

The Battle for the Human.
Gender, heteronormativity, and the attack of the clones

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the ways in which the concept of ‘the human’ is a fiction produced by simultaneous processes of humanization and dehumanization. By engaging in an analysis of three Western novels from the first decade of the twenty-first century that are centered around the image of the clone, I intend to show how these processes of humanization and dehumanization are inflected by the rendition and crystallization of a cultural binary logic of gender upheld by the heterosexual(ized) matrix of social relations. Moreover, I will also be concerned with an exploration of the ways in which the figure of ‘the animal’, as that which has come to represent the absolute non-human, is always summoned as a legitimization of these processes.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Section 1	4
I. Something gender, something sex	4
1. What to do with gender?.....	4
2. What to do with sex?	9
3. The sex, gender, and sexuality conundrum.....	15
4. Gender misdemeanor.....	18
II. Heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and the cradle of life.....	22
1. The siege on heterosexuality.....	22
2. Do it yourself: Heterosexuality kit	24
3. The knight, the princess, and the heteronormative fairytale	27
III. Human identity is gender identity	30
1. Gender and giraffes	30
2. What is human?.....	34
Interlude	38
1. Dreams of clones.....	38
2. Instead of methods	42
Section 2.....	43
I. I'm not exactly a girl. Gender and the dilemma of the human in David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas...	43
II. Sacrificial renderings. Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go and the limits of human identity.....	52
III. The meaningfulness of heterosex. Michel Houellebecq's The Possibility of an Island and the joys of being human	58
Conclusion.....	64
Bibliography.....	65

Introduction

I want to advance, as the starting point of this thesis, an idea that is both an adaptation and an extension of one of Jacques Derrida's insights about the processes of signification and differential meaning production at work in Western cultures. Thus, whereas Derrida argues that "there is no nature, only the effects of nature: denaturalization or naturalization"¹, I wish to argue that there is no human, only the effects of the human: humanization and dehumanization.

In this understanding, the human is not a given and does not have a fixed meaning. It does not denote belonging to a 'natural' category or to a species, it denotes processes of naturalization and speciesization. It does not have an inherent value, it signifies processes of valorization through which the living world is divided into valuable and non-valuable. It does not have rights, it is given rights based on cultural patterns of domination, subordination, and recognition. Consequently, the human becomes a concept whose boundaries are culturally grounded and culturally shifting and whose meaning inexorably depends on the perpetual, vigorous reinforcement of what *lives* outside it.

Therefore, this thesis abides to an interpretation of the human and its derivative, humanness, as signifying a wide range of processes of humanization and dehumanization that produce, consolidate, and reproduce understandings of what is deemed to be recognized as valuable life and what is deemed (or doomed) to be rendered as non-valuable life in Western cultures. These processes are enabled by phenomena stemming from a wide variety of areas of (human) social life so that the human becomes a concept that is gendered, sexualized,

¹ Derrida, J. In Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York & London: Routledge, p. 1

racialized, and inflected by dimensions like class, age, bodily abledness and bodily features, cultural difference, the taxonomization of species, and many others.

While I consider all these dimensions to be extremely important in establishing the meanings of the human on multiple levels, it would be nearly impossible to engage simultaneously with all of them in an effort to expose the ways and the degree to which they are involved in this construction. Consequently, this thesis only aims to explore how processes of humanization and dehumanization are involved with the rendition and constant validation of a binary logic of gender that is rooted in a heterosexual(ized) matrix of social relations, while also pertaining to the ways in which the figure of ‘the animal’ as the absolute non-human is always invoked, sometimes unnoticeably, to legitimize these processes.

In order to accomplish this task, I propose an exploration of the emblematic figure of the clone as portrayed in three Western novels from the first decade of the twenty-first century. In summoning the elusive figure of the clone, I hope that it will help me untangle the ways in which a body that could meet the parameters set by a physiological understanding of the human, and therefore could be appropriated as belonging to the ‘human’ species, is stripped of humanness and of its addendum, the right to live. I argue that the processes that enable and carry out the dehumanization of the clone are tightly related to the absence (or misrecognition) of indicators of gender identity, indicators that are caught up within a heteronormative cultural grid. In this sense, I aim to uncover the ways in which humanness is strictly correlated with heterogender. Moreover, I will try to reveal how, in so far as dehumanization necessarily references a devaluation of those unchallengeably non-human animals, the narrative fate of the clones is necessarily similar to that of the animals in contemporary, Western cultures, and it entails their subjection to an immense apparatus of exploitation and devaluation. Therefore, I argue, the non-humanness of the clone (as that of

‘the animal’) is not an intrinsic given but the result of a process that creates the human/non-human dichotomy and the valorization inherent in it.

The thesis is divided into two sections connected by an interlude. The first section is concerned with a theoretical exploration of the concepts of gender, heterosexuality and human identity and their necessary interconnectedness. Drawing from the writings of influential figures in feminist theory and philosophy, I will try to offer a complex picture of how these concepts have been shaped and problematized during the last few decades. In the centre of this exploration is the belief that the desire for a reconfiguration of the social world on fairer and extensively inclusive grounds is undermined by the ways in which humanness, the most precious of all identities, rests on standards of gender(ed) behavior that are rooted within a heteronormative matrix. The interlude serves to elucidate the concept of the clone and its particularities and to map out the critical tools to be used in the analysis. The second section then proceeds to employ the problematization developed in the theoretical discussion and the critical potential of the concept of the clone to explore the narratives of the three novels, David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, and Michel Houellebecq’s *The Possibility of an Island* in an effort to reveal how processes of humanization and dehumanization work in correlation with gender norms, are bound by dominant heteronormative interpretations of the meaning of life, and rely on the otherization and subordination of ‘the animal’ in Western cultures.

Section 1

I. Something gender, something sex

The first part of Section 1 deals with the complex relationship between notions of sex, gender, and sexuality. After locating the grounding of the sex – gender distinction, I will focus on theories that have tried to overcome sex and gender categories in an effort to subvert the logic of domination seen as inherent within them. I will also approach works that have pursued the deconstruction of sexual difference and exposed the inherent cultural determinations that inform it. I will then look at how different critiques employed notions of sexuality in trying to provide an understanding of the workings of the pervasive structures of gender oppression. Finally, I will discuss the relationship between gender and sexuality as interconnected dimensions of humanness and examine what effects their constitution as separate, even if intertwined, axes of identification has had.

1. What to do with gender?

“Masculinity and femininity are the cultural creations of a society based on gender hierarchy”.¹

The first feminist attempt at decoupling notions of sexual difference from gender roles and (the patterns of domination instated by) gender relations came from Ann Oakley, in her book, *Sex, Gender and Society*, published in 1972. Oakley critically deploys the concept of gender to reveal the historical and cultural specificity of the gendered reality of different (but

¹ Delphy, C. (2002) Rethinking sex and gender. In S. Jackson & S. Scott (Eds.) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. London: Routledge, p. 56

especially capitalist, Western) societies. Looking at the complexities that lie underneath the systematic distinction between women and men, Oakley wishes to instate a demarcation line between its *biological* and *cultural* dimensions. In doing so, she proposes to look at ‘sex’ as the biological term and at ‘gender’ as the psychological and cultural term of that differentiation.² This move enables her to criticize the structures of oppression and subordination that affect women as socially and culturally constituted and not as inevitable effects of biological dispositions.

Despite Oakley’s pioneering efforts, we must see that her work, as important as it was at the time, has helped naturalize a binary logic of sexual difference. When arguing that sex is constant but gender is variable³, Oakley loses sight of the fact that notions of sex (and by extension nature and biology) are not at all free of ‘contamination’ from notions of gender (and culture and sociality). This is why, analyzing Oakley’s work, Wendy Harrison argues that it has led to the constitution of the body, in feminist theory, as an unproblematic site that solidifies the two categories of ‘female’ and ‘male’ upon which the social world inflects its meanings and representations.⁴

However, at around the same time that Oakley was calling for an exploration of the way in which the binary (bio)logic of sex gets appropriated and shaped into a cultural, and therefore reversible, hierarchical social logic of gender, other feminists were carving out projects that would free women (and men) from this inherently oppressive logic.

In her book, *The Dialectic of Sex*, published in 1970, Shulamith Firestone is one of the first theoreticians to make the case for the desirability of the accomplishment of a genderless society. Writing from a radical feminist perspective and standing against the way liberal feminism has articulated their causes, Firestone argues that the ultimate goal of feminism

² Oakley, A. (2005) *The Ann Oakley Reader: Gender, Women and Social Science*, Bristol: The Policy Press, p. 7

³ Oakley, A. (1972) *Sex, Gender, and Society*, London: Temple Smith, p. 16

⁴ Harrison, W. C., & Hood-Williams, J. (2002) *Beyond Sex and Gender*, London: Sage Publications, p. 17

shouldn't be the elimination of male privilege, but that of the sex distinction itself.⁵ Therefore, for her, the goal of the feminist movement will not be reached until "genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally".⁶ Moreover, Firestone argues, rendering such a reality would also lead to the instatement of "an unobstructed pansexuality [...] [that would supersede] hetero/homo/bi-sexuality".⁷ A genderless society would then not do away only with gender oppression and sexism but with hierarchical arrangements of sexual desires and sexual identities and homophobia as well.

It becomes clear that for Firestone there is no chance for a rearticulation of sex in a non-stigmatizing way and that the gender and sexual identity categories are ultimately constituted as oppressive devices that would not have a place in an ideal, liberated society that goes beyond the (hetero)sexualized gratification of men and women's (gender-appropriate) ego needs. For Firestone, the key obstacle that stands in the way of accomplishing such a reality is (hetero)sexual reproduction that works to satisfy men's needs to see their names immortalized and to legitimize women's home-bound lives. Therefore, she suggests that once artificial reproduction will be largely available, it must be channeled to break the tyranny of the heterosexual family unit as the sacred site of reproduction, as the institution of 'authentic desire' for children, and as the cache of oppression for women, homosexuals and bisexuals⁸.

On the one hand, Firestone's argument that gender oppression is rooted in a *biologically founded* imbalance of power that favors men's ego displacements over those of women⁹ has been criticized as problematic in that it comes to be a strong reaffirmation of a biologism. At the same time, radical feminists, such as Adrienne Rich, in *Of Woman Born*, critiqued her for immediately dismissing the experience of biological motherhood without

⁵ Firestone, S. (1970) *The Dialectics of Sex*, New York: Quill, p. 19

⁶ Ibid., p. 19

⁷ Ibid., p. 19

⁸ Ibid., p. 229

⁹ Ibid., p. 18

trying to imagine it in a non-patriarchal system¹⁰. On the other hand, her problematization of the inextricable links between the axes of gender and sexuality and the child-centered ideology of reproduction and her discussion of artificial reproduction and collective ways of child-rearing that bypass kinship relations as the ultimate aspirations for a fair society have also been acknowledged as valuable insights at the time.

However, Firestone was not the only one to challenge the oppression entailed by the gender-sexuality-reproduction nexus and to militate for the dissolution of sex and gender categories at the time. Monique Wittig and Christine Delphy also dealt with very similar issues even if they developed rather different arguments about what needs to be done for such a goal to be accomplished.

In her various essays, Wittig pushed forward the idea that patriarchal oppression institutes sexual difference¹¹ and that the category of sex serves to create and maintain the idea of society as heterosexual.¹² Consequently, in her 1981 essay, *One is Not Born a Woman*, Wittig argued that the division between women and men is artificially naturalized within the logic of hetero-patriarchy and that the categories of woman and man are nothing but the enactment of that logic. According to Wittig, the lesbian, by not being subsumed under that definition, breaks away from the (political) category of *woman* and becomes the site of resistance against patriarchal oppressive structures. Through this refusal, the lesbian rejects the “the economic, ideological, and political power of man”,¹³ and becomes something else, “a not-woman, a not-man”,¹⁴ a non-gendered person that, through her desire, is a symbol of the possibility to overcome the logic of (hetero)sexual(ized) oppression.

¹⁰ Randall, D. (2004) Adrienne’s Rich “Clearing in the Imagination”: Of Woman Born as Literary Criticism. In A. O’Reilly (Ed.) *From Motherhood to Mothering*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 200

¹¹ Wittig, M. (1992) *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 2

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 5

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13

Wittig's insistence that "lesbians are not women"¹⁵ might seem an exercise in essentialism for some, but the way in which the French feminists revealed the overwhelming amount of influence that regulatory regimes of sexuality have in constructing ideas about sexual difference was nevertheless a point of departure for extremely fruitful theorizations later (such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*).

