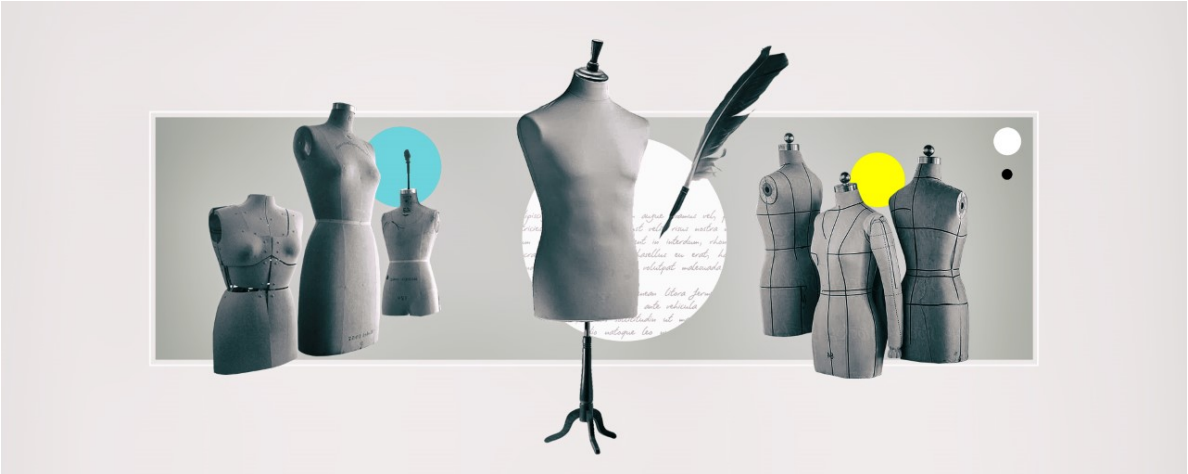
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND ALLIANCES

A letter from a trans man to the old sexual regime

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Ladies, gentlemen and others,

Amidst the crossfire related to sexual harassment policies and as a runner between two worlds, the world of 'women' and the world of 'men' (two separate worlds that might well not be if some people did not do their best to keep them apart with a sort of Berlin Wall of gender), I would like to tell you about some of the 'lost-and-found objects', or perhaps 'lost-and-found subjects' would be a better way of putting it, that I encountered during my crossing.

I am not speaking here as a man, as one of the ruling class to whom masculine gender was assigned at birth, who were brought up as members of the governing class, who were allowed, or perhaps required (a key analytical point), to exercise male sovereignty. And I am not speaking as a woman, given that I have voluntarily and intentionally abandoned that form of political and social embodiment. I am speaking here as a trans man. However, through this by no means do I aim to represent any particular group. I am not speaking, nor can I, as a heterosexual or homosexual, although I am familiar with and inhabit both positions, given that when you are trans these categories are obsolete. I am speaking as a gender fugitive, as a sexuality poacher, as a dissident (often ineptly, given the absence of a manual) of the regime of sexual difference. As a political and sexual human guinea pig who

has lived life on both sides of the wall and who by blazing the trail of crossing it day after day has ended up tired, ladies and gentlemen, of the obstinate rigidity of the codes and desires imposed by the hetero-patriarchal regime.

I should state that from the other side of the wall things are worse than I would have thought as a lesbian woman. Since I have been living as-if-I-were-a-man in a man's world (aware of embodying a political fiction) I have seen that the ruling class (male, heterosexual) will not give up its privileges just because we send some tweets or do some shouting. Following the shake-ups of the sexual and anti-colonial revolution of the last century, the hetero-patriarchy has embarked on a counter-reformation project, joined now by 'feminine' voices who wish to continue being 'importuned'. This will be a thousand-year war, the longest war there has ever been, given that it affects reproduction policies and the processes through which a human body is constituted as a sovereign subject. It will be the most important war, therefore, because what is in play is not a territory or a city, but our body, our enjoyment, our life.

What characterises the position of men in our techno-patriarchal and hetero-centric societies is that male sovereignty is defined by the legitimate use of the techniques of violence (against women, against children, against non-white men, against animals, against the planet as a whole). We could say, reading Weber and Butler, that masculinity is to society what state is to nation: the holder and legitimate user of violence. This violence may be expressed socially as domination, economically as privilege or sexually as assault and rape. In contrast, female sovereignty is only recognised in relation to women's capacity to procreate. Women are sexually and socially subordinate. Only mothers are sovereign. In this regime, masculinity is defined necro-politically (by men's right to give death), whereas femininity is defined bio-politically (by women's obligation to give life). We could say that necro-political heterosexuality would be something like the utopia of the eroticisation of a sexual encounter between RoboCop and Alien, hoping that, with a bit of luck, one of the two will have a good time.

