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JOURNAL > SITE 2. DARK ROOM: SOMATIC REASON AND SYNTHETIC EROS |
2019

Three Billion Pervers (1973)

Anonymous

“Trois milliards de pervers: Grande encyclopédie des homosexualités” (“Three Billion Pervers: The Big Encyclopedia of Homosexualities”) is the title of the twelfth issue of the journal *Recherches*, founded in 1965 by Félix Guattari. Published in March 1973, this issue caused a scandal, proclaiming the irruption of homosexuality in French society. Very quickly banned, seized, and destroyed for breach of moral standards, it became a milestone in the history of homosexual struggles. Recently reprinted, this publication is at once an historical document and an element of reflection for contemporary struggles for emancipation, shedding light on what could be a homosexual affirmation conceived as a radical break with the normative structures running through the social space. Combining testimonies, original texts, and interviews; articulating social criticism, literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis; across spaces as diverse as cafés, political meetings, prisons, asylums, parks, and urinals; and bringing together contributions from such figures as Gilles Deleuze, Fanny Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jean Genet, Felix Guattari, Daniel Guérin, Guy Hocquenghem, Jean-Jacques Lebel, the actor Marie-France, Vera Memmi, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jozy Thibaut, “Trois milliards de pervers” takes the form of a collective of homosexuals reflecting on the come-on, masturbation, transvestites, scouting, and militant movements, in order to call into question all forms of desiring-production. As such, this publication set out to establish an entirely “new scientific spirit.”

We are reprinting here a fragment of this historical archive entitled “La Femme de drague,”¹ a conversation between seven women addressing the social and affective economy of seduction. This is preceded by Michel Foucault’s testimony at the trial of Félix Guattari, in 1974, after the publication was seized.



Michel Foucault’s Testimony at the Trial of Félix Guattari

“There are three problems with this trial.

The first, which is apparent, is not, I believe, the most important one. It’s freedom of expression that is the issue: Is it pornography or not? The court would like to confine the trial to this aspect.

In fact, behind this first question is another that is much more serious: Will homosexuality, as a sexual practice, be granted the same rights of expression and practice as so-called normal sexuality? But it isn’t in these terms that the magistrates intend to conduct the arguments.

In third place arises the fundamental problem: the relationship between politics and sexuality.

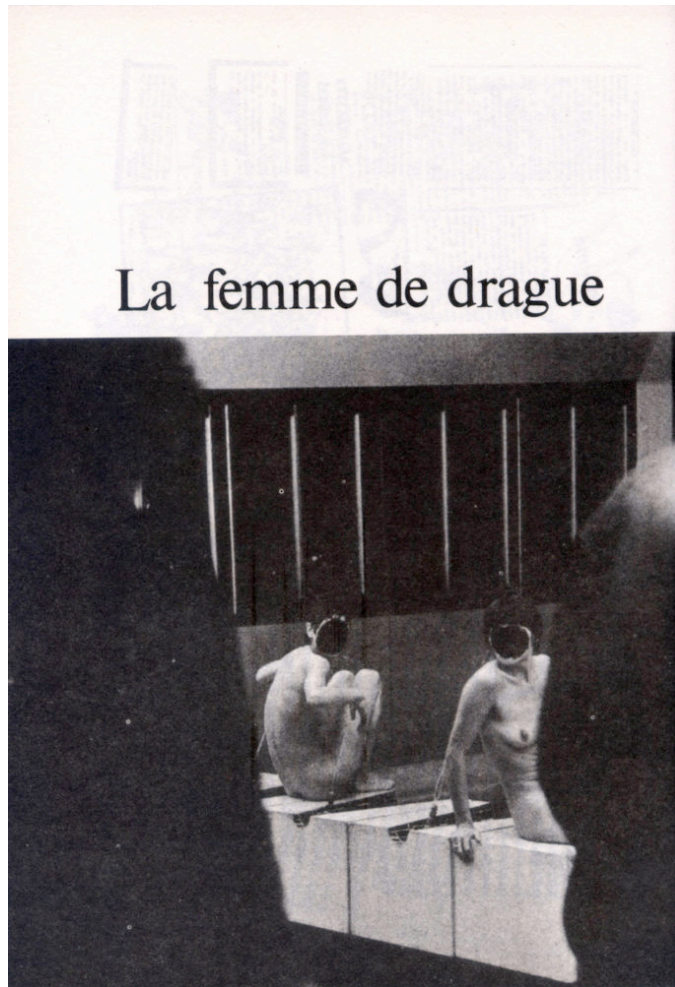
Does sexuality, the demand for sexual rights, the possibility of practicing the sexuality that one wants, constitute a political right? Can we, now, around those terms, constitute a movement whose objectives are ultimately political? This is the whole problem of integrating sexuality into the political battle.

And therein lies the fundamental issue raised by this trial. The problem is that neither the government nor the magistrates representing it want the question raised in these terms. So they have limited the trial to a much easier question to ask: Is it pornography or not?

