

## Ahmad Makia

### The Extinctionist Man

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**Abstract:** This essay explores how critical necropolitical frameworks bring to light, not only exploited subjugation, but the quality of doom, destruction and collapse embedded in masculine expression. It elaborates on how the proto-patriarchal view of death, or more accurately the prospective view towards it, emerges from a skewed narrative fixture, in which 'life' is determined by what it isn't, 'death'. Similar to the dissociative and occultive schisms in the patriarchal rationale of life forms, such as the opposition of 'man' to 'woman' or 'human' to 'animal,' the concept of death is realized into an abject non-place inhabited by subjectivities of "fucking" and "killing." Puncturing this staging of 'alive' patriarchal function, the necropolitical presents the condition of death as a possible flourishing identity and an already-present frontier of human expression, where 'life' and 'death' aren't separate entities to one another but enmeshed, as if in masquerade of one another. The essay also provides critique and caution on how fiction and theory transpire into 'staged' realities, especially in the manifestation of the abject body. Its concluding remarks support the inclusion of "straightness" in fluid sexual discourse by highlighting how the appropriation and posses-

sion of traditional and existing social roles, rather than only those in defiance or at their fringe, has birthed the concepts of kineticism and fluidity in sexual expression.

**Keywords:** death drive, necropolitical, sexual spectrums, maleness, feminism, serial killers, bug chasers, environmentalism

"If I know that he's negative and I'm fucking him, it sort of gets me off. I'm murdering him in a sense, killing him slowly, and that's sort of, as sick as it sounds, exciting to me"<sup>1</sup> offers Carlos to Gregory Freeman, the journalist who first published on bug chasing in *the Rolling Stone* in 2006. Bug chasers are men who long to be HIV+ and seek to be diseased – dead even, sometimes known as the "fuck of death" – and to transmit disease and death through sex. Bug chasing revealed the legacy of HIV's association with the queer community at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in San Francisco.

What sometimes is considered more "fucked up" about bug chasing is that perpetrators of the virus are sought out, identified as "gift givers" in the subculture's lingo, by self-proclaimed bug chasers, like Carlos, who are then called "self-delusional" by doctors. The community was founded online, and remains active on the internet – forums, Grindr – where one can be introduced to the world of "conversion ceremonies," for givers and chasers exchanging in fluids, namely "liquid gold" ie., HIV+ semen.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Freeman, "Bug Chasers: The Men who Long to be HIV+," *Rolling Stone* (November 16, 2006). [https://web.archive.org/web/20061116220955/http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/5939950/bug\\_chas/print](https://web.archive.org/web/20061116220955/http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/5939950/bug_chas/print)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Bug chasing, I believe, signals not a celebration of homosexual rights and their ability “to fuck” – literally – in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but about how they are fucked, or, more poignantly, fucked over, by gaining the ability to fuck. Having the right “to fuck” means somehow to die from sex and emerge anew. This is because the literalized autonomy “to fuck” or “get fucked” or “be fucked” has mostly been achieved by sexual identities, women and queers, who have been anthropomorphized as subjects of “fuck.” This subjectification is experienced because representing “a fuck” means one can get killed or murdered for “a fuck.” The labor of death and killing through fucking, especially for women and queers, is no longer imposed by an external patriarchy, but rather self-imposed: fucking is not unlike dying – more even, it is already dead – especially when it comes to the field of “fucking men,” so contemporary sex achieves liberty by practicing sex as a retroactive murder of the male form.

Bug chasing shows how male sex, especially queer male sex, performs separatist somatics so as to inoculate from what it might consider to be its Other, from female sexuality to mainstream proto-heterosexuality. Bug chasing, today, is considered a multilayered practice and a power negotiation, which attempts to perpetuate the identification of HIV with gay male culture in order to question gayhood’s “deviant” sexual status in society.<sup>3</sup>

The interesting aspect of bug chasing is how its practice of seeking to “become positive” sits in relation to contemporary culture which celebrates “positive sexuality”:

<sup>3</sup> Jaime García-Iglesias, “Wanting HIV Is ‘Such a Hot Choice’: Exploring Bugchasers’ Fluid Identities and Online Engagements,” *Deviant Behaviour* 1:12 (2019).

the genderless, post-humanistic culture governed by individual desire and free will, sometimes described as “fluid,” which can be further described as a politics in the sexual murder of the male form. If contemporary thinking is satisfied with sex being a search for positive individual meaning, and self-affirming fulfillment, especially under the “fluid” framework, but practices such as bug chasing illuminate a bigger question: is sex complete by being an act that humans perform for their individual pleasure, or is sex an act that searches for experiential qualities that signify “more than that?” This is the tension I explore in this essay.

As an example, the rather concerned tone offered by Freeman in his 2006 article “Bug Chasers” has shifted towards, in the recent past, a celebration of sexual health and expression in academic and social realities, this is because sex in itself is no longer a demeaning or deviant practice today but thought of as a cosplay of shared social experiences. Even if one desires to “fuck to death.” Bug chasing, under the “fluid sex” umbrella, is considered a “playful negotiation,” disassociating it from “a stable identity category resulting from a process of linear deviance.”<sup>4</sup> Carlos’s “playful negotiation,” as an example, is on full-view in the article where he acknowledges all of the moral contradictions for chasing the bug, but his claim stays the same: he is not ashamed of desiring it.

