

## Preface to my dissertation

Oddly, it was not my dissertation advisor who was most influential as I was writing my PhD Dissertation at UCSC in History of Consciousness. It was Norman O. Brown, author of *Love's Body*. It was Norman O. Brown who gave me an F in a course he was teaching that I walked out of, and, later, Norman O. Brown who came up to me as I was waiting in line at my Ph.D graduation ceremony and stuck out his hand saying, "You are one of the reasons I came this graduation."

*Love's Body* was required reading in the required first-year seminar for my entering class in 1974. There were practically no other requirements in this independent studies program. Brown was the humanities professor for this interdisciplinary seminar. A well-known and a flamboyant Greek and Humanities professor at UCSC, he once staged a performance of *Finnegan's Wake*, where he played Fennigan, getting into and out of an actual coffin on the stage where I was in attendance: Finn again. As a Freudian theorist, (author of *Life against Death*), he brought the aging Marcuse to the campus and tried to set up a series of debates with him, but never got Marcuse to agree

*Love's Body* could only have been written with a profound understanding of the nature of metaphor, and in the West, that means an understanding of Greek, and how it plays a central role in the etymology of western languages. His book is an apotheosis of the phallus, literally calling for "penises everywhere." It demonstrates the role of the human body in etymology. And that body is male. It reveals the point of view structured into our western languages -- that of the male human, the male human who structured his implicit image into our languages as they were developed. The male human created the structure of grammar, the rules governing pronouns, the central position of the so-called "generic he." The generic person, it goes without saying, is masculine. The masculine is only sometimes to be read as a gender, as when you have to make a specific choice between two bathroom doors, or when groups are identified by sex, as in the musical, "Guys and Gals." Otherwise, "You guys," applies to all. Even addressing an all-female group. And even when the speaker is female. As Monique Wittig showed, there is only one gender, the feminine, the masculine, having appropriated to itself the universal.

I arrived in this seminar after living in France in a time when the student world, the intellectual world, was reeling in the aftermath of Mai 1968. Where materialist theory was critiquing the dualistic ideas of philosophical idealism. Where the deconstructionist Derrida was accusing the Freudian Lacan of "phallogocentrism." Where feminists in my group of the MLF (the "Polymorphes perverses") referred to sexist men as "phallocrates." No wonder I perceived the phallogocentric *Love's Body* as a book I had to refute -- not surprising I chose *The Lesbian Body*, just translated into English, to anchor my critique of phallogocentrism. Never mind that

my non-conformist dissertation nearly got me kicked out of the program three times.

Today, all of us who struggled together fifty years ago can be gratified at the groundswell of support for Monique Wittig's book.

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