes consistent reference to Kant, either in describing ideas as immanent (as in Smith’s) or as regulative (as in Henry Somers-Hall’s “Transcendental Illusion and Antinomy in Kant and Deleuze”). While there is much to be made of the Kantian connection, my goal here is to explain Deleuze’s ontology rather than explain his departure from his predecessors. For more on Deleuzian Ideas from various perspectives, see, for example, Dan Smith’s “Axiomatics and Problematics as Two Modes of Formalization,” Edward Willat’s “The Genesis of Cognition,” and Chapter Four of David Lapoujade’s *Aberrant Movements: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*. In my view, and the reading that I’ll follow most closely here, Hughes’ chapter “Static Genesis: Ideas and Intensity” in *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* gives the best, clearest, and most detailed account of Ideas in
out of which Ideas emerge. What I will do first is explain what Deleuze means by Ideas, where they come from, and their basic function. I should note here that, as in Chapter Two, I will slide between some different sets of terminology for Ideas that Deleuze uses in *Difference and Repetition* (virtual, question-problem complexes) and *The Logic of Sense* (problems, structures).

Even though we will get a fuller explanation of how these terms are operative in what follows (especially “structure” and “question-problem complexes”), I should briefly explain what is meant by a few of them. In the account of the passive syntheses from the previous chapter, the “virtual” came into being in the second synthesis, or the synthesis of memory. This indicates that the virtual is of the order of the pure past, or the past which has never been present. If we recall the paradoxes of the passing of the present, we see that the virtual is always the companion of the present, never fully actual but never separate from it. As such, the “pure past” that Deleuze posits as the necessary condition for the present is the virtual. Ideas are of the realm of the virtual, which is to say they condition any present or any actualization. In this way, the pure past or the virtual becomes the field of problems, which is precisely the home of Ideas.

In Deleuze, as we will see below, Ideas are problems. That means that they exist in the pure past and are “accessible” only to the pre-subjective being prior to the formation of the representational subject, as we saw in the passive syntheses. To say that an Idea is a problem is to say that it is something unsettled, something that unsettles what we might think of as the subject of cognition. We see this indicated in the third synthesis, where the self is shattered and we have only a “fractured Cogito.”

Deleuze. Moreover, his explanation is most clearly and explicitly concerned with *genesis*, as is my project.
In calling them “structures,” which I will explain at length below, Deleuze is trying to insist that we remember his objection to the Image of Thought. If we see the virtual as the pure past that pre-exists any particular thought, the Idea that comes to be out of that genesis is a structure that is generated from that virtuality. This is important because it attempts to communicate Deleuze’s view that what becomes generated as an Idea does not resemble that which generates it. All of these terms are important to keep in mind as we progress through this discussion.

At the end of what we have called the dynamic genesis, we have the introduction of Ideas. Ideas are produced and structured as the effect of the shattering of the self, coming into being as problems that are themselves progressively determined. Ideas emerge out of the elements released when the desexualized libido turns back onto the self. Deleuze tells us that Ideas are, in a sense, present throughout the dynamic genesis, though they do not come to be fully characterized or determined until we reach the domain of thought or the metaphysical surface. He writes, “Ideas occur throughout the faculties and concern them all,” and “they render possible both the differential object and the transcendent exercise of that faculty.”

Ideas therefore must be considered something generated, but they are generated through this series of discordant relations. We should already see how Deleuze differs from an everyday understanding of ideas: they are not conscious representations that we set our minds over. Indeed, Deleuze argues that they are “necessarily unconscious.” They “are related not to a Cogito which functions as ground or as a proposition of consciousness, but to the fractured I of a dissolved Cogito; in other

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4 DR, 193.
5 Ibid., 192
words, to the universal *ungrounding*…”⁶ This ungrounding should remind us again of Deleuze’s difference from Kant: Ideas are disruptive rather than unifying, and they *occur to us*, passively, rather than something we ourselves conjure up. In other words, Ideas are intended to be *openings* or questions.

That Ideas are necessarily related to an “ungrounding” is significant, because it shows how Deleuze argues that Ideas are problems. Rather than grounding something we think in a form of representation, Ideas unsettle and/or open up non-representational thinking. To make sense of this, we must remember here that Deleuze is *not* talking about the fully formed subject, the lived experiencer of phenomenology. Ideas are generated and occur below the surface and affect only the pre-individual “larval” self. In *Aberrant Movements*, David Lapoujade writes, “the subject of metamorphoses is always a ‘larval subject.’ It is only at this level that the potentialities of the Idea can be actualized in the subject; then, when the organism is formed, when thought has taken a personal, subjective form, it is too late. […] We can have Ideas only by (re)becoming embryos or larvae, beings with neither a self nor an I.”⁷ In other words, Ideas happen below the surface, originating in the pre-conscious syntheses of the discordant faculties. It may be useful here to think of an example, keeping in mind that representational thinking itself never does justice to the Idea proper. If we think of, say, death, we can see the uncertainty involved here: it may be easy to conceive of someone dying, or even to think of our own death; we may be sad about another’s death; we may worry about our own death; we may see dead bodies on the news. However, *death itself* exists only as an Idea for us, and while we may

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⁶ Ibid., 194.
point to specific representations of death, those are only possible solutions to the problem of death itself, a question that has not (and cannot) be solved.\textsuperscript{8} Here we have a characterization of the Idea: it is the generation of problems that require tentative solutions, but solutions that themselves are not exhaustive responses to the problem. That the problem persists and is not answered is an indication that it occurs to the larval and not formed subject. Something I ruminate over never gets at the reality of the problem but instead only suggests various solutions to it.

From the discordant doctrine of the faculties into the plane of thought, Ideas become the ungrounding element that forces us to think. In so doing, they link together all of the faculties from sensibility to thought, ultimately resulting in a “question-problem complex.” The function of Ideas in Deleuze is to introduce a problem that forces thought to think, but an Idea proper does not close down thought with a simple answer. If we recall that the third synthesis is the synthesis of the eternal return, we can see that the Idea compels thought further. As Leonard Lawlor writes, an Idea is “what is taken into one’s being that one did not have before” and is therefore characterized by a kind of openness.\textsuperscript{9} This will become clearer once we first see the role of the aleatory point in Deleuze’s account of structure and then an elaboration of the phallus as this aleatory point.

Remember, the goal here is to explain the Idea in order to work towards a non-essentialist yet still materialist account of sexed becoming in its relation to thought, so my explanation of the Idea here is eventually going to be drawn back into this overall project.

\textsuperscript{8} This characterization of death of course owes something to Heidegger.
While we have seen a macro-level account of Ideas, we still have not arrived a detailed account of how they are generated and what their characteristics are. As already stated, Ideas emerge after the dynamic genesis and are composed of the virtual elements that were themselves generated through these passive syntheses.\(^{10}\) What happens next? Deleuze claims that Ideas have three different aspects, corresponding to three different moments or degrees of determination. I will provide these below in a rudimentary table, and then explain what occurs in the process of determination. In a later section, I will show how we can make sense of this development psychoanalytically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differential or ideal elements</th>
<th>Determinability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differential relations</td>
<td>Reciprocal determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singularities</td>
<td>Complete determination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each aspect of the Idea on the left side of the table corresponds to a certain moment of determination on the right side. So, the Idea itself is composed of elements that move into relation with each other. These ideal elements (those released from the shattering of the self) are in themselves nothing. That is, they are strictly determinable; alone, independent of any other element, they are sheer virtuality, “not even actually existent.”\(^{11}\) However, and this is what Deleuze means by his repeated invocation of the “child’s game” and the “throw of the dice,” these determinable elements come into a network of relations due to the intervention of an “aleatory point.”\(^{12}\) In the section below, I will say more about this

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\(^{10}\) The final chapter of Hughes’ *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* explains, differently than my second chapter but in the same spirit, how the virtual is produced and its relation to Ideas.

\(^{11}\) *DR*, 183.

\(^{12}\) *DR*, 198-200 and *LS* 56, 94, 116, 241 (among other places).
game of chance, already introduced by Deleuze in the third synthesis. These scattered ideal elements become related to each other (that is, reciprocally determined). Finally, this incipient structure comes to be completely determined by the production of singularities. A singularity here can be understood, most simply, geometrically: a singularity is a certain point that determines the precise form of an object. So, for instance, a square has four singularities: each corner marks a singular point that determines the direction of the line and thus that determines the form or shape of the object. Once singularities have emerged, the Idea becomes completely determined. The Idea is then comprised of scattered ideal elements that come into reciprocal relations that are then completely determined by singular points that give it its form.

Though this process won’t become fully clear until the explanation that follows, we could, following Deleuze, simply think of a dice throw, though my analogy here is not quite the same as he gives in *Difference and Repetition*. Think of playing Yahtzee or craps. You hold dice, which could be considered differential elements, in your hand or a cup. You shake the dice, which brings them in relation to each other. They clang against each other; they move around in the cup or in your hand. Finally, with a flick of your wrist, you toss them onto a table. This is analogous to how Ideas come into being. Each die with its many sides is a scattered set of elements that is not yet determined (we don’t know what number each die will roll). They become determinable only through their friction and relation to each other while jiggling about. Finally, they become dispersed into singular points with specific values; that is, they become structured with specific values and coordinates. Only then, after the flick of the wrist, does anything have any specification. While I’m using the example of actually rolling dice here, this is only
supposed to be demonstrative of Deleuze’s general view of Ideas; below, we will see how the real “game” that produces Ideas isn’t quite representable by an actual game.

So, for now, what I want to suggest is that Ideas are structures whose nature is not determined in advance. This working definition I’ve offered may raise (at least) two questions that require clarification.

Question 1: How is the Idea “not determined in advance”? We have a sense of this already with Deleuze claiming that the primary organizing principle of the Idea is an “aleatory point” or “a throw of the dice,” which indicates chance or randomness. Since Deleuze here is looking for difference and the generation of difference as opposed to already formed representation or concepts, the Idea cannot come prefabricated. Indeed, this would not be any different than a determinative judgment, wherein you have a concept already held that you impose on a set of phenomena: I recognize this animal as a dog, for instance. To return to the table above, we see that Ideas begin as determinability and become determined; thus, the Idea emerges as determined through the process of progressive determination. But, that determination is marked first by the unexpected and violent encounter with the being of the sensible; then by the “volcanic” disjunction between the faculties that pushes each to their limit; and then the “shattering” of the self into ideal elements which are only brought together by an unknown aleatory point.

In both Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense, Deleuze describes the formation of the Idea through the language of a game or a dice throw.\textsuperscript{13} As we saw in the third synthesis, he argues that the synthesis of thought is a game of chance, or a throw of

\textsuperscript{13} DR 198
the dice. In the Tenth Series of the Ideal Game in *The Logic of Sense*, he contrasts a recognizable game with the Ideal game. The former is simply something like chess: there are determined pieces (queen, king, rook, pawn) all of which have already established roles or movements (move left or right, diagonally or an L shape), and which exist on an already determined plane (the square grid). In contrast to this, the Ideal game has the following characteristics:

1) There are no pre-existing rules; each move invents its own rules…

2) [...]All throws affirm chance and endlessly ramify it with each throw

3) [...]Each throw emits singular points … But the set of throws is included in the aleatory point [...] Each throw operates a distribution of singularities … but instead of dividing a closed space between fixed results … the mobile results are distributed in the open space. [...] This is a *nomadic* and non-sedentary distribution.

4) Such a game—without rules, with neither winner nor loser, without responsibility, a game of innocence, a caucus-race in which skill and chance are no longer distinguishable—seems to have no reality. … [It] cannot be played by man or God. It can only be thought as nonsense. But precisely for this reason, it is the reality of thought itself and the unconscious of pure thought.\(^\text{14}\)

In describing Ideas through the language of games, Deleuze offers another way of describing thought proper: it is not determined in advance by a pregiven set of rules. Instead, its determination occurs in and through its own creation. It is in itself

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\(^{14}\) *LS*, 58-60.
unconscious, beneath the coherent and cognizant subject.\textsuperscript{15} When Deleuze writes that “Ideas are the problematic combinations which result from throws” and that “problems or Ideas emanate from … events which appear in the form of questions,” he is saying that the Idea is generated from the throw itself.\textsuperscript{16} It emerges only from the specific conditions that precede it and the “aleatory point” that allows for their distribution. This means that, in every case, the Idea or problem that emerges does so only from its own conditions, so to speak. It is immanently generated.\textsuperscript{17} It emerges anew with each “throw,” which is to say, through each genesis that stems from a fundamental encounter with the sensible.

Furthermore, in describing the game as having “neither winner nor loser,” he is saying not only that there are no rules given in advance, but also that the point itself is the throw, so to speak. Deleuze writes, “the imperative is to throw,” implying that the chance or adventure one opens oneself to is precisely the basis for thought. To have an Idea is to then say yes to the game itself.\textsuperscript{18}

Deleuze here continues to develop his difference from Kant: not only are the faculties not simply coherently articulated in recognizing an object of thought, but the Ideas here are not unifying or totalizing or regulative. Instead, generated from the principle of difference as we saw in Chapter Two, they are composed of multiplicities that are themselves drawn together. However, they are drawn together not by a unifying

\textsuperscript{15} As an aside, we can see strong parallels here between this idea of thinking and what Freud and especially Lacan say the real source of thinking is.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{DR} 199, 197.
\textsuperscript{17} Again, Dan Smith on immanent ideas in Kant would be instructive here, even if explaining Ideas from a different vantage point.
\textsuperscript{18} We can see the Nietzschean influence here; not only does Nietzsche “want to be a yes-sayer,” Deleuze calls this saying-yes “destiny,” which is just what Nietzsche means by Amor Fati. Cf. Aphorism 276 in Nietzsche’s \textit{The Gay Science}, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1975).
transcendental unity of apperception, but by something unpredictable that allows them to become determined. Thus, they must become generated through difference via the dynamic genesis, beginning in sensibility and only coming further into determination through what Deleuze calls the “static genesis.” This will bring together the moments of “the undetermined, the determinable, and determination” in an “internal problematic objective unity.”¹⁹ The elements of thought are themselves generated from differential sensibility and these elements remain as the background out of which an Idea emerges. At the same time, this differential background necessarily prevents the Idea itself from being “sedentary,” since the Idea only comes to be as a kind of unsettling question or problem. Remember that Deleuze is couching his project not only against Kant, but against what he has called the Image of Thought. This view of Ideas indicates that thinking proper is something unpredictable, something that we cannot know in advance and, indeed, something that returns us to our larval states, in a sense. A simple example shows the significance of this: imagine trying to teach someone something, and this person presumes already to know whatever you’re trying to say. This person, who may interrupt you or may presume their own prescience or mastery, says, for instance, “oh, I knew that” when perhaps they clearly do not. This would show a pretended superiority that ignores what is being said. Rather than being open to the experience of the Idea, rather than learning or being unsettled, the person shuts that down by presuming it to be something they already recognize.

We can see here in part how this connects Ideas as structures and Ideas and the new: if it cannot be determined in advance and if Ideas arrive as problems that are

¹⁹ DR, 170.
determined only by their own conditions, each Idea should offer the possibility of the new, because of its ground in differential relations. It will always occur beneath the surface of the subject, before recognition or representation, as in, say, the entirety of knowledge that pre-exists anyone’s learning anything. This account may help us understand the second question.

Question 2: In what way is an Idea a structure?

Deleuze calls Ideas structures repeatedly in The Logic of Sense, and in Difference and Repetition he argues that “the reality of the virtual is structure.”20 I think that the most useful way to progress in answering this question is to shift to Deleuze’s own discussion of structure in “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” This will demonstrate how Ideas are structures and how these are related more directly to cognition. Furthermore, it will show Deleuze’s own understanding of structure that allows for its own genesis. I turn to this essay based on a suggestion in Edward Willatt’s essay “The Genesis of Cognition: Deleuze as a Reader of Kant.”21 In this essay, Willatt suggests that Deleuze argues for a novel sense of structure. A structure, as we will soon see, is not simply a pregiven set of boundaries or a scaffolding on which we hang various elements. Since Deleuze is trying to argue for the generation of the new and of difference, we must read both genesis and structure together. If not, we are still within the confines of recognition and representation, wherein we would understand structures to be static or “sedentary distributions” of points.

He argues that “there is no more opposition between event and structure or sense and

20 DR, 209.
structure than there is between structure and genesis.”^{22} Like Ideas, structure must be “able to be open to its own genesis,” as Willatt puts it.^{23} The reason for this, Willatt argues, is because “genesis is what makes things fluid and porous in a structure and across structures, unsettling how we are used to classifying things” (the genesis of the new).^{24} “Structure,” he writes, “must therefore be what is differentiated or what realizes this genesis rather than something that is maintained because of its resemblance to what went before in the structures.”^{25} So, in other words, these structures come to be, as we have already seen, through the genesis that was explained in Chapter Two. However, once we shift to the register of the undetermined, the determinable, and determination, the kind of structure or problem that emerges itself undergoes a genesis, and this only occurs in and through the preceding dynamic genoses. In turning to “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” I will try to show how this process works, how structures can be self-interrupting, and, finally, how we can tie all of this to the overall concern of this dissertation: the relationship between sex and thought, animated by the phallus.

If we follow Deleuze, we thus need to see Ideas as structures, but only if we understand them on the model of structure given above, as something constantly submitted to the background of differences that constitute it. But, how does Deleuze argue for this sort of structure, a structure that is generated by something that disrupts it but that is still held together? Deleuze writes his essay “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” in order to affirm what he sees useful in structuralism (in particular its being able to account for

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^{22} *DR*, 191.
^{23} Willatt., 69.
^{24} Ibid.
^{25} Ibid. We should here recall that part of Deleuze’s invective against the image of thought includes resemblance.
multiplicities) but also to show what he attempts to move beyond. This essay historically
coincides with Lacan’s structuralist articulation of Oedipus through the Names-of-the-
Father, something that I will draw out later in this chapter and in the fourth. Furthermore,
Lawlor has described Deleuze’s project at this time as a general turn away from
phenomenology, with Deleuze insisting (at least at this point) that structuralism can move
us away from representation, resemblance, and the centrality and unity of the subject. As
we saw in Chapter Two, these are tenets of the Image of Thought he seeks to overturn.26
Indeed, what is so important for Deleuze is an account of how this kind of self-
interrupting structure need not resemble the ground that produces it. Thus, for Deleuze,
structuralism offers the possibility of a kind of immanent genesis, and we will see how he
argues for this below.

Even in his consideration of structuralism, Deleuze believes that it still relies on
identity and opposition and refuses a positive account of difference. For example, in a
sense he differs slightly from the Saussurean linguistic position, which argues that words
gain their significance only through the differences between terms, making opposition the
primary method of differentiation rather than, say, multiplicity.27 Thus, in this essay,
Deleuze identifies some common elements in various structuralist disciplines, all of which
are helpful in identifying how Deleuze is sympathetic to structuralism but adapting his
understanding of it. This will help to account for his project of explaining difference and

26 Most of Lawlor’s *Thinking Through French Philosophy* is enormously instructive and
nuanced on this point. His chapter “The End of Phenomenology: Expressionism in
Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze,” however, may best show how Deleuze sees structuralism
as having this possibility vis-à-vis phenomenology, especially pp. 80-86.
27 François Dosse offers a nice account of Deleuze’s difference from Saussure’s
linguistics, as well as Deleuze’s relation to structuralism in general, in his “Deleuze and
Structuralism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, eds. Daniel W. Smith & Henry
genesis with respect to structure. He will maintain that “every structure is a multiplicity,” which means that structures are in their nature comprised of differential elements.\(^\text{28}\) In *The Logic of Sense*, he writes “the importance of structuralism in philosophy, and for all thought, is that it displaces frontiers.”\(^\text{29}\) In line with this, what Deleuze will focus on in his identifications of structuralism’s major principles will be the ways in which structure and the new can be co-present, and for my purposes what is most central is what has been called the aleatory point. It is this point that will allow me to connect the Idea to the account in Chapter Two; that is, the aleatory point will show how Ideas remained marked by sex.

Deleuze argues that “structure envelops a wholly paradoxical argument or element.”\(^\text{30}\) This element we have already discussed in Chapter Two as the object = x, that which is never in its place yet which still distributes sense or series. It is “the problematic object.”\(^\text{31}\) This problematic element, the object = x or the empty square, is the generative element of structure, but that which also undoes structure in its very structuration. Deleuze writes, “the whole structure is driven by this originary Third, but that also fails to coincide with its own origin. Distributing the differences through the entire structure, making the differential relations vary with its displacements, the object = x constitutes the differenciating element of difference itself.”\(^\text{32}\) This empty, paradoxical element, the nonsense at the heart of sense, the moving element, is necessary for Deleuze’s understanding of structure and of genesis. It is also necessary for understanding structures

\(^{29}\) *LS*, 71.
\(^{30}\) “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” 184.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 187. Italics in original.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 186.
as being, in a sense, self-disrupting or self-moving. We have seen how this works in Deleuze’s account of Poe: the letter, not found in its place, distributes the places of those in the series that it animates. Deleuze writes that “structure is differentiating in itself, and differentiating in its effect.” Further, differences “are essentially differentiated by the structure which is actualized or carried out in them, and which produces them by being actualized.”33 Thus, we see that, for Deleuze, structure is not generic or reductive: without the empty element, the structure couldn’t move; nothing would circulate. To return to the example of the dice from above, it is precisely the hole in the cup or the emptiness formed by the hand that allows any distribution to occur at all.

Differences, in this case those which can be positively identified, have to emerge by being structured according to the dynamic geneses and which then submit to the static genesis, or that which allows for complete determination. In so doing, they also bring into being any structure that can possibly actualize them. Thus, the structure is itself generated in and through differential elements or intensities which itself gives form to. When Deleuze writes of “generative matter and engendered form,” he means precisely this: form and matter must develop together.34 Thus, structure emerges from difference; but, if we recall what Deleuze has argued about both the third synthesis and the Ideas that emerge from it, these structures must be animated by the dynamic genesis. This genesis, as we saw, involves an aleatory point which ensures that the structure of thought proper is never simply given in advance. What this means is that any structure has a “mobile element” that makes the structure possible, but this element at its heart means that the structure is

33 Ibid., 180.
34 LS, 105. I will try to show how sexual difference demonstrates this co-extensivity of form and matter in the Idea in Chapter Four.
constitutively incomplete. Any apparently closed set or structure by virtue of being closed is, in that same move, defining itself by an outside that makes it possible, as well as an empty place that animates it. This incompletion also means that a sea of differential particles always surrounds anything that we might ever be able to recognize, and these particles could always be redistributed by this mobile element.

What does this account of structure have to do with Ideas? Certainly we can see similarities. For instance, Ideas are not determined in advance. They never contain their own solutions. They are generated anew from aleatory points. They do not obey a pregiven set of rules. More to the point: the structure itself, as Deleuze writes, is composed of “the differential relations and singular points, the reciprocal determination and the complete determination,” which are precisely the moments of determination of the Idea described above. If we think of those points as coming to be arranged in a certain way, animated by the object = x that distributes them, they become arranged in a different coordination or concatenation out of differential elements.

Willatt claims that Deleuze talks about genesis “in terms of problems that unify the structuring of experience.” Problems, he claims, “hold together what they differentiate.” A way to think about this kind of distribution in an everyday sense might be that, rather than presuming that we set our vision or perception over an organized body that is given in advance (look at that cute dog!), whatever body we recognize only comes to be

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35 For more on this complex notion of structure, look to Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” Gödel’s incompleteness theorem, Russell’s paradox, and Paul Livingston’s *The Politics of Logic*, especially Chapters 3 and 4. Of course the example given so far in Deleuze is the phallus, which I’ll emphasize further later.
36 Deleuze, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” 178.
37 Willatt, 70.
determinable from a kind of background of diversity. If we consider standing in a busy city or dancing in a loud club, we find ourselves in a sea of disparate perceptions, an amalgamation of indistinct sensations. If it at some point I recognize a person calling to me or a song I like, those emerge out of that sea of perceptions and only become recognizable to me in and through that. But, at the same time, can easily fade back into the din. The emergence of any recognizable object is always subtended by these elements that constitute it, brought together only by an unknown object = x that allows its potentially recognizable distribution, but always potentially undone by it. What exactly drew the formation of that post hoc recognition of the song or voice? Deleuze writes in a seminar on Kant, “the object = x only receives a determination … by the diversity I relate to it.” The object = x is the source of the distribution of this diversity. In my fourth chapter, I will return to this psychoanalytically.

As this kind of mobile structure, Ideas link together unknown or undetermined elements in such a way that shows the unfolding of its multiplicity, as it were. Thus, as Willat puts it, Ideas play a role in generation and structure: it is always through Ideas that this activity occurs. We need to remember that Ideas, in a sense, ebb and flow: coming to be through sensibility and then becoming determined, they just as easily become undone, since it is their nature to be organized only problematically. More than this, once generated they themselves cause the structure to move, because their own generation requires an aleatory point that was not given in advance but which allows for a “nomadic

38 This example is similar to that of Proust’s Combray and the madeleine that I mentioned in Chapter Two: the shock of the taste madeleine as the object = x.
40 Willat, 73.
distribution.” By “nomadic distribution,” perhaps we can now see, Deleuze means a kind of arrangement of differential elements that does not need to simply fall in line with a model given in advance, or a Form, and indeed a distribution that has no home. That is, as I’ve been trying to describe, the Idea proper never finds itself at rest, since its very condition is a kind of animating empty place.

Ideas are thus structures that provide the coordinates for thought; however, they do not do so in such a way that objects of experience are known in advance. In this way, an Idea causes us to question, that is, to be open to a question. Ideas are therefore problem-questions that are in a sense irresolvable, since they do not have determined coordinates. Arranged as they are by the aleatory point, they are structuring principles that are continually remade in their own generation. Thus, in sum: Ideas are determined along singular points. Singular points are animated by aleatory points. Ideal elements that are determinable begin the whole process of the static genesis, having been begin formed as a result of the dynamic genesis. That which becomes organized as a result of this whole trajectory may well be a recognized object or a determinate Idea; but, it remains subtended by a field of difference that can overtake it or redirect it, as it were. I thus claim that Ideas are best seen as organizing structures that are always self-interrupting in their own generation. This again allows us to see the role of Ideas in the generation of the new, as well as their pre-representative nature. This also shows us the fundamental role of the object = x. The Idea, which begins in sensibility and emerges in thought, is the outcome of the dynamic geneses and thus is marked by sex. More importantly for my purposes, though, is the role of the aleatory point. What I will show in what follows, based on the account I’ve given in Chapter Two and here, is that the aleatory point is the phallus “as an
irresolvable problem with an indefinite number of solutions.”

Once we see how the phallus functions as such, we will be in a better position to see, in my fourth chapter, what this account can offer to our understanding of sexual difference.