Whether actually getting the bug or longing for it, it shows that sex is not only about its physical practice, i.e., not simply satisfied with orgasm, but about how it functions as part of larger self-narration and personal construction. In

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

bug chasing, sex is had so that one can more permanently inhabit a state of alterity and transformation through biopolitical techniques such as disease, immunity, life, death, activeness, and passiveness; a biopolitical self-governing, almost.

I find bug chasing caustic, because it is a prospective act, as if an investment, which seeks to cultivate immunity across generations of queers – the question is, “immunity against what?” More so, bug chasing is exclusively understood as a queer sex expression and this perception is held because hetero-normativity is not considered as “fucked up,” hence why chasing the bug is more rife in “fucked up” cultural spaces. It is the “fucked up-ness” of queer sex expression that has contributed to the evolution of sexology from being a pleasure-centered practice to an intellectual one through critical insights on the patriarchal function over the female AND the male body. Feminism is not really only interested in reorienting collective mind culture on how to better perceive and regulate the female identity, but male ones, and this essay is a broadcast of that vantage point.

Bug chasing twists, or supposedly queers, the sexual fulfillment and destiny one experiences by being a male in the patriarchy, which is that the male, through possessing women, children, and animals, finds individual meaning. It pays homage to the predetermined fate of the patriarchal male: unable to satisfactorily fulfill his possession – which is the most definite result – the male experiences a distress and thus performs his gender in an approximation of the “real thing.”<sup>5</sup> In this way, males in the patriarchy perform their gender in “lack” because they are unable to embody

<sup>5</sup> Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 5.

the full possession of others.<sup>6</sup> This breeds a disassociative syndrome where the male is found trapped between what he is told, which is perfect and complete, and what he experiences, which is partial and scattered.

What this existing psychoanalysis tells us is that there is palpable philosophical reasoning and justification for “pained” male behavior, especially in how it sexually translates itself in a prospective future (see the upcoming section on serial killers). Because of this, we *should*, not could, consider the engineering of male identity as a mass reproduction of bodies in occultation.<sup>7</sup> Occultation can be simply interpreted as “a body in the closet” because a male, in technical accordance of this lineage, must perform fulfillment externally, but is actually experiencing a deep, internal, absence or lack within his private realm of intimacy and feeling.<sup>8</sup> And so, the male is always hiding something “real” about himself, which is the struggle with his self-idealized image. The very fact that this thinking applies, which understands and empathizes with this behaviour, necessitates intellectual labor on gender and identity because it can uncover and question the authenticities of human expression. This is why I believe bug chasing exists: to directly reflect on what’s inside the closet and is creative by being *in it, of it*, and not its faraway fringe cousin: “The mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hélène Cixous and Annette Kuhn, “Castration or Decapitation,” *Signs* 7:1 (1981), 41-55.

<sup>7</sup> Is this why many male radical thinkers propose and embrace “opacity” as a framework for knowledge production? See “Le droit à l’opacité” for Édouard Glissant, as an example.

<sup>8</sup> See: Taylor, *Hans Bellmer*, 22-5; D.A. Miller, “Anal Rope,” *Representations*, 32 (1990), 120–24.

<sup>9</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 28.

## How did Occultation come to Signify the Patriarchy?

The coming out of the feminist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century proclaimed that a female existence or reality was a masquerade or folly performed on behalf of the mythologies penned by male producers and reified by male consumers. The default male identity status, exposed by women-feminists, made the “woman,” in and of herself, make-believe and a site that is assessed for its approximations to unnatural “womanly” characteristics. It presented to the thinking public that if it had conceived of the woman as a byproduct of “nature,” it meant that the world lives in a masquerade because the woman doesn’t exist, and that the masquerader and the woman are one and the same.<sup>10</sup>

This shift took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the social role of “woman author,” or ‘character,’ an already present tool for the production of narrative, was appropriated to instead narrate a crisis in public self-conception: the default social body is recognizable only in how it is different to “other” forms. One of the most distinct representations of this division is the image of man against woman: “humanity is male and man defines woman not herself but as relative to him.”<sup>11</sup> By self-imposing the category of “woman” on the woman herself, the feminist intellectual shift took shape. This kind of insurgency within existing social roles, not only produces new identities, but the manipulation of existing devices so that identities *can show how they can express differently* to the default status. The “woman author” which sometimes became synonymous with the

“feminist,” was a deliberate recovering and authoring of social roles and ideals away from patriarchal men and instead (over)performed by those who supposedly represent those roles in “real” life. A hyperstition, almost.

