

ARGUING WITH THE RAVING PHALLUS

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Abstract

This thesis discusses some of the key psychoanalytic concepts as they are used in the literature on rave culture. Departing from the Freudian perspective on altered states of consciousness, narcissism and female sexual development, the rave literature that I am analyzing in my thesis uncritically reiterates certain masculinist and heterosexist presuppositions which underlie these concepts. In order to argue for a possible strategic position from which non-subjects could be theorized in relation to rave culture, I am exploring some of the possibilities open by Irigaray's concept of female jouissance and Deleuze and Guattari's 'body-without-organs' and 'becomings'.

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Introduction

Following Thomas' suggestion that "academic feminism [...] failed to take account of the claims of women ravers 'regarding the apparent ability of rave to dissolve social divisions based upon sex, sexuality, age, race and class' (Pini, 1997, p.118, cited in Thomas, 2003, p.201) on the dance floor, if not off it" (Thomas, 2003, p.201), rave¹ might appear as providing a space for materializing feminist agenda. Although a fan of rave culture and feminism as well, I cannot agree that the two coincide un-problematically on the dance floor. My disagreement with this suggestion does not spring from some empirical ground. Many feminist researchers already discussed forms of social and symbolical inequality between male and female ravers (as for example: Bennett, 2000; Bradby, 1993; McRobbie, 1999; Pini, 2001; Thornton, 1995). What seems to stay outside of discussion is how certain concepts used for theorizing rave culture actually exclude non-subjects from this theorizing. I am thus asking how particular concepts related to psychoanalysis implicitly participate on this exclusion. By doing a feminist rereading of these concepts and seeing what problems might be caused by their deployment, I want to focus attention on the way that rave has been written, spoken and thought about. The purpose of this renegotiation is to open a possible space from which feminist reading and conceptualizing of rave culture might be lead – a space to theorize raving non-subjects.

¹ What I am referring to as 'rave/rave culture' is interchangeably addressed in academic musical press as rave or dance music culture (Hesmondhalgh, 1995) or later as post-rave dance music culture (Hesmondhalgh, 1998). Rave originally refers to illegal non-commercial dancing events organized by "computer geeks" hosted usually in the warehouses and fields behind the city (Herman & Ott, 2003). Although most of the studies I am using here were done in the environment of club networks, I find using the notion of club culture or dance music culture as too broad and imprecise for my purposes. Rave music has never been a specific musical branch and it can hardly stand for all of electronic dance music subgenres. In that aspect, it rightly can be seen as inappropriate for my use in this thesis which is not specifically anchored in time and place. I use the term rave in this thesis to refer to a certain *sensibility*. This sensibility is closely related or even superposed on altered states experiencing which I am discussing in this thesis. Using another terms would not provide me with the connotation of Ecstasy (MDMA) use and hard-core dancing from the dusk till dawn that rave certainly evokes. I also want to emphasis that my discussion of rave culture might be understood as not directly connected to the dance floor but as a certain meta level to it.

For the purposes of my argument, it is necessary to introduce some parts of the basic psychoanalytic framework. The tropes of Freudian work are widely present in the rave literature that I am dealing with². These tropes are deployed not as pure figures of speech but, as I argue, they underlie the way that the symbolical economy of rave culture is being thought of in this literature. As this way of thinking is highly contestable in reiterating the problem of exclusivity of subject status and reinforcing heteronormative framework of thinking, I find it necessary to return back to the elementary Freudian concepts and do a rereading of the claims which repeat in the rave literature the same problems that are already implicit in them. My attempt might be seen as a reply to Thomas' critical statement addressing the same body of literature: "Cultural analysis of rave culture is awash with speculative notions such as [the pre-Oedipal phase articulated in Freudian theory] which are seldom tested out or indeed argued through in systematic manner." (Thomas, 2003, pp.186-187)

In the first chapter, I am discussing the concept of 'oceanic feeling' and the concept of narcissism as they reappeared in the rave literature. 'Oceanic feeling' is a term deployed by Freud to describe the state out of every-day being governed by rationality, a state of altered consciousness. Narcissism theorizes departure from the 'correct' model for sexual energy investments towards inversion or regression of this energy back to the ego. Both concepts intersect when Freud defines this 'oceanic feeling' as "the restoration of limitless narcissism" while at the same time stressing the immature nature of such feeling. I suggest that both these concepts are used in the rave literature I am critiquing without taking into consideration their exclusionary potential when Freudian 'mature' subjectivity is granted only to the heterosexual male subject.

² In my critique of rave culture literature, I will mostly focus on Simon Reynolds' "classic chronicle of the nineties rave movement" (Hunter, cited in Reynolds, 1999, 'flash review' on the cover) *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture* in the hope to challenge the dubiously complimenting review line featuring the book cover: "Positively, definitely *the last word* on the cultural significance of trashing about like an epileptic gibbon from dusk till dawn" [emphasis mine] (Lewis, cited in Reynolds, 1999, 'flash review' on the cover).

In the second chapter, I will start by discussing some of the ways in which feminist perspectives helped dismantling the pervasive idea of the egalitarianism of rave culture, adding that, paraphrasing McRobbie, it is also the way that rave narratives are *articulated* and *communicated* that participates on reiterating women's position inside/outside of rave culture (McRobbie, 1999, p.147). But it is not only on the level of subjectivity that thinking about experiencing altered states and narcissism should be renegotiated. The raving body is also a differently sexed body – a body of “material specificity and determinateness” (Grosz, 1994, p.190). I will thus focus on sexual (in)difference as it underlies the conceptual ground of the rave literature in my focus. If psychoanalysis establishes a link between subject formation and sexual development, Irigaray theorizes female sexuality in order to grant woman with subjectivity. In Irigaray's account it is the figure of female mystic which exemplifies concentrated female jouissance. This figure is redeployed in the rave discourse to describe rave libidinal distribution. While Irigaray's feminine pleasure as a locus of shaping subjectivity is related to woman's bodily (sexual) specificity, some of the rave literature contains a promise of shifting this non-phallic sexuality/subjectivity to the male body as well.

In the final chapter, in order to define a space for theorizing rave culture for non-subject position as well, certain Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts need to be explored. In their two volume opus *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce ‘schizoanalysis’³ as a concept of “libidino-economic, libidino-political analysis” (Deleuze, 1995, p.19). Using the Freudian notion of ‘libido’ and Marxian ‘production’, Deleuze and Guattari are indebted to two colossal systems navigating thinking in the 20th century. And at the same time, they are highly challenging the authority of these systems. Concerning the borrowings from psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge its ‘discovering’ of ‘machineries of desire’. (Deleuze, 1995, pp.15-16) However, with prioritizing the Oedipus

³ If Freud takes as the departure point of constructing the notion of normality the case of neurosis, Deleuze and Guattari construct their perspective of ‘new materiality’ inspired by schizophrenic's world view.

complex, flows of desire are trapped into the ‘heavy large aggregate’ by which a particular genealogical form is ‘domesticated’ (D&G, 1972/1983, p.13). According to Deleuze and Guattari, so-called underlying structures like unconscious are not discovered but, in the contrary, they describe the status quo while with the help of psychoanalysis, this status quo is successfully kept on its place and vice-versa: “the plane of the Unconscious remains a plane of transcendence guaranteeing, justifying, the existence of psychoanalysis and the necessity of its interpretations” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.284).

Inspired by Deluzian and Guattarian notion of ‘molecular woman’s politics’ (D&G, 1980/1987, p.276), I will show that it is necessary to descend to the finest particles of sexuality – to D&G’s ‘desire’ – in order to leave rigidities of exclusionary psychoanalytic concepts behind and suggest a possible way out for theorizing rave without restricting it to the ‘mature’ subject position seen from a heterosexist perspective.

1. 'Standing outside himself' – the jerking raver figure

In his book dedicated to the so-called Ecstasy generation, Simon Reynolds quotes Webster's definitions of ecstasy as "a state of being beyond reason or self-control", "a state of overwhelming emotion", "mystic or prophetic trance", a "swoon", to which he adds the Greek etymological root of the word – ekstasis – meaning "standing outside oneself" and the most contemporary meaning "psychedelic amphetamine" MDMA popularly known as Ecstasy⁴. (Reynolds, 1999, p.82) It is the latest meaning which is usually associated with rave culture as the catalyst of the rave movement (Daily and Wice, 1999, p.102). Ecstasy (MDMA) got the name from its ability to induce altered states enumerated by Webster's dictionary so that it practically swallowed all these meanings and compressed them into the pill. In his study of consciousness transformations during clubbing, Malbon defines the special experience as "‘altered states’ of mind differ[ing] from normal states of mind in being qualitatively unlike the predominant states of mind experienced during one's waking hours in the course of ‘normal’ day-to-day living (Malbon, 1999/2005, p.491). Malbon is fully aware of the circularity of such definition and he is also cautious not to reiterate the binary of normality/abnormality. Nevertheless, when he is borrowing Freud's notion of the 'oceanic feeling', there is an implicit acceptance of such a binary as Freud himself codes it in this way.

The term 'oceanic feeling' was for the first time suggested to Freud in his correspondence with Romain Rolland. Rolland expressed his disappointment that Freud didn't

⁴ Synthesized and patented in 1914 by the German company Merck and as legends tell (Malbon, 1999/2005, p.500) used for a brief time as "an appetite suppressant for German troops", its "aggression diminishing, empathy-inducing effects" made this drug completely unsuitable for military purposes. The more reliable story starts with Alexander Shulgin's re-synthesis of the MDMA in the early 1960s. As soon as its therapeutic potential was suggested in medical journals, MDMA spread among US West coast psychotherapists under the name Adam "because of the way it facilitated a sort of Edenic rebirth of the trusting and 'innocent child'". Sporting a new name X, in the early 1980s, MDMA was already a clubbing drug legal in the US until 1985. Although Shulgin (with his wife and co-researcher) and psychotherapists intended to use it as a couple bonding tool, MDMA proved to go behind he-she or therapist-client relations producing "strange and wondrous atmosphere of *collective intimacy* [italicized by the author], an electric sense of connection between complete strangers." When used in association with "up-tempo, repetitive, electronic dance music" (Reynolds, 1999, pp.81-82) it received the name Ecstasy under which MDMA became a catalyst of a generation feeling similar to LSD in the 1960s (McKay, 1996, p.111).

acknowledge “the true source of religious sentiments” in his treatment of religion as an illusion (*The Future of an Illusion*) (Freud, 1929/30, p.64). Let me quote in full length Freud’s retelling of Rolland’s suggestion concerning the ‘oceanic feeling’:

This, he says, consists in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without, which he finds confirmed by many others, and which he may suppose is present in millions of people. It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of ‘eternity’, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic’. This feeling, he adds, is purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into particular channels, and doubtless also exhausted by them. One may, he thinks, rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion. (Freud, 1929/30, 1995, p.64)

Freud is not without suspicion towards such an ‘unscientific’ approach; he finds it difficult to deal with feelings (1929/30, 1995, p.65) as it contains a risk of “fall[ing] back on the ideational content which is most often associated with the feeling” (1929/30, 1995, p.65). However, he doesn’t disappoint his friend’s suggestion and attempts to digest the ‘oceanic feeling’ which, as he admits, he “cannot discover [in himself]” (1929/30, 1995, p.65) and subject it to his theoretical complex. The meditation on the ‘oceanic feeling’ appeared under the title *Civilization and its Discontents* which already tells a lot about Freud’s attitude to the topic putting it if not in the opposition to the civilization then at least marking it as its rapture.

