

**DISSEMINATIVE COLLAPSE: A DERREDIAN CRITIQUE OF THE
SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Disseminative Collapse: A Derridean Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction

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Literature Review

The sex/gender distinction first originated from American psychoanalyst Robert Stoller's 1968 book *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity*. In the decades that followed, second wave feminist scholars appropriated and redeployed Stoller's distinction towards an end of combating biological essentialism. Contemporaneously, the sex/gender distinction has undergone a conceptual reorientation towards creating two specific sets of occupiable positions for both gender and sex.

Thesis Statement

The disruptive effects of dissemination on the constitutive aspects of gender and sex result in these two concepts conflating. On account of this conflation, the sex/gender distinction of feminist theory collapses into untenability.

Theoretical Framework

This project utilizes textual analysis and conceptual analysis. Through textual analysis I evaluate the texts of feminist theory and a variety of other disciplines. Through conceptual analysis I interrogating a number of key concepts pertaining to these aforementioned disciplines.

Project Description

In many strains of contemporary feminist theory, the sex/gender distinction is an elementary conception. Across its decades of paradigmatic prevalence within the discipline, the distinction consistently contextualizes the category of gender as segregating by a dynamic of psychology/culture and the category of sex as segregating by a dynamic of biology. The sex/gender distinction, however, is ultimately untenable a conceptual structure. While other scholars have previously asserted this claim, this particular project puts forth an original critique incorporative of French poststructuralist Jacques Derrida's notion of dissemination.

In a general sense, dissemination prevents the meaning of signifiers from being restrained to an insular context. Accordingly, dissemination disrupts any conceptual schema that operationally requires contextual stabilization. The sex/gender distinction, being such a schema, falls into disarray as effected by disseminative disruptions. Disruption occurs in two ways. First, dissemination causes segregative conflation between the dynamics of both gender and sex, resulting in these categories coming to divide indistinguishably from each other. Second, dissemination conflates the individuated positions of gender and sex (e.g. man, woman, male, female) into a dual occupancy under both categories, resulting in an indistinguishability of categorized positional specificity. By the factor of both of these disruptions, the sex/gender distinction collapses.

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INTRODUCTION

Lay perspectives hide insights that can shatter orthodox paradigms. The unlearned understanding of the relationship between gender and sex exemplifies this notion brilliantly. Within contemporary feminist scholarship, it is an elementary principle that the concept of ‘sex’ is distinct from the concept of ‘gender’.¹ To postulate to the contrary, as by an unhesitant conflation of the two concepts, indicates to scholars a lack of theoretical knowledge and a belonging to the laity.² Given closer examination, however, this supposedly naive postulation of equivalency schematizes the relation between gender and sex more keenly than the dualistic model propped up by academic feminism. When put under scrutiny, the sex/gender distinction is revealed as untenable. The established perimeters said to divide the concepts, those being the ‘biological’ for ‘sex’ and the ‘social’/‘psychological’ for ‘gender’, fail at their segregative function to such an extent that currently all subject positions figured as belonging to the category of gender are present equally in the category of sex, and all subject positions figured as belonging to the category of sex are present equally in the category of gender.³ An utter conceptual collapse follows from this absolute overlap accordingly. Out of this absolute overlap comes a complete conceptual collapse. While a rejective account of the sex/gender distinction is in no sense itself revolutionary, this particular project stands individuated from past critiques on the basis of primary two factors.⁴ First, it seeks to dismantle the distinction in its most

¹ Alison Stone, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 30.

² Mari Mikkola, “Ontological Commitments, Sex and Gender,” in *Feminist Metaphysics: Explorations in Ontology of Sex, Gender and the Self*, ed. Charlotte Witt (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2011), 69.

³ Stone, 30.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990); Mikkola, “Ontological Commitments, Sex and Gender”; Raia Prokhovnik, *Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999).

contemporaneously constructed schematization, and second, it does so through a novel application of Jacques Derrida's quasi-concept of 'dissemination'. In addition to these primary factors, the project also proposes the remedial neologism of 'gendersex' as a responsive conceptual alternative to sex/gender distinction's collapse.

PART I

DISTINCTION SCHEMAS

Prior to detailing the problematic aspects and inherent deficiencies of the sex/gender distinction, it is first necessary to outline its origin, conceptual scheme, and functionality within key theoretical contexts. While the notion that ‘sex’ refers directly to a human status has been a constant since the 18th century, it was not until the 1960s that this same notion became equally applicable to ‘gender’; up until then, gender was strictly a grammatical term relating to noun distinguishment within a number of Romance languages.⁵ The ideas articulated by American psychoanalyst Robert Stoller in this decade ultimately mark both the development of gender into a realm of human categorization and, by consequence, the distinction of this new realm from that of sex. Stoller’s conception of the sex/gender distinction can be summarized as follows: sex pertains to differentiations of biologically contingent factors, while gender pertains to differentiations of culturally and psychologically contingent factors.⁶ Expanding further upon the constitution of the former, corporeal features including chromosomes, genitalia, gonads, hormonal levels, and post-puberty physiological changes all contribute to the characterization of one’s sex, and thus figure one’s placement within this realm as an immutable product of nature.⁷ ‘Male’ and ‘female’ operate as the validated positions of sex.⁸ Regarding gender, the basis for its constitution is somewhat more opaque than its biological counterpart. Stoller describes gender in

⁵ Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7-8; Jennifer Germon, *Gender: A Genealogy of an Idea*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

⁶ Robert Stoller, *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (London: Karnac Books, 1968), 9.

⁷ Stoller, 9; Prokhovnik, 111.

⁸ Stoller, 9.

very vague terms as “the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person.”⁹ Granting some greater clarity to concept, the psychoanalyst gives two further facets of gender corresponding to the twofoldness of its characterization. These facets are those of ‘gender identity’ and ‘gender role’. Through gender identity, one obtains a self-conscious awareness of occupying a specific gendered position, and, subsequently, said position becomes posited as a core element of one’s own psyche.¹⁰ As for gender roles, these are described in Stoller’s own words as, “the overt behavior one displays in society, the role which he [*sic*] plays, especially with other people, to establish his position with them insofar as his and their evaluation of his gender is concerned.”¹¹

In the years following Stoller’s initial schematization, the sex/gender distinction gained extensive traction within the context of feminist theory. However, the theoretical model appropriated out of Stoller’s framework by no means assumed a stabilized and universally adapted structural configuration. Toril Moi describes two disparate ways the distinction can be modeled,

The sex/gender distinction operates on two different levels: on a general social level, where gender becomes synonymous with social norms or ideology and sex means concrete human bodies; and on an individual level, where gender gets interpreted as personal identity or subjectivity, and sex is imagined to be an elusive entity inside or beyond the actual body.¹²

Following Moi, conceptualizing the sex/gender distinction may take either a wide-lensed approach in which its total effects on a society are taken under consideration, or a narrowed approach in which its effects are considered as divisionarily pertaining to individual. This socially oriented understanding will be referred to as the ‘macro model’, while the individual-

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Stoller, 10, 29-30.

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Toril Moi, *What Is A Woman?: and Other Essays*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32-33.

oriented understanding will be referred to as the ‘micro model’. The former of the two conceptualizations was the first to be developed from Stoller’s ideas and had by the 1970s reached paradigmatic status within the discourse of second wave feminism.¹³ By this socially oriented model of the sex/gender distinction, as aptly described in the words of Teresa de Lauretis, “gender is not sex, a state of nature, but the representation of each individual in terms of a social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes.”¹⁴ By the postulations of biological determinism, the constraints of the social milieu binding both males to masculinity and females to femininity are contingent upon the concrete anatomical differences between the sexes, thus negating any possibility to alter or escape from these positional roles.¹⁵ Feminists unsurprisingly found this notion of societal rigidity objectionable on account of its essentializing a hierarchy that subordinated the female to the male—or, as equivalently read, ‘woman to man’—for the first distinction model deemed all subject positions as belonging to sex, so each of these pairs are interchangeably iterable.¹⁶ Accordingly, the sex/gender distinction was deployed as a counter measure to the misogyny behind the essentialist framework. In compartmentalizing the biological into sex and the cultural into gender, feminists unlinked anatomical differentiation from determining the stifling aspects of femininity and masculinity. To extrapolate, while indeed as belonging to sex, males and females were figured as biologically disparate, this disparity was not itself responsible for the presence of social inequality; hierarchization emerged, rather, out of

¹³ David Haig, “The Inexorable Rise of Gender and the Decline of Sex: Social Change in Academic Titles, 1945–2001,” in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33, no. 2 (2004), 93; Stone, 31.

