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## Bridging Feminist Waves: Wendy Delorme's *Insurrections! En territoire sexuel*

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Similar to a number of Western nations such as Sweden and the United States, France has known three waves of feminism. Charting how feminism constitutes one of the pivotal social, political, cultural, and revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, the editors of *le Siècle des féminismes (the Century of Feminisms)*<sup>1</sup> explain that French first-wave feminism—spanning the latter nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century—focused on gaining legal status and acquiring equal and suffrage rights for women (Gubin et al. 10). French second-wave feminism (1960s-1980s) or “les années ‘Mouvement de la Libération des femmes’” (“the ‘Women’s Lib Movement’ years”) concentrated on establishing autonomous agency, gaining professional and personal emancipation, and obtaining reproductive rights (Gubin et al. 11). French second-wave feminism was also constituted of two main, antagonistic branches: materialism and differentialism (Fougeyrollas-Schwebel 14). For sociologist Dominique Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, both branches aimed at emancipating women from a patriarchal society and from alienating identities imposed on them by patriarchy (16). Yet differentialist feminists focused on the symbolic nature of inequality and on reclaiming femininity, while materialist feminists championed formal gender equality and the eradication of patriarchal domination (17-19, 24).

For scholars Marc Bessin and Elsa Dorlin, since the 1990s, “French feminism has clearly entered what could be called its *third wave* . . . a new generation of activists, or close to activist groups, appears, it is in any case politicized” (11-12, italics in original).<sup>2</sup> Unlike in the United States, the term “third wave” was not originally claimed by younger French feminists.<sup>3</sup> Instead, it was applied retrospectively, namely by Bessin and Dorlin in their special issue on contemporary French feminisms for the sociology journal *L’Homme et la société*. Only recently is “third wave” increasingly employed by French feminists to speak of current feminisms or their own standpoints as do, for example, political activist Clémentine Autain (17), historian Christine Bard (12), or Wendy Delorme (*QG* 61-63, 79).

Bessin and Dorlin (20-23; and Schaal in “Virginie Despentes” 40;

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“Troisième” 111, 112, 115), explain that younger French feminists insist upon the need to take into account not only the plurality of women’s experiences, but also the many facets (gender, color, or sexual orientation) that make up an individual identity. This focus on intersectionality has in turn questioned and contested the historical subject of feminism. Whether in France or in the United States, third-wave feminists frequently accuse second-wavers of blindly embracing the category “Woman” and, thus, (un)willingly negating the plurality or differences among women.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, for third-wavers, the subject of feminism can no longer be exclusively a singular, essentialist category, but must instead recognize the very multiplicity of privileges and obstacles from which women, and minorities at large, benefit or face (Bessin and Dorlin 20-26; Schaal “Troisième . . .” 115-17).

In *The Queer Turn in Feminism* Anne E. Berger examines, among other items, the current dissemination of American gender, performance, and queer theories in French academia (1-2, 15, 72, 79). In my previous comparative analysis of American third-wave and contemporary French feminist anthologies, I highlight the vitality and diversity of emerging feminist perspectives in France while confirming the heavy influence of American gender, feminist, and queer theory found in these publications (“Troisième . . .” 102, 109-16).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Berger asserts that, rather than exclusively “imported from the United States” (4), these theoretical frameworks “have constituted one of the main axes of Franco-American dialogue for almost seventy years” (3). Hence, just as in the United States, French third-wave feminism has often been perceived as forgetful and critical of second-wave-feminism, if not altogether in conflict with it (Bessin and Dorlin 12-13, 17, 27; Schaal “Troisième” 109, 111-12, 115-16).<sup>6</sup>

In France, the 2000s particularly witnessed the publication of several books by a younger generation of feminists, some of which even became controversial best-sellers. For instance, in 2001, journalist Isabelle Alonso published *Pourquoi je suis chienne de garde* (*Why I am a Watchbitch*). Named after the feminist organization she co-founded, Alonso charted how sexism remained a reality at all cultural or political levels in 1990s France. In 2002, Ovidie released *Porno Manifesto* where she asserted her sex-positive stance, sometimes against second-wave feminism. In 2003, Fadela Amara, together with journalist Sylvia Zappi, published *Breaking the Silence*. Amara revealed the endemic violence met by French women of Maghrebi descent both within their communities and in French society at large. Finally, in 2006, Virginie

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Despentes released *King Kong Theory*. The book also denounces ongoing misogyny in France—especially in literature and regarding women’s sexuality—and proposes her vision of feminism strongly influenced by American theorists or activists (Schaal “Virginie Despentes” 39).

One could not imagine more antithetical perspectives: Alonso, with “The Watchbitches,” decries the hypersexualization of women and misogynist treatment of women politicians in the French media. Amara co-founded the organization “Neither Whore Nor Submissive” to bring visibility to the issues faced by the disenfranchised young women (and also youths) of Maghrebi descent (Amara and Zappi 2-4). While Amara and Alonso work towards making French society more egalitarian, Despentes, on the other hand, is a radical, lesbian, sex-positive feminist who advocates the complete eradication of a still androcentric society (134-37). Ovidie proposes a more individualistic approach to feminism. She believes that producing feminist pornography and having a better knowledge of one’s body and desires can end double standards or the stigmatization of women’s active sexuality. However, while embracing different standpoints, all four writers bear witness to a paradox specific to French young women and third-wave feminists: in spite of legal and cultural changes brought about by the preceding feminist movements, several gender-based discriminations persist at all social and personal levels (Delorme *ITS* 103; Schaal “Troisième” 109-10, 112, 115). Hence, Alonso, Amara, Despentes, and Ovidie advocate different strategies; they also believe that feminism, as a movement, is still needed in twenty-first century France.