Is the incriminated publication an issue of truly serious, academic research and investigation or, on the contrary, a compilation of smut? I don't think we should let ourselves be entrapped in this way. The content of the journal, the nature of the illustrations, the value, the boundary of pornography that they cross or that they don't cross, all this is, I believe, of no importance. The serious issue, once again, is that of sexuality in politics. When we see today the importance that the MLF² has assumed, the issue of abortion, when we witness the candidacy of the clown Monsieur Royer,³ we can be sure that this is a key area of contemporary society. And not only of society but also of politics.

For a whole politics of the body has been enforced. In effect, since the 17th and 18th centuries, the human body has been used, locked down, held in check, constricted as work force. This policy consisted in extracting the maximum useable forces for work and the maximum useable time for production. Currently, what is being put to question is this: Are we going to be able to regain possession of our own bodies, and of the bodies of others too—with all the relations this implies—for purposes other than this use as a workforce?

It is this fight for our bodies that makes sexuality a political issue. It is understandable, in these conditions, that so-called normal sexuality, that is, reproductive of the workforce—with what this presupposes in terms of a rejection of other forms of sexuality and the subjugation of women—wants to be considered normative. And it is equally normal that, in the political movement aimed at regaining possession of the body, we find movements for the liberation of women as well as for male and female homosexuality.”



La Femme de Drague

Christiane: There are lots of ways to come on to someone. No one has ever seen me doing so cause I manage to do it without being noticed. I can tell you what I do: One method is to throw yourself on a piece of ass, just like that, saying come with me, etc., or you can simply make yourself receptive. It's very common with women. That's what they do. They don't usually lunge at a man's fly ... or a woman's pussy. They usually show that they're ready and willing so that the other person notices and does the rest. And there is no mistaking it. It's a code. All you have to do is be in the right place at the right time, in the right conditions, and act the right way.

Annie: Conforming to what the guy expects of you...

Cathy: Depends on the relationship I'd say: In relationships one person acts and the other is acted on, and it isn't necessarily the guy, it could be the girl. As a girl, I've seen women act like that towards me, so it's not a question of gender in these cases, it's a question of a relationship, where one person acts and the other is acted on.

Christiane: Gotta say, it's not like that anymore. How was it we didn't dare before?

Ozane: I would've liked to but didn't know how ... There were times I wanted to connect with someone and I didn't know how to go about it because it felt like doing something aggressive... Having something to gain is dreadful, it's paralyzing and in the end I couldn't do a thing. I wasn't going to put myself in the position of trying to win someone over when I'd have been happy to just make a connection, I didn't know how to go about it. Seems like there are other ways of connecting with people.

Christiane: Connecting with someone is one thing, coming on to someone is another. When I'd come on to someone, I felt like I was doing something shameful. If you're there without a whole lot of people around you whose only desire is to throw themselves on top of you or fall to their knees in front of you, without this crowd paying tribute to you and you there like their queen, you feel isolated, neglected, shameful, lonely, and alone. It's not a good feeling. If at a time like that you happen to go out to a café, and you look around you instead of looking down, that's seen as a come-on, if you go dancing in places where there are people, you don't feel good, you feel kinda shameful and gross. But then coming on to people is simply a matter of being there, looking at what's going on and being ready for whatever happens.

Receptiveness

Ozane: I don't call that coming on to someone, I call it receptiveness.

Anne: I find I can't follow through when it happens. I remember, for example, days when I was feeling really lonely and I went for a drink, just like that, at La Coupole, a typical place, and if someone happened to talk to me, I'd stick my nose in my book. Because there's something in the come-on that just doesn't sit well, cause it can't be on the basis of my face alone that someone would want to start a relationship with me. If it's from my face alone, it must be my ass not my face, or the fact that I'm a woman, so it can't be a meaningful relationship. I feel like any relationship you start has to be lasting, otherwise you're a whore. Two or three times I did things like, a guy'd come up to me in the street, he'd have a relatively nice face, we'd talk, for example, there was this black guy who I walked through Luxembourg with one day, another time there was this painter... We talked and then I make a date to meet up with him two or three days later and the guy doesn't show up of course. And if someone approaches me in the métro, it happens a lot with foreigners, and I respond without thinking anything of it, just like that, to talk... Once the guy chased me afterwards, haranguing me with insults; I'd simply talked to him politely in the métro with no hidden agenda. I had no desire for it to go on any longer than that. Once at a meeting of Cahiers de Mai on Usinor-Dunkerque,⁴ they'd brought

workers to the meeting, the questions asked by the leftists were completely idiotic and I let them know I thought their questions were stupid. Later, we went out for a drink with the workers, and the militants had everything planned, the place where they'd sleep, wake-up at 6 in the morning to catch a plane to go to another meeting in Lyon. The nicest guy, who'd noticed me during the discussion, said to me, "There's room at your place?" And then we spent a very enjoyable night together and we exchanged telephone numbers and addresses, but nothing came of it. I had two or three relationships like that, cool but short-lived. Don't know if that's a pick-up, but they were in complete contradiction with the idea I had of casual relationships as sleazy.