¹⁴ Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indianapolis University Press, 1987), 5.

¹⁵ Stone, 31.

¹⁶ Moi, 30.

culturally generated gender roles enforced upon the two positions of the sexes.¹⁷ Under this socially oriented model of the sex/gender distinction, thusly, the positing of gender roles upon the sexes affirmed the possibility of manifesting an egalitarian relationality between woman and man despite their anatomical dissimilarities.

¹⁷ Linda Nicholson, "Interpreting Gender," in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 1 (1994), 80-81.

PART II

THE MICRO MODEL'S ONSET

While in the era of second wave feminism the macro model served as the dominant form of the sex/gender distinction, its prevalence of usage within feminist theory has since diminished considerably.¹⁸ In its place, the other model of the sex/gender distinction, that more individual-oriented micro level model, has superseded its way into greater popularity within present day scholarship. A fully detailed account outlining the half a century shift from the macro model to the micro model far exceeds the viable breadth of analysis for this project. Said shift could very easily be the topic of its own separate treatise. The onset of queer theory, changes in the regime's psycho-medical institutions, and the rise of identity politics under neoliberalism have all been pegged as culpable, but these in no sense are exhaustive of the factors involved.¹⁹ Trajectories of transformation aside, the dynamics of gender and sex at play in the individually oriented model vastly differ from those of its socially oriented counterpart. By the schematizations of the macro model, gender's effect pertained to the relational differences manifested out of masculinity and femininity upon the whole of social subjects. On account of relationality serving as a basis here, gender itself lacked an ontological foundation. One could not *be* a gender, only constrained by the broader roles dictated by its systemization. Ontological fundament, rather, fell upon the sex side of the distinction. Hence, all foundational positions of the macro model (e.g. man, woman, female, male), were predicated upon what was figured as natural biological differences between

¹⁸ Sheila Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts: A feminist analysis of the politics of transgenderism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 4-5.

¹⁹ Jeffreys, 40-45; Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), 133; Marie Moran, *Identity & Capitalism* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage, 2015), 111-112.

bodies. In great contrast to the macro model, the divisionary function of the sex/gender distinction serves no longer under this new micro model to map out the gendered social impositions of femininity and masculinity upon their corresponding sexes of male (man) and female (woman). It instead serves to map out how the positions of sex and the positions of gender qualitatively operate *in tandem* at the level of the single individual. Summarized succinctly in the words of Mari Mikkola regarding what occurs from this shift, “‘woman’ and ‘man’ are used as gender terms, ‘female’ and ‘male’ as sex terms... Being a human female doesn’t make one a woman. Instead, in order to satisfy the gender concept ‘woman’ some social, not biological, conditions must be met.”²⁰ Thus, within each human exist both characteristics situating one as a particular gender and characteristics situating one as a particular sex.

To assist in us in better understanding the workings of the micro model, this project will heavily exemplify its schematization by Sam Killermann, most recognized as the creator of the Genderbread Person, a pedagogical device for mapping out the differences between gender identity, gender expression, sex, and attraction. Despite being strictly an activist, and therefore not the most academic of sources, two factors make Killermann nevertheless worth scrutinizing. First, qualified academics frequently incorporate the Genderbread Person, and thus the ideas it espouses, into the lesson plans of introductory gender studies courses (I myself was exposed to the Genderbread Person in my own Intro to Women’s and Gender Studies class). Killermann’s lack of verified academic credential then proves ultimately negligible in the face of those who are verified affirmingly teaching the activist’s ideas in a institutionally legitimate setting. Second, the sheer degree of the device’s virality beyond even the academy, the Genderbread Person has over a billion downloads as an image by the activist’s own data, qualifies it as the

²⁰ Mari Mikkola, “Gender Concepts and Intuitions,” in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 34, no. 4 (2009), 560.

most currently popular representation of the individual-oriented sex/gender distinction.²¹ The ideas of none other convey such a simplified folk understanding of how this model is widely understood. These factors prefaced, our attention can return now to investigating both the micro model in question and the way Killermann iterates its conceptualization.

Not all facets of the Genderbread Person relate substantially to Killermann’s portrayal of the sex/gender distinction, and as such only the relevant categorical aspects of the device, these being sex and gender identity, will be given attention here. Because all of categories themselves are “interrelated, but not necessarily interconnected,” Killermann’s views are not misrepresented by these omissions.²² So beginning with sex, the functionality of this category operates by many measures in the exact same way as it did under the socially oriented model. Both its ties to the realm of biology remain completely unsevered and its terminological application of ‘male’ and ‘female’ persist towards plotting out the same sort of anatomical dimorphisms.²³ In contrast to the macro model, however the micro model rejects sex as naturally holistic. No longer are female and male deemed indivisible or in rigid opposition to each other, they now possess a potential coexistence within an individual embodiment. By Killermann’s conceptualization, the category of sex elementally consists of a parallel correspondence between a continuum of ‘female-ness’ and a continuum of ‘male-ness’ (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1: The continua of biological sex.²⁴

²¹ Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate’s Handbook* (Austin: Impetus Books, 2017), 66-67.

²² *Ibid.*, 85.

²³ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

The leftmost end of each continuum represents the complete lack of its respective sex categorization. As one moves rightward, the degree of occupancy to an embodiment of either male-ness or female-ness augments accordingly. The marking of a placement upon each of the two axes serves then to indicate a different configuration of bodily sex.²⁵ In no sense, however, do these continua negate the category of sex from figuring female and male as ontologically rooted positions. Quite to the contrary, Killermann's continua invigorate the ontological foundation for 'intersex', a newly legitimized positioning which by past understandings, Stoller's included, was deemed strictly occupiable as a biological defect.²⁶ Killermann details,

If someone has all the characteristics of male anatomical sex, we may consider them to be 'male'. If someone has all the characteristics of female anatomical sex, we may consider them to be 'female'. And if someone has characteristics associated with both sexes, we may consider them to be 'intersex'.²⁷

Charting how each of these might appear on the two continua, the position of male would involve graphing female-ness at a stark zero and male-ness at any positive placement (the 0 : x ratio makes the specific value male-ness inconsequential). Vice versa applies to the position of female. As for the position of intersex, its graphing consists of a simultaneity in positivity along both the female-ness continuum and male-ness continuum.

In utter contrast to sex, however, gender assumes a drastically dissimilar conceptualization under Killermann's individual-oriented model than it does under the model of the socially oriented distinction. The activist chiefly addresses gender in its form of gender identity. As Killermann defines it,

Gender identity is how you, in your head, experience and define your gender, based on how much you align (or don't align) with what you understand the options for gender to be.... Gender identity is all about how you think about yourself. It's about how you

²⁵ Ibid., 96.

²⁶ Stoller, 9.

²⁷ Killermann, 120.

internally interpret your personal chemistry in the face of the socialization you experienced growing up.²⁸

Thus, gender identity in this context harks back to Stoller rendering of the psychological side of the distinction as characterized in part by gender's internalized subjectivization. Here too Killermann figures the category in question as derivable from two parallel continua, with 'man-ness' and 'woman-ness' replacing 'male-ness' and 'female-ness' as the corresponding axes for gender identity (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2: The continua of gender identity.²⁹

The conceptual mechanics of these new continua work just like those of sex, except they illustrate a psychological relationality instead one of a biological sort. Hence, different chartings yield different configurations of subjectivities, which in turn yield different positions of gender identity.³⁰ So, mirroring the sexed criteria for subject establishment, the plotting of both a positive value on the woman-ness continuum and a value of zero on the man-ness continuum qualifies an occupancy of the position 'woman', and vice versa for an occupancy of 'man'.³¹ Other charting configurations besides these two additionally yield a number of "genderqueer" positions such as 'agender' (occurs when both continua rest at zero) and 'bigender' (occurs when both continua are positively valued).³²

In considering the deeper implications of subject positioning pertinently operating within

²⁸ Ibid., 72

²⁹ Ibid., 291.

³⁰ Ibid., 97.

