Foucault:
On the Monstrosity of the Hermaphroditic Body

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On January 22, 1975 Michel Foucault devoted much of his lecture at the *Collège de France* to discussing the three figures that gave rise to the domain of abnormality: the "human monster," the "individual to be corrected," and the "masturbating child." For Foucault, these three figures captured the speculatively amorphous nature of abnormal individuals (*les anormaux*) from the medieval laws to the discourses of nineteenth century psychiatry. With the "human monster," specifically, Foucault does not simply mean a category in which we could hypothesize a bodily meaning of deformity, but a particular category that is foremost felt in and through the body, a "notion of the monster [that] is essentially a legal notion."[1] It is the body as an ontological transgression that becomes an active agent of monstrosity, violating both the laws of society and the laws of nature. As such, it moves involuntarily to the territory of power—which Foucault understood as a complex intertwining of relationships and conditions—producing shades and nuances from the normal to the abnormal, from the natural to the unnatural. As it seems for Foucault, having a monstrous body, or what he calls a "natural form of the unnatural," is not about the specific categories or ambiguities that the paradigm of the "human monster" imposes, but about the omnipresence of power and power's capacity to reproduce itself in different forms and contexts.[2]

In order to move in step with Foucault's lecture of January 22, 1975, I propose reading the hermaphroditic body as the target of power-knowledge relations and the various processes that contributed to its

subjectification, all of which have continuously measured, judged or disciplined hermaphroditism, an abnormality in itself. The potential uses of Foucault's reference to the figure of the "human monster" can indeed cause the emergence and expansion of concepts, characteristics or problems in his broader genealogy of abnormality. Such a dialogue determines the power configurations by which knowledge is formulated, as it is inherently related to separate or overlapping forms of power. Following Foucault's analysis, I will trace a history of shifts in the technologies of domination and the (re)conceptualizations of sexuality by focusing on the two case studies that Foucault describes: the trial of Marie Lemarcis, known also as "the Rouen hermaphrodite," from 1601 and that of Anne Grandjean from 1765. In both cases, hermaphroditism should not be viewed in conjunction with the subjects, figures or conditions of intersexuality—a relatively recent, all-inclusive term of gender incompatibility—which, like hermaphroditism, exists in the interstices of binary classifications of biological sex. Indeed, for those of us studying feminist and queer theory, the various meanings and applications of intersexuality enable us to access the nuances of gender intersections. For Foucault, however, hermaphroditism begins as a temporal specificity, a type of a proclaimed monstrosity that invites us to interrogate certain classifications of power and formations of knowledge. Nevertheless, hermaphroditism is neither static nor fixed within the larger framework of abnormality and/or power-knowledge relations. It is necessarily connected to the fluid and diverse character of nature and sexuality and, from Foucault's angle, is a (con)figuration of monstrosity that has produced multiple confrontations within the medico-judicial nexus over time.[3]

The hermaphrodite as a being of monstrosity

The line between the hermaphrodite and the monster seems to be a fine one within the disciplinary society. As Foucault notes, "from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century, and until at least the start of the seventeenth century, hermaphrodites were considered to be monsters and were executed, burnt at the stake and their ashes thrown to the winds."[4] In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault contextualizes the early interconnections between hermaphroditism, monstrosity, and criminality: "for a long time hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's offspring, since

their anatomical disposition, their very being, confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union."[5] Specifically, the case of Antide Collas from 1599 corroborates the relationship between hermaphroditism and crime, indicating the perception of the hermaphroditic body as an obscene creature that had to be addressed according to the regulatory characteristics of the law. While Collas was accused for being a hermaphrodite after he/she was examined by doctors who concluded that both sexes were present, the existence of double genitalia was justified on the basis that he/she "had relations with Satan and it was this relationship that had added a second sex to his/her original sex."[6] Thus, the satanic implant of an additional sex undermined the gendered ontology of divine creation and necessitated the condemnation of the unnatural body, demanding at the same time the implementation of extreme penalty. In the end, Collas was burnt alive in Dole, although, according to Foucault, was one of the last cases for which such punishment was applied for that reason.