THE MATERIALITY OF THE IDEA

Because I intend to connect this account of Ideas to my earlier account of the sexual genesis of thought, I need to re-emphasize Deleuze’s argument that Ideas have their origin in materiality. This is well recognized in Deleuze studies, and it is essential for my attempt to give an account of sexual difference that responds to the problem of Chapter One. Thus, I want to make it explicit. As argued above, Ideas belong to every faculty, and this includes sensibility. Sensibility provides the original point that traverses the passive syntheses and gives the ideal elements out of which an Idea can be formed. Joe Hughes holds that “thought is not the origin of muddled problems, sensibility is. Thought is the origin of determined problems.” This shows us again what Deleuze has argued, that Ideas traverse all the faculties and constitute the link between them. Ideas begin in sensibility and become progressively determined, and they always coexist with material, from the beginnings of their genesis in the encounter with the being of the sensible to their complete determination.

To clarify, we can understand this through the language of intensity. Hughes describes the relationship between Ideas and intensities as follows: “Determined Ideas

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41 Lawlor, 86.
42 Materiality is also important for understanding Lacan, inasmuch as, for him, the materiality of the signifier constructs the unconscious which directs us. More on this in the fourth chapter.
[are] the program or schema for a content. Without an intensity to take them out of their virtuality they remain a lifeless sensible schema. […] One could say that without the intensity the Idea is empty; but without the Idea, intensity is blind.”

If an Idea is a structure that is generated and in that generation opens itself up for its own undoing, then the materiality of the Idea is exactly what does this. From an encounter with intensity to the more developed scattering and determination of intensity in the Idea, there is no part of it which is not material. Materiality thus forms and de-forms the Idea, as the Idea will eventually come to unite and disunite the subject of thought. I emphasize this here primarily because it will be important to show how we can better understand the relationship between Deleuze and the Lacanian sinthome, which I will argue is the psychoanalytic corollary to the Idea. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind in order to give a robust account of sexuation from the account I’ve been giving: rather than “an identification” or an “embodiment,” sexuation turns out to be both, and thus recognizing this material progression is indispensable. If we forget the covalence of materiality and the Idea, we will run the risk of losing this account of sex.

SEXUALITY, SEXUATION, AND THE IDEA

To take us back to the overall thesis of my project: my argument is that we need to see the Deleuzian genesis of thought in its entirety as sexual, which means that we see sexual difference as a structure that coordinates the way in which thought emerges. This

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44 Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation*, 124. See also Lapoujade 122-126. Even though Hughes is riffing off Kant’s famous dictum, we should be careful not to confuse Deleuzian Ideas with Kantian concepts. The relationship between intensities and Ideas is, we could say, discursive and dialectical: they are always in reciprocal communication, rather than the Idea subsuming the intensity to a prefabricated (and not generated) structure.
itself is rooted in material elements which take on their first significance as sexual, or as erogenous. Thus, sex marks this whole progression, through the dynamic and static geneses. While Deleuze never calls sexual difference an Idea, he does clearly refer to it as problematic.\textsuperscript{45} Keith Faulkner \textit{does}, interestingly, when he claims, “when Deleuze refers to problems, he means those ideas about which we will never arrive at facts. His examples: life, death, and sexual difference.”\textsuperscript{46} It will be my goal later to explain what it means for sexual difference to be an Idea, and why this means something essential for difference and the new in general. For now, I want to indicate what it looks like for sexual difference to develop \textit{into} an Idea in the terms of what I’ve so far been explaining, keeping in mind that Ideas are the provenance of \textit{all} the faculties.

One way to conceive of this whole process genetically, and in accordance with the account of the dynamic and static geneses, might go as follows:

1) The discordant relationship of the faculties is spawned by an encounter with the being of the sensible (or intensity): sensibility reaches its limit in that which cannot be sensed. This also incites the first passive synthesis, which establishes the erogenous zones of the body. We can also call this the beginning of a “muddled problem,” or the beginnings of the dynamic genesis which will give us the elements that will eventually become the determined

\textsuperscript{45} Beyond what I’ve said in the previous chapter, more specific references to this will be given below.
\textsuperscript{46} Keith W. Faulkner, “What Is It to Have an Idea in Deleuze?” \textit{Global Center for Advanced Studies}, pub. March 10, 2016, https://globalcenterforadvancedstudies.org/what-is-it-to-have-an-idea-in-deleuze/ His definition of Ideas as that which we will never arrive at facts is, in itself, instructive: it means that, again, Ideas are insolvable problems that suggest solutions; the solutions are commensurate with the problems posed; but, since the response retroactively changes the question, we never arrive at determined answers.
Idea. That is to say, the erogenous zones offer the first stage of “muddled problem” of sexual difference.

2) From the first passive synthesis, we can recall, we transition into the second synthesis, or to that of memory. This synthesis encourages the production of virtual objects: when the erogenous zone cannot be satisfied, one creates another object that satisfies it in its absence (for example, thumbsucking comes to stand in for the breast). Virtual objects, those which are “shreds of the pure past,” never experienced as such, form a whole network of possibilities out of which other sexual desires, experiences, fantasies, and so on, can be formed. That is to say, the kinds of bodily satisfactions one can achieve become augmented and, to prefigure Lacan, become detached from the body itself. Is this pure past not what emerges in the return of the repressed in dreams? Pre-genital excitations pop up, unrecognizable, as a past never experienced. This is how “Eros tears virtual objects out of the pure past and gives them to us in order that they may be lived.” This stage constitutes part of Deleuze’s response to his statement that “the problem of comparison between human and animal sexuality consists of finding out how sexuality ceases to be a function and breaks its attachment to reproduction, for human sexuality interiorizes the conditions of the production of phantasms.” We have added the dimension of virtuality and of the pure past into sexuality and

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47 This will be explained more fully in the following section on Lacan.
48 *DR*, 103.
49 *DR*, 250.
sexual difference, in what is now inching towards creating the virtual out of which the Idea will be constructed.

3) Once the libido cannot be satisfied in external objects (when the reality test comes back disappointing, so to speak), as we have seen, the ego becomes desexualized and contemplates itself. In turning upon itself, the self is shattered and the “I think” is fractured. This third movement, the turning of the I onto the self, constitutes the plane of thought. Here thought emerges out of the elements that have been bubbling up underneath it, so to speak. As Lapoujade writes, “Thought is resexualized upon itself, upon the essences or irrational logics it discovers, and no longer in the objects or subjects that express those essences or logics. Or, rather, objects are now sexualized by the ‘essences,’ ‘concepts,’ the Ideas that they express, and by nothing else.”

Here thought cathects to itself and it is in a position to contemplate completely determined Ideas. Ideas are thus sexualized from the first stage that incites their production to the final stage whereupon they are completely determined.

This recapitulation is to show how the problem itself begins; the moments of determinability and reciprocal and complete determination only occur after the third stage. So, in sum, Ideas have their origin in sensibility and become determined in thought. If the genesis by which the Idea comes to be determined has its root in the materiality of

\[50\] Lapoujade, 117
sexuation, then the Idea itself emerges, we could say, on its way from a muddled sexual problem to a determined sexual problem. What remains to be seen is what part of the sexual genesis accounts for the stages of determination of the Idea as explained above. In other words, from the perspective of the sexual genesis, what is the aleatory point that determines the Idea?

Before I continue with my argument, I should explain that sexuality and sexuation or sexual difference here must be linked, because sexuation only comes from these sexed components. While the way I’ve framed this stems from psychoanalytic discourse, I think we can see it easily in the account of Deleuze I’ve given so far. “In psychoanalysis,” Charles Shepherdson argues, “‘sexual difference’ is neither a symbolic construction nor a biological reality.” More specifically, Marie-Hélène Brousse explains that “psychoanalysis implies a definition of sexuality as sexuation” that notes “a disparity between the biological real of sex—defined in the human species by the difference between male and female, and so by a duality [sic]—and its symbolic determinations.” In sum, “sexuation is a process of complex identifications.” In a sense, this observation is obvious: not everyone identifies with the sex assigned to her/him/them at birth. Human sexuality does not revolve solely around sexual reproduction. Thus, what “sexuation” means in psychoanalysis is a recognition of the complex interaction between being embodied, the sensations that that body has, the attitude one has towards that body and its pleasures, and the kinds of things that one “gets off on,” so to speak. Thus, to put this in

Deleuzian terms, psychoanalysis views “sexual difference” as a cluster of all of these series.

The reason I define this here is because one may well be inclined to see a difference between “sexual difference” (as male, female, or otherwise) and “sexuality” (as what one enjoys sexually or one’s sexual preference). For Lacanian psychoanalysis, and I will argue for Deleuze, the way in which one becomes sexuated is directly tied to the kinds of pleasures (or jouissance) one can achieve. Further, the way in which one comes to identify is on a different register than the processes that underlie that identification. This is part of what is meant by Lacan’s distinction between the Real, the symbolic, and the imaginary, and it is also akin to what Deleuze means when he discusses pre-individual singularities and larval subjects. That is to say: one’s identification or purported identity is epiphenomenal, an after effect or optical effect that is generated from the processes I’ve so far explained. Thus, neither sexuation nor sexual difference indicate gender identity or biological morphology.

I should here try to unify some of the different parts of my account so far. First, reading the passive syntheses and the generation of Ideas together, we can see that Ideas are always sexualized. Second, we can see how Ideas come to be completely determined (though we should always remember that “completely determined” means completely determined as a structure and not as in “over and done with”) only in this final stage of thought. I would like to suggest that this model will give us a model for sexual difference or sexuation. Recall that Ideas belong to every faculty and bring each faculty to its limit. Further, Deleuze maintains that each stage of the dynamic genesis has its own “question-
problem complex” which incites this progressive determination. The Idea of sexual difference or sexuation thus begins as a muddled problem of sensibility, or a series of stimulations which creates the surface of the body (the creation of erogenous zones on a gradation from maximum to minimum, usually around an orifice, to reference The Logic of Sense): “what is this excitation?” From there, it becomes a problem of involuntary memory or the pure past: “where is mom?” leads to the creation of virtual objects to satisfy these erogenous zones. These are always lost objects: “mom is not here.” This provides a stage beyond the teeming and disorganized excitations of the Id. Finally, when the ego turns back on itself and thought emerges, the Idea of sexuation has bodily elements, psychic elements, and now “metaphysical” elements. That is to say, it has these components tied together in a newly complicated notion of the Idea. This progressive determination now links together the material and the virtual. Sexuality in this third stage has been passed onto thought, and thought has become sexualized. Here the question or problem becomes the more determined question of sexuation as a persistent structure. Sexuation as “a process of complex identifications” emerges along the same axis as the determination of the Idea as a determined problem. Without the elements given in the previous syntheses (excitations, erogenous zones, virtual objects) sexuation could not come to be as such.

The Idea of sexuation traverses all stages of the dynamic genesis and thus forms the basis or the possibility of the Idea’s complete determination. Thus, all Ideas come

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53 DR, 78.
54 Deleuze argues that the field of excitations and first synthesis or binding constitute a first and second layer of the Id, respectively (DR 96).
55 When I write “ego,” we should not think of this simply as one’s image of oneself, but we should remember Freud’s claim in The Ego and the Id that “the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego. It is not a surface but the projection of a surface” (26).
from a sexual source. What I want to argue is that we need to understand the sexualization of Ideas as pre-individual. In a sense, we have cathected to Ideas, yes, but not egoically.\(^56\) The Idea of sexuation is formed from sexual elements. This means that we always and only experience cognition as sex(uat)ed. This does not mean anything particularly stereotypical about men being from Mars or women being from Venus. It means instead that, rooted in materiality and determined therefrom, sexuality and the Ideas that come from it form a structure that governs what is actualized in thought. If sexuality/sexuation marks all stages of the dynamic genesis, it thus marks the virtual itself.\(^57\) Based on the reading of the progressive determination of the Idea given above, the virtual is brought together through the operation of an aleatory point which links these sexual ideal elements into reciprocal and then complete determinations. In arguing that we should see Ideas as structures and that these elements are sexual, motivated first and foremost by the phallus, it is, then, the phallic function that ultimately motivates the formation of Ideas themselves.\(^58\) Deleuze himself suggests this when he writes,

> Let us consider Lacan’s psychoanalytic response: the object = x is determined as phallus. But this phallus is neither the real organ, nor the series of associable or associated images: it is the symbolic phallus. […] But the phallus appears not as a

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\(^56\) That is to say, I am not trying to say that knowledge is erotic, as we might see in the *Symposium* (though this, too may be true, on the plane of organization).

\(^57\) While this argument is far too complicated to explain here, recent Lacanian scholarship that argues that Being is *jouissance* could show further correspondence between Deleuze and Lacan. Cf. Alenka Zupančič’s “Sexual Difference and Ontology” in *e-flux journal* 32, at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/32/68246/sexual-difference-and-ontology/. See also A. Kiarina Kordela’s “Being or Sex, and Differences” in *Angelaki* 17:2, 49-67, where she argues that this notion is the same as “life” in Deleuze.

\(^58\) “Before the opposition between the sexes, determined by the possession or lack of the penis, there is the ‘question’ of the phallus which determines the differential position of sexed characters in each series” (*DR*, 107).
sexual given or as the empirical determination of one of the sexes. It appears rather as the symbolic organ that founds sexuality *in its entirety as system or structure*, and in relation to which places occupied variously by men and women are distributed, as also the series of images and realities. In designating the object = x as phallus, it is thus not a question of identifying this object, of conferring to it an identity, which is repellant to its nature. Quite the contrary, for the symbolic phallus is precisely that which does not coincide with its own identity, always found there where it is not since it is not where one looks for it, always displaced in relation to itself, *from the side of the mother*.\(^{59}\) In this sense, it is certainly the letter [as in Poe’s story]. Father, mother, etc., are symbolic elements held in differential relations. But the phallus is quite another thing, the object = x that determines the relative place of the elements and the variable value of relations, making a structure of the entirety of sexuality. The relations vary as a function of the displacements of the object = x, as relations between the ‘partial drives’ constitutive of sexuality.\(^{60}\)

This long passage from “How Do We Recognize Structuralism” draws together some of the major claims I’ve been making in Chapters Two and Three. Let me explain how.

As I explained in Chapter Two, the phallus is not to be conflated with the penis or even as a symbol of male power. Instead, for Lacan, the phallus or phallic function implies castration or lack. The phallus intervenes, as we saw in the third stage of the dynamic genesis, in a way that causes resonance between different series. In this case, we have seen that the phallus is the originary non-sense or empty place that makes different series have their respective places. It causes the animation of different series. For instance, the roles or

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\(^{59}\) Recall here my explanation of this in Chapter Two.

\(^{60}\) Deleuze, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” 187-8.
figures “father” and “mother” need not be simply the biological roles that the inseminating and birthing parents have; instead, they are differentially determined symbolic roles that can be occupied by any figure. In fact, this latter point is one of Lacan’s primary structuralist interventions, wherein he attempts to rewrite the Freudian Oedipus Complex by reducing the father simply to a prohibitive function, a “no” that intervenes to alienate the child which simultaneously becomes a metaphor for the desire of the mother. More than this, as we saw in Chapter Two, the phallus has two roles in Deleuze’s reading of Lacan and Klein: both as coordinating and as castrating. Thus, if we recall all of the component elements of sexuality (erogenous zones, partial drives and partial objects, Oedipal images, and castration), we see what Deleuze means by claiming that the phallus “mak[es] a structure of the entirety of sexuality.” It has the function of drawing together all of the component elements into distributed series (e.g., mother, father, child; oral, anal, genital); but, since it is always the empty place, the distributing element, it never does so statically. That is, it allows for the nomadic distribution of elements. If we recall that castration emerges after the failure of the coordinating phallus of Oedipus, we can see how this generates a mobile structure, as it were: the triad fails, or is broken. Castration as lack becomes the empty place that allows meanings to circulate. The organization of the series, the placement of the elements of those series, is not a necessary organization, ordained by a final cause or by a natural role or development. The structure of sexuality, comprised as it is by zones, objects, drives, phantasms, virtual objects, fantasies, and so on, can be read as this mobile structure animated by the empty place of the phallus. Since Deleuze argues that structures are perpetually mobile, sexuality never comprises a closed system. But how

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61 More on this will be found below.
can we make this more directly relevant to our discussion of Ideas as a kind of structure, and for explicating Deleuze’s understanding of structure?

Deleuze has argued that the phallus is the object = x which is the term that distributes sense and causes resonance. However, we need to remember Deleuze’s claim that the phallus becomes the object = x as the castrated phallus. Joe Hughes suggests this, when, in describing the transition between the two, he writes: “The failure of imagination, memory and thought ‘makes us discover in ourselves a still more beautiful faculty of the infinite.’ In the aftermath of recognition, a new cogito, the ‘aleatory point’ or castrated phallus, and its new synthesis, the eternal return, appear.”62 This indicates to me that we see a similar shift here in Deleuze’s reading of the Lacanian phallus as we do in his reading of Oedipus. In calling the castrated phallus the aleatory point, Hughes here is drawing a direct link between Deleuze’s account in *The Logic of Sense* of the Oedipal failure and the element of the static genesis that does the organizing work of structuring the Idea. All three stages of the genesis of thought are failed stages, forced by the Idea to transmit the original problem to different faculties. Thus, the phallic problem (or “the ‘question’ of the phallus”), like the problem of sensibility, moves from faculty to faculty until it generates the ideal elements that come to form a determined Idea.63 The aleatory point is, then, the failed phallus (or, we could say, the failed unification). But why does Hughes equate the castrated phallus with the aleatory point? The first suggestion comes from *The Logic of Sense*, when Deleuze writes of “the aleatory point of desexualized

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63 Cf. Note 57 above.
energy.”\textsuperscript{64} Since “desexualized energy” after the moment the phallus is castrated, or after the failure of Oedipus, that the aleatory point is the castrated phallus has some grounding.

Deleuze references the “aleatory point” throughout \textit{The Logic of Sense} and \textit{Difference and Repetition}, but he never precisely defines it. Its function remains consistent, however: to be the unknown element that brings together the scattered bits of virtuality (developed from the encounter with sensibility) that eventually form the completely determined Idea. Recall the passage in \textit{The Logic of Sense} (which I treated earlier) where he writes that “the \textit{problem} is determined by \textit{singular points} corresponding to the series, but the \textit{question} is determined by an \textit{aleatory point} corresponding to the empty square or the mobile element.”\textsuperscript{65} Taking this claim in conjunction with his gloss on the phallus, we can read the castrated phallus as this aleatory point, since it causes the motion and displacement of elements of sexual series. However, since Ideas are not fully formed at the beginning of the genesis, the question of the phallus becomes more and differently determined through this genesis. It was around from the beginning, so to speak, in incipient form that has to become installed in and through larval subjects before it becomes the aleatory point that distributes sense. Once the phallus as the organizing empty square comes on the scene, the virtual elements that have been produced for thought come to form the singular points that give the Idea structure. Even though the phallus is not the biological organ (and thus biology is \textit{not} destiny), the phallus as the

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{LS}, 241.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 56.
nonsense element at the genesis of the sexual/sexed subject has a structural effect on that subject.\textsuperscript{66}

Deleuze argues that “structuralism is right that form and matter have a scope only in the original and irreducible structures in which they are organized” and “sexuality lies within the organization and orientation of these of these dimensions, before being found in generative matter or engendered form.”\textsuperscript{67} I suggest that Deleuze’s claims about structuralism are again informed by and inextricable from his use of psychoanalysis. In the third synthesis (which is the synthesis wherein thought emerges), the synthesized erogenous zones come into unevenly distributed contact with the Oedipal images. This amplification is caused by the phallus of castration, which has become the object = x. What this means is that structures of thought that emerge from these sexed elements. This should allow us to see Deleuze’s version of structuralism as an \textit{immanent} structuralism: the structure emerges from the generative matter which engenders form. From these originary differential elements which then become thought emerge the possibilities for the structure of the Idea. But, this occurs only inasmuch as they are marked by the aleatory point which allows them to become distributed in accordance with the placement of singularities. So, to recall the discussion earlier, “structure” is necessarily comprised of multiplicity (differential elements), and that these elements emerge only out of a process of genesis. Structure is thus “the dimension proper to the third developmental position (Oedipus followed by castration), not as a third triangulating term which finally subsumes matter under form or body under language, but as the immanent effect of their equal

\textsuperscript{66} I say this to contrast this to a standard view that assumes that men and women think differently because of their biological makeup.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{LS}, 105.
articulation.” As we have seen, castration or the phallic function is the aleatory or empty point (never found in its place) that allows for these to become distributed.

What is the outcome of the static genesis? The completely determined Idea. If I am right in reading the Idea as a structure whose nature is not determined in advance, then the role of the phallus here, from the encounter with the being of the sensible to the Idea, is to structure the genesis of thought and the structural elements that are the provenance of thought itself. Since the phallus is not itself meaningful, it is also what motivates the formation of new problems and questions. That is to say, when arguing that the phallus generates this mode of becoming, it does not imply that it does so always in the same way or that it, in a fatalistically determinist way, establishes a chain of events that will necessarily result in any particular outcome. There is no stable ground here, so to speak, but, in a way, an empty structural element which institutes an incomplete subject always forced to think by that which escapes determination. When Hughes argues that it is in Ideas that “we finally encounter the conditions which enable the mind to progressively determine a problem and to therefore ‘find the reply to a question which is obscurely expressed,’” we see that the question of sexuality marks all kinds of questions and problems as well as preliminary solutions to those problems. This entire process explains how Deleuze can argue that sexuality, according to the Freudian dualism, is that which also is – everywhere and always. There is nothing the sense of which is not also sexual, in accordance with

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69 Ibid., 131. Remember also Lawlor’s claim that the object = x constitutes an irresolvable problem with an indeterminate number of solutions.
the law of the double surface. But it is still necessary to await this result which never ends, this other surface, for sexuality to be made the concomitant, and the co-sense of sense, so that one might say ‘everywhere,’ ‘for all times,’ and ‘eternal truth.’

The castrated phallus brings about the eternal return, which is the future. The future is marked by the sexual, motivated by the sexual which is forever its counterpart. The (muddled and progressively determined) Idea of sexuation inflects time, sensibility, memory, and thought.

So far, I have tried to explain what a Deleuzian Idea is and to show how it emerges from the geneses that I explained in Chapter Two. Inasmuch as I am arguing that we should read these geneses as sexual geneses, here I have also shown how the formation of the Idea is itself sexual. The formation of the Idea comes from the sexed elements that begin with the first dynamic genesis and continue through the intervention of the aleatory point which causes an Idea to become completely determined. Inasmuch as the aleatory point as castrated phallus is the mobile, empty element, we must remember that these Ideas are better thought of as what Deleuze called question-problem complexes: they open us up to thought as it is being forced to think. In this way, the Idea as question comes from the affirmation of the all of chance of the third synthesis. To be responsive to the Idea is to be responsive to the question, to keep it open, which is itself engendered by the mobile element.

To draw out the significance of sex for the Idea and for thinking, I want to turn to something that I think performs the same function as the Deleuzian Idea but that also will

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70 *LS*, 233.
allow us to better see the lasting effects of sex: the Lacanian *sinthome*. Ultimately, I will argue that reading Lacan and Deleuze together here will allow us to see something that I have not yet been able to make fully evident: the full co-implication of the body, sex, and thought that animates the argument of this whole dissertation. In a sense, Deleuze’s account shows us that sex marks the entirety of his genesis and produces thought; but, it does not tell us what it *means* for sexual difference to be an Idea, or for what the effect of the castrated phallus as aleatory point actually does for thought itself beyond the distribution of the static genesis. Again, to return to my first chapter, my goal here is to give us a reading of sexual difference that responds to the feminist impasse with respect to the body, and thus to show us both *that* and *how* sex matters. So far, through his use of psychoanalysis, Deleuze has made this possible, but I will argue that this project needs to be completed by a closer engagement with Lacan, to whom I now turn.

**LACAN AND THE SINTHOME**

Deleuze argues that everything has its roots in the “depth of corporeal causes.”71 This is important not only for Deleuze’s materialism, but for the consistency of the genoses. Because I obviously read Deleuze’s project here as (at least in part) psychoanalytic, and because I think his argument is most clearly indebted to Lacan, Freud, and Klein, an instructive comparison will help show how sex and thought are coadunative. I have already shown how Deleuze uses Lacan to articulate the phallic function. This allowed me to give an account of Deleuze’s generative ontology in its relation to the becoming of sexuation. However, more than that, I think that reading Lacan and Deleuze

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71 *LS*, 23.
together gives us the non-reductive but still material account of sexuation I’ve been seeking in response to the impasse of Chapter One. That is, using Lacan, Deleuze has offered us a model of becoming that I’ve argued is sexual; he has also shown us how Ideas themselves are marked by a sexual sense. What I aim to show is that returning to Lacan can help us complete an account for which Deleuze has laid the foundation. To show how their projects further coincide, I turn to the Lacanian concept of the *sinthome*. In defining this term below, I aim to show further covalence between the two thinkers, which will allow me to transition, in my final chapter, to a fuller account of sexuation. But to understand the *sinthome*, and thus to argue that it operates in the same way as the Deleuzian Idea, I first need to lay out some fundamentals of Lacanian theory.

Lacan introduces the term *sinthome* in 1975, in his 23rd Seminar, though the concept is present (even if not in name) in much of his earlier work.\(^{72}\) In writing this term, Lacan is updating his notion of the symptom, which he had originally described through the language of metaphor and metonymy, akin to Freud’s notion of “somatic compliance.”\(^{73}\) A symptom “comes from the Real” and is “that which doesn’t work”; in fact, it is often the problem that causes the subject to seek analysis. It is expressed corporeally as a sort of expression of psychic failure, tension, or repression (this is why Lacan likens it to a metaphor, a condensation of meaning somatically expressed). In rewriting “symptom” as “*sinthome,*” he is attempting to bring together the developments

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., 3. For Lacan’s use of metaphor as symptom and metonymy as desire, see “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud.”
in his teaching, specifically with respect to his famous 1972 positing of the three rings of a Borromean knot which correspond to three dimensions of reality: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary.⁷⁴ These three rings are all linked together, but if one is replaced, the other two do not remain linked. We could equate the removal of one ring to a kind of psychic dissociation: without all three held together, each dimension separates. In positing the *sinthome*, Lacan here introduces a fourth ring into the Borromean knot, suggesting that *the symptom holds the subject together*. In holding the three registers together, it also shows, like the symptom, a correspondence between matter or the body and thought or language. That is to say, it holds together the Real (understood, alternately, as bodily drives as well as that which escapes signification), the Imaginary (in the form of consistency between the registers that the *sinthome* offers), and the symbolic, as the way in which the symptom is inaugurated and also understood.⁷⁵ This leads Jacques-Alain Miller to define the *sinthome* as “the effort to write both signifier and *jouissance* in one sole trait,” where I take it that “signifier” points to language and “*jouissance*” means corporeality.⁷⁶ Briefly, then, the *sinthome* is Lacan’s attempt to unite the different registers

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⁷⁵ Whether “the body” is the Real, as in a sort of pure or prime matter that is then overlaid with the symbolic, or whether the Real is something that is produced through the very work of the symbolic, is quite the problem for Lacanian theor. For an account for the former position, see Paul Verhaeghe and Frederic Declerq’s “Lacan’s Analytic Goal: *Le Sinthome* or the Feminine Way in Thurston, 59-82. For the latter view, see Tom Eyers’ *Lacan and the Concept of ‘The Real’*” and Adrian Johnston’s *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*. I will say more about the Real below, when I discuss *object a*.