Another feminist theoretician that tried to explode the categories of 'man' and 'woman' was Christine Delphy. Her work revolves around challenging the idea that sex functions as the basis for a culturally constructed gender. While she favors the advances made in terms of revealing the arbitrariness of sex roles and stereotypes¹⁶ through the use of the concept of gender, Delphy criticizes the conceptualization of sex as a fixed container for which gender is a varying content¹⁷ that this kind of problematization upholds. Therefore she signals that the obstinance some feminists show in maintaining the sexual difference and its dividing principle, despite their efforts to abolish the sex/gender hierarchy, is shortsighted.¹⁸ Ultimately, for Delphy, the fact that males and females look different and play different roles in the sexual reproduction of humans should not be in any way considered as necessary grounds for a social division of labor in all fields of their life.¹⁹ This social division (and the hierarchy it entails) is upheld through heterosexual hegemony that requires to differentiate between male and female sexed bodies. Therefore, Delphy argues, sexual difference is the consequence of hetero-patriarchy: "sex itself simply marks a social division; [...] it serves to allow social recognition and identification of those who are dominants and those who are

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 32

¹⁶ Delphy, C. (2002) Rethinking sex and gender. In S. Jackson & S. Scott (Eds.) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. London: Routledge, p. 51

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 52

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 55

¹⁹ Delphy, C. (1984) *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, London: Hutchinson, p. 24-25

dominated”²⁰ and so a dissolution of sexual difference and gender categories would also undermine heterosexuality as the most, and usually only, legitimate form of sexuality.

While these (three) feminist theoreticians were trying to design plans for a world without gender oppression and sex and gender categories, the category of sex was not in itself debated or explored at length and the main concern around it was, ultimately, how to render it irrelevant. In this way some valuable insight might have been lost. Therefore, in the next subsection we will look at the ways in which the category of sex can be (and has been) deconstructed.

2. What to do with sex?

“Over the past 150 years, the most famous scientists of Europe and America have propagated scientific findings about sex and race. Virtually every claim that biological difference explains social inequality has turned out to be bogus. But hope springs eternal. Is it now possible that finally, with *really* new, *really* modern approaches, we can demonstrate the biological basis of sexual or racial inequality?”²¹

Anne Fausto-Sterling has dedicated her academic career to expose the virulent obstinacy of medical and biological discourses in keeping alive the hope of proving that social inequalities and differences between women and men are dictated by biological determinations. Against this tradition, Fausto-Sterling has mobilized an immense array of evidence that reveal the preconceptions and prejudices that inhabit the methodology and practice of studies aiming to uncover the biological foundations of the abilities, behaviors, and

²⁰ Delphy, C. (2002) Rethinking sex and gender. In S. Jackson & S. Scott (Eds.) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. London: Routledge, p. 53

²¹ Fausto-Sterling, A. (1992) *Myths of Gender. Biological Theories about Women and Men*, New York: Basic Books, p. 260

ways of experiencing the world of women and men, as well as the errors of interpretation uninhibitedly present in this type of research.

Her first book, *Myths of Gender*, released in 1985, set out to explore the multiple ways in which *scientific* research that aims to prove the biological conditioning of (modern, Western) gendered reality is fundamentally biased. Fausto-Sterling's mission is to show that social circumstances drastically influence the aspects that scientists consider as having a purely biological origin as well as the lenses which they use to acknowledge and interpret those aspects. She argues that an understanding of biology as the provider of root causes for (gendered) human behaviors is fundamentally flawed and that, while biology may to some extent condition behavior, behavior can in turn alter one's biology.²² Through her careful exposure of the socio-cultural bias that plays into scientific accounts of genes, hormones, brain structure and their perceived connections to sexed embodiments, Fausto-Sterling makes explicit the fact that the biologization (in the name of normalization) of gendered behaviors and gender relations is wrought with ideologically motivated error. While she believes that "there is no such thing as apolitical science"²³ and she claims that she doesn't argue that behavioral research should ignore biology, Fausto-Sterling considers nonetheless that it is vital to "release biology from its sacrosanct status as First Cause"²⁴ and to look at the ways in which biological phenomena and realities are inflected with and shaped by socio-cultural ones.

Her second book, *Sexing the Body*, published in 2000, extends the scope of her previous work into the realm of questioning the very boundary between the scientifically and popularly upheld categories of female and male. Fausto-Sterling's aim is to prove that "a

²² Ibid., p. 8

²³ Ibid., p. 207

²⁴ Ibid., p. 221

body's sex is simply too complex"²⁵ and that conceptions and preconceptions about the gender binary affect the knowledge scientists produce about sexed bodies and sexual difference. In doing that, she deploys the category of intersexuality as a critical reflection on the medically constructed bigendered reality of modern, Western reality and exposes the ways in which practices to 'correct' the genitalia of mixed-sex infants abusively produce (while at the same time rely on) notions of female/male dichotomy. Moreover, Fausto-Sterling sees the issue of intersexuality to be deeply linked not only with notions of sex and gender but also, evidently, with notions of sexuality. Therefore, in so far as the "definitions of homosexuality and heterosexuality were built on a two-sex model of masculinity and femininity", ²⁶ a critique of sex and gender categories may also disrupt notions of stable patterns of sexual desire that produce hierarchically-ordained sexual identities.

Pulling together arguments from multiple areas: feminist theory, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and diverse authors (ranging from Judith Butler through Elizabeth Grosz, to Donna Haraway) Fausto-Sterling sets up a strong ground from which she attacks the deeply ingrained ideas about sexual dimorphism that the modern, Western world has built through surgically erasing the bodies of intersex and hermaphrodite people. Tracing the current medical approach on intersexuality, that virulently advocates and practices the bodily reconfiguration of infants with diverse combinations of genitalia, to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when medicine took over the issue from the hands of lawyers and judges,²⁷ Fausto-Sterling uncovers the ways in which the 'naturalness' of the female/male dichotomy has been constructed and *fixed* through various technologies of surgery. She also exposes the inherent arbitrariness of this framework within which femaleness is that which has the reproductive potential of a female (even if the child also possesses fully functional male

²⁵ Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000) *Sexing the Body*, New York: Basic Books, p. 3

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40

genitalia), while maleness is that which corresponds to socially-constructed expectations about the size of the penis (with a penis smaller than 1.5 centimeters being deemed unfit for a male).²⁸ As can easily be seen, sexuality plays a decisive role in this allocation of gender identities, with the accomplishment of heterosexuality and the elimination of the threat of homosexuality as its primary motivations in opting for surgical alterations of the bodies of mixed-sex infants. It is inside this same framework that ‘masculine women’ and ‘effeminate men’ are abjected as ‘unnatural’ because of their gender inappropriateness and their bodies in which the threat of homosexuality is ‘looming’.

Fausto-Sterling’s exploration leads her to plead for an effort to understand that there is no reason to continue to uphold a framework that is clearly fraught with violence just because our cultural intelligibility is limited to a two-sex system when, if given the chance, mixed-sex bodies would change the rules of cultural intelligibility.²⁹ She insists that it doesn’t make too much sense not to accept variability in sexual identity and expression and to expose so many bodies to real and metaphorical violence in so far as it is evident that “no man or woman fits the universal gender stereotype”.³⁰

Fausto-Sterling’s approach has a tremendous importance for the understanding that this thesis abides to regarding the relation between notions of sex and gender and theories of biological causalities and determinisms. However, one has to wonder about the effects that the stance Fausto-Sterling wants to put forward will have if universally accepted and promoted and if its promise of liberation will prove to meet the expectations. In this sense, I think it is worthwhile to ask if the multiplication of culturally intelligible sexed positions will necessarily bring down the oppressive forces and hierarchies that currently restrict sex and gender to their two tick boxes or if they will enable a different type of hierarchy of one over

²⁸ Ibid., p. 57

²⁹ Ibid., p. 76

³⁰ Ibid., p. 108

all others to be installed in its place. Moreover, when Fausto-Sterling argues that no man or woman fit the universal gender stereotype in an effort to disrupt the notions about the naturalness of the gender binary, the danger that lies within that statement, a danger that has been identified in the work done by queer theorists as well, is that it obscures the fact that some people aspire to those ideal positions and in so doing maintain the normalizing power of these alleged ideals and violently impact the lives of those who don't.

In order to expose the uncertainty that lies behind this type of promise I think it is worthwhile to look at the work of Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Laqueur's analysis is somewhat complementary to Fausto-Sterling's in that it looks at how sex and gender were conceptualized in European traditions of thought, from ancient Greek philosophers to late Renaissance anatomists of the seventeenth century, before the shift that Fausto-Sterling takes as the starting point in her work.

Prior to the medicalization of sex in the eighteenth century, Laqueur argues, the two genders did not correspond to a system that upheld sexual dimorphism but to one in which there is only one sex and "the boundaries between male and female are of degree and not of kind".³¹ Despite the differences that various thinkers employed in writing about women and men – writing that revolved predominantly around the issue of reproduction – Laqueur identifies a common pattern that binds these works together, in which the female (and the female genitalia and reproductive fluids) were seen as inverted and less perfect copies of the male (and the male genitalia and reproductive fluids). This characteristic, according to Laqueur, points to a cultural logic that upholds man as the measure of all things while it does not conceive of woman as an ontologically distinct category.³² Furthermore, Laqueur attributes this type of thinking not to the blindness or ignorance of ancient Greek and

³¹ Laqueur, T. (1990) *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 25

³² *Ibid.*, p. 62

Renaissance thinkers,³³ but to a cultural order in which the male/female dichotomy did not have a reason to exist. Subsequently, Laqueur's mission is to prove that "almost everything one wants to say about sex – however sex is understood – already has in it a claim about gender".³⁴

Therefore, if we are to pay attention to Laqueur and agree that notions of sex are situational,³⁵ in that they both obscure and reveal patterns of gender dominance in different contexts, Fausto-Sterling's proposal to multiply the positions of cultural intelligibility does not necessarily deliver us from being entangled in a logic of hierarchisation. After all, according to Laqueur, the production of the category of female as ontologically distinct from male did not appear until it became politically important for the justification of dominance in a changing context.³⁶

Something that might not appear as obvious both in the works of Fausto-Sterling and Laqueur is how the notion of humanity is presented and intertwined within all the discourses that they analyze and reflect upon. Indeed, Laqueur mentions briefly that woman had to have all the parts as man did in order to be understood as human³⁷ and Fausto-Sterling's critique is ultimately about what kind of sexed body is allowed to be human, but neither of them decides to push the debate forward in this direction in order to attempt to overcome a major conceptual blockage summoned around the notion of *the human*.

In this sense, the next subsection will try to reveal how gender identity is constructed as an indispensable dimension of human identity. We will look at how notions of proper and ideal gender are caught up within regulatory discourses of (hetero)sexuality and entangled with ideas about what it means to be the right kind of human.

³³ Ibid., p. 96

³⁴ Ibid., p. 11

³⁵ Ibid., p. 11

³⁶ Ibid., p. 10

³⁷ Ibid., p. 97

3. The sex, gender, and sexuality conundrum

*“Intelligible genders are those which in some way institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire.”*³⁸

The work of Judith Butler stands out when approaching this move. From her earlier work to more recent times, Butler engages with the complexities that the gender-heterosexuality-humanness axis engenders in modern, Western societies and explodes some of the myths circulating in feminist theory and philosophy in relation to these concepts and the connections between them.

Her first book, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, published in 1990, has been praised as a stepping stone in rethinking gender in terms of sexual practices and in revealing the way desire works as a regulatory regime of power intertwined with ideas about sexuality and with bodily acts and performativity. Criticizing the totalizing tendencies and effects that identity politics, including feminism, have by their desire to create the very subjects that they claim to represent, Butler tries to reveal the coerciveness of this type of politics meant for emancipatory purposes.³⁹ In this sense, she asks whether the very category of woman can function outside of the context provided by the heterosexual matrix⁴⁰ and whether it isn't highly advisable to overcome any ideas about the stability of gender categories and the reifications they bring and devise a new type of feminist politics.