Concluding this decade rich in feminist publications, Wendy Delorme—perhaps a lesser-known writer (Fournier 87)—published *Insurrections! En territoire sexuel* (*Insurrections! In Sexual Territory*, 2009). Delorme is a multifaceted artist who has authored several works of fiction and non-fiction: a guide to BDSM practices (*Pervers & safe*, 2006) and two novels, *Quatrième génération* (*Fourth Generation*, 2007) and *La Mère, la sainte et la putain* (*The Mother, the Saint, and the Whore*, 2012); she also co-edited a collection of erotic short stories, *In/soumises* (*Un/submissive*, 2010). In addition, she regularly contributed to the now-defunct political journal *Ravages*. Delorme’s publications participate in French third-wave feminism in various ways. First, and similarly to the four aforementioned authors, Delorme exposes this paradoxical context that makes French feminism(s), especially its current manifestation, relevant to fighting ongoing discriminations. Second, Delorme incarnates the third-wave focus on multiplicity and intersectionality. She is described and self-identifies

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as a “dyke,” a writer, a queer performer and pornographic actress, as well as an academic (Duverger). In fact, Wendy Delorme is “a pen and stage name” for Stéphanie Kunert (Fournier 87). As a researcher, Kunert has produced scholarship on gender in the media and sex-positive feminisms. Kunert’s theory and Delorme’s art thus inform each other, and this dual identity pertains to French third-wave feminism as it is simultaneously theoretical and activist (Bessin and Dorlin 19-20, 27).<sup>7</sup>

Berger vehemently criticizes Delorme for forgetting the French (second-wave) roots of American gender, queer, and performance theories or academic publications (11-15, 79-82). However, Berger solely discusses Delorme as “a character [that] has recently appeared on the French media scene” (11). She does not mention Delorme’s publications, academic work, or specific performances. I, therefore, contend that Delorme’s work showcases instead a dual, if not multiple feminist affiliations, as many French third-wavers do. Virginie Sauzon indeed underlines how Delorme’s work is informed by a French second-wave feminist intertextuality (173-74, 176). Yet it is a paradoxical connection, chiefly because French third-wave feminism builds on and distances itself from second-wavers (Bessin and Dorlin 19). Consequently, in her publications and interviews, Delorme develops a syncretic, third-wave feminism where she bridges and claims the legacy of American and French theorists, activists, and writers—at times even antagonistic ones. In *Quatrième Génération*, she mentions the works of Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, and American third-wave or sex-positive feminists (56, 28, 263, 61-65 et passim). Nevertheless, Delorme also pays tribute to iconic French feminist authors of fiction such as Colette, Despentès, Benoîte Groult, or George Sand, as well as acknowledging her will to transmit their work through her own writing (Delorme *ITS* 169-70 ; Le Corre).

*Insurrections* is comprised of twenty chapters that Delorme calls “fictions politiques” (“political fictions”) (Girard “C’est mes tripes . . .”). Each chapter is further divided into five sections dedicated to specific topics such as activism, anger, love, or writing. If *Insurrections* does not explicitly mention theorists,<sup>8</sup> it builds upon American third-wave feminist and queer theories, such as Butler’s or Jeanine Delombard’s. More tacitly, Delorme also rearticulates standpoints from French second-wave materialist and differentialist feminist authors like Wittig, Hélène Cixous, or Luce Irigaray.<sup>9</sup> This article focuses on two main aspects of Delorme’s text that, while examined separately, are inextricably linked and help articulate a French syncretic, third-wave

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feminist stance that simultaneously builds on multiple feminist perspectives. This endeavor highlights the dynamic nature of feminism and how its waves, rather than discordant, are about continuity and change (Bessin and Dorlin 19; Schaal 116). The first section considers the extent to which *Insurrections* becomes a form of “femmenism” or performative queer politics. While still drawing on second-wave legacies, Delorme denounces gender as a mere performance and the lingering sexist and homo/lesbophobic discriminations in France. The second section explains how Delorme’s book pertains to the current post-pornographic movement, itself linked to French third-wave feminism. Again bridging feminisms, this standpoint allows Delorme to embrace explicitness in her self-assertions of her sexuality while also discussing ongoing issues regarding women’s sexualities.

### **A Femmenist Critique**

Except for third-wave scholars and activists, American gender and queer theories have not been warmly received in France. Several iconic second-wave French feminists—for instance, materialist scholar Christine Delphy and activist Maya Surduts—remain critical of American gender and queer theoretical or activist imports, which they perceive as essentially depoliticized. Performance, for example, cannot challenge endemic inequalities or violence.<sup>10</sup> Queer French activist and scholar Marie-Hélène Bourcier further explains that queer theory and politics were primarily introduced and applied in France via LGBT activists (*QZ1* 197-203; *QZ3* 66-67, 114, 217-18).<sup>11</sup> For Delorme’s commentators, her publications have participated in the diffusion of queer practices and knowledge in France, chiefly because her writing aims at educating her audience in these matters.<sup>12</sup>

To many French third-wave feminists and queer activists, Delorme fights against heterosexism, both cultural and political, by performing gender “with a vengeance” so as to expose its very performative nature (Russo 331). Obviously based on Butler’s theory of subversive repetition (189), queer and transgender performative identities represent powerful modes of resistance within and throughout heterosexist or patriarchal societies.<sup>13</sup> As Berger underlines, French feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir or Irigaray had already denounced femininity as a “masquerade” (11-12, 45). However, Delorme does not merely cite or imitate American theories (Berger 13, 74, 82); rather, as a third-wave feminist, Delorme attempts to bridge a variety of current and historical feminist perspectives so as to further posit gender, femininity in

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particular, as a social category and as essentially performative.