The cultivation of a new, self-authored, self-aware imagery of women led not only to legal and economic betterment – in a world of not only patriarchy but machismo culture and body narcissism too – it also offered needed complexities for how the body is envisioned in social, political and individual realms. This was very much needed because so far the public body was understood to be a perfect and complete male entity, and it was mostly through feminist philosophy that the psychological disassociation experienced by male identities came to light, especially in relation to how it impacts the wider human and geographical world, in overt and hidden ways (the message being that the male’s “pained” behaviour is inflicted everywhere). By displacing the default and self-enclosed state of the male producer and author, we saw the emergence of new media and new ways of thinking about the agile body as an intellectual frontier.<sup>12</sup>

The gender discipline today is attempting to reconcile its canon on the body from inherited male “defaultness.” Progressive sexuality today supports the adaptation of the body into fluidity and readdresses gender within the scope of the attributes discussed so far such as: masquerade, conversion, in transition and construction site; concepts owing to the feminist intellectual canon. It reveals that contemporary labor on gender and the body is no longer

<sup>10</sup> Joan Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade.” In *The Inner Work and Joan Riviere: Collected Papers 1920–1945*, ed. Athol Huges (London: H Karnac Books, 1991), 94.

<sup>11</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Cape, 2009), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1997)

monolithic but an elusive, and deeply philosophical trade. Gender is no longer assessed for physical endowments, but, rather, in collective and individual movement and physics, or hydraulics and kinetics: the precept that sex is ongoing, in transition, or in more scholarly terms, a performance.<sup>13</sup>

Through the manipulation of the gender device, of active gendering, of the Woman Othering herself from the version that was expected to be, of exposing “occultation,” is how the research sciences of “self-technology” were pioneered: the biopoliticization of one’s already biopolitical body.<sup>14</sup> The self-immunizing HIV chase is a poignant illustration of this gender self-technology, in how occupying the authorship of ideals *already existing* in society pave way for the “Total Body” to become a construction site; in development; not developed. Hélène Cixous, a champion of feminist thought, said that “Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement.”<sup>15</sup> This movement of “putting oneself in something” is the kinetic self-technological body: it is understanding what influence one’s body holds in the collective realm, and appropriating that perceived knowledge in one’s living conditions for discreet or large purposes.

Under this knowledge pedigree, both man and woman are considered performances, yet there remains a fundamental difference between them: self-technology

<sup>13</sup> Cixous and Kuhn, “Castration or Decapitation.”; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Martin Luther, Huck Gutman and Patrick Hutton (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988.)

<sup>15</sup> Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa,” *Signs* 1:4 (1976), 876.

propelled women to “come out” from a repressive closet, while males in the patriarchy still relish in “being in the closet.”. This kind of male torment is no longer inflicted on an individual level but now understood as a planetary affair: patriarchal structures bring ruin not only on a body or public health, but in the atmosphere, in the creation of radioactive zones, and in extracting potential from all kinds of species.

More important is how much “death and murder” ruin is generated because of “hidden” and “in the closet” tendencies of males in the patriarchy. Learners of the body understood with the feminists that sexual or physical practice in the patriarchy is a limited and liminal reality, and that inside these realities it was overcrowded. This does not mean they are fringe or queer, rather they are a more vivid and authentic sexual reality. They exist in these confined sexual corridors because the supposed “wide” and “real” reality is occupied and performed by men, and they sit in relation to them only as subjects and spaces of abjection, to repent, to learn, to tolerate, to lust, over a male sense of anguish and malaise. It is through this relational dynamic how man comes to understand his purpose, in knowing whether he is alive, and, for him to ascertain this, he needs to know others are dead, or, in killing them, himself.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the patriarch thinks of this liminal space as unfortunate and Other to him, it is indeed a result of his own manufacturing from within his “closeted” psychodrama, because patriarchs are not able to feel reconciled with

<sup>16</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Cixous and Kuhn, “Castration or Decapitation.”

their wide and real realities, and so their paths in life are dimly lit. A subject of abjection, on the other hand, has no path, has no engineering, it is all tucked far away. The frustration and contradiction arising from the masquerade envisioned for a man in the patriarchy is then projected as a woman, even though a woman can biologically birth life, she embodies what he isn't, dead. Under this logic, the woman's authentic state is dead and is given function and articulation to, and so the body is no longer a gender subject or discipline, but a universe on the flurried and varied authentic experiences of a body and its realization in public space. Those who exist on this abject threshold construe them "selves" as Other and continue to produce an endless stream of possible Others, of Otherness that flows in and out of the words of text. The liminal abject is a body that is always flowing, continuously producing fecund signifiers.<sup>17</sup>

### Is male Sex an Exercise in Death Fucking?

Serial killers proved to be a relevant case study for this essay, especially male subjects who have sex with their victims or kill their victims during sex, which is a great majority of serial killers, who are almost all men. Serial killers are an invention of fictional novels, considered to have been first written about in *Murder in the Rue Rogue* by Edgar Allan Poe, known as the father of the English modern novel. Poe's publishing of the novel later spawned the detective and crime fiction genre and many of its evolving sub-genres, such as the murder mysteries by Agatha Christie and noir pulp crime in America, especially after the Great Depression.

<sup>17</sup> John Charles Hawley, *Divine Aporia: Postmodern Conversations about the Other* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), 175.