Ozane: And the upshot? Nothing? You never got together with these people again?

Anne: Bottom line, I couldn't give a fuck. For example, one day I was on my way home, carrying a bunch of books. A guy with a relatively nice-looking face comes up to me and says: "What are you doing with those? It's incredible to see a girl on a Sunday afternoon in the middle of the summer with three books. Show me what you're reading..."

Philosophy, that's so unusual. What are you reading this for? I'd really like to talk with you." He took me to a café. He was a painter. I wanted to see his paintings. He had to add a coat of varnish. He takes me to see them. He explains why his paintings weren't remarkable, how the money system worked, the contracts that forced painters to make a painting of a certain size every month. We spend the afternoon talking. Then he takes me to my place. When I was about to leave him he started fondling me, saying he'd really like to get together with me again, and at the same time he tells me about his wife, who he'd left because she pissed him off, right off the bat going into bullshit that pissed me off. I give him my number anyway, just to get rid of him. I give my number to people to get rid of them because I'm never home.

Cathy: What you're saying right now is that the come-on is something that happens to you from the outside, it's not you. There are people who... so you hook up with them or you don't. My experience is not that at all. It's not a matter of being heterosexual or homosexual, that's for sure, just look how it is between us.

Christiane: There's still something I'd like to point out, it's that I've never come on to a woman. There are times when a woman comes along and a relationship develops, an attraction on my part, a mutual relationship that develops, meaning with a complete person. Don't know what I like about her, it's not necessarily her figure, it's what she says, who she is, don't know exactly what. At a time like that, there's an affinity, it's

situated in the realm of relationships. I've never come on to a girl. The come-on for me is situated in the institution and the institution is heterosexuality, men coming on to women. Women are not situated in the institution; with women there are relationships. Ozane: But a woman can come on to you.



The come-on as institution

Christiane: I guess that must happen. I guess I must have felt too uptight, or I just didn't notice it when I had the feeling I was simply developing a relationship. I have this way of acting toward a come-on that is visible on me, cynical and precise: Yes, if I'm the one coming on to someone, otherwise it makes me really uptight, coming from women, since for me it's not in the institution, it's in nature. The come-on is connected to the institution of fucking. The institution is fucking.

Ozane: When coming on to others, you don't think you've ever made them uptight?

Christiane: I'm extremely guarded about it, they can see it or not. In any case, it doesn't get them as uptight as I get when a guy throws himself on me saying, "So here we are, all alone, my pretty," even if there are six of us there, it's all the same.

Cathy: In the institution, it's hetero come-on or active-passive come-on, with precise roles. In the small portion of my life when I was heterosexual, I was the one who'd do the coming on. I didn't have that attitude of... oh, I see, he's coming on to me, well I'm okay with this one, that Ann was describing. I was the one who'd say to myself, that one, he suits me, let's go for it. Not at all an attitude of receptivity. I've used the same type of come-ons with men and with women.

Christiane: The way I'd come on to men is similar to you, except that with me, it was underhanded, I got the message across by a general way of behaving, I didn't pounce on their fly.

Cathy: When you talk of pouncing on a guy's fly, except when people are completely uptight, it really doesn't seem to me to be the issue. When I'd hear my gay friends talking, they don't pounce on each other's fly, there's a relationship that develops in words, and it's not "zip." I don't see where the come-on begins and seduction ends.

Annie: Even in the MLF,⁵ there are specialized establishments: Some girls will go dancing at the Katmandou.⁶ I've always felt deeply outraged by this. They go dancing, looking for girls.

Cathy: When I go dancing at the Katmandou with someone, it's that there's no physical relationship yet, but it can develop and this can be by going to the Katmandou, or going out to eat together.

Ozane: There are not that many places where you can hold a girl close. You feel at home, happy in the Katmandou.

"An immediate mutual code is only found in come-on situations"

Cathy: There's a side to the come-on that I like quite a bit, that's social and about representation, which is that, as long as the code's mutual, which is what I'd like, a real relationship can grow out of this mutual code. An immediate mutual code is only found in come-on situations: You come into a place and there's someone's there facing you and there's a potential that things could happen right away with that person. This state, the potential that things could happen right away, is a cool place to be, in my opinion, and what's totally far-out in this regard is what you can propose at a time like that to make things happen.

Christiane: Cathy's moving here to the final picture when I'm simply sketching a crude picture!

Cathy: The crude picture of a come-on is when you pounce on someone to have sex, when you get right to the point. This picture can be transformed to the point that the come-on becomes a game two people play, when the people there are the same, meaning two individuals who don't know each other, but the discourse is nevertheless somewhere else, not only about fucking.

What do you come on to?

Annie: I've never come on to people; others may have come on to me, but I was so uptight, I didn't notice it. It's what you were saying before, when someone accosts you and he addresses your face, your ass, not you as a person.