In *Insurrections*, Delorme reprises specifically Wittig's materialist claims. The book opens with a section titled "Sexe est politique" ("Sex is Political"), an undeniable tribute to Wittig's conceptualization of "woman" and "man" as not biological, but rather as political categories: something in being a lesbian—and by extension queer—helps to reveal and undermine (Wittig 2, 5-6, 12-13, 32, 46 et passim). Delorme shows that such an approach to gender identities proves still relevant in contemporary France and for contemporary feminists; the ironic performances of gender embraced by French third-wavers and queer activists confirm that women are "distorted to such an extent that [their] deformed bodies is what they call 'natural,' what is supposed to exist as such before oppression" (Wittig 9). "Sex is political" starts with the chapter "Une Fem-me." "Fem," in French, is a re-borrowing from English and is meant to signify a self-identified feminine lesbian or transgender woman who purposefully overplays her femininity.<sup>14</sup> "Une Fem-me" features a narrator describing at length the hyperfeminine attire of a nameless female protagonist to emphasize the careful staging and preparation that a hyperbolic femininity implies (13-17, 20, 22). Yet, the text also proves to be a metadiscourse on this very practice:

You are Dolly Parton's wigs, Madonna's voice and Marilyn [Monroe]'s breasts. . . . You are your own end and you do not have any, you are essential femininity and its permanent demystification. / When you were born, the doctors said 'It's a girl' and you so agreed with this sentencing that you have overdone it since. . . . The mother, saint, and whore: you play them all and you bear their cross. You collaborate and subvert, you reproduce and spoil from within the world that made you. (23-24)<sup>15</sup>

Here, Delorme's third-wave feminism effectively bridges historical French feminisms and American gender and queer theories. She echoes the second-wave criticism of women being coerced into patriarchal feminine identities such as the virgin, mother and whore that still exist in contemporary French society (Cixous 880-83, 890, 892; Irigaray 186-87, 201). Even if she does so willingly, Delorme's character has "distorted" her body to such an extent that as Wittig emphasizes above, the end result cannot be interpreted as nature.<sup>16</sup> Gender is thus portrayed, in this instance, as a mere staging of corporeal and behavioral expectations or conventions.

However, Delorme also moves beyond the wittigian and differentialist un-

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derstanding of patriarchal femininity as necessarily always a prison or coercion. This excerpt and the entire chapter also demonstrate how performing conventional gender identities can also be a form of empowerment and resistance. In this sense, Delorme claims American third-wave feminist Jeanine Delombard's "Femmenism" or "using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (22). Delorme specifically underlines how her protagonist deploys the performance of the very archetypes into which women have been cast so as to better debunk them. Furthermore, Delorme claims that a fem usually tries to imitate women she considers "icons of femininity," such as Parton, Madonna, and Monroe. For Delorme, these women represent archetypes of hyperbolic femininity and, consequently, excessive ideals that fems attempt to emulate (*L'Intermède*). Hence, "no one *can* embody" the latter women (Butler 176, italics in original) and their femininity can only be expressed through exaggeration (*L'intermède*).

Delorme's femmenist performance in "Une Fem-me" echoes the notion of the female grotesque posited by Mary Russo rather than solely Butler's ironic repetition. For Russo, women who "make a spectacle of themselves" draw on "high" and popular cultures using "recombination, inversion, mockery, and degradation" (323). This is what Delorme's fem protagonist does. She grossly exaggerates (populist) femininity that makes her explicitly resemble a carnivalesque figure, namely a "ship's figurehead" (15). Delorme concludes the chapter with "La femme est un mystère pour ceux qui aiment la mystifier, la fem est un rébus pour celles qui savent la décoder" ("Woman is a mystery for those who like to mystify her, a fem is a riddle for those who know how to decode her") (27). In short, the parodic, carnivalesque imitation a fem deploys is the best way to contest femininity as natural or as an essence. In this sentence, Delorme connects two feminist stances again: the second-wave denunciation of "Woman" as a patriarchal/heterosexist identity created to imprison women and the third-wave/queer deconstructive tools to expose gender as a performance. Through this dual affiliation and the two passages quoted above from *Insurrections*, Delorme indeed shows that gender identity and femininity do not stem from biology or anatomy, but rather constitute a sociopolitical construction and staging that may, in the end, be used against itself.