Police crime fiction from the 1960s-70s is considered to be the original appearance of the "serial killer" in full: brute, calculated, psychologically disturbed. Always a "he," the serial killer usually leaves red herrings for the police after he enacts several cold-murder cases that piece together a large narrative puzzle. What's especially interesting to note about serial killers is that they are an invention of media and literature and later became a lived social reality. This statement rings true to postmodernist thinking must make the postmodernists happy, which proposes that the world has already experienced an oversaturation of media and because of that humans today are unable to distinguish between what's real and what isn't. Case in point, serial killers.

Colin Ireland is known as Britain's "Gay Slayer." After murdering his first victim, Ireland contacted *The Sun* to lead them to the dead body of Peter Walker, in the early days of 1993. He told them, on the phone, that he wanted to become famous for being a serial killer, adding that "It was my New Year's resolution to murder a human being." He succeeded when the main detective inspector of the case later reported that "The motivation seems to have been this quest for infamy – to be a serial killer." This is a shared quality of modern serial killers: the search for fame and recognition on media platforms, especially their search for understanding of themselves and for others to contemplate.<sup>18</sup>

Serial killers' "quests for infamy" are predestined plans. Ireland became a major news sensation in 1993 in Britain

<sup>18</sup> "Colin Ireland Crime Files," *Crime and Investigation UK* <https://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/colin-ireland>

after he targeted and murdered five homosexual men. He later confessed that it wasn't that he was homophobic or had a vendetta against gays but that he needed a group that he could "easily pick on" so as to become a media sensation, and earn his infamous title as The Gay Slayer. After being penalized for his murders in Britain, Ireland then stood tall making a place for himself next to other murderer legends such as Jack the Ripper. Yet, this time, the serial killer is not a hologram but alive and uttering. What the "real" serial killer usually utters is the horrors experienced by the now-out-of-the closet serial killer who was on extreme social margins, leading to enlightenment and comfort in mediated representations of other serial killers. Ireland was enabled through the media to become thirsty, in a lustful manner, for murder. Even possibly achieving a sense of sexual bliss or nirvana: "Ireland compared the 'buzz' of his first kill to that of losing his virginity."<sup>19</sup>

Ireland seized, and didn't kowtow to, the media on what it had to say about serial killers. What is interesting is that serial killers understand the influence media has on people and become wise in learning that they can manipulate it too to get their own story across. They, like the genderists, appropriate given categories for the development of new sexualities. Serial killers, in this way, get to orate their stories as not ignorant, blood-thirsty people, but rather as intelligent – which is as far away as one can be from innocence – and resourceful. "He also placed two teddy bears in a 69 position on top of Peter. Ireland would often leave such items as symbols of innocence lost" claims the

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

investigative report on Ireland regarding how he left the scene of his first crime".<sup>20</sup> Serial killer crime cases are full of plot devices, hidden messages and tricks learned from deep immersion with fictional narrative which are then recreated and queered in social reality. Except, in "reality," serial killing is not meant to deliver entertainment but crude transparency about the experience of a body's sexualization.

Moreover, Ireland especially targeted homosexuals who were into sadomasochism. In one of the psychological reports on Ireland, it claimed "In his mind the homosexual man who indulged in sadomasochism became akin to the pedophile that has a similar 'relationship' with his victim: both are relationships of power and acquiescence."<sup>21</sup> The report is referring to several male pedophiles, from an optician to a lurker in a toilet cubicle, who had propositioned Ireland when young. They never got physical but all of them promised rewards or money if young Ireland would let them touch him. Many offered money because Ireland grew up in economic destitution for most of his life. His father abandoned his seventeen year old mother when she gave birth to him and a life of displacement, homelessness and degradation populate Ireland's child and adult history. But one thing known throughout much of his time is that Ireland is straight and heterosexual, having even been married twice in his adult life.<sup>22</sup>

Ireland's own confession that "I'm surprised that I grew up to be a sadist, and not a masochist" is recreated in

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

his murder scenarios, in which the endowed abuse of power by Ireland's propositioners is usurped and becomes possessed by Ireland instead, through his act of murder. He comes to be the power who picks on others and, in that way, becomes immune from being picked on – this is similar to queer somatics.<sup>23</sup>

Could it also be that Ireland was not really looking at murdering homosexual men exclusively, but looking to experiment with death more truly, and sadomasochism proved to be an opportune route, some of which is practiced by gay men, because of aligned histories of marginalization: those who are conditioned to feel sexually gratified by performing pain, torture and near-death. Sadomasochism is attributed to gay culture because gay sex exceeds in expressing more homicidal qualities than the homosocial through its sexual performativity.<sup>24</sup> It is no surprise, then, to discover that Ireland's first murder, his initiation let's say, was coincidentally performed on 45-year old Peter Walker, who was suffering from HIV.

At Mr Walker's flat, and with his consent, the theatre director was tied naked to the bed and hit and whipped. Then Ireland took a plastic bag and held it over his victims' head until he lost consciousness and died. He then singed his victim's pubic hair, to see what it smelt like.