Cathy: I could raise an objection to that. You can see someone's personality on their face, their body, the way they hold themselves, if you have a certain amount of sensitivity to people.

Annie: A person's way of holding themselves is their way of giving a certain image of themselves. My sense is that it's a false image.

Cathy: Even with a minimal degree of connection with people, you can get a pretty good handle on them, so that when you're addressing them, you're not only addressing blue eyes, etc.

Anne: If you're addressing a body, which really turns me off, that's why you'll come on to this one rather than that one. In relationships that involve having been together in meetings, having heard the person speak, knowing what's on their mind, how they talk, then I can choose, because for me that's the decisive criterion, while based on physical aspects, on the street level, apart from people who with a fascist face, everyone else attracts me equally, and there are plenty of people who don't have fascist faces.

Cathy: Maybe it's a matter of developing all possibilities. For me, it's specific, that's for sure. There's a certain number... but if I start defining this number, it's definitely not in relation to the experiences I've had. It's a wide range of people. But no one's asking me to choose from that. That's when the other more or less steps in.

Annie: But if you start judging by appearances, why is it always the same people who get hit on, and the same people who stay in the shadows, who are unremarkable. When you come on to someone in the street, you're judging them on appearances.

Cathy: I'm not so sure. It's also in your head. When I was in boarding school, there were two or three girls who everyone looked at. And those girls were lonely and unhappy, they didn't feel good about themselves, they felt ugly, etc. For me, I really can't say if the people I look at are people who others don't look at.



Clubs

Catherine: I have very little desire and for very few people. To me, coming on to someone involves a whole code that I'm incapable of applying. When I'd go to clubs, for example, I'd notice that girls were making eyes at each other, and I couldn't put on that kind of an act, I'm just not capable of it. When I go to a club thinking I'm going to pick someone up, I find I don't actually have any real impulse to do so. I look at the girls in the club and there isn't a single one I fancy. So I take a coin, saying to myself, okay, this girl heads or tails, I have to make a choice. The first time I decided to come on to someone, it was because I'd been in love with a girl for six years and I'd been completely alone for four years. So I said to myself, this can't go on. I went out and it felt like I was jumping from the third floor when I said "hello, what's your name?"

Cathy: Very soon you end up coming on to people outside clubs because in clubs, it's worse than the code. It's always the same small closed world, and very very soon it becomes exasperating. Coming on to people, just like that, in life everywhere, is a blast.

Annie: But before the movement to meet other homosexuals, your only choice was to go to a club.

Can a woman be homosexual inasmuch as she has desires for you?

Annie: Before the movement, the women I'd meet, well there'd be a percentage that were homosexual and a percentage that were heterosexual, and I'd fall in love indiscriminately, and each time I'd fall for heterosexuals who were completely uptight.

Cathy: You can also meet heteros who are not uptight; and the others, you can also make them uptight at first. What interests me in the life of a woman is who she is with me right there and then when she's facing me. Her past, her future, at the outset, I don't really give a shit. At the outset, I don't give a flying fuck about knowing who she is.

Christiane: I had lots of stuff that didn't lead anywhere because the response wasn't there. I'd send a message, no response, another one, no response, then she takes off in a plane. It's true that it happens all the time. The problem is not about asking someone, are you homosexual, you are, then let's go to bed. It's a matter of starting a relationship in general and when the person was heterosexual, and not interested in anything, it'd become a relationship of friendship.

Annie: You've got to know how to create a relationship of friendship and a relationship of friendship is created through language. You have to know how to talk. I clammed up hundreds of times because I didn't know how to interest someone through my language and my culture.

Catherine: Most of the girls around me were good talkers and would seduce by being smart-asses. So I figured it wasn't worth even trying, it would never work.

Pleasure, anticipated and shared

Cathy: That's what I thought at first; I thought, they're expecting something from me. What is it? Will I manage to fulfil my mission? If you have someone facing you and you're feeling like that, things usually go pretty badly. At some point, about the time that I started becoming much less interested in clubs and I started to go fishing in life, the problem was no longer whether I'd be up to fulfilling who knows what role, but whether the anticipated pleasure was shared. Seeing someone for ten minutes in six months makes you anticipate the pleasure of a relationship. Once you have this sense of anticipated pleasure, you figure you'll find out whether it'll be shared. And this no longer concerns you as an individual, in terms of your essential values that are so precious to you.

Anne: Anticipated pleasure is something I'm much more familiar with in the repetition, in the fact of seeing someone again, but the first time I'm scared out of my mind and at the same time I have the impression that things will go very badly..

Cathy: But what does very badly mean at a time like that?

Anne: Very badly, well, for example, that we'd talk and bore each other to tears, then, if it's with a guy, that he doesn't get a hard on or that I clam up completely, or, for example, when I made love to another girl besides you, it was very unpleasant, it was a bummer. Experiences like that are a real bummer, it doesn't give me any desire, it inhibits me for sure when it comes to starting a new relationship. It's absurd because if we really love each other, or something of the sort, we keep at it even if it doesn't work so well the first time.