Many opponents to queer and gender theories have stressed the apolitical nature of performance and its fundamental uselessness as to triggering social change or greater tolerance and equal rights for women or LGBT individu-

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als.<sup>17</sup> Delorme's third-wave femmenism is not a naive belief that performance alone may put an end to patriarchy or heterosexism. She even contests DeLombard's standpoint, which is itself a pun that refutes Audre Lorde's claim that "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (99, italics in original). Delorme's femmenist critique bridges Lorde's claim and a queer performative mode of resistance. Ironically, performing gender does not only constitute a strategy to "spoil the system from within," but it is also a tool to explicitly expose the still misogynist and homo/lesbophobic nature of French society.<sup>18</sup>

In the chapter "La Prophétie des petites filles" ("The Little Girls' Prophecy"), another nameless queer female protagonist is invited to a wedding. At the party, she muses on this very prophecy that reveals the paradoxical context in which young French women live. In spite of feminist changes, they remain prisoners of heterosexist norms. They still perceive a (straight) relationship as a fulfillment, although "they had been raised to become independent women, . . . all are college educated, all have socially meaningful . . . jobs" (142-43).<sup>19</sup> The narrator remains baffled by this reality and clearly stresses that social and political changes do not suffice to end patriarchy. If problematic mentalities, ideals, and conventions persist, women will never be entirely emancipated. Through this protagonist and her femmenist critique, Delorme also underlines the overall pervasive nature of a contemporary patriarchal and heterosexist society: it is not just straight women who are pressured to conform, but all women who experience the "anguish" to fit in (145). With this bitter assessment, Delorme again bridges third-wave with second-wave perspectives. She uses contemporary feminist tools to understand current gender standards and practices, yet she shows that historical approaches to (hetero)patriarchy remain relevant in the twenty-first century. Just as in the 1960s and 1970s, being married is viewed as social success. Similarly, becoming the "property" of a man remains a social *diktat* for young women (Cixous 888, 893; Irigaray 13, 66, 82-83, 158, 170-91; Wittig 6-7).

Regardless of their sexual orientation, appearance or age, women, in *Insurrections*, are systematically reduced to their sex—literally their genitals—through symbolic and physical violence. Delorme sums up this grim reality in the final chapter, in an ironic letter to women titled "Bienvenue au monde" ("Welcome to the World"). Contemporary violence includes gender assignment and training (91-92, 136, 143-44), homo/lesbophobia—including

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within LGBT communities—(19, 30), incest in a chapter ironically titled “In the Name of the Father” (111), rape as an epidemic (92, 132-33), catcalling (18, 21, 155-57), or gendered violence as a historical pandemic as explained by Eve herself in the satirical chapter “La Pomme” (“The Apple”). Criticizing society’s apathetic response to the widespread violence against women, Delorme concludes that we live in “in a world where it would sometimes be better to not have been born with a vagina but where the majority of the population suffers from the ‘everything-is-better-now-that-we-have-the-pill-abortion-voting-rights-political-parity-metrosexuals-what-more-could-we-ask-for?’ syndrome” (175).<sup>20</sup> Here, *Insurrections*’ third-wave context and feminism transpire most explicitly: gender violence is a daily reality for women. However, popular belief and, thanks to second-wavers, the many laws passed to foster equal rights for women, such as legalizing abortion or enforcing political parity, make feminism or any claim regarding gender-based discriminations seem irrelevant. Delorme’s femmenist critique through her queer protagonists, therefore, serves as a reminder that France still has a long way to go before achieving equality at several levels.

Furthermore, “Une Fem-me” and other chapters reveal how hyperbolically enacting one’s supposed natural or non-assigned gender has real violent consequences for its performers. The essay starts with a rhetoric of empowerment linked to the character’s performance of an aggressive and hyperbolic sexualized femininity (13-16). However, once the character steps in the subway, she becomes the target of an unchecked, ordinary sexism, including catcallers—harassers or “rescuers”—who feel entitled to touch, talk or stare at her just because of her hyperfemininity (17-18). As another fem character admits in echoing Lorde’s warning, empowerment through a performance of gender has its limits since “parfois ça aide d’arpenter les rues dans cette tenue, parfois non” (“sometimes it helps to wander the streets dressed as such, sometimes it does not”) (36-37). To a lesser extent, “Une Fem-me” also features the fem character’s butch partner. While hyperbolic femininity may empower the protagonist, her partner’s performance of masculinity makes him a “target” for verbal and physical violence (21).<sup>21</sup> Delorme’s femmenist performance and critique, therefore, while perhaps not changing society, still establish a French third-wave stance drawing on second-wave feminisms. They constitute a contemporary form of consciousness-raising, especially regarding lingering gender discriminations or still marginalized trans-, lesbo-, and homophobic violence in French society.

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## A Post-Pornographic Standpoint

What straight and queer women may or may not do in French society also transpires in sexuality and in the writing of sexuality. Here again Delorme deploys her syncretic feminism as a third-waver drawing on the legacy of second-wavers. Despite their different affiliations, the latter feminists shared similar perspectives on sexuality. They insisted on the need for women to (re) claim their sexuality both physically and symbolically. Cixous in “Laugh of the Medusa” (876, 879-80, et passim), Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (23-33, 34-35, 68-85, et passim), and Wittig (21-32, 76-89), all stress how both in real life and in psychoanalytical discourses, women’s sexuality and pleasure have been determined by phallo(go)centrism and, therefore, women have been stripped of any sexual agency. Such an erasure and stigmatization lead Cixous to state that “almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality” (885). In *Insurrections*, Delorme, just like Cixous, intends to reclaim women’s sexualities and disturb official or populist discourses on the matter, as the plural title indicates. However, it is unlikely that Cixous, with her notion of “sext”—a text that would speak the truth of women’s sexuality—had in mind a writing as explicit or pornographic as Delorme’s (887). Many feminists of Cixous’s generation, including Irigaray (198-204) and Wittig (25-26), are opposed to pornography which they see as yet another patriarchal or phallogocentric tool to subdue women.