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Heterosexuality is not only, as Wittig states, a political regime: it is also the politics of desire. The specificity of this regime lies in its embodiment of a process of seduction and romantic dependence between two 'free' sexual agents. The positions of 'RoboCop' and 'Alien' are not individually chosen or conscious. Necro-political heterosexuality is a political practice that is not imposed by those who govern (men) on those who are governed (women), but an epistemology that sets the respective definitions and positions of men and women through internal regulation. This political practice does not take the form of a law, but of an unwritten rule, of a transaction of gestures and codes that have the effect of

establishing within the practice of sexuality a partition between what can and what cannot be done. This form of sexual servitude rests on an aesthetic of seduction, a stylisation of desire and a choreography of pleasure. This regime is not natural: it is an aesthetic of historically built and coded domination that eroticises the power difference and perpetuates it. The politics of desire are what keeps the old sex-gender regime alive despite the legal processes of democratisation and empowerment of women. This necro-political heterosexual regime is today as denigrating and destructive as serfdom and slavery were in the Age of Enlightenment.

The violence denouncement and visibilisation process that we are experiencing forms part of a sexual revolution that is slow and torturous, but unstoppable. Queer feminism established epistemological transformation as the condition to enable social change. It questioned the binary and naturalised epistemology by affirming an irreducible multiplicity of sexes, genders and sexualities. Today we understand that epistemological transformation is no less important than libidinal transformation: the modification of desire. It is necessary to learn to desire sexual freedom.

For years, queer culture has been a laboratory of invention for new aesthetics of dissident sexuality in relation to the techniques of subjectification and the desires of hegemonic necro-political heterosexuality. Many of us have long since abandoned the aesthetic of RoboCop-Alien sexuality. We learnt from the butch-femme and BDSM cultures, with Joan Nestle, Pat Califia and Gayle Rubin, with Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens, with Guillaume Dustan and Virginie Despentes, that sexuality is political theatre in which desire, and not anatomy, writes the script. It is possible, within the theatrical fiction of sexuality, to want to lick the soles of shoes, to be penetrated in every orifice, or to chase your lover through the woods as if they were sexual prey. However, two differentiating elements separate the queer aesthetic of sexuality from the hetero-dominant aesthetic of the old regime: consent and the non-naturalisation of sexual positions. The equivalence of bodies and the redistribution of power.

As a trans man I do not identify with dominant masculinity and its necro-political definition. Our most urgent need is not to defend what we are (men or women), but to reject it, distance ourselves from the political coercion that forces us to desire the norm and repeat it. Our productive praxis is to disobey sexual and gender norms. After having been a lesbian for most of my life and trans for the last five years, I am as far from your aesthetic of heterosexuality as a Buddhist monk levitating in Lhasa is from a Carrefour supermarket. I do not come with your aesthetic of the old sexual regime. I do not get off on ‘importuning’ anybody. I am not interested in escaping my sexual misery by groping people on the metro. I do not feel any type of desire for the erotic and sexual kitsch you propose, men who take advantage of their power to have casual sex and touch women’s arses. I find this grotesque and murderous aesthetic of necro-political heterosexuality to be repugnant. An aesthetic that re-naturalises sexual difference and places men in the position of aggressor and women in the position of victim (painfully assaulted or happily importuned).

If it is possible to affirm that in queer and trans culture we fuck more and better, it is because not only have we removed sexuality from the scope of reproduction, but also and

especially from the scope of gender domination. I am not saying that the queer and transfeminist culture is free of all forms of violence. All forms of sexuality cast a shadow. But it is not necessary for this shadow (inequality and violence) to preside over and determine sexuality. Representatives of the old sexual regime take your shadow and have fun with it, and let us bury our dead. Enjoy your aesthetic of domination, but do not aim to make your aesthetic law. And then, leave us to fuck with our own politics of desire, without men or women, without penises or vaginas, without axes or rifles.



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Paul B. Preciado is a philosopher and art curator. His works about body policies, gender and sexuality are internationally well-known and renowned. He is one of the main contributors to queer theory and gender studies. Among his books are *Countersexual Manifesto* (2002); *Testo Yonqui. Sexo, drogas y biopolítica* (2008); *Pornotopia* (2010), y *Un Apartamento en Urano. Crónicas del cruce* (2019). He is currently Associated Philosopher at Centre Pompidou in Paris