³¹ Ibid., 137

³² Ibid. 134-136.

the realm of gender, it becomes apparent just how strikingly dissimilar the micro model's conception of gender is from that of its macro counterpart. Under an individual oriented schematization, gender assumes its own form of foundational ontology, one based uniquely upon gender identity's function of subjectivization. This ontologizing of the psychological indeed marks a break from past understandings; as by the notions of the prior model, gender had no being. Being was strictly reserved, rather, as a property belonging to the biological realm of sex. Consequent to the expansion of being's delimitation, gender furthermore obtains its own set of ontologically grounded positions. However, the means of this obtainment come not through an act of generation, but one of appropriation. 'Woman' and 'man', what were once occupiable as the positionings of sex, serve now exclusively as the psychological positionings of gender identity. They inevitably lose their prior contextualization as resting upon an anatomical fundament, and likewise their respective synonymities with 'female' and 'male' undergo a total dissociation. At the site of the individual then, two ontologized categories with their own positional sets effectively emerge: the category of sex, with its exclusive biologically rooted positions of 'male', 'female', and in some cases 'intersex'; and the category of gender, with its exclusive psychologically rooted positions of 'man', 'woman', and in some cases those of the genderqueer. Thus is the composition of the individually oriented model of the sex/gender distinction.

PART III

COLLAPSING THE MICRO MODEL

Having outlined both the macro and micro models of the sex/gender distinction, we shift now towards explicating the inoperability of this divisionary conception in the form of a critique. The contestment presented refutes both the macro and the micro model the distinction, as well as previously drafted criticisms directed towards each that exemplify common deficiencies in the distinction's conventional refutation. Working temporarily backwards from their order of paradigmatic establishment, the micro model will be the first of these demonstrated as untenably schematized.

In outline of its structure, the micro model relies upon a pyramidal organization of stratified contexts. At the top of this pyramid is the context of the micro model itself, with its contrast being towards that of the macro model. Moving down a stratum, the micro model splits into the two divided contexts of 'gender' and 'sex', which of course are distinguished as categories of either a psychological or biological character respectively. Moving down once more within each of these divided contexts, at which point one happens upon the pyramid's base, one reaches a context subsisting of these categories' specific positions (male and female for sex, man and woman for gender). Now, one cannot overemphasize the importance of positioning serving as a base here. The micro model ultimately requires it to viably operate, lest the whole structure collapse in on itself. This relevance of positioning stems from inherent segregative function of both gender and sex as categories. On the former, Donna Haraway remarks how "[g]ender' is at the heart of constructions and classifications of systems of difference."³³ On the

³³ Haraway, 130.

latter, Martine Rothblatt describes its current operation as a form of apartheid, and that “[i]f there are no hard and fast sex types, then there can be no apartheid of sex.”³⁴ Even in looking to these categories’ etymologies, gender and sex originate from words definitionally referential towards division. ‘Sex’ comes most probably from the Latin word *secare*, meaning ‘to cut’ or ‘to divide’.³⁵ As for ‘gender’, it comes from the Latin word *genus*, meaning ‘sort’ or ‘kind’.³⁶ This segregative characteristic indeed endures within the micro model of the sex/gender distinction. One’s categorization on both sides of the distinction necessitates a specific compartmentalized occupancy. That an individual could elude specificity as to be simply of a ‘general sex’ or a ‘general gender’ is entirely incomprehensible. The categories of both gender and sex then operationally segregate those of particular biological and subjectivized constitutions into specific positions. However, mere segregation only rudimentarily uncovers positioning’s significance. If the sex/gender distinction requires a specificity to its categorizations via a segregating of positions, then the *very parameters* of these segregated positions themselves sustain micro model’s contextual strata. Sex, as tied contextually to the biological, must accordingly divide along the biological. Gender, as tied contextually to the psychological, must accordingly divide along the psychological. Out from these divisions emerge both a set of positions strictly encompassed within sex and a set of positions strictly encompassed within gender. An absence of territorial overlap is implicit here. Killermann’s own two continua sets reflect such exclusivity with the relation between ‘woman-ness’ and ‘man-ness’ schematizing gender and ‘male-ness’ and ‘female-ness’ schematizing sex. Furthermore, the higher strata of

³⁴ Martine Rothblatt, *The Apartheid of Sex: A Manifesto on the Freedom of Gender* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995), 19.

³⁵ Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages*, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 560-561.

³⁶ Mary Hawkesworth, “Confounding Gender,” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22, no. 3 (1997), 657.

contexts also rely on this accordance of parameters. There can be no context of a ‘sex/gender distinction’ if gender and sex refrain from operating across distinct realms, and there can be no context of an individual-oriented modeling of said distinction if distinction itself is lacking.

Hence, the primary problem comes into view: the necessary maintenance of separation across each the micro model’s stratified contexts is *ultimately untenable*. Critically incorporated, Jacques Derrida’s quasi-concept of ‘dissemination’ demonstrates vitally this untenability of stabilized contextual segregation. The odd term of ‘quasi-concept’ here follows from its use by Eddo Evink. As Evink states “[t]he notion of dissemination can be placed in the line of Derridean quasi-concepts.... On the one hand, [quasi-concepts] can be described and thematized, although not in a fixed definition, on the other hand, their effects and consequences are variable and unpredictable.”³⁷ Said feature of indefinability perhaps outlines dissemination’s operation more aptly than would be possible through a mere reductive description, as its incorporative saliency pertains to the very impossibility to restrictively define the limits of a word’s meaningful signifying capacity. Nevertheless, the following quotation from Derrida provides a serviceable framing of the quasi-concept’s complicated workings:

This is the possibility on which I wish to insist: the possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication; as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its ‘original’ meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context.³⁸

We must attend to each of the active elements at play in this key quotation on dissemination, the first of these being the ‘mark’. The mark operates in a fashion similar to a word, more specifically the Saussurian sign, albeit a word as not inherently treated yet as such. The mark lies

³⁷ Eddo Evink, “Polysemy and Dissemination” in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 43 no. 3 (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 274.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf, trans. Alan Bass (New York: Columbia University Press), 97.

beneath the word as the inscriptive basis of the word's own presence. As Niall Lucy clarifies on this element of dissemination, "Before a word makes sense, for example, it is a mark – a black mark on a white page in the case of a written word. It has to be a mark in order to be a word. But once it becomes a word (comes into presence, as it were) it remains a mark; every word is always also a mark."³⁹ Continuing on, Derrida describes 'extraction' and 'citational grafting' as integral in the mark. The processes of these two elements go hand in hand. A mark is first appropriated via extraction from an inscriptive context, and then, through grafting, becomes citationally reintegrated into a new and different context as a repeated inscription. The continual interplay between these three elements of mark, extraction, grafting, propagate the actualization of 'writing', which in the Derridean sense goes beyond the conventional use of the word to include pictographic, hieroglyphic, ideographic, phonetic, and alphabetic content.⁴⁰ Said element of writing holds a capacity of functioning, as Derrida puts it, "before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication." As Evink describes 'horizon' as referred to here,

The horizon is that which lends unity and coherence to the contexts in which phenomena appear to us, as well as to the contexts within which texts and other expressions develop their meaning. When we interpret a text, we find our starting point in a linguistic, historical and cultural horizon that structures beforehand our expectations of the text. On the one hand, this horizon limits the possible significations of the text: it cannot mean everything at the same time. On the other hand, this limit is very flexible and open; it changes in the course of interpretation, which is a dialogue of horizons.⁴¹

The consequences of dissemination's capacity to function in lieu of this horizon are immense.

The capacity of writing to work outside the constraining zone of a horizon entails its emancipation from a signification limit. However, the elimination of limit does not implicate that a writing comes to mean everything all at once, but that its meaning as interpretively

³⁹ Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2004), 73-74.

⁴⁰ Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 90.

⁴¹ Evink, 269.

contextualized within a context can never be reductive. That one finds unity and coherence when interpreting a writing, be it in a present or future instance, indicates nothing in relation to the writing itself; interpretation begets no intrinsic restriction. Rather, writing itself holds a signifying capacity that perpetually eludes what in any context might be stably apparent as present.⁴² Thus, Derrida proclaims, “the force and form of [dissemination’s] disruption explode the semantic horizon.”⁴³ By this account, limitations of semiolinguistic communication become a non-factor with respects to what a writing might signify. Relating the disavowal of the horizon back the processes of extraction and grafting, a number of dissemination’s crucial effects become elucidated. First, in the composition of all writing consisting of grafted marks from other contexts, “there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring.”⁴⁴ In other words, no context operates as its own source of origination, an initial extraction from other contexts is required. Second, as following from this lack of center, writing becomes cut off from signifying an ‘original meaning’; such a significative capacity would suggest the bunk possibility of a writing as irreducibly originative in the first place. Third, no writing escapes from its own constitutive marks being extracted for implementation within newly devised contexts. One cannot block off parts of a writing from being citationally grafted elsewhere, even if these other contexts radically mutate the situating of a mark’s placement relative to other contexts (hence the importance of its exploding of the horizon). Finally fourth, as following from this radical mutation, writing’s meaning becomes impervious to saturation. The unbridled extractings and graftings that continually yield new contexts of writing ever-expand the signifying capacity of that which is subject to these processes. This expansion occurs both forwardly, through a citing

⁴² Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 92.

