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Against nature?**

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Tegen de natuur?
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TEGEN DE NATUUR?

AGAINST NATURE?

Sophie Wenerscheid (red.)



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AGAINST NATURE?

Instinct and Desire in Western Literature from the Early Modern Period to the Digital Age

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The ways in which sexuality is conceptualized, narrated, mythologized and practised vary greatly across historical periods and cultures. But however variously sexuality has been constructed over centuries, it is time and again associated with the animalistic. While, however, an animal's sexual instincts are conceived of as natural, following a clear scheme aiming at reproduction and species survival, human sexuality has very often been regarded as something that quickly changes into something unnatural, something that runs out of control, in fact *against nature*.

It is the aim of our thematic issue to focus on those ambivalent moments of transformation, mutation, transition and re-evaluation. We want to examine where the natural turns into the unnatural, where the animal is deemed to be the monster, and where, maybe, the monster magically transforms into a handsome prince again.

Special attention will be paid to the concepts of instinct, drive and desire as opposed to discipline and control. Sexual instinct seems to threaten humankind's self-control, rationality and autonomy. The desiring subject tends to lose its human status. It is no longer master of its feelings, but is, by contrast, subjected to sexual cravings as a force beyond human control. To desire obsessively means thus to wear out yourself and to waste your own powers. Desire becomes pure impulsiveness, monstrous or bestial, worse than animal drives ever could become. The boundary between human and non-human dissolves. The human dehumanizes itself and mutates into an inappropriate member of human society, which is based on self-discipline and productivity.

In the Western literary tradition, the destructiveness of desire has often been at the heart of the narration. Ancient literature contains a vast arsenal of stories driven by sexual desire and blind instinct, which not only cause enormous suffering and violence, but also offer a huge variety of surprising transformations. One need only think of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

This volume addresses a variety of topics and theories which have recently received increased attention, especially with the growing debate about animal studies, post-humanism, monster studies, cyber and other 'assemblages'. It engages with the interconnections between desiring bodies and minds and con-

cepts of the monstrous or the beastly and presents insights into the 'dark faces' every epoch unavoidably shows, from early modern fictions of man-machine hybridity, up to today's fascination with 'robosex'.

'MACHINE MADE OF EARTH'

Lively Automata in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*

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In the seventh century BCE, the Greek writer Semonides of Amorgos wrote a poem which described the seven 'types' of women made by Zeus. While these types are predominantly inspired by animals, Semonides introduces an 'earth woman' into the menagerie:

One type the gods of Mount Olympus crafted
out of Earth – their gift to man! She's lame
and has no sense of either good or bad.
She knows no useful skill, except to eat
and, when the gods make winter cold and hard
to drag her chair up closer to the fire.

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Semonides's earth woman is a creature of instinct who is focused only on basic bodily needs such as food and warmth. She is a 'reactive' creature with no sense of 'either good or bad' rather than a rationally responsive being capable of such distinctions (1994: 24). Her inability to 'respond' lies at the heart of early modern philosopher René Descartes's conception of the *bête machine* – the 'beast-machine' or 'animal automaton' – which separated animals from humans (Descartes 1637; Derrida 2006: 172, n. 1).¹ Animal behaviour, and the material world more generally, is for Descartes like the grinding of gears: determinate and predictable. Descartes's conception of the material world emerged during a period of increasing interest in mechanism. Among early modern thinkers like Marin Mersenne and Pierre Gassendi, and with inspiration from the hydraulic automata populating the royal gardens of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Descartes formulated a dualistic approach to the world which separated body and mind (or soul) (Merchant 1980: 192).² While the mind was an immaterial substance and the sole pre-

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1. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida discusses this distinction, writing that, for Descartes, 'A programmed machine like the animal is said to be incapable not of emitting signs but rather, according to the fifth part of the *Discourse on Method*, of "responding."' (2006: 139-140).
 2. In *Automata and Mimesis on the Stage of Theatre History*, Kara Reilly convincingly argues that, 'the advent of the mind-body divide is directly linked to Descartes's own mimetic faculty being shaped by the dramaturgy of technological spectacle and onto-epistemic mimesis. The very concept of the rational soul and the *cogito* owes much to the Francinis' hydraulic automata in the royal gardens at Saint-Germain-en-Laye' (2011: 66).

rogative of humans, the body was, for Descartes, pure matter, ‘a statue or machine made of earth’ (1662: 99).

