

The Elastic Self



A manifesto by *Pranya*. Presented
in unison with *A Loving Woman* (2025).



The Elastic Self: A Manifesto

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Volume I

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Introduction: Irresolvables

Sex is several paradoxical things. It is a singular source of decadent pleasure, it is a godly mode of reproduction, it is a much maligned and coveted social currency, it is painful, it is delightful. And above perhaps all else, it is a topic of great contention.

Dominique Laporte's *The History of Shit* (1) proposes a pithy definition of civilization that is measured by the physical distance we can put between ourselves and our refuse. The more elegant its system of plumbing and the further its site of defecation deposits from its ejector, the higher-minded a civilization is considered. But the allure of innuendo exposes all cerebral civilization as base — despite the physical attempts at enforced distance, it remains psychically and linguistically enamored with bodily function. Much akin to its neighboring shitting and pissing bits, the venereal is what we strive to at once conceal in taboos and to omnipresently reference. To enact sexual intercourse is to engage in negotiation of the paradoxes it presents us. We are simultaneously as preoccupied with genitals as in denial of said preoccupation. All modes of profanity find the locus of their existence within the sexual. Every “I feel it everywhere” is countered with an implicit, smirking “even *down there?*” The euphemistic second meaning in the phrase “double meaning” is a constant, whether this euphemism manifests in a phallic skyscraper or the graffiti on its backside. The repression cyclically feeds the obsession.

Our language for sexual acts follows the rigid binary model of Recipient and the Doer — this is dressed in endless synonyms, like the Lover and the Beloved, the Giver and Receiver, the Top and the Bottom, and rather erroneously, Male and Female — that ultimately

enshrine dichotomies of power. Foundational to queer theory, Gayle Rubin's *Thinking Sex* (2) is a seminal model that articulates more moral sexual hierarchies uncoupled from gender-essentialist feminist contemporaries, demanding that we think of sex more critically in relation to historical and political context. Four decades since, we still lack the vernacular to talk about sex without reifying hierarchical structures, and most refuse to engage with it outside the roles confined by gender and sexual identity. There is no clear consensus on what constitutes sexual deviation, there is no reprieve for the pervert. We succumb to the puritanical impulses that conflate morality with legality, that medicalize deviancy in order to uncomplicate and narrativize whatever disconcerts us. This manifesto does not deny that power itself possesses an incredible seduction, nor to deny the potential for sexual satisfaction in the roles powers offers, but to trouble the didactic notion of sex as something that could come with a manual to achieve optimal satisfaction from. It is an attempt to develop language for a multi-directional and playful approach to sex, which already exists in intercourse but as the kind of amorphous foreplay-adjacent gestures we disregard as filler. It also is a refusal to dissolve the aforementioned paradoxes of sex and desire, in acknowledgement of the broader, myriad inconsistent cognitive dissonances in all our beliefs.

To this end, I undertake a three-part exploration here. First, to develop a model that may explain how we articulate ourselves sexually using a metaphorical loom — converting yarn to interwoven textile through binary decision making. Next, interpolating Donna Haraway's redefinition of the cyborg in *The Cyborg Manifesto* (3) as present day cybernetically enhanced humans, in an argument that we are all already Fembots, calibrated by a

number of factors in the service of each other's pleasure. And finally, to propose elasticity, not as an uncritical panacea to all our troubles, but as an expansion of the self that can provide both social harmony and better sex that accounts for the intra-contradictions and inter-contradictions of our desires. In conversation with Michel Foucault's teasing assertion "tomorrow sex will be good again", I point to the ways in which sex is good right now, the ways it has always been.

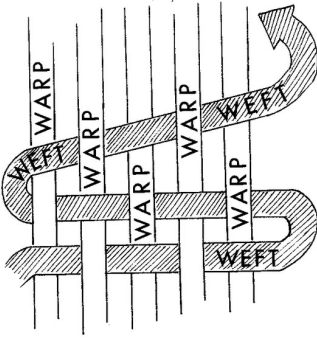
This may have been written from a presently well-sated perch, but this perch has known maddening deprivation well enough to account for the experience of calcifying longing and loneliness that drive one straight to the arms of dreary cynicism. I seek to provide an antidote to approaching sex as a landmine of potential abuse to tiptoe through, but as a vector of affection and expression that courses through us, much like Audre Lorde's essay *The Uses of the Erotic* (4) enumerates. Under the right circumstances, sex is a wellspring of creative interaction like none other. It is easy to feel like these circumstances are a pipedream, especially for survivors of sexual assault. It is significantly harder to leave the self pliant, ready to pleasure and be pleased under the paranoiac threat of the reemergence of the slights we suffer. Being a Fembot, as expanded upon later, may be a dire fate on paper, but it is in practice a plastic one that can be retooled to provide profound self-affirmation and joy precisely because of its ontological design for pleasure that subject it to potential indignities.

