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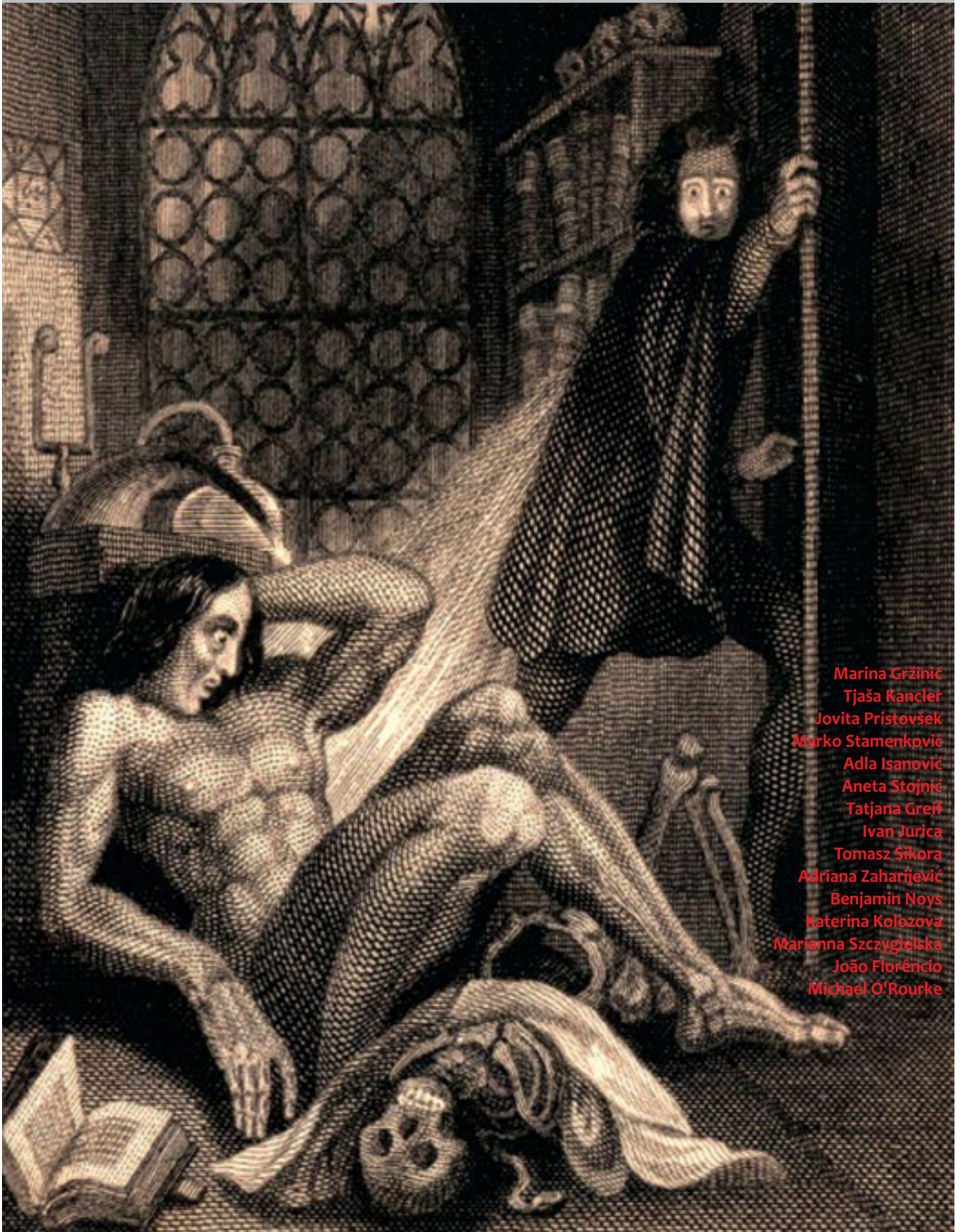
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Marina Gržinić
Tjaša Kandler
Jovita Pristovšek
Marko Stamenković
Adla Isarić
Aneta Stojnić
Tatjana Greš
Ivan Jurica
Tomasz Sikora
Adriana Zaharijević
Benjamin Noyš
Katerina Kólozová
Marianna Szczygielska
João Flôrencio
Michael O'Rourke



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Benjamin Noys
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João Florêncio
Michael O'Rourke



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- **EDITORIAL OFFICE**
Institute of social sciences and humanities - Skopje
Address: Street "20 Oktomvri"
nr.8, second floor
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
Phone/Fax: +389 2 3113 059
Email: info@identitiesjournal.edu.mk

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Science, Media, Necropolitics and Bastard Trans-feminism(s)

Intro into the thematic whole

Marina Gržinić

I decided to propose for this thematic whole younger positions coming from an academic field but as well having a strong activist engagement with the topic of trans-feminism/lesbian and queer positions and modes of lives.

I list the names of the authors here alphabetically: Tatjana Greif, Adla Isanović, Ivan Jurica, Tjaša Kancler, Jovita Pristovšek, Marko Stamenković and Aneta Stojnić.

What is the general topic of this thematic about? What I call “the former West” is the once first capitalist world, a Christian-capitalist patriarchal regime of power with a history and present processes of financialization that is becoming a pharmaco-pornographic hot system. Following Beatriz Preciado’s thesis developed in numerous texts, this system is becoming more and more “democratic” regarding the inclusion inside its capitalist matrix of all the non-heterosexual identities. The liberalization takes place in the Army (United States), and in the legalization of same sex partnerships in Europe (or in former Western Europe). The legalization of same sex partnerships opens the possibilities of legally sorting out questions of propriety, inheritance, retirement, care of the children and last but not least legal marriage and the adoption of children (that is the hard kernel). In France, Spain, Germany and etc., we see that these spheres are becoming more and more liberalized, that means biopolitically controlled and managed by the inclusion in the nation-state’s juridical system and judicial lineages. The queer knowledge, its theoretical and epistemological elaborations are becoming a mainstream in the western epistemological edifice.

On the other hand, we have the rest of the world, with conditions impregnated by death that is a violent setting of the world. These processes we name in relation to Achille Mbembe (and in difference to Michel Foucault’s biopolitics) the cold, necropolitical capitalism that violently subjugates and recirculates death in the realm of the gender, transsexual, lesbian and gay. Therefore, kludge’s of the necropolitical functions with misery, with “pure” format of exhaustion, malnutrition, exploitation, killings, slavery, seclusions, based directly on gender divisions.

So in the former West, the biopolitical presents an endless control of subjectivity through production, reinvestment, and intensification of libidinal drives until a complete fragmentation. This is an intensification of processes of depoliticization as well; fragmentation presents a disqualification of any political agenda or political intervention as a common struggle. On the other side, or better to say along the biopolitical we are witnessing the reign of the necropolitical, as an intensification of direct non mediated death and terror, violence and discrimination (social racism that works hand in hand with structural racism).

Both areas work with new strategies of representation, interventions, reproduction, financialization and control. These new strategies of representation, interventions, reproduction, financialization and control are in the focus of analysis in this thematic whole. Therefore the texts engage directly and precisely on the questions of sexual reproduction, labor and specifically on the questions of representation, the performative of sex and gender and the possibilities that could be open in relation to the questions of politics and the political subject in global capitalism today.

The texts are grouped in three subtopics.

The first is on the question of sexual reproduction, labor and specifically on representation politics (Marina Gržinić, Tjaša Kancler, Jovita Pristovšek and Marko Stamenković).

The second topic is on the performative of sex and gender and new media technology (Adla Isanović and Aneta Stojnić).

The third is on activism, exhibition’s politics and European Union’s politics (Tatjana Greif and Ivan Jurica).

Marina Gržinić,

philosopher, artist, theoretician, based in Ljubljana and Vienna

PART I

SEXUAL REPRODUCTION, LABOR

AND

REPRESENTATION POLITICS

Entanglement

Univ. Prof. Dr. Marina Gržinić,

The Institute of Philosophy, ZRC-SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia,

Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria

(margrz@zrc-sazu.si)

Abstract:

My intention is to expose the way in how gender, class and race and media were and are overdetermined, but without falling into a simplification that they are simply “contradictory.” I will make recourse to some contemporary performative practices and political spaces in Europe that dismantles the singular established contemporary history of art and performative practices in European context.

Key words: gender, class, race, media, performativity

I.

I will argue here that that which has and will have pertinent political weight in Europe today is the question of race. Europe has to critically review its colonial and racist history and present. Present EU hyperbolic regained whiteness and reiterated ideology of Occidentalism. In doing so it has brutally reproduced regimes of racial and class coding that governs economic, social and political inequality in Europe. My intention is to expose the way in which gender, class, race and media are overdetermined, without falling into a simplification that they are simply “contradictory.” I will make recourse to some contemporary performative practices and political spaces in Europe that dismantle the singular established contemporary history of art and performative practices in European context. Finally, I will conceptualize a possibility to think how to queer Europe which, after the fall of the Berlin wall (1989), has been divided in at least two parts – the European Union (that dreams to become in the future the “United States of Europe” or simply to vanish!) and other states waiting at EU’s threshold.

The point of departure for tackling this question is the project *Iron Mask, White Torture*, performance and installation, conceived by Marissa Lôbo in 2010.¹ It was presented at the group exhibition “Where do we go from here?” at Secession, in Vienna (also in 2010). Performers: Agnes Achola, Alessandra Klimpel, Belinda Kazeem, Flavia Inkiru, Grace Latigo, Steaze, Sheri Avraham, Njideka Stephanie Iroh and Marissa Lôbo. Why start with this project?

What is the most striking point that strikes us back but we refuse to go on strike is the absence of any word whatsoever in the mass media after the opening of this performance which was so strikingly black and white that was impossible to miss? An article was published in “Der Standard” the text that was published on the whole exhibition did not single out a word on this performance. At a later stage, an interview in “Der Standard,” with the author was published online. Therefore the role of “empowerment,” “agency” and “choice” had a double role in this performance. Shortly, I will state what the elements of the performance are, is based on the “Report by the Collective of Black Women Subjects in Art Space,” written by Marissa Lôbo and Sheri Avraham, and published in “Reartikulacija,”² a bilingual journal from Ljubljana.

They said that they entered the museum (or the “Secession” I mention above), “a space of production of an epistemological violence. Such a space presents an appropriation of the history of the ‘other,’ a constant reproduction of the white western desire of exposing and determining otherness – pure empire of voyeurisms.”³ The performance consisted of nine black women and women of colour, wearing black outfits and having bright blue eyes! The blue eye represented a reference to Anastácia, a slave in Quilombo region in Brazil. Her struggle for freedom became the symbol

¹ Cf. Marissa Lôbo, “Iron Mask, White Torture: What is Anastacia Keeping Silent? What Does Anastacia See?” in The Editorial Group for Writing Insurgent Genealogies (consisting of Carolina Agredo, Sheri Avraham, Annalisa Cannito, Miltiadis Gerothanasis, Marina Gržinić, Marissa Lôbo and Ivana Marjanović) eds., *Utopia of Alliances, Conditions of Impossibilities and the Vocabulary of Decoloniality* (Vienna: Löcker, 2013) 269-275.

² <http://grzanic-smid.si/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Rear2010tikulacija10111213.pdf> (Accessed: November 5, 2013).

³ Ibid.

of anti-colonial resistance.

The curator presented the title of the exhibition, “Where do we go from here?” “Where do we go from here, Vienna?” – isn’t this an ironic question to ask when your history is imprinted in every corner, and at the same time we revile openly and legally a deep-rooted racist structure. For example, in one recent Austrian election campaigns, one spoke of legislation that would enforce laws that are imposed on those who are defined as “aliens” that is the way of naming those coming from third states (states outside the European Union).⁴

The performance:⁵ One long, empty table is slowly occupied by nine black women and women of colour. They sit next to each other and stare directly at the audience.

