

#### 4. What the Dildo does for us

When we browse through the various chat-rooms on Chaturbate, it is striking that broadcasts that abstain from making use of a remote-controlled sex toy are scarce. Or at least it is the broadcasts that do integrate a Lovense, or similar toys, into the performance, that make it into the top listed chat-rooms and have the most viewers. Giving spectators the opportunity to have an active impact on the show – and with it on the body of the performer – seems profitable. It seems to be the interface that merges the virtual data flow and its material effects back together. This leads me to draw a connection to Paul B. Preciado's conception of the dildo – a conception that is most prominent in his rigorous „Countersexual Manifesto“. Like Schiel, Preciado radically rejects a naturalized *real hard core* of sexuality. Countersexuality undermines sexual binarism – meaning the classification of bodies into two genders of a putative biological origin and discloses the latter as a social construction. Even more drastically, it aims at deconstructing all allegedly “natural” delineations of the performatives of sexual identity. That is, bodies should be freed from confinements that render them masculine, feminine, trans, or intersex and simply exist as bodies. With reference to Donna Haraway's famous Cyborg Manifesto, countersex gives validation to medially generated and governed bodies.

Paving new ways for feminist discourse in the 1980s, Haraway uses the science fiction figure of the *cyborg* and claims it as a figurehead for the emancipatory act of fractioning uniform patriarchal narratives into diversity. *Cyborgs* are hybrid entities of human and machine – CYBernetic ORGanisms. Their cybernetic origination makes them independent from organic reproduction in an autopoietic manner: they are self-regenerating. *Cyborgs* combine imagination and materiality – both attributes, that carry potential for a revolution. As we are all “theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism”<sup>1</sup>, with a posthumanist tinge, Haraway claims that all of us are *cyborgs* already. That is, in a *mixed-reality* fashion, we are social reality and fictional phenomenon at the same time.

What Haraway's *cyborgs* revolt against, is the patriarchal domination of everything that does not embody the naturalized standard of the capitalistic, straight, white male. Yet, what is labeled here as “other”, Preciado undermines

---

1(1991: 150)

with a claim of postidentitarianism. Countersex denies every coercion of attributing sexual identities. The goal can not be identity production or sexual pleasure, that is in danger to be commodified, „but rather exuberant expenditure, affect experimentation, and freedom.“<sup>2</sup> Instead of labeling things, open and joyful exploration is the priority. Along the way, all existing boundaries are to be transgressed in order to estrange oneself from any culturally learned sexuality. Preciado asserts countersexuality is not reducible to gender theories.

The most important tool for the *postgender* subject is the dildo: “The dildo is to sex and to the straight systems of representation of genitals what the cyborg is to the nature/culture divide. Like the cyborg, the dildo is located at the very edge of the racist male-dominant capitalist tradition.”<sup>3</sup> According to Preciado, it is the material manifestation of simulation and abjection. In a capitalistic-patriarchal sense the dildo merely substitutes the penis. It is the synthetic reiteration of the fleshy material of sexual domination – since in a world organized by patriarchy, sex is centered around the penis – therefore a simulation. Hence, its utilization is deemed obscene and commonly disposed into the realm of the abnormal. Preciado points out that in a heteronormative culture, the use of dildo is only justified as a replacement of penis and therefore indicates an undesirable deficiency. Countersex, however, holds that the conception of dildo as a substitute – or simulation – of penis is a misconception. Rather than rendering the dildo as an expression of phallic domination, it should be reinvented as a tool that helps pave the way to *postgender* freedom.