³⁸ Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 17

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5

In doing so, Butler questions the conceptualization of gender as “the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex”⁴¹ and exposes the way in which gender functions as the tool through which the sexes and sexual difference are actually established inside a heterosexual matrix. Therefore, for Butler, the body is always already interpreted through a cultural lens⁴² and the access to its pre-discursive existence can never be unlocked. In this sense, it is culture, not biology, that dictates gender.⁴³

What follows from such an interpretation is that, for Butler, gender functions as a grid of cultural intelligibility for personhood and that one can only reach the status of *person* if they become gendered in line with recognizable and validated standards of gender intelligibility.⁴⁴ Those who fail to correspond to these standards are, obviously, deemed as broken, as failures of a system of logic and coherence of (gendered) human identity. But for Butler, it is precisely these sites of ‘failure’ that provide the possibility to subvert the oppressive grid of intelligibility and expose its regulatory aims and powers.⁴⁵ Disavowing the view that holds heterosexuality as an original which other forms of sexuality copy and replicate, Butler aims to show how the similarities between heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual practices and the ambiguities they generate through the enactment of gender confusion, disrupt the reification of “the disjunctive and asymmetrical binary of masculine/feminine”⁴⁶ that heterosexuality upholds and perpetuates.⁴⁷

In her second book, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, published in 1993, Butler engages further with the sex, gender, and sexuality conundrum while debating more explicitly how the notion of human identity and the processes through which this

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 7

⁴² Ibid., p. 8

⁴³ Ibid., p. 8

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 16

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 17

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 31

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 31

identity is inscribed upon certain bodies are entangled within it. In this sense, Butler posits the process of gendering and the grid of gender relations as “prior to the emergence of the *human*”.⁴⁸ Therefore, according to her, the human is delimited and sustained through the genderizing effects of medical and legal interpellations and naming procedures that meet the infant at birth and continue throughout different intervals of time in *her/his* life as a human being. This is most clearly presented in the way in which the human is constructed through delimitations and erasures that question the very humanness of “those abjected beings that do not appear properly gendered”⁴⁹ by refusing their possibility to occupy a culturally intelligible position. Subsequently, Butler argues, the idea that human subjects are constructed needs to be supplemented with a view of the way in which such a construction also brings about an operation that produces the “more or less *human*, the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable”⁵⁰ as outside zones which permanently haunt and disrupt the boundaries separating them from the humanly acceptable.

The picture is not complete though until the role that heterosexuality plays inside this framework is exposed. For Butler, it is in the name of the heterosexual imperative that the regulatory norms of sex function and that the materialization of the body’s sex is accomplished.⁵¹ Subsequently, gender norms and the embodiments and ideals of femininity and masculinity that they convey and dictate are always connected to the idealization of the heterosexual bond.⁵² Although Butler exposes how gender norms are ultimately never accomplished by forever having to cite themselves in a performative reiteration that can be subverted, they still hold immense power over the creation of subjectivities.

⁴⁸ Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York & London: Routledge, p. 7

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 232

Perhaps two of the most clear examples that reveal the power that gender norms can unleash on the inappropriately gendered, blocking their humanization, are those of the effeminate boy and the transgender person. The next part of this section will deal with the way in which these types of bodies are rendered vulnerable not only through the workings of society at large but also those of their own community.

4. Gender misdemeanor

“It is arguably the case that when the message of gay liberation changed from *All People Are Queer* to *Gay Is as Good as Straight*, the movement lost its revolutionary potential, its moral and redemptive center. It ceded to the very oppressive system it formed to contest the terms of its struggle and allowed the system to dictate the terms of its resistance”.⁵³

In her short essay, *How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick sets out to explore a topic rarely touched upon in gay activism even though it has been the focus of various rather unfavorable psychiatric investigations (following the depathologization of homosexuality in 1973), the *problem* of the effeminate gay boy. According to Sedgwick, in recent times, psychoanalysis and psychiatry have embraced the existence of some gay men, who are deemed healthy if accomplishing two conditions: are grown up and act masculine.⁵⁴ This, Sedgwick argues, is not too far from the gay movement’s own position on the issue seeing that it “has never been quick to attend to issues concerning effeminate boys”.⁵⁵

⁵³ Wilchins, R. A. (1997) *Read My Lips. Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender*. Ithaca & New York: Firebrand Books, p. 69

⁵⁴ Sedgwick, E. K. (1993) *How to Bring Up Your Kids Gay*. In M. Warner (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minneapolis Press, p. 71

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72

Moreover, even adult effeminate gay men occupy a marginal and stigmatized position in the movement.⁵⁶

The main cause of this effeminophobia, according to Sedgwick, is the gay movement's goal to disrupt "a long tradition of viewing gender and sexuality as continuous and collapsible categories".⁵⁷ Instead, the gay activists propose to instate an understanding of desire that allows for women to desire women, as women, and for men to desire men, as men. However, despite the importance of disentangling gender and sexuality and of exposing their complex connections, Sedgwick argues that the main problem that this change brings about is that "while denaturalizing sexual object-choice, it radically renaturalizes gender".⁵⁸ Moreover, as shown by the way in which new psychiatric and psychoanalytic research is done, it allows and leaves untroubled the usage of concepts like Core Gender Identity through which atypical gender identification (i.e. not corresponding to cultural expectations of behavior based on one's genitalia) is pathologized. According to Sedgwick, this leads to the judgment that a proper male core gender identity lets a child explore what it means to be masculine, and therefore, for a male to be human.⁵⁹ Its effect is that it casts people with non-normative gender expressions, out of which one of the most vulnerable is the effeminate boy, as marginalized within the community that is supposed to protect them and with an ambiguous human status.

In a similar fashion, David Valentine explains in his book, *Imagining Transgender: an ethnography of a category*, published in 2007, how mainstream gay and lesbian politics have worked to minimize the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality by diluting or even removing the transgressiveness that the category *gay* might have in terms of subverting

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 72

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 72

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 73

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 75

gender difference, a move that hides class-inflected and racialized patterns of exclusion.⁶⁰ Valentine argues that this is possible only through a conceptual shift which “produces gender and sexuality – and the identities that seem to flow from them – as radically different domains and experiences”.⁶¹ Therefore, in his account, it is the notions of transgender and transgender community that expose the lack of clarity and the unstable boundaries of the gender and sexuality categories. Moreover, a number of other aspects, like age, class, race are vital for Valentine’s understanding of gender and sexuality as these categories don’t “merely inflect or intersect with those experiences we call gender and sexuality but rather shift the very boundaries of what *gender* and *sexuality* can mean in particular contexts”.⁶² Valentine is definitely applying a critique of intersectionality here, by arguing that it is not enough to build categories which summon parts of one’s identity when those categories reflect processes that inflect each other, shift each other’s boundaries and are impossible to summarize as if clear-cut descriptions of who one ‘is’.

But what Valentine’s analysis is most interested in is exposing the issues of power involved in the imagining of certain communities and their memberships and their relation to larger structures of inequality and stratification.⁶³ In his account of three cross-dressing balls addressed to different kinds of populations, based on differentiations of gender-normativity, age, race, class, Valentine identifies how the rejection of the idea of drag as something that has implications for core gender identities happened in white, upper-class backgrounds. The men present at this type of ball insisted that they “remain gay men whatever their particular clothing choice or gender presentation; and moreover, that their *sexuality* as gay men is not

⁶⁰ Valentine, D. (2007) *Imagining Transgender. An ethnography of a category*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 133

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 100

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 103

expressed through drag”.⁶⁴ Therefore, for them, there is a deep abyss separating transgender identification from their identities as gay men, and even more so, the notion of transgender would actually contest their self-proclaimed identity as gay.⁶⁵ This type of argumentation, Valentine notices, has political implications that cannot be ignored and need to be uncovered from a history of the so-called LGBT community in order to prevent further stigmatizations.

In line with Valentine’s analysis, Shane Phelan’s book, *Sexual strangers: gays, lesbians, and dilemmas of citizenship*, published in 2001, explains how transgender and bisexual people have been estranged within lesbian and gay communities in ways startlingly similar to how lesbians and gays appear to be marginalized in heteronormative society and how they are vilified as embarrassments to “normal” homosexuals.⁶⁶ For Phelan, this process of exclusion has political significance for revealing the shortsightedness of identity politics, because groups claim respectability by contrasting themselves with other groups. Therefore, he suggests that “the drive to assert the distinction between gender and sexual orientation is part of a larger campaign to establish the normality of gays and lesbians, a normality which transgender people do not share”.⁶⁷ Gender identity then becomes a means of legitimizing someone’s normality, and the claims lesbians and gays make to normal womanhood or manhood observes that logic.

But, as argued by Butler and others, it is not accidental that it is gender identity that is being summoned here as the provider of access to ‘normal’ humanhood. The next subsection will explore how the binary logic of gender identity is enmeshed deeply within heterosexual hegemonic structures and how the bond they form is surrounded by the highly protective idea of the most precious thing of all, the creation of life and the perpetuation of humanity.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 93

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 97

⁶⁶ Phelan, S., (2001) *Sexual strangers : gays, lesbians, and dilemmas of citizenship*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 116

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 118

II. Heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and the cradle of life.

The second part of Section 1 is dedicated to exploring how heterosexuality and heteronormativity exert their overwhelming influence on the constitution of human subjects in the modern, Western world, especially through the regulatory power of gender norms and ideals. I will start by looking at how the critique of (compulsory) heterosexuality as a transhistorical and transcultural institution became a powerful tool in challenging patterns of gender dominance. Then I will complicate the analysis by showing how heterosexuality was constructed as an atemporal myth linked to the very existence of humanity and how, in fact, its invention is a relatively recent occurrence. I will also look at how heterosexuality and homosexuality are inseparable concepts and at how feasible a disruption of heteronormativity actually is.

1. The siege on heterosexuality

“To acknowledge that for women heterosexuality may not be a preference at all but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force is an immense step to take”.¹

In her famous article, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, published in 1980, Adrienne Rich embarked on a severe critique of heterosexuality as an extremely powerful institution controlling and afflicting the bodies and lives of women everywhere in the world through numerous mechanisms and practices that go unseen or unproblematized.

¹ Rich, A. (1980) *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. *Signs*, 5(4), p. 640

By claiming that heterosexuality should be “recognized and studied as a political institution”,² Rich demands a reconceptualization of gender relations and gender oppression that reveals the ways in which heterosexuality and marriage have been violently constructed as compulsory, and ultimately inevitable,³ for women.

Therefore, the multiple dimensions on which compulsory heterosexuality operates, Rich argues, have kept women inside a system of power relations in which they serve as means to ensure the “male right of physical, economical, and emotional access”.⁴ Rich claims that in order to dethrone this system, women have to rechannel their energies towards other women, even more so than before. For this purpose, she proposes the terms lesbian existence and lesbian continuum, that invoke the historical presence of lesbians and the wide range of woman-identified experiences⁵, as tools to dig up and promote the valuable connections and the intense bonds women have forged with one another throughout history.

However idealistic and generalizing the transhistorical and transcultural dimensions of Rich’s approach might sometimes be, her work had a lot to offer for feminist debates by enabling a critique of compulsory heterosexuality as a cultural, political institution and foregrounding the ways in which women have always resisted the forces oppressing them throughout different time periods and in different places.

But trying to capture the experiences of women *as* women and *with* women as means of forging a way out of the gender-oppressive heterosexual matrix did not really get to develop its potential. Instead, other theoreticians tried to explode the assumption that heterosexuality is an universal, transhistorical concept and reveal the ways in which (Western) ideas of heterosexuality naturalize themselves and help maintain its dominance.