For the purpose of inserting the notion of the ‘oceanic feeling’ in his body of work, Freud revisits the concept of ego. As he explains, primarily, the ego is undifferentiated from its surroundings so that the individual cannot be called individual yet as he (Freud only uses ‘he’ when speaking about the ego formation in the 3rd person) does not discriminate among internal and external perceptions but is connected to a flux of excitations coming from him as a world and from the world as him. This ego is called by Freud “the primitive pleasure-ego”

(1929/30, 1995, p.67). Through the experience, one can learn how to distinguish between sources of pleasurable and un-pleasurable feelings coming from inside and outside. This process serves as a protection shield. What Freud calls a “sharply demarcated ego-feeling of maturity” is built on the vestiges of the older layers of “a much more inclusive [...], an all-embracing [...] feeling [corresponding] to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world” (1929/30, 1995, p.69). To illustrate how the primary ego is rebuilt but not erased, Freud evokes the picture of the city of Rome with its multi-layered architecture revealing rich history. Such a picture might be read as representing ego of glorious past. But according to my reading of Freud, it is the contrary that is closer to Freud’s presentation of the primary ego. His other metaphor features the evolutionary chain in which “the most highly developed species have proceeded from the lowest; and yet we find all the simple form still in existence to-day” (1929/30, 1995, p.68). Such an illustration presents the ‘oceanic feeling’ as a crocodile (1929/30, 1995, p.68) – that animal which reminds us of times when Nature was only expecting its ‘highest creature’. Freud thus articulates the ‘mature’ ego as truly human while the earlier ego (which is revisited during experiencing altered states) is closer to the Nature, not fully distinguished from it, not self-governing and more animal-like.

In Thomas’ account, a big part of cultural analysts dealing with rave culture come up with the suggestion that “participants in rave ‘celebrations’ lose a sense of their (everyday) subjective identity while dancing” (2003, p.182). ‘Raving’ seems to be a passage from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary and this passage is multiplied or layered – first, it is the process of preparation and the event by itself which under the notion of ‘celebration’ encompassing specific “routines and rituals” represent the extra-ordinariness (Malbon, 1999/2005, p.502) and further on, it is a set of trance inducing techniques which lead to doing away with “bodily and psychological rigidities” (Reynolds, 1999, p.84). What I named as trance inducing techniques is elaborated by Reynolds in his reading of John Moore’s *Anarchy & Ecstasy*:

Visions of Halcyon Days. Although Moore's use of the word ecstasy in the title refers to the mystical state (and not MDMA's popular name Ecstasy), Reynolds translates Moore's findings into the MDMA context. Various components cooperate in producing altered states – lack of sleep, mass dancing accompanied by “enraptured abandonment to a syncopated musical beat” (Moore, cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.241), specific distribution of darkness and light and finally, use of hallucinogenic drugs. In the case of rave events, similar methods are used – one might even say that the whole rave culture is orbiting around the state of altered consciousness: events take place during the night in the open air, in large empty warehouses or in clubs, darkness of the place is pierced by color laser lights and aggressively fragmented by strobe lightning, dancers drink water and energy drinks in order not to get dehydrated while they are fueled by Ecstasy. Music plays a key role in consciousness altering, although it certainly needs all another components to be properly bodily *felt* not only heard. As Sommer claims, the music associated with rave is to be danced to not to be listened to: “The sound has been engineered (‘equalized’) so that some of the deep bass lines are not heard but felt as vibrations in the sternum, so that the dancer literally embodies the music” (2001, pp.73-74). The specific musical form played at rave events might be understood as a form of “a journey over a night – not just one record – build up, peak and slow down like movements in a symphony” (Wright, 1995, cited in McKay, 1996, p.111). It needs to be underlined that with what Sommer called “sonic-tactile fusion” (2001, p.74), ravers' bodies become subjects of the music – the contract is passed and the dancer shifts a part of *his* self-governing authority on the music. *He* is less of an individuality. In the words of Lorraine:

Human individuality is the result of a process by which we create corporeal and psychic boundaries to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the world which are always in danger of collapsing. Death is the ultimate form of this collapse, but it can occur in many forms at any moment and in any place. (1999, p.26)

The outcome of these trance producing strategies is described by Moore: “The initiate becomes androgynous, unconcerned with the artificial distinctions of gender. [...]

Encountering total saturation, individuals *transcend their ego boundaries* and their mortality in successive waves of ecstasy.” [italics mine] (cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.242)

Genderlessness experienced during altered states is invoked again in Reynolds’ personal account with chemical E/ecstasy⁵: “I remember one time on E enjoying a radical sensation of being without gender, a feeling of docility and angelic gentleness so novel and exquisite I could only express it clumsily: ‘I feel really effeminate.’ The subliminal hormonal ‘hum’ of masculinity was suddenly silenced.” (1999, p.247) It is remarkable that Reynolds connects his feeling of angelic genderlessness or “outflow of all-embracing but *peculiarly asexual* love” [emphasis mine] (1999, p.243) with effeminacy – the state of being more like a woman. On the top of that, Reynolds adds that “E [Ecstasy] is notorious for making erection difficult and male orgasm virtually impossible” (1998, p.88).

Nevertheless, what might be understood as a challenge to the phallic subjectivity and sexuality is only a top of the iceberg of unacknowledged phallogocentric presuppositions. With claims about loosing self-governing authority, blurring ego boundaries, becoming genderless or/and effeminate, it becomes obvious that seemingly gender neutral position of a raver experiencing altered states is implicitly constituted as a (straight) man position. Certainly, there is a research on E/ecstatic experiences of both men and women (Pini, 1997; Malbon, 1999/2005; Bogt and Engels, 2005). It is not the purpose of this paper to set a division between these experiences according to the gender determinant. It is much more useful focusing on the question of the problem of subjectivity which provides gender division

⁵ To differentiate the MDMA from the state of ecstasy, I will be using capitalized form of the name Ecstasy or its chemical formula MDMA. Here, the both meanings – chemical and mystical – coincide so I decided to mark it as E/ecstasy.

on the level of symbolical economy. Thus, if there is something that seems to be a dissolution of subjectivity during experiencing of altered states, the individual first needs to be in possession of a clearly demarcated subjectivity, of the Freudian mature ego so that *he* can undergo a process of leaving rigidities behind. In becoming ‘effeminate’, the question of who is in possession of such subjectivity is already pre-answered - male raver in the process of losing the ‘I’, his phallic subjectivity is becoming more woman-like. In this logic, the binary of man – subjectivity/woman – non-subjectivity is reiterated once again.

The (straight) man model interpreting subjectivity dissolution during altered states might be partly derived from what McRobbie identified as the collusion of male researchers with male subculture participants, thus women are excluded from theorizing subculture (1991 cited in Thomas, 2003, p.200). I would like to add to this point another angle of view arguing that phallogocentric logic is already built into the use of vocabulary uncritically departing from strongly masculinist concepts. This point will be argued further on in the next paragraph and in the next chapter. Before doing that I want to emphasize the significance of Reynolds’ conflation of asexuality and effeminacy. His perspective is interesting for my purposes as it departs from the reference point of phallic sexuality. The Phallus serves here as a lighthouse for navigation when Reynolds is discussing altered states. From this point of view, everything around the stability of the Phallus is blurry, genderless, deprived of ‘true’ sexuality. The ‘I’ surrounded by dark waters of altered states navigates only in reference to the ‘I’.

This phallic referencing brings us back to Rolland’s suggestion in a letter for Freud that the ‘oceanic feeling’ should be seen as the origin for religious sentiments (Freud, 1929/30, 1995, p.64). Evoking the paternal figure of the God, Freud claims: “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection. Finally, he interprets what might seem as “the restoration of limitless narcissism” as “the feeling of infantile helplessness” (1929/30, 1995, p.72). Although Freud accepts the idea of parallel survival of

the pleasure-ego along side of the ‘mature’ ego, he feels uncomfortable explaining this phenomenon when connecting it “with a number of obscure modifications of mental life, such as trances and ecstasies” (1929/30, 1995, p.73). Clearly, Freud does not see any ‘regression’ to the previous stages of ego as productive. Once one is human why would he try to be a crocodile? Freud relates this senseless activity to childish helplessness in searching for the protection of a paternal figure which is by no means associable with the mature self-governing individual.

In connection to religious sentiment originating in experiencing of altered states, Reynolds states that rave culture “*feels* like a religion” [italics mine] (1999, p.9) to its participants while it “*looks* like a sinister cult” [italics mine] (1999, p.9) to the outsiders. Again, there is a binary of irrational feeling vs. cold observation (just like in Freud’s discussion) – Reynolds puts himself in a position of explaining this feeling, translating its hieroglyphs into the language of observation, of rationality. Just like altered states are described from the point of view of the most stable reference point – the masculine subjectivity, rave culture needs to be contrasted with ‘normality’, with the rational everydayness. Therefore, Freud’s explanation through the search for the paternal figure does not match to this equation as it is from the perspective of the law of the Father – the reference point – that altered states/subcultures are evaluated. In other words, Reynolds just like Freud always keeps the Phallus as the lighthouse in his view when describing/discussing altered states, then phallogocentric perspective works as a centripetal force referring every thought and concept back to its central point of navigation. Thus the individual (straight male raver) cannot be seen as in search of a solid point when experiencing altered states as it is from this solid point that he just like altered states as such are theorized⁶.

⁶ Nevertheless, one can easily turn this equation around saying that rave culture can only legitimize itself as alternative in relation to the normativity represented here by the Phallus. So there is a mutual creation of normality and alternative providing each other status of the constitutive Other. Thomas takes this stance even further when stating that subcultures are actually creations of media and subcultural theorists (2003, p.200).

The only form in which Freud can accept the sense of the ‘oceanic state’ of being-more-than-one as more or less proper behavior is the amorous feeling between two lovers. But if the object of love disappears while the strong overwhelming feeling of amorousness stays, Freud categorizes it as regressive or even pathological. Inverted libidinal investments are conceptualized by Freud in his essay *On Narcissism: Introduction* (1914). The concept of narcissism (introduced by Paul Näcke) was originally derived from the clinical description of persons who ‘suffer’ from the attitude to their bodies which should be otherwise limited to their love-objects. Freud (1914/2001, pp.67-102) partly legitimizes this ‘disorder’ by shifting it to the developmental stage of the ego experienced by everyone. However, not everyone is allowed to develop the respectable mature ego which is characterized by libidinal investments directed to the outside world – first, subject’s Mother and later, after the Oedipal drama (and successive ‘genderization’), subject’s libido is focused on gender specific ‘objects’. Those who fail to exteriorize their sexual energy or whose libido later on ‘undergo’ introversion or return to the ego (1914/2001, pp.80-81) are seen as not following the proper development. In Freud’s perspective, this state can be detected in the ‘sick man’ (1914/2001, p.82), men with various disorders (paranoia, schizophrenia etc.), homosexuals (1914/2001, p.73) and the vast majority of women (1914/2001, pp.88-89).

Surprisingly, Freud addresses narcissism also by the term ‘happy love’. He claims that: “The return of the object-libido to the ego and its transformation into narcissism represents, as it were, a happy love once more; and, on the other hand, it is also true that a real happy love corresponds to the primal condition in which object-libido and ego-libido cannot be distinguished.” (1914/2001, p.100) We might detect at this point a tone of certain nostalgia which is presented as maturity able to sacrifice the primordial happiness for the sake of that maturity. And thus those who cannot deliver such sacrifice are labeled as selfish and immature, unworthy of noble humanness. Through this concept, the figure of the selfish sick

man is produced, as well as the mad man – merged with the world of his own, the homosexual seeking for himself in the outside world and the woman – woman, in love with her mirror reflection. Nevertheless, Freud is reluctant to dividing humanity into two impermeable groups of narcissists and non-narcissists. He “assumes rather that both kinds of object-choice are open to each individual, though he may show a preference for one or the other” (Freud, 1914/2001, p.88), although Freud does not comment on how conscious such operation of the switch in libido focus might be or how it effects further ego development.