In the contemporary global West, we are still haunted by the binary logic of early modern philosophers like Descartes and Francis Bacon, which separates humans from their material surrounds. This is particularly noticeable in humans’ ‘extractive’ and ‘exploitative’ relationship to the earth (Boehrer 2002: 17). We are now living on a planet where the impact of human activities has left a mark so recognisable that geologists are debating labelling our current epoch ‘The Anthropocene.’³ For scholars like Jane Bennett and Bruce Boehrer anthropocentric, or human-centred, thinking which is based on hierarchy and associated binaries such as human/nonhuman, subject/object, and active/passive play a fundamental role in our current ecological crises. To counter this unsustainable and unethical anthropocentrism, Bennett recommends we foster a greater appreciation of our enmeshment with a world that is not dead or inert but ‘lively’ (2010). This is not an easy task because imagining the ‘entanglement’ and vitality of matter forces us to reconfigure our notions of subjectivity: in a world where matter is an active force with the capacity to ‘do things, [...] produce effects, alter the course of events’, the binaries which position humans as active subjects and nonhumans as passive objects begin to break down (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010: viii, italics in original). In other words, we shift from controllers of the world to collaborators.

To engage with Bennett’s collaborative, lively, entangled, ‘vital materialism’, I take up the idea of ‘desire.’ It is my contention that our notion of desire is ontologically significant for the constitution of ecological subjectivities: for example, desire understood psychoanalytically involves highly structured flows of affect shaped by ‘cultural forces’ like ‘law, art, language, custom [and] psychology’ – all of which play, to varying degrees, roles in boundary-making and binary thinking (Pettman 2017: ix). As David Lee Miller summarises, in the psychoanalytic formulation of desire, the subject actively desires while the passive object is desired. According to Miller, ‘to step outside such a system would require installing a different perception at the origin of human desire’ (1989: 783). To make this step outside, I will argue, requires shifting from human to nonhuman conceptions of desire.

In discussing the ‘flows’ of desire, I am influenced by the hydraulic vocabulary of French poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who, in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), write that desire ‘does not take as its object persons or things but the entire surroundings that it traverses, the vibrations and flows of every sort to which it is joined, introducing therein breaks and captures – always nomadic and migrant desire’ (1972: 322). In their work, Deleuze and Guattari challenge the idea that ‘(1) sex is a function of procreation and heterosexual genital copulation

3. While it is possible to find earlier work which uses versions of this term, Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer are credited with coining it (as is now understood and used in scientific and environmental discourse) in *The Global Change Newsletter* in 2000.

is the “natural” and normative form of sexuality; (2) the sexual and the social are separate domains; and (3) human sex is essentially unrelated to the non-human world’ (Bogue 2011: 34). Deleuze and Guattari give the label ‘desire’ to the affective flow of ‘matter movement, [...] matter-energy, [...] matter-flow, [...] matter in variation’ that enters collective formations – or assemblages – ‘and leaves them’ (1980: 595, 474). Rather than being tied to organic essence, Deleuzian desire is ‘machinic’ in that it is characterised by connectivity and function. As Aislinn O’Donnell writes,

Sexuality and desire are not narrowly defined in Deleuze and Guattari’s work as they are in other discourses and in ordinary speech. They name instead the unconscious field that connects, disjoins and interrupts without mediation, which is uncoupled from objects and subjects. Its origin is not lack, although lack can be produced within it. It is impersonal, processual, productive, machinic, they say, and it works by breaking down. (2011: 217)