The group articulates and gives voice to all objects exhibited in art museums that have been object of theft, violence, lies and silence. The reading starts with a repetition of the name Anastácia by each of the nine performers. Then each woman, one after the other, exposes firmly thoughts by black feminists. Thoughts that concern racism and sexism, African diasporas, black identities and colonization are juxtaposed with critical migration politics and “rethinking black feminism as a social justice project.” In the last minute of the performance, they take the blue eye lenses out, they leave the space and some applause comes from the audience. This is a violent moment of contemplation on the art work, and the strong voice by Grace Latigo asks: “Is there something to be applauded here?” Not to forget the question that doesn’t want to be a silent one: “Where do we go from here?” “Nowhere! – We are here to stay!”

II.

Now let us make a slight detour to contextualize the performance, the topic of racism and the silence. To get a wider perspective in which to situate the performance and to understand what is going on in moment of its showing, it is necessary to make recourse at least briefly to what are the most propulsive positions in the West white queer context regarding the triangle of feminism, gender and queer. I have two main positions in mind and they are: Marie-Hélène Bourcier⁶ and Beatriz Preciado.⁷ These two positions are developing an internal critique inside the western discourse in the following triadic format: feminism, gender and queer. Especially important is Bourcier’s statement when she predicated the death of feminism.⁸ She stated that it will not persist without taking into account the issues of “race,” class, sexuality and gender.

For decades, the entanglement of these three elements has been pushed forwards by the black, Chicana and Asian feminists and the queer activists and theorist combining post-colonial and decolonial movements and studies. Today, the same entanglement is apparent in European context too, especially in the diasporic communities in former Western Europe, communities of migrants, queer and transsexuals and sex workers.

Why entanglement? Global capitalism functions not through a division but due to an *entanglement* that can be precisely described as the/a Christian white

capitalist world reiterated through a constant – humanization. “Becoming human” is a specific process of racialization that works hand in hand with class racialization. Through stigmatization and labeling based on the constructed category of race, racialization transforms societies into race determined societies. This process is today going so far that we have a process of racialization being imputed without any “race” prerogatives while nevertheless serving as a measure of discrimination, subjugation and finally global capitalism’s dispossession. It functions in Europe through the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The description is taken from the text published online. See

<http://grznic-smid.si/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Rear2010tikulacija10111213.pdf> (Accessed: November 5, 2013).

⁶ http://next.liberation.fr/sexe/2013/03/18/notre-feminisme-de-l-egalite-est-triste-et-peu-affirmatif_889497

⁷ Cf. Beatriz Preciado, “Pharmaco-Pornographic Capitalism Postporn Politics and the Decolonization of Sexual Representations” in The Editorial Group for Writing Insurgent Genealogies, eds., *Utopia of Alliances, Conditions of Impossibilities and the Vocabulary of Decoloniality* (Vienna: Löcker, 2013) 245-255.

⁸ http://www.nonfiction.fr/article-4344-politique_et_theorie_queer_la_seconde_vague.htm

The interview is a key reference for all the elaboration I made in relation to Bourcier.

manufacturing of the former Eastern European, the “non-subjects” into fully gendered European white middle class subjects. It is about *us* acquiring our capitalist conservative, chauvinistic, patriarchal, mostly petit-bourgeois lineage with which to safeguard the heterosexual family and the racialized nation’s “substance.” The European Union aims for the manufacturing of former the “barbarian communist” Eastern European into a “humanized” and “civilized” European.

The performance entitled “Iron Mask, White Torture” tackles precisely the entanglement formulated by Marissa Lôbo with regard to the context of her work. I quote: “all these processes affect us let’s say as human beings inside of all complexity of ideological effects of racialized bodies in this historical and geographical moment, and ask how the ideas of affect, sexuality, gender, class, modernity, and citizenship co-articulate and racialize our bodies; this is what is to be elaborate and made conscious to us.”⁹

Therefore it is possible to argue that at the core of the demand is the politics of queer, gender and feminism through race. This is a thesis I started to develop in 2000 when I made an analysis regarding the triadic model of feminism, gender and queer in the space of former Yugoslavia. I asked how we pass from Sanja Iveković, a Croatian artist of international recognition and a feminist, to the lesbian scene in Ljubljana in the 1980s and to the works of dramatization of masculinity in the post-feminist context in the works of Tanja Ostojić and Šejla Kamerić, in order to finally arrive to a discussion about a group in Ljubljana known as the “Uprising of the Lesborgs.” This trajectory unravels and explains the passage from sexually queer to politically queer, where we have projects in the queer context that have no simple connotation of the sex/gender divide. The demand I posed for repoliticizing comes around the time when Bourcier in the end of the 1990s started to think how re-politicize and re-sexualize French Theory (Foucault, Derrida). It coincides with the first wave queer from the US (today Bourcier talks of the second wave queer). Bourcier said that due to the simple fact that genders are constructed it was possible, as an outcome of the theoretical work produced by Judith Butler and others, to criticize the heteronormativity of the 1970s and 1980s feminism.

The situation of interpretation of the triadic passage from feminism through gender to queer in the former Yugoslavia’s context was similar (that means absent) as in the exhibition called “Gender check” (Vienna, Museum of Modern Art in 2009, produced by Erste Bank).¹⁰ In the exhibition missing were positions that come after the heterosexual feminist subject positions from the 1970s. These positions are surely historically extremely important. However, we cannot understand anything after the 1970s if we do not subject to precise analysis the positions of lesbians and gays in the 1980s in the socialism in ex-Yugoslavia.

Bourcier emphasizes not only that the queer feminism she started to develop in its first wave attacked heteronormativity, but that nowadays what is important is questioning homonormativity. Bourcier engages today with the critique of Butler and of the French materialist feminists and lesbians, notably Monique Wittig.

What is important with the translation of the queer US movement in Europe was that the questions posed by the Chicana, mestiza and African American feminists and lesbian positions have been brought in with the first queer wave in Europe. Bourcier argues that in the American context the queer of color were always suppressed and subjugated by the white majority and therefore this recent call for interseccionality when produced in the US white context in between gender, class, race and sex could be seen as a rather suspicious moment.

In the 1990s feminists, Chicana and Asian positions asked for intersectionality. They as well asked that their positions of empowerment are to be recognized. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Bourcier concerning European context, the political subject positions of identity politics were nullified by the structuralist and post-structuralist theories and their narratives of the death of the subject. Bourcier said very precisely that the translation of the queer movement from US to Europe that asked same questions by the queer of color did not get a satisfactory answer. Moreover, it was made ridiculous through mocking “strategic essentialism” and subsumed immediately under the republican universalistic (and I will say colonial, as France is a colonial republic) context. Knowing that Bourcier is talking about the French republic then we know that the ideals of the republic are the ideals of the colonial republic. The same can be applied to the Austrian republic, as we know this from the very precise work of migrants group, notably by the work of “The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence /Pamoja” from Vienna.¹¹

⁹ Cf. <http://grzinic-smid.si/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Rear2010tikulacija10111213.pdf>

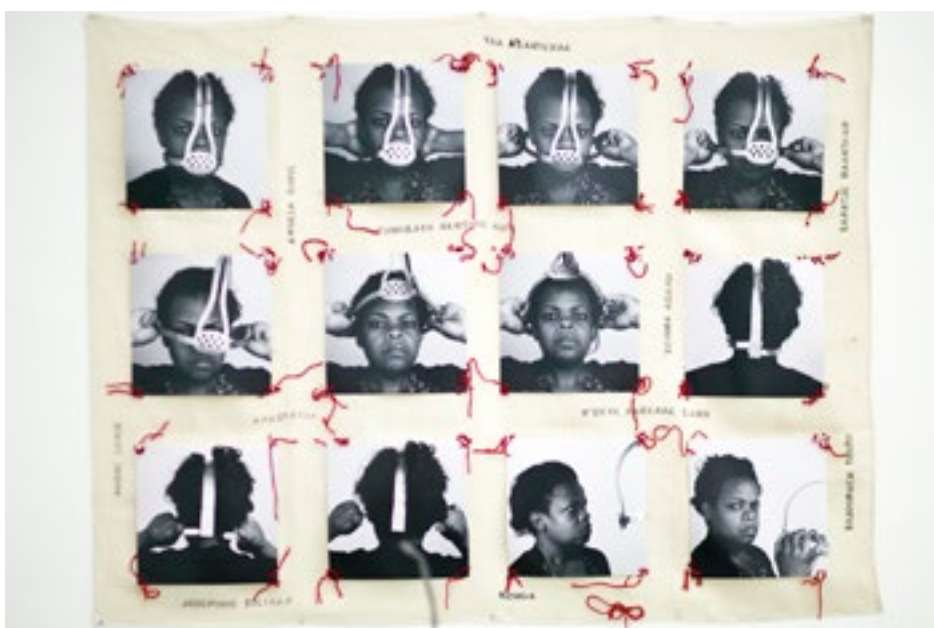
¹⁰ Cf. Marina Gržinić, “Gender Check – Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe,” Museum of Modern Art, (MUMOK), Vienna, November 2009/February 2010, <http://eipcp.net/policies/grzinic/en>. (Accessed: November 5, 2013).

¹¹ Cf. The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence /Pamoja, “Welcome to Cafe Decolonial. ‘Sag zur Mehlspeis’ leise Servus...” in The Editorial Group for Writing Insurgent Genealogies, eds., *Utopia of Alliances, Conditions of Impossibilities and the Vocabulary of*

What was the result of the incompetence—let us ask following Bourcier—by the irresponsible and tainted white theoreticians in the West of Europe? Racism, migration and disregard for the positions of minorities resulted as the product of this process. Bourcier argued that the choice was to either get rid of identity politics or cease performing not being capable to recognize some important points in it. French intellectuals, followed by the official gay and lesbian movements have still not understood this argument and continue missing the political potentials of cultural identities; as Bourcier explained when discussing the republican universalist claims. With such a gesture they include racism and misogyny in the very ideals of the colonial republic. Therefore, the point is, as stated by Bourcier, that today it is logical to emancipate ourselves from the U.S. queer theory in the first wave: it is inappropriate to French and European context as its limitations are numerous and as well revealed by the transqueer of color and transstudies. Transstudies brought as a major contribution in the European context topics such as labor, job insecurity, sex work and I would say the very powerful questioning of the formation of the Western, occidental white epistemic matrix. This later is the matrix of pure (colonial) violence.

This is what we could see at the performance and even more what Bourcier calls as a new indecent materialism. When Grace Latigo argues “why to applaud if we do not go anywhere from there, and we are here to stay,” this new materialism is, frankly, indecent. So the questions that are opened are the possibility of a construction of a new materialist migrant queer indecent political agenda.

In a word, the possibility for a materialist queer political agenda is the question of race that is according to Bourcier the Achilles heel of white feminism since the first queer wave movement. Taking into consideration the reaction after the performance in the “Secession” this is the most neuralgic point of EU space as well. If in the past studies, homology has been made between female oppression and slavery, this cannot be attainable anymore without the implication of the postcolonial or decolonial studies on slavery. To understand that the second wave queer starts to bring forward this moment is very important. Moreover, queer theory of the first wave has constructed heterosexuality as the main enemy. Therefore these questions are at the core of the transfeminist epistemological matrix. This is one of the queer issues that was opened at the performance in the “Secession.”



Therefore this issue is at the core and will stay there for another long struggle. Here is as well present a new demand for the pseudo-naturality of the alignment of “the same sex/same gender” type. Indeed, this position has resulted in an enhancement of the gendered female subject who has been associated with a certain naturalization of women (against the male subject, and of course many others, including transsexuals). This presupposes, as pointed out by Bourcier, the existence of the woman and of domination that erases all differences among women. This then resulted into declaring that the sexist domination is equal to slavery, but without the questioning of the colonial presuppositions of such a shift. It resulted in a deletion of the issue of racism in feminism, as a total absence of color in positions of feminist theory. Therefore, this is why the outsiders as Audre Lorde or the mestiza consciousness of Chicana lesbians as Cherrie Morraga, that live at the borders, are important as they put into question this new purity. Haraway’s cyborg had initially the same aim. This aim was firmly pointed out by Bourcier to oppose any idea of female moral superiority, innocence, and greater closeness to nature.