Delorme’s use of explicit sexuality inscribes itself in various contemporary French and international feminist branches. First, she echoes how, since the 1990s, women writers have increasingly used pornographic conventions as a critique of ongoing sexism and misogyny in France (Bourcier *QZ2* 187-206; Sauzon 173, 176-79). Second, she draws on American third-wave feminisms’ assertion of a tabooless exploration of sexuality—including toying with patriarchal fantasies and practices—and mirrors fellow French third-wavers’ sex-positive approaches to pornography that Despentes’s and Ovidie’s mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Delorme belongs to the feminist/queer post-pornographic movement that emerged primarily in Western Europe in the early 2000s, namely through performance groups, such as Post Op or Girls-WhoLike Porno in Spain, or in films by queer feminist directors, including Erika Lust in Sweden and Émilie Jouvét in France.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, post-pornography originally stems out of the American sex wars of the 1980s and specifically from the work of American sex-positive feminists like Pat Califia or Annie Sprinkle,<sup>24</sup> to whom Delorme refers in her work.<sup>25</sup> Spanish feminist

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and queer theorist Paul B. Preciado is credited for establishing the premises of post-pornographic politics with his *Manifeste contra-sexuel* (2000) (Stuttgart “Disidentification” 42; Stuttgart (*P/P/P*) 11).<sup>26</sup> Sprinkle, however, originally coined the neologism, itself borrowed from “Dutch artist Wink van Kesteren” who “describe[d] a new genre of sexually explicit material that is perhaps more visually experimental, political, humorous, ‘arty,’ and eclectic than the rest. Postmodern sex art could contain elements that were not necessarily focused on the erotic—humor, intellectual ideas, politics, and feminism (160).”

For scholars and performers, and unlike “mainstream” pornography, post-pornography showcases alternative sexualities and sexual agencies, thus destabilizing heterosexist norms.<sup>27</sup> Delorme, as a syncretic feminist, demonstrates that second-wavers’ criticism of pornography still proves relevant in the twenty-first century. Mainstream pornographic productions continue to deprive women of any (sexual) agency and reinforce conventional heterosexist standards (André; DuskTV). Yet, and echoing Sprinkle, she simultaneously reveals how new technologies and the feminist revolutions have also allowed for the emergence of a feminist pornography that is “political” and where “symbolic or effective minorities . . . tak[e] the camera and mak[e] images that reflect their own identities and desires” (DuskTV). As a consequence, in *Insurrections*, Delorme writes as a third-wave post-pornographer,<sup>28</sup> producing post-cixousian “sexts” that unabashedly describe, embrace, demystify, and criticize the ongoing stigmatization of all women’s sexualities. In her post-pornographic sexual fictional essays, she provides a literary agency to practices and people regarded as deviant or made invisible in mainstream society or pornography.

In *Insurrections*, Delorme attempts to assert a tabooless exploration of women’s and queer women’s sexualities by featuring a variety of sexual practices, fantasies, or agencies such as masturbation (77, 102, 163), sex-work (163-64), BDSM role-playing (57-59, 61-69, 85-90, 95-99), and gang bangs (61-69, 77-78). More importantly, she attempts to counter the official or popular discourses that have stigmatized or grossly misrepresented queer women’s sexual practices. Wittig underlines how LGBT sexuality has been pathologized by psychoanalysis (24); just as “mainstream” pornography tends to use lesbian sexuality as a foreplay to the “real”, “more serious” heterosexual intercourse (Courbet 104; Irigaray 200). The chapter “Baby Doll, Daddy-Girl” (English in original), features an anonymous female protagonist who relishes being submissive to an older partner. In the final lines, the protagonist denies

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that personal trauma, like incest or domestic violence, may have triggered such fantasies and practices by telling her shrink to “fuck off” (59). With this strong language and explicit description of what this role playing implies, Delorme rejects any potential negative psychoanalytical interpretations of queer BDSM role-playing (Fournier 97). Instead, this chapter, along with others displaying different roles, demonstrates that BDSM games rely on a contractual relationship based on ever-shifting positions. This explains why the latter games are perceived as essentially contesting conventional heterosexist and patriarchal sexuality.<sup>29</sup>

To further acknowledge the complexity and diversity of queer women’s sexualities,<sup>30</sup> Delorme writes extensively of a specific practice in her work, namely “fist-fucking.”<sup>31</sup> In *Insurrections*, she does so in four chapters, even providing an explicit step-by-step guide to fisting in “Éloge de la Main” (“In Praise of the Hand”) (71-75). This repetition serves two purposes: it reinstates her post-pornographic stance and reaffirms her will to demystify such a practice. While fist-fucking is undeniably associated with pleasure in all of Delorme’s books, it represents, specifically in *Insurrections*, a feminist, political gesture as she explains in “Métaphysique du vagin” (“Vaginal Metaphysics”):<sup>32</sup>

To all those who represent more than half of the Earth’s population, lauded in some parts of the globe but mutilated, crushed, and humiliated in others, my vagina is open to them. / I ceaselessly open myself, I take their hands within myself as the baby they were when they came out of a similar orifice, before they were declared a woman and it was signed, without their consent, on a birth certificate that coerces them to be what others have imagined, planned, carved out for them. (52)<sup>33</sup>

Delorme’s syncretic feminism reappears here. Just like second-wave feminists, she wishes to foster a global solidarity with all women regardless of who they are, even if she also addresses queer women explicitly in the chapter. Furthermore, Delorme also reclaims—as Cixous wished (881-82)—the archetype that still serves as a double-edged sword for women’s identities: the mother. Yet, as a third-wave post-pornographer, she uses traditional maternity and pornographic codes against themselves. In this instance, the narrator is not an object on display, nor is she being used for heterosexual pleasure. She instead becomes a powerful agent as she reclaims the experience of fist-fucking as a moment where solidarity and gender-bending agency may be