Also labelled ‘sexuality’, this type of desire is everywhere. Importantly, rather than just male and female sexes, there are ‘a thousand tiny sexes’ since the ‘molecular flux of sexuality motivates the endless “conjunctions” of “n” or “a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings” – those experiences in which dynamic, affective change occurs (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 278 in Powell 2011: 64). A key difference between psychoanalytic and Deleuzian desire is found in a comparison of two hydraulic models: ‘plateau’ and ‘release.’ As will be developed, the former is associated with the self-generating, moving, and circulatory quality of automata, while the latter is associated with structured organisms through its teleological drive towards orgasm and procreation. Recent work like Frida Beckman’s edited collection *Deleuze and Sex* (2011) explores Deleuze’s non-localised, ‘plateau’-approach to and use of desire as well as the ways it is developed throughout his oeuvre.⁴ However, besides Ronald Bogue’s contribution which investigates nonhuman desire in the science fiction of Octavia Butler, the essays do not consider the role of Deleuzian desire in literature. In addition, while Aislinn O’Donnell explores the ‘automaton’ in the context of Deleuzian desire, there is no direct or deliberate engagement with contemporary environmental issues. Unlike the essays within Beckman’s collection, I am interested in using Deleuzian desire as a ‘tool’⁵ which allows me to offer a re-reading of how early modern literature (pre-emptively) engages with issues central to environmental humanities and Anthropocene studies. Desire is, as Robert Azzarello argues, an important category of inquiry for ecocriticism because it is tightly bound up with ethics. For Azzarello, our ethical consideration of a species is connected to our ideas about its capacity for desire and, therefore, a broadening of our conception of desire beyond the human results in a similarly expanded frame of ethics (2018: 178).

4. See also, Beckman (2013).

5. Deleuze in D. Bouchard 1977: 208.

My investigation of desire and vital materialism is literature based and I focus on Christopher Marlowe's poem *Hero and Leander* (1598) – a text predominantly concerned with (all kinds of) desire. On the surface, the desire in Marlowe's poem is heteronormative and patriarchal and upholds binaries like subject/object and active/passive. The poem follows the interactions of Hero, a priestess from Sestos, and Leander, a suitor from Abydos on the other side of the strait, Hellespont. Like many other men, Leander desires Hero 'from afar'; yet, in this instance, Hero cautiously reciprocates his love – or, more fittingly, lust – all the while keeping in mind her 'oxymoronic' vow of chastity to the goddess of love, Venus (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 110). Throughout the poem, Leander demonstrates his rhetorical eloquence, eventually convincing Hero to revoke her vow of chastity. One night, Leander swims across the Hellespont and, after his perilous journey, the pair consummates their love/lust. Unlike the classical version of the tale by Greek writer Musaeus, the poem does not involve numerous nocturnal meetings between the lovers – meetings which culminate in Leander's drowning and Hero's suicide; instead, Marlowe's version ends with the first night of their intercourse.⁶ Yet, as we look closer at Marlowe's poem, we find challenges to this normative portrayal of desire. In particular, the blend of 'nature' and 'artifice' within the poem, especially in the pair of hydraulic automated sparrow buskins which adorn Hero's feet in the opening blazon, troubles the conception of desire as human and organic.

In the first part of this paper, I focus on the notion of the 'Organism.'⁷ Scientifically, 'organisms' describe unicellular or multicellular entities where individual parts contribute to the functioning of a whole. Deleuze and Guattari take up this implicit hierarchy, describing organisms as 'a type of body that is organized in a certain way, namely one that is "centralized," "hierarchized," and "self-directed"' (Protevi 2005: 200 in Smith 2018: 103). This understanding of the organism guides my work in the first section where I introduce the opening blazon of Marlowe's poem and contextualise the description of Hero within early modern humouralism – a system of thought which played a formative role in early modern conceptions of gender and flows of desire. I then explore Bruce Boehrer and Trish Thomas Henley's essay 'Automated Marlowe: *Hero and Leander* 31-36' (2008), noting the ways in which their reading operates from an assumption of desire as organic. I argue that reading desire in such a way is limiting for Hero because it binds her in particular organisational structures (hierarchical and binary) which begin with and are tied to the 'Organism.' To propose an interpretation which challenges notions of organic desire, I move from the 'Organism' to

6. While the poem was later 'completed' by George Chapman, in this paper I treat only Marlowe's work, and focus in particular on the poem's opening blazon of Hero.