A brief conceptual ground needed to be established in order to discuss what might be tentatively named as gay roots or gay sensibility of rave culture in relation to heterosexist theoretical framework present in the rave literature I am dealing with. In the previous discussion, I was arguing that in the rave literature I am dealing with, dissolution of subjectivity and state of effeminacy can be claimed only because the authors tend to take the male subjectivity as a reference point as McRobbie suggests, by conflating their position as researchers with male participants of subculture or as it will be argued in this section, by implicitly in reproducing certain (heterosexist) masculinist concepts. From this point of view, it is highly ironic that extra-ordinariness of the subculture and alteration of consciousness and sexuality are shifted by the phallic referent to the position of difference, strangeness and even denigration. When saying that such point of view seems ironic to me, I think about the ‘roots’ of rave culture which are connected with exclusion. In the writings of ‘experts’ exclusion strikes back once again against the marginalized ravers not allowing them a place in theorizing certain key concepts of symbolical economy. To demonstrate this point, I suggest that we trace rave’s specific sensibility back to disco culture.

In 1979, disco was peculiarly connected to the epidemic which later stigmatized gays: “Disco music is a disease. I call it Disco Dystrophy. The people victimized by this killer disease walk around like zombies. We must do everything possible to stop the spread of this

plague.” (DJ Steve Dahl, cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.23) Reynolds failed to perceive a connection of this claim to the latter AIDS rhetoric, nevertheless he sees “the ‘Disco Sucks’ phenomenon” as “Nazi book burnings or exhibitions of Degenerate Art” (1999, p.23). On the one hand, disco was dismissed by white rockers as “a betrayal of the virile principles of the true American *volk* music” [author’s emphasis] (1999, p.23) and on the other hand, it was devaluated by straight black musicians as “sophisticated, anti-black, anti-feel [...] represent[ing] the gay scene [and] separating blacks from their past and their culture” (Public Enemy’s Chuck D, cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.24). Thus, disco was built on this double exclusion as gay, black dance culture. To this other-side-of-binaries enumeration of gayness and color, the body as a locus of sexuality can be added. In his apology of disco culture and sensibility, Dyer puts a special stress on what he addresses as the ‘whole body eroticism’ promoted by disco. He argues that rhythm, considered in puritan perspective as primitively physical and thus directly sexual (1995, p.411) in opposition to pure mind focused melodic line characteristic for European music (Tagg, 1994, cited in Hesmondhalgh, 1995, p.261), is important factor in experiencing non-phallic sexuality⁷. Dyer refers to the rock music as to a hegemonic block which tends to monopolize the position of the ‘real’ alternative (to the normative order – whatever is meant by that) and thus representing disco in denigrating terms of “the mechanistic repetition [in opposition to rock’s ‘intelligent’ melody], the synthetic and electronic textures [while rock praises itself for instrumental realness], the rootlessness [in contrast to rock’s halls of fame], the ‘depraved’ sexuality [in Dyer’s perspective rock is a majoritarian heterosexual music] and ‘decadent’ drugginess” [rock tends to be allied more with the legal drug of alcohol] (Reynolds, 1999, p.24).

⁷ In his discussion of the erotic aspect of the disco, Dyer suggests a provisional line for libidinal distribution as it is differently targeted in three musical branches: 1) popular song’s sexual energy is focused on disembodied ‘inside’ – heart or soul, 2) rock music channels the libido towards genitals (Dyer insists that rock owes its rhythmic to the Afro-American culture in a very different way than disco and although “liberat[ing] from popular song’s disembodied eroticism” (1995, p.411), it’s physicality refers exclusively to the ‘cock’), 3) disco is according to Dyer able to distribute libidinal centers around the bodily surface non-discriminatively in ‘whole body eroticism’. (Dyer, 1995, pp.410-412)

Similar ‘discophobic’ rhetoric (Reynolds, 1999, p.24) is deployed when talking about rave culture as a direct heir of the disco sensibility. Paradoxically, even if Reynolds identified the line of ‘discophobia’ stretched from the disco to the rave⁸, he failed to notice that ‘discophobia’ might be perceived as another name for homophobia and thus he himself continues in reinforcing the implicit heterosexist rhetoric. If ‘discophobes’ blame disco and successively rave for rootlessness (Reynolds, 1999, p.24), Reynolds continues in this rhetoric by deploying the “metaphor of the rollercoaster – going round in circles, going nowhere fast” (1998, p.91). Coming from nowhere and not having any future, rave culture is a projection of homophobic discourse of infertility.

Claiming that “the two elements of rave culture that are most radical and ‘subversive’ are also what make it nihilistic and anti-humanist: namely, the intransitive nature of the rave experience, and the music’s asexuality” (Reynolds, 1998, p.86), Reynolds seems not to share Dryer’s fascination with the ‘whole body eroticism’ and non-phallic nature of the disco and its heirs. Here is his explanation of ‘intransitiveness of the rave experience’:

With E [Ecstasy], the full-on raver lifestyle means literally falling in love every weekend, then (with the inevitable midweek crash) having your heart broken. Millions of kids across the globe are riding this emotional roller coaster. Always looking ahead to their next tryst with E, addicted to love, in love with ... *nothing?* [emphasis mine] (Reynolds, 1999, p.248)

⁸ It is arguable that certain subgenres of the electronic dance music associated with rave culture tend to be more related with the gay sensibility while another are seen as more ‘straight’ (Amico, 2001, p.364). Instead, I would suggest that it is plausible to perceive the rave sensibility as thoroughly impregnated by influences of gay men’s of color musical culture. If “Chicago was one of a couple of cities in America where disco never died,” (Atkins, cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.22) then Chicago house, as one of three founding branches of rave culture (besides Detroit house and New York garage), is mostly linked with disco and gayness. However, according to my reading, in rave culture, it is difficult to set a line between gay/straight music and culture. If the supposedly ‘gay line’ of the rave originates in disco imprints in house music, then one might attempt to trace the ‘straight line’ from German Kraftwerk and its follower techno. However, seeing techno as celebrating artifice of the music and militariness of fast moving male bodies, techno can be seen as being equally a part of gay culture just like house.

In the above passage, Reynolds seems to be evoking Freud's claim about "the only one state – admittedly an unusual state, but not one that can be stigmatized as pathological" (Freud, 1929/30, 1995, p.66) – the state of being in love – which needs the subject and its object so that the equation of merging together could make sense. Reynolds continues by generating descriptions of rave sensibility which are based on Freudian narcissism as well as on dismissive discourse of the non-procreative sex: "the creation of sensation without pretext or context" (1998, p.86), "a glorious waste of energy and resources into the void" (1998, p.88), "a spectacle of collective autoeroticism, sterile *jouissance*" [author's emphasis] (1999, p.29), "self-pleasuring, masturbatory [...] – closer to the circle *jerk* than the courtship rituals that most forms of dance dramatize"⁹ [emphasis mine] (1989, p.89). Adding that "by feminizing the man, [he is allowed] to access *jouissance* independently rather than seek it through women" [author's emphasis] (1998, p.89), Reynolds seems to be conflating raving with sociality of men and their sexual activities exclusively. At the same time, he is unable to address sexuality outside of the phallic referencing – Reynolds' 'circle jerk'¹⁰ stays anchored in the phallogocentric framework where narcissistic pleasure means perverse 'happy love' and sociality of men needs to be guarded from the slippage into sexual closeness. Thus, Reynolds seems to stay ignorant to acknowledging that rave is thoroughly impregnated by a gay male sensibility. He seems to be translating raving into the strictly heterosexual context so that for him, the object of amorousness is necessarily missing (in reflection of Freudian ego-libido attributed to homosexuals).

Paradoxically, the sexuality attributed to rave culture can be represented as both 'depraved' and asexual. Stating that rave is

⁹ Thomas' chapter on rave/club culture dancing juxtaposes two types of mass social dancing: earlier dance halls where only man-woman pair dancing was thinkable and later rave where participants dance in groups or on their own, usually in same-gender groups. (2003, pp.177-211)

¹⁰ While in the earlier version of the text (1998, p.89), Reynolds mentions the 'circle jerk' in relation to rave sensibility in general, in the later one (1999, p.29), he connects the term jerk to the more specific concept – a specific house dance style called 'jacking' reminding of the body plugged to the electric circuit or of the fragmented movement under the strobe lightning. In both versions, the use of the word is used in the sense of its sexual connotation.

[...] the first youth subculture that's not based around the notion that sex is transgressive. Rejecting all that old-hat sixties apparatus of libidinal liberation, and recoiling from our sex-saturated popular culture, rave instead locates *jouissance* in pre-pubescent childhood or pre-Oedipal infancy.

[author's emphasis] (Reynolds, 1989, p.88)

Reynolds seems to be contradicting the usual perspective on rave as Dionysian¹¹ sex orgies as it tends to appear in the press (Thomas, 2003, p.188; Reynolds, 1999, p.88). Nevertheless, his perspective on altered states and the successive specific experiencing of sexuality could be again related back to Freudian paradigms. For Freud, experiencing altered states is close to not being able to hold one's piss in the night. The subject experiencing altered states is deprived of his supposed maturity – in the state of release, he loses his dignity of adult manhood when crying for father's protection. Notions like 'infantilization'¹² (Daily and Wice, 1995, pp.158-160) reappeared in perceiving rave culture as a regression to the pre-Oedipal sexuality – with its non-aggression, preference for bright colors and tactilely pleasurable materials, dancing props like fans and light sticks, use of lollipops and children's comforters (for appeasing the sucking tic which appears after MDMA intake (Daily and Wice, 1995, p.159). In the line of the suppression of the Dionysian, Thomas argues that wild night dancing is being shallowly interpreted as primitive searching for the answer (or Freudian Father?). As she puts it,

¹¹ Thomas explains how dancing is in a very Janus-faced manner associated with the Dionysian as a source of danger and primitivism of unbounded sexuality while it is at the same time related to the Apollonian as the prioritized Western notion of cultivation of the body and spirit. (2003, p.188)

¹² Daily and Wice who inserted the term 'infantilization' into their encyclopedia of cultural trends of the 1990s, identify AIDS panic as one of the reasons for the regression to asexuality and childish image (1995, p.159). I suggest that this interpretation is only an extension of the discussion above where I argue that asexuality/pre-Oedipal sexuality is presented not as an alternative to the phallic sexuality but as a refusal of it. Similarly Reynolds sees "rejecting all that tired sixties rhetoric of sexual liberation, and recoiling from our sex-saturated pop culture" (1999, p.247) in relation to the pre-Oedipal sexuality of the rave. Thus, in the logic of phallic sexuality/non-phallic sexuality superimposed with asexuality, a possibility of difference is erased. Sexuality stays inside the logic of phallic or none.

[...] this kind of analysis may be treated as a contemporary equivalent to nineteenth-century anthropological evolutionary approaches which assumed that when 'other' (non-western, pre-literate) societies could not understand something because they lacked or had not developed 'reason', they simply danced! (2003, pp.193-4)

Again, I suggest that a relation with the Freudian concept of explanation of 'oceanic feeling' might be established. In his evolutionary metaphor for the ego development, Freud also presents a linear model of positing events on the line with the idea of the progress as the ultimate value. Then dance/altered states/pre-Oedipal sexuality are situated in a way that they represent regression, non-rationality, abnormal sexuality and thus opposition to (straight) male subjectivity conflated with valued terms as self-possession, rationality and phallic sexuality.

In my perspective, both the 'infantilization' discourse¹³ and Reynolds' non-transgressive sexuality seem to suppress a possibility of difference in sexuality. Both these discourses share the phallic referent – sexuality can only relate to the Phallus which needs to be in possession of the object-libido – this referent is endangered by altered states (loss of subjectivity) and narcissism (ego-libido). Thus, I argue that rave culture's slogan of 'going mental' (Hesmodhalgh, 1998) is being represented as going de-mental. However, according to my reading, this loss of reason supposedly characteristic for rave culture does not refer to 'infantilization' as fear of becoming children but as a negation of non-phallic sexuality. In the case of rave culture, this non-phallic sexuality is most often conflated with gay sensibility and thus 'discophobia' and 'infantilization' might come together under the umbrella term of homophobia.