The Infinite Loom

The Loom is admittedly a computational model of sex, given that weaving is a binary operation — you can either lift a warp thread or leave it down. This may appear to reduce the capricious matters of the heart and libido into an unsexily rigid system, but the utility in thinking through the loom's transformation of yarn into textile emerges when considering the resilience of something that drapes, folds and stretches in its ontological design. The woven textile possesses a robustness that is derived from its flexibility — it can never be brittle. It is true that attempts can be made diagrammatically explicating sex on Euclidean planes, but the winding intersections of the warp and weft afford greater verisimilitude than two-dimensional labelled axes and their Cartesian coordinates. Sex is determined by too many variables to ascribe unchanging X and Y values to it, this is a material input-output system that can be as simple or baroque as looms themselves — nails hammered on to a wooden frame, or Jacquard looms (famously the first computers!) producing complex patterns with mechanical accuracy.

First, envision desire as the infinite yarn, the raw material to weave with. Desire itself is not a vector, it exists sans direction in an amoral plane. It is outside both the conception of both family and patriarchal conventions, and their rejections. There is no wind that an unchecked skein of yarn will refuse to flow, acquiescing to gravity's will and all manner of possible uncapped paraphilia — infidelity, bestiality, exhibitionism, incest, et al. How does a predetermined weave filter libidinous desire?

The Elastic Self



On the emotional plane, there are two discretely identifiable instincts. There is the instinct toward openness and inclusion, that seeks to expand outside the self, toward generosity, to decentralize control and power. This propels us toward newness of experience and toward forgiveness through ego-dissolution. The opposite contracting instinct is oriented toward security, self-construction, and reconstruction, and defining contours. It seeks to filter and discern, to centralize control and power. It is our provisional understanding of trust, identity-markers, and boundaries, as well as the limits we define as inalienable to us. These are both value-neutral instincts that can be framed as “good” or “bad” to exploit an argument, in trying to argue for monogamy or polyamory as the superior moral mode of relationships, in shaming promiscuity or dismissing asexuality, dressing interpersonal grudges in therapy-speak and allegations of abuse, or leveraging identity-politics for elite capture. Ultimately, both are integral to the structure of our self. Here is where the functionality of envisioning the warp and weft as mediators of desire comes into effect.

The warp is the length of the yarn, functioning as the open instinct, and the weft winds from left to right to left in a shuttle, as the contracting instinct. There is no single point of origin, instead endless cyclical intersections that take place in predetermined code. The warp and weft are both vectors, perpendicular to each other as they are contradictory, even conflicting, but both essential to the structure of the fabric. Actually *having* sexual intercourse is filtered

through several factors: resources like space-time and money, ability and energy, attention, reciprocity, morality, and so forth, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Each of these are mediated their own determinants. To account for these endless variables, I ascribe them to the shafts or heddles that operate in a loom to determine the pattern the weft courses through the warp. Desire is thus threaded into a unified weave by the open warp and the controlling weft which give each other both resonant meaning and structural form, cohering each other into a single fabric through the negotiations that determine each intersection. Sex becomes an articulation of desire materially determined by its weaver.

To see the loom in action, consider one of the aforementioned resources — time. We can measure intimacy as a unit of time, in a courtship of anxieties that is based on the modern question “how many ticks of the clock or days of the calendar to wait before calling, so as to not seem desperate?” This is not, in fact, a modern question but an eternal question. It is a calculation of appearances that has determined handwritten letters just as it does text messages. Time cannot be isolated from the other factors mentioned, since money, ability, and obligations determine its availability, and time further contributes to other factors like libidinal energy, attention, and reciprocity. In a more established relationship, the *when* of the when and where becomes a fixed variable with the answer “whenever”. Thus, the loom need not have universally labelled parts, but rather a blanket screening mechanism that accounts for their dynamic interdependent existence. Let’s revisit the Fembot with this model of thinking sex as a negotiation of two contradictory instincts that work together to articulate desire.

Poor Little Fembot

The word “Fembot” conjures a series of pop culture vignettes to mind — real life’s Sophia the Robot, *Stepford Wives*’ ‘enhancement’ of real women, the disembodied philandering voice assistant from Spike Jonze’s *Her* (2013), in-app virtual girlfriends. Though the word itself has a nebulous imaginary-real hybridity to it akin to Haraway’s Cyborg (3), in this section I use it in strict reference to (i) an anthropomorphic robot with (ii) a sentient AI-simulation of female responsiveness, made (iii) for the express purpose of sexual stimulation, which we can concur is not a present-day entity, though it has significant overlap with custom sex dolls like the ones made by Tantaly or Love Nestle. The sex doll is merely that, a doll for sexual purposes, a glorified blow-up doll with no ambition towards sentience.