7. In using this term, I admit a degree of anachronism. The term 'organism' in a sense we understand it today entered the English language in the eighteenth century. For more detailed explorations of early modern constructions of bio-psychological organisation, we might look to work like Gail Kern Paster's work (1993; 2004) and Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (1999).

the 'Automaton.' Automatons during the early modern period were understood as 'self-moving' machinery – a quality distinguishing them from general machines, which function through the application of perceptible external force (for example, human or animal bodies).⁸ This capacity for self-movement plays a formative role in the second section of this essay where I draw on Deleuzian desire as a concept which allows us to work through binaries like 'organism' and 'machine.' While critics like Judith Haber and David Lee Miller have explored the workings of desire within *Hero and Leander*, I do not follow their more general, Freudian approach. Instead, my reading is anchored in Anthropocene discourse and focuses on the potential of the automated sparrows to suggest a non-localised and non-teleological desire which problematises binary logic. While I devote most of my attention to the opening blazon describing Hero, I also briefly consider how the passage works within the poem's broader interest in non-normative desire. Marlowe's poem lends itself to such an interpretation in that it 'repeatedly conflates binaries':

The effect of this constant assault on the boundaries between [...] binaries is that the 'naturalness' of such constructions breaks down. [...] [T]he conflation of binaries tends to call into question ontological truths and categories, thus disrupting the truth of the binary itself. (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 113)

In *The Death of Nature* (1980), Carolyn Merchant argues that increased environmental exploitation can be mapped onto a shift from notions of earth-as-organism to the earth-as-machine – a shift which occurred during the scientific revolutions of the early modern period. In the final section of this paper, I interrogate this binary in a speculative vein and propose that conceiving of the earth as a field of desire, or, in Deleuzian parlance, 'Body without Organs', is ultimately more ecologically productive. Overall, however, in the sections which follow, I explore a kind of desire which is no longer the sole possession of (male) humans. Instead, desire emerges as disruptive and dispersed – something which challenges our notions of subjectivity and activity and passivity. With this kind of desire, we are able to ask: what can lively machines *do*?

8. In 1665, Robert Boyle writes of 'the whole universe (the soul of man excepted)' as 'a great Automaton, or self-moving engine' (in Mayr 1986: 56). And, in *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes creates an analogical association between the human body and automata, arguing that the difference between a living and a dead body is that the latter is like a watch, which 'is broken and the principle of its motion ceases to be active' (1984: 329-30). It is also worth mentioning, as Smith and Des Chene do, that even though 'machine' is 'a central metaphor' of Descartes' philosophy, he 'never actually defines what he means' by the term and instead 'explains organic phenomena through this analogy' (Smith 2018: 97-98; Des Chene 2001: xi).

Organism

Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was published posthumously in 1598 and follows a similar narrative trajectory to its classical precursor. In the lines introducing Hero (31-36), we receive a description of the curious avian automata that adorn her boots and which, through a movement of water produced by her steps, 'chirrup':

Buskins of shels, all silvered, used she,
 And brancht with blushing corall to the knee;
 Where sparrowes percht, of hollow pearle and gold,
 Such as the world would woonder to behold:
 Those with sweete water oft her handmaid fils,
 Which as she went, would cherupe through the bills.

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Besides Bruce Boehrer and Trish Thomas Henley's article (2008), Hero's automated boots have received very little critical attention.⁹ Boehrer and Henley divide their study into two parts, with the first treating the material culture of the boots, and the second exploring the implications of Hero wearing such boots. It 'reads Hero's misogynistic blazon from within the context of automata, arguing that the buskins represent Hero's unnatural repression of her innate sexuality' (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 98). Importantly, their essay introduces a connection between hydraulic automata of the Renaissance and the flows of humouralism; however, despite claiming to read 'from the context of automata', Boehrer and Henley do not challenge the idea of 'natural' or 'innate' sexuality. Instead, their reading of Hero operates from an organic conception of desire, which is informed by the doctrine of Galenic humouralism – a philosophy which in many ways reinforces classical conceptions of gender and agency but which also, as we will see, has the potential for binary disruption.