Foucault then discusses a transition to "a different type of jurisprudence" within which an individual was no more convicted of an alleged hermaphroditism but rather obliged to abide by the predominant sexual characteristics, applying those to the dress code of the pertinent gender conduct.[7] Indeed, the seventeenth century brought an increase in the dependence on the external testimony to decide on a hermaphrodite's predominant sex, providing at the same time the legal grounds for such a decision. In this respect, gender is not defined solely by sex according to the biological and morphological characteristics; it rather operates within the judicial system through which the category of the "human monster" has to be understood and confronted. The hermaphroditic body is thus "a monster only because it is also a legal labyrinth, a violation of and an obstacle to the law, both transgression and undecidability at the level of the law."[8]

This law/transgression axis is obvious in the case of Marie Lemarcis in Rouen in 1601. Foucault narrates the story of "someone who was baptized as Marie Lemarcis and who gradually became a man, wore men's clothes, and married a widow who was already the mother of three children."[9] He/she stood accused of abandoning the natural female identity by having assumed the name Marin and male attire. It is worth noting here that at the time the act of sodomy was regarded as quintessentially monstrous. The evidence of the unlawful marriage proclaimed

culpability and was specifically predicated upon the two-sex model. Marie/Marin Lemarcis was then brought before the Rouen court and consequently, as Foucault explains, "the first judges called for a medical examination by a doctor, an apothecary, and two surgeons."[10] Following the medical examination, no sign of masculinity was found, affirming that Lemarcis's biological sex was that of a woman. Hence it is important to recognize that masculinity was primarily defined by his/her clothes and other male-centered traits—rather than anatomical conclusions—all of which were unlawfully claimed and transgressively performed by this body that could neither be understood as male nor female. Foucault explains that Marie/Marin Lemarcis was consequently "sentenced to be hung, burned and her ashes scattered in the wind. His wife, or the woman who lived with him or her, was sentenced to witness the execution of her husband and to be thrashed at the town's crossroads."[11]

Similarly to the Antide Collas's case, Marie/Marin Lemarcis is the monstrous body, the subject on which society acts. It is therefore the task of both the judicial and medical institutions to respond to the hermaphroditic body, whose monstrosity is not merely reduced to the mixture of two sexes but, more importantly, is manifested through the act of sodomy, sacrilege, and the transgression of natural and social limits. The normative rules and the practices of punishment are *a priori* available in the domain of monstrosity; typical apparatuses of power (*les dispositifs du pouvoir*) that are summoned to discipline the hermaphroditic body in accordance with the laws of society. Despite the severity of the penalty, it is judicial power that eventually allowed for the "right of appeal that took place at the Rouen court with a new expert opinion."[12] Based on Foucault's description, "the new experts agreed with the first experts that there was no sign of virility."[13] Yet one of them, Jacques Duval, disagreed, proposing that Marie/Marin Lemarcis showed indeed signs of masculine anatomy. For Foucault, Duval "presents what could be called the very first rudiments of a clinical approach to sexuality."[14] This new approach involved a meticulous examination of the genital parts of the body for the determination of true sex. Duval insisted that he had felt a hidden organ inside Lemarcis's vagina and appealed against the judgment of his peers, declaring Marie/Marin Lemarcis as a male-dominated hermaphrodite and not a woman.[15]

Knowledge, in a Foucauldian sense, is thus obtained through a penetration of the hermaphroditic body; a kind of necessary violation in

this process of reaching the truth. Therefore, power fulfills its most fundamental premise by establishing a connection with knowledge, subject, and truth. It was because of the discovery of the penis that Marie/Marin Lemarcis was declared a man. Whether it was an atrophied penis or an enlarged clitoris—this detail is rather not important—the assumption of a possession of penis became the bodily signifier for determining both sex and gender. In other words, its presence as the source for a final decision provided the appropriate justification through which Duval affirmed his position of authority. Foucault argues that Duval's expert opinion is important because it gave us "the first medical text in which the sexual organization of the human body is not given in its general form but rather in clinical detail and with regard to a particular case."[16] He interprets the clinical study of hermaphroditism as a remarkable event in the medical history, allowing us to identify the organs of reproduction/sexuality as vectors of knowledge, what language should be used to convey such knowledge, and who may be permitted to have access to sexual matters. For example, literary texts or social documents that touched upon hermaphroditism or, more broadly, sexuality were still under moral supervision, often invoking the operation of censorship.[17] As for the medical discourse, in Foucault's view, mechanisms of power allowed an unprecedented kind of "expression and description."[18] In the beginning of the seventeenth century, as Foucault argues, "the need for a scientific discourse on sexuality and its anatomical organization appears, and is theorized, with the case of the Rouen hermaphrodite."[19] Medicine would ultimately become an indisputable technique of power-knowledge formations, providing an incentive for new discourses around sexuality within emerging disciplines through which it had to be consistently scrutinized and thoroughly questioned.