⁷⁶ J-A Miller, “The *Sinthome*, a Mixture of Symptom and Fantasy” in Voruz & Wolf, 60. When I refer to *jouissance* I should be clear that I am referring to a kind of bodily pleasure that might be akin to the first stage of the dynamic genesis, but that, as happens in both Deleuze and Lacan, is transformed as the subject comes into being, linked
of his work, ensuring that we can account for the union of the corporeal or material with the plane of thought.

What I aim to explain in this section, then, is how we might see Deleuze’s and Lacan’s work as complementary by bringing together Idea and sinthome. What is important here is the role of the phallus, which is inescapably central to both, as well as the way in which we can see different registers linked together through sexuation. For Lacan, the intervention of the phallus (which he also calls castration) enacts the alienation and separation of the subject from itself and institutes the mediation of language between the split subject and its body. This means that the subject now becomes a desiring subject who reaches out for satisfaction that it does not immediately have. This is the Lacanian corollary to the second passive synthesis. One way to think about this development for Lacan might go as follows: an infant is born and is premature (by which I mean, as Lacan does, that the infant cannot care for itself). It depends on others to survive. It sees no disconnection between itself and its mother, who satisfies all of its needs. However, eventually the child comes to be alienated from its mother, because the mother leaves or does not always satisfy the child. In a hypothetical but typical situation, the father intervenes to institute a gap between the mother and child. Lacan calls this the non-du-père, as the “no” of the father that marks the division between child and mother that was not previously there. This occurs alongside the introduction of the Symbolic, which is the register in which desire comes to be. Since the immediate needs of the child are not filled and because this occurs due to the intervention of language, desire comes to be in that together through these four rings of the knot. So jouissance does not refer simply to bodily pleasure in some unmitigated way, and usually is also connected to a form of pain or disgust.
register: this is also why desire slips along the same axis as language. Neither ever is satisfied or selfsame. Thus, the desiring subject is the split subject, the subject who does not coincide with herself, because the institution of language and the demands of the other interrupt the self-containment of this subject. The subject always lacks something, and this is what propels desire forward.\(^{78}\) This is expressed differently by Lacan in his Mirror Stage, in which the child, again hypothetically, sees itself in a mirror and gets the first (mis)recognition of itself as a complete or whole subject. Rather than a bundle of sensations over which it has no control, the mirror (and the mother’s approving voice) allows the subject the “jubilant assumption of its specular image” which it will “only rejoin … asymptotically.”\(^{79}\) The subject is then again split by language, the language of the Other, whom she always tries to live up to (but never rejoins).

Lacan asserts that the being of this subject is a question: who am I? What does the Other want from me? Who am I for the Other? The second operation in the institution of the split subject, separation, occurs when the question of the desire of the Other is named, and thus Lacan’s pun: the nom-du-père (that is, the no of the father becomes the Name of the Father and desire is named). Once the desire of the other is named, the subject thus attempts to transform itself into the object, now fully separated, that can satisfy the desire of the Other. Language and desire here (e)merge: it is language that splits the subject, and

\(^{78}\) It would be anathema to most Lacanians to describe this progression as “developmental,” though I use that term anyway. Because of the failure of the subject and the emergence of symptoms, alongside the return of repressed and the persistence of the unconscious in general, the subject never really “develops” in any directional way. However, the subject does emerge in and through these moments (logical or temporal), so in describing this trajectory in this way I do not intend to give a goal to the subject but instead describe the necessary moments (according to Lacan) by which a subject can come into being.

it is language and naming which comes to institute language and to code desire in language. The “paternal metaphor” (the no and the name) causes the question of the other’s desire and the desire of the subject itself to come to be.\textsuperscript{80} Significantly, what happens here in and through alienation and separation is \textit{the institution of meaning itself}. The “paternal metaphor” and “the Name of the Father” mean that the father does not refer to the \textit{real} father, or the biological entity or caretaker. In Seminar V, Lacan writes that “the father is a metaphor,” meaning the substitution of one signifier for another. For Lacan, the paternal metaphor works as the first substitution, that of the name for the mother’s desire. He writes, “the father is a signifier which is substituted for another signifier,” where this second signifier is the mother’s desire.\textsuperscript{81} The transition of the subject from a body to a speaking body occurs through this movement.

We have now some of the most important, fundamental elements of Lacanian theory: the Symbolic or language, lack, desire, the desire of the other, and the phallus or castration (the “no” which institutes the lack in the subject). What comes next in the account I’m giving is what emerges for the subject in the Other, which the subject also attempts to assert itself as. This is \textit{object a}. Like other terms in Lacan, \textit{object a} takes on many valences, but the most succinct definition of it is “the object cause of desire.” It is

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\textsuperscript{80} In Lorenzo Chiesa’s \textit{Subjectivity and Otherness} (Boston: MIT Press, 2007), he offers an exceptionally detailed account of the function of the Name of the Father in alienation and separation and its relation to the phallic or phallic function (in both its imaginary and symbolic dimensions) in Seminar V. This account is too complex to recast here, but it has contributed to my understanding of the paternal metaphor and its role in becoming a \textit{point de capiton} for the subject of speech. In what follows his distinction between the phallic function and the Name of the Father has also been very instructive. See in particular pp. 88-96. Alienation and separation are central in Fink’s view of the Lacanian subject in general, as well as in Laurent, Miller, and Voruz’s interpretations of the Real and the \textit{sinthome}.
\textsuperscript{81} Lacan, Seminar V, quoted in Chiesa, 89.
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also, as Tom Eyers writes, “the scrap or remainder of the Real in the Symbolic.” 82 Both of these definitions are instructive in laying out the way in which object a comes to be. Once the subject has undergone alienation and separation, the question of the desire of the subject and the desire of the Other comes into being, as we have seen. Since the child now desires the Other that is separate from her, and the Other is seen as having its own desire, there is a gap between the unity of child and mother. The child thus is motivated by object a and asserts itself as this, because it wants to satisfy the desire of the Other (its response to the question or problem of separation). Bruce Fink explains this process as follows: “a rift is induced in the hypothetical mother-child unity due to the very nature of desire and this rift leads to the advent of object a. Object a can be understood here as the remainder produced when that hypothetical unity breaks down, as a last trace of that unity, a last reminder thereof.” 83 Eyers can say that this is a remainder of the Real in the Symbolic because it means that this originary relation which is severed by the introduction of the symbolic through castration/the phallus/the paternal metaphor/the Symbolic still persists but only as that which is outside or resists symbolization. Object a causes desire and causes desire never to be satisfied: desire has no object but instead is caused and continues to slip from attempted satisfaction to attempted satisfaction. 84

82 Eyers, 35. Object a has taken on many roles and develops throughout Lacan’s work. It is not my goal here to elaborate Lacan’s corpus or to show the many complications of his theory. What I am trying to explain here is the basic genesis of the subject in Lacan in a way that will bring out the commensurability between his picture and that of Deleuze with respect to the role of the phallus.
83 Bruce Fink, The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance (Princeton: Princeton University, 1995), 59. Fink’s explanation of the subject in this text has greatly clarified my understanding of material presented by Lacan throughout.
84 Lacan discusses alienation and separation, as he does so many of his formulations, in many places. See especially Seminars VII and XI.
Lacan understands the non-coincidental, split subject to be related to this object cause of desire through a kind of fantasy (hence his formulation of every kind of fantasy as some combination of $ <> a$).\textsuperscript{85} It exists as the unnamable Thing that we cannot reach and that we cannot bring to language. What we do with our attempts to relate to this object is to always “bump up” against that which cannot be inscribed and which escapes us. As such, what object a points to is jouissance, or the kind of pleasure that can be achieved through a fantasy. Object a is what stands in for the lack that is occasioned in the subject through alienation and separation, and it thus, in a sense, keeps the subject together. When he claims that “alienation foregrounds the subject of the signifier, just as separation foregrounds the subject of jouissance,” Jacques-Alain Miller shows how these two processes enact the subject in relation to both the Symbolic or language and object a and the real.\textsuperscript{86}

I should note few things that are important to note here that will be instructive in my later discussion. First, the phallus as castrating agent separates the subject from the real and also brings the subject to the play of language. Second, object a is the cause of the desire of the subject, which is also in language. Third, the fact that desire has a cause and not an object means that it always slides through the signifier. Fourth, jouissance needs to be seen as an attempt to hold the subject together through its splitting, alienation, and separation. This language is of course different than that of Deleuze’s; but, once I show how this leads to Lacan’s introduction of the sinthome, I will show what is parallel in both. That is, I will show that the sinthome and the Idea perform the same function and

\textsuperscript{85} This means “the barred subject in relation to the object cause of its desire.” For the neurotic, the fundamental fantasy is as I’ve written it. For the pervert, the order switches, and the fundamental fantasy is a <> $. The psychotic is not a barred or split subject.

\textsuperscript{86} Miller, 65.
originate through the displacing function of the phallus, thus inscribing sexuation at the heart of both.

Earlier I introduced the *sinthome* as a new version of the symptom; as the fourth ring of the Borromean knot; and as a link between signifier and symptom. I have tried to explain how the *sinthome* might come to emerge on the basis of an account of what we might call the genesis of the Lacanian subject. The *sinthome* emerges in Lacan’s discussion of James Joyce, wherein he also refers to Joyce-the-symptom. Much of the literature on this seminar focuses on Joyce and the relationship between language and enjoyment, which I will explain briefly here, primarily in order to situate how this leads Lacan to posit the *sinthome* as the link that holds all registers of the subject together. In his reading of Joyce, whom Lacan takes to be psychotically structured, Lacan claims that it is through the act of writing, through Joyce’s neologisms and semantic slippages, that Joyce staves off psychosis. That is to say, Joyce does not experience a psychotic break precisely because he anchors himself in language. Eyers summarizes Lacan’s position, writing “it is the subjective ‘play’ of this writing that, Lacan argues, affords Joyce the

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87 Lacan also puns on *sinthome*: *sinthomasaquinas* and *saint homme* to demonstrate its other functions: Joyce turns out to be a “holy man” in and through his symptom, not giving up on his desire and finding it in his writing (SXXIII, 3-11).
88 See Eyers, 146-153, Voruz in Thurston, 111-140, and Philip Dravers’ “In the Wake of Interpretation” in Thurston, 141-175.
89 Lacan argues that there are three ways of being psychically structured, all of which have to do with how the subject relates to language and to castration: neurosis, perversion, and psychosis. That is, there are three different mechanisms by which the subject deals with this: repression, disavowal, and foreclosure, respectively. For very clear explications of these mechanisms, see Fink’s *Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999).
psychic, subjective consistency that would otherwise be provided by the paternal metaphor.”

To explain what this means, we should return to the earlier discussion of the Name of the Father. Another of the many functions that Lacan attributes to this is what he calls *points de capiton* or quilting points. As in the image of a quilted sofa, these points provide the anchors that hold, for instance, the button and the fabric of the sofa. The paternal metaphor works as such: it names the subject, names desire, names the cause of desire, and thus anchors the subject in the otherwise seemingly never-ending slippage of language. It allows for the play of the Symbolic eventually to stop and for the subject to be rooted in something. The reason the psychotic is psychotic and cannot inhabit language in a way that doesn’t fully unravel is because the paternal metaphor has here failed. The psychotic subject, here Joyce, despite his psychotic structure, manages to avoid a psychotic break *despite* the absence of the paternal metaphor, because through writing he constructs his own quilting points: namely, the “epiphanies,” or sudden forms of transformation or revelation. That is all to say, Joyce constructs his own anchor through writing: there is a “binding of the subject that Lacan consolidates with his notion of the *sinthome*.” If we think of the subject as being composed of the registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real, the *sinthome* emerges here as that which prevents them from

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90 Eyers, 152.
92 The example given frequently is that of *Stephen Hero*. See Voruz 121-123.
93 Eyers, 152. The preceding paragraph owes much to Veronique Voruz’s “Acephalic Litter as Phallic Letter” in Thurston.
dissipating, even when the paternal metaphor is not installed: “through this artifice of writing I would say that the Borromean knot is restored.”  

Lacan wants to communicate that Joyce finds a kind of anchor and a kind of *jouissance* in his writing; this is why Miller referred to the *sinthome* as an effort to write signifier and *jouissance* at once. This means that writing offers Joyce a kind of fantasy that allows him to relate to object *a* even though it never really emerged as the effect of castration. Thus, Joyce finds some *jouissance* in his writing, and Lacan puns on this by writing *jouis-sens* or an enjoyment in sense or language. In Seminar XXIII, Lacan argues that there are three forms of *jouissance*, and *jouis-sens* is linked to separation, which would be necessary for the subject to be anchored. What do we make of this form of pleasure, this real? Dominick Hoens and Ed Pluth argue that Joyce’s *sinthome* that holds him together, that his writing is an example of “an enjoyment-in-meaning, and enjoyment insisting ‘within’ language.”  

If Joyce relates to his non-existent object *a* through writing, his *jouissance* through the *sinthome* rather than through the Name of the Father indicates that, just as the phallus produces the eternal displacement of meanings, *so does the sinthome*. Indeed, they argue that “the *sinthome* is not itself a meaning … but it does produce meanings.” Further, “the *sinthome* produces meanings out of nothing, again and again.” The *sinthome* is “*a thing that makes meaning possible.*”  

Furthermore, “the *sinthome* is not concerned with the meanings produced, but with the activity of production itself.” The *sinthome* thus is a kind of structure or opening that produces meaning out of its own nonsense or non-place. This serves the same function as the Idea in Deleuze: it is a

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94 Seminar XXIII, 131.
95 Hoens & Pluth, 10.
96 Ibid., 11, my italics.
97 Ibid.
structure animated by a kernel of nonsense, a sort of absence, that allows meanings to circulate and shift.

I’ve introduced several different elements here in trying to define the *sinthome*. One goal of this has been to show how it has to come to be, or become determined, through a certain kind of process (e.g., as a substitute for the paternal function, though the *sinthome* persists for all subjects, not simply psychotics). The *sinthome* exists as a response to the introduction to language, to the slippage of the signifier. If it (at least sometimes) performs the same function as the Name of the Father, it “is also the site of one’s inscription in the Symbolic” by virtue of “grounding the Symbolic in an enjoyment.” This is one example of how the *sinthome* links the rings together: it grounds the subject of language and *jouissance*, or the Symbolic and the Real (or, we could say, language and the body).

Before I return to Deleuze and the Idea, I would like to say something about the *sinthome* and the phallus, since I argue that it is the phallus that will allow us to most clearly see how the *sinthome* and the Idea are homologous. The phallus as that which distributes sense or which introduces the subject, via lack, into the Symbolic, has been made clear. But, what does the phallus do for the *sinthome*? If we continue with the example of Joyce, for whom the paternal metaphor failed, it might seem like the phallus might not matter. It may be possible to read the *sinthome* and the Name of the Father as identical, and thus the phallus as the agent of castration may intervene and serve the same

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98 For a reading of the *sinthome* and neurosis, see Marie-Hélène Brousse’s “Hystérie et Sinthome” in Voruz & Wolf, 83-94.
99 Ibid., 18.
100 After my explanation of sexuation in the fourth chapter, I will ultimately argue that the Idea of sexuation or sexual difference and the *sinthome* are not only homologous but that they are the same. At this point, though, I cannot make that claim without further explanation.
function as the *sinthome*. Indeed, this is precisely what happens, as I have argued, and as Véronique Veruz makes clear in her “Acephalic Litter as Phallic Letter.” After glossing the role of the phallus and the fact that the paternal metaphor is not installed in the psychotic, she writes that, “for Joyce, although there may be no lack symbolized by the phallus, *phonation* serves a similar function, for it is by means of *homophony* that Joyce defuses the certainty of sense.”

If the function of the phallus is to institute a division or lack in the subject by means of language that allows the subject to come into existence as a desiring being (which is a necessary for the non-psychotic), Joyce’s latent psychosis means that the phallic function still subsists *even without the Father’s name*. Joyce staves off being completely suffused by or identified with the signifier. Voruz writes, “Joyce’s writing, by ‘stuffing the signified’ with the signifier defeats any potential identification with it.”

What I mean to say here is that the *sinthome* comes to take the place of the *phallic function*, which means, at any rate, that whatever the mechanism, there is an element in Lacan (as in Deleuze) that both grounds and ungrounds the subject by holding its sense and its *jouissance* together.

I am going to argue in my fourth chapter that there is a kind of *immanence* of the *sinthome* that Deleuze can account for, further intertwining his work with Lacan’s. This will also allow me to show how my reading here tries to offer

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101 Voruz, 126, her italics.
102 If we recall that the phallus institutes a division between mother and child through language, we can see how, without this, the psychotic subject may feel completely overtaken by language: it may account for everything, it may find no distance from the signifier, as we might see in paranoia—it’s forever overrun by externality. The psychotic subject is, in fact, *s/M/othered* by language.
103 Ibid. The phrase “stuffing the signified” comes from Lacan’s Seminar XX, wherein he argues (also in the context of Joyce) that the signified can contain so many meanings that it overfills or stuffs the signifier: one grapheme can contain many meanings. We see this in puns (*Witz*), for instance. This is another example of his insistence that the signifier takes precedence over the signified.
104 Recall Deleuze’s claim earlier that Ideas “unground.”
something to Dan Smith’s hope for an account of the reciprocal influence of Lacan and Deleuze and vice-versa.

**IDEAS AND THE SINTHOME**

In my explanation of the *sinthome*, I have shown that Lacan offers a sort of genesis of the split subject, the subject of language, fantasy, and *jouissance*, all of which is animated by a particular function. This function, as should be clear, is, as in Deleuze, the necessary precondition for sexuality and sexuation. It has to do with identifications, language, corporeality, and fantasy. So, how do the *sinthome* and the Idea really correspond? The ways in which Deleuze and Lacan, respectively explain the genesis of the subject might follow parallels in a sense:

First, there is a body comprised of a concatenation of erogenous zones (first stage of the passive synthesis/mother-child unity).

Second, there is the production of something beyond the body (virtual objects as absence; the absent mother/the desire of the mother [alienation]).

Third, there is the introduction of the subject into language (castration in both: the castrated phallus produces thought in *The Logic of Sense*; the Name of the Father is the primary metaphor that brings the subject into the signifier [separation]).

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105 For Lacan, as for Deleuze, identifications are only epiphenomenal. The imaginary or egoic level for Lacan is of course operative for most of us all the time, but, for him this is primarily “misrecognized.” For Deleuze, as we have seen, the subject of phenomenology or the fully constituted subject is an “optical effect,” or an aftereffect of conditioning series.
This is a schematic summary that glosses over any number of other possible points of contact (for instance: the mechanisms of development; the view of language both have; the role that object a has; the way in which the drive is retrospectively instituted as a form of jouissance as an effect of language in Lacan, which refigures the corporeal depths in Deleuze). But, it does, I think, lay out parallels closely enough that we can see how Ideas and the sinthome perform the same function in both (and, I argue, are motivated by the same sex[uat]ed factor), which is the phallus.

If the way I’ve laid out the preceding stages is correct, it means that what we end up with in Deleuze is the Idea and in Lacan the sinthome. The Idea is present in muddled form from the beginning of the geneses into the formation of the headless subject; what makes it work is the intervention of the phallus as the displacing/displaced agent. The Ideas that emerge are constructed out of these sexed elements and become the coordinating functions that allow the (non)subject to be both grounded and ungrounded.

The structure that emerges out of the production of the virtual is a sexed structure that conditions the possibility of representation in general, but never as, as we have seen, Kantian recognition. That is to say, Ideas are the inherent conditions of the new. But, since Ideas are not somehow transcendent, they exist always in and through the matter that conditions them. The Idea does not fully unground the thinking subject, for the Idea was

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106 For a good account of some of these differences, see Schuster, in particular Chapter 2. 107 Véronique Voruz may give more support for this point when she argues that, the function of the phallus first “transforms the body into a drive-body.” Then, “in a second moment, the phallus becomes the signifier of difference, the bar that separates the signifier from signified. In its third moment, it may come to be articulated with the paternal insignia” (125-6). 108 While readers of the later Deleuze may balk at positing anything in his work as giving subjective consistency, we should remember that even in his later work he guards against absolute deterritorialization. For Lacan, the sinthome emerges in his thinking as the recognition that the subject needs a ground even as it is always ungrounded.
always present alongside the subject’s formation; it, too, has its root in the same materiality that produced whatever decapitated subject comes to think it. Similarly, the *sinthome*, as the symptom that holds the subject together, has its roots in the materiality of the subject imposed upon by the signifier. It is my view that these are homologous and provide complementary ways to explain each other, though after further argument in my next chapter, I will shift to a stronger claim. The Idea, it might seem, is fully virtual, but such a view ignores how the Idea continues to erupt through encounters with sensibility, which then generates the process anew. Even though the *sinthome* is explained only with respect to the psychotic, what it reveals for Lacan is a broader structural use of the symptom, which is that it is the element that links the registers of the subject together, just like the Idea holds together (even as it disrupts) the stages of the subject. Both, then, emerge as structures that link together, ground and unground, and that enable thought to think. To quote Deleuze, “[T]hought thinks only on the bases of an unconscious, and thinks that unconscious in the transcendent exercise.” And we could just as easily imagine Lacan writing what follows: “another always thinks in me, another who must also be thought.” While I am arguing that the Idea and the *sinthome* perform the same function, my argument in my next chapter will further demonstrate why we need to read Lacan and Deleuze together, rather than simply as analogous. What I will show is that Deleuze and Lacan complete each other to give a robust account of sexuation that neither fully argues for alone, and I have tried in these chapters to lay the groundwork for that.

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109 This idea is carried over into his work with Guattari with absolute and relative deterritorialization and reterritorialization.
110 *DR*, 199-200.
111 Ibid.
What I want to point out in this comparison are not only the similarities, but a way to show how Ideas work. Lapoujade argues that Deleuze intends for us to think “the Idea as matter” which continually becomes embodied in and through individuation: there is a flux, i.e., “flow of ideal matter” that, through the dynamic and static geneses, becomes the Idea that takes on its determination.\footnote{Lapoujade, 124.} The sinthome, too, which emerges for the subject as its particular symptom, is a sort of anchoring, open-ended response to the original trauma of becoming.\footnote{Miller: “the symptom is that which does not stop writing itself” (71).} When Deleuze argues that “there is necessarily something cruel in this birth of a world which is a chaosmos,” he is indicating some original trauma, a kind of terror that goes along with “experimenting with movements that would be incompatible with an organized body or with articulated thought.”\footnote{DR, 219; Lapoujade, 127.} Eyers argues that “the power of the sinthome lies both in its capacity to hold the subject together and in the threat that it might at any point come apart.”\footnote{Eyers, 158.} This underwrites the subject in all cases: for Deleuze, the Idea “is the potentiality that accompanies every actual existence,” which is, if my argument about structure above is right, always an undoing and a redoing.\footnote{Lapoujade, 125.}

If in Deleuze, this thought emerges below the surface, I would argue there is also a sort of jouissance in the Idea, a jouissance in the subject’s relation to the real. Object a as the cause of desire comes about through the subject’s becoming-in-language; there is therefore a relationship between language and object a, and this of course in part explains the jouissance of Joyce’s sinthome. “The sinthome is precisely a structure, and this
structure is in itself an enjoyment,” Hoens and Pluth maintain. Similarly, Miller argues, the symptom is “the way in which each subject enjoys his unconscious insofar as the unconscious determines him.” How do I justify this interpretation of jouissance in the Idea in Deleuze’s own texts, rather than simply through comparisons to Lacan? If we return to *Difference and Repetition*, in his account of the second passive synthesis, Deleuze argues that the partial and virtual objects are created as a result of the lack of satisfaction in the real object (which we could see as the alienation of the child from the mother as described above). These are coterminous with “Melanie Klein’s good and bad object,” Winnicott’s “transitional object,” Freud’s “fetish object, and above all Lacan’s object a.” The virtual objects that provide partial satisfaction for the child after the mother-child continuity is broken cause desire (this is why Lacan argues that the gaze and the voice of the mother, alongside the good or bad breast of Melanie Klein, are primary examples of object a). But, once that desire fails to find satisfaction, as we saw earlier, thought turns back on itself, creating and sexualizing the metaphysical surface (which comes to form the completely determined Idea). Since, as Deleuze writes, “these virtual objects are incorporated in the real object” which eventually fails to provide satisfaction, as Lapoujade puts it, “objects are now sexualized by the … ‘Ideas’ that they express, and

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117 Hoens & Pluth, 12.
118 Miller, 71. Interestingly, in Seminar XXIII, Lacan argues for the primacy of orifices both for language and the body: “It is because the body has several orifices—the most important of which is the ear—that what I have called the voice has a response in the body” (9). Similarly, Deleuze says in the *Logic of Sense* that our erogenous zones form as gradations of intensities along these orifices (225). Considering speech involves the mouth and the ear, it wouldn’t be hard to see, for Deleuze alongside Lacan, an eroticization of language: an enjoyment in the Idea of language, in “the continuous sonorous flux” which becomes determined into the linguistic idea through the reciprocal determination of phonemes which result in morphemes as completely determined (*DR* 203).
119 *DR*, 101, my italics.
by nothing else.” If Ideas are cruel and traumatic, if they unite but also undo the subject, and if they are also sexual, then Ideas have exactly the same function as the sinthome: to ground and unground the subject through a cruel sense of enjoyment. Thus, I argue again that Deleuze and Lacan complement each other in that the sinthome offers us a way to view the Idea as both material and sexual, as well as showing the role both have in the generation of the new, in the constant open-ended becoming that Deleuze champions. More than this, I will argue in the next chapter that reading Deleuze and Lacan together offers us a fuller account of sexual difference than we might get otherwise. This will involve reading the Deleuzian geneses into Lacan’s theory of sexuation in Seminar XX, and provides a complete account of Deleuzian sexuation. That is, Deleuze has provided us with the immanent generation of the Idea of sexuation from the beginning of the dynamic genesis through the static genesis, animated as it is by the castrated phallus. What I think remains to be seen, and where Lacan will come into play further, is how the now-structured sexual Idea continues to perform its role as Idea. That is to say, we still need to see how sex traverses the subject from the first stage of the dynamic genesis to the Idea and back again.