Although fabricated according to the logic of representation and appropriation of nature (sometimes imitating a penis), the dildo, like the cyborg, exceeds that tradition, pushing it to its very limits through parody and dissent. The dildo ontology is postnaturalist and postconstructivist. The dildo politics is postidentitary. At the very limit of life and death, of the organic and the machine, the prosthesis introduces within sex and sexuality not only the ontology of becoming and dispossession but also the politics of somatic drag.<sup>4</sup>

The dildo is a tool that helps to break away from a historicized, naturalized notion of sexuality and sexual organs. As a mechanical object that refrains from ejaculating, it releases sex from the claim of reproduction. It helps to disengage sexual pleasure from biological organs. It is not a mere substitute, but rather shifts

---

2 p.10

3

4

the putative center of sexual pleasure to something inorganic – something outside the body – and thus circumvents the centering of sex around penile pleasure. Its inability to replace the organic leads it to continuously reinvent its form. Thus, it constantly moves further away from the shape it is supposedly trying to replace – and thereby jeopardizes the truth of the penis. The formal and material mutability of the dildo reveals the arbitrariness of the selection of the penis as the dominant pleasure-producing organ. Additionally, as Preciado points out, the dildo, as an inanimate object, unlike the organic penis, leaves pleasure entirely to the subject, without intruding with its own sentience.

The dildo is and is not an organ that, although belonging to someone, can't be fully owned. The dildo belongs to an economy of multiplicity, connection, sharing, transference, and usage. The dildo refuses to be inscribed into the body to create organic wholeness or identity. It stands on the side of dispossession and nomadism.<sup>5</sup>

Preciado comes to the conclusion that pleasure is nothing that can be owned. Pleasure can only be shared – the subject has to take it in from something external and appropriate it. Pleasure, he claims, is shaped by social discourse as well as technology – therefore it is never “real”. Based on the dildo as a non-hegemonic pleasure production device, Preciado develops an idea that is affirmative of our bodies being placed in a media-governed world. The challenge is to appropriate our mixed-media environment in a subversive way that invents new sexual practices and organs instead of resorting to the old, naturalized, historized, hegemonic conceptions of pleasure.

### *Dildonics on Chaturbate*

Like most of the broadcasters of Chaturbate, Hulk\_Dylann and Projektmelody both utilize of a Lovense toy. On their website the brand offers a range of various sex toys in different shapes and colors – none of them trying to imitate the shape, size, colors or texture of biological sexual organs. In fact, they do not resemble any biological shape. Yet, all of the shapes of the offered devices do have an organic feel to them. They seem to embody what Preciado means when he calls for the technological creation of new sexual organs. However, in spite of being in use in both Melody's and Dylan's broadcasts, they are relegated to the obscene in

both cases. Neither of them allows us a clear vision of the artificial sexual organs, that the spectators collectively control.

At least, in Hulk\_Dylan's broadcast, Dylan from time to time gives us a glimpse of a pink string coming out of his anus, by spreading his legs and pulling aside his shorts. We can thus suggest the actual material manifestation of an artificial sexual organ circled by his body. As the tips are spent, that supposedly activate vibrations inside of his body, he signifies to have pleasure from this and motivates his audience to give more. To leave no doubt of the actual use of the Lovense, he performs stronger affects when higher sums of *tokens* come in. They make him lose the control he allegedly tries to maintain in order for his roommate not to realize what is happening in the clandestine. His body contracts unintendedly and occasionally he jumps up on the sofa or grabs Kayn's legs or arms – sometimes leading to the roommate comforting Dylan. Thus for higher amounts of tokens you buy more risk, more pleasure and reveal a bit more of the obscene: the obscenity of a straight man hugging his gay roommate (that has a dildo in his butt) becomes onscene and prepares us for the next step. But to reach the next step of pleasure, the community has to pay.

The physical presence of the communal sex-organ inside of his body serves as proof for the liveness of the broadcasts. By triggering the vibrations of the Lovense, viewers and performers become aware of their *physische Ko-Präsenz*. When a single user spends tokens, the entire community is notified in the chat – and the entire community visually (and one of them physically) perceives the impact of the money spent. In some other broadcasts that I have seen (but did not have the capacity to analyze in the frame of this text), the presence of the Lovense is much stronger. Sometimes I could undeniably hear the vibrations of the sex toy, very often the tips trigger loud and allegedly uncontrolled moaning. All of this “truth” is not possible for Dylan, as he tries to maintain the game of pleasure from the clandestine. However, following the performance for a longer time, the supposed secrecy breaks open bit by bit, resulting in the straight roommate naked, with his penis circled by Dylan's mouth – and sometimes even the promise of him inserting the Lovense (indicated by the goal: “my roommate to use lush [...tk]”<sup>6</sup>).