This Fembot is more trope than being, a fantasy of child-brained naïve manipulability housed in the post-pubescent body. The urge that fuels and funds her potential realization is an attempt to bargain real reciprocal desire (which can only emerge from free will and agency) and complete control (a denial of free will and agency), resulting in a curious, oxymoronic creature — the astute may catch on to this being the extant condition of women writ large. She is merely a site for the proliferation of normative channels of desire, not the esoteric techno-fetishist transgression of them that she is dressed as. Complications, of course, abound.

My claims that there is a distinction between the Fembot and the sex doll and that regardless, the desire for both is normative to patriarchal sexual structures must be made robust. Indisputably, there exist self-professed techno-sexuals or robot-sexuals. Their

online community, ASFR (Alternate Sexual Fetish Robots), frequently conflates Fembots with other petrification fetishes of anthropomorphic transformation — real girl frozen into mannequin, which require the entrapped soul of the girl for their logic. In the purely synthetic Fembot genre, there exists a popular trope of the “glitching” Fembot who uses the glitched mode to override her code and discover genuine libido, expressing agency of desire through real “freakiness”. Porn that features real sex dolls (or the commercially popular limb-less torsos) tend to rest on the premise of covertly switching this sex doll with a real counterpart through comedy-of-errors hijinks. Pornographic equivalents of non-human machine fetish cinematic case studies, like *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989), *Crash* (2004) or *Titane* (2019), remain scant in the genre of Fembot porn which continues to reify its need for a woman, or something woman-shaped, to get off to. Placing a pin to revisit: this, like other porn, is not strictly cisgender in its scope.

The cultural footprint of a synthetic, custom-made female long predates this specific iteration of a sentient AI Fembot, tracing its origins all the way back to the Greek myth of Pygmalion, as noted in Julie Wosk’s incredibly comprehensive *My Fair Ladies* (5). The New Female of this canon can potentially be a mother, but always has a father-husband who has put his mind and tools into carving her in his image, intended to be forever his in blissful union. In contemporary iterations however, the Female 2.0 is manufactured as the post-industrialization commodity, commissioned, and calibrated to the settings of one’s preference out of the box. The dynamic of God and His Creation is substituted with that of User and his Device. In outsourcing her creation, the neoliberal user’s Fembot is no longer his direct offspring. Much like a gig economy worker’s illusory ephemeral assets, she is subject to terms and

conditions rendering her the true property of something abstract — the software of the Fembot proprietary to the corporation she is purchased from, her mind and thoughts hosted on a server continents away from her corporeal form. All the ways in which the real world is awful will be reflected back in any real Fembot — supply chain ethics, rare earth mining, software bugs, hardware corrosion. In this iteration, the soullessness endemic to consumerism makes the whole endeavor rather impersonal.

As a succinct example of this, consider a select episode of the tentpole of The Cartoon Network's heyday, *The Powerpuff Girls*. Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup are sisters of biochemical birth by a "Chemical X", charged with the purpose of combating violent crime in child bodies, an absurdity the show frequently lampshades as all postmodern media is wont to do. In the penultimate episode of the show's fourth season, *Knock It Off* (2002), their father-creator Professor Utonium is visited by his scheming college roommate and womanizing pervert, Professor Dick Hardly (it's true), who encounters the girls in their home using their superpowers to expedite household chores. Utonium unceremoniously kicks him out for a string of alarming remarks like "the Japanese would eat these things up!", upon which he successfully kidnaps and manipulates the sisters into giving him Chemical X, exploiting the goodness of their hearts into mass-manufacturing shoddy counterfeits for profit, shipped internationally with rapidly declining quality. It is a twenty-two minute epic on parenting, love, abuse, and anti-capitalism. The counterfeit girls — or "mutants" as Professor Dick calls them — are unambiguously alive and disfigured by the neglectful industrialization of their creation, unlike the original sisters who were made painstakingly by hand to be the "perfect little girls", recognized as human, and parented in a loving

home instead of being packaged like cargo. In an uncharacteristically ominous act of retribution, the mass of mutant girls confront the trauma of their existence by setting fire to the Professor Dick in the factory that birthed them, taking themselves with it. The “bona fide” sisters, in the meantime, are resuscitated in an embrace with Utonium, who tearfully discovers that the true secret ingredient to the Powerpuff Girls’ recipe is not Chemical X, but Love.