Ireland spent the night in the flat, mainly watching television, during which he discovered his victim was HIV-positive. Before leaving, as was

to be his habit, he meticulously cleaned away all evidence of his visit; he threw away his clothes and the rope.

As a final touch, he stuffed knotted condoms into the mouth and nostril of his victim ... It was, he later told police, an expression of disgust at Mr Walker's condition. He left during the morning rush-hour so as to be less conspicuous<sup>25</sup>

### Sex and the Media

The criminal language of detective fiction is subject to the same liability to backfire as crime itself.<sup>26</sup>

The media component in both contemporary positive and fluid sexual practice and serial killing proved to be the most relevant point for how sex is a site of murder. Bug chasing, as an example, is conceived as an "online" identity, i.e. a practice that is only possible because of the availability of the internet. It is similar to many expressions of sex today, which are realized because of the availability of media channels, with 1 in 3 marriages in America being the result of internet dating, and the ubiquity of transnational internet coupling today through apps such as Tindr.<sup>27</sup>

Pornography, the most searched item on the internet, is another great example, as porn doesn't show how people

<sup>25</sup> Terry Kirby, "Calculating murderer who preyed on gays: Terry Kirby builds up a picture of a man with a lethal wish to prove he was someone of consequence," *The Independent* (December 21, 1993). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/calculating-murderer-who-preyed-on-gays-terry-kirby-builds-up-a-picture-of-a-man-with-a-lethal-wish-1468747.html>.

<sup>26</sup> D.A. Miller, "Language of Detective Fiction: Fiction of Detective Language," *Granta* (March 1, 1980). <https://granta.com/language-of-detective-fiction-fiction-of-detective-language/>.

<sup>27</sup> Vicki Mayer, "Guys Gone Wild?: Soft-Core Video Professionalism and New Realities in Television Production," *Cinema Journal* 47:2 (2007) 99-101.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> D.A. Miller, "Cruising," *Film Quarterly* 61:2 (2007), 70-3.

have sex, it *changes* how they have sex and is similarly understood to be a “prospective” act for how people can develop in their “having of sex.” Today, pornography caters to a wide variety of sex and fetish genres, many of which exist because the media exists, not because these are sexual practices that existed in society prior to their mediation. So, sex practitioners, like serial killers, read and see fiction in the media and then go on to perform it in their own lives. Media is a refraction of body entities to living bodies via packaged, commodified sensory culture – patriarchal culture in sum – while ensuring that there is no clear boundary between the two – the viewer always operates under the illusion that the actors are “not acting” – but fully enmeshed with each other; possibly even fucking each other.<sup>28</sup>

But more than only the parallel of fucking and killing, I think the case studies of Carlos and Ireland show that the relationship between fucking and killing is mostly achieved by “manning”: that of “being a man,” which I am considering to be interchangeable with being masculine. Masculinity does “take on a functional rather than self-identifying form; it seeks to determine the changing limits for the performance of masculinity”.<sup>29</sup> The masculine subject in the media, as an example, is usually perceived by consumers in attributes that are violent and competitive, not necessarily through costume or biology. More so, the male character is either vindicated or celebrated through his acts of terror, violence, war and murder.

<sup>28</sup> Idem.

<sup>29</sup> Katerina Kolozova and Suzana Milevska, “Casting Žižek: Part1. Imperialist Symptomatology of the Phenomenon Žižek,” *The International Journal of Humanities*, 5 (2007).

Is the entire function of masculinity, the main software for the patriarchy, to be the profession of murdering and killing, then? Is murder the cover up for every sentiment of lack experienced by a man? How are males different to serial killers then? Serial killers, who are almost exclusively all men, *know* that they can be famous and celebrated if they murder and kill, just like Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Josip Broz Tito. How are serial killers, though, different to their more influential and celebrated murderers? Is the serial killer a “hidden” orator and mask from the sanctioned male performer of murder and death; the hidden orator between male producer and male consumer? If for women, men are in masquerade, then can we question if serial killers are in media or in reality? Are bodies fucking or killing in the postmodern mediated landscape?

### **Women, the Masculinist Professionals of Death Fucking**

Although, the “search” and “longing” for death in male sex continues, with women, sex begins at this very rupture, where sex is already dead. For the female sex, it has been argued, there exists an implanted knowledge and understanding of the body as death, as zero, as non-place, as abject, and this place, we are still learning, is not mystical but philosophical.

The legend of the severed breast in the early sadomasochistic Christian period is an example of how abstaining or deadening sex leads to the conception of ‘truer’ identities. The legend of Saint Agatha of Sicily speaks of a young and virginal Agatha who experienced a series of sexual advances by Quintianus, a consular

official from Sicily, yet she denied his requests to remain true to her religious convictions. In turn, Agatha endured horrific torture and imprisonment yet she never submitted to Quintianus's demands and delighted in warriorizing herself to further torments for the sake of abstinence and pure, spiritual love. Because of her virtuosity, Agatha's breasts were eventually torn off with iron hooks, and she starved in prison, in which she was later miraculously healed when spoken to by one of the apostles. Agatha, like many other saints, such as Dorothy, Margaret of Antioch, Fides, and Spes, Caritas, represents a selection of female protagonists who have their breasts amputated as a result of the psychological warfare inflicted on their body because they were self-guarding their personal sense of chastity and abstinence.<sup>30</sup>