² Ibid., p. 637

³ Ibid., p. 640

⁴ Ibid., p. 647

⁵ Ibid., p. 648

2. Do it yourself: Heterosexuality kit

“What *was* new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence. It was this new development that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherences of homo/heterosexual definition”.⁶

In his article, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, published in 1990, Jonathan Katz tries to break the extremely pervasive myth that heterosexuality is unchanging, an universal, essential and ahistorical condition of human existence.⁷ By pointing to the shift that happened (in an European-American context) in conceptualizing procreation from being the result of achieving correct and proper womanhood and manhood in early Victorian times⁸ to being the result of the sexualization of the bond between the woman and the man, Katz argues that heterosexuality is a modern invention that instates a “particular historical way of perceiving, categorizing, and imagining the social relations of the sexes”.⁹

According to Katz, it is in the nineteenth century, when the pathologization of sexual deviance was appropriated by the medical and psychiatric discourses, that the idea of heterosexuality as the natural, normal, and primordial way of expressing sexual desire and behavior took flight. Therefore, it is because of the great amount of attention paid to the sexual abnormal in the late Victorian era that the sexual normal was required to have a name,

⁶ Sedgwick, E. K. (1985) *Between Men: English literature and male homosocial desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 2

⁷ Katz, J. (1990) *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, *Socialist Review*, 20(1), p. 7

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7

and that name was heterosexuality.¹⁰ According to Katz, this new model of standardized heterosexuality, through its regularization of eroticism, had a two-fold effect: on the one hand, it (re)iterated the oppositeness of woman and man to justify the naturalness of heteroerotic desire;¹¹ on the other hand, it led to the (re)assertion of the link between heterosexuality and procreation under the sign of fecundity.¹²

In his conclusion, Katz advises to refrain from seeing heterosexuality as the original, atemporal, unchanging truth of human sexuality and instead explore the ways in which it designates “a word and concept, a norm and role, an individual and a group identity, a behavior and a feeling, and a peculiar sexual-political institution particular to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries”.¹³

In a similar fashion, Janet Halley develops her argumentation in the article, *The Construction of Heterosexuality*, around the ways in which heterosexuality gets constructed in an elusive manner through legal definitions (that often enough are condemnations) of homosexuality. In this sense, Halley argues that homosexuality and heterosexuality are diacritical because they acquire meaning in relation to each other, even if the privileged one tries (and most of the times succeeds) to hide that fact.¹⁴ Moreover, this relationship happens within the category heterosexual,¹⁵ as heterosexuality takes hold over the power “to define heterosexual and homosexual classes, to know the truth about their inhabitants”.¹⁶ For Halley, this practice of establishing the boundaries exposes the way in which heterosexuality is not the coherent and stable category that it claims to be but rather a construction that relies on the constant (and sometimes arbitrary) rejection of what it is not.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 14

¹¹ Ibid., p. 17

¹² Ibid., p. 20

¹³ Ibid., p. 28

¹⁴ Halley, J. E. (1993) *The Construction of Heterosexuality*. In M. Warner (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minneapolis Press, p. 83

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 83

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 89

One of the most important theoreticians of the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In her two books, *Between Men: English literature and male homosocial desire*, published in 1985, and *Epistemology of the Closet*, published in 1990, Sedgwick brings together a plethora of literary texts in order to challenge the strict distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality and the mystifying dimensions this distinction has brought about. For Sedgwick, the importance of the category *homosexual* in the modern, Western world does not arise from the way in which it describes a community of people that share the same desire, but from the way in which it is used to shape an extremely wide range of male bonds that permeate the social fabric.¹⁷ Moreover, Sedgwick argues that the apparently mutually exclusive definitions of homosexuality and heterosexuality are in a self-contradictory relationship, with heterosexuality both including and excluding homosexuality at the same time.¹⁸ This leads her to affirm that “the historically shifting, and precisely the arbitrary and self-contradictory, nature of the way homosexuality has been defined in relation to the rest of the male homosocial spectrum has been an exceedingly potent and embattled locus of power over the entire range of male bonds, and perhaps especially over those that define themselves, not as homosexual, but as against the homosexual”.¹⁹

By pointing out that the male homosocial desire is at once the most compulsory and the most prohibited of social bonds²⁰, Sedgwick makes a political argument that puts homophobia and the rejection of homosexuality in the center of the edifice of modern, Western societies, as regulating (somewhat arbitrarily) the access to the zone of male entitlement, “in the complex web of male power over the production, reproduction, and

¹⁷ Sedgwick, E. K. (1985) *Between Men: English literature and male homosocial desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 86

¹⁸ Sedgwick, E. K. (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 10

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187

exchange of goods, persons, and meanings”.²¹ This line of thinking leads then to seeing the closet not only as a feature of the lives of gay people²² but as an incredibly significant space through which male homosocial desire is rendered neutral through the workings of the male homosexual panic.

After seeing how heterosexuality came to life as a concept and what incoherences lie within its very definition, it is also important to look at how it maintains its definitive advantage in portraying itself as *the* right way of organizing the social realm. In this sense, I will explore how heterosexuality is imbedded in all accounts of human life and explore the gaps and failures of this process.

3. The knight, the princess, and the heteronormative fairytale

“Heteronormative thinking about society is seldom so cartoonish. Like androcentrism, it clothes itself as goodwill and intelligence”.²³

In the *Introduction* to the volume *Fear of a Queer Planet*, published in 1993, Michael Warner discusses the way in which sexuality has to be(come) a significant critical site (and tool) in Western theory because of the way in which it is involved (most of the times without any kind of recognition) in an incredibly large number of areas and dimensions of Western societies. What stands in the way of the development of this critique is, according to Warner, the way in which heterosexuality posits itself as synonymous to humanity²⁴ and therefore institutes a seemingly uncontested paradigm of naturalness and authenticity for itself.

²¹ Ibid., p. 187

²² Ibid., p. 68

²³ Warner, M. (1993) Introduction. In M. Warner (Ed.), *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, p. xxiii

²⁴ Ibid, p. xxiii

Consequently, for Warner, heteronormativity is the result of the capacity of heterosexual culture to define itself as the primary form of human association, as the basis for gender relations and identity, and the guarantor of the survival of humanity through reproduction. As a result of all these functions, heterosexuality becomes deeply embedded in the most standard accounts of the world²⁵ and provides immense privilege to the people that participate in it while putting the ones who don't at a great disadvantage.

What Warner desires to challenge is precisely the way in which this privilege constructs heterosexuality as desirable, as an alluring, irresistible form of doing sexuality and organizing social life. Therefore, he wishes to contest the idea that queer life, which is non-(hetero)normative life, is undesirable and cannot be thought of as desirable, as a necessary step in redrawing the social realm to an extensively inclusive and more just configuration.

Also challenging the primacy and the uncontested desirability of heterosexuality, Judith Roof argues, in her book *Come As You Are. Sexuality and Narrative*, published in 1996, that the ideology of heterosexuality is engendered and reproduced by the way sexuality and narrative are linked in the narrative traditions of the Western cultural productions.²⁶ In her exploration, Roof is interested in seeing why narrative fails to integrate a lesbian sexuality that escapes the burden of always being something less and how heterosexuality always succeeds in being the ultimate accomplishment and the restoration of order and balance in every situation despite the success of gay liberation in the late twentieth century Western world.

Arguing that the connection between reproduction and heterosexuality does not entail the pervasive myth that heterosexuality necessarily leads to reproduction but rather its opposite, with reproduction producing the normalcy of heterosexuality,²⁷ Roof argues that

²⁵ Ibid., p. xiii

²⁶ Roof, J. (1996) *Come As You Are. Sexuality & Narrative*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. xiv

²⁷ Ibid., p. xxi

narrative and sexuality are “organizing epistemes of a figuratively heterosexual reproductive ideology in twentieth century Western culture”.²⁸ This ultimately leads to the monopoly of heteroideology over the ‘proper’ understanding of the shape and meaning of life.²⁹

In this schema, Roof argues, the presence of homosexuality is only justified by its counterlogical role in so far as “homosexualities can occupy only certain positions or play certain roles metonymically linked to negative values within a reproductive aegis”.³⁰ Moreover, its threat is not limited to the heterosexual bond, but to the whole social edifice, as Roof sees heterosexuality reproduction and capitalist production tightly linked and producing an overarching narrative about the “irresistible merger of family and state, life and livelihood, heterosexual order and profit”.³¹

I argue though, that this whole edifice would not work without the conceptual framework provided by the paradoxical human identity rooted in processes of naturalization, through which heterosexuality and reproduction are portrayed as ‘natural’, and processes of denaturalization, that build the ‘human’ as removed from, and therefore dominant over, the so-called natural realm and its (animal and vegetal) inhabitants. That is why the next subsection will explore the range of meanings built in the interaction between a self-defined humanity and the ones that come to signify its others.

²⁸ Ibid., p. xxvii

²⁹ Ibid., p. xxvii

³⁰ Ibid., p. xxvii

³¹ Ibid., p. xvii

III. Human identity is gender identity

The third part of Section 1 deals with the implication that gender has in the notion of the human. I will look at how animals share similar patterns of oppression and subordination with those with the lesser genitalia or those inappropriately gendered. I will then deconstruct the way in which ‘the animal’ has been discursively articulated and excessively othered in the Western imaginary. Finally, I will explore the point of confluence of all these ideas, the dehumanized body of the ones on the wrong side of gender.

1. Gender and giraffes

“Human superiority is as much a lie as male superiority”.¹

The collection of essays *Animals and Women*, edited by Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan, published in 1995, aims to build bridges between feminist theory and theorizing about animals in an effort to reveal the shared roots of sexism and speciesism as ideologies of domination. For the two editors, all the oppressions present in human societies are interconnected and so feminism, in their view, should be “a transformative philosophy that embraces the amelioration of life on earth for all life-forms, for all natural entities”.²

Drawing attention to how wildlife is culturally conceived and represented in contemporary Western societies as “a pornographic parade of carnivorous violence”³ in spite of the fact that the worlds of animals revolve much more around caring, cooperation and symbiosis and that most animals are not carnivorous, Adams and Donovan argue that these

¹ Dunayer, J. (1995) Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots. In C. Adams & J. Donovan (Eds.) *Animals and Women. Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, Durham & London, p. 23

² Adams, C., & Donovan, J. (1995) Introduction. In C. Adams & J. Donovan (Eds.) *Animals and Women. Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, Durham & London, p. 3

³ Ibid., p. 6

type of representations serve to support and reinscribe male-supremacist ideologies, by legitimizing the so-called *naturalness* of aggressive and violent males and their desire and by encouraging human male behavior that follows these patterns.⁴ Moreover, they observe how different forms of abuse and subordination that affect women are similar to those that affect animals and they call for women to show faithfulness to animals in their historical subordination and objectification as Others.⁵ Ultimately, for Adams and Donovan, a rejection or denial of the importance of the animals' cause by feminists is not only hypocritical, but a profound betrayal of their commitments.⁶

One example of such a problematic theoretization is Judith Lorber's account of gender as a human invention.⁷ While her book, *Paradoxes of Gender*, published in 1994, is a valuable exploration of the arbitrariness and inconsistency of gender norms and gendered behaviors, Lorber uses the idea of 'the animal' as Other to propel her argumentation. To prove that gender is not attached to any biological determinations, Lorber uses a differentiation between human action and animal behavior that posits animals as asocial and physiologically driven in their actions.⁸ While not visibly ill-intentioned, this move exalts humans above animals and portrays the latter as undeniably and utterly different from the former, leaving space for a severe naturalization and biologization of the worlds of animals and a reinforcement of their status as inferior.

However, there are feminists who have successfully combined their critiques of sexism and gender oppression with speciesism and the subordination of animals. In her article, *Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots*, Joan Dunayer reveals how feminist objections to the 'animal' pejoratives used for women (i.e. bitch, cow, butterfly, chick, fox) and to the

⁴ Ibid., p. 6

⁵ Ibid., p. 7

⁶ Ibid., p. 8

⁷ Lorber, J. (1994) *Paradoxes of Gender*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p. 6

⁸ Ibid., p. 15

“pseudogenerics *man* and *mankind*”⁹ have left untouched the speciesist assumptions lying behind them.

Carefully exploring the roots of the usage of these words, Dunayer argues that the only reason why these words are offensive to women is because of the strong underlying disdain towards animals. That’s why, along with offensive ‘animal’ denominations for women we also encounter some that refer to men, i.e. shark, skunk, pig, snake, jackass, worm, weasel.¹⁰ According to Dunayer, these speciesist usages of language are not only ethically wrong but they are also extremely inaccurate and are symptoms of an incurable anthropocentrism. Moreover, Dunayer argues, the very usage of the word ‘animal’ to denote all the other animals that are not human, “falsely removes humans from animalkind”¹¹ and legitimizes its self-proclaimed superiority.

For an in-depth exploration of how that process took place, Jacques Derrida’s book, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, published in 2008, is an insightful source. Derrida devotes a lot of space to the issue of the animals in his ample critique of European philosophy and his restless engagement with the assumptions that have been passed on from thinker to thinker has produced rich texts that bring the issue of the animals and its derivate, animality, to a central spot. For Derrida, that which is called *the animal* stands, in Western culture, for the wholly other, more other than any other.¹² And it is so because it contains the absolute limit of the human, “the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man”.¹³

⁹ Dunayer, J. (1995) Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots. In C. Adams & J. Donovan (Eds.) *Animals and Women. Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, Durham & London, p. 11

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16

¹¹ Ibid., p. 19

¹² Derrida, J. (2008) *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, New York : Fordham University Press, p. 11.