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 45.

⁴⁴ Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 97.

of marks into newly inscribed meaning-alterative contexts, and recursively, by means of said alterations re-schematizing that mark's meaning at its site of extraction. And with no horizon to impose a limit on this swirling of cross-context transfers, writing as disseminated never becomes saturated of meanings to convey. With the quasi-concept described and thematized, the question arises as to how dissemination problematizes the micro model of the sex/gender distinction. Lucy provides us with a sketch of the answer: "the work of dissemination undoes the order of things, disrupting the security of borders and regulations and unsettling the solace of ideal forms. Dissemination refuses the ontology of presence."⁴⁵ Indeed, the disseminative undoing of order described here fatally disrupts the borders and regulations essential to micro model's viable operation. Across its presumably closed off contextual sites, a porous interworking between a multitude of foundational concepts bars the model from stability; among these being the categories of 'sex' and 'gender', the realms of the 'biological' and the 'psychological', and the positions of 'woman', 'man', 'female', and 'male'. In outlining the disseminative disruptions that remove the contextual signifying limitations around each of these grafted-in concepts, the untenability of the individual-oriented sex/gender distinction comes into clarity.

The first disruption to investigate pertains to the breaching of 'female' and 'male' into category of 'gender'. Foundationally, gender under the micro model finds its ground in the notion of gender identity, where one assumes and occupied position, recalling Killerman, "based on how much you align (or don't align) with what you understand the options for gender to be." Of particular note, the 'options for gender' referred to here actively exclude the positions of 'male' and 'female', as these belong strictly to the category of sex. So while 'woman', 'man',

⁴⁵ Lucy, 30.

and any configuration of the genderqueer may operate as valid specificities of gender identity, the same validity never applies those positions of a sexed contextualization. Gender identity, however, does not originate as a conception from Killermann's own writing; it has been *extracted* from another source and subsequently grafted into the micro model. Said source of extraction, while in no sense independent from incorporative graftings of its own, charts back to the writing of Stoller, which states the following on the conception in question:

Gender identity starts with the knowledge and awareness, whether conscious or unconscious, that one belongs to one sex and not the other, though as one develops, gender identity becomes much more complicated, so that, for example, one may sense himself as not only a male but a masculine man or an effeminate man or even a man who fantasies being a woman.⁴⁶

What emerges from this passage signals the first instance of dissemination destabilizing the contextual borders of the micro model. To extrapolate, Stoller's conception of gender identity includes not only 'woman' and 'man' as positional options of possible subjectivation, but also 'female' and 'male'; that which must qualify exclusively as positionings of sex. Were the context of the micro model closed off from all foreign influence, this relayed quotation would in no form disrupt the model's schematization of gender. However, on account of both the disseminative impossibility of contextual purity—as evident though the grafting in of 'gender identity' here—and the determinative parameters of identification abiding to *whatever* can be understood as a positional option of gender, this Stoller-derived signification expansion cannot be negated. Thus, the positions of 'male' and 'female' spread from their restrictive category of sex to obtain a simultaneous contextual presence in the category where they are supposed to be absent.

The impact of recapitulating Stoller, however, goes beyond just the breaching over of 'female' and 'male' into a new categorization: it begets the second disseminative disruption.

⁴⁶ Stoller, 10.

Upon both of these positions achieving a presence within each side of the sex/gender distinction, segregative dynamics from the realm of the psychological, what the micro model figures as pertinent in a gendered context alone, become active accordingly under a context of sex. In other words, sex as a category no longer divides in exclusive terms of biology, but does so in terms of psychology as well. Briefly retouching upon the micro model workings of sex, the divisionary contingency for each of the category's positions depends upon biological dimorphisms (e.g. chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, etc.). Now, a subtle, yet important, nuance at play here is that one need not possess a self-awareness of the dimorphic characteristics of one's own body for said body to occupy a specific sex. Sex operates at the ontological level, thus, as a simple *isness* of a corporeal state, and does so independent of interpretation. So, a graph of a specific position of sex, as following the procedure of Killermann's continua, points not towards an understanding of a bodily arrangement, but to the actual anatomical arrangement of the body itself. By consequence of this nuance, positions of sex cannot be identified into like those of gender. To 'be male' entails having a male body, 'female' a female body, 'intersex' an intersex body. However, when the disseminative effects upon these positions from the grafting in of Stoller are considered, this limitation to identification dissipates completely. As contextually present within the category of gender, 'female' and 'male' become subject to the category's typical psychologically based dynamics of segregation. But such a recontextualization into gender in no sense necessitates a *decontextualization* out of sex. On account of 'male' and 'female' existing within each category simultaneously—and doing so as inscribed in each through the same mark—psychologically based segregative dynamics not only affect these two positions while in the context of gender, *but do so equally while in the context of sex*. Unexamined anatomical

configuration desists then as the sole ontological foundation for sexed positioning, it operates just as surely now upon the self-understood position of one's own sex itself.

By initial assessment, this new scheme seems circular. How can sex's positions be determined by their determination if the criterium for this is exactly what is in question? What is crucial to recall here is that sex has not lost its ontological sourcing in the body, its foundational scheme has just expanded to a multi-realm plurality. That the determination of sex is now in part psychological does not negate the initial grounding role of the biological. Hence, the two realms interact. Through utilization of psychological faculties, one self-references one's own biology to determine a sexed positioning. An inquiry of, 'how do I know what my sex is?' spurs one to evaluate the sexually dimorphic corporeal regions of the body in order to satiate this question. Whatever conclusion is obtained serves as the occupied position of sex. Critically, no alternative locus grants one epistemic awareness of this occupancy. While the body as unevaluated may possess a sexed configuration, positional establishment remains an impossibility until an evaluation actually occurs. In other words, one cannot specify oneself as positioned in sex unless a position is first contemplatively understood as applicable. As a consequence, what yields from corporeal self-evaluation comes *itself* to act as an ontological fundament, one planted outside the realm of biological. Much then like how the determination of gender entails an assessment of positional options, sex's determination comes to involve a similar act of assessment, albeit one directed towards the body instead of all understandable gender identities. That this assessment utilizes psychological faculties does not default it as an operation of gender, however. It is not the specificity of a gender positioning being targeted here in this corporeal self-evaluation, but strictly the positioning of one's sex alone. Finding one's position in gender is a separate inquiry, one that takes place in an entirely different categorical context. Thus, the category of sex comes

to possess two disparate ontological foundations that situate its respective positionings: the biological body itself and this body as psychologically comprehended self-referentially.

Now, no menacing disruptions to the micro model seem emergent from this addition of a psychologically characterized ontology to sex. After all, the psychologically derived positionings here remain reliant upon an assessment of the body, meaning the biological upholds its status as the category's realm of divisional primacy. But this status is not guaranteed imperishability. Psychology's presence in sex tears biology from its place of assumed precedence. While indeed standardly the body must be evaluated in order to establish a psychologically based position, nothing inherently renders the biological as the comparatively more superior foundation to the psychological relative to the positionings each produces. The realms are interdependent of each other. Without a possessed body to refer to, sex as psychologically grounded becomes unstationable; without a contemplation of corporeal configuring, sex as biologically grounded becomes uniterable. However, on account of no one realm trumping the other as the category's ultimate ground, nothing incorruptibly cements the biological as operationally antecedent. Causal polarity can be *reversed*. In accordance with such a reversal, sex starts in the activation of one's psychological faculties, coming subsequently to adjust the body into a suitable corporeality. Julia Serano's idea of 'subconscious sex' works as an epitome of this polarity switch. Defined by Serano as "an unconscious and inexplicable self-understanding regarding what sex one belongs to or should be," subconscious sex supposes not biology, but psychology as the antecedent realm of positional establishment.⁴⁷ One's embodied anatomical arrangement is superseded by a subconscious self-understanding, one that first grounds the positioning of sex upon a

⁴⁷ Julia Serano, "Julia's trans, gender, sexuality, & activism glossary!," *juliaserano.com* (2016), <http://juliaserano.com/terminology.html>; Julia Serano, *Outspoken: A Decade of Transgender Activism and Transfeminism* (Oakland, Switch Hitter Press, 2016), 283.

psychological fundament.⁴⁸ Following suit, subconscious sex further dictates a coincident positional conformity at the level of the biological.⁴⁹ Serano understands this requirement of positional congruency as the reason why procedures of physical transition for trans individuals are therapeutic.⁵⁰ The body comes accordingly to match a latent, self-understood positioning. Whether this psychology-to-biology causality Serano advocates is a more accurate portrayal of the operation of sex than a biology-to-psychology rendition is ultimately beside the point here. By the micro model, ‘subconscious sex’ is oxymoronic. Sex supposedly sorts out its positions only along the lines the biological, a realm where the subconscious has no belonging. Yet were only biology at play in the category, an idea like subconscious sex would be infeasible to even conceptualize in the first place. The very capacity to formulate sex as foundationally psychological demonstrates a lack of singularity in its divisional factor. With sex now segregating nonexclusively under both biological and psychological dynamics, the sex/gender distinction decays only further into structural disarray.