¹³ In reference to the term 'infantilization', one might object that there is a similar discourse not on rave culture but emerging from it. Sommer's article on house music dancers' 'communitas' stresses the *playfulness* of the club life and dancing (2001), while the slang term '*children/kids*' refers to black gay clubbers (Thomas, 1995). However, I would suggest that this discourse, dissociated from sexuality and highly affirmative, cannot be submerged with 'infantilization'.

2. Utopia as an island of no women?

Rave culture was originally presented as a movement for joy bringing together embodiments intersected by various social vectors dancing under the common idea of reaching for pleasure:

What we must lose now is this insidious, corrosive knowingness, this need to collect and contain. We must open our brains that have been stopped and plugged with random information, and once again must our limbs carve in air the patterns of their desire – [...] a carnal music of total release. We must make joy once more a crime against the state. (Hoskyns, 1981, cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.4)

Those expecting the rave movement to be the next 1968 were desperately seeking for connection between LSD and MDMA cultures on the political level (for example McKay, 1996) and ended up theorizing its escapism calling it “collective disappearance”, “internal tourism” or “politics of ecstasy” (Reynolds, 1999, p. 238-239). Ecstasy fueled ‘we’ aspect of rave culture was theorized in relation to Turner’s concept of ‘communitas’ “in which co-operative and egalitarian behavior is characteristic, and in which the social distinction of rank, office and status are temporarily in abeyance, or regarded as irrelevant” (Turner, 1974, p.238, cited in Thomas, 2003, p.182). Reynolds repeatedly claims that in rave as “anti-elitist, anti-cool, pro-inclusivity, pro-abandon” culture (1999, p.381), it is the sweaty crowd that is the real star of the scene and not musicians (Reynolds cited in McRobbie, 1999, p.145). Also Malbon and Sommer add that there is a spirit of cooperation in the raving crowd – every dancer monitors other dancers to stay in touch with the community (Malbon, 1999/2005, pp.496-497; Sommer, 2001). But although rave is promoted as making straight men dance

shoulder to shoulder with gay men and women¹⁴, blacks with whites¹⁵, working class and middle class, younger and older people, there is a growing number of scholarly works contesting this utopian point of view and revealing the collective raving ‘we’ (Reynolds, 1999, p.376) more and more partial. In the next section, rave will be discussed in its exclusionary mode with focus on gender as a category of social/symbolical determinacy.

Concerning feminist critiques, Barbara Bradby is breaking supposed egalitarianism in the dance music along the lines of binaries superimposed on the basic division of man/woman with women pushed to the devalued side of these binaries. Men are connected to technological skills and ‘connoisseurism’, when artifice is appreciated more than performance. Women as vocalists and video performers are represented as emotion, melody and body while men stand for speech, rhythm and skill/mind. (Bradby, 1993)

Sarah Thornton questioned the utopian premise of social equality of ravers departing from Bourdieu’s concept of ‘social capital’ and analyzing “the social logic of subcultural capitalism”: “Distinctions are never just assertions of equal difference; they usually entail some claim to authority and presume inferiority of others.” (Thornton, 1995/2005, p.185) Researching the British (mostly Londoner) club scene, she states that there is a tendency to “reject and denigrate a feminized mainstream” (1999/2005, p.187) represented by ‘uncool’ working class girls who do not possess the knowledge or, to use Thornton’s formulation, “who are not culturally ‘one of the boys’” (p.190) Using another concept of Bourdieu’s – ‘habitus’ – she explains how the subcultural value of ‘hipness’ or ‘coolness’ is objectified and

¹⁴ As to my knowledge, the binary of lesbian/straight women has not been theorized in relation to rave culture. It is male homosexuality which gets in the centre gaining credits for ‘creating’ disco and house music. This fact also adds to my main point that female subjectivity stays mostly outside of theorizing rave culture.

¹⁵ In his highly critical account on subcultural imperialism, Roberts states that big open air ‘celebrations of modern primitivism’ in ‘exotic’ settings take place behind the concrete or metaphorical barb-wire to keep the locals away – he paraphrases Reynolds’ (2000) report from the Goa-trance festival taking place in the Puerto-Rican rainforest: “the festival’s high price was partly intended to prevent local teenagers from spoiling their [festival’s paying participants] fun.” (Roberts, 2004/2005, p.576). Such attitude adds a nail to the coffin for the rave’s proclaimed ideal of dancing together under the sky. Racism might be challenged on the urban dancefloor but it seems to be reconstituted in the binary First/Third world or as Roberts would put it – between those who strive for modernity and those who can afford to throw it away.

embodied. On the basis of her research, she shows that the sphere of subculture is not created by free will independently of hierarchical structures of the ‘outside’ world but reproducing the same system ‘inside’ the subculture. (McRobbie, 1999, p.147; Thomas, 2003, p.207)

In Thomas’ account, it is the aspect of safety and self-expression which is stressed in relation to female clubbers. She agrees with works of Pini and Bennett (who focus on researching British female clubbers) that Thornton underestimated the fact that many women avoid ‘mainstream’ clubs because they want to indulge in clubbing instead of being targets of sexual harassment. While Thornton reproduced the division mainstream/underground according to the male clubbers’ perspective, Pini and Bennett suggest that women perceive as underground those places where the actual experience of ‘going mental’ can be experienced in the atmosphere of sexual safety. (Thomas, 2003, pp.207-208)

Although stating that “rave has actually politicized [him], made [him] think harder about questions of class, race, *gender*, technology” [*italics mine*] (Reynolds, 1999, p.10), the question of gender is invoked in Reynolds’s rave chronicles from the (unacknowledged) gender determined perspective of a male raver and musical journalist. He is praising Ecstasy for turning British clubs for a period of a time into the safe place for men and women equally – instead of the usual “‘cattle market’ and combat zone” clubs became “a place where women come into their own and men are too busy dancing and bonding with their mates to get into fights” (1999, p.238). Description of the homosocial atmosphere is deepened when Reynolds claims that “for men, the drug/music interface acts to de-phallicize the body and open it up to enraptured, abandoned, ‘effeminate’ gestures. But removing the heterosexist impulse can mean that women are rendered dispensable” (1999, p.247). Reynolds’ suggestion about the ‘risk’ of dispensability of women seems to be densely articulated by McRobbie in a slightly different context as “traditional course of male evasiveness and female need” (McRobbie, 1999, p.146). Contradictory claim is proposed by Thomas. Drawing on Pini and McRobbie,

she claims that solo dancing is being appreciated by women as a possibility for self-expression, celebration of their individuality and equality, enjoyment without excessive observation from the part of men (Thomas, 2003, p.183) and paradoxically, by combination of hyper-sexual and pre-sexual 'childish' look (McRobbie, cited in Thomas, 2003, p.201) they experiment with new ways of being a female in the leisure zone (McRobbie, 1999, p.147) and even they might be reaching for the 'sexuality of their own' which is not measured by phallic parameters. In a heterosexist context that is characteristic for Reynolds' suggestions, whose problem is the supposed 'dispensability' of women? If men are fully occupied by dancing and socializing with other men (Reynolds, 1999, p.238), while women care about drugs and dance (Pini, 2001, p.34, cited in Thomas, 2003, p.207), I might suggest only as a speculation that there is only the point of view of 'common sense' heteronormativity which might form an objection to this 'separatism' on the dance floor. It is rather surprising that Reynolds seems to ignore gay roots of rave culture as well as most of the researchers (feminist included) do not seem to acknowledge that their study is focused on heterosexual clubs or on clubs in general but seen through heterosexual lenses.

It seems that studies on music experiencing rarely take into consideration sexual difference (or sexuality) of participants/listeners. In the following claim, rock's usual image of phallic sexuality¹⁶ of boys shaking pelvises and playing air guitars might seem to be turned around: "Rock and roll is corporeal and 'invasive'. For example, without the mediation of meaning, the sheer volume and repetitive rhythms [...] produce a real material pleasure for its fans (at many live concerts, the vibration actually might be compared to the use of vibrator, often focused on genital organs)" (Grossberg, 1990, p.113, cited in Tagg, 1994, p.211). Surprisingly, even with the use of sex prop in the metaphor for the specificity of rock

¹⁶ Of course, it is objectionable to conceive of rock culture in purely phallic terms not allowing for the space for female interprets/musicians (for example Stein, 1995) or for women's 'non-traditional' sensibility expressions (McRobbie, 1999, p.146), not to talk about glam rock's tendency for ambiguous gender/sexuality or some outstanding studies like Garber's text on Elvis Presley in relation to cross-dressing (1992).

soundscape, sexuality, sexual difference, or gender is not even mentioned. The author is criticized just on the margin for inadequacy of the metaphor in its presupposition that we “all have intimate experience with vibrators”. (Tagg, 1994, p.212) Clearly, neither the author nor his critic sees the claim as a potentiality for acknowledging the sexual specificity of the rock audience. This is worrisome especially in the line of thinking with Irigaray, that on the level of subjectivity and sexuality, thinking, talking and writing about rave culture (or subcultures in general) constantly reiterates conflation to the order of the Sameness – male subjectivity is un-problematically taken for a general measure without acknowledging the difference of the constitutive Other who provides a mirror for the One. To discuss problems of sexual (in)difference in relation to subjectivity/sexuality articulation, I provide a brief overview of Irigaray’s concepts. I am later on applying these concepts to do a rereading of female sexuality as it appears articulated in the rave literature.

Irigaray’s project springs from what she expresses as “the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse” (Irigaray, 1977/1985, p.63). In the opening of *Speculum of the Other Woman*, she identifies Freudian concepts of female sexuality/subjectivity development as collapsing the difference into the order of Sameness (1977/1985, p.72). Behind this indifference, she sees the Oedipal logic as a reflection and a support of the patriarchy (1977/1985, p.73) and thus “feminine pleasure has to remain inarticulate in language, in its own language, if it is not to threaten the underpinnings of logical operations” (1977/1985, p.77). For Irigaray, articulating the specificities of female sexuality and desire seems to play a decisive role in subject becoming of a woman. This idea is inherited from psychoanalytic discourse as such accentuating sexuality – subject relations. In *Speculum*, she tries to see how Freudian concepts actually do not leave a place for the feminine. Irigaray bravely opens the discussion: “So Freud thinks...” (1974/1985, p.28) that men and women do not differ in their sexual development until the time when the boy is

threatened with castration. In the *phallic* phase, both boy and girl indulge in phallic masturbation – boy using his penis and girl her little version of penis – clitoris. Any vaginal sensations are ‘exhorted’ (1974/1985, p.29). The switch to femininity occurs in relation to the boy’s castration threat when his own penis is forbidden to him. Then the vagina miraculously appears on the stage as a leading erotogenic zone to prepare “to take over for the little boy’s hand in order to assure an articulation between autoeroticism and heteroeroticism in intercourse” (1977/1985, p.24). In this “classic representation of sexuality” (1977/1985, p.24), Irigaray draws attention to the problem of woman’s autoeroticism which stays unarticulated as soon as clitoris loses its phallic function.