Still it is possible to formulate a critique that what Bourcier and Preciado develop, and what they call sexpolitics, is almost fully about the current dominant configurations of the biopolitical. Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira¹² in an

Decoloniality (Vienna: Löcker, 2013) 53-57.

¹² Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira, “Body, sex and subversion: reflections on two queer theoretician,” *Interface* (Botucatu) vol.4 no.se 2008.

interesting analysis on these two queer theoreticians develops a set of relation on which I will rely upon. Sexpolitics focuses on forms of expression like pornographic cinema, sadomasochism, the construction of the figures of the transvestite, transgender and transsexual. The so-called queer zones constitute privileged intervention spaces. All this is part of a hot, punk capitalism as Beatriz Preciado stated in her text.¹³ Moreover, one arrives to sexpolitics after the persistent critique of the sex-gender distinction. Here is important to state that such critique of the sex-gender distinction destabilizes both the category of biological sex and the category of gender identity. Though exists as well a warning path, as emphasized by Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira. He refers to Toril Moi,¹⁴ who argued in 2001 that though this destabilization enabled to think the plurality of identities and practices, it also increased their abstraction in relation to corporeity and, simultaneously, made the concept of gender become virtually useless in theorizing subjectivity and identity. According to Toril Moi this is something that cannot be so easily overlooked.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize, as Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira does, that Bourcier and Preciado both draw on Butler's theoretical legacy and both search for something more than a performativity theory that is supported by a language model based on speech acts; they are authors who act within the queer politics that bets on the subversive possibilities of the abnormal bodies (abject, strange, queer), and who search for the body's materiality. This is why their approach to the techniques that construct the bodies (vibrators, pornography, cinema, surgeries), and the need to historicize the categories of sex, flesh, body, biology and nature, makes the concept of sexpolitics so important.

Again, still what stays open is whether the queer experience can be seen without a more precise re-elaboration of the relation in between queer – and the other two constructed categories of nationality and race? And if does not exist a danger that leaving out from the conceptualization of queer the relation to nation-state and its processes of racializations (social and institutional racism) we would end up not naturalizing what we wish to denaturalize?

Simply if I connect what was said until now with the art project that was presented in the start of this text, we have to state that we could not be able to talk about it, if we were not able to question the relation between queer and the dilemmas of identity, sex politics that are constructed through the nation-state or through "race." Therefore we have to reflect on technologies that construct racialized bodies and to ask how they act. In short, I am asking about the place of race, nation-state and migrants in queer theory.

III.

And the question that presses us is as well what we do with the necropolitical?

What is the relation in between biopolitics and necropolitics? In an abbreviated mode, I can state that the mode of life envisioned in the First Capitalist World by Michel Foucault and named biopolitics in the 1970s changed in the time of global capitalism into necropolitics, a term coined and elaborated by Achille Mbembe¹⁵ in 2003. Mbembe talks about necropolitics in order to capture a mode of life in Africa after the 2001 when capitalism literally changed into neoliberal global capitalism. Now before giving a certain explanation what brings such a change I have to emphasize that in global capitalism neoliberal times, biopolitics and necropolitics lives one near the other. They reside as well one in the other. That this is the case we see just when making an analysis of the LGBTQI reality within Europe today.

But before proceeding into this, I can state that Foucault's **biopolitics** (a coinage in-between bio (life) and politics) can be described in an axiomatic way as **"make live and let die."** With necropolitics we can on the other side precisely define the transformation of regulation of life within extreme conditions produced by capital. Necropolitics is a coinage in-between necro (DEATH) and politics. Necropolitics regulates life through the perspective of death, therefore transforming life in a mere existence bellow every life minimum. I defined **necropolitics as "let live and make die."** These two modes of life present a brutal difference in managing life and death; in biopolitics life was controlled and it was about providing a good life but only and solely for the citizens of the sovereign first world capitalist nation-states; today what is at the hand is a pure abandonment of these structures of life (as what reigns is "let live") and at the same time death is capitalized (necropolitics) by the war machine. The surplus value is made by managing death in many different ways and by different machines, regimes and aparati. Today in global neoliberal capitalism the biopolitical and necropolitical mode of life reproduces one near the other transforming many of the former biopolitical sovereign states into necropolitical ones.

¹³ Cf. Beatriz Preciado, "Pharmaco-Pornographic CapitalismPostporn Politics," op. cit.

¹⁴ Cf. Toril Moi, *What Is A Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Cf. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Public Culture*, 15.1 (2003) 11-40.

And the difference between biopolitics and necropolitics is very visible if we are to conceptualize a homophobic history in the post-Yugoslav space. This space is not on the other continent, somewhere there, but here and now, in the middle of the Fortress EU or just Europe. The processes that are to be captured from drawing this homophobic history are not possible to be named just biopolitical measures by respective nations-states for the protection of the nation-state heterosexual rights. We see all over bodies in blood, LGBTQI members beaten and their lives threaten to the point that they are living under the constant threat of death and with basic human rights being negated to them.

Therefore we can talk about a homophobic history that is a necropolitical measure by the respective nation-states and moreover this necropolitics lives side by side the biopolitics of as they like to call themselves former West European states.

In 2001, Serbia's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community (LGBTQ) attempted to hold the country's first Gay Pride in Belgrade. When the participants started to gather in one of Belgrade's principal squares, a huge crowd of opponents (right wing, fascist-orthodox organizations and individuals) attacked the event, injuring several participants and stopping the march. The police were not prepared to suppress riots or protect the Pride marchers. Non-governmental organizations and a number of public personalities criticized the assailants, the government and security officials. In 2009 a group of human rights activists announced their plans to organize a second Belgrade Pride. However, due to the heavy public threats of violence made by extreme right organizations, the Serbian Ministry of the Interior moved the location of the march out of the city center, thereby effectively banning the Pride. In October 2010 petrol bombs and rocks flew at the parade, after the authorities allowed it to go forward, announcing that they would protect the participants. A presence of some thousands of policemen guided the way for 1,000 marchers; several policemen were injured; a few dozen people were arrested in the wake of their anti-gay violence. In 2011 the interior ministry banned the Belgrade Pride Parade, allegedly because they saw the parade as an "obstruction of public transport, endangering health, public moral or safety of individuals and properties." Not a word from the Serbian Ministry of the Interior being preoccupied in this case with the obstruction of basic human rights. In 2013 it was the same.

Although the first LGBTQ event in Slovenia dates back almost 30 years, deep in the times of socialism, when in 1984 in Ljubljana the first coming-out public project called "Magnus" was organized (which was, in fact, the first coming out in all of the former Eastern European states). The first pride parade in Slovenia was not organized until 2001, and it was the result of an immediate provocation by an incident in a Ljubljana cafe where a gay couple was asked to leave for being homosexual. Though vandalism and beatings targeting the LGBTQ population held sway in the new millennium and repeated during the 2010s, the sign of a Slovenian society becoming more and more openly homophobic and transphobic happened in 2012, when Slovenians voted against the new Family Code. The new Family Code expanded provisions protecting the rights of children, such as outlawing corporal punishment, and expanded existing same-sex registered partnerships to have all the rights of married couples, except adoption (excluding step-child adoption).

A conservative group called Civil Initiative for the Family and the Rights of Children, which proposed the referendum to ban the new Family Code, "opposed same-sex unions and demanded the referendum out of respect for motherhood and fatherhood," which allegedly was a statement that would function as a "counter" statement to the proposed definition of family in the new Family Code, described as a "union of a child or children with one or two parents or guardians." It was clearly presented in the debates (not exempted from an invigorated racist and homophobic rhetoric) that if accepted, the new Family Code would be a first comprehensive overhaul of family legislation in 35 years (the last one was approved in the 1970s). The Family Code was rejected in the referendum held on 25 March 2012.

In 2011 the Pride Parade in Split, Croatia, was met with a face of primitivism and violence that shocked many. The parade was surrounded by hundreds of very hostile citizens of Split who were shouting "Kill the fag," making the fascist salute with their right hands and continuing to throw stones and various objects. The situation was shameful for Croatia, who in 2011 signed the treaty of accession to become the twenty-eighth member of the European Union.

To conclude, another task stays in the vision of the queering and that is to put clearly the place of necropolitics into queer and to expose the "queer death" as a process that develops hand in hand with global capitalism. It is not going on somewhere else but rather, it is here and now, occupying and amplifying the turbo fascist capitalist features in former Yugoslavia or the postmodern fascist disintegration of the social in the west European or US context.

US context? Eric Stanley in his text “Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture?”¹⁶ reported that thousands of mutilation of transgender people happened in the last decade. He calls this overkill as the transgender individuals are so mutilated that it transcends homicide; actually it is a fury of transphobic situation. The point is that this is not just a single situation somewhere in some rural spaces but a reality here and now in the developed urban spaces. Achille Mbembe has provocatively asked, “But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing?” in order to explain how the queer approximates physical violence that marks the edges of subjectivity itself.

In short, it is clear that what global capitalism brings in front of us is a necessity to revisit globally the racist, homophobic and discriminatory processes, not as simple identity differences but as processes that are entangled with capital, new media technology and the change of the mode of life under capital’s brutal modes of racialization and exploitation.

Reproductions part of this text are images from the performance and installation, Iron Mask, White Torture, conceived by Marissa Lôbo in 2010. The project was presented in Secession, Vienna, 2010.

Dr. Marina Gržinić, philosopher, artist and theoretician. She is professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Institute of Fine Arts, Post-Conceptual Art, Vienna, Austria. Her last book is *Re-Politicizing art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology*, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna and Schlebrügge. Editor, Vienna 2008. Marina Gržinić in collaboration with Aina Šmid, produced more numerous video-films and media projects. They have exhibited at numerous exhibition projects and festivals (World Wide Video Festival, Den Haag; European Media Art Festival, Osnabruck; After de wall, Moderna Museet, Stockholm; 100 years of Lacan, at The Freud Museum; Net_art Condition project at theSteirische Herbst; Video Viewpoints Program MOMA New York; Gender check, MuMok, Vienna).

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¹⁶ Cf. Eric Stanley’s text at http://www.academia.edu/863819/Near_Life_Queer_Death_Overkill_and_Ontological_Capture (Accessed: November 5, 2013).

Tongue Untied, Tongue with Tongue. Mining the Binary Matrix

Tjaša Kancler

Associated Professor, Department of Design and Image,
Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Barcelona, Spain

(tkancler@ub.edu)

Abstract:

Although language allows boundless freedom, we are at the same time confined within a linguistic structure that first demands that we are assigned a sex and a gender and consequently restricts us to two existing categories; that is, to the categories of male or female. Gender in language therefore forces every individual to mark in its speech to which gender category it belongs. If we are neither women nor men, then how can we understand our existence through language? What is the relation between the binary system of gender (man/woman) and language? How is the relationship between body, language, subjectivity and politics articulated nowadays? In addition, how can we be constituted as political subjects in spite of our non-defining identity? This article considers the questions of deconstruction of the binary man/woman system in relation to the further, possible and common struggle against global capitalism, coloniality and heteropatriarchy.

Key words: language, gender, sexuality, transfeminism, protests

Tongue Untied, Tongue with Tongue. Mining the Binary Matrix

“I am not a woman and I am not a man. I would like the European Community to take out the ‘F’ sign on my ID. I think that it is a discrimination sign and everyone of us should go to the European Community and say: ‘I do not want to be identified by my genitals!’”¹

– *Beatriz Preciado*

This introductory quote is taken from the video recording of the debate, entitled *Il ritorno delle bambole* (The Return of Dolls), between Michela Marzano, Italian philosopher, writer and author of the book *Volevo essere una farfalla* (I Wanted To Be a Butterfly), Beatriz Preciado, Spanish philosopher, writer and author of the book *Pornotopia* and Natasha Walters, British writer and author of the book *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*. The debate took place at “Teatro Comunale” in Ferrara (Italy), in autumn 2011, and its aim was to tackle the question of deconstruction of the binary man/woman system. What is the role of language as means of expression? How is the relationship between body, language, subjectivity and politics articulated nowadays? In addition, how can we be constituted as political subjects in spite of our non-defining identity?