¹³ Ibid., p. 12

According to Derrida, what underlies and motivates this extreme otherization is humanity's need to institute what is proper to *man*¹⁴, to maintain "the relation with itself of a humanity that is above all anxious about, and jealous of, what is proper to it".¹⁵ Subsequently, Derrida argues, *man*, from within *his* celebratory, narcissistic anthropocentrism, "claims in a single stroke his property [...] and his superiority over what is called animal life".¹⁶ And that is, for the French philosopher, "a law of imperturbable logic, both Promethean and Adamic, both Greek and Abrahamic (Judaic, Christian, and Islamic)".¹⁷

We can therefore see that Derrida traces the setting of the boundary between human and animal(s) back to Ancient Greece and the emergence of some of world's most influential religions (surely the most influential for a Western context). Nevertheless, he notices that during the last two centuries the subjection of the animal has taken unprecedented proportions through the development of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of the production of meat, artificial insemination, forced, large-scale reproduction, and the developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic forms of knowledge, all of which understand 'the animal' as something to be used in the name of the well-being of humanity.¹⁸

Furthermore, Derrida severely criticizes the ways in which European philosophy has dealt with the issue of the animals before him, ways that have completely legitimized the type of treatment applied by humans to animals in the contemporary world. Although he disclaims a belief in the existence of some continuity between what calls itself *man* and what *he* [man] calls animal¹⁹, and therefore of any anthropomorphic readings of animal behavior, Derrida virulently points out three crimes that philosophers have committed in what regards animals

¹⁴ I am unsure whether the translator of this text translated the French word 'l'homme' with the English word 'man', or whether it was Derrida's intention or inattention to employ 'man'. But the use of humanity in the same sentence makes me think it is the translator's interpretation that is at fault.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 14

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 20

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 20

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 25

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 30

and what they call animality. The first of them is the refusal to acknowledge that animals might be capable of employing language²⁰. The second is the violent generalization entailed in the notion of animal that creates a confusion between all living (non-vegetal) creatures that are not human.²¹ The final one is the way in which almost all animals are undifferentiated in terms of sexual differences and their sexuality is neutralized, or castrated.²² These assumptions severely affect the way in which animals are seen from humanity's perspective and their status as undifferentiated, unworthy, mute, emotionless creatures in a human-dominated world.

Although this critique enjoys little visibility in almost any context, including the academic one, due to grander structures of power that make the oppression invisible, I argue that its role in helping shape a critique of patterns of dominance is crucial. In the next subsection I will show how even approaches that deal with the investigation of dehumanization processes and try to destabilize the category of human, despite their good intentions and commitment to building bridges towards a fairer world, remain inside the deeply anthropomorphic framework that they wish to combat.

2. What is human?

“Gender [...] figures as a precondition for the production and maintenance of legible humanity”.²³

Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender*, published in 2004, is a complex analysis of the ways in which the category of the human, and therefore the category of subjects that can claim

²⁰ Ibid., p. 32

²¹ Ibid., p. 48

²² Ibid., p. 40

²³ Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*, New York & London: Routledge, p. 11

rights for themselves based on their human identity, is defined and restrained by a multitude of social and cultural norms that filter the legibility of humanness through indicators like sex, gender, and sexuality and the ways in which these indicators are tested, verified, and recognized. By looking at how gender and sexuality norms and patterns of cultural legibility acutely influence one's existence in the (human) world, Butler aims to prove that "recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced".²⁴ In this sense, for Butler, the differential between the human, the less-than-human and the inhuman is produced by socially articulated (albeit changeable) terms²⁵ that create boundaries and stop certain people from accessing the security and the recognition conferred by a viable human life in modern, Western culture.

This, however, is not an arbitrary exercise of power. It is imbedded in the very logic of the construction of the human because "for the human to be human it must relate to what is nonhuman".²⁶ Furthermore, Butler explains how this relationship is paradoxical, with the non-human being outside of the human but continuous with it, the human exceeding itself in the effort to set up its boundaries. What she refers to here is the fact that some human lives do not register and are not recognized as valuable human lives, being dehumanized and exposed to violence.²⁷ In this register, violence is a means of carrying out the message of dehumanization articulated and already working within culture.²⁸ A perfect example for how this process works is the transgendered person who is denied access to a position of cultural legibility and is exposed to violence from those who believe they are in charge of dictating the parameters of human life, be it other people, institutions or knowledge producers. Because of the trespassing of a culturally imposed necessity for coherence between what is perceived as

²⁴ Ibid., p. 2

²⁵ Ibid., p. 2

²⁶ Ibid., p. 12

²⁷ Ibid., p. 25

²⁸ Ibid., p. 25

biological sex and the ‘proper’ gender performance that goes with it, the transgendered body has the potential to restructure at a fundamental level ideas about what counts as human and what norms govern the idea of humanness.²⁹

However, in my reading, in making this a problem centered around the notion of the human body, Butler risks to fall into a deeply anthropomorphic discourse, despite her attempt to disavow such a correlation.³⁰ By differentiating between human life and livable life in an effort to point out the privileges that are offered to those recognized as subscribing to all the norms that bestow humanness to a body, Butler avoids dealing with the question of how the category of human was set up as valuable to begin with. Her implied anthropocentrism is definitely motivated by a political agenda to bring to the foreground the abjected less-than-human, who often enough are transgendered or gays and lesbians, but that does not relieve her approach from the need to deal with the processes through which the valuable human is “produced, reproduced, and deproduced”³¹ not only in correlation to the less-than-human or the inhuman but to its actual absolute other, ‘the animal’.

Therefore, in so far as the human is ultimately endowed with an intrinsic unquestionable value vis-à-vis the animal, exploring the process that constructs the human and the animal as unbridgeable opposites should be a necessary part of any analysis that aims to deconstruct the notion of humanness and expose the gaps and inequities that haunt it. I argue, in line with some of the theoreticians present in this section, that the repeated consolidation of the human/animal dichotomy in the imaginary and the narratives of Western culture is a process that enables and supports a pattern of domination present in other areas of social life as well. The novels that I explore reveal some of the ways in which this transfer works. Therefore, David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* presents us with the dehumanization of those

²⁹ Ibid., p. 28

³⁰ Ibid., p. 17

³¹ Ibid., p. 36

who perform the menial labor in Western, capitalist societies (often enough immigrants), Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* reveals the lens through which those cultures deemed as primitive are portrayed in the Western imaginary (both with disgust and fascination), while Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* deals with the abuses of medicine and the medical sciences.

Consequently, my analysis of the representation of the clone in three literary works of the first decade of the twenty-first century aims to uncover the ways in which the dehumanization of the clone exposes not only the unbreakable link between gender, the heterosexual matrix, and human identity, but also how this process always refers back to topography of the human/animal dichotomy.

Interlude

1. Dreams of clones

The contemporary idea of the human clone¹ that entails the biotechnological success of replicating a human being to its exact characteristics is not a new development in the imaginary of Western cultures. Its roots can be traced back to the Judaeo-Christian myth of origins² that celebrates the creation of a living body in the image of the creator, who is a higher power that ultimately gets to decide over the fate of the one *he* creates. However, the meanings attached to the image of the clone have drastically shifted, so that Adam, Hephaestus's slaves³, Frankenstein⁴, and the clone troopers of the Army of The Republic in the American movie *Star Wars*, do not have much in common even if they share a conceptually similar origin. A major role in this redistribution of meaning is played by the ways in which this old myth of artificial creation has come to interact with other aspects of the societies in which it circulates, with technology and technological fantasies as important dimensions that inflect upon its (re)signification.

It has been argued that it is precisely because its association with (bio)technology and the extension of the scientific reach into the realm of the reproduction of living organisms that the image of the clone has come to signify a symptom of the impending end of humanity in recent times. In this sense, while analyzing the ways in which the idea of the clone is portrayed in contemporary popular culture, Giovanni Maio discovered that it is necessarily

¹ Although a lot of cloning experiments have been done on animals and the cloning of plants is a widespread practice, for the purposes of this thesis we will only look at human cloning. An interesting discussion would surely be produced by the comparison between ideas about human cloning and animal cloning, but this analysis is beyond the scope of my thesis.

² Maio, G. (2006) Cloning in the media and popular culture, EMBO reports, 7(3), p. 242

³ Nussbaum, M. C., & Sunstein, C. R. (1997) Introduction. In M. C. Nussbaum & C. R. Sunstein (Eds.) *Clones and Clones. Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 11

⁴ Ibid., p. 12

linked to some kind of dystopian narrative. While scientific discourse maintains a somewhat neutral approach to cloning, argues Maio, according to the majority of discourses of cultural production, cloning is “frequently related to eugenics, to the loss of human individuality and to blasphemy.”⁵ This happens because the idea of an ‘artificial’ human being, born ‘unnaturally’ through the usage of ‘scientific’ techniques, results in the interpretation of the clone as a soul-less being, a lesser human, and a dangerous blasphemy.⁶

However, it seems that the idea of the clone (in its different variations) and its interpretations are invested in more than the relationship humanity has with its technologies. I argue that the dehumanization that happens around the image of the clone is determined to a great extent by the fact that it occupies a space where norms and idea(l)s about (hetero)sexuality, gender, and the notion of humanness, and the allegedly unbreakable links between all of these are fundamentally challenged. Escaping the logic of the dominant (heterosexual) reproductive narrative, cast outside traditional kinship relationships and the nuclear family, exempted from the necessity to practice gendered behaviors and to operate within dominant patterns of gender relations in order to survive, and released from the ‘responsibility’ of reproducing the human species, the clones challenge, by their very presence, the social fabric and organization of Western societies centered around (natural, healthy, heterosexual) procreation and the concomitant preservation of the population (which often enough is articulated in purely ethno-national terms). Consequently, such disruptive symbolic power implicates the idea of the clone associated with the potential loss of one foundational assumption of modern, Western, human societies, the heterosexual nuclear family and its hold on the reproduction of the species and the meaning of (human) life. Therefore, it becomes easy to see that, as Judith Butler argues, views that celebrate

⁵ Ibid., p. 245

⁶ Ibid., p. 243

reproduction as necessarily following from heterosexual parental coitus⁷ will necessarily lead to a condemnation “of forms of nonheterosexual unions, reproductive technology, and parenting outside of nuclear heterosexual marriage as damaging for the child, threatening to culture, destructive of the human”.⁸

Some of these views belong even to feminist theoreticians, who have criticized at length the developing field of biotechnology as potentially leading to the dystopian resurgence of fascism (Franklin and McKinnon),⁹ as sabotaging the feminist cause by leaving women without the most important leverage (the bearing of children) against the domination of men (Dworkin),¹⁰ or as a threat to erase the primacy of sexual difference (French feminist psychoanalysts).¹¹ Other feminist theoreticians have argued the exact opposite, suggesting that “the development of these technologies will reinvigorate the feminist utopian idea of women reproducing without men”¹² and that they will separate reproduction from sex and allow queer people to have their own families.¹³

But all these debates articulate only partially the problem that the Western imaginary has with cloning. Deeper than the threat of uncontrollable technology and the normalcy of heterosexual reproduction, lies another Western sensitivity that cloning uncovers, the question of identity. Therefore, through its very existence, the clone may apply a direct attack on the notion of identity. Consequently, it becomes encircled by a dystopian aura of death. In so far as the clone exposes the notion of self-same (‘idem’) identity as a fiction, as a (given) ‘reality’ that comes to be imploded, it runs against the very core of an identitarian society. I argue this is another reason why the conceptualization of the clone becomes a menace to the very

⁷ Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*, New York & London: Routledge, p. 14

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125

¹⁰ Dworkin, A. (1997) Sasha. In M. C. Nussbaum & C. R. Sunstein (Eds.) *Clones and Clones. Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 76

¹¹ Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*, New York & London: Routledge, p. 11

¹² Eskridge, W. N. Jr., Stein, E. (1997) Queer Clones. In M. C. Nussbaum & C. R. Sunstein (Eds.) *Clones and Clones. Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 97

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 110

structure of the social fabric. Of course, clones have actually always existed, in the form of monozygotic twins,¹⁴ but the disruptive potential of this ‘natural’ occurrence has always been neutralized by the social structures of kinship through which children acquire separate identities. The ‘unnatural’ clones however do not enjoy this cultural safety net so they cannot be redeemed and rescued from their dystopian fate.