So, on the one hand, female sexuality is effaced while, on the other hand, it is hystericized. Further on in *Speculum*, Irigaray reopens the question of hysteric female sexuality in relation to female mystics. In *La Mystérique*, she celebrates mystics who managed to pass behind the mirror of representation of Sameness. Her words need some space, let me thus quote in length the opening paragraph of the text:

La mystérique: [...]. Consciousness still imposes such names to signify that other scene, off-stage, that it finds *cryptic*. This is the place where consciousness is no longer master, where, to its extreme confusion, it sinks into a dark night that is also fire and flames. This is the place where ‘she’ – and in some cases he, if he follows ‘her’ lead – speaks about the dazzling glare which comes from the source of light that has been logically repressed, about ‘subject’ and ‘Other’ flowing out into an embrace of fire that mingles one term into another, about contempt for form as such, about mistrust for understanding as an obstacle along the path of *jouissance* and mistrust for the dry desolation of reason. [author’s emphasis] (1974/1985, p.191)

According to Irigaray, outside of the boundaries of reason, mystics move with unprecedented self-consciousness – it is the only place in Western history that is strongly occupied by

women and attributed with certain value as well. Behind the phallic 'I' of categorization, calculation, referencing and planning, the mystic visits the non-space where sacred and sexual merge together in hypergasmic blesses: "she waits for the rapture to return, the ecstasy, the lightning flash, the penetration of the divine touch" (1974/1985, p.195). In the figure of a female mystic, Irigaray rediscovers ultimate woman's autoerotic pleasure. It is not 'only' self-affinity that Irigaray attributes to feminine jouissance in general – the continual self-touching of her sex organs (1977/1985, p.26), her preference for mutual touch (Lorraine, 1999, p.31) and a whirling movement as a recreation of the child-mother union (Lorraine, 1999, p.31). In the case of a mystic, pleasure is ultimately and completely dissociated from restricting woman's body and her sex organs to motherhood; it is the pleasure of her own. In Irigaray's neologism 'mystérique', mystery and me-hysteria come together. The pleasure of a mystic is hysterical, full of convulsive movements; it embarrasses the spectator (1974/1985, p.198). On some other place, Irigaray writes about woman remaining 'elsewhere', being able to mimic the hegemonic masculine but to be able to do this, she is acting from a place which is outside of the Order (1977/1985, p.76). Then, if she writes in *Speculum*, in relation to mystics, that "'God' will prove to have been her best lover since he separates her from herself only by that space of her jouissance where she finds Him/herself" (1974/1985, p.201), Irigaray seems to be suggesting that this 'elsewhere' might be woman's jouissance. Sexual pleasure which newly reshapes her body is also a place from which her subjectivity springs – she is reborn: autonomous in difference. For the further analysis, it is important to take into consideration that in the case of 'myst(er)ics', manifestations of sexual specificity take place during experiencing altered states.

As scholars deconstructed the idea of social utopia of egalitarianism of rave culture, altered states where empathy and love could be democratically shared in withdrawal from the

‘reality’ remain the last bastion of rave utopianism. In one of his ‘instant’ claims, Reynolds states:

Rave is a culture of clitoris envy, a low-brow version of Jacques Lacan’s green-eyed feelings about the mystic Saint Teresa. Malcolm Bowie (1991), paraphrasing Lacan, describes women as ‘perpetual motion machines programmed to produce their own rapture’, and writes of how ‘an uncaused, unlocalisable and ineffable pleasure-spasm’ incited Teresa’s enraptured contortions. Pure rave! Rave’s epileptic stimuli-bombardement (convulsive beats and strobes) reflects the subculture’s essence:

‘nympholepsy’ – ‘an ecstasy or frenzy caused by desire of the unattainable’. (Reynolds, 1998, p.89)

To discuss how sexual (in)difference is presented in the rave literature, I decided not to follow the psychoanalytical line doing the rereading of Lacan who is directly mentioned in the passage above but to draw on Irigary’s concepts which already contain in them discussion with Lacanian ideas. If in the quote above Reynolds seems to be suggesting a model for woman’s experiencing of altered states, he quickly turns his back to such reading in order to generalize (and in that way also de-gender-ize) those claims. As a result of this generalization, he attempts to cover the whole rave culture with the metaphor of mystic’s hypergasmic body.

The citation above might also be connected to the notion of ‘whole body eroticism’ introduced by Dyer. To explain the use of this term, he says:

Gay men do not intrinsically have any prerogative over whole-body-eroticism. We are often even more cock oriented than nongays of either sex [...]. Nonetheless, partly because many of us have traditionally not thought of ourselves as being ‘real men’, and partly because gay ghetto culture is also a space where alternative definitions, including those of sexuality, can be developed, it seems to me that the importance of disco in scene culture indicates an openness to a sexuality which is not defined in terms of cock. (1995, p.412)

Thus, although deriving the notion of ‘whole body sexuality’ from disco sensibility experiencing, he also acknowledges term’s limitations and political potential. Unlike Reynolds who seems to generate and juxtapose various concepts without developing them further or at least suggesting what their relation or use might mean/cause.

Both ‘whole body eroticism’ and mystic’s hypergasmic body depart from the idea of sexual difference (to end up, in Dyers’ and Reynolds’ account, transposing specific ‘feminine’ sexuality on a male body). The sexual difference paradigm is anchored in a presupposition that female erotogenicity is not restricted to genitals but it can cover the whole surface of the body, As Irigaray puts it:

Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is plural. [...] *woman has sex organs more or less everywhere*. She finds the pleasure almost anywhere. Even if we refrain from invoking the hystericization of her entire body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than commonly imagined – in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness. [author’s emphasis] (1977/1985, p.28)

Then if Reynolds articulates woman’s sexuality as ‘uncaused, unlocalisable and ineffable pleasure-spasm’ (Bowie, cited in Reynolds, 1998, p.89), he is in his thinking actually closer to Freudian pre-Oedipal pleasure-ego, the state when the individual is still ‘confused’ about distinguishing between the outside and inside pleasure sources, the body is merged with the world in pleasure waves. Woman’s pleasure is thus represented as a sort of immature confusion which does not have a proper cause, cannot be localized and evades any measures – it is more like an ‘error in the system’. The adjectives that Reynolds quotes estrange hypergasmicity from the female body itself and shift it under the notion of the unexplainable, bizarre and embarrassing when it is *looked at*. Irigaray would see the idea of finding the

cause, localizing and measuring the pleasure as a masculine specular technique of appropriation.

In Reynolds' citation, women's sexual specificity is translated into machinic vocabulary as something out of control which might need to be fixed. Irigaray sees it differently: "“A woman can usually find self-expression only when her lips [mouth or labia] are touching together and when her whole body is in *movement*.”” [emphasis mine] (Irigaray, cited in Lorraine, 1999, p.32) Irigaray's hysterical figure of a mystic is a strong 'extract' of woman's sexual sensibility; she embodies the idea of excess that Irigaray is talking about extensively in her work. Woman is excessive (from the specular point of view) being out of the (masculine) norm and the mystic is providing the body to this *symbolic* excessiveness. Since the body of the mystic is symbolic, the body of the raver cannot be un-problematically substituted for the body of a mystic on the level of the excessiveness that they both share. While mystic's excessiveness, as to my reading of Irigaray, is symbolical, raving body is experiencing sensory overload on a very physical level. Unless this concrete excess is not translated into symbolic terms of how the male/female body is re-articulated on the level of erotogenicity by experiencing altered states, I suggest that it is premature to make conclusions by conflating the mystic and the raving body under the category of hysteric pleasure experiencing.

To understand what might lead to the conflation of the two bodies, it is useful to revisit Freud's connection between narcissism and erotogenicity. Erotogenicity is established in the mind as a message of "sexually exciting stimuli" (Freud, 1914/2001, p.84) produced in *any* body part or organ. According to Freud, erotogenicity might be understood as characteristic of the whole body, its every organ and varying level of erotogenicity are reflected on the level of the ego. The early pleasure-ego can thus be seen as a record of erotogenic stimuli. For better understanding of how ego works, Freud offers a visualizing

prop of homunculus. Homunculus is a sensorimotor representation as captured by the cerebral cortex, a distorted inverted little person which is, as Grosz emphasizes, coded as male (Grosz, 1994, pp.34-35). How would such homunculus look like for a dancer in a state of ecstatic use of his/her senses? For both men and women, it is plausible that similarities would outweigh differences in high proportion – the whole body sensuality would suppress eroticism centered in sexual organs. This image of a raving body completely covered in erotogenic zones might thus be reminiscent of the ecstatic mystic.

By diagnosing feminine hypergasmic hysteria as ‘nympholepsy’, *non-attainability* (Reynolds’ quote, p.27) of such desire relegates female pleasure under the notion of narcissism as nostalgia for the perfect ‘happy love’ of bodily unity with the surroundings. As not reachable, narcissism of ecstatic pleasure is implicitly posited in opposition to the rational love of object relations. It is surprising that Freud does not comment on the adult narcissism as a return of libidinal investments to the ego and *reshaping* of the ego by such investments. In the pre-Oedipal phase, Freud puts a direct connection between erotogenicity, narcissism and ego formation. In its adult version, this connection is deprived of its last component. It seems like Freud does not acknowledge further ego formations which might be taking place during narcissistic libidinal investments. By positing the adult narcissism as necessarily regressive, such unacknowledged further formation is abolished. On the contrary, further libidinal investments seem to express not ego shaping process (as it is the case with child narcissism) but return to some complete state of being (‘happy love’). This is in fact an aporetic moment in Freud’s concept of narcissism when on the one hand, libidinal investments directed towards oneself are ego formative and on the other hand, return to the pleasure-ego means achieving certain state of balance (or should it be chaos in Freudian point of view) which is a blueprint of ‘happy love’. Therefore, in his articulation of woman’s autoeroticism translated into the rave context, Reynolds once again hits the wall of Freudian

paradigms – after clitoris cedes to vagina as a leading erotogenic zone, woman’s sexual development stays outside of the discussion. Working inside the heteronormative logic, Reynolds can only portray woman’s pleasure as statically narcissistic, looking back to the pre-phallic and phallic stages of her sexual development.

Strangely enough, talking about rave as “a culture of clitoris envy” (1998, p.89, for the complete quote see p.27) Reynolds manages to localize the source of the ‘inexplicable pleasure’ to the clitoris. The clitoris, previously symbolically removed from woman by the Freudian concept of boy’s threat of castration, returns to the scene – not to the scene of Oedipal drama but to supposedly pre-Oedipal sexuality experienced on the rave scene. Although a locus of envy, the clitoris disappears once again (and the sexual difference as well) giving space to hysterical pleasure of the mystic which is applied on the gender non-specific raver’s body (the homunculus representing erotogenic sensitivity is similar for both male and female raver). From clitoris to hypergasmicity, this is a journey back in time ‘down’ to the *pre-gendered* pleasure-ego. Reynolds seems to be suggesting that pleasure derived from raving fueled by Ecstasy is not gender specific, that both men and women enjoy E/ecstatic feelings of “‘touching within’”¹⁷ (Reynolds, 1999, p.83) which might be expressed as a certain ‘communism of sexuality’ (paraphrasing ‘communism of the emotions’ (Smith cited in Reynolds, 1999, p.85). Along the lines of the idea of common sharing, Reynolds also adds a story which might be read in a way that pleasure-ego of the raver is not introverted to invest sexual energy on itself only (as is the ‘common sense’ reading of narcissism) but it needs the idea of a higher unity, of collective experiencing: “A friend of mine, bored, once took some leftover E [Ecstasy] at home and spent the night kissing the walls and hugging himself.” (Reynolds, 1999, p.85) Thus, narcissistic pleasure can be better articulated in relation to Irigarayan autoeroticism of woman as being constantly in touch, never being one but always

¹⁷ MDMA was for a certain time labeled by its therapeutic enthusiasts as “*emphatogen* (a feeling enhancer) and *entactogen* (literally ‘touching within’, a substance that puts [the user] in touch with [him/herself] and others)” [italicized by the author] (Reynolds, 1999, p.83)

already plural. In Reynolds' anecdote, it is also implicitly suggested that the male body is somehow not enough to experience the hypergasmic pleasure by himself (as it is the case with the female mystic). The connection needs to be mediated through the crowd and once there is a crowd, woman is 'dispensable'.