Christiane: In a conventional pick-up, there's a total lack of consideration for the other person, the other is treated as an object. Do we ever have this type of relationship?

Anne: My impression is that there are guys who when they come on to you treat you like an object, and if you happen to react as a person, not passively and defensively, they go away with their tail between their legs.

Catherine: There have been times when someone came on to me in a way that I found very seductive and that sparked a desire in me to get to know the person.

Testing your power of seduction

Cathy: And what's wrong with testing your power of seduction. I don't see such a big difference between when someone you've loved for six months tells you you're beautiful and when it's someone you've never seen before. It's reassuring in either case.

Anne: But being reassured about your beauty in a pick-up situation is being reassured in relation to a model.

Cathy: It's not about beauty, it's about your power of seduction. By power I mean potential, possibility, having the sense that you're pretty and attractive, like having the sense that you have the potential to write a beautiful text.

Rachel: It's not the same thing when it's people or when it's paper and ideas in your head.

Cathy: Why shouldn't a sense of one's power of seduction be a factor among others.

There are times you want to prove things to yourself.

Anne: If we define the come-on as a way of entering into a relationship with people who you make love to, there's no reason for it to end. There are different ways of starting a relationship.

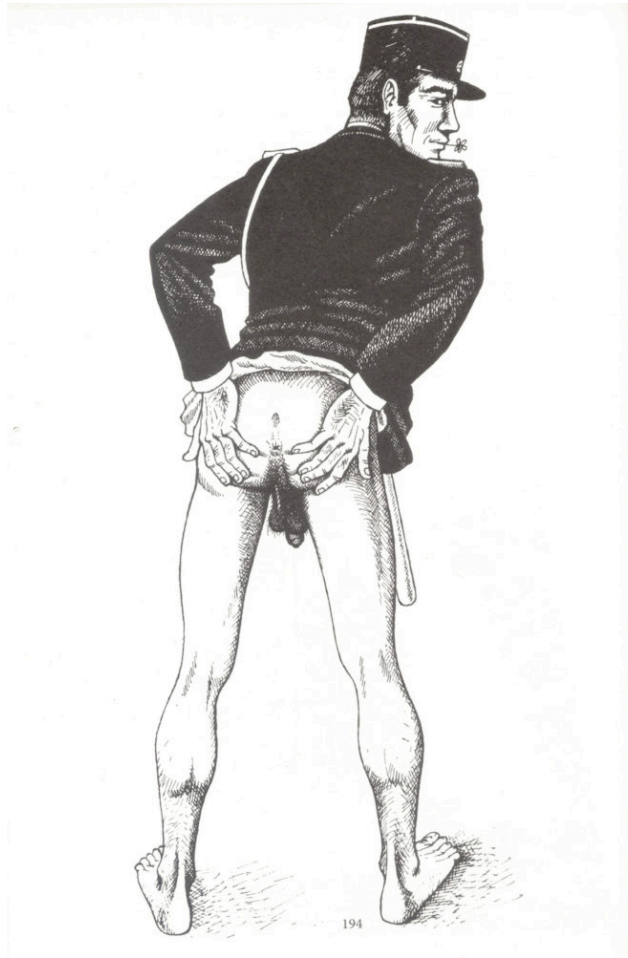
Christiane: To me, when what you're doing is coming on to people, you're presenting yourself like someone out on a hunt and looking for game. Entering into a relationship is very different. I know very well there are overlaps, but it still seems to me that they are two separate realms. The starting point here is going hunting and seeing others as game.

Cathy: What you're saying is so Manichean. It isn't true that in a deep, ongoing relationship, an intelligent relationship, there's nothing, at the beginning at least, that fits your hunt-game category, that makes me say about a girl I've seen only two times in my life, hey, I'd like to sleep with that one. There's this prior desire to reach a goal that the other person is not necessarily aware of, which puts her in the position of game, but this doesn't stand in the way of developing a beautiful, satisfying relationship in the end.

Rachel: To me, the come-on is something very simple: It's the guy who goes out at night to find a girl, he doesn't even choose. It's something institutionalized, the pick-up on the Champs Elysées at night, the cars stopping, etc. When it's more subtle, it can sometimes be appealing.

Anne: But that's the kind of thing we know inside out; might as well go hand out fliers about it on the Champs Elysées. What are we doing here? Are we talking about the subject to get rid of a number of inhibitions or to prepare a tract for the Champs Elysées. None of us are concerned by come-ons on the Champs Elysées.