Galenic humouralism is an ancient medical philosophy which proposes that one can achieve a healthy constitution by balancing four different elemental humours: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Each of these humours is understood to consist of a specific combination of moistness/dryness and warmth/coldness. Humouralism played a central role in early modern explanations of bodily function and the construction of subjectivity.¹⁰ For example, humouralism described 'men's bodies [as] hotter and drier'; while, women's bodies were thought to be 'colder and more spongy' (Paster 2004, 77). One of the implications of this is that, akin to Semonides's earth woman's reliance on 'heat', female agency and liveliness were dependent on and subordinate to masculine

9. As Boehrer and Henley note, the material contexts of these automata have also been alluded to, though not explored, by Roma Gill in her edition of the poem. And, while Patrick Cheney offers a more detailed analysis of the buskins in his *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood*, he 'does not mention the relation between Hero's buskins and classical or early modern automata' (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 117; see Cheney 1997: 243-45).

10. See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (1993) and *Humoring the Body* (2004).

'heat.' We find this pattern of thought throughout Marlowe's poem where descriptions of Hero's 'cold virginity', and her 'lukewarm place', contrast with Leander's 'secret flame', and 'the fire that from his count'nance blazed' (317, 738, 619, 164). Frequently, these descriptions of the protagonists' temperatures are bound up with ideas of activity and passivity, evoking Aristotelian notions of generation. For Aristotle, and many thinkers during the early modern period, males were the active principle in procreation. During the reproductive process, 'the female contributed the matter or passive principle. This was the material on which the active male principle, the semen, worked in creating the embryo' (Merchant 1980: 13):

And in her lukewarm place Leander lay,
Whose lively heat, like fire from heaven fet,
Would animate gross clay [...]. (738-40)

Gender also played a role in beliefs surrounding an individual's ability to control the 'flows' of humours and passions. Through humouralism, 'each subject grew up with a common understanding of her body as a semipermeable, irrigated container in which humors moved sluggishly' (Paster 1993: 8). Together, passions¹¹ and humours were understood as, to use Miranda Burgess' contemporary description of affects, 'a phenomenon anterior to the distinction of persons: a flow of energy among bodies as well as between bodies and the world' (2011: 289). While men were believed to be able to control such bodily motions through their rational capacity, women were understood as impressionable, sensuous, and bodily beings more closely aligned to animals. Women's capacity for bodily control was deemed inferior to men's because of a 'natural deficiency' (Fudge 2006: 40). Early moderns believed that 'the external world impacts on women [...] in a way that implies their control of the internal world is frail'; thus, while 'always different from [...] animals', a woman's 'humanity was perceived to be more fragile' (Fudge 2006: 41). We see this idea at work early in Marlowe's poem with a description of Hero's tears:

Forth from those two tralucient cisterns brake
A stream of liquid pearl, which down her face
Made milk-white paths, whereon the gods might trace
To Jove's high court. (296-299)

With the metaphor of 'milk white paths', Marlowe conflates the flow of tears with an allusion to the female-specific flow of breastmilk, thus drawing attention to two different conceptions of female 'leakiness.'¹² This image introduces women's

11. Like humours, passions were conceived of as material, as forces 'drowned in corporal organs and instruments' (Wright 1604: 95).

12. See Paster 1993: 23-63; Carson 1990: 154.

association with ‘wetness’ – a humoral element which was rarely considered apart from ‘coldness’, and which, like temperature, had implications for understandings of sexuality (Carson 1990: 137). Aligned with water, women have an ‘unfailing moisture’ and ‘sexual drive’ which is seen as

part of a larger pattern, part of a larger harmony between women and the elements of nature in general. United by a vital liquidity with the elemental world, woman is able to tap into the inexhaustible reservoirs of nature’s procreative power. Man, meanwhile, holds himself fiercely and thoughtfully apart from this world of plants, animals, and female wantonness. (Carson 1990: 142-143)

For women, characterised by porousness and penetrability, a ‘wet’ constitution explains their greater vulnerability to the flows of passions, in particular of desire (*erōs*).