The theory of the 1980s and 1990s introduced the distinction between sex and gender. In this period of the history of ideas, we also learned that “sex” and “gender” are not some natural states but a representation of an individual in the sense of a particular social relation, which is established onto the rigid conceptual opposition of two complementary yet exclusive categories. This conceptual system still remains a firm and stable framework resisting change and

¹ Cf. Beatriz Preciado in a debate entitled “The Return of Dolls” at MEDIUM? (date of release) available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_XEwFOR2Zg

transformation. More, we have recently witnessed the return of naturalization of the binary regime of gender: woman (femininity) and man (masculinity). According to Beatriz Preciado, especially sex persists as the last remnant of nature; even after technology has completed its task of constructing the body.

In 1947, the sexologist John Money, who conducted research and experiments to enable the technical reconstruction of intersex children, came up with the term “gender.” As Preciado writes, “gender” assumes that the configuration of a subject’s sex can be influenced by means of various interventions such as surgery, hormonal and psychological therapy. With the term “gender” the medical discourse unravels the arbitrary basis of sex and its constructivist character. At the same time, it opens up the path to new forms of resistance and political action. According to Preciado this term has been taken later on by feminism. But while preserving the metaphysical binarism (sex, gender) that was in a crisis at that point, “gender” faced the dead-end of the modern presupposition that the body is a given biological matter – gene code, sexual organs, reproductive functions. The same presupposition is shared by two opposed feminisms: essentialism and constructivism. If until that point sex was natural, definitive and nontransferable, we now got gender as synthetic, changeable, transferable, imitative, technically produced and reproduced.

Preciado therefore indicates that understanding sex and gender in the sense of technological intervention (technologies of gender) resolves the contradiction of essentialism and constructivism. Thus we can replace, as she points out, sex and gender with the word “technogender” because the bodies can no longer be isolated from the social forces of sexual difference. It can easily be claimed that it is impossible to determine where the boundary lies between natural bodies and those fabricated by the interventions of artificial technologies such as cyber implants, electronic prostheses, hormones, tablets and organ transplantation. The new biotechnology simultaneously acts on both the body and social structures through which it regulates and controls cultural differences. This new stage of modern societies whose goal is the production and control of life itself was named by Michel Foucault biopolitics. It can also be called the society of control (Deleuze and Guattari) or the pharmacopornographic society (Preciado).

In the 1990’s a new differentiation between man and woman took place. One began to speak of “bio” (those who keep the sex that “determines” them from birth on) and “trans or techno” the men and women (those who want to change their sex using technical, prosthetic, performative and legal procedures). Despite this difference, we can state following Preciado that both (bio and trans), regardless of the difference, are now technologically produced since they both depend on methods of visual recognition, the performative and morphological procedures of control. The difference between the two, as has been noted by Preciado, depends on resistance to the norms, on conscience and by the degree of awareness that production of masculinity and femininity are basically techno-social processes of recognition in the public space.

Nowadays it is possible to understand sex, gender and sexuality as discursive constructions which, through linguistic performativity (drag king, drag queen, cross-dressing, hormonal experimentation...), can receive new meanings or by means of surgery. It has become clear that man and woman exist as a social norm that is maintained by means of the technology of body control: pharmacological and audio-visual techniques that constantly distort the reality that surrounds us. Preciado names this psycho-political technology of the formation of subjectivity with fixed gender and sexual identity (I am a man, I am a woman, I am heterosexual, I am homosexual...) – “gender programming.” The current possibility for the different construction of gender and sexuality at the margins of the hegemonic discourse of the heteronormative regime allows us to take an eccentric position towards the binary system. that we are caught in, through the deactivation of this “gender programming,” that is, through de-identification and de-naturalization.

If we are neither women nor men, then how can we understand our existence through language? What is the relation between the binary system of gender (man/woman) and language? Does language encode power relations and in which way? Although language allows boundless freedom, we are at the same time confined within a linguistic structure that first demands that we are assigned a sex and a gender and consequently restricts us to two existing categories; that is, to the categories of male or female. Gender in language therefore forces every individual to mark in its speech to which gender category it belongs. In the same way as it is done with the inscription in the civil register. The only exceptions until now are Nepal (2007), India (2009), Australia and New Zealand (2011) that officially include a third option within the gender categories that citizens can select on passport or ID cards applications, that is, the designation “third gender” (Nepal) “E” (“eunuch”, India) or “X” (“indeterminate, unspecified or intersex”, Australia and New Zealand).

When filling in the form, most women probably enter “F” instead of “M” confirming, each and every time, the entry in social relations as a woman. This does not only mean that others then perceive us as women but that we represent

ourselves as women. “While we are thinking that we were the ones who mark the square with an ‘F,’ it is, as argued by Teresa de Lauretis, “quite the opposite, it is this ‘F’ that marks us.”² But if our sex is neither female nor male, which language should we use to express ourselves outside the language matrix which is conditioned by the sexual binary? And if our gender is neither female nor male, how can we use personal pronouns, verb conjugations in a mode that would not be defined by gender in the framework of two existing options?

As it has been noted by Monique Wittig, the right to use language in this way does not represent freedom of choice but an obligation to register oneself within the binary heteronormative system. It is about political categories in the heteronormative society that has, as claimed by Wittig, its own inquisitors, a number of laws, courts, terror and forms of mutilations of body parts so that they can control our existence. Nobody is allowed to be a subject without a gender and while the male gender still means a universal position appropriated by males, we, meaning all others, are limited to a particularity from birth. New names are inscribed in the already existing system and bind themselves to its basic principles, although it is nowadays more than evident that these categories are discordant. Shifting from the binary gender matrix, we can see how also language forcefully gives us a form and operates in reality. If language can maintain the body, then it can also threaten its existence.

It is oppression that creates gender and not the other way around, This means that it is gender that creates the oppression and thus represents the cause and origin of one of the most basic types of oppression in the very notion of gender. Namely, it lies in the assumed “natural” division between male and female that has existed long before society. This is why categories of sex should be disqualified in politics and philosophy, as well as gender in language. Or at least, as argued by Monique Wittig, we should modify their use.

Monique Wittig tried with her works (*L’Opoanax* (1964), *Les Guérillères* (1969) and *Le Corps Lesbien* (1973)) to transform the language of “minorities” (women, lesbians). As she argued, with the transformation of gender defined persons in language nothing remains untouched. The words in their order and mutual relationships shift and activate the entire language constellation, which starts to fold and redirect in numerous directions. A structural change in language enables them to acquire a different aspect. Their tone and color have changed.

We are constituted and interpellated as subjects in language through a selective process that regulates intelligible and unintelligible subjectivities, as it has been argued by Judith Butler. Language thus conditions social relations, simultaneously representing a restriction and an option. According to Butler, when Frantz Fanon claimed that “The black is not a man,” he introduced a critique of humanism that showed that the human in its contemporary articulation is fully racialized (founded on racial differentiation) and that no black man could therefore qualify as human. Fanon also formulated a critique of masculinity, implying that the black man is effeminized and at the same time, as Butler writes, he showed that masculinity is a racial privilege related to the notion of human. In this way, discrimination is not only articulated in gender terms, as has been written by Barbara Smith, but also in racial terms. Women of color are exposed to sexism and racism and experience racism as women of color. In this sense, the racial scope has been called into question, in which, through the intensive exclusion of all “minority” groups, the category of human is articulated. Therefore, the rearticulation of the human category starts right at the point when the excluded starts to talk to this category and from this category. Butler asks: “If Fanon writes that ‘the black is not a man,’ who writes then when Fanon writes?” She continues that when we can ask “who” means that the human has exceeded its categorical definition, and that he is in and through the utterance opening up a path toward a different future.³

If there are norms of recognition by which the “human” is constituted, then these norms are codes by power operations. Therefore, it follows that the struggle for the future of humanity works in and through such norms. Those of us who are illegible, unrecognizable or “inexistent” nevertheless speak in terms of the “human,” opening a new space that is not yet fully constrained by the existing power relations. Linguistic resignification therefore allows opening up new contexts and forms of speech that have not yet been legitimized. It becomes a struggle for new and future forms of legitimization to ensure equal space for everyone. But if we do not work simultaneously in the fields of philosophy, politics and economics, as Wittig argued, it would be impossible to change language, because just as we are marked in it by gender, we are marked by sex in society. If our existence is conditioned by language, can we imagine subjects on the margins of such a linguistic legitimacy?

In her book *The Second Sex* (*Le Deuxième Sexe*), Simone de Beauvoir claimed already in 1949 that “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.” In this way, de Beauvoir indicated the social construction of sexual difference,

² Cf. Teresa de Lauretis, “Diferencias. Etapas de un camino a través del Feminismo,” *Cuadernos inacabados*, no. 35 (Madrid: Horas y horas, 2000).

³ Cf. Judith Butler, *Deshacer el género* (Barcelona: Editorial Paidós, 2006).

the product of which is a woman. Monique Wittig has written that we should ask ourselves about the meaning of the term feminism, which itself contains the word “femina” (woman) and means somebody who fights for the rights of women. She warned that a careful distinction had to be made between “woman” as a myth and “women” as a class. “Because ‘woman’ does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while ‘women’ are the product of a social relationship.”⁴ As part of her radical emancipation strategy, Wittig’s statement that “Lesbians are not women” opened up new possibilities for political action. She claimed that only the abolition of all existing categories can bring about real change. Therefore, it is not a question of replacing the category “woman” with the category “lesbian,” but rather to use it as a strategic position to abolish the heterosexual regime. The lesbian as defined by Wittig falls beyond the categories of gender (male-female), because s/he is neither economically, neither politically nor ideologically a woman. “Not only are we not women,” says Marie Hélène Bourcier, “we also do not need to become one.”⁵

In a radio program “Lezbomanija” (September 2011) which is hosted by Nataša Sukič on Radio Študent, Ljubljana, Marina Gržinić stated “Before being feminists, we were lesbians.” With such a statement Gržinić proposed a redefinition of the very point of struggle for the abolition of discrimination in Slovenia. Gržinić pointed as well toward a redefinition of the political subject and its history, which has become a strategic weapon in the concrete social space.⁶ In this way she indicated on the necessity for the persistent rearticulation of the political subject of the feminist movement, which in the 1980s in Slovenia expressed itself first as a political lesbian stance. Lesbians that took the position through language and performativity and articulated it in connection with the gay and punk scene, as well as in connection with transsexual and theoretical political positions, thus have taken the stand for the political emancipation of history, politics and gender already in times of socialism. For several decades the most important radical critique concerning capitalist Slovenia and the EU has been and still is authored by the radical section ŠKUC-LL (in the form of texts, books, performances, etc. by Tatjana Greif, Nataša Sukič, Suzana Tratnik, Nataša Velikonja, Urška Sterle, Kristina Hočevar, Petra Hrovatin and others).

Within this relations, the disidentification with the category of “woman,” and later on as well the deconstructive analysis of masculinity and male gender (“One is not born man but rather becomes one,” or “Gay are not men”), along with political struggles articulated by lesbians, gays, transgender, intersex, transsexuals, black women and women of color, black queer and queer of color, brought about the decentralization and deconstruction of “the woman” as the subject of the historical feminist struggle, and the formation of identities that are not fixed but change through the constant process of becoming.