The sexual humiliation experienced by the female saints through the most prominent feature of their gender, breasts, was never envisioned in the same way in male saints. The torture scene documentation of female legends and saints is extremely pornographic and disproportionate in volume to the legends of the male saints, whose legends ensure that their "maleness" is never hindered; they are fully sexed. Some have even claimed that these detailed torture scenes of female saints might have operated as public erotica, especially if one is to consider the "real" Christian reality in which sexual restraint was extremely self-enforced.<sup>31</sup> One thing to also keep in mind is that the legends are not "true," like how serial killers are not in principle true. The legends, like the serial killers, are there

to transmit narratives and moral messages through the "staging," of an obscenity.

The symbolic message of the severed breast is dead sex. The Church Fathers, who were authoring the legends, created the figure of the female virgin saint with a severed breast because it was meant to signify her detachment from corporeal life.<sup>32</sup> This woman didn't care about the body, about its sexual blossoming, because it found greater truth and meaning when it channeled its obedience to God. The female is especially illustrative of this because the female can practice withdrawal from one's body through self-initiated body discipline: remaining virginal from sex and sexualization; to remain unsexed.

The severing of the breast was effective in holding permanent weight on female virginity, because under Roman law a virgin cannot be executed, because prior to sex, a subject makes "pure" or "true" decisions. This is why the legends were effective because they queered a law that could never be imagined to be broken: severing a female breast is like taking away her virginity.<sup>33</sup> Fast forward to the eighteenth century, much after Roman law, where the literal "taking away," or "capturing" of female virginity, i.e. without consent, or the "defloration rape scene," became a major literary trend. In these stories, the female victim is always opiated and this exactly represents the comatose conditions which shape the roofied rape victim in reality today. The staging of women's bodies, especially for their sexual or intimate qualities, is indistinguishable from images in which her death is staged and conditioned within her.<sup>34</sup> *Women die for love, men kill for love.*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jolene Zigarovich, *Sex and Death in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Kirsten Wolf, "The Severed Breast: A Topos in the Legends of Female Virgin Martyr Saints," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 112 (1997), 96-112.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Another interesting aspect about legends between male and female saints, is how the male upholds his struggle for determining his sexuality, as something nonexistent, wondering whether it is secondary or primary to his being. In his narrative, the sexual determination of a woman is in her virginity because it is a virtue already implanted in the female form and so it isn't something to be searched for, it is an already present condition. More yet, what the severed breast of a female saint signified was not only her exteriority to the body and submission to the soul, but also that she had repudiated all sex in order to assume a true nature of "man," a man who didn't necessarily exist in "reality": a man premised on nobility, steadfastness, strength, and courage.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, it is only the transvestite female saint who can embody the "true" and "authentic" nature of man if one is to truly understand the "behind the scenes" logic of the female saints, as authored by male Church Fathers.<sup>36</sup> The female characteristic or physicality, in this early Christian period, focuses on the breast and its desertion, and emerges not as a "problem but as a solution," to speak from.<sup>37</sup> It is identical to the device technique we find underwriting the feminist practice and the appropriation of the "woman author" or "female character." Both practices show that the female body is not attached to physical or sexual attributes but in its metamorphosis through time; in its coming out. Yet, the narrative of the male sex today, is that he is searching for sex in the 2000s and today in the 2020s he still searches.

<sup>35</sup> Wolf, "The Severed Breast."

<sup>36</sup> See Saint Pelega for transvestite female saints.

<sup>37</sup> Wolf, "The Severed Breast."

In fact, if metamorphosis underwrites feminist practice, then, for male sex, it is the quest for identifying the aliveness of his sex through the "staging" of killing. Take *The Art of War's* legend on General Sun Tse, who was ordered by the King to take his wives and make soldiers out of them.

So Sun Tse had the women arranged in two rows, each headed by one of the two favorite wives, and then taught them the language of the drumbeat. It was very simple: two beats— right, three beats — left, four beats— about turn or backward march. But instead of learning the code very quickly, the ladies started laughing and chattering and paying no attention to the lesson, and Sun Tse, the master, repeated the lesson several times over. But the more he spoke, the more the women fell about laughing, upon which Sun Tse put his code to the test. It is said in this code that should women fall about laughing instead of becoming soldiers, their actions might be deemed mutinous, and the code has ordained that cases of mutiny call for the death penalty. So the women were condemned to death. This bothered the king somewhat: 180 wives was a lot to lose! He didn't want his wives put to death. But Sun Tse replied that since he was put in charge of making soldiers out of the women, he would carry out the order: Sun Tse was a man of absolute principle. And in any case there's an order even more "royal" than that of the king himself: the Absolute Law ... One does not go back on an order. He therefore acted according to the code and with his saber beheaded

the two women commanders. They were replaced and the exercise started again, and as if they had never done anything except practice the art of war, the women turned right, left, and about in silence and with never a single mistake<sup>38</sup>

The heart of male sexual practice does not kill out of need or necessity, but has to create a “staging” of killing to communicate about morals important to men. More yet, these mediums and devices are legible and reasoned with that they have made the “real” functions of life and sex to be destruction and collapse, hopefully in reach of something outside of this “real” life. It is at this intersection of death, especially performed by women and queers, which yields and attests to the patriarchal view that enlightened knowledge is made possible on the governing, primordial rule of death. This is the tale of “man”; realizing a hypothesis in which you become more free, more wise, by the murdering of The Other.