It is women’s alignment with the natural world, and in particular their liquidity, which informs Boehrer and Henley’s reading of Marlowe’s blazon. Following the doctrine of Galenic humouralism, they argue that Hero’s mechanical buskins represent her ‘attempts to control her own sexual impulses’ (2008: 107). In their analogical reading, the sparrow-adorned buskins are subsumed into the human realm as ‘emblems of the body, contrasting the humoral body’s organic creation of the passions with Hero’s attempt to repress the irrepressible’ (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 107). The sensual alignment between elements of the natural world, like water, and women is important for Boehrer and Henley’s suggestion that it is ‘natural’ for these desiring passions to be channelled into sexual activity. The water that flows through the sparrows is a symbol of Hero’s passions, which she mechanically controls. Hero tries to move further away from the ‘lusty’ animal which adorns her buskins by attempting to ‘mechanically’ control her sexual impulses.¹³ Hero’s feminine nature, ‘imagined as water’, is channelled; it is ‘driven out and forced through pipes, the arteries of her shoes’ (Boehrer and Henley 112). Hero is not, to use Boehrer and Henley’s words, a ‘whore’ ‘because she is sexually incontinent’ – ‘water, symbolically female, does not function here as a sign of Hero’s “leaky vessel,” marking her inability to control her sexual urges’ (2008: 111-112). Rather, ‘Hero is a whore because she attempts to manipulate what should be organic: sexual desire’ (Boehrer and Henley 2008: 112). Boehrer and Henley’s reading places us in the realm of the Organism: Galenic humouralism helps to construct a specific organisation or ordering of the body which links with societal and gendered organisational structures.

It is this organic conception of desire (and its subordination to the Organism) that I wish to contest. With this understanding, Hero is doubly constrained: she is ‘unnatural’ if she clings to ‘cold virginity’, but in her ‘natural’ role associated with the earth she is ‘colonised’ as Leander ‘scale[s]’ her ‘ivory mount’ which is

13. During the early-modern period, sparrows were linked with sexuality and promiscuity; see, for example, John Donne’s ‘Epithalamion, or Wedding Song’ (1633).

'with azure circling lines empaled, / much like a globe (a globe may I term this, / By which love sails to regions full of bliss)' (757-60). Instead, I argue that the degree to which the organic and inorganic and the natural and artificial are entangled within this poem, and in particular, in the opening blazons, gives us viable grounds to call into question the assumption that desire is organic. Hero's attired body, described as an assemblage of lawn, silk, blood stains of 'wretched lovers', myrtle, artificial flowers and leaves, pebble-stone, coral, and automated sparrows which combine elements 'of hollow pearl and gold', speaks to early modern thought in which it was often difficult to distinguish between the organic and inorganic (33)¹⁴:

In general, the Renaissance view was that all living things were permeated by life, there being no adequate method by which to designate the inanimate from the animate. It was difficult to differentiate between living and nonliving things, because of the resemblance in structures. Like plants and animals, minerals and gems were filled with small pores, tublets, cavities, and streaks, through which they seemed to nourish themselves. (Merchant 1980: 27-28)

The earth, humans, animals, plants, and minerals and gems all experience 'flows' through the tubes and cavities of their 'bodies.' It is this idea which allows us, via the figure of the hydraulic automaton, to begin to challenge the notion that desire is an organic and specifically human phenomenon. Rather than creating sharp divisions between organisms and machines, and the natural and artificial, I draw on parallels between humoral flows and the hydraulic flows of Marlowe's automata to gesture towards a hydraulic conception of desire as a force which frees – or deterritorialises – itself from its localisation within the organic body, in particular the genitals. Navigating this paradox allows us to delimit a concept of nonhuman desire, or vital materiality, in which entanglement replaces essentialism.