The reconfiguration of feminism through confrontation with the postcolonial and decolonial thinking, lesbian feminism as well as with queer theory and activism—which is nowadays exposed to the accelerated process of mercantilisation and recodification by dominant discourses and is, therefore, losing its political potential—brings about a new political possibility – transfeminism. Transfeminism is seen in the sense of the plurality of feminisms and as a political philosophy of multiplicity that arises after the queer critique and as Preciado puts it, it spreads through fragile but still widespread networks, through strategic alliances and synthetic bonds, through the same channels within which global capital circulates.⁷

Nowadays we talk about the eccentric (Teresa de Lauretis), nomadic (Rosi Braidotti), fragmented subjects (Gayatri Spivak), hybrids, cyborgs (Dona Haraway), non-natural, non-ontological, postnational, postgender and political postidentities, in other words, about a multiplicity of feminist subject that shows the simultaneity and transversality of discrimination and oppression, as well as the complex power relations that efface the existence of any “privileged” point of struggle. Taking a look back at *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa,⁸ we can say that mestizos, mulattoes, the perverse, problematic, inert and – in addition to all this, following the traces of Virginie Despentes – prostitutes, raped, biomale dissidents, lesbians, gays, transsexuals, transgender, intersex—or in a word, everyone who crosses the borders of the “normal”—are nowadays residing here. Transfeminism occupies the border space, which becomes the position of those for whom the binary categories man/woman are too tight and at the same time stresses the fact that our common basis of oppression remains capitalism, coloniality and heteropatriarchy. The

⁴ Cf. Monique Wittig, *El pensamiento heterosexual y otros ensayos* (Barcelona: Egales, Barcelona, 1992).

⁵ Cf. Antonella Corsani, *Beyond the Myth of Woman: The Becoming-Transfeminist of (Post)Marxism, A Review of Theory & Literary Criticism*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2007.

⁶ Cf. Marina Gržinić, “Biopolitics, necropolitics and de-coloniality,” *Pavilion*, 14 (Bucarest: Artphoto Asc., 2010).

⁷ Cf. Beatriz Preciado, *Manifiesto contra-sexual. Prácticas subversivas de identidad sexual* (Madrid: Opera Prima, 2002). Cf. Beatriz Preciado, *Multitudes Queer. Notas para una política de los ‘anormales’*, *Multitudes*, no.12, Paris, 2003. Cf. Beatriz Preciado, *Testo Yonqui* (Madrid: Espasa, Madrid, 2008).

⁸ Cf. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

biological principle and ontological difference are called into question through positions that deconstruct the concept of “woman” and “man” in favor of the political thought of differential differences, undisciplined sexual, ethnic and racial multiplicity, which according to Antonella Corsani go beyond the binary system as the epistemological and political core and cause new shifts of categories, discourses, political forms and borders.⁹

As Judith Butler says: “They call us by our name but we are simultaneously and to the same extent dependent on the names by which we have never been called. And if we would want to merge all names by which we had been called, would not that multiplicity present a dilemma for our identity?”¹⁰ Therefore, political postidentities are not politics of closing or group identity, but rather ones formulated from a critical position with respect to the processes of normalization and discipline, as well as to the control of identity formation establishing compromise with the constant process of becoming. If differences are the product of oppression, or rather if oppression is something that creates differences, then disidentification or detachment from the identities that we have been assigned by techno-semiotic systems of control and the proliferation of postidentity positions is nowadays a political strategy that, through the merging of singularities, whose result is “we” and the politicization of life, allows us to open new and common worlds. This is possible not only from the theoretical-political aspect enabled by the feminist deconstruction of the subject “woman” but also by virtue of the need to understand each individual as a multiplicity.

Here and now in the context of the deepening of the financial and political crisis, it is urgent to connect transversally, on the line of impossible alliances (for the ruling class impossible), “all Marxist classes” in the further, possible and common struggle against global capitalism, coloniality and heteropatriarchy. At the same time, the first thing to do in Slovenia, in the case of the referendum call related to the new Family Code (proposed by the Civil initiative homophobic “majority” in order to serve the Church and capital which persist on biological sex and control of the private property of heterosexual family), is to circle YES! to the not yet modified proposal of the new Family Code and make a next step towards the emancipation of the Slovenian social and political space.

The Family Code was rejected in the referendum held on 25 March 2012.

Tjaša Kancler (Maribor, 1978), lawyer, artist, activist, researcher and associated professor at the Department of Design and Image, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Barcelona and CIC, Faculty of Philology, University of Barcelona. S/he is currently a PhD candidate in Fine Arts, and a member of a research group- teaching innovation project: *The audiovisual archive as innovative teaching activity*, at the Department of Design and Image, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Barcelona. S/he works as well with the activist group *Audiovisual Commission 15Mbcn.tv* (www.15mbcn.tv) and is one of the founders of the independent research project that focuses on art, activism, politics and critical theory, *kronotop.org* (www.kronotop.org)

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⁹ Cf. Antonella Corsani, *Beyond the Myth of Woman: The Becoming-Transfeminist of (Post)Marxism, A Review of Theory & Literary Criticism*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2007.

¹⁰ Cf. Judith Butler, *Lenguaje, poder e identidad*, (Madrid: Síntesis, 1997).

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Re/-Production: Identity, Queer, and Labor in the Work of Angela Mitropoulos

Jovita Pristovšek

lecturer at the A.V.A., Academy of Visual Arts Ljubljana,
and a PhD student at the Post-graduate School in Nova Gorica, Slovenia

(jovitapristovsek@gmail.com)

Abstract:

The following paper analyses the status of identity, queer, and labor in relation to re-/production, as shown in the recently published book by Angela Mitropoulos, entitled *Contract and Contagion. From Biopolitics to Oikonomia* (2012). The aim of this paper is to suggest that oikonomia, as elaborated by Mitropoulos, is a *biopolitical heterosexual oikonomia*, where we should emphasize its necropolitical intensification that reaches beyond the border of the biopolitical, meaning that it literally breeds death (necro), or in other words, the state reproduces itself by extracting the surplus value from death and war machines. The above transformation will be – in reference to the formulation of Marina Gržinić – called “necropolitical intensification of biopolitics” – while at the same time pointing also to two triads of reproduction of capital/sex/labor and race that are the one of necessity/contingency/value and the other of debt/risk/law of value. My intention is to show how the sexual reproduction is incorporated into the capitalist system through the maximization of the theory of value.

Keywords: Bio/-Necropolitics, Re/-Production, Oikonomia, Identity, Labour

Biopolitics and Necropolitics

The increase of the new forms of expropriation, precarity, indebtedness, social and economic deaths as well as consecutive discriminations, nowadays, exceeds the very term of Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics as a governmental practice since the 18th century onwards and its attempts to rationalize the problems and phenomena characteristic of the population (e.g. fertility, hygiene, health, race, etc.). Foucault defined biopolitics in parallel to the explanation of liberalism that he labeled as “govern too much.”¹ Biopolitics applies, as Foucault has said, to the type of rationalities “carried into effect in the procedures regulating human behavior through the state administration,”² or put differently, to the procedures that nowadays exceed mere control and regulation of production and reproduction of life within the frame of institutions of punishment and discipline. Hence, present “types of rationalities” are not only retreating in favor of the sphere of corporations (i.e. privatization), but are ever more, as argued by Gržinić, stepping away from the very horizon of the production of life.³ Gržinić elaborates that this biopolitical radicalization of the processes, operational in extreme conditions and produced by capital, in the field of theory as “necropolitical intensification of biopolitics,”⁴ repoliticizes the concept of biopolitics of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben in combination with the concept of necropolitics of Achille Mbembe, while simultaneously clearly distinguishing the two. Gržinić writes: “[i]f biopower, according to Foucault, is the exercise of the power ‘to make live and let die,’ then necropower is the exercise of the power ‘to let live and make die.’”⁵

¹ Michel Foucault, “Rojstvo biopolitike,” *Filozofski vestnik*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2003), 175.

² Foucault, “Rojstvo biopolitike,” 175.

³ Marina Gržinić, “Capital, Repetition,” *Reartikulacija*, No.8 (December 2009), <http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=695> (Accessed: February 23, 2013).

⁴ Gržinić, “Capital, Repetition.”

⁵ Gržinić, “Capital, Repetition.” Emphasis in the original.

The difference between the biopolitics and necropolitics consists in the fact that whereas the former includes the production of life, the production of life in the latter is completely abandoned.⁶ Foucault's concept of biopolitics denotes the management of life within the capitalist nation-state context of the first world in the 1970s of the past century, and Agamben's contribution to biopolitics of the 1990s points to the fragmentation of life into bare life, which later on proves to be merely one of the forms in the sequence of the capitalist modes of life.⁷ Achille Mbembe, with his *necropolitics* defines "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death."⁸ Within this frame Mbembe discusses less abstract and more tangible categories, such as life and death, through the relation between politics and death in those systems that can operate only in state of exception.⁹ Upon the experience of Africa, Mbembe reads the (contemporary) politics as the "work of death"¹⁰ based on Foucault's notion of sovereignty, and their relation towards war and biopower, whilst simultaneously pointing out that the notion of biopolitics proves insufficient for the explanation of the "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*."¹¹ His concerns are, therefore, "those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*."¹²

This "necropolitical intensification of biopolitics," is "the work of the right of the sovereign" to kill (either the corporal, or the social) under the flag of (permanent) state of exception, within which, according to Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee there is a 'legitimate' state violence. The latter enables *necrocapitalism*¹³ an access to unbridled process of accumulation.¹⁴ The process at issue will likely become evident if we try to understand how the "dispensability of human life,"¹⁵ originating from the specific form of commodity, human-slave,¹⁶ connects to the triads of *necessity/contingency/value* (therefore to the transformation of contingency into necessity, defining the value). Angela Mitropoulos in the book *Contract and Contagion. From Biopolitics to Oikonomia*,¹⁷ as well as in her shorter paper "Legal, Tender"¹⁸ shows that capitalism and its method of production of value—through, as we could say, ontological category of exploitation (of labor force)—is a triad of *debt/risk/law of value*. There is, therefore, the question of debt (as a necessity), risk (as contingency), and value (as the law of value) where the law of value is tied to the labor or labor force, or, in other words, to the extraction of the surplus value that is, as suggested by Mitropoulos, exercised in the field of production and re-production through the contractual and oikonomical.

Identity

What does contract and contagion in the work of Mitropoulos refer to? The notions of contract and contagion revolve around the issue of generation, relation, and subjectivity.¹⁹ For her, the relation between the contract and contagion

⁶ Gržinić, "Capital, Repetition."

⁷ Marina Gržinić, "Europe: Gender, Class, Race," *The Scholar & Feminist Online* (Special Issue on Feminist Media Theory: Iterations of Social Difference), Iss. 10.3 (Summer 2012), <http://sfonline.barnard.edu/feminist-media-theory/europe-gender-class-race/0/> (Accessed: April 3, 2013).

⁸ Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2003), 39-40. <http://racismandnationalconsciousnessresources.files.wordpress.com/2008/11/achille-mbembe-necropolitics.pdf> (Accessed: March 13, 2013).

⁹ Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 14-16.

¹⁰ Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 16.

¹¹ Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 40. Emphasis in the original.

¹² Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 14. Emphasis in the original.

¹³ Banerjee's concept of necrocapitalism is developed on the basis of the notions of sovereignty and biopower of Giorgio Agamben, Achille Mbembe and Michel Foucault. The term necrocapitalism denotes the contemporary forms of organizational accumulation that includes expropriation and submission of life to the power of death. Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, "Live and Let Die: Colonial Sovereignities and the Death Worlds of Necrocapitalism," *Borderlands*, Vol. 5, no.1 (2006), http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol5no1_2006/banerjee_live.htm (Accessed: January 12, 2013).

¹⁴ Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, "Histories of Oppression and Voices of Resistance: Towards a Theory of the Translocal," *Reartikulacija*, No.9, (December 2009), http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=612&langswitch_lang=en (Accessed: February 18, 2013).

¹⁵ Walter D. Mignolo, "Dispensable and Bare Lives: Coloniality and the Hidden Political/Economic Agenda of Modernity," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self Knowledge*, Vol. 7, Iss. 2, Article 7 (2009), 69-88.

¹⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011), 5-6.

¹⁷ Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia* (Autonomedia, Minor Compositions: Brooklyn/US, 2012).

¹⁸ Angela Mitropoulos, "Legal, Tender," *Reartikulacija*, No. 7 (December 2009), <http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=698> (Accessed: March 2, 2013).