There is an important difference between the women’s and queer performance of the death drive, moreover: the former possesses a strong foundation in the authenticating narrative of gender, a “woman.” A “queer,” on the other hand, is about literal disfiguration, about literal executionism, as illustrated in bug chasing. Seeing the complexity of queerhood only through ideas of who it likes to “fuck” forgoes the queer variety of labor performativity in the staging of death through sex. Queerness includes masturbation, incest, pedophilia, hermaphroditism, those sexually impotent or disabled, and much more. In this way, queers are not bodies who are fighting for their

rights to fuck but corpses of instruction and narrative.<sup>39</sup> It is where the boundary between life and death is absent, or in masquerade.

Today, sexual and identity practice is about taking away the death and murder narratives set up by sadistic, confused patriachs to be fulfilled, not by make-believe legends, but in those who have literally anthropomorphized into biopolitical subjects of a mythology, like serial killers, like “women authors” or “characters,” such as the feminist, like bug chasers.

But this shift presents a new challenge: Does this mean the identity struggles are at such great odds anymore? Is contemporary sex also experiencing diffusion and disintegration, not only through destructive, amputated annihilation, but in one’s own biopoliticization of one’s biopolitical body? Now that the devices of masculinity have been exposed, is contemporary sex satisfied by achieving semblance and ruin follies of the desires and privileges of masculinity?

### Where is Male Sex Today?

I write woman. Woman must write woman. And man, man. So only an oblique consideration will be found here of man; it’s up to him to say where his masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly.<sup>40</sup>

That masculinity is rife with death would be the simple conclusion to this paper’s question. Yet, the contemporary

<sup>39</sup> Zigarovich, *Sex and Death in Eighteenth-Century Literature*.

<sup>40</sup> Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa,” 875.

<sup>38</sup> Cixous and Kuhn, “Castration or Decapitation,” 42.

fluid discourse is positioned, today, to offer some relief, some horizon, that by the male adapting into a more fluid understanding of himself and others, he displaces his sense of male default-ness, his sense of lack, and his thirst for murder. I myself am a male author and have benefited from contributing to sexual and gender discourse by presenting ideas through the veneer of fluidity. But I do not think I am fluid and writing about fluidity does not alleviate my own sense of inherited default-ness. I am indistinguishable, actually, from the serial killer, from the bug chaser, at least on paper and in the tools I use, because I perpetuate and allot room for their ideas. However, the creation and presentation on fluidity in sexual discourse does not mean that the social reality is fluid, rather, it is a presentation on why fluidity in sexual understanding is necessary. Yet, I have my own hesitations around fluid bodies, because it champions a negation of fixed-ness, and has resulted in what I would consider to be a mass reproduction of fluidity and transition in form and imagery, especially as self-realization, rather than as a self-technology. It causes great stress to propagate collective thinking about fluid bodies, because even though they go against the grain, it pretends to not observe or desire traditional morals and social fixations on gender. The discourse rather wants to discard with it. But, in fact, fluid bodies can only be labeled as “fluid” because fluidity is discounting another, that is, the traditional or classical moral codes on gender. Fluidity, in essence, is only a possible reality because it has to simultaneously recognize fixity. Further, why is fixity a necessarily negative quality?

I believe that fixity, or male-ity, is part of the labor of gender performance and that it is active, not stagnant, because performance observes structures of fixity not

even around it, but *in it, of it*. So, why would masquerade even observe fixity if it truly wants to run away from it? Could it mean that fixed, straight things are not only an imposition on us, but perhaps fixations are what some bodies do indeed want to possess, to become. It is also possible that this performance is enjoyed? Bodies see something in straight and universal sexual expression and it does not only represent a biopolitical statecraft and media condition put upon them in which they emerge as externally-tailored gendered subjects. If we can celebrate sexual expression of bug chasing, then we must create a culture of acceptance for straight things, because in the fluid discourse the straight is in threat of becoming naturalized as a state of defaultness. Being straight is evolutionary, inter-generational and in extreme flux; so my essay is not about supporting fluidity only, but also straightness in fluid discourse. To ignore it and place it at the backwater of contemporary sexology, as a redundant “mass” public attitude, is to forgo the versatile trade of sex and murder, of the performance of gender. Actually, the reader can consider this essay a murder story on its own, in which my own quest for sexual liberation through intellectual production, which should have lead me towards fluidity, has in turn uncovered my true desire for being straight, being fixed, being controlled. Further, if we are to treat straightness as an oppressive rule, then it must be considered as an oppressive rule of two, folie à deux, of man and woman, of consumer and producer. This is where I find contemporary sexuality, in the “in between” and liminal graveyard of the two oppressors; it is spectral but within a spectrum of death, nowhere anywhere close to either, but extremely limited by them at the same time.