**THE IDEA, THE SINTHOME, AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE**

In this chapter I have explained the following: 1) what the completely determined Idea is; 2) how the Idea is determined by a static genesis; 3) how the static genesis emerges from the dynamic genesis that I explained in Chapter Two; 4) how this whole process sexual in nature. Further, by emphasizing the psychoanalytic account and

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120 Ibid., Lapoujade, 117.
Deleuze’s use of Lacan, I have also showed how the Deleuzian Idea and the Lacanian *sinthome* fulfill the same role and indeed are animated by the same originary function, namely, the phallic function. By explaining these congruences, my goal is not simply to point out that parts of their projects are coextensive. What is significant is that they both de-center the subject through parallel arguments, and both find sexuality as one of the driving forces in their projects. In fact, Deleuze’s use of the phallic function will allow me to argue that Lacan’s graphs of sexuation, never mentioned by Deleuze, actually complete his account, just as Deleuze’s syntheses manage to ground Lacan’s graphs. My claim will therefore be that sexuation is *not* epiphenomenal for Deleuze and Lacan in the way that what we call gender identity or even sexual-morphology-as-sexual-difference is. What remains to be seen is what any of this means for us as *subjects*. What effect does this argument have, and what does it mean for the original problem of feminist theory? In my next chapter I will turn to Lacan’s still account of sexuation to argue that it *does* have effects, but *only as the repeated instantiation of a failure*, just as Deleuze’s syntheses are always failed syntheses. The failures of sexuation are both internal and external. That is, when for Lacan “there is no sexual relationship,” for Deleuze, this failure is what continues to perpetuate the production of the future. That the *sinthome* and the Idea are so closely aligned will allow me to argue again in the next chapter that Lacan and Deleuze’s projects aim for the same thing, and that the *sinthome* and sexual difference can concretize Deleuze’s own account of thought and the future. Thus, my intent is to show that reading Lacan and Deleuze as filling out each other’s projects can resolve the problem I raised in the first chapter by allowing us to arrive at an account of sexuation that does justice to both sexual difference theory and gender theory.
CHAPTER FOUR

Deleuzian Sexuation, via Lacan

INTRODUCTION

So far, I have shown that Deleuze’s ontology (or, perhaps, onto-logic) is rooted in sex, that Deleuze’s argument depends on psychoanalysis, and that there is a greater consistency between Deleuze and Lacan that is ordinarily believed. Further, I have tried to show, perhaps more explicitly than Deleuze himself does, how thought itself is always marked by a sexual sense. Ideas in Deleuze, if we recall, begin as “muddled” in sensibility and only become completely formed when the self is shattered and the metaphysical surface or plane of thought comes to be out of the sexed geneses. However, Deleuze only takes us so far. Although he provides the ground for this argument in Difference and Repetition and indicates its significance in the last several series of The Logic of Sense, it remains to be seen why this all matters. Ultimately, in response to the problem of Chapter One, I argue that sexual difference does matter, inasmuch as it marks every aspect of the subject, from its pre-individual, larval beginnings through subjective cognition itself. This position does not imply any reductive form of essentialism, as I will argue, since it is rooted in the forms of becoming and ungrounding treated in Chapters Two and Three. I

1 Whether this is because Deleuze did not himself see sexual difference as so central to his project, or whether it is because his focus changed, or simply because he moved away, at least ostensibly, from psychoanalysis, is hard to say. My view is that, whatever the case, reading Deleuze and Lacan together actually helps us to get a more complete picture of both of their projects, along with a new, significant, and materialist reading of the relationship between sexuation, becoming, and thought.

2 In this, as I indicated in the Chapter One, I am to a degree similar to Irigaray (although she may take issue with my use of the phallic function, which I will address in my conclusion) along with Deleuzian feminists like Braidotti and Grosz; however, I differ from the latter in my psychoanalytic understanding of sexual difference and, as I’ve said, my focus on Deleuze’s early work rather than his Guattari texts.
will build on my argument from Chapter Three with respect to the aleatory point as castrated phallus in my proffering what I call *Deleuzian sexuation*. I will argue that the reading of Deleuze and Lacan together, as has been sustained through this dissertation, offers us precisely both a reading of the necessity for sexual difference, a la Lacan, but, when read through Deleuze’s castrated phallus as immanently generated aleatory point, shows us its character as both embodied and as productive.

In showing how Deleuze’s builds on Lacan, I have shown how their accounts can be read together, and I will now argue that they in fact complete each other with respect to the issue sexual difference. In Chapter Three I showed how the Idea and the *sinthome* perform the same function for both thinkers. By the end of this chapter, I will have made a much stronger claim. My argument will be that Lacan offers a necessary completion of Deleuze’s view of sex by further specifying the effects of the phallic function or castration. On the other side, Deleuze helps Lacan’s project by finding a way to ground sexual difference in the body. While of course Lacan does not somehow ignore “the body,” literature on Lacan often tends to reduce the significance of the embodied existence of sexuated beings. On the face of it, that kind of position seems unlikely: how could we have sexual difference without its being enacted by and incarnated in subjects? I would like to provide a few examples that I think show the effacement of the specific individuation of sexuation in favor of broader ontological claims. In *The Democracy of Objects*, Levi Bryant argues that the charts of sexuation have nothing to do with sexual difference and thus are better read as ontological principles, writing “it is not at all clear why these two structures should be called ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’”³ Similarly,

Copjec’s explanation of the charts via the Kantian antinomies, which I will treat below, does not engage with the question of what their antinomial structure means for sexed beings.⁴ In more recent developments, members of the Slovenian school following Žižek also tend to view sexual difference as a fundamental ontological split in Being. Zupančič’s “Sexual Difference and Ontology,” for instance, argues that sexual difference is “the out-of-beingness of being.”⁵ While I find all of these positions compelling and informative (and, in some ways, true), I worry that they may lose an account of sexual difference as it is instantiated in subjects, and thus may lose why and how sexual difference has effects and significance for these subjects. While analysis itself, and Lacanian theory, are concerned with how this is borne out, the theoretical interpretations of sexuation in Lacan have done justice neither to how antinomial sexuation becomes embodied nor to its effects for the subject.⁶ There is a danger in reading Lacan in a way that abstracts from sex in subjects or argues that the materiality of the body is entirely subsumed under the signifier. Likewise, there is a danger in reading Deleuze in a way that privileges an abstract form of “becoming” that loses its roots in the passive syntheses that ground his entire project.

One goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that Lacan’s graphs of sexuation in Seminar XX can work out the full implication of Deleuze’s suggestion that sense is always “also” sexual. That is, I want to argue that Lacan shows us how the structure of Ideas is necessarily sexual. While Deleuze gives us the position that the elements out of which Ideas become structured are sexual, he doesn’t say what sex means for thought,

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⁵ Zupančič, 8.
⁶ One notable exception is Genevieve Morel’s Sexual Ambiguities, trans. Lindsay Watson (London: Karnak Books, 2011) where she argues for three progressive moments whereby a subject “chooses” a sex.
other than claiming that the former forms the conditions for the latter. The covalence between Idea and *sinthome* I demonstrated in Chapter Three was meant to show that *sinthome* and Idea perform the same function for Deleuze and Lacan. As I’ve demonstrated, the phallic function animates Deleuze’s psychoanalytic account of the three syntheses. Following my interpretation of the centrality of the Lacanian phallic function for Deleuze’s argument, I argued that thought itself emerges only through these sexed elements. Furthermore, the phallus intervenes *qua* castration in the third synthesis in Deleuze, which is also when the subject enters into language or the Symbolic. Deleuze brings us this far. However, by turning to Lacan, and justified by Deleuze’s fidelity to Lacan, we can see now what it means for Ideas to be structured sexually. Again, the phallic function will be the key to seeing how the two fit together.

To complete this account, I still need to explain what Lacan means by sexuation or sexual difference. I will do this through a sustained analysis of his graphs of sexuation in Seminar XX. My reading of the graphs is, I argue, concerned with what sexuation means for the embodied subject. This means, first and foremost, that I take seriously the claim that sexuation is a way of relating to *jouissance*. That means sex is actually embodied, but this *also* means that this relationship to *jouissance* will show how the intervention of Lacanian sexuation makes a difference in the way we read Deleuze, because of the way that both involve a back-turning relation between registers, one that is brought about by castration. First I will flesh out the psychoanalytic understanding of sexuation as introduced in the Chapter Three. Second, I will show how Deleuze offers us a way to read sexual difference on the model of becoming without simply reducing it to an epiphenomenal identification. Third, I will show how Lacan’s graphs offer a necessary
differentiation of castration that Deleuze does not indicate. Fourth, I will argue, that there is a foundational relationship between sexual difference and cognition, such that the materiality of sexuation grounds and runs through cognition and back again. I also will argue that the Deleuzian genesis of sexuation gives an immanent account of sexuation, thus further intertwining the projects of Deleuze and Lacan.

In Chapter Three, I argued that sexuation is a structure that coordinates the way in which thought emerges. I argued this by demonstrating that, from the dynamic geneses through the static geneses, Ideas are necessarily sexual. This remains my argument. However, Lacan’s interventions through the graphs give me a way to show how sexual difference or sexuation *remains* this coordinative structure. This involves further elaborating on the role and effects of the phallic function, or the castrated phallus. I think I cannot, with Deleuze alone, keep sexuation as foundational without a greater elaboration of the castrated phallus, and its effects, and this is what Lacan offers. I will argue, ultimately, that sexuation is an Idea, but an Idea more fundamental than any other (at least for the thinking, human subject). To do this, I will argue that the castrated phallus as aleatory point, discussed in Chapter Three, is what enacts sexuation in every subject. All subjects come to be sexuated in accordance with what I’ve argued in Chapters Two and Three, but this does not mean that subjects are sexuated the same. Thus, I will argue that we can understand the way the syntheses that produce the Idea continue to operate in the production of thought from the body. In other words, I read Lacan’s account of sexuation as the completion of Deleuze’s account of the Idea, and this is why I afford it a privileged status over other Ideas. This account also shows us why sex *has* effects rather than *is* an effect. To demonstrate this more concretely and more specifically, I will provide an
extended example of how what I will call “Deleuzian sexuation” might occur in subjects via Deleuze’s brief engagement with Serge Leclaire in *The Logic of Sense*. This will allow me to show how the Lacanian *sinthome* and the Deleuzian dynamic geneses can be read together to give an account of embodied sexuation in its relation to thought. This account will fold the work of all four chapters together to present its account of sex as a kind of necessary, repeated instantiation of a failure that forces thought to think.

**LACAN’S GRAPHS OF SEXUATION**

In Seminar XX, Lacan offers his charts or graphs of sexuation. For now, I will focus on the top half, returning to the lower half later. It is important to explain this chart at length not only because it requires considerable unpacking, but because I think that careful attention to these charts yields a strong argument for reading Lacanian sexuation and the Deleuzian geneses together.⁷

![Graph of Sexuation](image)

For introductory definitions: the left side of this chart is the male side, and the right is the female side, expressed as logical propositions. ∀ is the universal quantifier, suggesting

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⁷ This chart can be found in Seminar XX, 78.
“every,” “all,” or “none.” ∃ is the existential quantifier, suggesting “some,” “one,” “at least,” “most.” The quality of the proposition is that of its copula, is or is not, affirmative or negative. The negative is marked by a bar over its predicate. Finally, Φ is Lacan’s symbol for “the phallic function,” or the function of castration that indicates lack in the subject. Copjec translates this logic into more recognizable language as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Side</th>
<th>Female Side</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is at least one x that</td>
<td>There is not one x that is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is not submitted to the phallic</td>
<td>submitted to the phallic function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Lacan, these are “the only possible definitions of the so-called man or woman portion for that which finds itself in the position of inhabiting language.”

Further Lacan claims that “one is not obliged, when one is male, to situation oneself on the side of ∀xΦx. One can also situate oneself on the side of the not-whole,” which is the feminine side. It is clear that sexual difference is not simply biological—but, nor is it simply textual. Bruce Fink writes, “What Lacan calls masculine structure and feminine structure have to do not with one's biological organs but rather with the kind of jouissance one is able to

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9 Lacan, Encore, 80.
10 Ibid., 76.
obtain. There is not ... any easy overlap between sexuation and 'sexual identity,' or between sexuation and what is sometimes referred to as 'sexual orientation.'"¹¹ We still must decipher what these charts mean for the relationship between sexuation, being, and thought. Before dealing with the meaning of the charts themselves, I need explain its central term: the phallic function.

The phallic function is the function of castration, as I described in the previous chapters. Recourse to the terminology used there will help make sense of this, before we tackle question of sexual difference. As we saw, the child undergoes both alienation and separation (at a time that also corresponds to introduction into the symbolic or language), which means that they have had to sacrifice a certain amount of pleasure: the non/nom-du-père insists on it.¹² This institutes a first sort of lack in the subject which institutes their desire. We then have the formation of object a as the unnamable cause of desire and the phallus as the signifier of desire. The castrated subject is the subject who comes to speak, and is castrated in the very process of coming to speak, in naming desire (nom-du-père). Thus, the phallic function comes to be the name of that desire, “the signifier of desire,” which is simultaneously the alienating function of language. Lacan writes, “the phallus functions as the signifier of the lack of being that is wrought in the subject in his relation to the signifier.”¹³ So, the phallic function indicates the way the subject becomes split or the lack introduced into the subject through the alienating function of language and the separation entailed from the plenitude of the connection with the (m)other. The subject

¹² Lacan is using Φ which refers to symbolic castration, not −φ, which is imaginary castration. Much less is he referring to real castration.
that is castrated is a subject who lacks, but this also produces a remainder, or the unknown
object a that causes desire and sets it in motion.

What is important with respect to the top half of the above graph is that this
absence occasioned by symbolic castration implies the incompleteness of the subject. There
is something about language that prevents enjoyment, or that splits the subject in speech.
“The word kills the thing.” So the subject brought into language is a subject who desires
with a desire that, constitutively, can never be satisfied. Its cause exists only outside of
linguistic access. Furthermore, Lacan’s account of language maintains that the symbolic is
also necessarily incomplete. We have an incomplete subject within the incomplete
symbolic. This is what Lacan means by his paradoxical formulations of sexual difference
above: due to these two correlative incompletions, due to the fundamental metaphor and
metonymy of the linguistic subject, all attempts at satisfaction within the symbolic fail.
Not only this, but they fail in two ways, masculine and feminine. “Masculine” and
“feminine” here refer only to the way in which the subject responds to symbolic castration
and thus refer to two ways in which people inhabit the symbolic and the two types of
jouissance that can be obtained.14

I want to emphasize that Lacan’s account implies non-totality or openness that is
brought about by a constitutive paradox. Further, this openness is characterized by failure.
If we recall, Deleuze’s third synthesis, as well as his reading of Oedipus, are also
characterized by failure. I will argue below that these failures, read together, provide more
complete accounts of sexual difference for them both. The goal here is to show what it is
about sexuation that matters and how we can arrive at an account of it that responds to the

14 Fink, “Knowledge and Jouissance” in Reading Seminar XX, eds. Fink & Suzanne
concerns of both theorists of sexual difference and theorists of gender, as I described in Chapter One. I will argue that Lacan’s account of sexuation can be read as becoming instantiated through Deleuze’s third synthesis, the failed synthesis of thought. Thought and sexuation come into being in the same motion, so to speak, and are both, as I wrote above, failures. This will take some explanation, after I first lay out first what Lacanian sexuation is for subjects and second how it is marked by twin failures. Then, I will show how these failures demonstrate that sexuation is an Idea in the Deleuzian sense, and an Idea more fundamental than any other, because sexuation qua castration is what enables the formation of any Idea.

First, I will discuss the ways Lacan’s graphs map out this failure. Each is marked by a necessary undecidability: that all men are “submitted to the phallic function” is coupled with the fact that “there is at least one man who is not submitted to the phallic function,” and thus the “all” is a curiously non-totalizable totality. Similarly, for a woman, “not one … is not submitted to the phallic function” while at the same time “not every … is submitted to the phallic function.” That is, each sexed subject position is marked by an internal failure, an irresolvable antinomy. Further, we will see after this that there is a failure between sexed subjects. Let us take each side in turn.

**Male Side**

The male side of the charts indicates that there is an exception to phallic castration, that is, there is at least one “man” not subject to castration. For Lacan, there is no actually

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15 Copjec famously explains these charts through the Kantian antinomies: the male side refers to the dynamic antinomies and the female side the mathematical antinomies. That is, the male side is complete only with an exception or prohibition (e.g., Kantian freedom) and thus male desire is prohibited desire; the female side is never complete, not-whole, not-all, and thus impossible or infinite (allowing for Lacan’s equation of the woman both with the “plus-one” and association with God).
existing speaking subject who is not subject to castration in some way, so, what he means here is that we have the law of a constitutive exception. This allows for the possibility of an *imagined* totality, but only because something has been excluded from it which sets its boundaries; or, that is, it is the condition for the possibility of the closed set. One way to think of this would be simply relational: the definition of a group or a category is to a degree determined by what it excludes.¹⁶ However, the reading most proffered here is one that finds its roots in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*.¹⁷ In these texts, Freud postulates the myth of a Primal Father who has access to all women. He, that is, has unlimited *jouissance*, including incestuous relations that fulfill the always-precluded desire for the mother. For any castrated subject, as we know, something must be lost: desire is never really satisfied.

I hold the significance of the Primal Father as not only a logical or structural necessity. In my view, the myth of the Primal Father *does* establish these structural boundaries of the masculine subject, but more significantly, it also serves in the role of *fantasy*. The projection of this myth serves (at least) two functions for the castrated masculine subject. First, it creates a myth of fullness or plenitude that placates the subject’s sexual anxiety. Lacan writes in Seminar X that “anxiety is the truth of sexuality” [...] The phallus, where it is expected as sexual, never appears except as lack, and this is

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¹⁶ Here we might see Irigaray’s (and others’) excoriation of “masculinist” thinking as having only rigid and impenetrable borders (just like masculine sexuality), meaning that their identity is upheld only through a violent exclusion.

¹⁷ A clear and convincing reading of this, while not discussing Lacan explicitly, can be found in the Verhaeghe’s chapter “The Rock of Castration” in *Does the Woman Exist?*, trans. Marc du Ry (New York: Other Press, 1999), 205-239. Fink’s “There’s No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship” and Bryant’s “The Four Theses of Flat Ontology” also offer clear discussions of the Primal Father in relation to masculine sexuation.
its link with anxiety.”

So-called male sexual prowess is of course limited by the failures of the male sex organ, not to mention the anxiety many feel with respect to any (possible) sexual encounter. The fact of castration means that, to compensate for this anxiety, one projects a complete subject, someone who does not lack. To put it bluntly: the Primal Father gets all women; God has unlimited knowledge; the Monarch has unlimited power. Thus, the rule of law enacted in the symbolic depends on an exception which also serves as an exception to the failures of jouissance. All men are subject to castration on the condition that one man is not. This means something about the masculine imaginary, which in turn means something about masculine jouissance. Second, recall that, in Freud, the Primal Father is murdered. If the primal father represents the limit and constitutive exception of the castrated subject, why is he murdered? He is murdered because it is only as the dead father that the father can be absolute. Any speaking subject must be subject to castration, so it is only as dead that this omnipotence becomes possible. Paul Verhaeghe argues that this mythic drama of murder is representative of “language itself.” When the subject enters the symbolic, through alienation and separation, which is also when the subject is castrated, the Primal Father also dies. Verhaeghe writes, “the Name-of-the-Father as symbolic father is henceforth the dead father. Dead because it concerns a symbolic function, to which the real father has the same relationship as every subject to any signifier: he disappears beneath it.”

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18 Seminar X, 269.
19 Here we can also see the jealousy involved in the assumption that someone else is enjoying more than I do; indeed, this invective is often used in racist and homophobic tirades, arguments against welfare, etc. Of course this is not meant be a full explanation of any of these phenomena.
20 Verhaeghe, 227.
21 Ibid.
a time, there was a man who had it all…”]) conditions the masculine subject and thus conditions the masculine way of failing to totalize: the dead father “can pop up again with any other signifier.” In learning to speak, the real father and symbolic father coincide. The founding father remains a myth, a promise of exception, ex-isting (rather than existing) beyond the Symbolic. We could also say that this myth allows the excepted father to live on, in a way, indicating the unconscious persistence of the Oedipal drama.

The reason I am expounding more on the role of the Primal Father here than simply referring to the logic of exception is that I believe it necessary to see how sexuation is actually instantiated, and this is a key component of my argument. If the formation of thought for Deleuze happens when the I turns back on the self, the psychoanalytic reading I want to proffer means that there are specific ways that “turn back” on themselves. Thus, this will mean that the way in which one is sexuated will have real, material effects on the entire, cyclical process of sexuation. I don’t believe that Lacan maintains these simply as formalisms, though it is a useful way to try to make sense of this otherwise opaque representation of sex. While the formulas do indicate the structural and logical deadlocks involved in totalization (e.g., all are castrated only on the condition that one is not castrated), it seems to me that for them to have any meaning for the split subject, they also must play a role in its psycho- and ontogenesis. Thus the male side of the graph fails by way of constitutive exception, but the exception posited by Lacan and Freud here is quite literally a failure of jouissance that the subject reckons with in anxiety and fantasy. Thus, the failure of masculine jouissance is a jouissance of prohibition: the castrated man is prohibited from the totalized jouissance of the Primal

22 Ibid.
Father, and this turns up in the anxieties of male fantasy. Eventually, we will see that there is a causal relationship between this failed jouissance and thought, and yet another for the feminine failure. At this stage, we also need to see that the anxiety occasioned by the mythical Primal Father also conditions half of the failure of the sexual relationship, which is the subject of the lower half of the graph.

**Female Side**

On the female side, we have Lacan’s fairly notorious formulation $\neg \forall x \Phi x$. Not-all women are subjected to the phallic function. The “not-all” or “pas-tout” has been the subject of countless interpretations, especially when coupled with his claim that “Woman cannot be said” or “the woman does not exist.” When read with the other part of feminine structure, though, its meaning may become clearer. In writing if the speaking subject “inscribes itself there… it will be a not-whole, insofar as it has the choice of positing itself in $\Phi x$ or of not being there,” Lacan shows that he means that it is not the entirety of a woman that comes under $\Phi x$. This formulation of not-all or not-whole indicates something like “not all of an apple is red.” A woman is not wholly subsumed under the phallic function, which is not the same as saying “there are women who escape castration.” This causes us to read the other feminine formulation as “there does not exist at least one subject who is not at least in part subject to the phallic function.” What this means is that there is something, or some part, of someone with feminine structure that

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23 Seminar XX, 81. The translation of the “pas-tout” itself remains undecided. Fink translates it as “not-whole” sometimes in Seminar XX, as well as saying “not all of a woman comes under the law of the signifier.” For a brief discussion of this issue, see Russell Grigg’s “Lacan and Badiou: The Logic of the Pas-Tout,” Filozofski vetnik Vol. 6 (2), 2005: 54-55.

24 Seminar XX, 80.

25 This reading is derived in part from Fink, The Lacanian Subject, 112.
escapes the phallic function. Not-all, or not the whole of, the woman is not subject to
castration.\textsuperscript{26} That implies something excessive or “beyond” about feminine jouissance. (I
will explain this claim when I turn to the lower half of the graph.)

What this means is that the feminine side is not characterized by the logic of
exception and thus that feminine jouissance fails in a different way than masculine
jouissance. If there must be an exception for there to be a closed set according to Lacan’s
logic, and if there is no exception for the feminine, then female side is not-whole. “Not-
whole” here is meant not in the sense of lack or incompletion (at least any more than any
other subject), but in the sense of not being universal. “It will not allow for any
universality.”\textsuperscript{27} We therefore cannot establish a class of women in the same way we can
establish a class of men, bounded as it is by the law of exception. Thus, we can understand
Lacan’s claim that Woman does not exist: a closed set of women, a totality, does not exist.
Just as Kant resolves the mathematical antinomies by saying we cannot take the world, for
instance, as a thing in itself, so, too, can we not take Woman to be a category in itself.
Rather than universal, those on the feminine side are singular. As Levi Bryant writes,
“They form an open set without any shared or overarching predicate defining a
universal identity, thereby undermining any pretension to essence or identity.”\textsuperscript{28}
Rather than the mythical Woman, the eternal feminine, we have women, to be taken
one-by-one.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} However, she does not completely elude castration, because otherwise she would be
psychotic.
\textsuperscript{27} Seminar XX, 80.
\textsuperscript{28} The Democracy of Objects, 256. On this issue, Verhaeghe and Declercq in “Lacan’s
Analytic Goal: Le Sinthome or the Feminine Way” in Thurston suggest that the
possibilities afforded by the feminine position may mark the end of analysis.
\textsuperscript{29} Seminar XX, 10.
We have here another antinomial deadlock or failure in conceiving of the 
woman, just as we did with the masculine. The masculine can exist only via 
exception, while the woman does not exist at all. The masculine is fully subjected to 
the phallic function, while something of the woman escapes. What does this mean for 
female jouissance? If there is something that escapes the logic of the signifier (which 
is what is enacted in castration), there is something that exceeds language, something 
ineffable about a (possible) feminine jouissance.

Before I turn to the lower half of the graph, I’d like to indicate here why I find it 
important to engage in this sustained exegesis. Because of their complexity, the graphs 
bring together all the different elements that I’ve so far introduced: desire, object a, 
language, jouissance. This is important for recognizing the interaction between these 
different kinds of elements for Lacan’s understanding of sexuation. Sexuation means 
something for “male” and “female” subjects as they actually exist as kinds of castrated 
subjects and this failure as castration is what propels them forward. That sexuation is 
conditioned by both internal and external failures will, ultimately, provide the same kind 
of covalence between Deleuze’s failed third synthesis and thought as obtained between the 
sinthome and the Idea. After I present my interpretation of the failure of the sexual 
relationship, I will return to Deleuze to show how Lacanian sexuation as I’ve explained it 
completes the Deleuzian geneses explained in Chapters Two and Three. This lower part of 
Lacan’s graph also will help us to further inflect the entirety of the Deleuzian geneses with 
sexual difference. Furthermore, it will allow me to return to the Idea-sinthome relation to 
demonstrate why I indicate that sex should carry the weight I’ve argued for throughout 
this dissertation.
THE LOWER HALF: THE FAILURE OF THE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

With the dual antinomies of sexuation in mind, I want to turn to the lower half of Lacan’s graph, which will also help to explain his notorious claim that “there is no such thing as a sexual relationship.” This can be said because “one can indicate the structures that govern the relations between the sexes by referring simply to the phallus’ function.” So far we have seen that sexuation for Lacan is both a logical formulation and a subject position that comes into being upon castration. That is, sexual difference marks two different responses to the phallic function, to castration, and to the introduction into language. However, these ultimately correspond to two different modalities of failure: as Lacan puts it, “there [is] a male way of botching the sexual relationship, and then another.” Let us recall that object a comes into being as the cause of desire when the subject learns to speak. The phallus is the signifier that names the lack that is brought upon the subject through castration and is thus the signifier of desire. We thus have two Lacanian registers operating here: the Real (object a) and the Symbolic (Φ). We should note that underneath the masculine side we have $ and Φ, which are both in the register of the symbolic. That is to say, men are fully subsumed under the phallic function. On the feminine side, we have object a, Lα, and S(A), or the signifier of the lack in the other. These fall on the side of the Real. Because my project is engaging with aspects of feminist philosophy, I will spend more time on the feminine side here, in order to explain how we get an account of femininity that is not simply “hysterical,” “unspeakable,” or some other

30 Ibid., 12.
32 Seminar XX, 58.
33 The imaginary comes into being in the role of fantasy, as the screen that attempts to bridge the gap between the Symbolic and the Real (at least for the neurotic).
reductive stereotype that has been leveled at psychoanalysis. Indeed, it would be odd to champion sexual difference to feminist philosophers simply by taking recourse to a figure who allegedly denies the existence of women altogether, or brings women into speech only to deny them.  