Going even further along the lines of thinking the autoeroticism of altered states, one might conclude that ecstatic autoeroticism is paradoxically only thinkable for women if phallic sexuality is blocked during altered states (or at least certainly on MDMA) and man's body is articulated as in need of libidinal object/objects so that jouissance can pass through his body. This perspective might be found behind the fraction of Irigaray's words on mystics: "This is the place where 'she' – and in some cases he, if he follows 'her' lead [etc.]" (1974/1985, p.191). Taking in account these words, woman is somehow able to 'enter' the altered states by herself using her sexual uniqueness while man is in need of connection to do so. To balance the idea of the excessive/insufficient body, another perspective on man's body experiencing sexuality of altered states might be derived from Dyer's explanation of the use of 'whole body eroticism' term (see quote on p.27). It is plausible that in the heteronormative framework, man is not able to conceive of his body as of a locus of dispersed sexuality. It is then Dyer's gay disco dancer who can dissociate 'specifically' woman's sexuality from the female body and apply it on his body under the name of the 'whole body eroticism'.

Bringing in the figure of Saint Teresa, Reynolds again represents rave invoking religious feelings, adding the aspect of physical pleasure to it. In relation to the house music, he also states that [...] "spiritual redemption and sexual rapture are fused in a kind of eroto-mystic delirium" (1999, p.31) and he continues further describing specific erotic charge of the music:

The samples that feature in much rave music – orgasmic whimpers and sighs, soul diva beseechings – induce a feverish state of *intransitive amorousness* [italicized by the author]. The ecstatic female vocals

don't signify a desirable/desirous woman, but (as in gay disco¹⁸) a hypergasmic rapture that the male identifies with and aspires toward. The 'you' or 'it' in vocal samples refers not to a person but a sensation. (Reynolds, 1999, p.248)

It is again the male raver who is in the focus of Reynolds interest – merging with the vibe which replaces the object of his libidinal interests. This 'eroto-mystic delirium' might be seen as a moment of distance from the Phallus where different sexuality is appropriated. If Freud would speak about helpless searching for the Phallus in experiencing altered states, I would suggest that Reynolds might be this time implicitly contradicting Freudian paradigm when describing the rave as a "collective autism" (1999, p.248). Through the lenses of Irigaray's perspective, one might argue that this autism is only a form of evasion from the Phallus. And although Reynolds on another place in the text juxtaposes autoerotic and autistic aspects of the rave experiencing (1999, p.248), I would argue that this 'autoeroticism' can stand for *different* sexuality – possibly the sexuality which stays outside Freudian articulation and which gets a place in Irigaray's writings even if there it seems to be anchored exclusively in the female body.

Another paradox to Freudian line of experiencing altered states as a regressive state of helplessness translated into the loss of subjectivity might be Malbon's conclusion to his chapter on oceanic and ecstatic states experienced during clubbing (1999/2005). He states that "the experiencing of ecstatic sensations can actually be about an extraordinary and, for many, unparalleled and extremely precious experience of *their own identity*" [author's emphasis]

¹⁸ Reynolds's interpretation of 'gay perception' of the vocals in some of the rave genres might sound a bit too narrow. Dyer would certainly object to restricting gay men sexuality to 'feminine sexuality' (see quote on p.9). In his article on signification of masculinity signs on the specific house music scene, Amico (2001) claims that although some genres of the dance music might be closely related to gay communities (as "puffy" house music), they are not necessarily in relation to popular perception of gay men as in possession of 'feminine sexuality'. In Amico's research on Aurora gay dance club patrons, hyperbolic masculinity is regarded as desirable while effeminacy is strongly devalued. Thus, "puffy" music can be a soundscape for muscular torsos not only feather fans and soft dancing gestures usually attributed to the disco or house music.

(1999/2005, p.509). Malbon bases this finding on the piece of the interview with a she-clubber. He further on interprets her experiences as releasing a utopian identity of a 'real' self or a better self (1999/2005, p.509). Such a contradiction to Freudian regression to the archaic layers of ego that suggests abandonment of the solid 'I' might give an idea that there are differing perspectives on what is 'lost' and what is 'gained' during subjection to altered states. I certainly do not want to join the discourse which perceives subjectivity as a locus which might be lost and found or differently manipulated because it is possessed by its owner – fully self-governing individuality. This contestable approach is tellingly articulated in Paul Sweetman's perspective when he says that "the body [...] mobilized as a *plastic resource* on to which a *reflexive sense of self* is projected [...]. We are [...] assuming increasing responsibility for the design of our bodies and *selves*." [emphasis mine] (Sweetman, 1999, p.166) What I see as remarkable, is certain insistence in the rave literature on the idea of *alternative* – rave culture is being theorized as an arena for negotiation where *different* sexuality and subjectivity forms can tentatively take place outside of the normative gender/sex system.

3. 'Machines R Us': The line between the human and the non-human

Citing various novels and going across different disciplines, Deleuze and Guattari invite their readers to do the same: to borrow concepts from their work and apply them wherever there is a need. The slogan for such borrowing should not be a question of the meaning – is it true? – one should better inquire in terms of the function – does it work? (D&G, 1980/1987, p.xv) The issue of borrowing is in Deleuze and Guattari's work closely related to notions of nonlinearity, simultaneousness, open-system, 'tool box' etc. The concepts that they borrow are attached together to function in a radically new way, not to *reflect* what Deleuze named "a deeper 'spirit of the age'" (1995, p.22), but to *generate* this spirit or even to generate this age.

As a great fan of borrowing, Reynolds uses some of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts when discussing rave culture. Following the functionalist logic of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, I am asking whether the 'tool box' provided by Deleuze and Guattari works for Reynolds' thinking about rave culture. The intuitive answer would be negative, as he at the same time keeps using Freudian sofa. However, Deleuze and Guattari never mentioned that their tool box should be used exclusively and without combination with other tools. My critique of Reynolds' use of Deleuze and Guattari's concept does not aspire to provide some list of corrections; I am trying to exemplify how the articulation of rave culture stays embedded in hard-core Freudian terms. Although Reynolds tends to see rave culture as a preparation for living in virtual reality (1998, p.86), at the same time, he remains stretched on the psychoanalytic couch. This double sidedness is exemplary present in both of his works on rave culture.

On the one hand, Reynolds describes rave spirituality and sexuality in terms of generating strong sensations out of any context and without a goal, as a depthless 'subculture for subculture' cleansed of any meaning. In the role of 'advocatus diaboli', Reynolds

suggests that from the ‘classical’ modernist perspective rave culture is an oxymoronic notion if culture is perceived in relation to truths, meanings, roots and future (Reynolds, 1998, p.91). Seeing rave out of the representative model of meaning and its interpretation correlates well with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the ‘rhizome’. ‘Rhizome’ is in every sense different from the arborescent representative hierarchical structure – the ‘tree model’, it is a-centered system, “a machinic network of finite automata” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.18). ‘Rhizome’ is composed of equally distanced and connected ‘plateaus’ which are defined as being always in the middle, as the idea of the beginning, origin, roots or the end does not apply for the rhizomatic system. The concept of the ‘plateau’ is derived from Bateson’s “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.22). Bateson introduces this model inspired by Balinese culture contrasted with ‘the Western mind’ which tends “to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value” (Bateson, 1972, p.113, cited in D&G, 1980/1987, p.22).

Transcendancy, meaning and interpretation are closely related to the institution of psychoanalysis as an authority of Western thinking. Deleuze and Guattari are trying to challenge the representative/idealistic model by introducing their ‘new materialist’ perspective (Deleuze, 1995, p.16) in which they abolish metaphors and replace them by matter – pure reality of physics (D&G, 1972/1983, p.283). This reality is kept together by ‘desiring-machines’ functioning on the molecular level as a mutual dependence of desire flows and partial objects. The relation between product of such machines and their functioning as such is undistinguished (D&G, 1972/1983, p.6). It is the molar (organic, social etc.) functionalism which is false as its product and function is dissociated and thus *meaning* (intention, signification, purpose etc.) is generated while molecular ‘desiring-machines’

cannot signify because they are what they do without distinction between the two (D&G, 1972/1983, pp.287-288). The relation between the molar and molecular level is articulated by D&G as productive and repressive:

When we posit in one case an involuntariness of the social and technical machines [molar level], in the other case an unconscious of the desiring-machines [molecular level], it is a question of a necessary relationship between inextricably linked forces. Some of these are elementary forces by means of which the unconscious is produced; the others, resultants reacting on the first, statistical aggregates [molar level] through which the unconscious is represented and already suffers psychic and social repression of its elementary productive forces. (1972/1983, p.283)

Thus, psychoanalysis with its notions of meaning and interpretation is posited as a molar machine which takes molecular flows in ‘hostage’ of heavy large aggregates in order to produce these representations. In relation to this line of thinking, Deleuze and Guattari do not pretend to have *discovered* a true model of the unconscious. They do what the psychoanalysis did without acknowledging it – they *construct* the unconscious. But to rethink the unconscious, the old organization of a subject has to be renegotiated or even dismantled; for this purpose, the notion of the ‘body-without-organs’ is introduced.

Body-without-Organs is a notion borrowed from Artaud’s writings accompanied by citations from Burroughs, Michaux and Miller (all experimentators with altered states). In order to construct the BwO, “what would be required is a pure fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, streaming over the surface of the body”¹⁹ (D&G, 1972/1983, p.8). This body cannot have an image because for that, machines producing this image would be needed and so meaning generating production (of false molar machinery) would be reorganized on

¹⁹ In Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy deprived of the primacy of ‘the human’, body does not refer solely to the human body but it can equally comprise economic, social, artistic, scientific etc. or any other body which should be understood not as a delimited entity but more as a sum of processes with not the stability as a virtue but fluidity. According to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘body-without-organs’ can be produced everywhere.

the body. It doesn't have any organs; organs imply organization and the 'body-without-organs' is outside of productivity, completely useless. The 'body-without-organs' freezes the production for a while and then everything continues. It is close to the state of death but it is very lively: "flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibers, their continuums and conjunctions of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions, have replaced the world of subject" (D&G, 1980/1987, p.162).

Having defined some of the key concepts of Deleuze and Guattari and connections between them, we can see how they are used in Reynolds' perspective on rave culture. According to the Deleuzian and Guattarian logic, this perspective should be seen not only as description, meaning attachment and interpretation but as generative of certain materiality. Thus, by describing the rave in certain particular terms, the culture by itself is modulated and shaped. So contradictory to previous perspective on rave culture as deprived of any meaning, what Reynolds seems to be doing in his works is attaching meanings as to deepen this depthlessness. And not only that – he seems to be strongly connected to the modernist framework via 'classical' psychoanalysis. As an example to this statement, Reynolds prefers to use Bateson's definition for 'plateau' describing the 'body-without-organs' which corresponds in his understanding to the raver's body and he relates this term back to Freudian paradigm of pre-Oedipal sexuality:

Described by Deleuze and Guattari as 'a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end', the body-without-organs is an update of Freud's notion of polymorphous perversity: a diffuse eroticism that's connected to the non-genital, nonorgasmic sensuality of the pre-Oedipal infant. (Reynolds, 1999, p.246)

So once again, Reynolds returns to the Freudian paradigm operating in terms of humanity/non-humanity, maturity/immaturity, sane sexuality/perversity and thus also in the

binary of normality/abnormality and responsibility/irresponsibility. Together with Freudian concepts, Reynolds seems to be borrowing a piece of his authority for making such distinctions and judgments which, in my perspective, lead him away from the humble use of the ‘tool box’ to proud interpretations of an expert. In addition to this, Reynolds’ use of Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts tends to rigidify the ‘open system’ used by D&G (Deleuze, 1995, p.29) into some post-Freudian understanding of their concepts. For example, Reynolds defines the BwO as the “*human* component” of the rave “composed out of all potentials in the *human* nervous system for *pleasure* and sensation without purpose: the *sterile* bliss of *perverse* sexuality, drug experiences, play, dancing, and so forth” [emphasis mine] (1999, p.246). Emphasized words are invocations of Freudian logic – with sterility going even further: if Guattari acknowledges that psychoanalysis liberated desire from procreative ends (Deleuze, 1995, p.16), Reynolds seems to be bringing reproductive ideal of ‘true’ sexuality back on the scene. I suggest that even his use of D&G’s concepts seems to be permeated by the vocabulary immanent from the Phallus as a central and ultimate signifier for his thinking. The impermeable line between humanness and non-humanness which is clearly set in the Freudian paradigm and which is transgressed in Deleuze and Guattari’s work seems to be another problematic point in Reynolds’ grasp of D&G’s concepts. As it will be shown below, by working with Freudian presuppositions when using the ‘tool box’ of D&G, Reynolds at the same time deeply respects and intuitively transgresses this line.