Having mapped out how sex becomes psychologically segregative, we arrive now at the third disseminative disruption. Configurably mirroring the first disruption, it consists of the breaching of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ into the category of sex. Just as how the micro model grafted in ‘gender identity’ from a contextual elsewhere, so too by this same procedure did ‘man’ and ‘women’ enter its conceptual scheme. However, rather than this integration being trackable to a specific textual source, as was relationally the case to Stoller, the two positions in question instead derive from the macro model of the sex/gender distinction. ‘Man’ and ‘woman’ under this model once served unquestionably as sexed positionings, but this changed with the micro

⁴⁸ Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Emeryville: Seal Press, 2007), 80-81.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30, 86.

model's advent. Appropriated and re-schematized, they were delimited out of the context of sex to become lodged exclusively within context of gender. By the effects of dissemination, however, this aim towards contextual delimitation proves utterly futile. 'Woman' and 'man' hauntingly endure as positionings of sex in spite of all contemporary efforts to shed this past conception. Even those subscribed to the micro model fail in confining them to a gendered context. An analysis from Killermann on the workings of sexism immaculately exemplifies this failure. While discussing the aim of feminist politics, the activist states the following:

The thing feminism thinks is bad is the hundreds of years of sexism ..., as well as the existence of sexism today. Sexism is the problem—sexism that a lot of men engage in and a lot of women internalize. Men engage in sexism because they've been taught to behave/think that way. Women internalize it for the same reason. Feminism asks both men and women to critically think about those normalized behaviors and their impact and holds people accountable to sexist thinking and behavior even if they didn't initially realize it was sexist.⁵¹

A variety of tensions come into focus out of this passage. If, by Killermann's assessment, "feminism, distilled down to its absolute core, is about gender equity," the question arises as to why feminists posit the social malaise of *sexism* as their primary target of critique.⁵² Also questionable here is the relational role at play between this malaise and the positions of woman and man. Purportedly, men engage in sexism and women internalize it, yet nothing indicates the recipient of this engagement for man nor the impetus of this internalization for woman. An adherence to the established parameters of the micro model entails this impetus and recipient be categorized as sexed, but not only does this clash with the asserted directive of feminism towards establishing gender equity, it leaves inexplicable why woman and man, being without an inherent connection to sex, execute such disparate actions from each other under sexism's influence. Interpreted alternatively, the selected object of each position's action is the other

⁵¹ Killermann, 196-197.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 194.

gender position itself. Hence, woman suffers as the recipient of man's sexist engagements, and man originates as the impetus of woman's sexist internalizations. While this much more sensible interpretation does resolve the contradictions iterated, it does so only to produce one anew, for woman and man now exit their purely gendered classification to obtain a coexistent belonging to the realm of sex.

What do these tensions indicate in being present? Were the contextual border of the micro model sufficiently secure, 'sexism' should possess zero referentiality to matters concerning 'woman' and 'man'. The conflictual relations between these positions ought to be problematized exclusively via a term like 'genderism' (which, while infrequently used, is in fact an already coined concept).⁵³ Likewise, issues of sexism ought to pertain strictly to sex's own respective positionings. However, not only are neither of these securing measures utilized here by Killermann, virtually *no one* takes such measures of security. The activist's description of feminism as vying to combat sexism towards an establishment of gender equity succeeds faultlessly in portraying the discipline's current political telos, it by no means is misrepresentative. Yet simultaneously, it also exposes a pervasive contradiction in contemporary feminism's base conceptions. 'Contemporary' noteworthy is the key word here. The feminism of the macro model posited 'man' and 'woman' as sexed positions, opposed sexism in terms of said positionings, and sought equity by a factor of sex.⁵⁴ Hence, the conceptual wielding of sexism proved non-contradictory under this schematization. The micro model's consistent usage of sexism towards the same positional marks, albeit with them now problematically posited into gender, indicates the extracting of 'woman' and 'man' from the older socially oriented model.

⁵³ Daryl Hill and Brian Willoughby. "The Development and Validation of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale," in *Sex Roles* 53 (2005).

⁵⁴ Jeffreys, 5-6.

Consequently subjected to a contextual breaching, ‘man’ and ‘woman’ thusly obtain a dual positioning within both categories of sex and gender.

The configural mirror withstanding, the fourth and final disruption from dissemination works inversely to that of the second. Akin to the infiltration of ‘male’ and ‘female’ into gender initiating the flow of the psychological into sex, the infiltration of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ into sex initiates the flow the biological into gender. Another passage from Killermann proves assistive here, its topic relating this time to the issue of bathrooms. Responding to the contemporary controversy over who appropriately belongs in each of the two segregated public restroom facilities, Killermann proposes an eliminative solution to this issue of public space by advocating for their re-signifying as ‘all-gender restrooms’ (See Fig. 3).



Figure 3: All-gender Restroom sign.⁵⁵

The activist posits indiscriminate inclusion as the dispelling remedy to this controversy so as to account for those aforementioned genderqueer positions falling outside the gender binary.

Killermann explains,

When it comes to shared restrooms, there are laws in place ... that set strict building standards related to men’s and women’s restrooms. These laws exclude folks who don’t fit within that binary, and those who identify with a third gender. So changing them, and

⁵⁵ Killermann, 295.

finding workarounds in the meantime, will be necessary to achieve restroom equity on the gender front.⁵⁶

While by an initial assessment nothing here appears to disturb the operations of the micro model, a noxious confoundment becomes clear upon further investigating how this remedial transformation towards all-gender restrooms relates back to these spaces' displayed signage and constructive design. As Killermann notes, present day restroom segregation allocates two divided areas: the men's room and the women's room. By the micro model, these divided spaces ought to suit those of a congruent positioning in gender; the men's room is designed for those gendered as men, the women's room for those gendered as women. In accordance with this presumption, the segregation in effect works thusly along an axis of gender. This notion of public restrooms as zones fundamentally separated by gender, however, utterly errs in what it attributes to segregating these spaces. Not gender, but a biologically rooted macro model conception of sex underpins restrooms' binary arrangement. As Christine Overall attests of this reattribution, "I take the segregation of public toilets as a ... custom of sex segregation. A particular person is expected to use the women's toilets, not because that person may act in a so-called feminine manner (some men do and some women don't) but rather because that person has, or is thought to have, a vulva and a vagina."⁵⁷ Further evidencing the biological basis of restroom division, the constructive design difference between the spaces accommodates strictly for anatomical discrepancies. As Alex Schweder remarks, "Public bathrooms, as conventionally constructed today, are based on a Freudian model, where women's bodies are men's bodies that lack a penis. Conventional women's rooms are basically men's rooms without urinals. The

⁵⁶ Ibid., 166.

⁵⁷ Christine Overall, "Public Toilets: Sex Segregation Revisited," in *Ethics & the Environment* 12, no. 2 (2007), 75.

absence of female urinals in public spaces emphasizes women's lack of a penis."⁵⁸ No way detracting from this astute observation of men's rooms as phallocentric, a slight addendum to Schweder's assertion proves the construction of women's restrooms presumes an exclusive genital possession. Within these spaces are accommodations made for those who menstruate, while in the men's room there are none such accommodations whatsoever.⁵⁹ The division of restrooms by 'woman' and 'man' thusly pertains not, as implicated by the micro model, to a subjectivized position of gender, but, as in congruency with the macro model, to an anatomical position of sex.