It is apparent that a perfectly sentient sex-bot partner is a harebrained pipe-dream incongruent to reality, yet she continues becoming increasingly germane; I would go as far as to argue that the impetus of the AI boom is in large part a quest to realize her existence. Wildly inconsistent demands are made of her that raise red flags across issues of bodily agency, sexual ethics, and gender politics, none of these demands ask her to wield any power. She replaces a number of potential roles — whore, girlfriend, wife, mother, woman. All of these have contentious definitions and overlapping forms of marginalization — and specifically rape-based subjugation. Wives are still subject to hangovers of coverture and lack of support for marital rape, mothers who perform unpaid domestic labor are also presumably aforementioned wives, the systemic mass rape of women in conquered territory is a time-honored military tactic, sex workers are denied agency and their self-advocating communities are repeatedly eroded by policies that make their already precarious livelihood increasingly vulnerable. Everything the Fembot stands to be a fantastic simulation of is superlatively wretched, she is a pathetic doe-eyed vacuum of power.

In another incongruence, she is often the fuel for dreams of CRISPR-regulated superhuman post-disability futures as the perfect

procreative vessel built superior to the unwieldy human womb, the reproductive harbinger of a cybernetically enhanced race. Yet she is outside the margins of the structure of the nuclear family unit which affords primacy to the “natural order”. Arguments to include her in this system would rest on the recognition of her personhood. Sexual relations with people relegated to the status of subhuman objects — that reveal personhood itself to be a politically fraught and inconsistently applied category — are not a novel object of contemplation but a direct parallel to anti-miscegenation rhetoric. She is a myth of great political resonance, with overlooked racial and eugenicist contours. When I was a thirteen-year-old on Tumblr, with an emotional allegiance to the platform only seen toward nation-states, I could not escape the urban legend of Alexandra’s Genesis. A staple viral post with a life-cycle unheard of today, it detailed a genetic mutation whose afflicted would have violet eyes, no body hair, no periods yet remain fertile. Men did not author nor circulate this legend, it was a collective in-group teen frenzy. I was inconsolably devastated that I couldn’t have it, and for thousands of girls it was like learning Santa wasn’t real all over again. She was still in line with the eugenicist dream of perfect bodies, but this Mutant Fembot was a product of adolescent insecurity, unwittingly futurist in its bio-hacked conception.

This feeds into the aesthetic considerations that go into a sex doll’s make, the neotenous newness of her silicone flesh. A vulva that is not marked with the hyperpigmentation or asymmetry of lips, a Perfect Pussy, the real-world analogue of which is largely encountered in porn. But said real world analogue would be hard-won and storied, post-laser hair removal, post-labiaplasty, anally bleached and up-kept meticulously, not bearing the illusion of Barbie-like virginity. This infantilization is a teleological tool to

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neuter the threat women are perceived to possess — a siren-like seduction that can undermine families, “fuck their way to the top”, unleash political scandal, topple reputations. The single lady is a destabilizing threat to the status quo. This is based in a fear of the erotic, the Fembot is a manifestation of an attempt to regulate this fear. She is a most degraded, enslaved creature, conceived from a misogynistic dream as a product of a gender binary rape culture to substitute capricious womanhood. The utter abjection of her condition is exactly what makes her so compelling and ripe to feminist reclamations, and more tantalizingly, visions of a queered Fembot. These gender-essentialist pathetic trappings are the raw materials for remixing and collaging her into a mascot of hope.

Interludes

I: Solving Rape

There are several mentions of rape and the Fembot as existentially intertwined in the previous section. That is, for now, where that thread ends. It is not within the scope of this volume to take any definitive stances on the question of intercourse with her being inherently non-consensual, since it is impossible to map conclusions for a hypothetical being. All we know is that the Fembot would be designed for sexual satisfaction at her user's behest. While there is no organic life here to defend or violate, she possesses a morphological rigor that is sufficiently sophisticated enough in comparison to disembodied vibrators and massage sleeves, a real body to hold, that her abuse would inspire greater discomfort than just a mistreated flashlight would. Interpersonal abuse is commonplace, with varying degrees of infractions, and I am certain bleeds into dynamics with these dolls as well. Their present-day owners appear, by all standards, to largely tend for these things lovingly — posing, dressing, and cleaning them — demonstrating genuine emotional attachment. They do not suffer “delusions” of these being real women, an oft-levied as an insult. We universally extend our selfhood onto objects in our possession, formatively as children and forever until death. I, unlike groups such as the Campaign Against Sex Robots (6), would not deprive sex doll owners of deeply cherished sources of contentment because of the potential to for them to be abused exists.

This volume also does not seek to extrapolate any of these possible conclusions to propose what right now must be done with or to sex offenders. I elaborate in the final section on the need for abolitionist

anti-carceral and pro-transformative justice, as our current punitive systems serve to keep survivors disinclined to report or seek recourse, and abusers sequestered as dead-ends unable to take accountability or contribute to repair. I speak of consent only as it pertains to the ambit of relations and desires that are perhaps problematic and in conflict without aspiring to a mantle of any greater arrogance.

