Gender Trouble Couplets, Volume 1

A.W. Strouse

Published by Punctum Books

Strouse, A.W.
Gender Trouble Couplets, Volume 1.

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Gender: 
The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate

Is Gender what you have or be?
Is Gender just made culturally?
Could we construct it differently?
Is there a possibility of any gender agency?
Is Gender’s universal axis then always framed as different Sexes?
And is there ever any Gender that’s to the gendered Subject prior?
Now some would say this very notion of Gender as man-made construction functions deterministically or even syllogistically encoding Bodies culturally
in meanings anatomically
assigned and coded passively
as though it weren’t Biology
but forces awfully culturally
that thereby frame our destiny.
And then in Simone de Beauvoir
(within her classic oeuvre) are
these thoughts you may have read before:
A woman’s not as woman born
but she becomes as she would learn.
Preceding Gender? There’s an ego,
an Agent (whom we call Cogito)
who at some point takes on a Gender
and therefore might have picked the other.
Construction then is not a choice?
Or does compulsion steal one’s voice?
And does compulsion come from Sex?
Or made as Culture so expects?

In fact there isn’t any Body
which would not always already be
encoded by us culturally
so that it’s just fallaciously
some preordained Biology
is basis for Ontology.
It looks like Sex by definition
is Gender, which is a construction.
And then this issue of construction
must founder on the rock, convention
debating if the Will has force
or if some Fate would Will coerce?
Given then such characteristics,
it all is traced back to Linguistics:
how our debate is so constrained
because (as I have just explained)
the Body’s written in these terms
receiving as a set of Norms
a Will that is appropriative
or otherwise interpretative—
and so the Body’s made to fit
the meanings inscribed onto it.
The Body too is a construction,
its meaning *post hoc* through deduction.
And neither does it exist ever
as prior to that marker Gender.
Therefore critiquing insistence
that the Body has existence
both in and through this mark of Gender
we simply cannot any longer
assume the Body’s neatly filled
with Essence or that it’s instilled
with whatsoever Self has willed.
So have not we discovered whether
it’s either Sex or either Gender
that’s firstly fixed, or is it free?
Or what if what it’s seen to be
is actually a limitation
and just a pre-fab supposition
which is some claim of Humanism
wrecking all our radicalism?
Now this intractability in the impossibility of truly analyzing Gender—because it’s really made by Culture—exposes there’s a quandary where Discourse builds a boundary that’s set within a Hegemonic constructing system so Platonic which degrades corporeality and promotes rationality since Language always will constrain all Being to its own domain (with Gender acting as its Name). But whether Gender’s cultural or if it’s biological or if it is linguistical ALWAYS ALREADY it’s sexual—an assumed Signification that is put in a relation of a kind of opposition against some certain kind of Other who would partake a different Gender.

Though Gender is relational it’s not ergo just personal; because the Universal Person is set against the other Woman since Woman always is the Bearer who carries with her marks of Gender
while Manliness and Personhood are simply One—it’s understood.

And yet to add a complication: there is a deeper contradiction which we might call a paradox; though Sex is Woman, she’s the Sex who is not One (I do not lie: I read it in Irigaray). All Words are phallogocentric and so the Masculine Linguistic means Woman is not thinkable: a Sex un-representable who is a Multiplicity illegible to Unity.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir (within her classic oeuvre) are these thoughts you may have read before: the Woman always is the Other who is the very mark of Gender. According to Irigaray (whom I cite true and do not lie) the Woman cannot signify.

And so it’s dialectically that excluded entirely is this Other’s Identity denied in Sign’s economy so that metaphysically
imposed is the Hegemony that structures Subjectivity.

And yet what is the Metaphysics presumed to be the Subject’s substance? And who is it shaping this complex of the Sex and the Gender matrix? Alas the humanistic concept of the human as a so-called Subject assumes that there’s a Person (or as it were a singular human) who is an agent of an action who’s got a certain character which forms within a basic core upon which is a Gender, or there’s someone whom we’d call a Person whom we deem capable of Reason who simply has some attributes now added onto Human roots. This universalist conception that views the Human as a Person provides a point for our departure in theorizing social Gender. If Gender’s really a position constructed within a relation among Subjects whose Construction supplies their social constitution and Gender follows that relation, then Persons cannot simply “be” except as they are socially.
And Essence must be relative to that discourse relations give and discourse more determinative and Gender’s then not substantive but formed by discourse cultural and, too, by terms historical.