¹⁹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 13-14.

is both, figurative as well as empirical. Mitropoulos states that she cares about the illumination of the history and the practices of the actually existing “contracts as the allocation of risk” and “contagion as the field of the valorization of contingency.”²⁰ The contract, according to Mitropoulos, is—in this case—the most appreciated principle of capitalism, whose specific problem is the conversion of contingency into necessity (the reorganization of uncertainty, its re-location, or its valorization and re-introduction of necessity).²¹ The contract, as she states, was, legally and philosophically at the center of conflicts about the pattern and the meaning of relations, sexual and economic, denoting the gender distinction as well as the complicated connection of the public and intimate spheres.²² It served as the foundation of the social, determining the legal lines of obligation and rights.²³ The contractual theory, as Mitropoulos says, is a kind of a holy trinity: of value, exchange, and surplus.²⁴ Mitropoulos notices violence of rights in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s keen advocacy: his “social compact [contract],” requires an “unanimous consent,” where “no one, under any pretext whatsoever, can make any man a subject without his consent.”²⁵ It’s about a kind of a blind date, a non-voluntary subjugation, as Rousseau has reduced the coincidence of birth and residency to an anticipated act of consent, so the one who does not agree with the sovereign authority, or opposes this social contract of a nation-state, becomes a “foreigner-by-choice.”²⁶ Put shortly, and as Mitropoulos shows, it is about (in relation to Rousseau’s social compact as universalized) a transformation of the contingency of birth and residency into necessity of the anticipated (or even enforced) act of consent.²⁷

In her text with the title “Legal, Tender” (the title is a technical term for a type of a contractual debt ensured by violence) that can be found in a slightly modified version as the third chapter in the book *Contract and Contagion*, Mitropoulos writes primarily about the ban of the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2009. What we have there, she argues, is not legal, nor illegal, but extralegal violence.²⁸ The rights, as she says with reference to Walter Benjamin’s formulation of two forms of violence, is always accompanied by violence, either *the contract – establishing*, or *the contract – maintaining* violence. In reference to the ban of the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2009, Mitropoulos points to a new, third form of violence, *the violence that does not concern the contract at all*.

While elaborating on the question of human rights and democracy in relation to the legal/judicial frames, Mitropoulos, demonstrates that the deprivation of rights from the very beginning accompanies the doctrine of human rights. In other words, basic human rights practically do not exist, for if they do, then their violation is included in the judicial frame from the very beginning. Mitropoulos points out that what is at issue in the procedures of inscription in the genealogy of the state and its judicial frame (assuring its order) is *the legal form of value* (therefore in extreme cases decision-making also about what is legal labor, or put in a different way, the difference between the waged labor and slavery), *a legal/judicial regulation of relations* (amongst other things deciding about what authorized reproduction is going to be) and last but not least *a legal form of identity* (enabling individuals to prove his or her identity). “What passes for legal tender is a convention for the reckoning of debts – and a legitimated violence steps in where convention fails,”²⁹ that will, amongst other things, decide also about who and/or what is included in the legal frame (as legal or illegal) and who and/or what is excluded from it (as the out-of-law). The identity therefore shows itself as a judicial category, established through the contractual, regulating identity, valorizing its value, exchange, and the surplus.

The key for Mitropoulos’s analysis is the concept of *oikonomia* describing the methods, through which the politics of a household (familiarity and genealogy, the intimate and national) “are crucial to the organization of intimate forms of self-management, but also the confluences of nation, race and sexuality with re-/production that continue to define the reach and limits of contractualism.”³⁰ *Oikos* is an ancient Greek word for household (and not for a family; family is *genea*, and connects the lineage or origin with generation; the modern Greek term for a family is *oikogeneia*, combining the notions of genealogy and a household).³¹ It was for Aristotle and other contemporaries, according to Mitropoulos, that the term of *oikonomia* denoted the study of the management of a household. *Oikos* was juxtaposed to *polis*, and

²⁰ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 18.

²¹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 26.

²² Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 31.

²³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 31.

²⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 24.

²⁵ Rousseau in Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 23.

²⁶ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 23. See also Angela Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

²⁷ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 94.

²⁸ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

²⁹ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

³⁰ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 38.

³¹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 49.

oikonomia to *politikon*. For Aristotle, the household (*oikos*) is the foundation of *polis* (a city state), provided that the owners of a household (within which there reigns a strict hierarchy) are free adult men (that are equal in a *polis*).³² In a word, here Mitropoulos speaks about the difference between the “egalitarian logic of politics” and “hierarchical logic of *oikos*,”³³ pointing with *oikonomia* to the shifting definitions and demarcations between economics and politics, and observing the methods with which the restoration of genealogical lines sets as the central one, for the re-foundation and persistence of the capitalist order.³⁴ She follows the historical discontinuity between the ancient and modern understanding of *oikos*, in order to historicize what momentarily appears to be a naturalized configuration of intimacy and genealogy, but also to simultaneously emphasize some implicit questions, posed by the history of interruptions.³⁵ Mitropoulos argues that “geopolitical demarcations [that] come to assume the character of a domestic space (as in the familial concept of the nation, or as with the term ‘domestic economy’), while the positing of distinctions such as race and class to a space outside discrete households both amplifies the perception of the household as the foundation of an ostensibly natural economy founded on a similarly naturalized sexual difference that, in turn, becomes the premise which links sex to the reproduction of race, nation and (conceived as an identity) class.”³⁶

The modern genealogical understanding of *oikos* has, according to Mitropoulos become a naturalized foundation, hence a model for identification and transferability of the property and right. The ancient household could not be perceived as a family home, as for the presence of slaves. For the slaves and women whose common denominators are the race and sex (and private property) in the sphere of the ancient political there was no space.³⁷ In short, as she puts it, it concerns important shifts and the difference between the ancient *oikonomia* and the modern household economics: “[w]here the ancients distinguished between economics and politics and located the former in the household and where, across the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, the household and factory were affectively and architecturally demarcated, Fordism and the Keynesian welfare state put them back together as a form of social accounting in the register of the family wage.”³⁸

Xenophon’s work on *oikonomia* (*Oeconomikos*), which undergoes Latin transliteration in the Renaissance, and Aristotle’s work (on the distinction between *oikos* and *polis* as a foundation for the later discussions about political economy (Foucault, Arendt), according to Mitropoulos, highlight an important question: about the household as the place of the emergence of the intimate self-management.³⁹ This is one thing, and the second one is that Xenophon’s text gains importance, especially with Machiavelli’s understanding of *oikos* as genealogical and contractual, as he was dealing with the legal inscription of paternal rights through a contract.⁴⁰ In short, “if Aristotle wrote of formal distinctions between the city-state and the *oikos*, Xenophon was concerned with a highly stylized managerialism, one premised on self-discipline, and capable of moving between city (and battlefield) and household with ease.”⁴¹

In short, at the basis there is a question of (re-)production (therefore a connection of sexuality and economy) and extraction, maximization of the surplus value, which is hidden within the notion of surplus labor: either as slavery or unpaid domestic household labor, “in the presentation of surplus labor as obligation, indebtedness and gift through definitions of contract as a species of unbreakable covenant, in the presumption of contract as the performance of voluntary submission, reciprocity and exchange, and in the divisions of labor as the attributions of gender, race, citizenship and sexuality, that are arranged and characterized as the naturalized order of the *oikos*.”⁴²

Queer

Let’s go back to the aforementioned text and chapter in “Legal, Tender;” as soon as Mitropoulos explains *oikonomia* as the space where economics and politics intertwine (and capitalism constantly wanting to separate them), she presents the racial and sexual reproduction as the moving nexus between the intimate and national, the public and private, between sexuality and economics as well as between the intimate and global reorganization of labor. The text “Legal,

³² Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 49.

³³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 58.

³⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 50.

³⁵ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 50.

³⁶ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 50.

³⁷ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 51.

³⁸ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 51.

³⁹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 53.

⁴⁰ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 56.

⁴¹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 58. Emphasis in the original.

⁴² Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 66. Emphasis in the original.

Tender” opens with Pierre Nora’s quotation about genealogy and the origin itself as a pure myth (we have already said that in her book Mitropoulos illustrates how at the time of Renaissance, the reading of Xenophon’s *oikonomia* genealogically appears where it had not been before). Mitropoulos understands genealogy as the main methodology of inscription, and re-inscription of the lines of the legal production and reproduction,⁴³ as well as the transformation of the numerous and irreducible relations into contractual identities, or to state this at the point, as the recognition “to whom or what we owe our existence.”⁴⁴

“[T]here would be no way to think of a race, or a people, or a nation,” as Mitropoulos says, “without the ordered inscriptions of genealogy,” that has brought along also the “normative economy of sex, gender and sexuality.”⁴⁵ The norm is therefore the reproduction of race, and nationalism is realized through genealogy. Nationalism, as she shows, almost literally defines the rights, and it is more than just their preliminary condition.⁴⁶ In this way, opposing nationalistic visions is understood as a refusal of reproduction of values representing the foundation of a nation’s identity. In reference to Alys Eve Weinbaum, Mitropoulos tells us that it is about a *race/reproduction* link, where the “interconnected ideologies of racism, nationalism, and imperialism rest on the notion that race can be reproduced.”⁴⁷ Racism, nationalism and imperialism therefore cannot be thought of without their close connection to the legal/judicial frame (and contractually ensured).

It is exactly this strong inclination towards reproduction that Mitropoulos recognizes also in the claims for the recognition of rights of homosexual couples (marriage, adoption, access to the technology of bio-medically-assisted procreation etc.).⁴⁸ On the reverse side of this inclination there is a question of how to ensure genealogical order,⁴⁹ how to regulate the legal inscription and the assignment of proprietorship. In Slovenia, in March 2012, there was a referendum about a new Family Code that failed, however showing not only that a major portion of the space has to either emancipate from the Christianity, patriarchal and heterosexual matrix. It should be seen as the signal to wake up from the (overly) comfortable passivity (i.e. depoliticization) when the issue is the rights of fellow citizens, but also that the homosexually oriented partners are able to register only in the form of heterosexual (and therefore patriarchal) matrix. It’s similar to the already mentioned figures of “foreigner-by-choice” of Rousseau. In this case, the figure of the foreigner is that of a citizen with reference to Ariella Azoulay’s⁵⁰ critique of the exclusive rights as a normative heterosexual citizen.

It is an issue of border, where at the attempts of its transgression *the genealogical re-appears ever again in its modified forms*.⁵¹ In her book, in a chapter entitled “Reproducing value,” Mitropoulos gives a couple of examples of the mentioned genealogical in a modified form. While the first talks about ball houses of drag culture, whose tenants are families, most often consisting of Latin and Afro-American queer persons, gathered around the “mother of the house” or “father of the house,” who “operate not only as the performative enactments of conventional gender and familial roles in a queer register,” but are at the same time also staging of both, the contract and the *oikos*, the latter consists in more than mere “shaky foundations of the oikonomic.”⁵² Should the *barebacking subculture* represent the unprotected sexual intercourses between the HIV positive gays, who have, through the virus, found out that they can breed without women and where “the generation of the virus takes the place of reproduction,”⁵³ and where the “culture of breeding the virus composes itself not only as a question of generation and fraternal kinship, but also invokes the contractual allocation of risk and the performativity of contract,”⁵⁴ then this risk no longer represents the domain of life, but the domain of death. This presents as well an – we could say Agambenian – division of *oikonomia* from within, the separation of the *heterosexual oikonomia* from the *homosexual* one. The latter, the *homosexual oikonomia* as a question of reproduction of the deadly virus coincides with what Gržinić elaborates in reference to Foucault, Agamben and Mbembe as *necropolitical intensification of biopolitics*. What this means for the relation of politicization/historicization between biopolitics/necropolitics and *oikonomia*/lineage/nation is to be seen in the very near future.

⁴³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 92.

⁴⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 93.

⁴⁵ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁴⁶ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 99.

⁴⁷ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 99.

⁴⁸ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁴⁹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 100.

⁵⁰ See Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).

⁵¹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 110.

⁵² Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 110.

⁵³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 111.