By the effects of this schematic residue from the macro model, Killermann's solution of creating all-gender restrooms fatally complicates the micro model's operations. Incredibly simple in its devising, the activist's de-segregative tactic involves merely replacing the 'Men' and 'Women' signage displayed outside each space with the sign pictured in Figure 3.⁶⁰ The interior construction of these spaces, however, is left entirely unaltered. Like the problematizations presented by the contradictory utilization of sexism, an adherence to a micro model logic in analyzing the effects of all-gender restrooms reveals crippling deficiencies across multiple interpretations. Abiding to the conception of gender as based in subjectivity, to revise the signage in the described manner transforms public restrooms into exasperatedly dysfunctional spaces. Some further explanation of this claim is required. All restrooms, even as segregated currently, are themselves already "all-gender." For example, nothing prevents one of a genderqueer identification from entering the women's or men's room, insofar as said

⁵⁸ Alex Schweder, "Stalls Between Walls: Segregated Sexed Spaces," in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, eds. Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 184.

⁵⁹ John Chrisler et al., "Queer periods: attitudes toward and experiences with menstruation in the masculine of centre and transgender community," in *Culture, Health, & Sexuality* 18, no. 11 (2016), 1246.

⁶⁰ Killermann, 166.

individual's anatomy complies to the established anatomical restrictions of the space. The men's room accommodates genderqueer people with a penis and its related dimorphisms, and the women's room accommodates genderqueer people with a vagina and its related dimorphisms. Granted, while indeed within public restrooms a policing of ambiguous or deviant presences occurs upon the basis of one's interactable public appearance, such as, to use J. Jack Halberstam's famous scenario, when butch females in the women's room are accused of being in the wrong space, this policing aims to reify spatial segregation by a measure of biology alone.⁶¹ Interrogations of deviant presences seek not to elucidate a hidden positioning privately based in a subjective interior, but a hidden sexual anatomy concealed under the exterior garb of a confounding appearance.⁶² Changing the signage of restrooms to 'all-gender' then serves only as a superfluous reversal of the present order. The previously implicit permittance of all genders within each space becomes explicit through the spaces' signage, while the previously explicit segregation of each space by biological sex becomes implicit through the spaces' architecture. Considering the relation between signage and space, however, this reversal leaves public restrooms utterly dysfunctional. The identicality in indicative display means one cannot discern which sex belongs in which room until first entering. Upon doing so, the selection made will be either correct, at which point the room entered will have to be committed to memory for the event of future uses, or incorrect, meaning one now is embarrassingly in the wrong restroom and highly likely to be reprimanded.

The sheer nonsensicality and inapplicability of this solution demands an alternative. The following works far more sensibly: when Killermann proposes for the instatement of 'all-gender restrooms', said proposal is not in pursuit of the open permittance of gender identities within

⁶¹ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press: 1998), 20-21.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 23-24.

these spaces, this is already the current state of things. Rather, the ‘all’ of ‘all-gender’ entails the open permittance of *all variations of biological embodiment*. Each restrooms’ interior design difference refrains then from indicating the anatomical configuration appropriate to each space. Penis or no penis, vagina or no vagina, one of any gender positioning may access every room without hindrance. While this interpretation indeed produces a more practical result, an advocacy for the free flow of bodies throughout biologically segregated spaces via the mark of ‘gender’ results in this category’s critical undermining. On account of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ being categorized under the micro model as belonging to gender, Killermann’s remediation abides to this categorization accordingly—hence the specific proposal for a conversion towards an ‘all-gender’ signage instead of a more commonplace, yet equally neutralizing, ‘unisex’ signage. Due to the segregative zoning of restrooms operating upon an anatomical conception of these positionings, however, gender departs from its pure placement within the psychological to obtain co-occupancy within the realm biology. Far more than mere issues of public space are at stake in this departure. Whether Killermann’s remediation receives an actualized implementation is utterly irrelevant; this call for ‘all-gender restrooms’ serves merely as a proposal. But precisely this propositional character of the solution thrusts the issue beyond the scope of the any one specific scenario. The very arriving by the activist to a remediation that imbues gender with biological dynamics attests to the category’s contextual looseness. As was the case with ‘subconscious sex’, were there a working contextual security in place, this remediation would be inconceivable and un-formulatable. Unlike any conception of psychological sex, however, what emerges from biological gender follows no special procedure of its own, no convoluted equivalent to corporeal self-referencing or causality reversal. The direct grafting in of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ from sex under the macro model means biological gender’s positional establishments

possess no operative differentiation from those of their extractive source. In other words, the divisional dynamics between these categories are completely indistinguishable, save for their relationality to other the facets of their respective models. Hence, the diffusive effects of dissemination once again dilapidate the sex/gender distinction into greater ruin.

Having reviewed in full all four disseminative destabilizations, we obtain at last the possibility to look towards their combined impact upon the sex/gender distinction. Before doing so, however, an assessment of the often neglected ‘intersex’ and ‘genderqueer’ positions is first warranted. Said assessment will act as a prelude to the direct explanation of the distinction’s collapse into untenability. Now, two factors make the positions of ‘intersex’ and ‘genderqueer’ unique by comparison to those of male, man, female, and woman. First, the very structure of their names connects them directly to their category of occupancy. *Intersex* belongs evidently to the realm of sex, *genderqueer* belongs evidently to the realm of gender. Second, the segregative function of each category that produces their specific positionings does not explicitly generate the two positions in question. ‘Genderqueer’ and ‘intersex’, rather, rely upon a referential interrelation *between* said explicitly produced positions. As Jennifer Germon notes on the inherent interlacing of ‘female’ and ‘male’ in the latter, “‘Inter’ literally means between: thus to be intersexed is to fall between the two legitimate sex categories.”⁶³ Likewise, on the former, with respects to ‘man’ and ‘woman’, Alyson Escalante remarks, “To take on [a genderqueer] identity in a rejection of the gender binary is still to accept the binary as a point of reference. In the resistance to it, one only reconstructs the normative status of the binary.”⁶⁴ Even Killermann’s own continua based understanding affirms this reliance upon interrelation, as the

⁶³ Germon, 171.

⁶⁴ Alyson Escalante, “Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto,” in *What is Gender Nihilism? A Reader* (Contagion Press, 2016), 313.

mapping of 'intersex' necessitate a dual positivity in male-ness and female-ness, and the mapping of 'genderqueer' requires the same in woman-ness and man-ness.

By the sum of these two factors then, one might assume conceptual solidity within these unique positions. But in recalling the multitude of disseminative disruptions destabilizing gender, sex, and their jumble of specificities, 'genderqueer' and 'intersex' are shown as slipping outside their schematized realms. 'Man' and 'woman' subsist as simultaneous positions of sex in addition to gender; 'male' and 'female' as positions of gender in addition to sex. This crisscrossing disastrously complicates the interrelationality necessitating the two positions in question. If, for instance, 'genderqueer' inherently operates in reference to 'man' and 'woman', and 'man' and 'woman' now are categorized under sex, it follows that 'genderqueer' accordingly joins this category of sex in correspondence to its interrelative positionings. The inverse conclusion applies in what happens to 'intersex' in 'female' and 'male' entering gender. Thus, each assumes a paradoxical constitution: 'intersex' becomes a gender, and 'genderqueer' becomes a sex. All categorical appropriateness has been brazenly transgressed. Alternatively, the maintenance of the positions within their appropriate categories remains a possibility, albeit one no less plagued with complications. Using 'intersex' as the example this time, if this position simply operates via the interrelations of whatever falls within the category of sex, the question arises as to how the addition of 'woman' and 'man' to this category impacts the modes of interrelationality. What is 'intersex' as figured between man and male or woman and female? What about between woman and man? What about between all four at once? The same conundrum affects the position of 'genderqueer', and one can pose for its own tailored set of confounding questions. Without these categories' segregations dividing binarily, thusly, 'intersex' and 'genderqueer' mutate into borderline nebulous conceptions.

What has happened here to these two specific positions microcosmically reflects the inevitable fate of the sex/gender distinction as a whole. By the totalized consequences of dissemination's contextual border disruptions, the divisionary aim of the micro model is shown as ultimately untenable. Let us review the totality of border breachings as to justify this assertion. By one measure, untenability manifests via a relational disturbance between position and category. The categories gender and sex each require their own exclusive set of specific positionings; 'man' and 'woman' being those of gender, 'male' and 'female' being those of sex. The positions, however, unceasingly elude their conceived categorical exclusivity. We find 'female' and 'male' unwittingly schematized as belonging to gender, and we find 'man' and 'woman' likewise schematized here as belonging to sex. As resulting from this two-way positional diffusion across categorical contexts, gender and sex come to possess the same arrangement of specific positionings. Position-to-category disturbances are not the only forms of annihilative disruption at play here however, significantly active also are disturbances of a category-to-realm variety. In addition to their needing of exclusive positions sets, sex and gender also require a contextual confining to a single realm of divisionary operation. For sex, this realm is the biological, while for gender this realm is the psychological. However, as Raia Prokhovnik iterates, "The rich field of ambiguities that the sex/gender distinction evokes is made even more complex by the practice according to which 'sex' and 'gender' are often used *interchangeably*, designating the same thing."⁶⁵ This factor of interchangeability here marks another form of contextual breaching, one that transverses the paramedic realm for each category. 'Sex' divides not singularly upon biological dynamics, but does so in tandem by dynamics of psychology. 'Gender', meanwhile, divides singularly upon psychological dynamics, but does so in tandem by

⁶⁵ Prokhovnik, 114. (Emphasis mine)

dynamics of biology.