Male Side

Here we have the barred subject $ and the phallic function. The barred subject is the subject split by its entry into the symbolic. The phallic function, too, falls on the side of the masculine, since the masculine is completely subsumed thereunder. The arrow of the barred subject points to object $ as the cause of desire. This means that the barred subject tries to compensate for its lack by pursuing a kind of jouissance to be satisfied by object $ . Inasmuch as this object is irretrievably lost, the subject never satisfies it. Object $ causes the subject to continue to seek it in order to plug up his lack. Since the male-sexuated subject relates to this sought-but-never-found satisfaction as object $ and not as another subject, we can see how the sexual relation fails. Not only does the subject fail to reach completion but he fails in his relation to his partner, whom he sees only through the screen of fantasy (remember that the matheme for fantasy is $ \leftrightarrow a $ ). The kind of jouissance occasioned here is therefore “masturbatory,” Lacan claims. The masculine subject seeks satisfaction not in the other qua other, but other qua lost cause of desire.

Female Side

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34 While I dealt with some of these interpretations in my Chapter two, a more recent argument claims that Lacan simply effaces the feminine entirely is Claire Potter “A Love Letter from Beyond the Grave: Irigaray, Nothingness and La femme n’existe pas” in Engaging the World: Thinking After Irigaray, ed. Mary C. Rawlinson (Stony Brook: SUNY Press, 2016), 91-114.

35 Seminar XX, 75.
On the female side of the chart, we have the barred La, indicating Woman who does not exist, as we saw earlier. From her we have two arrows, towards S(Ą) and towards Φ. There is no established agreement in interpretations of what this means. What does seem to be the case is that the non-totalized woman is directed towards the male side qua symbolic, as well as towards the signifier of the lack in the other. What does this mean? That the woman may seek two modes of jouissance (phallic or non/extra-phallic). Lacan writes “Woman has a relation with S(Ą), and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ.”

To have a relation with Φ means, most simply, that the female subject seeks jouissance with a castrated or male subject (as always, we should recall that “male” and “female” do not refer to biological sex). However, if we recall that the male subject always fails or lacks and never really embodies “phallic power,” the woman’s attempts to relate to this always fail, for the man never lives up to the phallic promise. Further, she can never be the inaccessible object a, by definition. Bryant writes, “In this regard we can see the impossibility of the sexual relation in terms of feminine sexuation, insofar as the feminine sexuated subject relates to his partner not as a subject but as a semblance of

36 See, for instance, Levi Bryant arguing that Φ “does not seem to represent the phallic function” (Democracy of Objects, 258) vs. Geneviève Morel’s, “If she wants to have a sexual partner, she must accept this relation to the phallic function … on the basis of which she has an unconscious that makes her a divided subject” in “Feminine Conditions of Jouissance” (Reading Seminar XX, 82). Even though Bryant is mistaken in his claim, I also reject Morel’s reading. I maintain that we need to read Φ as the phallic function in order to see it as instantiated, because it has to do with how one achieves jouissance. However, Morel’s reading implies that a person structured as feminine is somehow psychotic before relating herself to a man, if it is indeed relating to the phallic function on the male side that makes her a barred subject. This seems to me a misreading of what it means to be structured as feminine, as she does not fully escape castration.

37 Seminar XX, 81.
Φ."38 Thus, the woman, in attempting to be object a (hence a being on this side) which she can never be, too has anxiety about this failure, in relating to the man who aspires to the Φ he can never be.39 As Renata Salecl summarizes, “a man is traumatized by not being able to assume his symbolic role and a woman by not possessing the object of the Other’s desire.”40 Neither relates to the other. There is no sexual relationship.

ON PRIMAL REPRESSION AND OTHER JOUISSANCE

S(A) is a complicated notion in Lacan and seems to shift in meaning through the course of his seminars. I want to develop my view of the relationship between primal repression and Other jouissance or S(A) further because 1) I think the fundamental importance of primal repression for sexuation has not yet been explained, and 2) I will later incorporate that relationship between repression and sexuation into my argument for reading Deleuze and Lacan together when I show that relations to jouissance in Lacan (or sexuation) are the same as the circular motion of the I turning back on the self in Deleuze.

S(A) is usually defined as the signifier of the lack in the other, or as “the signifier of the Other’s desire.”41 This means that there is a lack in the symbolic that is never totalized, which indicates another reason for it to be located on the feminine side of the chart: there is no complete battery of signifiers. It goes on +1. However, in placing S(A) on the side of the feminine and opposed to the phallic function, it is important to see that

38 Bryant, 258-9.
39 Here we can see at least a double sense of what Lacan means when he says “the essence of the object is failure” (Seminar XX, 58).
40 “Love Anxieties” in Reading Seminar XX, 94.
41 For instance, see Fink, The Lacanian Subject, Chapters Five and Eight, as well as Verhaeghe, pp. 38-53.
this is not the same as $\Phi$, which is on the side of the symbolic.\textsuperscript{42} Thus (and this will become significant with respect to Deleuze in what follows), $S(\mathcal{A})$ stands for the signifier attached to the first loss, or primary repression.

I need to elaborate further on this issue and its significance for my project. In *Does the Woman Exist?*, Verhaeghe argues that $S(\mathcal{A})$ refers to the trauma of original passivity, wherein a kind of pleasure that the subject doesn’t control overtakes him. This is the barred $\mathcal{A}$. He suggests that the primary anxiety felt in this overtaking becomes the primary repressed. The Real is thus repressed and what we get instead is $S(\mathcal{A})$, the signifier of that lack. On this model, we can see how Lacan might shift between the signifier of lack and the primal repressed. The signifier of lack (which I’ve argued is the *nom/non-du-père*) institutes this repressed in its instantiation of alienation and separation.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, Verhaeghe offers us the tools to see this shift in registers between Real and Symbolic. I argue, however, that the reason Lacan situates $S(\mathcal{A})$ on the feminine side is not because passivity is feminine, as Verhaeghe suggests, but because he associates it with feminine *jouissance*. I will ultimately associate this with primary repression. If it is Other *jouissance*, it is non-phallic *jouissance*. In what follows I’ll try to explain this linkage without associating passivity and femininity.

As I have claimed, Lacan argues that this Other *jouissance* speaks to the failure of the sexual relationship. That is, it speaks to a *jouissance* not coextensive with phallic *jouissance*, and it indicates something beyond the order of the signifier that is written on

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Cf. Seminar XXIII, 107: “$S$ of barred $\mathcal{A}$ is something altogether different from $\Phi$."
  \item \textsuperscript{43} This shows how the unconscious becomes formed, for Lacan, linking it to a nonsense term, as we will see later with Leclaire.
\end{itemize}
the body. I suggest that this jouissance can only be explained through primary repression. The reason I want to emphasize this is because, again, I want to show how sexuation comes to be in the subject, and thus what it means for any subject. I ground my reading of the relationship between Other jouissance and primal repression in Lacan’s own text. Once I show what I take this to mean, I will, as promised, return to Deleuze to show why this matters for my overall argument.

In Seminar XX, Lacan writes, “repression is produced only to attest, in all statements, … that jouissance is not proper to the sexual relationship. It is precisely because the said jouissance speaks that the sexual relationship is not.” He writes further, “the first effect of repression is that it speaks of something else. That is what constitutes the mainspring of metaphor.” Here, Lacan is continuing his discussion of jouissance and sexuation, or the failure of the sexual relationship. He is referring to Other jouissance as that which cannot be expressed, that which escapes the symbolic. In that regard, it is non-phallic, as the phallic function is what brings one into the signifier as the original metaphor. It cannot be spoken. Inasmuch as it “speaks of something else” which “constitutes the mainspring of metaphor,” it speaks through the symptom. Lacan famously equates the symptom with metaphor. If the symptom is “that which doesn’t work,” then the symptom exists as the effect of primary repression. That is to say, the symptom’s existence means that “the sexual relationship is not,” because the jouissance that is lost through castration, together with responses thereto, comprises the failure of the sexual relationship. Therefore, there is a necessary link between 1) primal repression as that

44 I will discuss more fully the writing of the signifier on the body later in this chapter, specifically by turning to Leclaire.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 62
which exists outside the possibility of signification and 2) the *jouissance* that cannot be spoken, which Lacan calls feminine *jouissance*. This means that the relationship between male sexuated subjects and female sexuated subjects (the failed relationship) fails is based on a fundamental antagonism between responses to primal repression. This reading will be important for my argument in the sections that follow, because of the relationship between primal repression, *jouissance*, and thought in Deleuze.

In claiming that the feminine can cathect to S(A), Lacan is showing the relationship between the unspoken or unsayable feminine *jouissance* (which is un-becumming), its failure to communicate with phallic *jouissance*, and primal repression. He writes, “the *jouissance* that couldn’t be/never fails” correlates to the first repressed. Even if it can’t be spoken, that *jouissance* “doesn’t hush up,” which means that “the first of effect of repression is that it speaks of something else,” through the obfuscating metaphor of the symptom. The fact that women to a degree escape castration means that an unsayable connection to the primal repressed may be possible, hence its being beyond the Symbolic. What I mean here is that the ineffable of feminine *jouissance* has to do with the primal repressed occasioned by anxiety. In relating to the primal loss, we are relating to a kind of *jouissance* “that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not that she experiences it. … She knows it, of course, when it comes. It doesn’t happen to all of them.” In relating herself (sometimes) to S(A), the person with feminine structure can seek a *jouissance* outside the symbolic, i.e., that which cannot be spoken. It thus stands in relation to the primal repressed, and in this way may be how the feminine relates

47 Ibid.  
48 Ibid.  
49 *Seminar XX*, 74.
differently to castration. If, for the man, the father totally disappears under the signifier, and if the paternal metaphor is what coincides with castration, that part of the feminine that escapes castration can seek a kind of *jouissance* beyond the symbolic, and, indeed, beyond the father.\(^{50}\)

I have interpreted Lacanian sexuation in such detail because I think we cannot understand why sexual difference has any relation to thought (psychoanalytically) if we don’t understand what sexual difference is and how it fails on two registers: within sexuation itself and then between the sexual relationship. This is essential to understanding how these Lacanian failures map onto the failed third synthesis to see how they differenciate Deleuzian castration. That is, these failures will demonstrate how the failed third synthesis produces thought. Moreover, my account so far has tried to describe in detail what sexuation means for the subject, which doesn’t mean the way in the subject identifies. Instead, it means what *jouissance* the subject is capable of. As we will see, for Lacan, there is an inescapable connection between *jouissance* and thought. This will turn out to mean, then, that sexuation coordinates one’s relation to thought, which is what I’ve been suggesting throughout. My view as to how this operates will be explained in the next section, wherein I will show how sexuation completes Deleuze’s account.

Within itself, definitions of sexual difference are antinomial, and there is, by definition, no sexual relationship. There is no sexual relationship because of the way subjects respond to castration and the kinds of *jouissance* that become possible therefrom.

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\(^{50}\) This is why Verhaeghe & Declercq argue that the beyond of analysis is to be found in the feminine. This is also why Lacan develops the *synthia que point de capiton* to explain how we can move beyond the Name-of-the-Father. I believe that Deleuze also attempts to do this in *The Logic of Sense* through the notion of “esoteric words.” I will return to this with Leclaire.
Deleuze’s project is also characterized by failure (the violence of transmission between the faculties, the failure of the third synthesis which brings about thought), and I argue that it is the failure of sexuation, and the failure of the sexual relationship, that generates thought and that continues to generate it. Further, both Deleuze’s and Lacan’s their onto-logic and onto-genic accounts recognize the inextricable link between bodies, language, speech, and sexuality. Sex therefore marks the link between thought and the body. As such it forms the site where the generation of the new occurs, conditioned through the continuous replay of the sexed syntheses. If Lacan’s account of sexuation reveals the failure of totalization, it also indicates the nonsense that subtends the subject and generates something new therefrom. As Copjec argues, “sex is the stumbling block of sense.”

DELEUZIAN SEXUATION

So far in this chapter, I have given my reading of Lacanian sexuation. The reason I have done this is because I think its antinomial structure completes the account of sexual difference I’ve been building through Deleuze and Lacan. The question of sex for both Deleuze and Lacan is one of the relation between thought and materiality; for both, the site of thought is not the Cogito or consciousness but the unconscious that subtends it. While I’ve argued that Deleuze set the stage for sexual difference as a generated and generative Idea in both Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense, I believe he doesn’t fully carry through with its implications. Similarly, Lacan has identified several different registers of the subject and has given us an account of sexual difference that

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51 This is of course one of the major aims of The Logic of Sense. We could also remember Deleuze’s argument in Difference and Repetition that it is bêtise that allows us to recognize the field of Ideas.

52 Copjec, 204.
bridges the gap between *jouissance* and knowledge, at least to a degree, but he’s done it in a way that might be seen as divorced from materiality (how dead is the thing under the word?). What I want to suggest is that *together*, Deleuze’s and Lacan’s accounts give us a better picture of materiality, becoming, and thought.

Lacan’s asks, “what possible relationship can there be between the articulation that constitutes language and the *jouissance* that reveals itself to be the substance of thought?” I think this is essentially the same as Deleuze’s question of how thought emerges from the body. In Chapter Two, I explained how Deleuze argues that the body itself comes to be formed through passive syntheses that then gives rise to the possibility for thought at all. Thought emerges through the failure of Oedipus; or, that is, through an account of castration which brings about a kind of subject position. What I intend to emphasize here is that Lacanian sexuation becomes installed in the subject in and through the third synthesis, and thus that it becomes, like the Idea, a self-interrupting structure. However, what I will draw out further is the role of castration, discussed but not fully specified by Deleuze as the necessary condition for thought.

In this section, I show more exactly how it is that Lacanian sexuation completes the account of sexual difference I’ve read through Deleuze I will argue that it is in the third passive synthesis and into the dynamic genesis that Lacan’s formulations become installed in the subject. That is, the subject becomes sexuated in and through the third synthesis. In other words, Lacanian sexuation intervenes here and becomes fully determined as an Idea in the Deleuzian sense. More than that, I argue that the structure of Lacanian sexuation, which occurs as a response to castration, will show us how the whole

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53 Seminar XX, 111.
process of sexuation then continues to structure Ideas in general. This is how Lacanian sexuation completes Deleuze’s account. It also shows how sense and sex are coextensive, as Deleuze argued in *The Logic of Sense*. I do not want to simply tack on Lacanian sexuation to the Deleuzian syntheses. Instead, the Deleuzian geneses, animated by the phallic function, provide a way of understanding the *becoming* of Lacanian sexuation. This will involve more explicitly reading Deleuze and Lacan into each other.

As I return to the first passive synthesis, I will suggest how the account I’ve given in this chapter might help us revisit Ideas and intensities in *Difference and Repetition*. As I explored in Chapter Two, Deleuze argues that it is the “being of the sensible” that begins the whole process of the discordant doctrine of the faculties: the faculty reaches its limit in “that which can only be sensed,” which is “imperceptible precisely from the point of view of recognition.” 54 This is not, of course, an object to be sensed by a recognizing subject; in its unrecognizability, the being of the sensible is a problem. But, what *is* this thing that can only be sensed? Recall that Deleuze claims that it is intensity. To give a retroactive interpretation of what Deleuze might mean through the framework of sexual difference, *what can only be sensed is precisely the primary repressed*, that unknowable and unspeakable thing to which we have access through only either a projected fantasy or an ineffable *jouissance* (*S(A)*). When read back into Deleuze’s account, this means that different responses to castration mean different ways of throwing the dice, so to speak. If this argument is right, and a relationship to *S(A)* marks a sexed position, it will strengthen my claims about the significance of sexual difference for Deleuze, since castration indicates how one responds to and distributes intensity.

54 *DR*, 140.
Hughes argues, “Deleuze merges two traditional understandings of intensity: (1) intensity as the senseless flux of corporeal materiality which affects our body, and (2) intensity as the expression of the quantity of affection, a quantity which engages the attention of the ego and provokes a commitment on its part.” If I am right to read Deleuze and Lacan together, the first form of intensity becomes bound (per the first synthesis) into the possibility of the erogenous zone. I would like to follow Deleuze’s argument that this binding is itself passive, “performed” as it is by larval subjects. If that is the case, that means that in the process of the first synthesis, this binding comprises the erogenous zones, which is to say the erogenous zones are formed prepersonally. That means that the erogenous zones that come to form the surface of the body are themselves composed of intensities that eventually become erogenous, or pleasurable. I want to argue that this passive kind of bodily formulation eventually comes to be something foreign, something that takes over that is unrecognizable; indeed, it “can only be sensed.” In the formation of erogenous zones, then, and even in their production of pleasure, there is a kind of foreign trauma of passivity. Verhaeghe argues, there is something “which gave rise to anxiety as the only possible reaction. We have already described this as the Lacanian Real” which “was always of a passive, unpleasurable and traumatic nature.” If originary passivity causes anxiety in the child and becomes repressed, this intensive fluctuation becomes the primary repressed. Later, during the stage of castration, the way

55 Hughes, 122. He argues this first understanding of intensity comes directly from Freud. While he reads the second as Husserlian, if we still refer to the ego here not as the ego of an active subject but as the ego-in-formation, it could still be passively conceived.
56 Verhaeghe, 39.
57 Ibid., 38.
in which one responds to castration also entails the relation one has to this primary
repressed.

Even before the formation of the erogenous zones, intensity is inflected with
sexual significance which retroactively will take on an even greater role once the Idea of
sexuation becomes fully determined. Remember Deleuze argues that “the surface” of the
body is only constituted as a contraction of bindings, or a concatenation of erogenous
zones that are themselves formed by these intensities. If we recall Deleuze’s claim that the
erogenous zone is a gradation of maximum and minimum, usually around an orifice, we
can see that the intensities in said zones carry erotogenic significance from the beginning.
My argument here is that the passivity that constitutes them also produces anxiety and
thus is the cause of primal repression. Intensity as “the senseless flux of corporeal reality”
already establishes “the Real of the body,” but as something that can only be sensed.\(^{58}\)
This is why Other (*jouissance*), which is connected to primal repression, cannot be spoken.

As I described in Chapter Two, once the erogenous zones have formed, the child
forms virtual objects. To translate this into correlative Lacanian terminology, it is in this
stage of the genesis that *fantasy* becomes possible. This is when the child recognizes the
mother’s absence or the child becomes alienated from the mother. Fantasy is necessarily
virtual, because it comes into being to cover over both the traumatic Real of the first
synthesis, and because it has virtual, rather than real, objects as its cathexes. Fantasy
allows one to deal with trauma by relating oneself to the cause of its desire. However, the
cause of this desire is always lost, and thus, we have access to it only through the virtual

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 12.
The fantasy of the Primal Father, for instance, becomes a virtual cathexis that the male-sexuated child eventually reckons with.\textsuperscript{59} As I’ve made clear, it is castration or the third synthesis that brings Deleuze and Lacan together. We have seen that, in Deleuze, the third synthesis is the synthesis of thought. This happens when, in his account, the Oedipal series and the erogenous series attempt to coordinate under the phallus of coordination. In this movement, according to Deleuze, the phallus \textit{becomes} the object = x or the phallic function. In the Lacanian account, we have separation, wherein the \textit{nom-du-père} intervenes. As Deleuze and Lacan both have it, it is here that the (castrated) phallic function intervenes, the desire of the child is set into motion, and \textit{object a} is irretrievably lost. As I explained in Chapter Two, this produces thought, the Eternal Return, and the future as the production of the new. In Chapter Three, I showed that this produces the elements that then form Ideas. My argument there was that Ideas are self-interrupting structures that come to be in and through the intensities that are released when the self is shattered. The way Ideas come to be structured is in and through the aleatory point, which is the castrated phallus or object =

\textsuperscript{59} Recall Miller’s claim that alienation foregrounds the subject of the signifier (it prevents psychosis) and separation foregrounds the subject of \textit{jouissance} (the subject who is fully separated from \textit{object a})

\textsuperscript{60} For Lacan, it is possible simply to end at alienation, or the first stage of castration. That would cause the subject to become perversely structured, rather than neurotically structured. I am streamlining what I’ve called the Lacanian genesis here in order to show how Lacan and Deleuze progress similarly and ultimately end with accounts that benefit the other, at least as far as an account of sexuation. Deleuze seems to privilege perversion in his early work and psychosis in his work with Guattari. For the purposes of my argument, the distinction between each three psychic structures is not especially important, because one’s structure as neurotic, psychotic, or perverse does not necessarily bear on one’s sexuation. For more on the relation between sexuation and psychic structure, see Morel’s \textit{Sexual Ambiguities}, Lacan’s “Remarks on Daniel Lagache’s Presentation ‘Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure’” in \textit{Ecrits}; Catherine Millot’s \textit{Horsexe} (New York: Autonomedia, 1989); and Patricia Gherovici’s \textit{Transgender Psychoanalysis} (New York: Routledge, 2017).
x. So, it is here, where castration or the phallic function intervenes, that Lacanian
sexuation becomes installed in the subject. I claim: the phallic function as it occurs in the
third Deleuzian synthesis that is the same phallic function that occasions Lacanian
sexuation. In my brief recap of the three syntheses, I have suggested how the elements of
Lacan’s account can emerge from Deleuze’s. In what follows, I will argue that we can
read Lacanian sexuation into Deleuze’s third synthesis, primarily by showing how the
phallic function that causes sexual difference is the aleatory point that causes the
distribution of intensities into Ideas.

For Deleuze, the castrated phallus emerges and the self turns on itself and releases
intensive elements that are then arranged by the aleatory point, which is also the castrated
phallus. Lacan argues that the phallic function, or castration, determines one’s sexed
position. So, castration determines sex for Lacan, as for Deleuze the “phallus …
determines the differential position of sexed characters in each series.”61 Once castration
intervenes, this means *more* than just that the self is shattered and intensities become
distributed. Indeed, how could this tell us anything beyond the moment of castration? The
Deleuzian geneses in their psychoanalytic recapitulation could, despite his insistence,
simply be read in a *linear* fashion, which tells the story of the development of a subject
established through these syntheses: first, the body forms erogenous zones; second, it
forms virtual objects; third, it shatters and the metaphysical surface is produced. However,
one the erogenous zones are formed, once castration occurs, it’s not immediately obvious
how this keeps thought going. Haven’t orifices been established? Hasn’t the subject
become castrated? I think again the psychoanalytic account gives us a way to show how

61 *DR*, 107.
the geneses continue to repeat themselves. I will argue that it is through the structure of sexuation that this repetition happens, and that we need this structure of sexuation to show how Ideas are formed and continue to be formed.

The lynchpin of this argument is the castrated phallus. Note that, for my purposes, the “phallic function” is equivalent to symbolic castration, which is equivalent to the Deleuzian “castrated phallus.” I’ve shown that the castrated phallus has this role in Chapters Two and Three. It shatters the self, it rolls the dice and it also determines sexed subjects, who take up these positions in response to castration. If we follow Lacan, all are not castrated equally, so to speak, although all must respond to castration. Deleuze’s geneses end with castration, but he does not say anything about the subjects that become castrated or the function of castration. To put this another way, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze does not tell us about the instantiation of sex, though he does briefly allude to it. In *The Logic of Sense*, he insists upon this instantiation even while failing to make it explicit: Oedipus is not without sexed implications. Lacan’s graphs of sexuation supplement Deleuze, because they tell us more about the aftermath of castration, suggesting more about the way in which the castrated phallus distributes singularities through a relation to *jouissance* via the primal repressed.

If the subject undergoes castration, or is subjected to the phallic function, the subject responds to this in a “male” way or a “female” way. As we have seen, this does not mean anything about one’s anatomy or even one’s identification; it only means that one can obtain one kind of *jouissance* or another, because one responds to the lack that
castration engenders in one way or another.\textsuperscript{62} Just as not all are castrated equally, be they phallic or extra-phallic, not all lacks occasioned by castration are equal. So, the implications of castration from Lacan are that one responds to it and it determines the \textit{jouissance} available to one. For Deleuze, “in line with Lacan,” this produces thought, “at the end of Oedipal development.”\textsuperscript{63} Thought in general is therefore produced out of sexed elements through the castrated phallus, and Ideas as self-interrupting structures are produced out of these elements—\textit{but}, they are self-interrupting only because of the intervention of the phallic function. What Lacan offers us is a way to read castration as a kind of permanent gap that enacts two kinds of (failed) responses. These differences in responses more fully flesh out the way in which the third synthesis in Deleuze fails. This also gives us a better sense of how this is continuously enacted every time thought is forced to think, since, according to Deleuze, thought is forced to think through the being of the sensible, which is precisely the primal repressed.

Castration brings about a failure of unification, or a failure at concentricity. For Lacan, there are different ways of failing and these failures are sexual in nature. For Deleuze, whose disharmonious geneses are sexed from beginning to end, the very sexed nature of geneses is what generates thought. It also means that Ideas in their virtuality are produced out this failure, which is occasioned by the incompleteness of the subject that the

\textsuperscript{62} As for how the subject comes to “assume” a sex, a male or female position in Lacanian psychoanalysis, see Morel’s “Psychoanalytic Anatomy: The Three Moments of Sexuation.” However, as far as I understand it, there is no “reason” one assumes one position or another that could be ascribed universally to anyone with any anatomy.

\textsuperscript{63} Schuster, 84.
phallic function engenders. This function is what creates the void or the lack in the subject. This brings us back to Deleuze’s claim that the castrated phallus is the *aleatory point itself*. When we continue to read Lacan into the third synthesis, we add a further dimension to this failure, or we double it. There are male ways of failing and female ways of failing. This is just what Lacan means in the top half of his graph: there is a constitutive (but imagined) exception to a totality, or there is the nonexistence of a totality. This means that this kind of failure is instituted in subjects in different ways, yet they both fail *qua* castrated. That is why I discussed their antinomial structure at length above as well as the way in which that antinomial structure brings about a kind of fantasy and/or a kind of *jouissance*. The failure of the subject to coincide with him/herself is a function of the failure of the passive syntheses, and the intervention of castration that causes sex also enables thought. More than this, the way each subject deals with castration—either phallic *jouissance* through fantasy in a screened relation to object a, or extra-phallic *jouissance* in a relationship to S(A)—means that the aleatory point that throws the dice throws differently. If materiality grounds and runs through thought as Deleuze argues, then the way in which the aleatory point distributes these elements is, in fact, a function of the way in which one responds to castration. In other words, the aleatory point itself comes to be in and through castration and the response thereto coordinates the relation one has to the intensities, erogenous zones, etc., that have conditioned it. Sexuation as a response to castration creates the mode by which the subject becomes capable of thought. Moreover,

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64 In a sense, Deleuze is arguing for a kind of *immanence* of the phallic function, which I argue further shows how he “grounds” Lacanian theory. I will explain this more fully when I turn to Leclaire.
that castration is the aleatory point means that sexuation, as the response to castration, coordinates how thought will continue to occur.

Since, in one sense, castration occurs only once, or, at least, first, a subject responds to it and becomes “male” or “female.” However, because castration has been enacted, that lack is permanently installed. The subject is always castrated, and castration is the void is what conditions the repetition of the syntheses. This is why sexual difference is an Idea more fundamental than any other. There would be no aleatory point without castration. It is not simply one Idea among others, like one more unsolvable problem.

From its origins in intensity and materiality, to the necessarily sexed singularities of Ideas, to the way in which Ideas become structured by castration, sexuation begins as a muddled problem only to become the coordinating structure through which any further Idea comes to be formed. However, because of its nature as self-interruption (since it is the empty square), the Idea of sexuation is precisely how thought continues to think. Thought is motivated by its necessarily sexuated origin and its necessarily sexuated kind of lack.