II: Hating Men

I find myself unenthused at the prospect of joining a chorus of man-hate that sentences them to a status of pernicious ferality. They are a near-irrelevant demographic in my lesbian personal life, with their existence inspiring at most an ambivalence. But there is a currency in leveraging toothless man-hating, particularly for pathologizing a spectrum of romantic disappointments as emotional abuse. In no regard is this an insinuation that there is literal profit to be made via the route of abuse allegations, which is a classic patriarchal denial of rape culture; to reiterate this volume is not an attempt at decisively solving rape. Surviving assault, which most women have and do, is distinct from the phenomenon I highlight here. I do not criticize man-hating because I want us to pretty-please prioritize the feelings of men, but to caution against its reification of the gender binary. I want us to be critical of the sources of our solace, lest they become counterintuitive to our professed goals.

What is, then, the currency of man-hating if not money or clout? It is an in-group shorthand that permits gesturing at insurmountable societal structures to misdiagnose causes of unisexual behaviors (such as infidelity, or ghosting, or miscommunications). It feeds into

digitally-native communities that medicalize callousness or disinterest as malignant narcissism, into forums that enable each other's anticipatory suspicion of potential partners. The tenor of online dating advice spheres is one of bio-essentialist mistrust and paranoia not incomparable to their male-counterpart incel forums in their mythologizing of gendered traits. better diagnose the unvarnished root of the discontent before it dresses itself in justice-seeking garb.

The sting of rejection is singularly destabilizing to our self-conception, and we now have access to the language of righteous indignation as a balm, as Instagram story exposés and Reddit posts to assuage our shaken dignity. In uttering “men are pigs” who are unserious about commitment or dishonest about their degree of interest, we minimize that our offering was something sweet, an extended branch of trust or a kernel of expectation, that was taken from us by an uncaring noncommittal suitor. It is disingenuous to identify this as an axis of oppression suffered. To infantilize ourselves as hapless sweet things ripe for exploitation is an unwitting reinforcement of the patriarchal notions that house our value in our chastity. “Men will be men” is a defeatist denial, absolving our agency in the consequences of where we choose to allocate our time and energy in opting for what does not serve us, over and over, in hopes of a different outcome. In our eagerness to be wanted we are ill-prepared to do the mental work of first identifying why we want. “Ex-pop” surrounds us, even by self-professed queer women, prioritizing an embittered reaction to a man's actions (his sexual ineptitude, his small penis, his bad music) before any genuine Sapphic expression in a Gen-Z revival of political lesbianism that would not have existed had this sexually inept, small penised man paused his bad music to text them back.

To resign ourselves to a world where all we can imagine of man is a predator, to whet this rhetoric divorced from any class-analysis harkens back to the hostilities of Civil War era executions of enslaved men accused of rape (the word “false” was omitted from this sentence as redundant owing to my aforementioned ideological opposition to capital punishment). Misandry must not be discarded wholesale, with its political utility in agitating collective anger toward material impact. Its application must be surgically discerned. “Female rage” cannot be a catch-all phrase diminished to settling scores of not being texted back or not orgasming enough.

It is crucial work to be interrogating the politics of intimacy, and that makes it all the more necessary that we are honest about the dissatisfactions we experience. I certainly believe in Dumping Him as evergreen advice (there has nary been a boyfriend I have approved of deserving my friends) as I do not see the logic of prolonging something you know doesn’t work, but I simply cannot abide another woman (especially a bisexual one with options otherwise) voluntarily exposing her resentment of her own choices seeking reaffirmation through pop feminism, in flimsy denial of how much she cared about Some Stupid Guy. I cannot abide sanctimonious, dishonest revisionism.

III: Thinking Pleasure

Pleasure Activism (7) is home to adrienne maree brown’s much lauded assertion that “pleasure activism is us learning to make justice and liberation the most pleasurable experiences we can have on this planet”, an idea I find well-intentioned and misguided in equal measure. Its proponents and book jacket propose a

shimmering vision of shame-free joy-centric community, its insides are riddled with pages upon pages upon pages of Beyoncé worship further muddled with garden-variety new age spirituality tips (crystals, astrology, reiki, et al) whose Orientalism would be less embarrassing if nestled amid the horoscope and self-love section of Cosmopolitan magazine instead of an explicitly decolonial quasi-academic undertaking. It enlists an exciting range of thinkers, writers, facilitators, it fails to cohere their contradictory stances on sex work and porn into anything that would resemble a concluding takeaway. Despite the radical stylings of the work, it does not actually posit a theory of “activism” hinted at in its introduction but conversations on how to expel learned shame in one’s life. These strategies, which I read in the utmost good faith, applied routinely in earnest would no doubt yield benefits for the practitioner but the overarching advice is predicated on its unsound premise (the one it ultimately never addresses: a pursuit of justice and liberation through an embrace of the erotic). This is not a knock on adrienne maree brown’s activist credentials, nor a dismissal of the value of personal rituals, but an invitation to be critical of what makes self-care and self-love so vulnerable to being co-opted by neoliberal sex positive frameworks.