Rachel: But homosexual come-ons between women are exactly the same, they even seem worse to me cause I was expecting something different from women. We go clubbing by category: It's a leather jacket club here, a jean club here, an Arab club there. It's disconnected from human relationships, from life, and it's not even sexual, it's gymnastics, it's flat out about a piece of ass, when you're in the dark you don't even see who it is, for balling. I asked someone why do you do that when you have a girlfriend at home and you could be doing other stuff. It's satisfying a relationship to a piece of ass, abstractly. From women, I was expecting something else. I've been to lots of women's clubs and it struck me. Have to say a lot of the women there didn't like it either. In these clubs, I didn't even have the guts to dance when I like dancing a lot, because when a girl invites you it's not to dance it's to come on to you. Once, we started dancing as a group, everyone felt better, it was not that closed thing with everyone looking to get something from someone else and everyone feeling uncomfortable. Treating others like an object is not worthy of us as feminists. And, when we talk about the come-on, I think of these types of relationships.



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Evelyne: People have come on to me, but when it comes to coming on to them, I don't really know how to go about it. When someone comes on to me, I don't even realize it. And when I realize all the conning that went into it, I get really paranoid. It stops me dead in my tracks. I simply can't go on. It paralyzes me totally, I don't know why I'm doing this. The only time I tried, I took one step forward and four steps back, and as a result nothing ever happened with that girl.

Catherine: To get people to come on to you, you have to do a number of things. I've had people come on to me, but I behave in a way that blocks them, even girls who appeal to me.

Evelyne: I always thought this was something only guys did. Then I discovered in the movement that girls were coming on to me. I'll usually throw a bucket of cold water on the girl, saying "so you want to sleep with me?" Of course, she's not expecting that at all.

Anne: What is it about our little bodies that's so precious that we need to protect it and reject the other person's desire to sleep with us?

Annie: When a girl you don't know comes on to you, well you tell yourself you're just an object to her, that's all.

Anne: What I found physically trying in relationships with guys, when they treat you like an object, is how physically unpleasant it is, they jackhammer you, you don't feel a thing—when you don't actually feel pain—and then when they're done... It sucks big time. That's what I call treating you as an object, the guy who comes up to you from behind. Mademoiselle, do you have far to walk? You're a student? Can I keep you company? And, if you laugh in response, he splits. You can see very well that if you and he had screwed, it would've gone very badly, he wouldn't have been able to get it up or, if he did, he'd have shot his wad in no time. There's that whole side of it that's dreadful. But there are also relationships that are direct and cool. Like, after one of our meetings, a guy said, "Can I come over and sleep at your place tonight?" I said yes right away because it was frank, direct, clear, and it went really well, it was really cool. We'd noticed each other in political discussions, that's what started the relationship, of course it's not a guy accosting me in the street. If a guy comes up to me in the street in a really nice way, why couldn't that happen, there's no reason to give priority to an approach on a political plane over an approach through a commonplace, everyday phrase.

Desiring someone is fucking scary

Catherine: I get the feeling that we don't want to admit that desiring someone can be fucking scary. It gives you the impression that you're going to be dragged into something that you won't know how to respond to. In my case, for example, I was once raped by a heterosexual because I didn't have the guts to say no. That's why I'm often afraid of desire, I don't want it cause I tell myself I won't know how to refuse.

Evelyne: The thing is, it should be possible for a girl to come tell you she wants to sleep with you, knowing that you might say yes and you might say no.

Cathy: There are times I can't tell you how turned off I'd be if someone said yes. Imagine that you come up to the lady of your life at seven at night, someone with whom you've never made love, and say to her I want to make love to you and she says yes, well, hell, I don't think that's how I want to get to it. What point is there in formulating the thing.

Christiane: With the come-on situation, that's not what's involved; it's about categories as totalities.

Catherine: Why couldn't we be completely laid-back when someone comes on to us?

Christiane: It really freaks me out to have someone facing me who doesn't see me as a person. It even freaks me out when I see it happening to someone else and I'm not in the picture, when I see another girl being hit on.

Catherine: Depending on how I'm feeling about myself at the time, when a guy starts looking at me, it can make me uncomfortable, I don't know where to look anymore, or, just the opposite, I can feel completely laid-back and things go smoothly, I watch the dude come over. Why at certain times it's okay and at others it's not, and yet it's the same thing that's happening. There are times when being looked at like that has no effect and other times when it freaks me out.

Evelyne: A girl came on to me in the street in May 1968, she almost ran me over with her 2CV, she stopped, opened the door, said "climb in," I said yes, I never saw her again.

Catherine: It's funny, the come-ons that are like all other come-ons and yet we say yes... I feel an inhibition and I would like to get rid of it: When someone comes on to me and also because I've never managed to come on to someone else, to simply say to someone that I want her, it's always made me feel like I'm about to jump from the third floor.

Christiane: Fear of failure is really inhibiting. I know that feeling too. That's why I tiptoe around so I can beat the heck out of there without being noticed.