From the Medicalization of the Body to the Categorization of Sexuality

Duval's examination of the hermaphroditic body has enabled the emergence of scientific discourses on sexual biological difference, sparing in the end of Marie/Marin Lemarcis's life. While unable to escape the inevitable match with monstrosity, the significance of Lemarcis's case lies in the changing medical knowledge and the developing role of medical expertise in the judicial system. The proclamation of the expert that affirms

the hermaphroditic nature is by definition responsible for the judicial outcome. However, the choice of gender within this juridico-natural/juridico-biological complex is not free of various cultural or social interventions. It is the apparatuses of power that place the obligation on the hermaphroditic body to conform to the predetermined nature of the gendered body. It is therefore necessary for the judicial system to demand conformity to ensure his/her salvation; a kind of salvation that serves the purpose of "normalization," which Foucault most often discusses as a technique of power.[20] The verdict of the Rouen court released Marie/Marin Lemarcis on the basis of Duval's examination, abandoning the initial verdict of death, while imposing female attire and banning him/her "from living with anyone of either sex, 'on pain of death.'"[21] Lemarcis's case is thus resolved through the coerced assignation of gender according to the natural male/female categories and the total negation of sexuality.

Foucault notes an additional significance in the Marie/Marin Lemarcis case, which confirms and complicates further the perception of the hermaphrodite as monster. This is exemplified in the controversy between Duval and a second expert, Jean Riolan, a renowned anatomist and teratologist. As I have previously mentioned, Duval held that Lemarcis was a male-dominated hermaphrodite, identifying hermaphroditism as a somatic abnormality and presenting the evidence upon which the court revoked the death sentence. Duval included an extensive account of his clinical examination regarding the Lemarcis case in his *Traité des hermaphrodits, accouchemens des femmes, et traitement qui est requis pour les relever en santé, et bien élever leurs enfans* (*Treatise On Hermaphrodites, Childbirth, and the Treatment That Is Required to Return Women to Health and to Raise Their Children Well*) that was published in 1612.[22] Two years later (1614), Riolan, in his study *Discours sur les hermaphrodites* (Discourse on Hermaphrodites), rebutted Duval's scholarship by claiming that there are only males and females, understanding hermaphroditism as a type of monstrosity that was "counter to the order and general rule of nature . . ."[23] For Riolan, a clinical examination was only necessary for determining the garments that needed to be ordered according to the predominant sex, as well as for mandating the form of future emotional or sexual connections between the hermaphroditic body and other members of society. As Foucault puts it, "on the one hand, then, we have the clearly formulated demand for a medical discourse on sexuality and its organs and then, on the other, the still traditional conception of hermaphrodites

as monsters, but monsters, as we have seen, whose monstrosity nonetheless escapes the conviction and sentencing that were previously the rule."[24] It is, therefore, a set of developing relations between the apparatuses of power within which hermaphroditism started shifting from teratology to pathology. For this exact reason, the death penalty that existed in French law for the punishment of similar cases was officially abandoned and no longer reinforced.

The Anne Grandjean Case and the Disintegration of Monstrosity

What is important here is not only that Foucault felt the necessity to highlight the genealogical rupture that opens upon the death penalty. Equally important is the examination of the hermaphroditic body and the accreditation of natural knowledge in the function of justice, what Foucault refers to as the "juridico-natural" complex. According to Foucault, "The order that the disciplinary punishments must enforce is of a mixed nature: it is an 'artificial' order, explicitly laid down by a law, a programme, a set of regulations. But it is also an order defined by natural and observable processes: the duration of an apprenticeship, the time taken to perform an exercise, the level of aptitude refer to a regularity that is also a rule."[25] These ontological suppositions claimed their authority from the development of scientific expertise with regard to the underlying or hidden structures of the body, or of the domain occasionally in question, such as hermaphroditism and sexual desire. In this context, Foucault analyzes the case of Anne Grandjean from 1765, which then marks an analogous shift in the medico-legal discourse.