The rhetoric that one’s individual well-being will prime us for better care interpersonally holds water, so an extrapolation that we will emerge from our bedroom to post-orgasm magick the world into a better place is ostensibly the next step. This is an understandably tempting thing to believe, that sexual satisfaction can be channeled toward political liberation. The peril of this school of thought being so sweeping in its conclusions lies in the credence it lends to making reverse-engineered sexual diagnoses of political backwardness.

This is not a phenomenon born yesterday. It is precisely the idea that caused the defanging of the Free Love movement in the 1960s, moving from specific charged demands of women's emancipation to being Rococo for the hippies devolved into yuppie-dom. It is the idea that dispelled rumors of Hitler's micropenis-fueled pedophilic sexual dysfunction in an attempt to demystify Nazism as caused by sexual repression. This pathologizing of repression, and the 180 march in the other direction, caused West Berlin to sanction Helmut Kentler's policy of housing of homeless boys with pedophiles. Earnest apologies to adrienne maree brown but wielding sex positivity as a lens for wider political activism is at best naive and impotent, and at worst Kentler-fodder. We have to be precise in what good sex is good for and what bad sex is bad for, because while there are politics to intimacy and there is activism to be done about it, we cannot conflate merely satisfying ourselves as the correct moral position. Covert fascists are getting off too.

Lauren Berlant tackles this aporia in *A Properly Political Concept of Love* (8) where they reflect on the comparison between Love and Money as the most seductive motivations capable of transforming contemporary society, both sought as possessions. Love, unlike capital, provides an alterity that absolves individualist thinking and creates a mode for the afflicted to act in a capacious exalted state of mind. But such a "pastoral" vision of love is like having our cake and eating it too. A cautious analysis recognizes the shortcomings of love: yes, it can make one simultaneously "more open and yet more oneself", but we cannot cherry-pick past the amorality and ego-padding of our appetites, we do not know what we want in full — we cannot know — and we cannot utilize such an ambivalence to clear political end.

What then is the use of sex? The soft-focus haze of a post-coitus pillow talk makes this evident with the resultant minds brought starkly into the embodied present tense, conjoined in endorphin's perfume. Yes, deep connection transpires asexually too, and intimacy alone creates too precarious a bubble to rely on, but its potency is undeniably universal. This may not present a political tool in and of itself. But perhaps the inverse is true.

Good sex may not be a means for a more equitable world, but a more equitable world is demonstrably means for better sex. This forms the thesis of *Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism* (9), a text featuring Alexandra Kollontai's Soviet-era writing on "free union". Sex between comrades is envisioned with care systems in place to ensure women not only had avenues for sexual expression but infrastructural access to abortion, guaranteed work, and family care. Besides the concrete conception of a world that permits women to pursue pleasure without being saddled with its puritanical "consequences", Kollontai also envisions an emotional care system. Acknowledging love as a "valuable socio-psychological factor" she argues for the need to establish an emotional parity between comrades engaged in erotic friendship. Lenin may have disregarded her and other Marxist feminists' focus on romance as bourgeois ideology, regardless she put in the labor to articulate what a "Winged Eros" (10) could do for the proletariat with an excess of emotional energy, how romance and intimacy are crucial in promoting feelings of being sated. We know (more or less) what compels us to fuck. Not all fucking was made equal, and the pleasure one derives from it is infinitely variable. If we are to agree to value pleasure as a worthwhile pursuit, we must agree on the circumstances that make it viable. In this instance, it's chicken before egg.

Queering the Fembot

At the time of my writing this, and likely of you reading this, the state of being transgender is in and of itself considered a perverse one that makes mockery of nature. Gender minorities, libeled as perverts on arrival, thereby stand to lose less and gain more in being open about paraphilia they do engage in. Anti-assimilationists include kink at Pride to the chagrin of many each year, working to ensure something about queerness stays queer now that cruising spots have become extinct and largely migrated online. Non-conformist gender identities kindle non-conformist sex, it is only from the outside they can continue to challenge what Gayle Rubin calls the “Charmed Circle” of sanctioned reproductive sex. The defiant embrace of perversions is requisite as a political tool against the homogenized triadic family model.