Anne: What does fear of failure mean? Fear that you'll be rejected or fear of a relationship that you may not be able to get out of. All the more since, for me, given that I tend to put myself in a passive position, I find that the distinction between me coming on to someone and someone coming on to me is not very true; often, I'm the one who's ready, but it's as if I needed the other person to give me a formal agreement, a kind of institutionalization of the relationship by the fact that the other person is the one who makes a move... One thing that stops me in my tracks, especially with women, is the thought that I don't know how to make love; I have to find myself with someone who's in the position of initiator; it's a helluva block. Another thing, when you know the people, you're scared of destroying their system of relationships and then not being able to follow through. For example, a girl living with a guy, I have no desire to stir up shit, same thing for a guy living with a girl I know. When I don't know the people it's different. When you're not there expecting someone to fuck with you, when you're not running scared, then they don't fuck with you. Don't know what it is in my body, in my way of acting that has changed but now it's very rare that I get approached. It's not that I wanted to be picked up beforehand, just the opposite, it has to do with what's on my mind when I'm out walking, the obsession that I will be hit on or something else. I'm not often hit on now cause I'm okay with it happening. If it happens, I couldn't give a shit so it's no problem at all. When you're scared of being hit on, you're scared of your body,

especially since people always come up to you from behind, so you're expecting something and that changes your way of walking, and, bang, in that state of expectancy, a guy comes along, etc.

Evelyne: The whole system is so blocked. They never taught us how to connect with another person sexually. They told us about romance, parents in the day, they'd find the stud to go with the girl, etc. We learnt how to behave in society, but not in terms of sexuality, they don't teach us that. Since it's bad, no one talks about it, it's taboo... We have to develop our own system and it's a whole code. The winks, the dude who touches the girl in the street, all that stuff, maybe they're patterns, but they're there to replace something that doesn't exist. We think it's gross cause it's guys accosting us like that and we don't like guys. With guys it's different because I've developed such a strong system of defense against them since I was a teenager that right away they realize they're wasting their time, I'm not fuckable. With girls, I still have this attitude when I feel like a girl is coming on to me, I have a tendency to put up these defenses again because she's kinda acting like I've seen guys act. On the other hand, how do you approach a girl?

Anne: If fucking is really the aim of the come-on, I can't say that I ever have any desire to fuck someone I'm seeing for the first time.

Catherine: When a girl comes on to you, there's a sense of admiration that sparks your desire cause it's so rare.

Evelyne: At the Sorbonne, there was this girl who came on to me: We looked at each other, she winked at me, the next time I found myself sitting next to her, it was a real come-on, but it was so rare. It was before the movement, it was cool to find a girl like that.

Anne: Do you think the come-on is bad because you see it as an act of violence?

Evelyne: If it's a guy coming on to you by touching you on the street, I consider that an aggressive act. To me, it's a form of oppression: Because I'm a woman, he thinks he can treat me like that, touch me, say whatever he wants, like I'm an object.

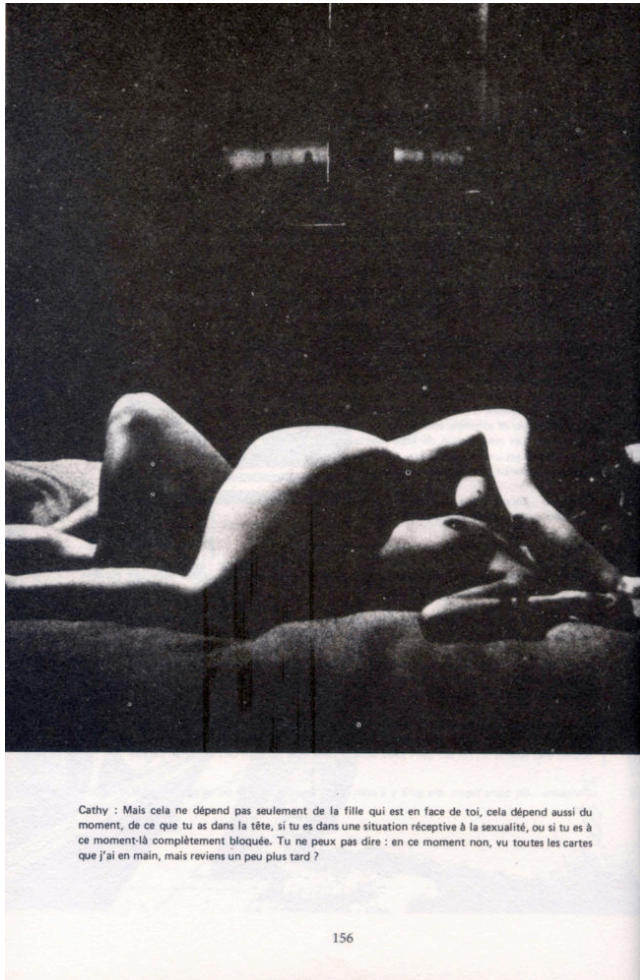
Catherine: What's hard about the relationships we have now is that all the signs can be read in so many different ways, there's no single code anymore, it's more like a code per person.

Evelyne: Personally I can't stand girls who use charm on me cause they want me to come on to them; I'm more receptive to a girl who comes on to me in a masculine way.