This also shows us how thought remains tied to its origins in materiality. The erogenous body and the metaphysical surface operate in a kind of loop or cycle; even though the original instance of castration occurs as the subject comes into language, that castration remains with the subject as one who is structured in response to it. This whole process incessantly turns back on itself in the constant tension of the interplay between the erogenous body and the plane of thought, produced through sexuation. Aaron Schuster describes this “exquisite dissonance” as follows:

The body rises to the level of thought, yet without ripping apart and plunging the cerebral surface back into the corporeal depths. [It] is a new beginning—or rather, it
is the repetition of a beginning that never really ended or began … circling back to
the primitive body-in-pieces, then to the physical surface of pregenital and genital
sexuality, and onward to an abstract and incorporeal plane.  

If I am right that the phallic function in the third synthesis is the castrated phallus as
aleatory point, then the void that throws the die is forever more occasioned by the kind of
lack, or the sexuation, one has. It matters what kind of jouissance one can have because
that is precisely the way that thought and the body interact. If my reading of primary
repression is correct, that means that male and female sexuated subjects have the
possibility of relating differently to the constitutive intensities that begin the whole
process. It does not mean that men and women by definition think differently. Instead, it
implies the incompletion all subjects, their mismatch with themselves, as a kind of
antagonism that continually produces difference as it produces Ideas.

Moreover, because each subject fails “internally,” the relation between subjects
also fails. In other words, the failure of the sexual relationship is a consequence of
castration and the way in which one responds to it. The myth of completion, of two-
becoming-one, does not compensate for this failure. Because there is no sexual
relationship, there is a doubled sense of failure that perpetuates the subject forward.

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65 Schuster, 84-5.
66 Lacan’s Seminar VIII, The Transference, as a reading of Plato’s Symposium, discusses
this myth at length. Not coincidentally, it is here, in his discussion of love, wherein he
also discusses the lost object a as the agalma.
67 I find myself in the uneasy position of agreeing with Žižek to sum up my position with
respect to both Deleuze and Lacan: “far from being normative, sexual difference is thus
pathological in the most radical sense of the term: a contingent stain that all symbolic
fictions … try in vain to obliterate. Far from constraining in advance the variety of sexual
arrangements, … sexual difference is the traumatic cause that sets in motion their
contingent proliferation.” Zizek, “The Real of Sexual Difference” in Reading Seminar
XX, 72
trauma of sexual difference—read here as the trauma of repression and of castration—is precisely what enables the perpetuation of difference. A subject’s discordance within itself, including both the disharmony between its faculties, the discord between subjects is completely sexual and occasioned by a sexual lack.

I am claiming that sexual difference (as sexuation) forces thought to think. I am further arguing that the Idea of sexual difference provides both the form and the content of the becoming of thought. The content is provided by the intensities that are first bound and then continue through the geneses. The form is provided by the psychic structures that occur through and after castration. Hughes writes, “the present remains a senseless flux of intensity without Ideas, but the future remains a lifeless possibility … if it doesn’t ‘plug into’ intensity.” 68 By equating the present with the flux of intensity and the future with Ideas, we can see he suggests a position that works well with mine. The present is the time of binding, of erogenous zones; the future is that of the shattered self, of desexualized energy, of Ideas. The dynamic geneses provide the intensities, while Ideas provides the structure. If my argument has been correct, we must see structure as sexuated.69 Since each sexuated response is a failure, sexual difference never becomes deterministic. It perpetuates itself through time but never in the same fashion. This is all to say that Deleuze’s account of the generation of the body emerging from intensity is 1) the ground of primal repression; 2) the ground for the Idea as emergent from sexual difference which itself emerges from the process he has articulated in the three syntheses. Thus we see sexuation as an Idea, or a structure that grounds and ungrounds itself in and through its own becoming. As I’ve tried to demonstrate, we must see this Idea as foundational: sexual

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68 Hughes, 124.
69 Which, I will argue in the end, may be equated with sexuation qua sinthome.
difference is the Idea par (s)excellence, because it is in and through sex that the series
generate, resonate, and turn back on themselves. This reading allows us to see more
concretely what Deleuze means by referring to the “fractured I” and the “shattered self.”
The I is split by castration and as is such non-coincidental, and the self is shattered into the
partial zones out of which it is constituted.

I would also like to suggest that, while this account matters for thought, it also
matters for knowledge. In his gloss on the Nicomachean Ethics, Lacan argues that
Aristotle’s inquiry into the good begins with a “failing, deficiency, something that isn’t
working out.” Thus, as with all subjects, Aristotle is motivated by a lack that propels him
to seek satisfaction via inquiry. The implication here is that, as Fink writes, “knowledge
begins with a deficiency of jouissance.” What this indicates is that lack of satisfaction
propels one forward. Thinking emerges from the fact that the subject is not satisfied. It
may be easy enough to see this: whatever loss the subject suffers through coming into
language means that there is an irreducible remainder that s/he seeks to make herself
complete, which motivates both desire and determines the kind of jouissance one can
attain. It also means that one finds a kind of satisfaction in where the lost jouissance goes,
which is language, the Other which is both cause and recipient of this surplus. Fink
argues, “the sacrifice involved in castration is to hand over a certain jouissance to the
Other and let it circulate in the Other.” “This may take the form of writing or of the

70 Seminar XX, 55.
71 Fink, “Knowledge and Jouissance,” 34.
72 “Thinking” here refers to both unconscious thought and imaginary thought, though of
course Lacan separates these two. However, both are motivated by the same lack, I would argue.
establishment of a ‘body of knowledge.’” The Other demands my sacrifice, the loss of the pound of flesh, the forced choice, and I give it to the Other by investing my jouissance into language, or into a product outside of myself. If there are (at least) two ways of responding to castration (sexual difference), there are (at least) two kinds of motivating jouissance. If knowledge begins with a deficiency in jouissance, and there are two kinds of jouissance, then what emerges from these deficiencies might also be of (at least) two kinds.

In the next section, I show how we could see this cyclical structure of body-sex-thought at work. I do this by turning to Deleuze’s page-long engagement with Serge Leclaire, which demonstrates more concretely how I see this process occurring. This also will serve to show why I find it so important to consider sexuation as a structure that is actually instantiated and not simply an ontological principle. In this regard, I will also be showing how Deleuze’s account can offer an immanent account of castration; that is, one that comes into being from the very material that produces it. I will briefly return to my discussion of the sinthome in Chapter Three to show how Lacan himself may be moving towards a similar account of castration in Seminar XXIII. I do this to reinforce the view that Deleuze and Lacan’s projects complete each other. This will also imply a kind of productive dehiscence of their unity. Deleuze’s view of castration, generated from

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73 Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 99. Thinking and knowledge are not the same for either Deleuze or Lacan; however, what I want to show is the effect that this process of sexuation has on the subject, and the subject does contain these different registers.

74 While feminine jouissance may be ineffable, that does not mean that what it spurs on is ineffable. When, further, I say “at least,” that means that the “beyond” of the phallus have any number of implications, especially considering its infinity or at least unboundedness. Further, That the lost jouissance might be found in writing may well show how Lacan argues that writing establishes Joyce’s sinthome. I will return to this at the end of the chapter.
difference, doesn’t sufficiently account for its own differentiation, while Lacan does offer us a differenciacion of castration. Meanwhile, I argue that Lacan’s account of sexuation doesn’t account for its own genesis, which is precisely what Deleuze contributes.

SERGE LECLAIRE: A DRAMATIZATING OF DELEUZIAN SEXUATION

I would like here to demonstrate more specifically how Deleuze and Lacan’s positions work together in the manner I have suggested above—that is, how, when taken together, each improves the other. In part, in this section I am going to show how Deleuze’s account of the syntheses can be read into Lacanian sexuation, just as I tried to read Lacanian sexuation into Deleuze’s syntheses. Lacan himself moves towards the kind of account that I give here, in particular by reworking his understanding of castration and the paternal metaphor. In particular, I am thinking of the shifts that occur in Lacan’s work from the 1950s into the 1970s, where the singular importance of the phallus and paternal metaphors change. Even the transition from the Name-of-the-Father to the Names of the Father indicates that Lacan reworks his understanding of castration. One of the primary arguments I’ve been making is that the phallic function institutes lack, which itself is the aleatory point that allows for thought to occur and recur. Now I will show that my reading can be borne out in Deleuze’s own text. In so doing, I will also be showing what I consider to be so essential: how this theoretical account actually comes to be incarnated. In other words, I think this example shows how what I’ve been explaining actually occurs.

Offering a reading of Serge Leclaire in Series 32 of *The Logic of Sense* (“On the Different Types of Series”), Deleuze recapitulates in psychoanalytic/Oedipal terms the relationship between language, the body, and sexed positions.\(^\text{76}\) I read this section both as a demonstration of how Deleuzian sexuation comes into being, and as Deleuze’s attempt to give an immanent reading of castration. That is, rather than the Name of the Father simply intervening from without (“Dad says no!”), Deleuze’s reading of Leclaire allows us to see how castration is not only exogenously imposed but also has its own genesis. This will help clarify the relationship between Ideas, sexuation, and the *sinthome*, which will knot the loops of my argument together.

Series 32 is concerned with the development of language into thought along the axis of the dynamic genesis. While I will not fully engage Deleuze’s account of language in this series, I take this section as emblematic of Deleuze’s immanent account of castration. Recall that castration for Lacan coincides with the subject’s introduction into language. I think Deleuze suggests the possibility of an immanent generation of Lacan’s own account of the *nom-du-père*, which is often read to be the external intervention of a prohibitive figure. This has the interesting effect of reinforcing *why castration is necessary* for thought, rather than the view than that “lack” is somehow empty or unproductive.

In the Series 32, Deleuze lays out the ways in which the subject is formed through successive stages, coextensive with the dynamic geneses: the series of contracted erogenous zones (first stage of the dynamic genesis/coordination); the series of parental images (second stage of the dynamic genesis/stage of phallic coordination/conjunction);

\(^{76}\) I must credit Collet’s article, referenced a few times in this dissertation, for giving me the idea to turn to Leclaire to further explain intertwining of Deleuze and Lacan.
and the Oedipal series (third stage of the dynamic genesis/stage of the castrated phallus/disjunction). He also maps these stages onto the development of language. He writes, likening “phonemes to erogenous zones, morphemes to the phallic stage, and semantemes to the evolution of Oedipus and the castration complex.”

Here, Deleuze introduces Leclaire in a way, I propose, that allows to read Deleuze back into Lacan, thus supporting my claim that their respective accounts of sexuation complement one another and together provide a more complete understanding of sexuation itself.

Deleuze writes that Leclaire’s *Psychoanalyser* advances the thesis that an erogenous zone “would be marked essentially by a ‘letter’ which, at the same time, would trace its limit and subsume under it images or objects of satisfaction.” Deleuze insists on the relevance of this claim for his own project in *The Logic of Sense*: “It is no longer at all a question of the simple addition of the preceding phonemes, but rather the construction of the first *esoteric words*, which integrate phonemes into a conjunctive synthesis.”

Pointing to one of Leclaire’s examples, “the secret name ‘Poord’jeli’ that a child creates” is a “morpheme” that “refers to the phallus as an agent of coordination.” As an esoteric word, “this series enters into a relation of resonance with another divergent and independent series—‘joli corps de Lili’ (Lili’s beautiful body). The new series corresponds to the third aspect of the sexual position, that is, to the development of Oedipus, the castration complex, and the concomitant transformation of the phallus which as now become object = x” which “plays now the role of a semanteme.”

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77 *LS*, 231.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
are rather difficult to understand, though we can clearly recognize the stages of the
dynamic genesis in this reading. Coupled with these stages we have “letter” corresponding
to “erogenous zone”; “morpheme” with “Poordj’eli”; and the latter’s connection with joli
corps de Lili with “semanteme.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First stage of genesis</th>
<th>Erogenous zone</th>
<th>Letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second stage</td>
<td>Phallus of coordination</td>
<td>Morpheme (Poordj’eli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third stage</td>
<td>Castrated phallus</td>
<td>Semanteme (joli corps de Lili)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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When Deleuze writes that the erogenous zone is marked by a “letter,” he is referring to Leclaire’s argument that “the letter” becomes inscribed on the body as it becomes erotogenic. As with Deleuze, for Leclaire the body is a concatenation of erogenous zones which become demarcated. He gives the example of a mother’s finger caressing the child: the intersection of these differences (for instance, a mother touching a child’s cheek) marks the meeting place “where access to ‘pure difference’ (the experience of pleasure) produced there remains marked by a distinctive trait, a letter [which is] inscribed in this place.”82 Interestingly, Leclaire calls “the experience of pleasure” “pure difference,” which matches up nicely with my argument that intensity in Deleuze has originary erotogenic significance, as well as being a source of anxiety. This “letter” is, for Leclaire, what becomes repressed. “Letter” here is to be taken in its Lacanian sense, where it means the material substrate of the signifier. That is, the pure facticity of the letter, or the simple fact that the letter exists in its differences from other letters, independent of any signification—in other words, the materiality of its sound, or what Lacan calls

“phonation” (this is also what Fink has called “the signiferness of the signifier”). What’s more, as Leclaire writes, “the letter ... cannot be detached from its essential erotogenic value.” Leclaire argues that sounds and erogenous zones become commingled, and “language,” at least in its most rudimentary form, is inscribed on the body, with some a sound or phoneme inscribing itself on these zones of pleasure. We could clarify this with a reading of Lacan’s Mirror Stage. Lacan argues that the mother’s affirmation of the child in the mirror is involved in the child’s misrecognition of itself as Ideal. So, for instance, as the mother holds her child and says, “what a good boy you are, George,” we have the inscription of phonemic elements on the body which are simultaneously erotically charged. Thus there are phonemic elements of the voice of the mother that come to be associated with the body as it comes into being. In other words, the letter and the erogenous zones become coadunate.

These letters “form a layer of nonsense” coextensive with the body qua erogenous. Erogenous zones, each marked by letters, come into contact with each other, but not under any banner of sense or reason. “A global integration of zones could be produced,” Deleuze writes, which can be identified with “an entry of phonemes into more complex elements” and “the problem of phallic coordination.” This is precisely the second synthesis. But how do phonemes come together, and where do they come from? I propose that each erogenous zone that is supposed to be united under the phallus has with it a corresponding letter or phoneme. Let me explain this through an example. In his

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84 Ibid., 53.
85 For Leclaire, as for Deleuze, these zones are defined by their differences and the differences in series.
86 Collett, 107.
87 LS, 231.
invocation of Leclaire, Deleuze asserts “Poordj’éli” to be this bringing together or coordination of a morpheme as a layer of nonsense. But from whence “Poord’jeli”? Leclaire maintains that this nonsense word is the secret nub of his analysand’s psyche. The name of the Leclaire’s analysand is Philippe Georges Elhyani. “Poordj’éli” is therefore the phonic contraction of his given or proper name, or “the secret replica of the proper name,” and Leclaire posits that there is often a “resemblance between a patient’s fundamental phantasm and his name.”

When Deleuze argues that this occurs in accordance with the coordinating phallus, he’s assuming a distribution of different phonemes or letters commensurate with different erogenous zones to be unified into genital sexuality. While neither Leclaire nor Deleuze makes this claim explicitly, if my suggestion above that we read the whole scene along the lines of the affirmation of the mother during the Mirror Stage, it’s not hard to see how these phonemic elements might be inscribed as letters infused with erotogenic significance. “What a good boy you are, Philippe Georges Elhyani!” might suggest that the bolded phonemes are each erotically charged. Thus, when the phallus attempts to bring the erogenous zones together under the genital stage, it also brings these phonemic elements (often related to the name suffused with affirmation) into coordination as this layer of nonsense. The parts attempt to make a whole.

For Leclaire, this morpheme forms the kernel of Philippe’s unconscious, as the instance of the letters in the unconscious. Deleuze jumps to the third stage, that of

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88 Leclaire 81, 83.
89 Leclaire arrives at this interpretation through careful attention to his analysand’s speech, based on vocal patterns and intonations that the analyst picks up. There is thus a chain of meaningless letters strung together that, in their signifierness, come to be seen in his
castration, by mentioning this esoteric word’s connection to a seemingly sensible phrase, “le joli corps de Lili.” This phrase refers to a scene recounted to Leclaire by Philippe during analysis. Lili, “a very close relation,” teased the three-year-old boy flirtatiously through an “affectionate kidding [which] became in subsequent years a complicitous greeting.”

Lili, related to his mother, was married to the first cousin of his father. Thus, through his attraction to her and her repeated flirtation, and their consanguinity, she “wards off and represents … and doubles the dimension of incest.” Lili therefore plays a formative role in the Oedipal drama. The Oedipal prohibition, or castration, plays itself out through her, after the morpheme Poordj’eli becomes nonsensically synthesized.

“Thus,” Leclaire writes, in analysis “when Philippe relates his memories of the beach and the novelty of his gaze on the feminine body, it is the most natural thing in the world to underscore in passing the privileged representation of the ‘corps de Lili’ in the bright sunshine.” We have here Oedipus and castration coinciding with a meaningful phrase, not nonsense—“this representation makes sense.” Thus we are in the third stage of the dynamic genesis, from letters to morphemes to semantemes, correlating to erogenous zones, virtual objects, and castration.

If the morpheme is Poordj’eli, we could isolate it into the phonemes (or letters) p, or, por, d’j, je, el, li, and so on...and it is indeed “li” that allows Leclaire to connect it between all three stages (Philipe, Poordj’eli, Lili). Leclaire thus offers us a model of the inscription of the letter on the body, transmitted through the nonsense morpheme or the dreams, which are connected to his memories of his mother and his mother’s cousin, Lili. For more on this, see Leclaire’s chapter “The Dream with the Unicorn.”

90 Ibid., 72.
91 Ibid., 78.
92 Ibid., 85.
93 Ibid.
esoteric word, and resonating in the space between body and sense in the interaction between the castrated and the coordinating phallus. Deleuze writes that Poordj’eli “causes the two divergent series to resonate” as “a signifier which does not animate the corresponding series without cropping up suddenly in the preceding series,” which indicates the imbrication between the different terms.\textsuperscript{94} Guillaume Collett writes that in saying “\textit{le joli corps de Lili},” Philippe causes “such conscious representations to resonate with the unconscious ones subtending and ultimately supporting conscious discourse, namely with the erogenous letter ‘li’ and more completely with the esoteric word … which covers the erogenous body.”\textsuperscript{95} What this implies is that the conscious representation is in fact underwritten and made meaningful by the stubbornness of the letter written on the body and the nonsense with which it resonates. When Leclaire writes, \textit{“the literal formula gives the representation its singular value,”} he is arguing that the materiality of the signifier (the literal formula) makes the meaningful phrase \textit{“le joli corps de Lili”} significant.\textsuperscript{96} Sense comes to be and is made meaningful only through the persistence of a subtending nonsense, or the phonemes and sites of “stupid” jouissance.\textsuperscript{97} The homophonic similarity between Poord’jeli and joli corps de Lili should have been apparent—but now hopefully that significance for Philippe is clear. The kernel of his unconscious (\textit{Kern unseres Wesen}) has with it erotogenic significance, and thus anything that coincides with the letter engages in this process of resonance. In short, the resonance between the letter of erogenous body and the semantemes of sense is what produces thought \textit{via castration}.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{LS}, 231.
\textsuperscript{95} Collett, 116.
\textsuperscript{96} Leclaire, 85. Original emphasis.
\textsuperscript{97} Lacan often refers to jouissance as that of the “idiot” or as “acephalic.” Cf. Seminar XVII, when he discusses this in terms of the hysteric’s discourse.
Indeed, this is indicated by Lacan in Seminar XXIII, when he writes, “phonation … is the essence of the Φ.”98 The phallic function or castration is enacted through the phonated signifier, and these signifiers get written onto the body as Leclaire has explained.

Deleuze spends only a page on this example, and my explanation of it here does not do even that full justice, since it leaves out key elements of Deleuze’s account of language, as well as essential relations to the Lacanian unconscious. However, the explanation here given here dramatizes how what I’ve called “Deleuzian sexuation” might actually work. First, it shows how the three dynamic geneses correspond to stages in the progression of the subject, ultimately leading from discrete bits into an attempted organization. If we read my account of castration into this progression, we could see that once castration occurs in the third synthesis, the semanteme becomes meaningful. But, since castration has occurred, this meaning is only made such by the sexed void that castration brings about (or, we might say, a kernel of nonsense). Simultaneously, this conscious or meaningful representation is only made such by virtue of the elements (we might say intensities) that make it up. The relationship between phonemes and semantemes can be read as coextensive with the relationship between erogenous zones and thought. So, we can see in this example how the cyclical relationship between thought and the body works that I tried to argue for in the previous section. This is because, to refer back to Collet’s reading, in the process of Philippe’s analysis, the reason “joli corps de Lili” “makes sense” is only because it resonates with the nonsensical phonemes inscribed on his erogenous body. The way the cycle of thought persists is because thought is animated by the core that “throws the dice” and distributes sense. This occurs, I

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maintain, because of the failed third synthesis, which is the castrated phallus, which is, in fact, the non-totalizing failure of sexuation. When Deleuze writes “castration … has a very special situation between that of which it is the result and that which it causes to begin,” he shows castration’s status as this point that continues to bring the first and third stages together as the I turns back on the self.\footnote{LS, 222.} The unconscious nonsense that subtends any meaningful effect persists, causing the continued interplay between registers.\footnote{As Deleuze writes, “nonsense functions as the zero point of thought, the aleatory point of desexualized energy,” which “invests or reinvests an object of sexual interest as such and is thereby re-sexualized in a new way.” \textit{LS}, 241-3.} I will say more about this (re)sexualization vis-à-vis Deleuze, Lacan, and Leclaire below.

\textbf{THE IMMANENCE OF CASTRATION, OR THE SYNTHOME REVISITED}

Deleuze’s reading of Leclaire very exactly shows the relation between the letter and the body as concatenation of signifiers and erotogenic zones while provides an analysis of Leclaire’s analysand which mapped directly onto Deleuze’s dynamic geneses, thus showing how nonsense and language are coordinate with each stage. I have argued that Lacan may not offer us a way to show the \textit{becoming} of sexuation, but Deleuze does. At the same time, Deleuze takes us through sexuation, but he does not complete his account. I now want to insist on an even stronger intertwining of Deleuze and Lacan by saying that: in mapping out Leclaire’s Lacanian analysis, Deleuze gives us an \textit{immanently generated} of Name of the Father, rather than one simply imposed from without. Recall that Deleuzian Ideas are self-interrupting structures that have their bases in the materiality of the dynamic geneses or passive syntheses. Keeping this in mind, I believe we must also give a properly Deleuzian account of castration, which would show how the Name of the
Father takes hold in/on the subject. Castration is linked to the Name of the Father in Lacan. Deleuze, through Leclaire’s “immanent psychoanalytic structuralism,” offers a reading of Lacan that shows how language comes not only from the heights but from the depths, to use Deleuze’s metaphors.\textsuperscript{101} If “Poord’jéli” is the repressed kernel of the unconscious, we could see through Deleuze’s account of Leclaire how thought might be forced to think—namely, through the resonance of the corporeal unconscious with the meaningful statements and semantemes to which it gives birth. This is precisely a way of understanding the cyclical or back-turning relationship between the thought and the body Deleuze has articulated.

I would like to conclude by saying a bit more about this immanent account of the Name of the Father and showing how it is consistent with the account of sexuation I’ve developed through a return to the Lacanian sinthome. Leclaire showed that “Poord’jéli” is a contraction of Philippe’s name qua “secret name” that the child (unknowingly) gives itself. Leclaire also tells us that Philippe’s father is the “too-soon-departed Jérémie.”\textsuperscript{102} Philippe, in fact, has no paternal interdiction, and thus the contraction of Poord’jéli from his name is a self-naming, a self-castration. Moreover, the Oedipal schematic Philippe enters centers on this self-naming primarily in view of the role of the mother and Lili. This shows the impotence of the Name of the Father, or to put in more Deleuzian terms, the immanence of the Name of the Father.\textsuperscript{103} Philippe’s contraction, in Deleuze’s language, of his name into “Poord’jéli” actually brings about castration: it enacts Lacanian separation. The fact that this is possible, and that it animates series of thoughts that “make sense,”

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  \item \textsuperscript{101} Collett, 108. See also pp. 18-23 in Eyers’ \textit{Post-Rationalism: Psychoanalysis, Epistemology, and Marxism in Post-War France} (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
  \item \textsuperscript{102} Leclaire, 86.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Cf. Collett 111 with respect to the Voice in Deleuze.
\end{itemize}
indicates that the intervention of self-naming is a necessary condition for the subject. Indeed this is precisely what Lacan tends towards in his analysis of Joyce via the *sinthome*.

Coextensive with the becoming of sexuation is the becoming of language. Just as the intensities that formed erogenous zones do not alone give us thought, nor do the phonemes that inscribe themselves on the erogenous body. As Deleuze writes, “the voice gave us only … formative elements, without reaching formed units.” The vocative phonemes cannot do the work of castration alone; instead, there must be a kind of immanent generation of the sexed void that allows for the genesis of thought. Thus the account that Deleuze, Lacan, and Leclaire all give, in insisting that the erogenous body is always a body crisscrossed with language, and that language is necessarily infused with this erotogenic significance, provides the other side of castration. That is to say, the erotogenic phonemes that have been mapped onto the child’s body come to take on their own meaning through a self-naming, which means that the child ends up naming desire. Hence the series of Lacanian questions and answers: What does the Other want from me? It wants me. How do I assert myself against this s/m/Othering desire? I name myself.

It might be useful to give an example that would bring all of this together. In Chapter Three, I used the described coming to fixate on one particular song or word out of

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104 Leclaire makes it quite clear that Philippe struggles to stave off psychosis: “Philippe, in his derisive formula, will from now on have no other concern than to defend against the other’s desire.” Leclaire, 86-87. The use of “derisive” here I think is a pun: “poor” as in “poor you.”

105 *LS*, 241.

106 Cf. Collett, 109: “In the case of Philippe, it allows the Name of the Father to be “built by the infant from the normative and phallic fantasmonic forms … extracted from the speech of his mother and Liliane, and inscribed as letters on the infant’s erogenous zones. By building it in this way, the Name-of-the-Father is knotted together with the … signifiers inscribed on the infant’s body.”
a din of noise that then fades away. One possibility for interpreting how one comes to focus might be offered by this Deleuze/Leclaire/Lacan hybrid. If the reason that “joli corps de Lili” “makes sense” is because of “Poordj’eli,” then the reason one comes to fixate on a particular object = x (in the Kantian sense as the form of an object) is because of their own object = x (in the Deleuzian sense). “Joli corps de Lili” is only suffused with significance (it is only thought) because of the way in which “Poordj’eli,” as a contraction of the proper name, makes the series resonate. Phonation is the essence of the phallic function, Lacan held. But, at the same time, this “phunction” causes a kind of castration and enables a kind of jouissance with respect to the primary repressed (the concatenation of erogenously charged signifernesses).\(^{107}\) If we refer to the table I constructed above, this means that S(A) refers to a relation to the phonemes or intensities that make this whole process possible. Further, the relationship one has to these phonemes is determined by one’s response to castration. Thus, the function of naming which causes the resonance is the symptom, or, more precisely, the sinthome. We have here a “knotting” of the sinthome and sexuation through the phenomenon (or phonemenon) of castration.