The story of Anne Grandjean seems very similar to that of Marie/Marin Lemarcis. Based on Foucault's description, Anne Grandjean was born and baptized as a girl, but during adolescence she discovered an attraction for other girls and young women.[26] Henceforth, while gradually dressing as a boy, Grandjean developed masculine idiosyncrasies, she moved to Lyon, and married a woman called Françoise Lambert. "After being exposed," writes Foucault, "she was brought before the courts. She was seen by the surgeon who concluded that she was a woman and could be tried since she had lived with another woman."[27] The medico-judicial authorities attested that she had "used the sex that was not dominant in her, and the first judges sentenced her to the pillory with this inscription:

'She profaned the marriage sacrament.' The pillory, whip, and cane."[28] During the appeal that followed before the Dauphine court, Grandjean was released with the obligation to wear only women's clothes and was prohibited from living with Françoise Lambert or any other woman. Contrary to the Lemarcis case, the negation of sexuality is not fully established here; it is rather coerced into the normative power of heterosexuality.

It is obvious that we are in front of a paradigmatic correspondence between the Lemarcis and the Grandjean case, supported by the apparatuses of power in the once constructed and then dissolved juridico-natural complex. To put it in context with the dissolution that Foucault wants us to ponder, we need to pay attention to a rather subtle and nuanced reclamation of the hermaphroditic body in relation to the continuous power-knowledge formations. As we have seen, Grandjean's encounter with the doctors and judges reaffirms the medico-judicial continuum and the need to sustain their alignment. This case, however, is particularly important for Foucault because the hermaphrodite ceases to be defined as a mixture of two sexes in a single body, as it was previously posed by Duval. To support this distinct shift, Foucault moves on to the published material by another expert of the time, Claude Champeaux, who claimed that "there is never the simultaneous presence of two sexes in a single organism and a single individual."[29] Nevertheless, Champeaux acknowledged that there are individuals whose genital parts are deformed, lacking the ability to function and reproduce. A genital deformity may still be regarded as an aberration from the scope of normality, but from this point onwards, as Foucault puts it, "monstrosity as the mix of sexes, as transgression of everything that separates one sex from another, disappears."[30]

This sudden disappearance of the primacy of monstrosity marks the rationale of Foucault's genealogy of abnormality. It explains the dissolution of the juridico-natural complex through which the hermaphroditic body had been so far understood, violated, and governed. A somatic deformation is no longer regarded as monstrosity but rather "an imperfection, a deviation."[31] Champeaux requested the sentence of Anne Grandjean not on the basis of her hermaphroditism, but of a volitional perversity. What was at issue was not monstrosity but immorality, a woman that loves women, "and it is this monstrosity, which is not a monstrosity of nature but a monstrosity of behavior, that calls for condemnation."[32] Foucault notes that monstrosity is now "simply an irregularity, a slight deviation, but one that makes possible something that

will be a monstrosity, that is to say, the monstrosity of character."[33] This assertion is made all the more clear if we consider the ethical and disciplinary subjectivities within the medico-judicial apparatuses from which they emerge. In *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France,* Cathy McClive reveals that there were two contradictory accounts in determining the sex of Grandjean, both of which debated about "the absence or presence of menstruation."[34] On the one hand, Grandjean's lawyer, François-Michel Vermeil, argued that Grandjean had never had menstrual periods and therefore could not be identified as a woman; while on the other hand, Champeaux, who had physically examined Grandjean, claimed that she did menstruate. It is interesting again that this claim was not based on some first-hand observation but rather on Grandjean's wife, Françoise Lambert, and for that reason was not included in the medical reports.[35] Vermeil defended Grandjean by maintaining there was a mixture of sexes that qualified her as a hermaphrodite, arguing against the "monstrosity of character" of which she was accused by Champeaux.[36]

These two evaluations, which can both be described as non-closed operations into the structures of their own authority, signal the shift from the juridico-natural to the juridico-moral complex. Foucault argues that "from then on we see the emergence of a kind of specific domain that will become the domain of monstrous criminality or of monstrosity that does not produce its effects in nature and the confusion of species, but in behavior itself."[37] This means that the juridico-moral complex established behavioral expectations in tandem with social norms, which were perceived as "natural," thus creating the figure of the abnormal. Foucault, in other words, traces the development of a counter-discourse on criminality that does not exclusively focus on the act of crime but on the delinquency of character, moral decay, and sexual deviation.