Automaton

As indicated above, females were thought to be tied to the 'elemental world' through a 'vital liquidity' and it was this connection which allowed them 'to tap into the inexhaustible reservoirs of nature's procreative power' (Carson 1990: 142-143). Yet, the Hero presented in the opening blazon is just as much a part of a tradition which associated females with artifice as with the natural world. In his extensive study of early modern technology and art, Jonathan Sawday notes how

14. Hero's body is also evocative of the early-modern *Kunstammer*, or wonder cabinet, which contained and blended collections of natural and artificial objects: 'ornate flowers, fossils, or "[c]urious shells, tree stumps or stones containing recognizable images, giant's bones or the Scythian Lamb were all examples of the *lusus naturae*, each seeming to dissolve the barrier between the natural and the artificial'" (Simon Werrett 2001: 133 in Reilly 2011: 33). For more on the *Kunstammer*, see Reilly 2011: 32-33.

‘the very first legendary automata of which we possess a description were female’ (2007: 199). In support of this, he references book XVII of Homer’s *Iliad*, where we find female automata who were

Golden maidservants [who] helped their master. They looked like real girls and could not only speak and use their limbs but were endowed with intelligence and trained in hand-work by the immortal gods. (Homer 348)

Sawday then goes on to offer examples across centuries noting, amongst others, the twelfth-century work *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, where we find a young girl ‘crafted out of gold’ who performs and ‘entertain[s] and dance[s] and caper[s] and gambol[s] and leap[s] all day’, and early modern examples like Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590) where Acrasia and ‘art’ share the ability to ‘subvert and then over-master masculine reason’, Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* where Cleopatra is described as ‘a piece of art who is capable of creating “a gap in nature”’ (Shakespeare 1623: 2.2.224), and *The Winter’s Tale* (1623) where the statue Hermione comes to life (Sawday 2007: 193, 181, 203, 204).

Shakespeare’s Hermione is modelled on the Ovidian tale of Pygmalion where the sculptor’s desire brings the female statue to life and it is perhaps this example which best captures the idea that automata are machines which are often ‘erotized as objects of imaginary projection and desire’; entities, which ‘titillate our sexual curiosity and trigger all kinds of questions about sexuality and procreation’ (Braidotti 2002: 217). Reproduction is a central feature of discussions concerning the boundaries between nature and art. For Aristotle, nature is ‘essentially differen[t]’ and superior to art because it exhibits an ability to biologically reproduce itself (Reilly 2011: 17). Similarly, in his lecture on organisms and machines, twentieth-century French philosopher Georges Canguilhem notes that unlike organisms, ‘machines do not construct other machines’; instead, they depend on ‘something external and non-mechanical for their creation and continuing reproduction’ (Canguilhem 1992: 55; Smith 2018: 97). In their work, Deleuze and Guattari interrogate the biological limits frequently placed on concepts like reproduction and desire and, as we will see, they do so through an idea of ‘productive machines.’ In my exploration of Marlowe’s poem, I argue that amidst the sexualisation of technology and debates about its reproductive capacity, the status of automatons as non-(organically)procreative configurations allows us to investigate desire as a processual phenomenon rather than an essentialist one. Such a move involves looking ‘in-between’ the seeming divide between organism and machine (as well as its associated binaries). This is not an easy task, however. As Rosi Braidotti writes,

it is by far simpler to think about the concept A or B, or of B as non-A, rather than the process of what goes on in between A and B. Thinking through flows and interconnections remains a difficult challenge. [I]t [is] difficult to find adequate representations for processes, fluid in-between flows of data, experience and information. (2002: 1-2)

In this section, I explore Marlowe's poem through two hydraulic models of desire found in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and consider how they help us to conceptualise the seeming paradox of 'lively machines.' To begin this task, however, requires shifting our thinking of Hero as 'organism' or 'machine' to the 'fluid in-between flows' (Braidotti 2002: 2).