As I argued in Chapter Three, the sinthome, like the Idea, allows for a kind of subjective consistency in the development of the castrated subject. It brings together the body, partial drives, partial objects, and thought through the hole of castration with its “special situation.” The kind of immanent reading that Deleuze offers is, in fact, already present in Lacan’s account of sexuation, though under a different name: sinthome. I argued earlier that the Idea and the sinthome are homologous. After the account I’ve now built, though, I think it is more appropriate to say that the Idea of sexual difference and the

\(^{107}\) Seminar XXIII, 107.
sinthome are one and the same. Is it not ultimately the sinthome “the attempt to write the signifier and jouissance as one sole trait”? Deleuze’s reworking of the Lacanian thesis through Leclaire shows us just how the sinthome is what the subject clings to, for it inextricably links speech and the body, emerging nonsensically and perpetually as it does, giving a kind of unknowing cathexis to the language that emerges. This means that sexuation is itself sinthomatic. Sexuation as the failed response to castration, as the aleatory point that distributes sense as a response to divergent series, itself comes to be. The castrated phallus is the necessary void that constitutes the subject as incomplete, and also brings the subject back to its origins, as it were, in materiality via jouissance. Thus the kind of jouissance one can have inflects this whole somersaulting process.

Moreover, if Joyce creates his own sinthome to stave off psychosis, Philippe does the same. The sinthome is, too, the highly individual Kern unseres Wesen. This new signifier (Poord’jeli, for instance) is nonsense and thus cannot be transferred or exchanged to another subject. Sexuation determines the kind of jouissance one can have, while the sinthome singularizes it. In giving us an immanent account of castration, Deleuze does the same. The sinthome is in fact Lacan’s version of immanent castration, for in Seminar XXIII he argues that “the father is a symptom, or a sinthome, as you wish.”108 If Joyce can invest his jouissance in his writing or in language, he in fact castrates himself through this kind of activity, because it allows him to relate to a separated jouissance. Recall that Fink argues that when we sacrifice our jouissance, we sacrifice it to the Other, which in this case is language. Joyce, through his writing, manages to enjoy his sinthome. This implies a necessary castration, because it means that he does not find himself s/m/Othered.

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108 Seminar XXIII, 11.
Similarly, if Philippe names himself and this self-naming invests things with significance, he has created the void that allows for that to become meaningful in its distribution, for certain things to cathect via this void. Indeed, the *sinthome* could be said to become Lacan’s new metaphor for sexuation, since he realizes that there can be a kind of self-generated castration even in the absence of the paternal metaphor. The *sinthome* is Lacan’s recognition of his own need for an immanent generation of the principle of castration. I argued in Chapter Three that Ideas and the *sinthome* perform the same function, and in Chapter Four that sexual difference is an Idea more fundamental than any other. I think we can now see an even stronger connection: the *sinthome* is the Idea *qua* immanent sexuation. Sexuation, I argue, is the void or aleatory point that makes thought possible via its back-turning movement as a kind of *jouissance*. Sexuation is thus necessary for every subject, and the void that it is perpetuates thought in its continuous cycle.

**CONCLUSION**

The account of sexuation I’ve tried to offer here is one that had its beginnings in the becoming of materiality in Deleuze’s dynamic geneses and passive syntheses. In his account, becoming necessarily produced erogenous zones as the surface of the body, virtual objects as substitutive and fantasy objects, and ultimately the plane of thought after the intervention of the aleatory point of castration. I argued further that this aleatory point as the castrated phallus served as the primary point of contact between Deleuze and Lacan. It institutes castration first (when the subject fully comes into language and undergoes separation). However, as an instantiated void, it is that which allows for the continual perpetuation of thought. Thus, all thought is sexed and remains sexed, since sex is lack
through which one relates to jouissance once something is sacrificed to castration. In Deleuze’s account of the syntheses, he argues that the I (fractured by castration) turns back on the “shattered self,” which are precisely the erogenous zones and intensities that worked their way up to become the singularities of Ideas to begin with. Thus, to be castrated is to be capable of thought for both of these thinkers, when we read castration as that which enacts the void when one sacrifices to speak. Since Deleuze insists that the structures of Ideas come to be only in and through this aleatory point, and the aleatory point is castration, Ideas must always be sexed. Lacan differentiates this by showing the different ways in which the sexed void can allow one to respond to bodily jouissance via $S(A)$ or object $a$ via fantasy. Both Lacan and Deleuze argue that the perpetuation of thought happens because of a failure (namely, the castrated phallus). Deleuze’s account logically, I believe, leads to the conclusion that sexual difference is a foundational structure; but, it requires Lacan’s more complicated intervention with respect to all and not-all castration in its relation to jouissance that lets us see how thought continues to think in and through modalities of sexuation.

While in Chapter Three I argued that the Idea and the sinthome perform the same function for Deleuze and Lacan, my reading of Deleuzian sexuation via Leclaire moved me towards another, stronger correspondence and yet again, one that I suggest Lacan seemed to be working towards himself. My interpretation of Deleuze’s reading of Leclaire indicates that Philippe contracted his own “secret name” in order to name himself as an act of separation. This shows that castration can be sui generis, which is, I maintain, the same conclusion Lacan draws in Seminar XXIII. The sinthome as creative process allows the non-castrated or non-separated subject to enact separation by asserting itself, in a way.
This led me to a speculative conclusion, but one that I think shows again the close linkage between Deleuze and Lacan’s projects as I’ve read them here. Both indicate the need for an immanent account of castration, which is to say an immanent account of sexuation. Deleuzian Ideas are self-interrupting in their own cruel becoming; and, the *sinthome* does just the same. In short, through my reading of Deleuze and Lacan together, I have tried to show how they give an account of sexuation that is constituted both in and through the becoming of the body that comes into language via castration, and how this whole process entails a kind of necessarily sexed void that brings the fractured I back onto the erogenous body as the cycle that continues to animate the process of becoming. Sex as the generated failed third synthesis in Deleuze; sex as the internal and external failures in Lacan: both determine how the castrated subject relates to the material of its own becoming. I argue, then, that this combinatory reading of psychoanalytic instantiation of sex that comes to be in and through the becoming of the body provides a new account of sex that can speak to the problem raised in Chapter One, to where I now turn.
CONCLUSION

A Return to Feminist Theory through Deleuzian Sexuation

CONSTRUCTING DELEUZIAN SEXUATION

The goal of this conclusion is to bring the dissertation full circle by using the account I’ve offered at length in Chapters Two through Four to respond to the original problem of Chapter One. This is the problem of the status of sexual difference for feminist theory. Before I do this, I am going to offer a summary of my argument so far so that we have a more ready-to-hand understanding of it when I turn to this motivating question.

This dissertation has offered a reading of Gilles Deleuze’s sexual becoming of thought as read through Jacques Lacan’s account of the genesis of the sexuated subject. I have argued for an intertwining of Deleuze and Lacan’s work, specifically with regard to a psychoanalytic interpretation of sex or sexuation. In one sense, the motivation for doing this was simply because I found it to be a necessary axis for understanding Deleuze’s project as an account of the becoming of thought, as opposed to what he called the Image of Thought. Deleuze’s account of thought is non-representational and constitutes an opposition to any model of thinking based on a model of recognition. I argued in Chapter Two that this may be best understood as a response and contrast to Kant. Also in contrast to Kant is Deleuze’s argument that the production of thought is necessarily corporeal. In understanding the material origins of thought, Deleuze developed an account of its genesis in which thought was not simply carried out by the active syntheses of the imagination but passively constituted by three syntheses. Indeed, rather than, for instance, my looking at something and recognizing it as a formed object, Deleuze argues that thought must be forced to think. There is, for Deleuze, a kind of unrecognizable encounter that causes the
disharmonious linkage between the different faculties of sensibility, memory, and thought. Thought does not come naturally to the human subject, as Descartes would have it when he argued that “good sense is the best distributed thing in the world.”

In this argument, I found it most instructive to read Deleuze’s account as one about the development of the faculty of cognition in human subjects, even if passive and not agential. Commensurate with the attempts of psychoanalysis, this argument has had the effect of undermining the conscious, representative subject and making the effect of these passive syntheses that constitute it. These views of the subject and the mind as constituted by something over which they have no control paints a radically different picture of the subject, its body, and its relationship to its “own” faculties. In offering this account, Deleuze is, as I’ve shown, concerned to articulate a model of becoming, and indeed a model that has its roots in difference, a concern that runs through his entire project.

In explaining Deleuze’s account of the syntheses, I specifically focused on their psychoanalytic accounts. This is because, again, I see the syntheses as necessarily occurring to/in thinking, human subjects, and psychoanalysis is the theoretical apparatus Deleuze works with. By reading the passive syntheses of *Difference and Repetition* alongside the dynamic geneses of *The Logic of Sense*, I showed that these syntheses correspond to the formation of different components of a sexuated account of the subject. Because Deleuze’s account relied heavily on psychoanalytic terminology, I tried to demonstrate how that terminology worked and enabled his account. Erogenous zones correspond to the first synthesis of the present. Virtual objects (which come to stand in for the lost object, the object that once satisfied but becomes absent) correspond to the second

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synthesis of the pure past as that which “pops up” involuntarily as the paradoxical condition of the present. These virtual objects coincide with the Oedipal drama in psychoanalysis, which Deleuze reads in line with both Melanie Klein and with Lacan.

Finally, for Deleuze as for Lacan, the castrated phallus intervenes in a way that causes the “I” to be split between conscious and unconscious, that is, to be split between jouissance and language (as in Lacan’s account) and, in the same movement, to turn back on itself to create the plane of thought. In this back-turning movement of the I on the self, the “metaphysical surface” is necessarily produced out of this sexual genesis. The products of this sexual genesis – what Deleuze calls Ideas – are necessarily and always marked by a sexual sense, and they are composed from sexed elements. I explained the sexual genesis of Ideas in psychoanalytic terminology, while also focusing on the central term for my argument: the phallic function qua castration. This is central because of the role it plays in the formation of Ideas in Deleuze, because yokes together Deleuze and Lacan, showing how their accounts work together to give what I have described as the sexual genesis of thought.

In Chapter Three, I take this argument further by following Deleuze’s claim that what forms out of the shattering of the self, when the desexualized libido produces the plane of thought, are Ideas. My explanation of Ideas in Deleuze builds again from Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense and also turns to his essay called “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” It here continues to contrast Deleuze’s project against Kant’s, arguing that Ideas in his formulation are to be seen as what I called “self-interrupting structures.” This is important for Deleuze, because it continues both the account of becoming as well as the decentering or destabilization of the subject of
cognition. Rather than an Idea be something I immediately recognize or ponder, an Idea for Deleuze is the association of disparate elements that happen to become temporarily unified only by a chance encounter or an “aleatory point.” Deleuze likens this to a dice throw, indicating that the flick of the wrist is the chance moment that causes the distribution of shattered elements into temporary structures. Since I have been making the claim that Deleuze’s account is one of the becoming of sex coextensive with the becoming of thought, I also explained this phenomenon in terms of the sexual geneses. In “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” Deleuze, drawing explicitly from Lacan, argues that the castrated phallus, which intervenes in the third stage of the dynamic genesis, is the aleatory point that manages to distribute sense in Ideas. In that regard, I make the argument that Ideas are not only composed of sexed elements as produced in the dynamic geneses, they are also structured according to the logic of sexuation, which is to say Lacanian castration. In short, I argued that Ideas begin in sexed materiality or intensity and then become fully determined through the operation of castration, which is the aleatory point. Ideas are through and through sexual. This implies a psychoanalytic understanding of sex as sexuation, which is a term used to indicate the complex interplay of registers involved in the sexed becoming of the subject. These I indicated in the passive syntheses and dynamic geneses.

To demonstrate further the relationship between Deleuze and Lacan, I then showed how the late Lacanian notion of the sinthome clarifies both my reading of Ideas and the sexual nature thereof. The sinthome is a term that Lacan uses to link the different registers of the subject (the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic) together. It, too, has a relationship between the phallic function or castration, and in fact will ultimately serve, I
argue, a foundational and fundamental role as the base or core structure out of which all Ideas, in their materiality, are formed. The *sinthome* allowed me to show more clearly how Ideas are sexual and how they are constituted always in and through the process of materialization that Deleuze calls the dynamic geneses. They, that is, ground and unground the subject, just as Ideas as self-interrupting structures do.

Finally, in my fourth chapter, I turn to a more sustained engagement with Lacan. The justification for this has been built into my reading of Deleuze and Lacan together, specifically through castration and the phallic function, though other Lacanian terminology such as *object a* and *jouissance* have come into play. My argument here is that Deleuze’s geneses have gotten us to the formation of thought as a sexed formation, and that this results in Ideas that are themselves coextensive with this development. In seeing that Ideas have a necessary relationship to materiality as that which grounds and ungrounds them in its structuration, and in seeing that they are formed in and through castration as the aleatory point, I turn to Lacan’s account of sexuation in Seminar XX. Here, Lacan argues that sexual difference or sexuation consists in two types of failures: an internal antinomial deadlock that women and men suffer differently and an external failure in the inability for sexuated subjects to relate to each other. My argument here serves a few purposes. First, it completes Deleuze’s account of castration by showing how the subject comes to be castrated and what that means for different kinds of subjects (that is, masculine and feminine sexuated subjects). Through an engagement with Lacan’s graphs, the chapter also shows two different ways of relating to the other. These are either in the form of the lost *object a* as a “masculine subject,” or to a relationship with S(A) or the primal repressed, which I liken to the Deleuzian notion of intensity.
Not only do I read Lacan into Deleuze to show how he completes Deleuze, I also try to show how the Deleuzian genesis of the subject may account for the genesis of Lacanian sexuation as it is instantiated in subjects. This is necessary for an account of sexuation that isn’t simply a formalism or an abstraction but that has effects for the subjects in whom sexuation comes to be. This means that we complicate castration in two ways. First, we have responses to castration that can be either “masculine” or “feminine,” which determine one’s sexuated position. Second, this implies that we have castration installed as a kind of permanent lack or void (this is the phallic function which I describe at length throughout the dissertation). Thus, I try to show how that lack actually comes to be in the subject through what I call an immanent account of castration. This means that sexuation qua Deleuzian Idea becomes installed in the subject as the permanent possibility of being the dice-thrower, as it were. The failures of sexuation as occasioned by castration in fact are, I argue, what allow thought to continue to think after the first enactment of castration. Like an Idea, sexuation brings together three registers of the subject in its relationship to the other and to its materiality (in either object a or S(A)). This means that sexuation allows us to see how thought forms via the dynamic geneses, how it becomes the castrated phallus as aleatory point that distributes intensities in Ideas, and how it continues to perpetuate the formation of Ideas; or, that is, how it forces thought to think.

An immanent account of castration is needed for the consistency of Deleuze’s project, and it also indicates further covalence between Deleuze and Lacan through a return to the *sinthome*.

Finally, I turn to Deleuze’s brief reading of Serge Leclaire as an example of how Deleuzian sexuation (qua Ideal) works. I take this to be important because Leclaire’s
Lacanian analysis, as read through Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, demonstrates how *sexuation works* in a concrete manner, rather than simply in the technical language that I’ve given in my analysis. This demonstrates not only the registers of the subject as they come into being, as well as their coextensivity with the development of language, but it also shows, again concretely, how Deleuze offers an immanent account of castration or the phallic function. This allows me to again see the enmeshing of Deleuze with Lacan, as I suggest that Lacan moves towards an immanent reading of castration via his account of the *sinthome*, which I had earlier taken to be covalent with the Idea. This shows that sexuation *qua* *sinthome* is the Idea *par excellence*, demonstrating its absolute necessity for the genesis and persistence of thought. Reading them together all along has shown that Deleuze and Lacan can complete each other’s projects via a reading of sexuation that links together the body and thought in a dynamic interplay.

What I have done in this dissertation is offer an account of sexuation through Deleuze and Lacan. Deleuzian sexuation is thus akin to the psychoanalytic notion of sexuation, but Deleuze offers us an account of its becoming in and through materiality, as well as the possibility of the immanence of castration. That means that sexuation is *sinthomatic*, to combine their terms such that we have both a *structure* of sexuation and *individual content* to it, as well.

I have given this summation of my position here for a few reasons. First, the argument is quite dense and technical throughout, but I believe that to have been necessary to prove my reading of the two thinkers together. Moreover, all of these stages are necessary to respond to the original problem of the dissertation, which is to where I now turn.
To conclude I want to step back and offer my account of how Deleuzian sexuation responds productively to the impasse of the question of the status of the body in feminist theory. While I will at times refer back to specialized arguments of Butler and Irigaray to show how my reading may respond to certain of their claims of (especially with respect to controversial and allegedly non-feminist elements like the phallus and castration), my goal here is to show how this may be useful for feminist theory both politically and philosophically.

A RETURN TO THE PROBLEM OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

My first chapter laid out the impasse between Butler and Irigaray, represented as the difference between “gender” and “sexual difference” feminisms and framed in terms of a tension with respect to the status of the sexed body. I then argued that I saw what I called “Deleuzian feminism” to be a position offered in response to this tension. To briefly recap, the way in which this series of problems emerged goes as follows. Irigaray raised the problem of the relationship between sex and metaphysics, arguing that metaphysics has always been constructed on the view of the masculine, that is, a view that has occluded the feminine or always reduced it to the Other or derivative of the masculine. This argument is built not only from the historic subordination of “women” to “men,” but also from an interpretation of systems of thinking that have privileged men or the masculine as opposed to the feminine. Thus, Irigaray’s project has been to bring “the feminine” to the forefront, arguing for its own positivity in the face of its perpetual effacement. This has taken the form of emphasizing of “feminine” anatomy (the vagina, mucous), “feminine” modes of communication and language, and an emphasis on
difference, relation, dispossession, and interval.\(^2\) This is opposed to a sort of totalization of the masculinist view—that is, the turgid rigidity of masculinist claims to universality. In particular, Irigaray has argued that women’s bodies, language, and desires have been suppressed, and that in order to have any proper account of difference, we must account for (and acknowledge) sexual difference. Furthermore, the argument goes, metaphysics has been determined by sexual difference, because it has been determined in and through the exclusion of the feminine. This position, as I explained in Chapter One, has been met with some vociferous objections. The most critical of these for feminist philosophy has been that of essentialism, which argues that any attempt to define “the feminine” necessarily restricts women’s capacities and abilities and reduces them to their embodiment as “female.” Indeed, if one of the primary goals of feminism is to loosen the shackles by which women have been defined, it seems counterintuitive to try to assert anything about “women” as a totality, considering the variegated ways in which women live and experience. The purported solution of “strategic essentialism,” argues that we can (and must) temporarily assert an “essential” definition of women to articulate any political goals. This solution, I argued, fails on both philosophical and political grounds—respectively, it depends on an assumption of essentialism that it denies as it suggests it, and it fails to include all those it proclaims to represent.

Thus, in a sense opposed to Irigaray-inspired “sexual difference” theory, “gender” theory emerged. This position I represented primarily through the work of Judith Butler, but it has been readily incorporated as the dominant view within gender and queer theory in the American academy. This view maintains the sociological distinction between sex

\(^2\) See *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 121-124, for instance.
and gender (which I think not incompatible with sexual difference feminism), arguing that
the gender role that one enacts or identifies as is constructed in and through relations of
power. In its most simple formulation, and thus its collective appeal, this means that being
female-bodied does not mean that one must act or identify as “feminine.” More than this,
the Butlerian position maintains that sex is always already gender, because it is impossible
to read “sex” outside the confines of a world of discourse that causes us to read
“embodiment” as always already inflected by gender. That is, for gender theory, there is
no “body” prior to discourse, and the recognition of a body is always already filtered
through the lens of gender. Gender’s performativity means that it brings itself into being
with every iteration of itself, formed as it is in accordance with a norm that both preexists
it and is incarnated by it. Thus, we bring a body into being only in and through modalities
of power that shape the recognition of any body as such. However, gender theory, like
sexual difference theory, has both philosophical and political drawbacks. It tends towards
a discursive world that is akin to “the night in which … all cows are black,” by which I
mean it is easy to accuse it of reducing difference to sameness, specifically, the sameness
of discourse and the refusal of any meaningful differences between subjects. That is to
say, for discourse theory, we are all products of power and that power reduces us to “the
same” underneath, indicating that there is no meaningful difference between the sexes,
only an epiphenomenal one to be deconstructed away via a kind of subversive shibboleth.

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3 This is a summary condensation of Butler’s combinatory reading of Foucault, Aristotle,
Althusser, and Derrida in Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter.
4 Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford, Oxford University Press,
9.
5 I again reference Julia Serano’s book here as a nice summation of this argument, as well
as Alcoff’s piece, both cited in Chapter One.
Thus we reach an impasse in feminist theory. While sexual difference feminism claims to champion difference in the face of sameness, arguing that there has always only been the monosexuality of the masculine, gender feminism argues for a proliferation of differences that is enabled by the equivalence of the subject to its discursive production. Both are perhaps animated by the same goal but remain in a kind of deadlock. Champions of Butler and Irigaray alike recognize these tensions within their respective positions, of course, and there is plenty of scholarship defending both positions which I’ve referenced throughout. My intervention here has not been to rehash those, but to offer an argument that may be able to gain something through retaining some of the spirit of both.

DELEUZIAN SEXUATION BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER

What does the account I’ve constructed offer to this problem? I first want to couch my argument in general terms with regard to the positions above, and then I will respond to some more technical, philosophical concerns that may be raised. Recall that in Chapter One I suggested that Deleuzian feminism emerged as an attempt to hybridize sexual difference theory and gender theory. It did so by arguing that we could see the body as the site of “flows” and “becoming,” which, of course, is a necessary component of my account. However, I argued that Deleuzian feminism faced two obstacles, one philosophical and one political. First, its “strategic essentialism,” a political use of essentialist language to “affirm the feminine,” actually affirmed just what it wanted to deny by requiring a form of essentialism to make its claims plausible. This position has the effect of attempting to universalize a group that resists universalization (interestingly, both discursively and psychoanalytically). Further, any invocation of “essentialism” for
specific political goals ends up effacing or ignoring the needs, desires, and specificities of many women whose needs, aims, or goals may not be included under the banner of whatever coalition has been formed. More than this, later versions of Deleuzian feminism that have moved away from strategic essentialism find themselves in the trap of, I argue, reducing sexual difference or sexuation to simply one pit stop on the Road of Becoming, which ignores its foundational yet non-deterministic status.

For example, how to deal with the question of “the female body” in relation to the issue of materiality is one of the fundamental points of divergence of sexual difference and gender feminisms. In establishing the body as first and foremost erogenous, Deleuzian sexuation does root sexuation in materiality, and in fact that materiality remains a necessary but unstable ground that perpetuates its effects in and through the cyclical production of thought. This means, first, that it does not participate in the phallogocentric denial of position or embodiment—indeed, it further specifies particularities of the body in and through its singularized erogenous locales. As Freud observed, “any part of the skin and any sense organ – probably, indeed, any organ – can function as an erotogenic zone.”

This being the case, the body is first and foremost erogenous, and these erogenous zones constitute it as a surface. If we follow Deleuze, this means that bodies do matter, but it also means that they come to matter through a kind of passive genesis that certainly does not ignore the particularities of one’s morphology, but nor does it reduce one to that morphology. This does not, for instance, amount to a denial or refusal of female embodiment but instead places the feminine in the model of non-essentialist becoming. Indeed, the becoming of the erogeneity of the body accords nicely with Irigaray’s

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emphasis on porosity and mucous. If erogenous zones may possibly become such because of their proximity to an orifice, then it may well be that the fluidity and permeability of those orifices constitutes the possibilities available for becoming in the first place. The erogenous zones preexist the surface and as such they create possibilities for different kinds of sexuated becomings. Remember that sexuation, in this discourse, refers to the kind of jouissance one can obtain with respect to either object a or S(A), so fluidity and permeability may be the conditions for becoming’s origin (at least in the subject).

This makes it possible to reread Irigaray’s claim that “in order to become, one needs a gender or an essence (necessarily sexed) as horizon,” a process which “is obviously open-ended.”7 I have argued that my account of Deleuze and Lacan does offer us a necessarily sexed horizon, but that sexed horizon is of course a sexuated horizon with all the complexity entailed in its own stubborn structural self-undoing. This has the benefit of arguing for the necessarily non-reductive embodiment of the subject, but this remains in a constant kind of interplay with the following stages of the genesis of thought. That the body is constituted primarily as erogenous zones that then have this interplay will offer, too, a solution to the gender feminist who wants to afford no necessary primacy to the body. If we read sex through Deleuzian sexuation, then the way becoming happens is necessarily sexed, because sex engenders the becoming of thought in its relation to the erogenous body. But, taking the body as erogenous does not mean that being embodied as male, female, or intersex means anything necessarily about what that body will come to find erogenous (and much less what it will fail to find as its object a). Moreover, because

7 Irigaray, Sexes et parentés, 73, quoted in Braidotti’s Metamorphoses, 65. My italics.
of the rotatory motion between thought and erogenous zones, it’s unclear that there could be any particular determinism assigned to this position.

My argument, then, is that the psychoanalytically inflected version of Deleuzian sexuation accomplishes in part what sexual difference feminism wants, by offering an account of sexuation that is both necessarily embodied and foundational. It address the concerns of gender feminism, as well, by not arguing for any essential necessity for a sexuated subject to be beholden to a subject position—indeed, there is no reason one could not subvert gender from within this account. Nor is there any reason that one’s embodiment will necessarily cause male or female sexuation. As I will suggest, this account of Deleuzian sexuation in fact offers more subversive possibilities for difference than Butler’s account. Moreover, in its non-reductive materialist account of becoming, it also provides the link between sexed subjectivities and thought via language, something that both sexual difference feminism and gender feminism imply, although differently.

For both sexual difference and gender feminism, the subject necessarily comes into being through language, though the two accounts of what this means differ. Irigaray argues that any women’s “liberation … passes through a transformation of culture, and its operative agency: language.” Language here, though, is to be read as the Symbolic, as that order into which a subject submits by entering into language, which means that it is the order that creates human sexuality as divorced from instinct or need. Irigaray is, of course, a psychoanalyst, however wary she may be of some of its iterations. Thus, for her, the order of the Symbol is that very order of culture itself, that by which sexuality becomes instituted as its own kind of excess that is not reducible to biology. Charles Shepherdson

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8 This Sex Which Is Not One, 155.
writes, “the symbol is constitutive for the human subject: without its relation to the symbol (a relation in which the subject is not master), the subject would not enter into history, and sexuality would be governed by the necessities of nature.”9 This view, shared by Irigaray in her insistence that the “female body” be read in relation to speech and language (as in her suggestive titles “The ‘Mechanics’ of Fluids” and “When Our Lips Speak Together”) suggests that the realm of the symbolic interacts with the biological in order to create an imbricated web of significations that the body inherits and that create the embodied becoming-sexed subject. That is to say, Irigaray’s articulation of feminine morphology is always already tied up in language: “Mechanics” in quotations and “lips speaking” indicate that her view of “the body” is not simply something one can get to prior to symbolization. Thus, the symbolic here is a universal structure that causes the subject in its emergence to become split by its introduction into it.