## Prologue: How did we get to this Mass Graveyard of Sex?

It is evolutionary scale that the discourse on patriarchy and sex is lacking, where “man” is not connected to immediate sex and blood, but in envisioning man in grand connection with worldwide and interplanetary nature, from the ape to the flea; the evolutionary Darwinian man. It is through this line of inquiry who “man” seeks to fuck and kill and eventually reach. Most of the contemporary media show man hunched over the computer screen, as in, his evolution ends at the screen, at media. But the media man is a distraction from the “self-realization” of the evolutionary man, who is not in domestic or corporate dystopia but in wildlife and galactic bliss.

The “man” as an environmental engineer, landscaper and observer of the “field” is how man became scientifically enlightened and realized that the real host for his inscriptions of sexual lack are in nature. This is everything from castrating bulls for fattier meats to cave and wall drawings, in which man and species are seen intertwining with each other. It is decades long researchers who collect fauna at the bed of the Arctic. It is in situating the body in alienation of itself, of “something more than,” that has come to roost: wildlife, outer space, nature, oceans. Man discovered at the depths of the world, at the depths of the “south,” things die and then are rebirthed, and this is contemporary sexology.<sup>41</sup>

It is no only in the fleshy or libidinal motivations of a body – semen, sweat, urine, blood – but in its rapture

with what is more than its body, and it is usually in alien landscapes, in alienated spaces, in alienated identities, in the Anthropocene; a process of alienation that is not atomization or disintegration, but the search for “more than” feeling human, of being inside a body. Man, unlike animals, seeks that which transits and radiates outside of the body. The public image of wildlife men who survey distant alien foreign lands, are never violent or murderous men, but disarmed men. Somehow, outside the functions of their body, operating in greater harmony with a wider nature, outside their own flesh. This is what man’s “nature” is like, it is about him being an evolutionary man, not an identity politics man, who prevails as an environmental or civilizational champion, as maybe even sexless. It is only in nature, which he cannot mutilate for its sheer power over him, in which he finally submits to his death.

Is a positive sexual identity a body-located expression, or is it what can be expressed despite of our bodies? I believe that the sexual search of ‘MAN’ is for alienaty, not humanity. The spectre of the man as enslaved and interlinked with nature lifts the entitled sense of power from the human body and sees it displaced by nature. In this process, “man” discovers they are not a consumer or producer, but a dead man. “Man” in nature is decomposing to enrich and nourish nature. This is man’s final frontier: being dead in natural terms. This is where sexuality is today; in a sense of alienation from nature and its fixities. Nature knows what it is doing, meanwhile, humans are flawed. This is man’s personification of his lack. Nature is great and powerful, man is not.

Identity politics man saw the non-Western evolutionary body, of the Tropics, Orient, and Africa as a proximal figure

<sup>41</sup> Greta Gaard, *Critical Ecofeminism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017).

for sex with nature, or the sexless in nature, and continues to exploit it when it doesn't yield immediate results. The non-West, to the evolutionary man, offers an imagination of sex as otherworldly, mythological, or serendipitous, manifested in practices such as mutilating, circumcising, stoning, geishaing, beheading. This interface between man and the non-Western body believes that the natural state of sex is not in seeking immediate gratification but in its supposed bliss with the "nature of things." This supposedly "arrived" or fixed sexuality of the non-Western evolutionary body, which is usually displayed out in figures such as a passionate Hispanic character or an overly-veiled Muslim woman, are symbolic representations of connections between the non-Western body and forces outside of the performance of its body, as if towards "nature."

I have noticed a similar trend in the arena of knowledge producers, such as academics, curators, and thinkers. Many are encouraging the integration of the non-Western evolutionary body – indigenous, subaltern, minorities – for how they interpret "nature," which is usually imagined to be a practice that is in harmony and equilibrium with the "order of things," especially the order and mediation of nature-mystics rather than the sociopolitical. This, à la nature methodology, is perceived to alleviate the weight of Western modernism and imperialism. It is noticeable in social practice too, from climate justice to emerging thinking on the non-human, digitization, and singularity. The search in sex is no longer in freedom, or in identity, but with the "natural" and "nature"; it is biomimicry: the "greening" of sex.

In 1926, Wyndham Lewis wrote on the operations of masculinity as "a carefully nurtured secondary development above the normal and womanly" and that if the "arbitrary psychological machinery that [...] constitutes the mere male 'a man'" was removed, "he collapses and becomes to all intents and purposes a woman."<sup>42</sup> So my question is what if man did not collapse and become a woman, but instead stepped over both woman and man, and has entitled himself to a new elation, to become a prophet of nature; guilt free. In nature, man has finally discovered that his sex, his mating, with other men, signifies very little. The man is not only an evolutionist, or necropolitical, he is an *extinctionist*.

<sup>42</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (Santa Rose, CA: Blacksparrow, 1990), 194-6.