With rave corresponding to the ‘desiring-machine’ defined as “a decentered, nonhierarchical *assemblage of people and technology* characterized by flow-without-goal and expression-without-meaning” [emphasis mine] (Reynolds, 1999, p.246), the rave and the BwO are, according to Reynolds, plugged in the Ecstasy as a primary energy generator. In this context, Ecstasy should be understood as an enhancer which lifts the rigidities calcified in bodies so that particles of desire can freely circulate. Desire thus gets a very concrete shape on

the level of biology – rave desire is dopamine and serotonin which after using MDMA flood the nervous system (Reynolds, 1999, p.83). As to the connection between dancing bodies and technology, it is effectuated on the level of music which greatly participates on altered states inducing. Technology is present as a hard component of sound systems and as a soft component of generated sound – “The music’s emphasis on texture and timbre enhances the drug’s mildly synesthetic effects so that sound seems to caress the listener’s skin. You feel like you’re dancing inside the music; sound becomes a fluid medium in which you’re immersed.” (Reynolds, 1999, p.84) And further on, music is described as a “vehicle, rhythmic engine that takes the dancer on the ride” (1999, p.30) and as “machine-made music that turn[s] you into a machine” (1999, p.28). The dancer is necessarily permeated by amplified sound vibrations; he/she thus connects through the soft component to the hard component of the music becoming a part of the sound system. From this perspective, hard component, soft component and dancing bodies might form a rave assemblage of people and technology as it was stated in Reynolds’ claim above. But Reynolds’ seems not to be talking about the music but about Ecstasy as a primary energy moving (across) the whole people-technology connection. Although the neurotransmitters distribute pleasure even to the most distant parts of the body, they do not transgress the limit of a human body. What is it then that connects bodies and sound machines together in a rave assemblage? In D&G’s logic, the ‘flow-without-goal’ and ‘expression-without-meaning’ must transport certain desire components which are smaller than sound waves of the music and smaller than neurotransmitters – some material particles underlying sound and biochemical components which are communicable to ‘living’ and ‘non-living’ matter. Thus, if Reynolds wants to keep the conceptual logic of ‘desiring-machines’, he has to give up the impermeable line between the human/non-human which is reiterated by the ‘classic’ psychoanalysis.

With the conflation of the formation and functioning that the ‘desiring-machines’ presuppose, the rave assemblage as presented by Reynolds evades any meaning, purpose or intention. Nevertheless, it is plausible to see desire as an intentional product of rave which makes it not a ‘desiring-machine’ but a desire aggregate or a libidinal aggregate extracting a specific sexual energy out of organisms. For D&G, the assemblage of desire is always two-sided with one side facing the strata, organisms, institutions and the other side turned towards the BwO (D&G, 1980/1987, p.157). Thus, one cannot simply argue against Reynolds’ use of the term, it is only possible to suggest that there is the other side of the assemblage. In Reynolds’ point of view, this two-sidedness is superimposed by the utopia/dystopia binary:

At the heart of rave lies a kernel of tautology: raving is about the celebration of celebration. [...]

Trouble is that the machine tends to wear out its human components; drugs are required to bring the nervous system up to speed; the human frame was not built to withstand the attrition of sensations.

(1998, p.86)

Surprisingly, Reynolds seems to ignore D&G’s ‘empty body-without-organs’ – the ‘botched’ BwO of a drug addict. The dismantled organism can either form a ‘full body-without-organs’ of “gaiety, ecstasy and dance” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.150) but also an ‘empty body-without-organs’ of a drug addict, masochist, paranoiac, schizophrenic etc. (D&G, 1980/1987, pp.150-153). This distinction is made according to how these bodies function, what populates them, if they are frozen or permeable in relation to desire flows with desire “defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows or pleasure that fills it” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.154). When constructing a ‘body-without-organs’, certain parts of organism and subjectivity have to be preserved. It is important that the ‘body-without-organs’ “is constructed piece by piece, and the place, conditions, and techniques are irreducible to one another” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.157). If the construction is ‘botched’, the

strict stratification or subjection to large heavy aggregates takes place. Plus, as a result, “monstrous crossbreeds” might appear (D&G, 1980/1987, p.157). At the end of a chapter titled *How do You make Yourself a Body without Organs?*, Deleuze and Guattari pose a question whether it is possible to use drugs in order to produce a ‘body-without-organs’, “to use drugs without using drugs, to get soused on pure water” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.166). One (and never *the* only one) of the answers that Deleuze and Guattari suggest is that drugs can be used for changing “the general conditions of space and time perception” but in this changed dimension, they become already redundant as too unwieldy to grasp the finer particles of perception. This dimension (the ‘plane of consistency’) needs to fabricate its own drugs. (D&G, 1980/1987, p.286) Not taking into consideration Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘botched’ ‘body-without-organs’, Reynolds operates in terms of “dead souls, zombie-eyed, prematurely haggard” clubbers (1998, p.86). Evoking the ‘dark side’ of rave culture, he uses again D&G’s ‘desiring-machines’ stating that “there also comes the inevitable point at which rave’s ‘desiring-machine’ turns ‘fascist’” (Reynolds, 1998, p.86). According to Reynolds, this ‘*inevitable* point’ is related to the libidinal energy circulating – “dangerously overwhelming bliss” or the “jouissance-overdose” (1998, p.87) – must be in Freudian logic followed by the punishment.

In my perspective, Reynolds interprets this ‘punishment’ in relation to experimenting with the line between human/non-human. The idea of “achieving freedom by abandoning subjectivity and self-will” (Reynolds, 1999, p.28) pervasively present in rave culture is related to “the notion of becoming less than human” (Reynolds, 1999, p.29). Raving bodies are described as “*robotnik* vacancy, voodoo delirium, whirling dervishes, zombiedom, marionettes, slaves to the rhythm” [italicized by the author] (Reynolds, 1999, p.29) – all terms referencing to some external power as dictatorship, religion or favorite Freudian trope of

theater. On the one hand, there is the thread of the loss of individuation which, on the other hand, is represented as a redemption:

The body-without-organs also echoes age-old mystical goals: Zen's Uncarved Block, a blissful, inchoate flux preceding individuation and gender; the 'translucent' or 'subtle body', angelic and androgynous, whose resurrection was sought by Gnostics and alchemists. (Reynolds, 1999, p.246)

Again, this distinction between being deprived of agency and giving it up on purpose can be connected to D&G's concepts of empty and full BwO which does not appear in Reynolds' works. To my guess, this might also be because he is constantly trying to reiterate the good/bad distinction which seems to explode in full/empty BwO concept. According to D&G, drug addict, masochist or paranoiac are similar to Taoist monk or to courtly lovers. It is important to add that Deleuze and Guattari are reluctant to working inside the 'great dualism machine' producing notions of good and bad and thus they renounce notions of responsibility/irresponsibility (Deleuze, 1995, p.24). And still, Foucault sees their work (in the *Preface of Anti-Oedipus*) not only in terms of some universal ethics but as "a manual or guide to everyday life" freed from the seeds of fascism (D&G, 1972/1983, p.xiii). Their specific ethics transgress the line of the goodness/evil which is based on notions like meaning, interpretation, authority. The distinction they make (also in the case of full and empty BwOs) is on level of functioning – the 'full BwO' works while the 'empty BwO' doesn't. Particular desire flows thus connect the figure of a Taoist with the drug addict – one achieves to successfully construct himself into the BwO, the other 'botched' his project. Prisoner of good/bad judgments, Reynolds seems to be attempting to elevate the figure of the raver – 'the "epileptic gibbon"' on MDMA (Reynolds, 1999, back cover review) – to the level of positive evaluation by associations with various spiritual movements. But in this way, the gap between spirituality and bodily existence is deepened. To stay in lines with humanist ideals, the raver

has to be represented as a spiritual seeker as well as the warning should be passed: too much passion kills!

Nonetheless, Reynolds seems to be torn between advocating a humanist as well as a post-humanist position. In his reply to ‘there’s no emotion’ opinion on the dance music, he answers: “In fact there *is* an emotion [...], one that seems to emanate from some infra-human domain: the passion of subatomic particles” [italicized by the author] (1999, p.33). Isn’t this ‘passion of subatomic particles’ the desire exchanged between the sound system and ‘human components’ of the rave assemblage? As every raver would surely agree, to perceive this ‘emotion’, one need to be connected or ‘plugged in’, to become a part of the rave assemblage. He/she has to invest the whole body – not just ears to listen – to this vibe. Reynolds suggests that “for the critic this requires a shift of emphasis, so that you no longer ask what the music ‘means’ but how it *works*” (1999, p.9). Nevertheless, it still seems to me that there is a binary continually fabricated and tentatively transgressed by Reynolds’ discourse on rave which posits meaning, nature and normality on one side while functioning, artifice and thus also abnormality on the other side of the binary. It is only in the frame of this dualism that he can say that

Rave music [...] is riddled with Zen-like paradoxes. It’s music of resistance and acquiescence, utopian idealism and nihilistic hedonism. It’s both escape route and dead-end, orgasmotron and panopticon, space and cage. It’s still the best thing we’ve got going in this country. But is it enough? (Reynolds, 1998, p.92)

Doesn’t this sound like asking for the *real* meaning? After describing how rave works, Reynolds still needs something more – something meaningful, it seems. In this point, to my opinion, ‘body-without-organs’ with its static character and possible dead-end in emptiness is

somehow not enough and the concept of ‘becoming’ – as dynamic and progressive to a certain point of view – might get thinking about rave in terms of ‘how it works’ a bit more far.

For further theorizing of rave, the concept of ‘becoming’ thus needs to be introduced:

Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which becoming is the process of desire. This principle of proximity or approximation is entirely particular and reintroduces no analogy whatsoever. [authors’ emphasis] (D&G, 1980/1987, p.272)

‘Becomings’ are not effectuated on the level of the molar by mimicking what one is trying to become but on the molecular level; it is an attempt to approach what one is becoming by molecular similarities, by getting to the proximity of particles that are typical for what one is becoming. For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘becomings’ form certain chain which has its departure point in the male existence and its ‘goal’ in becoming imperceptible. This chain is passing through “becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or –mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becoming-particles” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.272). At the other end of this ‘apparent progression’, there are ‘three virtues’ of “imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality” (D&G, 1980/1987, p.280) which might be understood as forms of existence which cannot be trapped in molar aggregates and thus cannot be turned into organisms from which productive work is extracted. This understanding of the ‘imperceptibility’ might throw some light on Reynolds’ claim based on Moore’s *Anarchy & Ecstasy* saying that “mystical encounter with Chaos [...] is an essential component of any truly vital anarchistic politics” (1999, p.241). Thus, ‘becoming’ can be seen as a way of

escaping the power structures into the state which might be also seen as un-organization/anarchy although D&G would rather see it as a state of non-organization.