For a better understanding of the uniqueness of the (artificial) clone’s position, Jackie Stacey’s article, *Screening the Gene. Hollywood Cinema and the Genetic Imaginary*, published in 2008, proves to be very useful. In this article, Stacey explores the ways in which the issue of the clone is interrelated with notions of identity, biotechnology and reproductive anxieties. According to her, debates around cloning and clones articulate anxieties about the “technological threat to human authenticity and individuality”¹⁵ and “disturb the conventional teleologies of gender, heterosexuality, and reproduction”.¹⁶ Moreover, the image of the clone is deeply imbedded in a “dialogics of identity” that refers to the ways in which identities are not simply embodied or constituted but are always relational to the readings done by others.¹⁷ Therefore, in so far as Stacey argues that identity “is a process rather than a product”,¹⁸ the clone exposes identity as a problem within the dominant logic of articulation.

Of course, these two dimensions cannot be separated, as this analysis of the three novels will show. In all of them notions of gender, sexuality, and humanness are deeply invested and acutely rely on ideas about what identity is, or rather how identity is conceptualized, with all of these dimensions of identity reinforcing each other as they filter through the meanings and significations available for their subjects.

¹⁴ Dawkins, R. (1997) What’s Wrong with Cloning? In M. C. Nussbaum & C. R. Sunstein (Eds.) *Clones and Clones. Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 56

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 96

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 96

¹⁷ Stacey, J. (2008) *Screening the Gene. Hollywood Cinema and the Genetic Imaginary*. In A. Smelik & N. Lykke (Eds.) *Bits of Life. Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, p. 95

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 95

2. Instead of methods

This thesis employs the deconstructivist approach, introduced by Jacques Derrida¹⁹, in order to expose the ways in which the meanings of the notion of the human are inflected by and shift under its correlations with notions of gender and heteronormativity. Even if deconstruction is not a method,²⁰ as it does not entail a set of rules or steps to be followed, its critical potential for the purposes of this thesis is extremely powerful in so far as, as Diane Fuss argues, “deconstruction dislocates the understanding of identity as self-presence and offers, instead, a view of identity as difference”.²¹ Moreover, as Fuss suggests, “to the extent that identity always contains the specter of non-identity within it, the subject is always divided and identity is always purchased at the price of the exclusion of the Other, the repression or repudiation of non-identity”.²²

While some feminist thinkers have argued that deconstruction cannot be a feminist tool because it only produces ambivalences that run against feminist goals, the position held by this thesis is similar to that of Elizabeth Grosz who argues that Derrida’s work is not nonpolitical or apolitical, but that it aims to rethink the ways in which politics and theory are carried out in a complex world in which clear-cut divisions are no longer efficient or desirable.²³

¹⁹ Derrida, J. (1976) *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press

²⁰ Derrida, J. (1988) Letter to A Japanese Friend. In D. Wood & R. Bernasconi (Eds.) *Derrida and Différance*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. 3

²¹ Fuss, D. (1989) *Essentially speaking: feminism, nature & difference*, New York: Routledge, p. 102-103

²² *Ibid.*, p. 102-103

²³ Grosz, E. (1997) *Ontology and Equivocation. Derrida’s Politics of Sexual Difference*. In N. J. Holland (Ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 95

Section 2

I. I'm not exactly a girl. Gender and the dilemma of the human in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is a novel that explores a wide range of themes, from the imperialist explorations of the seventeenth century, to the decadence of early twentieth century aristocracy, to the threat of Cold War nuclear conspiracies, to the surrealism of contemporary elderly care institutions, to dystopian projections of science-and-technology-driven societies, and to the post-apocalyptic re-organization of human life and the encounters between civilizations. All these themes are connected to the larger trope of modernity but, even more so, to the unceasing debate around the identity of the modern subject. Be it race and ethnicity (The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing), class and sexuality (Letters from Zedelghem), gender (Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery), age (The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish), bodies and genetics (An Orison of Sonmi~451), or cultural surroundings (Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After), *Cloud Atlas* seems to be deeply entrenched in an exploration of human identity and its construction through the reinforcement of difference and similitude, throughout the course (past, present and future) of humanity's modern life.

For the purposes of this thesis I will look at the fifth section of the novel, *An Orison of Sonmi~451*, in order to disentangle the multiple connections that Mitchell is drawing, through the life narrative of fabricant clone Sonmi~451, between the notions of identity, humanness, gender, and heterosexuality.

In writing *An Orison of Sonmi~451* Mitchell draws from the genre of dystopian speculative fiction. As many other works written in this register, *An Orison of Sonmi~451* is in a dialogue with multiple discourses of modernity. The most important of these are probably

discourses about capitalism's alleged potential to lead humanity to a world of affluence, a world without poverty, a world of meritocracy. Commodification, markets, corporations, globalization, privatization, deregulation and their effects are discussed at large in dystopian narratives, simultaneously with their critiques. Other discourses that are usually present in dystopian fantasies, and that Mitchell is in dialogue with as well, are environmentalist discourses regarding the continuous degradation of the Earth and its sustainability, Marxist rhetoric about the exploitation of the working-class, of immigrants and of non-Western regions of the World, democratization theories that predict the unstoppable march of democracy as the most desirable form of government, discourses of science, its *divine* potential and its extending reach towards every single aspect of human life, and discourses of biologism, cognitivism and geneticism.

Of course, the dystopian impulse has strong connections with postmodernism and its project of dissolving modernity's grand narratives. But one of its sources may also be found in one of the first anti-utopias, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a work that exposes its author's conviction that "the whole of modern western development has been a steady descent into nightmare".¹ Huxley's main discontent with modernity's narratives lies in the acclamation of Science and Reason, the twin components of all progressive and utopian conceptions,² as the tools to deliver humanity from its unsatisfactory condition. On the contrary, for Huxley, the two have only succeeded in perpetuating and deepening humanity's misfortunes.

In this dystopian context, it may not be apparent at first that gender identity and its intricate relationship with human identity play a big role in Mitchell's depiction of the futuristic world of Nae So Corpus. However, a closer exploration reveals how this

¹ Kumar, K. (1987) *Utopia & Anti-Utopia*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 242

² *Ibid.*, p. 243

relationship is a decisive part of the narrative by exposing the ways in which dehumanization works against the background of this dystopian, consumerist, totalitarian society.

I will start the analysis with a discussion of human reproduction. From the very beginning of the section, we are presented with a distinction that gives contour to the whole narrative, the distinction between fabricants (or replicants) and purebloods³. Fabricants (or replicants) are clones bred in massive wombtanks, who are used by the corpocracy⁴ (Nae So Corpus represents a vision of the state that replaced modern political leadership as we know it with economic, corpocratic leadership) to do the menial labor in society, only to be killed after twelve years of nineteen-hours work-days. Purebloods are humans conceived in the ‘traditional’, mommy and daddy, heterosexual fashion, although a lot of genetic intervention is present in this case as well. Therefore, in Mitchell’s world, the radical feminist claims, proposed by Shulamith Firestone, that reproduction is at the root of patriarchal oppression do not hold. Mitchell’s *An Orison of Sonmi~451* dictates a completely different interpretation of this idea and, in his view, artificial reproduction would just help construct a severely controlled gender binary, that affirms, ever more strongly, the *naturalness* of the notions of male and female and its *natural* derivation into man and woman categories.

Moreover, Mitchell’s representation of the human/clone differentiation and of the ways in which reproduction is carried out in this world exposes a number of assumptions about human life and human identity present in contemporary, Western scientific discourses. The most pervasive one is the belief that genetics is the fundamental denominator of human life and identity, even if it is unclear whether Mitchell is engaged in a critique of this discourse. A second assumption is the deterministic view that the human body is entirely manipulable, through scientific means, with its conception being the key event to the rest of its development, including the acquiring of the biological sex (with the male option being

³ Mitchell, D. (2004), *Cloud Atlas*, London: Sceptre, p. 187

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193

more expensive in Nae So Corpus). This belief reifies notions of sexual dimorphism, that have been criticized by feminist thinkers like Anne Fausto Sterling, and exposes the dangers entailed in a biologization of cultural parameters and social divisions.

Another range of assumptions about human reproduction are the ones concerned with sexuality. *An Orison of Sonmi~451* does not contain any non-heteronormative characters and while it would be easy to justify this by blaming it on Mitchell's bias towards queer life, his credentials from the previous chapters of the book tend to suggest otherwise. What seems more plausible is an underlying assumption that somewhere during the rise of genetics as the most influential dimension of human life and identity, the 'gay gene' was finally *found*, alongside with the 'trans gene' and the 'intersex gene' and any other 'queer gene', and they were eliminated as unproductive accidents of nature that do not have place in a highly rationalized world. Therefore, the message that seems to emerge from this is that a world of perfect calculation and genetic manipulation, where people can choose the characteristics of their children, celebrates the desirability of heterosexuality and of the socially-constructed gender binary and gender ideals it upholds.

But Mitchell provides us with reasons to think that this severe biologization and naturalization of human life only serves to hide from the inhabitants of Nae So Corpus the fact that they live in a totalitarian society that does not allow for transgression. In this sense, there is a great tension that resurfaces at times and exposes the deceptiveness of the scientific discourse at work. The most important moment of this exposure is the process through which Sonmi~451, a clone genetically designed, like all other clones, to be a dumb fabricant⁵, becomes a highly intelligent, knowledge absorbing *human being*. Her story (which could have been every other clone's story) breaks down all the myths of her society and exposes the danger in giving unquestioned truth value to the discourses of biology and genetics.

⁵ Ibid., p. 240

In order to understand Sonmi~451's transformation we need to explore the background on which *her* story unfolds. The world of *An Orison of Sonmi~451* is built through the exaggeration of the capitalist, corporatist fantasy in which efficiency is the most sacred value. This world is an extremely hierarchical one, with numerous strata, even though it allows for the possibility for people to rise upstrata or sink downstrata.⁶ That possibility is, however, denied to the fabricants, who are meant to serve for twelve years in menial jobs before they are transported to the paradise island of Hawaii. This, in a truly dystopian fashion, is a void promise and the fabricants end up being murdered and liquefied in order to provide the needed nutrition to raise the new generation of clones. All in the name of efficiency. We are therefore presented with a world in which rest is time theft⁷, the week has ten days⁸, the dollar has become the symbol everyone prays to⁹, the most important people in society are the Logomen and brand names have become nominal nouns: sonys, marlboros, nikes, starbucks, disneys, fords, etc. Within it, we see notions of identity and humanity get reconfigured to conform to the exigency of production and consumerism.

But what interests us the most is that Nae So Corpus is a very patriarchal society, led by the Logomen and the Boardmen, in which women are relegated to taking care of the children, are excluded from positions of power and from decision making, and are genomed for sex-appeal.¹⁰ Furthermore, these roles are also entangled with heteronormative expectations in so far as we are told that "no Boardman was ever a divorcee".¹¹ Moreover, we see how gender norms and ideals articulate notions of sexual difference in so far as female sexed fabricants are used to provide customer service, while male sexed fabricants are used as

⁶ Ibid., p. 192

⁷ Ibid., p. 188

⁸ Ibid., p. 192

⁹ Ibid., p. 196

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 350

¹¹ Ibid., p. 185

militiamen and disastermen, a distinction that maintains a symbolic association between femaleness and caring and maleness and warfare.

But sexual difference in *An Orison of Sonmi~451* is not only a device to create a matrix for the division of labor in a dystopian, capitalist society. It is also intricately connected with the very notion of humanness. Although the fabricants are presented as female sexed or male sexed (there is only one male-sexed fabricant present in the story), I argue that this fact remains unknown and inaccessible to them. Moreover, the purebloods do not recognize it either, and in their refusal gender identity and human identity become irrevocably linked. There are several mechanisms through which Mitchell points out that this is happening.

The first dimension that we're going to examine is naming and identity. Throughout the text, fabricants are referred to by employing the objectifying pronoun 'it' despite their "carefully designed"¹² male or female sexed bodies, bodies that implicitly carry (especially in a strictly regulated world like this) an association with gender. This nomination thus denies them, at the same time, their status as human beings but also the possibility to be gendered persons. Moreover, the word fabricant in itself resonates the implications brought by a culture of commodification, where human bodies become merchandise, produced, sold and replaced when malfunctioning. In order for that to be possible though, these bodies must be stripped of their humanness, to protect the 'conscience' of those abusing them. And gender is stripped away from them at the same time with humanness.