This stands in contrast to gender feminists’ discursive view of the production of sexuality via language. To explain this difference, let us turn to an account in Butler’s *Bodies That Matter*: namely, her account of performativity as citationality in “Critically Queer.” Here, she argues that to name someone as a particular gender (“it’s a girl!”) is to interpellate her in the Althusserian sense, and thus to enter her into a world of cultural sanctions and taboos that enjoin her to act like a girl in order to be recognized as a subject. “This is a ‘girl’ … who is compelled to ‘cite’ the norm in order to qualify as a viable subject.”10 For Butler, the linguistic order is the site of a performative normativity. The norm exists as cultural sanction and/or taboo, and the subject is brought into being in and through that very naming. As such, the subject of discourse analysis is the subject

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10 *Bodies That Matter*, 232.
occasioned by language, and the sex of the named child is enforced and reinforced through these cultural prohibitions. Sex is brought into being through its naming, always already coded by gender. Thus, the subject of discourse analysis is occasioned by the signifier and remains on the same level as it. The subject exists only as a function of its own recognizance within a given performatively enacted discourse. This is why Butler’s political move is subversion: since no norm can ever fully be enacted, the gaps and crevices that exist between failed repetitions allow for the clutches of intersecting vectors of power to be loosened by showing their failure to fully totalize. This, again, makes sex a discursive effect, which has a different status than the sex occasioned by Irigaray’s symbolic. Why? As Charles Shepherdson writes, in contrast to the symbolic, this kind of historicist account amounts to a “‘contractual agreement’ produced in history by already given subjects” which amounts to a “conflation of the symbolic, as organizing—in every culture and for every human society—human sexuality, on the one hand, and, on the other, the institutions of patriarchy that arise in time.”

Butler does maintain that every subject is necessarily constituted in and through language, for otherwise, she would not be recognizable as a subject at all. In this regard, her argument does share similarities with the symbolic. However, the reason I believe it is different is because Butler’s subject is occasioned by a historical symbolic (e.g., through the subvertable conventions of a patriarchal order). That means that the particular instantiation of the subject on the level of discourse may change and thus the “pact” that a subject tacitly “agrees” to in its compliance with the law could change via subversion.

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11 Shepherdson, 34.
12 I put “agree” in quotation marks here because Butler would not argue that a subject “agrees” from the outset to be interpellated, and of course a subject’s agency is enabled
Here we have another impasse in feminist philosophy with respect to the status of sex, and this is a tension that emerged in the writing of my own account. We have gone from sexed body to sexed subject—and, I will suggest, the account I’ve given in this dissertation can in fact account for both, since the sexed subject emerges from the sexed body. Does the sexed subject occur on the level of the signifier, brought into being in and through a discursive prohibition? Or is the sexed subject found in the very split wrought when the subject enters the symbolic? This is the very problem laid out by Joan Copjec in “Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason,” where she famously attacks Butler’s historicism in favor of a psychoanalytic account of sex. Copjec writes that Butler’s discursive or historicist account of particular historical injunctions that can be subverted due to the failure of the norm’s total efficacy gives us only “a description of the effect of the inherent failure of discourse – a riot of sense in which on meaning constantly collides; a multiplication of the possibilities of each discourse’s meaning – but no real acknowledgement of its cause: the impossibility of saying everything in language.”

Copjec’s position is obviously psychoanalytic, and Lacanian at that, but I do not intend to simply take her side because my account of Deleuze has been psychoanalytic. But she does dramatize the difference between the position of Irigaray and the position of Butler—where does the sexed subject “reside”? What is its ontological status? What does its “location” or status tell us about what sex means?

I think my Deleuzian-Lacanian account of sexual difference resolves this tension without only affirming the Lacanian position. Most engagements between psychoanalysis...
and discursive/historicist readings tend to simply be chiding or “corrective,” maintaining that Butler simply misses the point of psychoanalytic terminology or that she even willfully ignores or misinterprets psychoanalysis in order to proffer her own view. On the other side, queer theorists are often suspicious of psychoanalysis because of its alleged heteronormativity and masculinist bias. Butler of course has had many productive engagements with psychoanalysis, and doggedly clinging to one side or the other cannot accomplish the resolution I aim for. I want to show how my argument with respect to the immanence of castration that enacts sex as a void in the subject may productively respond to Butler’s claims on the discursiveness of sex. My position is, of course, psychoanalytic, but this does not mean it is anti-Butlerian tout court. Accomplishing this will require require a return to her account of language and specifically the way she conceives of the phallus, which has been primary in my argument throughout. 

Butler gives her most sustained reading of the Lacanian phallus in “The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary,” where she roots her account in Seminars I and II (1953-4) and the essay “The Signification of the Phallus” (1958). In so doing, she yokes together different accounts of Lacan’s through a kind of deconstructive reading of terms. She reads the Lacanian Mirror Stage as an imaginary identification whose identity or stability is conferred only by the parental law which names the child and brings its “body in pieces” together. This, we may recognize from Deleuze’s account, is not dissimilar to


\[15\] Bodies That Matter, 71-73. I note the dates here to indicate that these pieces are very early in Lacan’s work. That Butler deals only with these indicates that she may miss
the attempt of the coordinating phallus to bring different erogenous zones together to make a whole. I argued earlier that the Mirror Stage may be useful in helping us understand how signifiers get written on the body and charged with erotogenic significance when explaining the meaning of Poordj’eli. Yet, if we recall, this is only in the second stage of Deleuze’s dynamic genesis. What happens next?

Butler argues that the phallus is, despite Lacan’s insistence, *imaginary*, as the coordinating phallus; *symbolic*, as “a privileged signifier”; *and*, again despite Lacan’s insistence, related to the penis inasmuch as it “symbolizes” the organ.16 She argues that the phallus is in fact an *idealization* of morphology, a “privileged signifier” that “designates meaning effects as a whole.”17 Butler’s goal here is to rethink the phallus as an idealization of the penis on which it depends “in order to symbolize it.”18 In calling it a symbol, she means that the phallus is necessarily linked to the organ “by determinate negation.”19 The goal of Butler’s reading is to contest Lacan’s claims that the phallus is indifferent to the penis and to say, on the basis of this deconstructive or Hegelian move, as an idealization of an organ, it necessarily depends on the penis or organ in its very disavowal of it. If it is necessarily linked to the idealization of an organ, Butler argues that there is no reason for the phallus to refer to any particular organ. Hence her argument for “the lesbian phallus,” one that would create a different kind of imaginary than the one organized by the coordinating phallus based on the penis in its imagined specular totality.

some key transformations in Lacan’s account of the phallus, I will argue, specifically by ignoring the phallic function, i.e., castration.


17 *Ecrits*, 690. What Lacan means by this is that the phallus designates the bar between the signifier and the signified, which is to say that the phallus brings the signified into being through the castration that that been wrought when the subject enters into language.

18 *Bodies That Matter*, 84

The phallus provides the body in pieces with its specular whole by virtue of its necessary reference to the penis which Lacan claims it is not. Thus, it is transferrable to another image; when Butler refers to the lesbian phallus’ plasticity, she makes quite the penetrating pun.

By linking the coordinating phallus of the Mirror Stage with the phallus’ changed status as a “privileged signifier,” Butler attempts to show the speciousness of Lacan’s use of the phallus even in his disavowal of its status. This is intended to accomplish a rewriting of the terms of sexual identifications, imaginaries, and identifications that might be outside the phallic order. Her argument offers a discursive deconstruction of the meanings of the phallus that Lacan gives by arguing for the relationship of determinate negation between the image, the phallus, and the penis as a series of hoodwinking substitutions all in the service of queering the phallus, of allowing an imago to be formed otherwise than under the banner of the phallic sex. This also explains Butler’s view that so-called phallic sex can be reducible only to the binary between “having” and “being,” which Butler maintains is a heterosexist imperative that reduces lesbianism to “lack” and “shame.”

There are a few reasons I believe that Butler’s argument here is wrong. Butler’s discursive argument shows, I think, why she is wrong in her reading of Lacan; but this misreading of hers will also dramatize how the argument that the sex of the subject can be read on the same level as a constitutive discursive structure fails to be sufficiently radical. I think, further, that my account of Deleuzian sexuation may respond to the difficulty she has in a way that still may allow for the kind of queering of the phallus she wants, presuming we adjust for her misreading. First, in conflating the imaginary ego of the
Mirror Stage with the phallus, she remains only at the level of the imaginary. For Lacan, sexed subject positions are not constructed at the level of the imaginary but instead are formed as relations to kinds of *jouissance*, or they are at the level of the Real. (I explained this in his graphs of sexuation.) Butler reads Lacan only at one level in order to situate the phallus on the same level as discourse, which is the same way she figures sex. The imaginary relations that obtain in this account of sex may well be important to deconstruct and to rid of “shame,” as she argues, but this, I claim, is simply a misrepresentation of Lacan’s position. Of course, Butler does not have to accept Lacan’s view, but what she presents here is again an entirely discursive world that allows for the linguistic relation between terms to be sufficient to establish any kind of relation whatsoever. Why is this important? From my vantage point, Butler stops at the phallus of coordination and does not account for the way in which the phallus becomes the object = x, or the castrated phallus that installs sexuation in the real as a kind of generative void.

This is significant for my argument because it shows that Butler remains committed to an imaginary reading of sex that, as Copjec argued, only shows the effects of the inexhaustibility of discourse. Of course, subject positions as identifications can proliferate on this account, but what we need is an account of the cause of the possibility of proliferation at all. I think if we return to my account of Ideas and the aleatory point in sexuation, we will get a better understanding of how this proliferation occurs. If the aleatory point is castration, Butler has a view of the subject as non-castrated, as left in the

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20 This is also Butler’s justification in *Bodies That Matter* for the discursive production of the body. For her, language is material just as the body is material, and the materiality of the body can well be formed by the materiality of language. Cf. pp. 67-72. I would think Deleuze’s view in *The Logic of Sense* with respect to the event of language might offer an interesting alternative here.
imaginary, and thus lacking a motivating cause of the interruption of any structure. Indeed, Butler argues that “the structural place of the phallus” is “consigned by the Lacanian scheme” in such a way that prevents the structure to move or to be open to change or generation.\textsuperscript{21} In a footnote to that line, she claims to have a Derridean notion of structure that argues that “a structure does not remain self-identical through time,” but ‘is’ to the extent that it is reiterated. … This is a difference constitutive of identity.”\textsuperscript{22} While close to the account that I’ve offered through Deleuze and Lacan, Butler’s view of structure here, in its Derridean roots, does not get to the self-generated animating cause of the differentiation of a structure. My account of castration is relevant here: it shows that the aleatory point qua castration, and castration as immanently engendered, give us a better account of a structure in its self-differentiation. Indeed, the Deleuzian Idea is a structure whose nature is not known in advance and whose nature is to be self-interrupting. If my arguments in Chapters Three and Four are right, this notion of structure, which is necessarily the structure occasioned by the castrated phallus, offers a better model of a structure that is actually generated from difference and not identity. The Derridean structure of iterability is the same formulation that Butler uses to argue for the imperfect recitation of norms. This, therefore, makes iterability contingent and predicated on its original identity that must then be repeated in its eventual non-self-equivalence. This would be akin to Hegelian difference, which Deleuze criticizes in \textit{Difference and Repetition} as, also, deriving difference from identity. This does not, in the end, produce “difference [as] constitutive of identity” except on the model of linguistic performativity.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 264n34.
which requires what she has called elsewhere a “sedimented iterability,” which is to say, the repetition of the same.  

Thus, because Butler remains on the level of the imaginary, her position does not account for the differentiation that she seeks and thereby stalls her view of sex as discursively gender. The embodied, immanently engendered view of sexuation as void is better equipped to argue for any kind of radical “resignifying” possibilities, as Butler would put it. Recall my argument that the whole genesis of thought and its repetition happens both around, in, and through the hole of sex by bringing thought and the body into a discordant relation. When Butler argues that the Mirror Stage leaves us at the phallus of coordination, she unknowingly precludes the necessary last step for the production of the new, or of difference. Thus, the quadripartite failures of sexuation as perpetually self-aborting cyclotrons give us a better account of the generation of difference, as well as of the status of sex as this void that occasions the relation whereby thought turns back on the self. The reason I’ve tried to emphasize so strongly the relation between thought and the body is because I think that constant mismatched interplay deals with both subversion and essentialism by showing a more productive account of their relation.

DELEUZIAN SEXUATION IN PRACTICE: POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS

What else does my account of Deleuzian sexuation accomplish? For one thing, it can address interesting tensions in contemporary feminist and queer theory with respect to

trans* narratives. On the one hand, arguments for, say, sexual reassignment surgery maintain *that it matters* how one is embodied, because we don’t want to reduce one’s embodiment, as the way in which one inhabits the world, to merely a kind of discursive fiction. In this regard, Susan Stryker argues that Butler’s argument for performativity cannot account for “the self-understanding of many transgender people,” because of her reduction of “identification” to a production of power that denies or elides the subjectivity of the trans* subject. Styker, along with arguments for SRS, also express the need for a correspondence between embodiment and identity.  

The argument here is that performativity implies that identifications are in bad faith, or a kind of production that persists only in their falsity. Thus, to be trans* would be to fall prey to a sort of trick, the trick of hypostatization. On the other hand, trans* narratives also must presume a kind of plasticity and a kind of identification that is *not* solely dependent on corporeality, which might indicate that bodies *don’t* matter. If I can “identify” irrespective of my morphology, and if I *don’t* require any form of sexual reassignment surgery (as many trans* and genderqueer folks cannot or do not seek), then perhaps there need be no correspondence


25 Of course, Butler is not transphobic, and her politics would never admit that. The point here is not to say anything about *her* but about the implications of performativity as a political and philosophical position. As for whether performativity can be adapted to trans* studies, there are competing positions. Sandy Stone argues that performativity shows the unnaturalness of gender and thus that the compulsion to “pass” is itself a product of the social regime that causes one to feel the need to transition. See her “The Empire Strikes Back,” *Camera Obscura* vol. 10 no. 2 (1992): 150-176. On the other hand, in *Second Skins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), Jay Prosser argues that Butler sufficiently de-materializes and de-phenomenologizes “the body” in such a way that it makes the “bodily ego” impossible to realize through her account. Thus, performativity on this view would not be capable of offering a proper reconciliation of identity and embodiment.
between bodies, psychic positions, sexual position, or sexuality at all. The strict separation of gender, sex, and “sexual orientation” in some forms of intersectional politics tends in this direction.

And, of course, sexual difference feminism has had a difficult time accounting for trans* narratives. As I referenced in Chapter One, the presumption that there are two (and perhaps only two) sexes, and that the authentic relationship between Others is heterosexual, marks much of Irigaray’s work (and has spawned many criticisms). In I Love To You, Irigaray writes, “Some of our prosperous and naïve contemporaries, women and men, would like to wipe out difference by resorting to monosexuality, to the unisex, and to what is called identification: even if I am bodily a man or a woman, I can identify with, and so be, the other sex.” This seems to be a condemnation of any kind of trans* identification, arguing that “identification” is somehow less real or less significant than one’s corporeality by birth. Her claim here implies that, in identifying as the “other” sex, what one does is reduce or eliminate sexual difference by presuming one’s body-by-birth doesn’t matter. This would render us all to the same underneath: simply “human,” which is anathema to her position.

I am sketching these out to show the limitations of some positions with respect to the status or significance of the sexed body. While for Lacanian psychoanalysis, the question of transitioning is always distributed between three different registers, I want to suggest that my account of Deleuzian sexuation may be useful here. The reason this is so is again because of the kind of open-endedness that is implied via the feedback loop of erogenous zones and thought via sexuation. What this means is that the way one responds

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26 Cf. notes 17 and 33 in Chapter One.
27 I Love To You, 61-2.
to castration can enjoin “masculine” or “feminine” sexuation, but that means nothing about your identification as “male,” “female,” “non-binary,” “non-conforming,” “gender fluid,” “gender queer,” and so on. This would be appealing for someone wanting an account of the importance of “feeling at home” in their body, but it also does not allow itself to universalize the conditions of any one person, spread between registers. This account might be able to respond to that question because it tries to hold together the complicated formative elements of any sexed being, recognizing that psychoanalytic sex need not in any way correlate with biological sex. It suggests that the way in which one relates to one’s erogenous body occurs through a kind of process whereby the body is not given but becomes, and furthermore that the void of sex qua castration coordinates that relation. That means that we could have an account of the materiality of the body as well as of sex, but one that shows them coexisting in a kind of back-turning relation of becoming. From a clinical perspective, it might also be useful in terms of parsing out the differences between desires, jouissance, and identifications. Trans* subjectivity and embodiment is just as variegated between registers as any other, because it involves the complex intertwining between imaginary identifications, fantasies, jouissances, and subject positions.28

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28This is why Catherine Millot’s wildly unpopular book Horsexe may have something to offer. Millot’s book has been attacked by Kate Bornstein as being the work a “real terrorist: a Gender Defender” (“Gender Terror, Gender Rage” in The Transgender Studies Reader, 236). Bornstein claimed this because Millot’s text argues that it may not be in the analysand’s best interest to receive SRS depending on their psychic structure and what they hope to accomplish through SRS. Thus, analysts must decipher their subject position to determine if the trans* identifying subject is (like any other subject) neurotic, psychotic, or perverse. If the subject is psychotically structured, then they will feel as though transitioning will complete them: they will Really Embody A Man or a Woman. From the perspective of a Lacanian, or at least from Millot’s perspective, that could easily trigger a psychotic break, because of the disappointment that would necessarily
In fact, Deleuzian sexuation may be able to offer new kinds of understandings for shifting subject positions, non-normative identifications, and other forms of apparent disconnect between registers that psychology or other normative disciplines may simply register as “errors.” If sexuation as castration exists as the aleatory point that continues to produce self-interrupting Ideas through the relationship between thought and erogeneity, Deleuzian sexuation as the intertwining of the becoming of the body and the perpetual (re)distribution of intensities offers a model for psychoanalytically thematizing new kinds of identifications that seem to be emerging all around us. Indeed, this is one of the important lessons of the *sinthome* as immanent castration: it may be able to account for male or female sexuated positions that are individualized in their own symptom. This would have the effect of guarding against any reductive view of sexuation as determinative or as heterosexist, because it would give each subject his or her own *sinthomatic* way of relating to his or her own sexuated position. Indeed, Deleuzian sexuation allows for this all the more, because of the necessary imbrication of all the registers of the subject as have developed in the three syntheses. This would also give the possibility for one’s own subject position to *change*, which is of course the point of follow when the transitioned subject realizes that they cannot, by definition, embody The Man or The Woman, because both are constitutively impossible. Of course, Butler would also argue that they are constitutively impossible because of the failure of any norm to fully be incarnated. Some view Millot’s position as transphobic, and there are unfortunately many phobic (homophobic and transphobic) analysts. However, as I see it, the Lacanian position does not assume that a trans* identified subject is any more likely to be psychotic than any other, considering the ways in which identification and *jouissance* do not overlap. However, Lacan’s formulation of the “push to a woman” in the case of psychosis, for instance in Schreber, and the discussion of transsexuality with respect to Daniel Lagache do give the impression that there is a reflexive association of trans*ness with psychosis. Cf. Chapter Eight of Morel’s *Sexual Ambiguities*. For more on Millot, cf. Shepherdson’s “The Role of Gender and the Imperative of Sex” in *Vital Signs* and Gherovici’s *Transgender Psychoanalysis*
analysis altogether.

This view of the *sinthome* as a kind of immanent sexuation may also help us turn to the question of the *Woman* who does not exist. Of course, this is one of the most controversial arguments that Lacan has made, and it is easy fodder for many to trounce for its apparent misogyny and denial of feminine speech or subjectivity. Moreover, does Lacan not simply make the Mother the all-consuming, desiring beast, the terrorizing figure from whom the child must separate in order to live, and the constitutive, unsymbolizable outside? An easy (if perhaps not the most convincing) way out of this objection is to say that these are simply structural positions and not actually incarnate mothers and fathers: any figure can enact the law or represent the desire of the Other. Moreover, a typical Lacanian defense argues that the non-existence or not-all of *Woman* is in fact *her freedom*, inasmuch as “the woman” cannot be said to exist as any archetypal eternal feminine. Thus taking women “one-by-one” renders every woman singular, unrepresentable by any mythical woman *except in the fantasy of a man* or in the “masquerade” she must enact in order to enter into a failed sexual relationship with a male sexuated subject.

Unsurprisingly, one of Lacan’s major critics on this point has been Irigaray. According to her, for Lacan there can be no feminine subjectivity, as the feminine either has a

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relationship to S(A) which cannot be spoken, or she is fully phallicized.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, Claire Potter argues that the attempted “saving grace” of arguing that the barred Woman (who does not exist) in fact makes room for de-essentialized women is more or less a trick occasioned by a patriarchal mind that brings Woman into the signifier only to deny her in the same fell swoop.\textsuperscript{32}

So, what does this mean for my attempt to use Lacan to offer an argument that responds helpfully to Irigaray? My speculative suggestion is that, if we see sexuation on the model of the *sinthome* as a kind of immanent castration, as I argued in Chapters Three and Four, then we may be able to give an account of feminine sexuation that *could* be signified, but that would still have a relationship to S(A) and thus could be articulable and not consigned fully to the exterior of the symbolic. When Joyce, for instance, found his *sinthome* in writing, it was a creative kind of process that allowed him to enact a form of self-naming; the same was true for Philippe. The *sinthome* therefore is a kind of invented creativity, a supplement. If the *sinthome* is a self-created symptom or supplement it necessarily flies in the face of universality, because it as a singular, individual invention. In this regard, the impulse to create the *sinthome* is indicative of the necessary creativity of Woman who, in partly escaping castration, has this relation to what I called primary intensity or *jouissance*. Thus, because of the “special” relationship a feminine-sexuated subject has to *jouissance*, she is impelled to “create something of herself, in the very

\textsuperscript{31} She makes these criticisms in “Cosi Fan Tutti” in *This Sex Which Is Not One* and throughout *Speculum of the Other Woman*. For a clear analysis of Irigaray’s position with respect to Lacan, see the chapter “Freud, Lacan, and Speaking (as a) Woman” in Rachel Jones’ *Irigaray: Towards a Sexuate Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 130-159.

\textsuperscript{32} Potter, “A Love Letter from Beyond the Grave.” A positive representation of denying Woman to make room for *women* is also found in Wittig’s “One Is Not Born a Woman.”
process of becoming a woman.” If there can be a kind of self-naming creativity that is the mark of the woman, perhaps this shows Lacan again reworking his view of castration to show the creative impulsion that is brought about through this immanent castration. This account of *sinthome* as individual self-castration may well show potential reconciliations between the account I’ve constructed between Deleuze and Lacan and Lacan and Deleuze & Guattari: if the *sinthome* is immanent castration and also highly individual, then there may be a possibility to see how n sexes and two sexes might not be so incompatibile after all, if immanent castration amounts to something highly individualized, nonsensical, and nontransferable.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show how my argument for Deleuzian sexuation may be able to respond to some concerns of sexual difference feminists and gender feminists. I am not fully advocating for a hybrid between them, but I do think that my position may be able to reconcile some of the tensions between the two while still remaining satisfactory to both. As it stands, I am admittedly in a curious position. There are at least ostensibly irreconcilable splits between every major figure I’ve dealt with in this dissertation. To give only a few examples,

1) *Between Deleuze and Lacan*: In “You Can’t Have it Both Ways: Deleuze or Lacan,” Peter Hallward argues that Deleuze and Lacanian psychoanalysis are entirely

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33 Verhaeghe & Leclerq, 76.
incommensurable, offering a five-pronged argument (that, I might add, engages none of the texts I’ve elaborated at length in this dissertation) attempting to demonstrate this.\textsuperscript{34}

2) \textit{Between Irigaray and Lacan}: In “Cosi fan tutti,” and elsewhere, Irigaray argues that Lacanian psychoanalysis wants woman to be “anything … so long as she is not a ‘subject,’” a position taken up and repeated by most commentators on Irigaray.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, one of Irigaray’s primary targets in her analyses is psychoanalysis, which she claims reduces women to nothing, governed as it is by the phallus as the primary signifier. For her, there is only “man” and his other.

3) \textit{Between Butler and Lacan}: In “Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason,” Joan Copjec argues that there is a “total incompatibility” between Judith Butler’s discursive reading of sex and Lacanian psychoanalysis.\textsuperscript{36} This position has repeated by Zizek and Zupancic at length, as well as some Lacanian queer theorists such as Tim Dean.\textsuperscript{37}

4) \textit{Between Butler and Irigaray}: In \textit{Metamorphoses}, Braidotti sets up a fundamental difference between Butler and Irigaray, which I interpreted in Chapter One as a question of the ontological status of sexual difference.

\textsuperscript{34} Peter Hallward, “You Can’t Have it Both Ways” in \textit{Deleuze and Psychoanalysis}, ed. Leen de Bolle (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 30-50.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{This Sex}, 95. I give only this example here, though they can be found throughout her work.
\textsuperscript{36} Copjec, 209.
\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Zupancic, 8; Zizek’s responses to Butler in \textit{Contingency, Hegemony, Universality} (London: Verso, 2000); and Tim Dean’s “Bodies that Mutter” in \textit{Beyond Sexuality} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). See also Butler’s own arguments against Lacan in “The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary” and her account of heterosexual melancholy in both \textit{Gender Trouble} and \textit{The Psychic Life of Power} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). I would suggest that Butler’s use of psychoanalysis indicates her own sympathy towards it rather than her radical difference from it (at least from her own discursive position).
5) Between Butler and Deleuze: In *Subjects of Desire*, Butler establishes her own difference from Deleuze (with Guattari), suggesting that he impossibly seeks “an incorporation of differences … as a revolutionary return to a natural Eros” somehow beyond the Law, and thus a desire that emerges from plenitude and not from a fundamental lack.38

6) Between Irigaray and Deleuze: In *Conversations*, Irigaray sets up her own distinction from Deleuze, arguing that Deleuze’s concept of “becoming-woman” in his work with Guattari “amounts to becoming what he is not by birth,” indicating yet another masculinist appropriation.39

There are thus fundamental oppositions between every figure I treat this dissertation, with some of them even claiming total incommensurability. It certainly falls outside the purview this dissertation to reconcile all of these tensions, or even to explain the very nuanced arguments each gives in response to their supposed opponent. However, my hope is that this conclusion has shown how reading one of these ostensible impasses responds to another. More specifically, what I have tried to do in this dissertation is to reconcile the work of Deleuze and Lacan in the service of trying to reconcile the tension between Butler and Irigaray. Perhaps, in the end, this might be explained by Deleuze’s own account: what I have offered is a series of disjunctive syntheses that, in their differences, produce thought.

39 *Conversations* (London: Continuum, 2008), 79.
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