Anne: You may have an impulse toward several people you know and wait for enough signs from them to be for sure... It's a terrible problem of evaluation because you don't want to make a mistake, you don't want to force yourself on others, if you're the one who

takes the initiative, you get the sense that you might do violence to someone who's not looking for this at all. That's why I'd also rather adopt the "feminine," "passive" posture, of being in a position to act, but leaving the initiative to the other. I know that if I leave it to the other person, I won't feel that violence has been done to me.

Cathy: And do you think that there's no violence in forcing the other person into the position of having to act. Even if she doesn't force herself violently on you, she'll have to do violence to herself in order to make a move.



Relationships of reciprocity

Christiane: It's beginning to piss me off that there's this weird position dictating that one gives and the other gets. The case of reciprocity barely seems to have existed. It seems to me that all the cases we've been speaking of should be thrown into the trash heap of history. What interests me are relationships of reciprocity.

Anne: But they're mythical; out of the whole slew of people we meet and we ask ourselves questions about, they are very, very rare.

Christiane: That's not my experience and I wonder why that is, maybe it's my way of presenting myself, attentive rather than expectant or pouncing. When I meet people, if something happens, it happens between the two of us, nothing happens from one to the other.

Evelyne: That's what happened between Wanda and me, but it seemed to me really out of the ordinary: We met one night, got talking, continued the discussion at my place, found ourselves in the same bed because there was only one at my place at the time, then I began thinking I'd really like to make love with this girl, she was thinking the same thing, there was a real attraction, and then I touched her and that's how things went.

Christiane: Couldn't we lay down as a working hypothesis that this type of stuff is the real thing and that the other stuff is about obedience, conditioning, institutions, false stuff. As long as there's no relationship of reciprocity in actual fact, we shouldn't be making a move.

Cathy: It's awfully hard to see where the hunt ends and reciprocity begins, because it was the other person, because it was me?

Anne: When we talk about reciprocity, in the back of our minds is the idea that the two people who meet each other were predestined. There's another way of working the hypothesis, in terms of the way that you enter into a relationship with someone, and you can do this from a position of reciprocity no matter who you're entering into a relationship with.

Christiane: In my working hypothesis, predestination is universal: If it's not everyone that's because we're all in deep shit, separated by institutions, patterns, habits. Reciprocity can exist with someone on a specific point and on that point only.

Anne: When we say that, we're disregarding what we said before: that we're afraid of fucking, of being fucked, of entering into a sexual relationship. For there to be reciprocity on all levels, there's a whole slew of behaviors that need to be changed. In the many relationships I've had until now, there has very rarely been reciprocity from the outset. For example, I've been in love with a girl for a very long time; I felt particularly in love the night at the Mutualité; there'd never been anything physical between us; I have no idea whether it's reciprocal or not; before the movement, because I was repressing my homosexuality, I experienced this relationship as a fantasy rivalry. It's a bizarre relationship, where we don't speak much, because we don't want to touch on it, cause that would open up a can of worms.

Christiane: What stops a relationship from being reciprocal are the hangups, the questions we ask ourselves, our anxieties.

Cathy: Reciprocity can exist and the relationship can still be stuck.

Anne: But in such a situation, I'd tend to put myself in a waiting position and let the other person take the initiative.

Evelyne: We shouldn't treat sexual reciprocity as a separate case; you can have relations with someone on all levels.

Anne: For me the problem of reciprocity comes up as soon as sexual relations are more or less in the picture. That's when the shit starts, the inhibitions, the taboos, obsessions, lots of stuff that messes things up.

Evelyne: Why do we need a whole game to find out if another person wants to communicate with us sexually, when the question doesn't come up for verbal communication? When you talk with someone, you know the other person likes talking to you or she'd have left.

Christiane: Anyway, as soon as sex is in the picture, there's anxiety and you don't want the response to be no.

Cathy: But this doesn't only depend on the girl facing you, it also depends on the moment, what's in your head, if you're receptive to sexuality, or if you're completely hung up at that point in time. You can't say: right now, no, given the cards I have in my hand, but come back a little later?

Translated from the French by Gila Walker.

Footnotes

1. Translator's note: The noun "*la drague*" and the verb "dragner" are colloquial for an amorous advance, for flirting, generally for the purpose of having sex, and often but not only casual sex. As a verb *dragner* could be translated variously as to come on to, hit on, make a move, a play, or a pass. In seventies gay culture it is associated with the act of cruising.
2. French Women's Liberation Movement.
3. After the death of Georges Pompidou in 1974, Jean Royer ran for president on the platform of "moral order."
4. *Les Cahiers de Mai* was a journal created immediately after the event of May 68 and published until 1974. The aim of the publication was to establish connections between revolutionary workers groups. For this purpose, political meetings were organized bringing together activist workers in about fifteen factories, including Usinor's in Dunkirk.
5. See above, note 2.
6. A lesbian disco for women in Paris