⁵⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 111.

Mitropoulos in the text “Legal, Tender” elaborates on the contractual theory of Benedict de Spinoza, and the tension between the common and the private – in other words, “between the jealous privatisation of women as the object of desire and women as the common property of men,” the tension that operates as “the template of contract theories, whether those of the marital, wage or social contract, and brings to the fore all the gendered senses in which the categories of active and passive (citizenship and sexuality) are constructed and remade,”⁵⁵ adding that, “it is little wonder that both [Étienne] Balibar and [Warren] Montag, in reading Spinoza to this point, begin to think about the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There is, very simply, no way to think of sexual economies without speaking, also, of the organisation of race, though the connection is less metonymic or homologous than that they are both crucial to the inscriptions of genealogy, the legitimate transmission of property through name.”⁵⁶

What sums it up is the notion that “the household (reproductive) architecture of a Jeffersonian domestic economy required common law’s experimental inclination and its scalable contracts. At the frontier, sovereignty and canonical law gave way to fraternal democracy and common law.”⁵⁷ According to Mitropoulos, they represent a frontier expansion; the oceanic expansion of an empire and common law.⁵⁸ “Common law,” as she puts it, “with its reliance on case law, unfolds through a subtle play between precedent and approximation – or, put another way, common law navigates power through repetition and variation.”⁵⁹ It is the heteronormative household (or, in other words the heteronormative matrix) that, she continues, was the one that has, based on a precedent, and the evolution of the common law itself, decided about the time and quantity measure of the recognition of property, contract, loans, their inheritability and assurance.⁶⁰

Here Mitropoulos adds another statement of Siobhan B. Somerville, who does not say only that the idea of advanced nations should be only the bestowment of authenticity to the identity itself, and the introduction of comparison, and that the politics of identity are insufficient when we speak about race, but that the inter-racial marriage became introduced with its complete heterosexualization.⁶¹ Referring to Janet Halley, Mitropoulos adds that the “[m]ovements around sexual orientation, [...] harbor ‘an unforgivingly corrosive critique of identity itself.’”⁶² She also argues “that the specificity of queer sex is that it, as with the Marxian notion of class, is far less an identity than a placeholder of that which is regarded as without value, inauthentic and – in its specifically capitalist sense – deemed unproductive or excessively so.”⁶³ She here speaks about queer value that she places “between the putatively abstract schema of money and the apparently particularistic organization of an oikonomics.”⁶⁴ The term *queer* was, according to Will Fisher originally used in phrases connected to falsification, or forged money since the 17th century (all the way until the 19th century).⁶⁵ So the value of the queer addresses the issue of authenticity in the sense of a forgery, or imitation of heterosexuality,⁶⁶ as well as the question of the authenticity of the movement itself. Fisher explores, as argued by Mitropoulos, “in his treatise of the etymological proximity of ‘queer sex’ to ‘queer money,’ their shared connotations of counterfeit and forgery.”⁶⁷ If each original requires its copy (reproduction) in order to define, evaluate one’s own authenticity, or, in other words, if the copy grants authenticity, then the queer shows itself as a consisting part of capitalism. But as Mitropoulos says “[w]ithout ‘the guarantee of power,’ as Mark Osteen puts it, ‘counterfeit and genuine currency are identical,’”⁶⁸ pointing that Osteen shows to the dependence of monetary economy upon the ‘faith’ or ‘belief’ in authenticity.⁶⁹

Labor

Genealogy inscribes itself through a precedent or an approximation of the authorization of the state in the gesture of granting authenticity (either to a race, labor, sex, etc.) with the help of stories about the origin within the frame of

⁵⁵ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.” See also Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 100.

⁵⁶ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 100.

⁵⁷ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 101.

⁵⁸ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 101.

⁵⁹ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 101.

⁶⁰ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.” See also Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 102.

⁶¹ Somerville in Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 102.

⁶² Halley in Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 102.

⁶³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 102.

⁶⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 104.

⁶⁵ Will Fisher, “Queer Money,” *ELH*, Vol.66, No.1 (Spring 1999), 1.

⁶⁶ Fisher, »Queer Money,« 1.

⁶⁷ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 104.

⁶⁸ Osteen in Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 104.

⁶⁹ Osteen in Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

common law; it is “in the unpredictable environment of life” (as said by judge Wendell Holmes),⁷⁰ or in other words, in the endless sequence of states of exception and the transmission of exceptional rules into the legal/judicial frame that “their re- and productivity in relation to a nation state is (re)defined.”⁷¹ The legal tender, as already mentioned in reference to Mitropoulos at the beginning of the analysis, is a type of debt, and the debt is arranged on the basis of the contractual, and assured by violence.

There is a question of how to intensify the surplus labor as a point of class re-composition⁷² through, as argued by Mitropoulos, “indistinction between intimacy and economy that plays out, among other things, as the expectation that women who work [...] deliver a labor that has affective purchase, circulating as an extension of [...] care-giving domestic labor that has to appear as if it is not work at all, but freely and naturally given.”⁷³ This is therefore a story of capitalism whose key question concerns the surplus labor and its channeling as well as the re/distribution through *oikonomia*⁷⁴; it is a brutal law of value where the place of the surplus labor is tied to the surplus value, and where exploitation is shown as an ontological category. The latter, according to Mitropoulos, constitutes the central logic of capitalist (re-)production that also includes unpaid household work as the domain of femininity, and slavery as the domain of blackness.⁷⁵

The labor force itself does not, according to Mitropoulos, represent an ontological, but a historical category. It does not represent the synonym for bare life, saying that it is more likely the judgment of common law about what is just and what is not: “The remainder, the surplus of the labor theory of value, is that which is not recognized as labor, as being productive. [...] The labor theory of right is, in its way, a way of recording the genealogies of exploitation and recompense – quite literally, tracing the lines of justice and indebtedness, of adjudicating on the not-so-confident assumption of knowing to whom and to what we owe our existence.”⁷⁶

If today it is the debt that produces surplus value – as also shown by Marina Vishmidt in one of her discussions on debt as the present foundation for social reproduction⁷⁷ – or, in other words, should the debt “translates ownership into obedience,”⁷⁸ post-Fordism could be read as an updated version of slavery. This is what Mitropoulos virtually hints to when saying: “Not only is the labor of the slave without measure, it is situated outside time in the supposedly mutual and sentimental bonds of master and slave, but nevertheless figured as a boundless obligation to labor. Slavery, rather than wage labor, is the riddle (and telos) at the heart of the labor theory of value – or, better put: it marks the extraction of a surplus without punctual limit, through the gendered, racialised distribution of the wage and its accompanying architectures of household and nation.”⁷⁹

Unwaged labor is, according to Vishmidt, also anchored in the wage relation itself, hiding “the unpaid, slave-like nature of so much of the work upon which capital accumulation is premised.”⁸⁰ But to point to the noticeable difference, inherent to a contemporary slave, we should add – to the already mentioned – her shattering statement that today “[c]apital has neither the inclination nor the resources to offer workers more exploitation right now, but there has to be recognition that exploitation remains the bedrock of the social contract, and it is achieved most efficiently without jobs in an economy premised on the capitalization of debt.”⁸¹ The loss of social antagonism should be, according to Vishmidt ascribed to the moment of devalorization of labor and its revalorization in the form of debt, where the devalorization itself (both, the ideological as well as the economic) ensures that the social field in its entirety confronts the capital. The worker, on the other hand, is shown as a unit of capital, that can either represent an input (when given modal life, i.e. life with form, style, etc.) or subject to exploitation (as indebtedness represents his/her only access

⁷⁰ Wendell Holmes in Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁷¹ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁷² Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 105.

⁷³ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 106.

⁷⁴ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 106.

⁷⁵ Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 106.

⁷⁶ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁷⁷ Marina Vishmidt, “Human Capital or Toxic Asset: After the Wage, part 1,” *Reartikulacija*, No. 10-13 (February 2010), http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=1487&langswitch_lang=en (Accessed: February 7, 2013). See also Marina Vishmidt, “Human Capital or Toxic Asset: After the Wage, part 2,” *Reartikulacija*, No. 10-13 (February 2010), http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=1492&langswitch_lang=en (Accessed: February 7, 2013).

⁷⁸ Stephen M. Best in Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁷⁹ Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender.”

⁸⁰ Silvia Federici in Vishmidt, “Human Capital or Toxic Asset: After the Wage, part 2.”

⁸¹ Vishmidt, “Human Capital or Toxic Asset: After the Wage, part 1.”

to the basic necessities of life).⁸² So it may not be so surprising that Mitropoulos also claims that she has a feeling that the globally spread protests, movements, and occupations of today represent an economic opposition rather than political formations; something that could not be ascribed to them in the 1960s – an economic maximalism and political minimalism.⁸³

Coda

Capitalism has – to the last drop – succeeded in incorporating the sexual reproduction into the system of its value as *labor* (sex work, social work in the forms of custody, fostering, and adoption into nuclear, extended, or reorganized families, service work as care labor, etc.), or as *consumption and exhaustion* (the systems of identities). Capitalism has incorporated sexual reproduction into the very center of the system through the maximisation of the theory of value (i.e. through maximisation of surplus labor), and showed that genealogy represents the sliding door, opening or closing according to historical requirements.

Despite its repeating representation in connection to identities and singular branded sexual practices, sexual reproduction, at a closer look, really shows itself as the central place of the reproduction, hegemony, and discrimination. Sexual reproduction is inscribed into the biopolitics of the neoliberal capitalist state when operating as the most desired biopolitical dispositive (especially through the formation of genealogies), or it is the dispositive of necrocapitalistic procedures (e.g. former Yugoslavia).

The ban of the Belgrade Pride Parade as a deprivation of rights accompanied by extralegal (violence) that Mitropoulos writes about is the matter of the necropolitical and not of the biopolitical.

Jovita Pristovšek (1982) 2008 graduated in fine arts at The Academy of Fine Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she also finished MA in fine arts. She is currently enrolled in the PhD program at the Post-graduate School in Nova Gorica, Slovenia working on her PhD thesis entitled *The regimes of Aesthetic, Public, and Political within the Post-political Global Space*. From 2009, she teaches at the A.V.A. Institute, Ljubljana.

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⁸² Marina Vishmidt, "Value at Risk: From Politics of Reproduction to Human Capital," *Reartikulacija*, No. 7 (December 2009), <http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=708> (Accessed: March 5, 2013).

⁸³ Angela Mitropoulos, February 25, 2013, "A summary of sorts," <http://s0metim3s.com/2013/02/25/cc-summaryofsorts> (Accessed: March 22, 2013).

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AN UNCLOUDED VIEW

Compulsory Ontology, Clinical Episteme, and Gendering Dissidence of Suicide

Marko Stamenković

PhD Researcher,
Department of Philosophy and Moral Sciences, University of Ghent, Belgium,
(marko.stamenkovic@live.com)

Abstract:

This paper is but one part of a broader study that examines the gender-specific position of contemporary death and of suicide in particular. As a point of departure, it takes a set of arguments around discourses on suicide as hegemonic, accumulated around the sovereign domain of medical and scientific knowledge and in charge of a compulsory ontology of suicide. I understand this situation, together with Katrina Jaworski and Ian Marsh, in the first place to be highly problematic and lacking constructive counter-proposals. A major task to be undertaken is twofold: first, to scrutinize the centre of the hegemonic (clinical) episteme by penetrating its dynamics of power; then, to offer alternatives to its 'regimes of truth' within the plurality of epistemic models, approaches, and rationalities. To underline the extent to which the gendering process occurs therein is tantamount to this task. Accordingly, I want to argue that the dominant ontology and epistemology of suicide produce a discursively polluted and clouded backdrop where pathological and patriarchal principles still prevail. This paper thus aims at interrogating suicidology further, across its canonic strands of thought and politics of representation. Moreover, it will introduce some unexplored dissident perspectives into an existent counter-hegemonic agenda for an overall liberation from Western scientific epistemicide – the gendering of suicide being no exception to that.