Hence, by the combined impact of these position-to-category and category-to-realm disturbances, a final scheme comes into clarity. The micro model's inherent function of category segregation has become violated to the point of complete operational nonviability. In each category sharing among themselves the identical position set of 'man', 'woman', 'male', and 'female', no tenable distinction can be made between them à la positional exclusivity. In each category holding a simultaneous stationing within both the realms of the psychological and the biological, no tenable distinction can be made between them à la exclusive segregative dynamics. All borders of categorical separation breached, *sex and gender conflate into indistinguishability*. The pyramid collapses, thus illustrating the ultimate untenability of the sex/gender distinction as individual-oriented.

PART IV

COLLAPSING THE MACRO MODEL

In response to the ruin of the micro model, a remedial return to the macro model might arise as a first impulse. After all, the failure of one schema does not necessitate the inherent untenability of sex/gender distinction in its alternative formulations. Given its exclusivity of all positionings to category of sex, the previously paradigmatic macro model would lack the problem of position breaching persistent throughout its contemporary counterpart. Furthermore, in gender under the older model dividing relationally by terms of femininity and masculinity, this category's bifurcation operates entirely differently from that of sex's own. Such differences in conceptual structure would mean a difference in conceptual dynamics. Hence, one might be tempted to posit the key to a viable sex/gender distinction within understandings past, entailing a revival effort to revert back to this past scheme. However, no such reversion to times prior offers a conception of the distinction any less of a fiasco than what paradigmatically dominates presently. The critique turns, thus, towards demonstrating the ultimate untenability of macro model schema. On account of many of the same affective factors of destabilization for the micro model making here a reoccurrence, this section will be substantially shorter than the one prior.

In the factor of dissemination holding primary responsibility for collapsing the micro model, the question arises as to whether this same factor bars the macro model from tenability. Already we have seen how the complex of a systematized distinction model proves feeble as a measure of protection from contextual border crossing, this being evident in 'man' and 'woman' entering 'sex' under the micro model on account of their like categorical placement in the macro context. Yet a remedial pursuit of the old distinction schema assumes within such a complex a

status of security, but only so by a factor of the temporal. In accordance with said factor, the lack of conflation between ‘gender’ and ‘sex’, as abiding to macro model formulations, during the second wave indicates the latent undermining contradictions of the present-day model as purely contemporaneously contingent. In other words, the lack of category contradictions in the late 20th century when macro model was paradigmatic means the issue lies not in the distinction itself, but its specific individual-oriented rendition as the micro model. So via returning to a past conceptual schematization historically demonstrated a unproblematically operational, the sex/gender distinction ought, from an advocate standpoint, to be impervious to both internal contextual breachings between its own categories, as due to its unmistakable differentiation in categorical segregative dynamics, and external contextual breachings between other models, as due to its preceding the micro model developmentally and its record of operability.

This revivalist pursuit, however, is grounded in nothing but bleary naivety. Foolishly it underestimates the viral extents to which dissemination can effectively cripple a supposedly stable system. No temporal back tracing through the nostalgic revitalizing of antique understandings offers escape from the quasi-concept’s destabilizations, for disseminative disruptions break from time’s linear confines. The following Derrida passage on the nuances of grafting help elucidate this point:

It is the sustained, discrete violence of an incision that is not apparent in the thickness of the text, a calculated insemination of the proliferating allogene through which the two texts are transformed, deform each other, contaminate each other’s content, tend at times to reject each other, or pass elliptically one into the other and become regenerated in the repetition, along the edges of an overcast seam. Each grafted text continues to radiate back towards the site of its removal, transforming that, too, as it affects the new territory.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 355.

Understanding that ‘text’ here is procedurally analogous to Derrida’s previously articulated notion of ‘writing’, we find dissemination flows *bidirectionally*. By one trajectory, the grafting in of a mark to a new context brings with it the potentiated significations of its extractional source. Through the irrepressible resurfacing of said significations, thus, dissemination disrupts newly devised writings in all limitative contextual efforts towards interpretive finitude. As exemplified in the micro model, a grafting in of ‘gender identity’ lead to ‘male’ and ‘female’ obtaining an unbecoming positional placement in the category of gender. Likewise, the model’s grafting in of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ similarly resulted in these two positions violatively breaching over into the category of sex. As for the other trajectory, this disseminative flow works through an opposite orientation. Instead of disruption emerging from extractionally sourced significations affecting the contextual site of citational grafting, significations produced from this very graft-based site come to recursively disrupt the context of extractional origin. A mark, thusly, does not solely accumulate potentiated meanings throughout its progressively perpetuated re-inscriptions; accumulation infects a mark as a *totality*, as within every instance of its contextual deployment irrespective to temporal sequentiality.

The bidirectional character of dissemination ultimately eliminates the macro model as a tenable solution to redeeming of sex/gender distinction. Mobile across time, dissemination disrupts the borders of mark-sharing contexts indifferent to a context functioning as the past site antecedently extracted from or the present site subsequently grafted into. For the macro model specifically, this mobility negates all temporally rooted measures of defense against cross-system intrusions of micro model significations. It matters not that the distinction operated contradiction free operation during the milieu of the second wave, not even the most extreme and thorough revivalist measures can reconstruct the innumerable aspects that granted this milieu schematic

tenability in the first place. Deeming a contemporaneously reinstated macro model as operating wholly without deviation from how it used to in the past debases said model to the status of a shoddy anachronism. Over fifty years have passed since this era of noncontradiction. Since then, a whole bounty of strange new additive meanings have taken up residency within the constitutive marks of the macro model's structure. It matters not, furthermore, that these newly added meanings cluster contextually under the scheme of the micro model, nor that this new model chronologically developed out of the macro model itself. Just as how a bringing forth of the past in its unabridged wholeness to the standpoint of the present exceeds all procedural possibility, so too is it impossible to leave behind the wholeness of the present to return to a past standpoint having already occurred. Hence, revitalizing the distinction to its former state inherently requires one do so from the vantage of the here and now. Such a vantage, however, never stands outside the total shifts of contextual mutation. The restoring of the macro model to prominence does nothing to erase from existence the contradicting conceptual formulations begotten from its micro counterpart. The past temporal point of the second wave era inaccessible, the models can only coexist with each other; an arrangement no different from what currently is in place with to micro model as paradigmatic. Both schemas now in an inescapably contiguous relation at the same temporal point of the present, the macro model loses all protection from its shared marks with the micro model succumbing to a graft-sourced infusion of signification. Dissemination, thusly, disrupts the security of contextual borders just as potently flowing in a macro-to-micro direction as it does in a micro-to-macro trajectory.

Connected now to its already fully corrupted counterpart, the macro model undergoes a similar disintegrative crisscrossing that inevitably leads to its structural collapse. The first effective disruption of dissemination towards this distinction stems from a breaching of 'man'

and 'woman' from the micro model into the macro model category of 'gender'. As previously explained, these two positions were first extracted from the socially oriented model's category of 'sex' and then grafted into individual-oriented model's category of gender. The ties of 'woman' and 'man' to their appropriated from category leads to these positionings subsequently gaining a dual placement in the micro model as both gendered and sexed. But with regards to the macro model, a different effect yields from its own positions being grafted into a new context. The ideal schematization of macro model delimits positioning as exclusively viable under the categorical context of 'sex', 'man' and 'woman' included. 'Gender' for this scheme lacks such viability. However, post-grafting into the micro model, 'gender' comes also to gain positional viability, albeit as contextually bordered off from the macro model. Hence, dissemination activates. The sharing of the marks 'woman' and 'man' between each schema gives 'gender' as operating under micro dynamics a channel for recursively entering the macro model context. Accordingly, the category of gender itself under this model becomes dualistic in its segregative dynamics, dividing both along its ideal terms of masculinity and femininity and in micro model's own positional terms of 'man' and 'woman'. Gender now imbued with positional potential, the same previously outlined progression of border disruptions initiates once again within the macro context: 'male' and 'female' breach over into gender, causing psychological/cultural dynamics to begin segregating under sex; 'woman' and 'man', already dually positioned in category, cause biological dynamics to begin segregating under gender. What results as the finalized schema from this sequence of crisscrossings corresponds precisely with the fate of micro model: gender and sex become *categorically indistinguishable*. All revivalist pursuits towards re-erecting the macro model are then totally snuffed. No alternative salvational recourse towards tenability thus remaining, the collapse of the sex/distinction reaches its ultimate nadir of annihilation.