Heraclitus famously conceived of the body 'as a torrential river' and Hero is indeed a body that flows (Sissa 2008: 46). In midst of the analogical similarities in the flows of her hydraulic automaton and humours and passions, it is possible to read a form of immanent and free-flowing desire. Like humours and passions, Deleuzian desire is conceived of materially – it is 'matter-movement, matter-energy' which is, to again quote Burgess, 'anterior to the distinction of persons' (2011: 289). Rather than being a discrete force localised and contained within organisms, it is that which moves, which passes between entities drawing them into different relations, assemblages – that is, constellations of matter – and affective experiences Deleuze and Guattari label 'becomings.' The figure of the machine plays an important role in Deleuze and Guattari's development of this non-localised desire, helping them 'to free the flows of desire from their dependence on a normative vision of the embodied subject' (Braidotti 2002: 124). The machine – or, more specifically, a 'desiring-machine' – 'denotes the "conjoined operations" and "interlocking arrangements" of every kind of production' (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 216). When we conceive of desire or sexuality beyond the organism, we open up potential to see it as a 'productive-energy', 'a drive that makes us, or in Deleuze's later terminology, that fuels becoming' (Beckman 2011: 9, 7-8). It is the notion of desire as a non-localised drive or flow which brings into dialogue the early modern thought of organic and inorganic entities permeated with life and a movement of matter through their 'pores, tublets, [and] cavities' and Bennett's recent work on 'vital materialism.' Interestingly, even in Descartes's dualistic ontology, elemental flows connect the organic and inorganic. In *Treatise on Man* (1662), he writes that his readers should consider the functions of their bodily machine as occurring through the body's 'blood and its spirits which are agitated by the heat of a fire that burns continuously in its heart, and which is of the same nature as those fires that occur in inanimate bodies' (1662: 162). While for the most part, Descartes delegates the movement of human machines to the rational soul – or, in his analogy with the hydraulic figures of the royal gardens, the 'fountainier' (1662: 107) – here, the organs of the body align more with the self-generating movements of automata which are, like inorganic matter, moved not by an external force, but an embedded, circulatory one: 'the fire that burns continuously in its heart' (1662: 162).

The circulatory quality of material exchange plays a key role distinguishing Deleuze and Guattari's approach to desire from anthropocentric, patriarchal, and psychoanalytic models. Deleuze and Guattari frame the distinction as 'plateau' versus 'release.' The release model is teleological and is aligned with the organism

through its focus on termination (orgasm and procreation). It is an approach to desire, or sexuality, which begins with the subject and which

subordinate[s] hydraulic force to conduits, pipes, embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constrain movement to go from one point to another, and space itself to be striated and measured, which makes the fluid depend on the solid, and flows proceed by parallel, laminal layers. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 423)

Desire here has a linear trajectory with a specific and localised point of termination: gratification and pleasure (Beckman 2011: 3). In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari offer an image of the 'plateau.' Enlisting the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, Deleuze and Guattari describe desire as a plateau, a 'self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end' (1980: 23). Desire here

consists in being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space, in producing a movement that holds space and simultaneously affects all of its points, instead of being held by space in a local movement from one specified point to another. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 423)

For Deleuze and Guattari, conceiving of desire according to the release model of pleasure/orgasm is a major impediment to understanding desire as a distributed, flowing, and productive force. Rather than thinking of intra-species reproductions, Deleuze and Guattari's machinic desire allows us to move beyond essentialist logic and into trans-species affective assemblages.

It is fitting that we find Hero and her automated sparrows in a text which shows a sustained interest in non-teleological and non-heteronormative desire on both formal and plot levels. Not only is Marlowe's poem itself 'unfinished' (though it was later 'completed' by George Chapman) but it also seems to challenge linear models of desire by opening the poem with its conclusion and creating various confusions and disruptions to the lovers' act of consummation. Judith Haber writes that the effect of the plot's inversion is a 'temporal reversal' which 'unmask[s] the illusion of inevitability, naturalness, and unity created by linear structure' (1998: 373). Quoting Slavoj Žižek, Haber draws attention to how this inversion '*retroactively* confers the consistency of an organic whole on the preceding events' (1992: 69, italics in original). In addition, the continual confusions in the second part of the poem, where apparent sexual encounters that turn out not to be 'completions' of the act, 'do not simply delay our progress to the foregone conclusion; they [...] call the primacy of that stability into question' (Haber 1998: 379-380). With apparent humour, Marlowe introduces the figure of 'Tantalus' in midst of these confusions to tease us with the seeming impossibility of conclusion: 'Like to the tree of *Tantalus* she fled' (559).

As Haber has already pointed out, there is a direct connection between these non-endings and sexuality. She writes that 'the disruption of end-directed narra-