The fact that the fabricants bear a numerical name attached to the name of their 'production series' (i.e. Sonmi~451, Yoona~939, Wing~027) further contributes to the process of ungendering as it does not correspond to the deeply entrenched cultural logic of our societies that names carry gender within them.

¹² Ibid., p. 215

A key to this debate is also to be found in the word *replicant*, that is used alternatively with *fabricant*. The word *replicant* points to the perceived interchangeability of the identities of the clones, made possible because of their identical features. This is eloquently portrayed by Mitchell in an episode where, after the murdering of one of the clones, the Seer of the establishment casually replaces the number on the collar of another clone with the number of the deceased one in order to have the journalists take pictures of her.

Speech also plays a big part in the denial of humanness and genderedness to the fabricants' bodies. We are repeatedly told that clones are not allowed to talk without cause¹³, which underlines an instrumentalization of language that prevents identity formation, and that clones are fed amnesiacs in order to forget the words they learn but are unnecessary to their communication with the customers. By denying speech as a means of accomplishing identity, the establishment puts a final mark on (dehumanization of the) the body of the clone that reads: non-human humanoid specimen.

All the themes brought in the discussion above strike a formidable resemblance to the way animals are being thought of and behaved towards in our societies. It is unclear what Mitchell's agenda is, but it seems that his text is in dialogue with discourses about animals' identity and welfare. From the 'it' pronoun, to the numerical tagging, to the genetic manipulation, to the perceived interchangeability, to the denial of speech, and to the slaughterhouse, clones seem to have a remarkably similar fate to animals. This highlights the points that Jacques Derrida has made regarding the status of animals and the human/animal dichotomy in Western societies.

The second dimension refers to the intertwined relationship between heterosexuality, genderedness and humanness. Mitchell's artistry comes into focus at this point as the whole section proves to be centered around the transformation of Sonmi-451 from a fabricant to a

¹³ Ibid., p. 191

pureblood, and to a woman. The very framing of the account in the form of an interview, of a life narrative, stands as enough evidence that there is an identity to be illuminated in this process. I will point out a few key moments that make this process clear.

The first moment is an interaction between a pureblood woman and her child. When the mother explains to the child how fabricants are grown in the same wombtank, like radishes¹⁴, the child asks about who takes care of fabricants' babies if they are at work all day. This moment of recognition of the human potential of the fabricants in a child's vision, albeit linked to the capacity of bearing a child of the female-sexed body and denied by the woman's reply that fabricants don't have babies because they don't want them, is the first breach into the heavy fabric constructed around the non-humanness of clones.

The second moment comes when Sonmi~451, recently escaped from Papa Song's, is starting to perform her non-humanness to her host, in order to avoid being caught gathering knowledge at an incredible speed. The act of consciously performing her non-humanness implies that Sonmi~451 becomes aware of the dangers her conduct might expose her to. The demarcation line between fabricant and pureblood is therefore completely destabilized.

The third moment is actually a sequence of events that lead to Sonmi~451 becoming a human, and a woman. First, Sonmi~451 is asked, while attending lectures at the University, if she has a boyfriend. The question is completely dependent on the setting and we can see how the intertwining of humanness, heterosexuality, and gender resurfaces one more. But Sonmi~451's reticence, comprised in her statements, "I was not a classmate and not xactly a girl"¹⁵ and "fabricants don't have boyfriends"¹⁶, are perpetuating the confusion. The second event in the sequence is Sonmi~451's interaction with a fabricant in a restaurant and the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 192

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 235

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 238

fabricants assumption that she was a pureblood. Through the question “Yes, madam?”¹⁷ and Sonmi~451’s startled reaction, the implosion of the fabricant/pureblood dichotomy is exposed as inextricably linked to gender identity. But it is the third event that allows for Sonmi~451’s ascension to humanness and gender identity. Working from within a heteronormative paradigm, it is the sexual act between Sonmi~451 and Hae-Joo, following the witnessing of the slaughter of her fellow clones on board of a ship, that delivers her from the zone of non-gendered human. The passage that describes it, coincides with the first identification of Sonmi~451 as a woman: “because of the horror, we mumbled the memory of the slaughterhsip, the way a woman and a man may”.¹⁸ Moreover, its juxtaposition with the killing of the other ‘mindless’ clones reifies once more the valuable/non-valuable, life/death markers that supplement the human/non-human dichotomy.

Therefore, as argued throughout the theories in the first section of this thesis, and especially in the work of Judith Butler, we see how gender becomes the marker of the fulfillment of the heteronormative prophecy. Moreover, gender and humanness become interlinked and inseparable, with gender functioning as an indispensable principle of human identity, one that accomplishes itself only through the disavowal of the non-human and, by extension, ‘the animal’, who is condemned to death.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 240

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 362

II. Sacrificial renderings. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and the limits of human identity

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* stands out among the three novels analyzed in this thesis by presenting the dystopian dimensions of its world in a very nuanced, strangely imperceptible way. It is also the one in which the differences between what is deemed as clone and what is deemed as truly human are apparently the most minimal, despite the immense edifices of signification that suppress any attempt of bridging the two concepts. These peculiarities are funneled by the way in which Ishiguro constructs the narrative by slowly revealing the horrifying dimensions of what he's describing while trying to keep it as normalized and contained as possible. Because of this, the gravity of the text is reinforced and the exposure of the subtle ways in which what counts as human in contemporary, Western societies is constructed and kept under guard by people, institutions, and discourse is ultimately more enduring.

The narrative of *Never Let Me Go* centers around the destiny of three clones, Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, and follows them as they live through their upbringing in the boarding-school environment of Hailsham, the period of their fabricated independence at the Cottages, and the fulfillment of their 'life-mission' in the donation centers where they work as carers until they get to serve as organ providers for the 'normal' people. The problematization of their human identity is gradually gaining pace as we shift through these time periods and as we draw closer to the moments when they have to give up their vital organs, and therefore their life, for the benefit of the world that created them solely for this purpose.

As in the other two novels, the lives of the clones in *Never Let Me Go* and the ways in which they are appropriated in society unfold the complex ways in which the definition of the

human is intertwined with notions of gender and the parameters of the heterosexual matrix, while also revealing how processes of dehumanization are necessarily articulated with processes reminiscent of the ways in which ‘the animal’ is conceptualized and acted upon as a non-valuable entity in modern, Western cultures.

From the start of the novel we slowly start to understand that there is an insurmountable difference between the clones and the ‘normal’ humans. Visible in the way in which they are addressed to (students, donors or creatures), behaved towards (people shudder at the very thought of them¹⁹) and ultimately conceived for (the donation of organs for the ‘normal’ population) the dehumanization of the clones is a process that continues to be exposed throughout the novel. Moreover, there are striking resemblances between the situation of the clones and that of animals in contemporary, Western societies. Raised and guarded in contained spaces with no ability to decide their own fate (in ways similar to the fate of animals in industrial farms, zoos, and research laboratories), transferred when mature to a place where parts of their bodies are removed from them in a process that ultimately kills them (in ways similar to the slaughterhouse and the recent development of the fur farms), feared and rejected (“in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders”²⁰), sterilized to remove unwanted complications and reproduced under the strict supervision of humans (in ways similar to the control humans exert on the reproduction of captive animals that goes as far as intrusive artificial insemination), and told that they are less than human²¹ and that therefore their lives don’t count (in ways similar to the ways animals are prevalently conceived in Western culture) the clones of *Never Let Me Go* are rendered inhuman and therefore sacrificeable. However, I argue that this process is complexly intertwined with

¹⁹ Ishiguro, K. (2005) *Never Let Me Go*, Croydon: Faber and Faber, p. 36

²⁰ Ibid., p. 35

²¹ Ibid., p. 258

notions of gender and (hetero)sexuality, as notions of humanness necessarily involve the acquisition of a gendered identity inflected by heteronormative exigencies.

Consequently, the clone society in *Never Let Me Go* is a society barely touched by gender norms and gender particularities are not inflected on the behavior or the relations and interactions between its protagonists. Although minimal notions of sexual difference exist and are functional (through the use of the concepts of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ but never those of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, as these indicate a clear connection to a mature, heteronormative, reproductive humanness the clones are not supposed to access), the characters are not apparently differentiated based on them. As children, young adults, carers or donors, the life patterns of the clones are identical, irrespective of sexual difference. This homogeneity of status enables boys and girls alike to explore, within the severely confined limits of their situation, who they want to be. In this sense, Ishiguro’s portrayal of the clone society of Hailsham as one in which sexual difference is apparently irrelevant reflects feminist arguments about the arbitrariness of gender norms and roles. However, the dystopian dimension of the narrative suppresses the liberating potential of this association and reveals instead how the lack of gender is an indicator of the lack of humanness imprinted on the body of the clones.

Moreover, if analyzed from the perspectives offered by Judith Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling, the interpretation appears to grow more complex. If cultural notions of gender are seen as inevitably articulating notions of sexual difference, then we can see how the usage of the notions of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ to define the clones are not results of a simple recognition of some ‘natural’ parameters of sexual difference. In this sense, I wish to argue that, because the inevitable life course of the clones will lead them to being released in the ‘normal’ society, where sex and gender are dimensions of great importance, the notions of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ serve as signifiers of the heterosexual matrix that the clones have to be aware of so that they manage their sexuality properly once they get to interact with the ‘normal’

people. This is clearly portrayed in the ways in which the guardians reinforce the fact that clones needed “to be extremely careful about having sex in the outside world [...] because out there sex means all sorts of things”²² and people are fighting and killing each other over who had sex with whom because of the fact that sex resulted in babies.²³ Therefore, while never granted the access to proper gender categories, and therefore to humanness, the clones must not behave in ways that would breach the rules of the (heteronormative) society of ‘normal’ humans.

It is unsurprising then that, despite the fact that the guardians encourage the clones to have sex based on the physical needs of their bodies²⁴ and on the idea that “sex is a beautiful thing”,²⁵ the notion of gay sex is met with a lot of hostility and cruelty.²⁶ The ban on gay sex consolidates the idea that the imposition of sexual difference and the heterosexual imperative on the clone society are extensions of an outside world that will have to host them through their short-lived contact. However, this imposition is unilateral and it would be false to assume that the ‘normal’ people and the ‘normal’ society associate the idea of the clone with genderedness and heterosexuality.

The key to consolidate this argument is the acknowledgement of the fact that clones cannot sexually reproduce. Without the pretext of reproduction, their sexual lives remain tolerated behaviors (as long as they abide to a logic of mimicking the acceptable form of sexuality) that ensure the health of the body and the quality of their organs²⁷. The fact that we don’t know the reasons behind the infertility of the clones, and that we can assume that they’ve been rendered unable to reproduce by their creators, reinforces the idea that heterosexual reproduction and the gender difference associated with it are markers of

²² Ibid., p. 82

²³ Ibid., p. 82

²⁴ Ibid., p. 93

²⁵ Ibid., p. 93

²⁶ Ibid., p. 94

²⁷ Ibid., p. 94

humanness. In this sense, Judith Roof's argument that reproduction produces the normalcy of heterosexuality in the narratives of modern, Western societies directly applies to the situation of the clones, who are unable to accomplish their heterosexuality, and to access the zone of humanness associated with it, because of their inability to reproduce.

There are various pieces of evidence in the text that support this interpretation. The first hint we get regarding the association between gender, heterosexuality, reproduction, and humanness comes early on when one of the clones suggests that the reason for which the guardians make it impossible for them to have sex, despite their constant reinforcement of the idea that sex is something they should do whenever they feel it's right, is that even though they knew, intellectually, that clones couldn't have babies, they still felt uneasy about them doing it because they couldn't really believe that it wouldn't result in having babies.²⁸ In this ambivalence, we can see how the possibility of heterosexual sex makes the imposition of the human/clone dichotomy unstable through its inefaceable correlation with notions of humanness.

The second hint stems from the way in which the veteran couples at the Cottages (always subsiding to the heteronormative logic of boy and girl) "never did anything showy in public",²⁹ so that their relationship, even if acknowledged by the other clones, never got to be performed in the open. This concealment serves as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy in so far as, by not performing their sexuality openly even though no visible restriction apply, the clones perpetuate the structures of oppression that refuse the recognition of their humanness through the denial of heterogender.