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granted. In this excerpt and earlier in the chapter, she explains how fisting has helped birth transgender men (49-51). Hence, this passage also shows that fisting can become an act of resistance not only in sexuality, but also against heterosexist gender assignment or patriarchal conceptions of motherhood. In “Je suis venue vous parler d’amour” (“I Came to Talk about Love”), Delorme describes a lesbian gang bang (101). While explicit, the emphasis is not limited to the sexual act or fisting itself, but rather on how, among a group of friends, it is an act of love, respect, and bonding (107). By explicitly featuring a variety of sexual possibilities and depicting lesbian and queer practices devoid of almost any heterosexual references, Delorme effectively demystifies lesbian sexuality as conceived in a patriarchal society and denies the convention of lesbian sexuality as “just a phase.” Instead, she attempts to create a new, alternative vision that does not repeat trite clichés but speaks truly of LGBT practices and sexualities.

Post-pornography testifies to the fact that in contemporary France, women can freely enjoy and express their sexualities. However, in *Insurrections*, and typically for third-wave feminists, Delorme shows that the situation is paradoxical at best. Similar to her femmenist critique, Delorme again chooses a post-pornographic stance to address the ongoing issues at stake in women’s sexualities and, in that sense, establishes a bridge with second-wave critiques of women’s sexualities in a (hetero)patriarchal system. The chapter “Fantasmes” (“Fantasies”), opens with Delorme explicitly describing a heterosexual gang bang where the protagonist is at the mercy of several men (77-78). Although a queer woman, the first-person narrator explains that this fantasy has purely masturbatory purposes (78). She also believes that making peace with one’s fantasies, including patriarchal ones, represents a form of feminist empowerment and reclaiming of one’s sexual agency “although I must admit that, in the end, centuries of oppression cannot be erased by sixty years of feminism, that I am unable to fantasize outside of this mental cage that was constructed for my body by others way before I was born” (79-80).<sup>34</sup> In line with third-wave feminism and post-pornography, explicitness in Delorme also comprises a critical discourse that integrates second-wave perspectives on sexuality. She emphasizes the empowerment of her character while simultaneously admitting the problematic nature of sexual fantasies that remain framed by a broader and persisting heteronormative context.

Delorme’s awareness of the tricky nature of her sexual fantasies and her will to bridge feminist waves is also revealed in her recognition of how

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language itself is still (self)-censored when it comes to writing sexuality for women (*ITS* 160-61, 164), as differentialist feminists had also decried (Cixous 875, 877, 885; Irigaray 145, 157). Delorme's (self-)critique goes on to admit that her own writing remains affected by an inability to fully transcribe her sexual experiences in the chapter titled "Dirty Talking" (English in original): "You don't come, you experience pleasure. You don't fuck me, you make love to me. You don't ass-fuck me, you take me from behind. You don't ejaculate, you spring or flow. You don't stick your fist in my pussy, you practice fisting. You don't do phone sex, you do dirty talking. As if you had to euphemize or ennoble, but you know that formal language neuters the impact of your actions (163)."<sup>35</sup>

While continuing to embody a post-pornographer and sex-positive feminist, the character admits here that she holds herself back in the matter of sexuality; she continues to resort to trite allegories that, in the end, depoliticize her writing. Similarly, Delorme acknowledges how women's use of dirty language is still stigmatized, including within the lesbian, queer, or feminist subcultures (163-64). For feminists, explicit language is considered a form of collaboration with the patriarchal system; mainstream society women still encounter the interdiction of explicit language as "unfeminine" (25, 164). Hence, women's sexuality remains associated with the private sphere (164). Simultaneously, however, Delorme reclaims explicitness in the metadiscourse featured in this excerpt and in *Insurrections* at large with its post-pornographic stance. The book consequently articulates a third-wave feminism that embraces and demystifies (queer) women's sexualities while simultaneously acknowledging lingering interdictions and limitations already highlighted by second-wavers.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated, *Insurrections* is a complex text. It must therefore be suggested that several other points of engagement with this book, while outside the scope of this article, might also consider Delorme's use of humor in spite of the gravity of some of the issues she tackles. Another aspect could be how Delorme also bridges second-wave and third-wave feminisms through her emphasis on sisterly solidarity, a *leitmotif* in *Insurrections* (24, 26, 93, 120). As mentioned, Berger accuses Delorme of forgetting the French (feminist) roots of American gender and queer theory. This article has shown that the situation is more ambiguous because Delorme draws on a variety of contem-

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porary and past historical feminisms, at times even antagonistic perspectives as those of Cixous and Wittig have been.