For the purposes of my thesis, ‘becoming’ is very relevant because unlike the ‘body-without-organs’, it is a concept which attributes an important place to gender and sexuality. Deleuze and Guattari talk the most about gender²⁰ and sexuality when elaborating the concept of ‘becoming-woman’ (or producing the ‘universal girl’). The body of the girl is seen as a kind of a raw matter from which “opposable organisms” of two ‘sexes’ are fabricated by the ‘great dualism machines’ (D&G, 1980/1987, p.276). It is in the light of the process of fabricating two ‘sexes’ that I understand the claim that “Sexuality, any sexuality, is a becoming-woman, in other words, a girl” as passing under the molar sexuality of masculine/feminine divide and even under the divide of two sexes system to the sexuality of the molecular. In Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding, woman exists on two levels as “a molar entity [...], the woman defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject” (1980/1987, p.275) and on the molecular level, as “a microfemininity”²¹ understood in terms of particles, relations of movement and rest, proximity zones (1980/1987, p.275). With male existence as the most stabile form and thus most occupied by rigidities, every other existence is an evasion from this stability towards less organized existence. Being non-subjectivity, woman is in D&G’s perspective privileged in terms of ‘becomings’. And still, as I was emphasizing in the first chapter, it is male subjectivity which is being articulated with priority (and in many cases even exclusively) in

²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari do not use term gender; they rather speak about sex instead. I decided to use square quotes when reproducing their use of the word sex to indicate that on the one hand, D&G describe fabrication of gender on the bodies of boys and girls but on the other hand, to acknowledge that talking about sex instead of gender might take the line of thinking along the line of fabrication even further: to perceive gender fabrication ‘projected’ on the level of the two sexes system. From this latter point of view, D&G’s use of sex corresponds more to queer theory thinking than to feminist gender orthodoxy.

²¹ While molar woman could be translated into terms of gender and sex, I see the concept of molecular woman or ‘microfemininity’ as much more problematic as it might be seen as translating sex/gender divide on the slightest material level – femininity as a ‘natural’ mode of existence of particles – as well as one might interpret ‘microfemininity’ as legitimizing woman on a level that is not (yet) present on a molar level – and which, as in Irigaray’s project, is only so to say waiting for its time to come.

relation to altered states. When Reynolds expresses one of his E/ecstatic feelings as “‘I feel really effeminate’” (1999, p.247), he reveals the unacknowledged speaking position of a straight male researcher/journalist translating then this position into supposedly neutral theorizing of altered states. Deploying Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘becomings’, Reynolds is positioned on a departure point for all ‘becomings’ – without changing his molar constitution, he testifies a gender change. But changing of gender would not be what Deleuze and Guattari had in mind when speaking about ‘becoming-woman’ as gender (as well as sex, as I argued in footnote 20) is a molar construction which gets fabricated from the body of a ‘universal girl’. Then, in relation to ‘becomings’ ‘effeminacy’ of a (straight) male raver on the MDMA might be seen as an alternation on the level of sexuality which is *not* the sexuality of two sexes system.

In his statements on rave sexuality, Reynolds seems to be juggling with two contradictory perspectives: on the one hand, he speaks about “‘effeminate’ gestures” of (straight) male dancers (1999, p.247) while, on the other hand, he mentions “‘peculiarly asexual love’” (1999, p.243). This contradiction cedes to be contradictory when Reynolds relates sexuality during altered states with ‘polymorphous perversity’ of a narcissistic status saying that “rave locates *jouissance* in pre-pubescent childhood or pre-Oedipal infancy” [italicized by the author] (Reynolds, 1998, p.88). It seems that for him, just like for Freud, every difference from heterosexual male sexuality simply collapses into ego-invested libidinal activity of narcissism. This point leads us again and again back to rethinking narcissism – asexual or ‘whole body’ sexual? Following Freud, we might conclude that ‘polymorphous perversity’ is a sum total of sexuality from which ‘mature’ sexuality of object-libido is distanced by ‘sane’ development of the ego. Non-differentiated libidinal flows of a child might be related to the ‘body-without-organs’, just like Reynolds suggested this link when speaking about the BwO concept as “an update of Freud’s notion of polymorphous

perversity” (1999, p.246). Narcissistic sexuality of a child seems to be more than ‘just’ sexuality (in restricted heteronormative sense of the word), it is the complete relation of the child with the outside world as well as with itself; it is the totality of perception. Just like ‘full body-without-organs’ open to desire flows, the narcissistic infant is conceptualized as indulging in confusion of stimuli or ‘happy love’ (although these stimuli are not always pleasurable). The problem comes, in Reynolds discourse, when he attempts to define what actually is happening with sexuality of a raver in altered states. And this problem seems to spring from the fact that although Reynolds is informed about various concepts (including psychoanalytical), he keeps judging every difference according to a blueprint of hetero-male sexuality. But more than that, Reynolds seems to be falling into the trap of ‘common sense’ judgments that pre-pubescent sexuality is not sexuality at all. From such point of view, “a diffuse eroticism that’s connected to the non-genital, nonorgasmic sensuality” (Reynolds, 1999, p.246) is necessarily seen as asexual while “an uncaused, unlocalisable pleasure-spasm” (Reynolds, 1998, p.89) of a hysterical hypergasmic woman is posited as over-sexual²². I see this contradiction again anchored in Freudian heritage – if only ‘mature’ sexuality attributed mostly to straight males is granted as the ‘sane’ one, this idea is narrowed down to the point that this sexuality becomes the only thinkable sexuality. Every difference – of none or too much sexuality – falls into the difficulty of articulation.

In the light of previous argumentation, we might see ‘becoming-woman’ as a desertion from molar organization of stable ‘mature’ sexuality status (which also participates on defining the privilege of subjectivity). While the same de-organization and de-subjecting might be claimed for the concept of ‘body-without-organs’, it seems to me that ‘becoming-woman’ is more appropriate for taking gender and sexuality into consideration. Once a

²² Theorizing the rave aporia of hyper-sexuality/asexuality, Thomas quotes McRobbie saying that female ravers include in their ultra sexy look accessories of “(pre-sexual) childhood” (2003, p.200). She thus falls into the trap of interpreting rave in terms of superficial attributes instead of looking at how rave works. As I argued earlier (Chapter 1, p.8), the whole rave culture is concentrated around altered states experiencing thus, in my perspective, it is unavoidable to look at its functioning and not its props only.

(straight) male raver experiencing altered states is deprived of the stable sexual identity, it is sexual confusion of asexuality/hyper-sexuality that seems to be taking place. To suggest a possible way out of this aporia, I would return to Deleuze and Guattari's perspective on sexuality envisaged when discussing the concept of 'becomings'. On the molecular level, the masculinity/femininity distinction, the system of two sexes or the bisexuality of both sexes lose any sense. Sexuality is defined as "a[n uncontrollable] diversity of conjugated becomings", as "a production of thousand sexes" (D&G, 1980/1987, p.278). It escapes any 'narrow cells' of organization, it evades large heavy aggregate of the Phallus, it avoids anthropomorphism. It is always original forming 'free multiplicities' (D&G, 1972/1983, p.295) which operate under the 'magic formula' of pluralism = monism (D&G, 1980/1987, p.20). Using this formula suggested by D&G, we might think about asexuality/hyper-sexuality aporia of rave culture in terms of *one sexuality which is multiple*. In other words, sexuality of altered states as experienced during raving can be seen as the sexuality of 'becoming'. It is a sexuality deprived of molar rigidities, of the large heavy aggregate of the Phallus. It is a sexuality of differences, of multiplicities. Its uncontrollability posits this sexuality on the level of finest particles of molecular existence and thus we can speak about its 'imperceptibility'. Being 'imperceptible' makes it ungraspable for heteronormative order so it can be paradoxically proclaimed to be non-existent. To summarize this point, I argue that 'raving sexuality' is multiple; therefore it is one which by virtue of imperceptibility becomes none. From this perspective, Reynolds' confusion about hyper-sexuality and asexuality of the rave corresponds to D&G's concept of 'becomings'.

To deploy another Deleuzian and Guattarian model, the system of two sexes correlates to representative model ($A = A$, because it is not B) while this 'other' sexuality corresponds to the principle of linear conjunctions (schematized as ...and + and + and...) which associates 'multiplicities' (1980/1987, p.25). Representation represses multiplicities and replaces them

by opposing duality. Outside of restrictions of psychoanalysis formulated as regression, sublimation, projection, phantasies, lack, pleasure, signifier etc., ‘new materiality’ functions in terms of positivity, flows, connections, breaks, continuum etc. It tries to get rid of rigidities which organize flows of desire into organism, subject, structure etc. The result of this de-rigidification is de-humanization – no more anthropomorphism: the id becomes it (D&G, 1972/1983, p.1). And desire is not human either – it “does not take as its object persons or things, but the entire surroundings that it traverses” (D&G, 1972/1983, p.292). Here, it is not transcendence but immanence that is a principle. So I suggest that sexuality needed to undergo theoretical dehumanization (as desire) in order to provide a space of theoretical navigation for non-subject positions.

Conclusion

In this thesis I was looking at the use of some key concepts related to psychoanalysis to show that their use does not allow for non-subject positions to participate on theorizing rave culture.

I departed from Freud's perspective on altered states which relegate the individual experiencing them to the dissolution of subjectivity which first needs to be established. Thus, I concluded that it is only male subject which can be theorized in relation to dissolution of subjectivity as female non-subject is deprived of the status of subjectivity. Another Freudian concept which is built on exclusion is narcissism. Discussing rave in terms of intransitivity of libidinal investments involved, heterosexist presuppositions that are already built into Freudian conceptualizing of narcissism are reiterated. Therefore, I was arguing that the 'infantilization' of rave – not as a fear of regression to childhood but as a negation of non-phallic sexuality – seems to be another name for homophobia. This discussion was exemplified on a figure of the jerking raver.

Another trope used in relation to psychoanalytic concepts was the hysterical female mystic. In my rereading of this figure deployed to talk about rave pleasure experiencing, I looked at Irigaray's concept of hysterization and abolishment of female sexuality. A similar aporia of asexuality/hypersexuality was traced down in the literature on rave culture. While Irigaray's concepts stay closely anchored in the female body, in discourses on rave, feminine sexuality is shifted onto male bodies (for example under the name of 'whole body eroticism'). Thus, what seems to be an aporetic feminine (a-)sexuality experienced in altered states might simply be called different/non-phallic sexuality.

To investigate in nature of this different sexuality, I attempted to do a rereading of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts. While the concept of 'body-without-organs' provided us with a possibility to theorize subjectivity dissolution as doing away with rigidities of body,

mind and society, the use of this concept also proved to be double sided ('empty body-without-organs'), moreover it was used in relation to a backlash of Freudian 'polymorphous perversity'. Therefore, I suggested deploying 'becomings' in order to put emphasis on gendered nature of theorizing altered states. Finally, I showed that sexuality needed to be de-humanized for purposes of providing a possibility to include non-subjects in theorizing rave.

Concerning possible contributions to the field, I believe that my work might provide a theoretical meta-level from which empirical research on ravers and rave culture might be initiated. I was trying to draw attention on the use of concepts that might implicitly lead theorizing of rave into the void of exclusion. This is not to hope for new utopian togetherness of the raving 'we' but to suggest that exclusion is far away from being restricted only to the dance floor. I also believe that I managed to challenge Thomas' premature statement about rave as an arena for feminist utopia. Nevertheless, I believe that this work might participate in feminist negotiations on the dance floor as well as off it.

In this project I focused on the psychoanalytic concepts underlying some key works on rave culture. A possible avenue I plan to take in the future is to examine rave as an arena where gender and sexuality get negotiated. This is especially interesting once we take into consideration that rave might be understood as an unofficial (unacknowledged) institution. Thus subculture could also be seen in relation to its prefix *sub* not as hidden from the gaze of institutions but in a certain way as underlying them. Being able to avoid social institutions and break the structure of 'domesticated genealogical forms' (D&G, 1972/1983, p.13) to get to the finest particles of 'desire', I would like to look at rave as a space for the political.

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