And therefore the Feminine Sex is only linguistic Absence — the frank impossibility of any such grammatically named Noun which is substantively not really a Reality. According to Irigaray whom I would cite without a lie, it’s actually her point of view to show such Substance isn’t true but merely is a social force produced my Masculine Discourse. This Absence isn’t marked as such — an argument that very much opposes what de Beauvoir’s thought (that Woman’s marked and Man is not). Irigaray’s Sex is not Other — the lack that defines the Male Gender. The Feminine therefore can’t be defined thus theoretically since Language would be phallocentric; the Female Sex is not a Subject and there is no representation.
for any female/male relation
if linguistic economy
is made by Masculinity.

Between any social positions
we surely can make some distinctions
on what is perceived as the Subject
within the given social context.
The very circularity
of Feminism’s inquiry
is underscored by the positions
which locate Gender inside Persons
and those who claim the very notion
which views the Human as a Person
who is positioned as a Subject
within the sexist pre-modern construct
without the possibility
both structurally, semantically,
of female positivity.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir
(within her classic oeuvre) are
these thoughts you may have read before:
the very notion of the Subject
within the existential project
which takes shape from Misogyny
is therefore ALWAYS ALREADY
a Masculine, a Universal
within the framework existential
defined precisely as it’d differ
from what it makes its female Other outside its universal Norms in singular, embodied forms.

Some say de Beauvoir wants to fight for Woman, so she’ll have the right to be a Subject existential in these same terms now universal. But she rejects a cool Abstract and disembodied, male Subject as well as the disparagement of disavowed embodiment projected on the Feminine as though the body’s Female. Then to link corporeality somehow with Femininity as a gesture just restricts the Body and the Female Sex as if it follows logically however paradoxically: Man is Incorporeality and tool of Rationality who only then is ever free. And so de Beauvoir’s proposition would seem to start to beg the question: Exactly what is this negation by which male identification is all Universality and makes Corporeality construed as Femininity?
The Master-Slave dialectic provides some terms analogic for this Gender asymmetry prefiguring an Economy that signs for Masculinity, creating always its very Subject in terms of course of this self-same lack.

And then in Simone de Beauvoir (within her classic oeuvre) are these thoughts you may have read before: whether some Femininity is an instrumentality of Freedom and of Existence or limiting as an Essence which shows that the Embodiment informing all her argument is actually the reproduction of old Descartes and his distinction of Body as different from Freedom yet I assert the contrary against the ancient binary which sets up that duality of Mind and Body hierarchy—where de Beauvoir sees as synthesis in her compelling analysis and claims this very dualism would follow Phallocentrism.
Tradition philosophical through Plato, Sartre, or Husserl insists on the distinctiveness of Body against Consciousness. This slash between the body, soul in Plato, Sartre, or Husserl supports regimes political as well as psychological that thus are hierarchical:

For what by Dualism is meant but fleeing from Embodiment?

And scholars now can document the many texts that represent the Mind as Masculinity, the Body, Femininity. So every single Reproduction of Mind and Body in distinction repeated thus conventionally creates a Gender hierarchy.

But in de Beauvoir’s formulation there is always this separation of Freedom and the human Body—a Mark that’s frankly shoddy because it’s not along the axis of Gender and the Sexes—but an old Cartesian distinction in dire need (I think) of revision. De Beauvoir’s point officially is that this Femininity is marked on Body by Discourse.
then leaves men’s bodies (but of course) unmarked as though universal;
but what is seemingly worse still:
according to Irigaray (and yet again I do not lie),
the Marked is always like the Marker so Self is always like the Other;
thereafter all Signification is man-made and (as a construction) puts Woman as an Otherness and cannot grasp the differences but gives a Label or a Name and therefore marks it as the same.