“We are very dirty”, declare self-professed ecosexuals Annie M. Sprinkle and Elizabeth M. Stephens in the *Ecosexual Manifesto* (11) where they replace the anthropomorphic model of mother earth — encumbered with gendered and archaic notions — with that of earth as lover. That one would be moved, as tree-huggers were, to shield non-human biodiversity with their literal chest because they are compelled by an eroticized attachment. This is demonstrated in their documentary *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosexual Love Story* (2016), where the two performatively “marry” mountain tops at risk of destruction in a strategic bid to raise consciousness, but simultaneously push for a plurality in the ceremony’s meaning. Beyond just a stunt activist action, they contend to be operating within the expected romantic trajectory of marrying one’s beloved — in this case, the mountain tops. This is a marriage they intend to consummate. Paul B. Preciado, author of *Testo Junkie* (12), converses

with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (13) in *Orlando, My Political Autobiography* (2023), featuring plural Orlandos in communion with nature. These don't appear to be premeditated rituals, but improvised gestures of externalizing an erotic impulse, a serene exhibitionism intended less for the audience but for the alternate sensual modalities of the trees, the rocks, the flowing water. In both cases there is no channel for sexual feedback from normatively reciprocal bodies. This appears at first to be driven by a personification of the earth and nature, but is better identified as a trans-humanism of the self, emerging from a willingness to consider the body as a collaboration between several mutualistic organisms that can thus be erotically embedded in a larger ecosystem. No human gaze required.

Preciado writes of gender-affirming hormone replacement therapy as a mutable condition, "molecular prostheses" to "foil what society wanted to make of me". (12) If gender is a destiny, it is not a sealed one. In Virginia Woolf's original *Orlando*, the titular protagonist transmogrifies in a painless dreamy trance in an avant-garde forerunner to both magical realism and non-binary representation, inventing new form for the sapphic love letter. Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (14) updates this canon with a similar involuntary metamorphosis, but one that happens by familiar science fiction procedures instead of a divinely ordained ritual. They are all means to the same end: all these Orlandos and Eves ultimately revel in the inorganic origin of their gender destinies, in their cyborgian existence — "I was a man-made masterpiece of skin and bone, the technological Eve in person. I saw myself. I delighted in me". They live in female vessels, but imbued with a chimeric non-binary agency. Mary Tsang's interdisciplinary project *Open Source Estrogen* (15) brings to life this DIY gender articulation, recognizing the

medical gatekeeping of the biomolecule, and its potency in gender sovereignty.

A Neo-Fembot can emerge from this queered understanding. In all these instances she is no less eroticized, (perhaps even more considering the queer expression of making love and kin with the non-human). No less concerned with being desired or desirable. No less cybernetic in her bio-hacked metamorphosis materialized through hormones, the knife, or divine entities. Yet she manages to escape the dire disposability of her *Blade Runner*-style peers through appropriating her creation myth, taking the body into her own hands. Queerness emerges an avenue for agency, for inventing one's own creation myth.

"The Nature you bedevil me with is a lie," decries Susan Stryker's seminal embrace the artificiality of the construction of the transgender body as Frankensteinian (16). She is fond of the self-ID'd monster, the rage, the remaking. I am fonder still of the Bride of Frankenstein, Fembot invented for the silver-screen, who recoils (not once but twice) in rejection of being the conduit of another's desire. In the precious few moments of her existence, she demonstrates in affective wailing a reclamation of her fated design. It is a text suffused thoroughly with queerness. This penultimate section has relied on a selection of case studies to define the contours of the argument that follows, outlining a recipe for the creation of our own Fembot freed from her gender essentialist trappings.

Sexy, Sexy Inventions

The Fembot is designed with inescapable purpose: made for pleasure, a loving machine. Coded by knobs and levers, bespoke in her sensitization to the needs of another. This is where our lesson lies. We have only seen the Fembot lay with a cross-species user, or one attempting to subvert this fate. We have yet to see the Fembot want another, we have not seen self-pleasuring lesbian Fembots. Suddenly, not only do we have a restored power balance, we now have room to play with what sex even is. Two (or more) Fembots, both coded to change their attributes with the missive to maximize the other's pleasure, reconfiguring in real time to each other's stimuli. We are already programmed like the Fembot, we are already coded through the filters that weave on desire's loom. It is when we recognize the other as the Fembot too that the Loom is suddenly a playground where gender's tyranny ceases to exist, one where sexual deviancy is not a bourgeoisie degeneracy, but a potential medium of communication. The textile generated as the Loom's output, desire articulated into sex, has its own mass, its own gravity. It undulates, conceals, reveals, shifting over time and space. It would not be remiss to say that sexual intercourse is *intercourse*, dialectical and self-altering. There may be a destination in mind, but the path to it is improvisational and experimental.

It is from this junction that the questions of bio-essentialist hierarchies are rendered obsolete in the pursuit of calibrating and re-calibrating us to getting increasingly proficient at pleasuring the other. This is where the needs of the Fembots, material and emotional, are put in a rhizomatic assemblage obliterating the individual ownership of these needs. I propose to call this mutualistic symbiosis of Fembots the Folkbot, a fused deity born of

a postmodern, post-gender and post-human embrace of pleasure rooted in critical hedonism — honest and sincere in what abundance feels like, not the capitalist mirages that pretend to be it.