With Melody the toy remains virtual. To begin with, the material manifestation of the Lovense can not be represented, because the entire performance is disembodied. But even on the next level, its existence remains ambiguous – or obscene – since it is not visualized in any way. What we get to see is only the reaction that it supposedly triggers, that is, only the higher amounts of tips trigger affects in the performer. Ultimately, in order to get pleasure, viewers have to trust the simulated Lovense. Interestingly enough, Projektmelody at that night is the broadcast with both the most visitors and the highest amount of tips spent. In fact, the AI seems to regularly break records on Chaturbate in terms of viewer amounts and height of tips – even her own. Like Hulk\_Dylan, Projektmelody seems to prove that the ambiguous and the clandestine are huge selling points. Melody leaves a lot of blank spots that can be filled with fantasies and thus induce pleasure.

But in one point Melody is not ambiguous at all: her body and gender expression. There is probably no chat on Chaturbate that can be described as countersexual (I have not seen one to date) – but if there is one with a high countersexual potential, it would be Melody's. Since she is, or at least claims to be, an artificial intelligence, with a digitally produced body, and therefore can not claim any biological origin, she could potentially take on any form. With her origination a postidentitarian potential is already inclined. Yet, what she represents is a body shaped by the fantasies of capitalist, heterosexual male domination. She is everything but *postgender*. The gender stereotype of the (pornotopically sexualized) woman is pushed to the maximum with her nonviably slim body with its big round breasts, with her cute high voice, and with her submissiveness – constantly apologizing and “giving the internet what it wants.”<sup>7</sup>

However, in a strikingly controversial way, Melody's broadcast proves that pleasure production on Chaturbate can be unbound first of all from the penis, but ultimately also from the material manifestation of the dildo – while at the same time pretending to be entangled with the socially constructed need of a material object that can be circled. About the actual material presence of a Lovense triggered by the tokens spent in the chat-room there we can only speculate. Meanwhile, the fantasies and desires that emerge from the performance, are triggered by the mere circulation of tips. When Melody in the second part of her show simulates oral sex, a penis is not part of the performance. Instead of a 3D

---

7 Richtig?

rendering of an actual Penis, she sucks on a 3D rendering of a dildo. Hence, even here penile pleasure is not the center; supposedly she sucks on the dildo for her own pleasure (she afterwards claims that she “loved it”<sup>8</sup>). We could, therefore, assert that Melody acts for her own good in an emancipatory manner. But we should not forget is that this is all a simulation, made for an audience that spends money for what they see. The more she delivers to the audience’s desires, the more money is spent. Ultimately, the performance at its core does not simply center around the pleasure of the audience, but rather around the commodification of pleasure. The simulated stimulation is meant to induce desires and affects in the audience members, some of which are uttered in the chat. It is only those utterances that can lead to speculations of who actually sits in front of the other screens. Since a big amount of messages revolve around a penis (e.g. things like “I wish u could sck my cock like the dildo” are uttered), the assumption that a lot of users actually have a penis could be made. But ultimately there is no actual knowledge about the identity of the chat-users. At any rate, watching a performer that claims to be an AI puts into perspective the assumption that there are actual embodied minds on the other side of the interface. In a *mixed-reality* there can be no difference between simulated and embodied stimulation.

What is valid for the AI, applies for the roommates in a similar way. We can not feel Dylan’s physical stimulation. But his performance stimulates its spectators in a virtual way. It makes them pursue more and more pleasure until the ultimate goal is reached: the *cum goal*. With the pursuit of the *cum goal* performances of Chaturbate are fundamentally incompatible with countersexuality. For “Cumming” as the telos of sexual practices is deeply rooted in a naturalized conception of sexuality. Schiel, in her examination of sex-performances on Chaturbate, locates a potential of subversion that is indeed immanent in them, but unfortunately not used. In a similar manner, I have to conclude that Chaturbate in fact has all the potential for a groundbreaking countersexual revolution, that remains unused. Due to categorization of sexual identities and the commodification of pornotopically organized pleasure it is based on the alleged *real hard core* of sex.