The third and most pertinent piece of evidence to support the claim that the accomplishment of heterosexuality and the gender categories it upholds would lead to the recognition of the humanness of the clones rests within the main storyline of the novel.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 94

²⁹ Ibid., p. 118

Kathy's, Tommy's, and Ruth's life stories revolve around the paced elaboration of the belief that if a certain number of criteria have been met, one could defer their donation process for a couple of years. The criteria are very revealing of the way in which humanization is linked with the accomplishment of heterosexual love and gender categories in so far as what is required for a deferral is that a couple comprised (unsurprisingly) of a boy and a girl could prove that they are really, properly in love with each other.³⁰ Therefore, the only way to bypass the structure of dehumanization and postpone death is by participating in the heteronormative narrative of true love. Even if, as the storyline reaches its climax, we find out that the possibility of deferral is just a myth and that our protagonists will have to face their unchangeable sentences, the redemptive power of heterosexual love is confirmed by the matrons in their bewilderment at the fact that however hard they tried to stomp this myth from spreading in the clone society, it still continued to exist and, even more surprisingly, "created [itself] from scratch over and over".³¹ Therefore, we can see how Michael Warner's and Judith Roof's arguments about the entangling of heterosexuality in all structures of human society and its capacity to define itself as humanity are validated once more.

The lives of the clones of *Never Let Me Go* clearly expose the limits of human identity and the processes of recognition that work to establish the humanness or non-humanness of bodies in relation to gender and heterosexuality. Being destined 'to complete' (a term euphemistically employed to designate the death of the clones after a variable number of donations have been performed that furthermore strengthens the process of dehumanization) in the surgical room, they are rendered as non-valuable lives even if their body parts are seen as extremely precious.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 151

³¹ Ibid., p. 252

III. The meaningfulness of heterosex. Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* and the joys of being human

Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* is a somewhat different project than the other two novels that this thesis has set out to explore through the lens of the complex interdependencies between gender, sexuality, and humanness. While Houellebecq's focus is the same as Mitchell's and Ishiguro's, imagining the impact that the possibility of cloning would have on contemporary societies, his approach is different. The way in which the devaluation of the clone is accomplished in Houellebecq's novel is not through structures of power and patterns of domination but rather through a symbolical association of human life with (heteronormative) happiness and of neohuman (or clone) life with deathly inertia. In this sense, heterosexuality and proper gender categories (derived from a masculinist fascination for the fantasy of the young, beautiful, sexually insatiable woman) are seen as the ultimate source of happiness and meaning, while the solitary lives of the neohuman clones are rendered as meaningless successions of days that anticipate death. Therefore, by presenting us with the progressive disappearance of the (hetero)erotic desire that infuses a big part of the narrative and inserting it into the context of the appearance of the neohumans, the non-sexual, non-gendered clones, Houellebecq affirms the inextricable link between properly gendered (heterosexual) subjects and the survival of humanness, of 'the human'.

In a similar fashion to Mitchell, Houellebecq knits the narrative of *The Possibility of an Island* within the milieu of debates around capitalism(s) and commodification and, in doing so, tries to spell out the harmful potential and the inevitable apocalyptic dimension that is seen to lie in the exacerbation of unrestrained capitalist organization of human societies and human life. It is no surprise then that the post-apocalyptic world of Daniel²⁴ and Daniel²⁵, who are two successive clones of the novel's main character, Daniel (referred to by the

neohumans as Daniel1), has come to be because of the irremediable damage done to the environment by the capitalist hunger for profit and its “joys of consumption”.¹ Moreover, the insatiable quest for *fun* that Houellebecq describes as plaguing the world’s contemporary developed economies is also seen as responsible for the destruction of the human world, because it enabled a celebration of youth over everything else and a complete social disregard for both birthing (having children) and dying (caring for the elders).

Paralleling these tendencies, that intensify towards the end of the book, is the exacerbation of scientism and biologism as modes of interpreting and dealing with human life. The ultimate consequence of the scientification of all aspects of human life is the emergence of Elohimism, a new religion advocating the possibility of eternal life through cloning and the transfer of memory from one body to another by replicating the entire structure of the nerve connections in the brain. Houellebecq exposes the unrealistic character of that promise though, by letting us know that many centuries later, in the world of Daniel24 and Daniel25, that objective is unaccomplished. But the cloning part of the equation has been successful and a new Daniel is produced whenever the previous one has died, only to spend a lifetime in complete isolation, reading the memoirs of Daniel(1) and the commentaries of all the other clones before him. The ultimate goal of the organization of the neohuman (or clone) society is the coming of the Future Ones, whose memory can be successfully transmitted onto another body thus accomplishing the coveted ideal of immortality. The futility of such an endeavour becomes clear towards the end though (culminating with Daniel25’s escape from his solitary cell) and the (sacrificed) lives of the neohumans come to signify pointlessness. In opposition, Daniel’s life of success and (hetero)sexual adventures is rendered as the truth of *all* existence, only accessible by (properly heterogendered) humans.

¹ Houellebecq, M. (2005) *The Possibility of an Island*, London: Phoenix, p. 20

Through this opposition between meaningful human and meaningless neohuman, the connections between gender, heteronormativity and humanness are exposed. Because of their non-genderedness and non-sexualization, the neohumans are unable to access the zone that renders value to their lives. Narratively intertwined with Daniel(1)'s stories of heterosexual adventures, the lives of Daniel²⁴ and Daniel²⁵ are reduced to pointless, ephemeral repetition of solitary confinement. Therefore, the human emerges victorious as holding the key to the value of life, through its heterosexual disposition, while the neohuman is cast as life that has no potential of acquiring a valuable content. This is most clearly portrayed in Daniel²⁴'s last words: "I will leave with no real regret an existence that brought me no real joy".² The same fate is shared by the animals that, according to Houellebecq, do not enjoy sex and only perform it for reproduction.³ Moreover, Houellebecq writes, "the difference between animal and human is that the human is always sexual".⁴ Subsequently, the similitude between 'the animal' and 'the neohuman' as living entities not able to experience (albeit for different reasons) the true pleasure of heterosexual sex exposes how processes of dehumanization are connected to the heteronormative narrative about the meaning of life.

Of course, by removing heterosexuality from the neohuman society, Houellebecq erases gender differences as well. In one of the first pages of the book he points to the indeterminacy of the gender of the clones. When Daniel²⁴ reflects that "Marie²², if she exists, is a woman to the same extent that I am a man; to a limited, refutable extent",⁵ we see how gender and sexual differences do not make sense anymore (and are refutable) in the neohuman world. Although it may seem that this argumentation is countrelogical because the use of the word 'limited' actually signifies the presence of some degree of genderedness, I argue that it is not. In my view, Houellebecq's choice of words actually means that, in so far

² Ibid., p. 141-142

³ Ibid., p. 64

⁴ Ibid., p. 283

⁵ Ibid., p. 7

as the clones are supposed to keep alive the memory of the original human (and an enactment of their gendered identity is a part of that) and considering that the whole project of the Future Ones is an inconsolable failure, the use of the word ‘limited’ actually signals that failure. If gender is necessarily performative, as Judith Butler argues, then the lack of an audience makes it impossible for the neohumans to claim access to it, and to a zone of valuable humanness.

In order to strengthen the distinction between Daniel(1) and Daniel24 and Daniel25 an understanding of Daniel(1)’s context will prove helpful. This context is constantly enforcing ideas about what a woman and a man are and should be through its abundant display of man-dominates-woman heterosexual sex. The heterosexual prophecy is upheld and propelled through comments like: “she wanted , like all women, to be penetrated”⁶, “like all very pretty young girls she was only good for fucking”⁷, “if the abandonment of machismo had effectively made men unhappy, it had not actually made women happy [...] more and more people, especially women, dreamed of a return to a system where women were modest and submissive, and their virginity was preserved”.⁸ Through these sweeping affirmations, Houellebecq creates the ground for a conceptualization of ‘woman’ articulated in relation to ‘man’ within an oppressively heteronormative paradigm. By making the woman intelligible only in relation the man’s desire for her, Houellebecq violently reduces the concept of womanhood to fit the heteronormative definition of gender. This is most clearly portrayed in Daniel(1)’s cynical depiction of a woman he calls Fat Ass who desperately wants to gain his attention but fails because of her flabby thighs, rolls of fat, and sagging clitoris⁹. However, it is through her heteroerotic desire to be penetrated that her gender becomes intelligible and she

⁶ Ibid., p. 275

⁷ Ibid., p. 187

⁸ Ibid., p. 308

⁹ Ibid., p. 275

is incorporated into the “all women”¹⁰ category. Moreover, the heteronormative paradigm defines what a man is as well. Therefore, according to Daniel(1), it is heterosexual love and sex that can make a man what he is as he says: “[f]or the first time in my life I felt unrestrictedly happy to be a man, by this I mean a human being of masculine sex, because for the first time I had found a woman who opened herself completely to me, who gave me totally, without limits, what a woman can give a man”.¹¹ There is no question here that the man, which is defined as any human being of the masculine sex, becomes accomplished through his relationship with the woman, a relationship in which she completely surrenders.

Another dimension of Daniel(1)’s context that supports the process of defining genders as positions within a heteronormative paradigm refers to the way in which homosexuality is portrayed and referred to. First mentioned as a “complication of modality”¹², homosexuality fleetingly reappears at certain moments in the text as something marginal, albeit a mark of the progressive. Even in the completely permissive climate of the new religion of Elohimism that encouraged the exploration of all sexual desires, homosexuality was present only in small doses.¹³ And homosexuals, “after a brief period of frenzy following the liberalization of their practices, had calmed down a lot, and they now aspired to monogamy and a peaceful, settled life, as a couple, devoted to cultural tourism and the discovery of local wines”.¹⁴ From all this we can conclude that homosexuality does nothing to upset the edifice of heteronormativity and the ways in which the gender binary is constructed to uphold that edifice.

Taking all this into consideration, and the project that the neohumans are invested in: the transfer of memory from one body to another, we see how the neohuman clones fail to

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 275

¹¹ Ibid., p. 189

¹² Ibid., p. 13

¹³ Ibid., p. 98

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 320

enact a gender performance. While it would seem plausible to assume that Daniel²⁵ would try and be a man as much as Daniel⁽¹⁾ was and that Marie²² would try to be a woman as much as Marie¹ was, there is an insoluble incongruence between the ‘originals’ and the ‘copies’, one that exposes the impossibility of gender outside the zone of humanness. Therefore, with the loss of the heteronormative matrix of social relations, neohumans become unintelligible in terms of gender and lose the potential to access the meaning of humanness.

However, the last part of the text follows Daniel²⁵ as he escapes the prison tower of neohuman captivity and ventures into the post-apocalyptic scenery of the once-called human world. Although his journey does not entail the possibility of a conquest of humanness, as he is alone, surviving with the help of his photosynthetic genetic modification, there is an unexpressed nostalgic dimension of his endeavour towards reclaiming an impossible human identity.

Conclusion

The analyses of the three novels and, particularly, of the depictions of the clones in each of them, have revealed how the processes of humanization and dehumanization that produce the category of ‘the human’ are inextricably intertwined with the assumption that humanness is necessarily (hetero)gendered and safeguarded through the workings of heteronormativity and of the heterosexual matrix. Moreover, they have exposed how processes of dehumanization are ultimately imbedded in the relationship a self-defined humanity has with its despised other, animality.

Consequently, the clone serves as a site of investigation where the anxieties about and incongruences of humanness are exposed. As we have seen in Mitchell’s, Ishiguro’s, and Houellebecq’s texts, the clone is rendered non-human, but this rendition constantly challenges the boundaries set up for itself. And it is probably in Sonmi~451 ascension from fabricant to pureblood, in Kathy’s and Tommy’s quest to prove the validity of their (heterosexual) love with the hope of salvation, and in Daniel25’s escape from the deathly silence of neohuman society, that the simultaneous production of the human and of the non-human becomes clearest.

Ultimately, this thesis proves that any claim made on behalf of ‘the human’ entails within itself the workings of processes of humanization and dehumanization, of valorization and devalorization. It becomes necessary then to point out the shortcomings and acts of violence that are enabled by this all-pervasive paradigm of our contemporary world.

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