The question of sexuality emerged most crucially at the moment when the "human monster" became a "moral monster."[38] It was in this state of fusion, investigation and categorization that modern preoccupations with the abnormal individual took root. From then on attempts were made to analyze and regulate the deviant figure in terms of variations of civil laws and moral imperatives. This made it possible for experts of all kinds to gain power over the deviant body, defining it through institutions, political events, medical practices, and experimental processes. By transferring hermaphroditism from monstrosity into the category of morality, the medical discourse became the primary source of judgment.

Moral monsters were now understood in terms of the norm, and it was medicine that gave the grounds for tolerance, or conversely intolerance, against individuals that were classified either as immoral or abnormal. The moral monster was the offspring of the "human monster" and "the individual to be corrected;" just like Hermaphroditus—the beauteous son of Hermes and Aphrodite— who, in a reversed allegory, came into being after the unification of his body with nymph Salmacis.

The hermaphrodite, this moral monster, had left the cosmological space and entered the space of the family, the school, the church, and the hospital. Undeniably, these apparatuses brought numerous explanatory systems to find new ways of dealing with the deviant body, installing a new social order that was founded on the continuous production of power and knowledge. Power seeks knowledge, and knowledge is *sine qua non* for power to function. Thus, power and knowledge cannot be separated; they need to be viewed through the formations and the operations of the institutions/apparatuses through which they manifest and evolve. As we have seen, the encounters of Lemarcis and Grandjean with the medical and legal authorities offered key insights into the relationship between monstrosity, power, knowledge and the body during the Classical Age. In Foucault's genealogy of abnormality, the spirals of power and knowledge are of course not limited to the domain of hermaphroditism. His approach to the operations of power in the discourse of monstrosity inevitably leads to the realm of sexuality, which ultimately determined the power-knowledge relations at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Foucault explains this productive process in the nineteenth century in relation to the appearance of "psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and psychic 'hermaphroditism' [that] made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity [. . .].'"[39] The emergence of new discourses constructed new power mechanisms and further knowledge was obtained. The individual in need of correction arose through the most visible expressions of acts and desires, signifying the moment in which the dominant apparatuses moved from one complex to another. The shift from nature to morality may therefore be tangibly witnessed in the differentiated and often disputed terms that began to operate within the new discourses. Eventually,

sexuality started being defined among multiple disciplinary interactions and ethical imperatives.

At the beginning of the January 22, 1975 lecture, Foucault mentioned that "the recurring problem of the nineteenth century is that of discovering the core of monstrosity hidden behind little abnormalities, deviances, and irregularities."[40] Through the shift from the juridico-natural to the juridico-moral complex, through the developing logic of normalization, little abnormalities, deviances and irregularities came to the fore. The abnormal individual with his/her innate delinquency and a supposed need for normalization is most clearly objectified before psychiatry. Henceforth, experts played an important role in the regulation and transformation of deviant subjects. Foucault concludes the January 22, 1975 lecture by saying that "the principle of this transformation is to be found in a kind of economy of the power to punish and the transformation of this economy."[41] If we recognize the ambiguity of Foucault's genealogy on abnormality, if we imagine this genealogy as multiple layers of meanings, discourses and conceptualizations overlapping one another, "a sort of machine with many parts, moving in relation to one another," then we may suggest possible trajectories for a comprehension of the normal/abnormal distinction.[42] The hermaphroditic body continues to play a crucial role into the larger context of this indispensable ambiguity.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975*, trans., Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004), 55.
2. Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975,* 56.
3. Ibid., 324.
4. Ibid., 67.
5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans., Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 38.
6. Foucault, *Abnormal Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975,*, 67.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 65.
9. Ibid., 68.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 68-69.
15. Katharine Park, "The Rediscovery of the Clitoris," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 179.
16. Foucault, *Abnormal Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975,*, 69.
17. Ibid., 70.
18. Ibid., 71.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 25,26.
21. Ibid., 68.
22. Park, "The Rediscovery of the Clitoris," in *The Body in Parts,* 179.
23. Foucault, *Abnormal Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975,* 71.
24. Ibid.
25. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 179.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 72.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 73.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Cathy McClive, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 222.
35. McClive, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France, 222*.
36. Foucault, *Abnormal Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975*, 73.
37. Ibid., 74.
38. Ibid., 75.
39. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43.
40. Foucault, *Abnormal Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1974-1975*,, 56.
41. Ibid., 75.
42. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 162.

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