Berger's critique echoes how third-wave feminism in France has been accused of having too little knowledge (or a distorted, negative view) of second-wavers (Schaal "Troisième" 109, 112, 116). In "Dirty Talking," Delorme negates this vision of a forgetful or ungrateful third-wavers: "On n'a rien inventé, mais ils ne cessent d'oublier. Alors on répète. Les mots du sexe et ceux de la révolution" ("We didn't make anything up but they keep on forgetting. So we repeat. The words of sex and those of the revolution.") (*ITS* 165). With *Insurrections*, Delorme thus shows how younger feminists have not forgotten or rejected second-wavers. On the contrary, through her femmenist critic and her post-pornographic standpoint, Delorme effectively bridges the theories and aesthetics laid forth by her foremothers in literature and in activism as well as international and contemporary approaches to feminism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. For clarity and flow, the following abbreviations will be used in parenthetical references: *Insurrections! En territoire sexuel*: *ITS*; *La Mère, la sainte et la putain*: *MSP*; *Pervers & Safe*: *P&S*; *Post/porn/politics*: *P/P/P*; *Quatrième génération*: *QG*; *Queer Zones*: *QZ1*; *Queer Zones 2*: *QZ2*; *Queer Zones 3*: *QZ3*; and *Testo Junkie*: *TJ*.

<sup>2</sup> "le féminisme français est clairement entré dans ce que l'on pourrait appeler sa *troisième vague* . . . une nouvelle génération apparaît, militante ou proche des groupes militants, en tout cas conscientisée" (Bessin and Dorlin 11-12).

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Walker, daughter of poet and feminist Alice Walker, is credited for first using the term in her 1992 *Ms. Magazine* article "Becoming the Third Wave" (39-41).

<sup>4</sup> See Alfonso and Trigilio 9-10; Bessin and Dorlin 20-22; Schaal "Troisième" 106, 115; Schaal "Virginie Despentes" 40; and Siegel 53, 57, 59.

<sup>5</sup> See also Bessin and Dorlin 19, 20; and Mossuz-Lavau 186.

<sup>6</sup> For intergenerational differences between second- and third-wavers in the United States, see Alfonso and Trigilio 9-12; Bailey 17-19, 20-24, 26-27; and Siegel 61, 63-65.

<sup>7</sup> Commentators of her work and Delorme herself acknowledge how she deliberately integrates gender/queer theory in her art (Berger 11-13, 74, 79;

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Boisclair 123, 126 ; Fournier 87-88; Girard “‘C’est mes tripes’”; Girard “‘Du sexe des fem’”).

<sup>8</sup> Only American sex-positive Pat Califia is briefly alluded to (Delorme *ITS* 33).

<sup>9</sup> Cixous and Irigaray are usually assigned to these categories by scholars or activists rather than claiming this affiliation. Only Wittig openly belonged to the French materialist branch; she spent the majority of her academic career in the United States, where she is credited for her influence on queer theory (Fougeyrollas-Schwebel 22-24).

<sup>10</sup> See namely Berger 46-47, 77, 109, 129; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 21-22, 66-67; Bourcier (*QZ3*) 66-67, 114; Rojzman and Surduts 186-89; and Taraud 47, 102.

<sup>11</sup> See also Bessin and Dorlin 18; and Fournier 88, 94.

<sup>12</sup> See Boisclair 124-27; Fournier 87-89; Girard (“‘Du sexe des fem’”); and Mossuz-Lavau 186.

<sup>13</sup> See Alfonso and Trigilio 13-14; Bourcier (*QZ1*) 143, 145-47, 167; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 66-67, 124, 130, 231-47; Bourcier (*QZ3*) 218-19; and Girard (“‘C’est mes tripes . . .’”).

<sup>14</sup> See Berger 11-13; DeLombard 21-22; Delorme (*ITS*) 26; Delorme (*QG*) 23-26; and L’Intermède.

<sup>15</sup> “Tu es les perruques de Dolly Parton, la voix de Madonna et les seins de Marilyn [Monroe]. . . . Tu es ta propre fin et tu n’en as pas, tu es l’éternel féminin et son permanent sabotage. / À ta naissance les docteurs ont dit ‘C’est une fille’ et tu es tombée tellement d’accord avec cette sentence que tu n’as cessé d’en rajouter depuis. . . . La mère, la sainte et la putain tu les incarnes toutes et tu portes leur croix. . . . Tu collabores et tu subvertis, tu reproduis et tu pourris de l’intérieur le monde qui t’a faite” (Delorme *ITS* 23-24).

<sup>16</sup> For Isabelle Boisclair, Delorme exposes, in une “Fem-me,” how a fem’s performance is not different from conventional femininity (125).

<sup>17</sup> See Rojzman and Surduts 185-86; and Taraud 47. Delorme acknowledges that, in France today, “queer” has somewhat lost its subversive meaning. Hence, she now identifies as a “dyke” though she believes “queer” still represents a powerful tool for social critique and change (Duverger).

<sup>18</sup> In 2012, the debates surrounding the law on same-sex marriage and its subsequent passing led to massive hostility and protests from religious and political conservatives. This movement, ironically self-labelled the “Manif pour tous” (“Protest for Everyone”) betrays how heterosexism and homo/lesbophobia remain problematic in France. Delorme testified to the negative

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impact on herself and the French LGBT communities (André).

<sup>19</sup> “on les avait élevées dans l'idée d'être des femmes indépendantes, . . . elles ont toutes fait des études supérieures, toutes obtenu un boulot . . . socialement valorisant” (Delorme *ITS* 142-43).

<sup>20</sup> “un monde où il vaudrait mieux parfois ne pas être née avec un vagin, mais où la majorité de la population est atteinte du syndrome de “Tout-va-mieux-regardez-on-a-la-pilule-l'avortement-le-droit-de-vote-la-parité-les-métrosexuels-que-demander-de-plus?” (Delorme *ITS* 175).