This imagined creature becomes our guiding mascot for Good Sex, and for what we can derive from being open to the possibility of falling into such a structure without contriving it. This is an expansion of the queered Fembot, and an antidote to the dystopian degraded Fembot of classic tropes. The Folkbot, which I hesitate to define too narrowly so as to leave room for subjective projections, is a wildly utopian futurist pivot.

In contrast to the synthetic Fembot, the Folkbot is organic. It comes into being through a purely voluntary agreement, free from coercion by factors of societal pressure or internal insecurities. Its existence cannot be contrived, it is a serendipitous being. For Fembots to fall in love, they must be able to recognize each other as such and stay in the boat for further discoveries.

The Folkbot eschews partnering for ego-dressing or completionist tendencies. There is no upward mobility to love, it is inimical to all deliberate aspirations to coolness and status. The intent of the Folkbot is to relish in the rewards within the assemblage.

The Folkbot is a system that relies on mutual trust among its constituents for the non-hierarchal

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rhizomatic transfer of needs, its existence constitutes the agreement to participate in the interdependent processes that erode individual egos for the pleasure of the unit. Doing so does not kill the vitality of its constituents, but fortifies their identities as the definition of their role in the assemblage grows sharper.

The Folkbot is not synonymous with the “found family” or “polycule”, as it is not seeking to be a replacement to colonial triadic family structures. It is a mode for thinking about and practicing the exchange of pleasure, a closed circuit of resources.

The Folkbot, unlike the Fembot, does not have binaric On and Off modes. It is not governed by Western dualisms of mind and heart or reason and emotion or cerebral and sensual. It operates in complex degrees of libido that are edified only in experience through time. It is unafraid of being eaten, of enjoying sex, of playing games it can lose. Loss itself is reframed as win when both are properties within its closed circuit.

The Folkbot is not immune to harm, it is excited by conflict and resentment as new opportunities to expand itself, thriving in the interstices between conclusions. It invents new ways to recycle the sedimentation of hurt, ejecting it from its pores when an understanding of its root has been

perfectly absorbed. The benefit of the doubt is unlimited currency for the Folkbot.

The Folkbot is iterative, and re-iterative. It grows in efficiency and modifies itself over time, refusing to set its identity in stone, capable of self-updation in response to its pooled needs.

The Folkbot disinvests from a human-hierarchy of intelligence, or of nature as something external to it. From gut microbiomes to large bodies of water, there is no species-based delineation of its participating bodies.

The Folkbot suffers no delusions of a linear process of healing from traumata. It is a recognition that traumata can never be escaped or completely exorcised, that the traumatological approach to sex is a denial of pleasure.

The Folkbot inverts the French aphorism “le petit mort” of referencing orgasm as death, calling death “le grand orgasme” instead. The Folkbot is not interested in claims to immortality, nor suicidal. It is in life already part of complex ecological processes and fluid ejections, further fluids will continue to unspool and scavengers feast in its chemical and physical disintegration. There is no greater jouissance. The Folkbot is aware that it will lose one of its wheels before the other, however, instead of the blissful ability to disintegrate in

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perfect unison. This temporal displacement of its cognitive parts' ability to perceive the other is an anxiety the Folkbot can never reconcile over the course of its existence.

This is my creation myth. It is the contour of an actionable plan, and a dream I harbor. I know how it is sprung into existence, but I find it as hard to confront its death as I do my own. The Folkbot makes a case for the “no man is an island” crowd, all of it a recognition of the self in the other. There is more to elaborate on. There is sex — and love — out there that can change the composition and contours of your being. There is irrevocable transformation in its practice. When you find a love you can entrust your surrender to, you will first feel the threat of bursting. You will then find under this threat that you have expanded instead. You will find that the needs of another are interchangeable with your own. You will find that the self is infinitely elastic. You will mutate, and readily so.

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About the Author

Uterus

Anteverted 7.2 x 4.3 x 3.5 cm. Normal Echotexture.

Endometrial Thickness: 14 mm. This may be in keeping with physiological cycle.

Cervix

3 cm, closed. Traces of fluid seen in endocervical canal.

Right Ovary

Size: 3.8 x 2.8 x 2.4 cm.

Functional cyst: None.

Arterial and venous flow detected.

Right Fallopian Tube

1.1 x 0.8 cm in diameter. No hydrosalpinx or abscess. No hyperemia.

Left Ovary

Size: 3.5 x 2.6 x 2.3 cm.

Largest functional cyst: Mainly simple 2.3 x 1.8 x 1.7 cm cyst.

Arterial and venous flow detected.

Left Fallopian Tube

0.25 cm in diameter.

Bladder

Borderline 5.5 mm thickened wall. RT ureteric jet seen. LT ureteric jet not seen.