PART V

GENDERSEX

Standing now in the ruins of the collapsed distinction, we find ourselves faced with a question most dire: how ought we to restructure the conceptual fragments of this shattered system? The untenability of categorical separation between sex and gender leaves their plethora of once constitutive positions orphaned and without organization. As already evidenced, merely constructing of a new distinction model to put these positions into is inherently bound to fail, for no model possesses the immunity necessary for evading dissemination's system undermining disruptions. Hence, a schematic structure of a radically new sort must be created, one organizing of the distinction's conceptual fragments yet simultaneously compensative towards the inevitability of disseminative destabilization. Towards the actualization of such a structure, I propose the neologism of *gendersex*. To summarize the neologism, gendersex operates not as a category that rigidly borders off positions from each other in accordance with a certain segregative dynamic, but as an all-engulfing amalgam that amorphously arranges positions into a dynamically multiplicitous cellular configuration. In other words, the neologism takes all the fragments of the collapsed sex/gender distinction and makes from them a single, solitary structure parametrically lacking in hard contextual boundaries.

It might prove helpful to first outline what gendersex is *not* before further detailing its operations in positive terms. For starters, gendersex does not reside at the top of the distinction's pyramidal structure as a sort of capstone category that contains beneath it the other categories of 'sex' and 'gender'. The neologism's structure assumes this pyramid having collapsed entirely. Thus, said structure contains within itself neither 'sex' nor 'gender', for both of these are

necessitated as conflated into untenability for gendersex to effectively operate. Furthermore, gendersex is not simply a crude sticking together of ‘gender’ with ‘sex’. Other scholars grappling with this same issue of categorical inseparability have already resorted to this procedure, and what results conceptually from their efforts ends up counterproductively reifying the distinction. Jennifer Germon is one exemplary scholar subscribed to this procedure, “One of my aims is to try where possible to refuse the sex/gender distinction. In order to signify that refusal I use a hyphenated form that appears on the page as *sex-gender*.”⁶⁷ Nina Lykke poses as another notable example, “In line with my use of Feminist Studies as a broad umbrella term and my intentions to avoid easy fixations, *in casu* the fixation of a dichotomy between gender and sex, ... I shall use the consciously ambiguous term ‘gender/sex’.”⁶⁸ In investigating the commonalities between ‘sex-gender’ and ‘gender/sex’, one finds within each of these new concepts the incorporation of a conjunctive punctuation mark. Both ‘/’ and ‘-’ work respectively to stitch together the once exclusively divided categories of the distinction into a unified conceptual whole, one where ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ default unavoidably into tandem evaluation. As pertaining to what ultimately leads to distinctual reification from these concepts, ‘tandem’ is the key word here. To take ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ together in tandem implies a scheme where their separation holds feasibility (the very use of ‘sex/gender’ within sex/gender distinction attests exactly to this point). Hence the placement of the punctuative stitch lying *centrally between* the two categories being stuck together; without ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ legibly present as marks relationally devoid of contact from each other, Germon’s and Lykke’s neologisms lose the referential basis of their conceptual wholeness. So, while ‘-’ and ‘/’ indeed function towards unification, they only do so via

⁶⁷ Germon, 16. (Emphasis Germon’s)

⁶⁸ Nina Lykke, *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

whatever is becoming unified having an individuated stability of its own, as well as a sufficient separative distance from its combinatory counterpart. Thus, ‘sex-gender’ and ‘gender/sex’ do not manageably counteract the distinction, they merely further reify it though a supposition of categorical non-conflation; as if all the significations coursing throughout ‘gender’ were not just as present within ‘sex’ and vice versa.

Having described gendersex in negative terms, we turn now towards directly elucidating both its compositional structure and subsequent conceptual operations. In contrast to the neologisms of Germon and Lykke, gendersex contains no centrally placed conjunctive punctuation that stitches together two stably separate categories. ‘Sex’ and ‘gender’ here, rather, assume a presence rife with dubiousness. Neither of their marks appear written as properly spaced—a quite significant factor in consideration that a mark’s emergence fundamentally depends upon its spatial relation to surrounding textual elements.⁶⁹ One can read within gendersex an inscription of both categories, but in absence of a separative stitch, one knows not with certainty if such a reading designates properly the site of suture. Who is to say it reads as ‘gender|sex’ and not ‘genders|ex’ or some other alternative inscription? Having rendered all assumptions of implied internal spacing ultimately ambiguous, thus, the consistent kerning of the neologism forces one accordingly read it as an uninterrupted, singularized whole.

Its structure explained, the next aspect of consideration for gendersex pertains to its operation as a concept. Now, it would be ultimately hypocritical to try and proclaim that whatever operations are listed encompass the totalized potential for the neologism’s deployment. Gendersex itself is not immune to the effects of dissemination; I cannot put a stopper on how it might be grafted into other contexts. Nevertheless, the following description outlines at least one

⁶⁹ Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 93.

of many possible conceptual configurations for the neologism. The operational schema of gendersex contains three primary aspects. First, gendersex collects the sum of all occupiable positions orphaned by the collapse of sex/gender distinction and amalgamates them into a singularized totality. Thus, 'man', 'woman', 'male', 'female', 'intersex', 'genderqueer', and any other conceivably occupiable positioning refrain from being confined to a specific category. Rather, gendersex subsumes these positionings in such a way that their resulting amalgamation lacks the compartmentalizations of uncrossable contextual borders. Second, as following from this lack, gendersex arranges its collected positions into an amorphous cellularized configuration. Under the now defunct conceptualization of the distinction, positions were framed as binary pairs (e.g. man with woman, male with female). But as a part of gendersex, no form of essentialized relational connection, binary included, ties any number of positionings together. Hence, positionings obtain a cell-like constitution; maintaining for themselves their own individuation from each other, as predicated by the dissimilarity of their marks, yet never assuming a solidified overall interrelationality. Ever shifting, the positional cells of gendersex elude conceivability with respect to their total configuration, rendering the neologism's produced arrangement thoroughly amorphous in character. Third, and lastly, gendersex applies no inherent dynamic of cellularization towards its positions. Acting as a pertinent aspect of sex/gender distinction, positional division depends upon a particular categorically contingent segregative dynamic. Said division posits for each positioning an essential predicative fundament (e.g. 'male' as categorized under a biologically segregative sex would itself possess a biologically characteristic being). Gendersex, however, does not abide to this divisional particularity relative to the positions it encompasses. Free of all categorical contexts, the neologism's cellularization establishes for its positions a non-essentialized and irreducible foundational ground, one as equally shifty to their

amorphous relational configuration. So, to draw from the last used example, 'male' within gendersex possesses no variety of inherent grounding as either biologically, psychologically, or culturally based, but instead are constituted upon a potentiated, non-hierarchical simultaneity of all three of these dynamics. Thusly, gendersex opens the fundament of its positionings to mutation, granting accordingly a pluralized conceptual schematization rejective of contextual over-solidification.

CONCLUSION

The operations of gendersex described, the ultimate question relative to the neologism concerns how it might be theoretically utilized within scholarship. A reverting to gendersex from the conventional scheme of the sex/gender distinction entails a shift in inquiry. All contextual borders eliminated, one need not ask ‘what positions belong in which category?’ Abiding to gendersex, one might ask instead ‘what are the past, present, or projected configural relationality between the sum of these positions?’. Furthermore, instead of asking, ‘what dynamic truly characterizes the category of sex’ or ‘what dynamic truly characterizes the category of gender?’ one might ask, ‘what does it mean that such disparate dynamics have become infused within the same positional marks?’ Lastly, in all positions having become foundationally pluralized, one need no longer ask ‘what truly is a woman?’ ‘what truly is a man?’ or any question of a similar sort directed towards other positions. One might ask in its place ‘with all of these positions foundationally turbulent, what strange conceptualizations wait for them in the future?’ Out from such a change in theory, thus, we shift towards a formulation of our milieu that revels in the disruptions of dissemination and eludes the rigid trap of the sex/distinction.

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