<sup>21</sup> These reflections and passages strikingly echo DeLombard's essay where she reports street harassment against herself and her partner, as well as how “being a femme in public means constantly weighing my personal comfort against my personal safety” (31-32). For Mat Fournier, Delorme, in *Insurrections*, posits the butch/fem couple as not a reproduction of, but a resistance to heterosexist norms (89, 100); The butch/fem couple has, historically, generated antagonistic interpretations as both collaborationist and subversive. See Bourcier (*QZ2*) 123, 209-30; Berger 12-13, 24-25, 46-48, 79; Butler 41, 156-57, 174-75; DeLombard 28-29; Delorme (*ITS*) 25; Fournier 89, 93, 96; Girard (“C'est mes tripes . . .”); and L'Intermède. Interestingly too, for Jo Trigilio, the butch/fem couple is an important staple of American third-wave sexuality (Alfonso and Trigilio 12).

<sup>22</sup> See Alfonso and Trigilio 12; Bailey 23; Schaal “Virginia Despentés” 41, 46; and Schaal “Troisième” 107, 111, 113-14, 117.

<sup>23</sup> See Courbet 118, 122, 136-40, 150-53, 188, 243-54; Despentés (*Mutantes*) 1:01-1:29; Preciado (*TJ*) 340; Stüttgen *P/P/P* 16, 18; and Stüttgen “Maria Llopi” 258-81.

<sup>24</sup> See namely Bourcier (*QZ2*) 157; Courbet 19-20, 182-90; Despentés (*Mutantes*) 1:01; Kunert 206-07, 210, 213; and Preciado (*TJ*) 272-73.

<sup>25</sup> See, among other possibilities, Delorme (*QG*) 28, 103; Delorme (*ITS*) 33; Delorme “Pornographie féministe” 102, 107; and Girard (“C'est mes tripes . . .”).

<sup>26</sup> The term “post-pornography” does not appear in Preciado's manifesto though. He primarily uses the neologism in *Testo Junkie* (2013) and in his contribution to *P/P/P*.

<sup>27</sup> See Bourcier (*QZ1*) 29, 32, 39, 81-83; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 157-86, 223; Bourcier (*QZ3*) 153-54, 162, 173-92, 231-80; Courbet 23, 159, 166; Delorme “Pornographie féministe” 102-103; Despentés *Mutantes* 1:01, 1:06; Kunert 200-201, 212, 215-16; Preciado (*TJ*) 272-73, 340-41; Preciado “Ar-

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chitecture” 22-39; and Stüttgen “Maria Llopis” 258-81.

<sup>28</sup> In *Pervers & safe*, Delorme identifies as a “performer and pornographer” (6), just as she has participated in several of Émilie Jouvett’s pornographic films.

<sup>29</sup> See Bourcier (*QZ1*) 73,78, 81-83, 89; Bourcier (*QZ3*) 176, 231-80; Delorme (*P&S*) 9-18; and Duverger. This is how Fournier interprets the chapter too, yet also as a disruption intrinsically linked to the “existence [of] the social codes it challenges” (97). While I agree on the disruptive nature of Delorme’s writing of sexuality, I would, however, stress that this also pertains to her third-wave feminist and post-pornographic standpoint.

<sup>30</sup> Boisclair believes that Delorme’s writing generally speaking “dedramatizes sexuality” (my trans.; 127) and Fournier that it features “explorations of alternative sexualities” (87).

<sup>31</sup> See namely André; Delorme (*QG*) 27, 121, 141, 146-47, et passim; Delorme (*ITS*) 47-54, 59, 71-75, 90; Delorme *MSP* 54, 173; and Girard (“C’est mes tripes . . .”).

<sup>32</sup> Delorme claims this chapter stems from one of her live performances, itself an attempt to “démystifi[er] . . . l’organe sexuel féminin” ‘demystify the female sexual organ’ (Girard).

<sup>33</sup> “À toutes ces personnes, qui représentent plus de la moitié de la population terrestre, que dans certains endroits du globe on encense et ailleurs on mutile, écrase et humilie, mon vagin est ouvert. / Je m’ouvre sans cesse, je prends leurs mains en moi comme le bébé qu’ils étaient lorsqu’ils sont sortis d’un semblable orifice, avant qu’on ne les déclare femme et signe sans leur consentement un acte de naissance qui les convoque à être ce que d’autres ont imaginé, prévu, taillé pour eux” (Delorme *ITS* 52).

<sup>34</sup> “même si je dois bien admettre au final que . . . des siècles d’oppression ne s’effacent pas en soixante ans de féminisme, que je suis infoutue de fantasmer en dehors de la cage mentale qui a été construite pour mon corps par d’autres que moi bien avant ma naissance” (Delorme *ITS* 79-80). In “Merveilleuse Angélique,” Delorme discusses this very passage in “Gang Bang” (28-29). She acknowledges her ambivalence towards this fantasy and how it was shaped by a series of (sexist) films watched as a child (André; Delorme “Merveilleuse Angélique” 25-32).

<sup>35</sup> “Tu ne jouis pas, tu as du plaisir. Tu ne me baisses pas, tu me fais l’amour. Tu ne m’encules pas, tu me prends par-derrière. Tu n’éjacules pas, tu jaillis ou tu coules. Tu ne mets pas ton poing dans ma chatte, tu pratiques

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le fisting. Tu ne parles pas cul au téléphone, tu t'adonnes au dirty talking.  
/ Comme si tu avais besoin d'euphémiser ou d'anoblir, mais tu sais que le  
langage châtié châte la portée des actes ” (Delorme *ITS* 163).

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