Key words: suicide, gender, representation, epistemicide, necropolitics

Introduction

What is suggested here is not in any way an alternative theory of suicide, or even that such a thing would be desirable, but rather that through a sort of realignment, a change in our line of sight, it may be possible to 'make visible' that which has, over time, slipped from view.

- Ian Marsh¹

The question of suicide is not and has never been singular. Rather it is the matter of an ongoing hermeneutic inconsistency. This paper² takes seriously into account such inconsistency and the evidence that the meanings of suicide "are so protean across time and space that it is not so clear that there is one thing, suicide."³ Scholars, present and

¹ Ian Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 75.

² This paper relates to my PhD research project *Suicide Cultures. Theories and Practices or Radical Withdrawal – A Transnational Cultural and Media Paradigm (2001–2011)*. Started in 2011 at the Department of Philosophy and Moral Sciences, University of Ghent (Belgium), it is supervised by Prof. Dr. Tom Claes, Director of CEVI – the Center for Ethics and Value Inquiry, and supported by Basileus Scholarship – an Erasmus Mundus Action 2 project for academic exchange between the EU and the Western Balkans funded by the European Commission.

³ Ian Hacking, "The Suicide Weapon," *Critical Inquiry* 35, 1 (2008), 1.

future, should never overlook the fact that suicide resides in the space of discursive plurality. This is one of the reasons why their analytical approaches should always preferably aim toward resolving the questions of suicides (both plural) instead of fitting any existent normative framework. In what follows, I am offering but a modest attempt at addressing the versatile interpretations around this troublesome phenomenon with one particular focus in mind: the gendered position of suicide and its (un)representability in the epistemic hierarchy of scientific and popular discourses. Hence, I will centre on the problem of knowledge on suicide and related issues, most notably as gender-specific. While suffering from Western scientific epistemicide, they will be treated as the victims of patriarchal and scientific demagogies in which the clinical episteme has a privileged power position.

The Compulsory Ontology and Clinical Episteme of Suicide

The production and distribution of knowledge on suicide have been the privilege of power discourses pertaining to healthcare expertise in medical sciences and clinical practice, as discussed by Ian Marsh.⁴ Accordingly, the subject has been treated as part of a broader field of knowledge where abnormality, mental disease, psychological disorder, and pathological behaviour play the most distinctive roles. Such dominant viewpoints have, in turn, also produced a boomerang effect. By pointing out the relative validity of normative and hegemonic discourses themselves (or “the ways in which contemporary approaches to suicide could be said to relate to the prevention of suicide, and suffering in relation to suicide”),⁵ many professionals have challenged the power positions in the study field. Their need to question the ruling system of knowledge has not emerged from the competitive atmosphere of revolt for the sake of mere criticality. On the contrary, it has evolved from equally strong arguments in discursive analyses producing a kind of situated, ‘revolutionary’ dissidence. One of their aims is to set the study field free from the so-called “egopolitics of knowledge,” about which Grosfoguel and Mielants write the following lines:

Occidentalism created the epistemic privilege and hegemonic identity politics of the West from which to judge and produce knowledge about the ‘Others.’ The egopolitics of knowledge of Rene Descartes in the 17th century where Western men replace God as the foundation of knowledge is the foundational basis of modern Western philosophy. However as Enrique Dussel (1994), Latin American philosopher of liberation, reminds us, Descartes’ ego-cogito (‘I think, therefore I am’) was preceded by 150 years of the ego-conquiro (‘I conquer, therefore I am’). *The God-eye view defended by Descartes transferred the attributes of the Christian God to Western men (the gender here is not accidental)*. But this was only possible from an Imperial Being, that is, from the panoptic gaze of someone who is at the centre of the world because he has conquered it.⁶

Through what could be termed the violent invasion of scientific epistemology, I comply with the dissidents by arguing that the omnipresent normative perspectives have reached the point of theoretical, institutional, and political *colonization*. More than one knowledge discipline, where suicide has found fertile grounds to be analyzed and discussed critically, make up part of the cognitive and empirical territory from which to launch critical arguments against the imperial ‘regime of truth’ and to open up possibilities for epistemic liberation. Therefore, when it comes to ‘a question of suicide’ one needs to account for the epistemic plurality of related and unrelated arguments within the hierarchy of power structures around suicidality. Given the leading positions in such a hierarchy, reserved since the nineteenth century for pathologizing, preventive, patriarchal, and patronizing perspectives, they have also established the principles for an obligatory ontology of suicide. I treat it as the kind of sovereignty where medical discourses and clinical practices have definitely prevailed. However, my stance is that one should never dismiss the coexistence of the plurality of other (ethical, theoretical, and scientific) arguments proposed throughout recent history and across the world. In such a universe of counter-arguments this paper found its point of departure. Marsh, for example, uses the term ‘compulsory ontology’ when he describes this “necessity of expert knowledge at the expense of other ways of understanding [as] a compulsory ontology difficult to critique.”⁷ In problematizing contemporary discursive formations of suicide and, more precisely, a contemporary ‘regime of truth’ in relation to it, he says the following:

Within the field that has come to be known as ‘suicidology,’ suicide itself is constituted as an object of scientific study, as are suicidal patients. Epidemiological studies seek to establish the

⁴ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 2010.

⁵ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 66 – 67.

⁶ Ramón Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants, “The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist/Patriarchal World-System. An Introduction,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-knowledge* 1 (2006), 8 (M.S. emphasis).

⁷ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 66.

truth of suicide in terms of quantifiable factors such as age, sex, and means while psychological autopsy studies have sought to correlate acts of self-destruction with categories of mental illness. More recently, studies into the biology and genetics of suicide risk have looked to find evidence of neuro-chemical, neuro-anatomical or genetic abnormalities that could explain why people kill themselves. It is the meeting of science and medicine that dominates the field of suicide studies.⁸

Starting from this controversial meeting-point between science and medicine, Marsh continues his 'guided-tour' around the 'exhibition of power structures' in suicidology. In his words, as regards the matter of practice, attention should equally be paid to the following:

In practice too, for the most part those considered expert on suicide and the management of suicidal people are doctors, particularly psychiatrists. Other professions – psychology, social work, nursing, occupational therapy – tend to work within a medically delineated, and to a large extent controlled, space. Through this meeting of scientific study and medical/psychiatric practice the truths of suicide have come to be (and continue to be) formed. Such ways of thinking and acting come together to produce and reproduce a form of suicide that could be characterized as individual, pathological and medical. Suicide is taken as arising as a consequence of mental illness, a form of pathology or abnormality situated within the individual, and it is thus a matter of medical/psychiatric concern. It is now difficult to talk of suicide without recourse to some notion of mental illness, usually depression, or reference to the 'mental state' of the person involved.⁹

Evidently, Marsh argues that "suicide is constructed within dominant discourses as a unitary act with a singular meaning – pathology."¹⁰ Thus, its abnormality remains situated within the individual (the 'unitary,' and not the social). This discloses the general conditions within which any alternative, counter-hegemonic epistemology, including sociology and social philosophy, encounters obstacles and difficulties in coping with the 'condemnation imperative'¹¹ of power discourses – or their 'compulsory ontology,' as Marsh calls it, and continues:

What such a stance makes difficult is the development of other ways of constituting suicide and the formation of alternative objects, concepts and subjectivities in relation to self-accomplished death. Instead there is a continual reproduction of suicide as the tragic act of a mentally unwell individual. As this is taken to be necessary, real and true – described here in terms of a compulsory ontology – it becomes difficult to critique, and shortcomings and negative (even if unintended) consequences that follow from so constituting suicide are for the most part unexplored.¹²

While remaining fully supportive of Marsh's worthwhile stance on the issue at hand, this paper complies with his 'de-colonial' attempts toward the liberation of suicide from its singular and compulsory ontology. Yet beside the plurality to be fought for, widely recognized and applied, there is one – inevitably singular – aspect of suicide(s) that should not be overlooked: its enigmatic, undefinable, and, for the time being, unanswerable nature. Independently from any political, social, cultural, and ethical contexts within which suicides are discussed, ideated, or committed, the singularity of our knowledge (or, rather, ignorance) about suicide and its 'doubles' remains *hermeneutically incomplete*. This incompleteness should not be a reason to stop thinking and looking further than the limited distances imposed by a 'compulsory ontology.' On the contrary, these should be transgressed and expanded. The gendered dimensions of suicide are but a way to be engaged in such task.

Is Death a woman? Suicide, Gendering and Dissidence

Marsh exposes a larger picture of "a critical inquiry into the formation of suicide as pathological and medical."¹³ The gendering (and queering) of suicide has its own place in it. To suggest one example, I will give a hint on this problematic

⁸ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 65.

⁹ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 65.

¹⁰ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 66.

¹¹ Ghassan Hage, "'Comes a Time We Are All Enthusiasm.' Understanding Palestinian Suicide Bombers in Times of Exhiphobia," *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003), 67.

¹² Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 66.

¹³ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 66.

as articulated in his recent study.¹⁴ When he analyses “the ways the ‘suicidal homosexual’ was constituted in psychiatric discourse,” he remarks: “Although at times rather ill-defined – appearing only in the margins or at the periphery of psychiatric thought – such a figure was most often portrayed as ‘weak yet destructive,’ with the psychiatric profession wavering between pity and condemnation.”¹⁵

Says Marsh:

Declared a pathological ‘type’ in the late nineteenth century, the ‘homosexual’ came to be constituted in relation to a variety of psychiatric theories and practices over the next century. Initially formed as ‘degenerates,’ ‘perverts,’ and ‘inverts,’ later as emotionally immature, disordered personalities, most usually understood as in some way biologically abnormal, psychiatric descriptions of the ‘homosexual’ also came to include consideration of their perceived propensity to self-destruction.¹⁶

Here, again, a few things become more than evident, namely: that the psychiatric matrix of power discourses is discriminatory; that it has pretensions towards universalist and patriarchal ‘truths’; and that it exposes itself as troublesome in relation to a queer paradigm when claiming the figure of ‘suicidal homosexual’ (or, for that matter, ‘suicidal prostitute,’ ‘suicidal [poor unmarried] woman,’ and so on) to be problematic, i.e. pathological. Therefore, in the current process of epistemic decolonization it is the contemporary ‘regime of truth’ in relation to suicide that turns out to be itself the point of controversy, as Marsh contends. I will treat the abovementioned ‘deviations’ from a gendered norm as a family of issues awaiting to be liberated from psychiatric ‘compulsory ontology’ and epistemic violence. At this point, what interest me most are their visual properties: the ways they have co-existed (as representations of suicidal deaths) in modern and contemporary imaginaries in relation to gender.

So, is Death a woman?

For Karl S. Guthke this question was a starting-point in his iconographic inquiry of Western representations of death and its gendering, in particular through the *figure* of death.¹⁷ His main dilemma revolves around the rationality behind a range of choices, namely, “why is it that in some cultures and times, literature, folklore, and art commonly represent death as a man, in others as a woman?”¹⁸ Guthke’s dealing with this issue transcends any arbitrariness. He scrutinizes it as a matter of situated, contextualized, and strategic choice. In a historical overview spanning the period since the middle Ages until the late twentieth century, he discloses a variety of attitudes and understandings of death. He perceives them as a number of possible ways to give meaning to the world and to humanity at large. This is most notably valid for what concerns “the cultural history of the West.”¹⁹ He acknowledges “the wealth of images that the creative impulse has produced over hundreds of years of imagining the unimaginable in the Western world,” while being aware that “such images may or may not reveal something about the ‘nature’ of death.”²⁰ Instead, he continues, “they open our eyes for aspects of ‘the world as interpretation,’ that is, for humans, individuals and groups, orienting themselves in their world by making such images and thereby, ultimately, defining themselves.”²¹ A certain type of power dynamics must have resided in those choices turning the figure of death recognizable either as a man or a woman: “At any given time, *related and contrary* images of death naturally cluster around the *dominant* ones. Different cultural contexts, differing group-specific views as well as different individual attitudes create different images of death. They are male and female images that each comprises a wide variety of further differentiations: old and young, beautiful and ugly, fatherly and motherly, terrifying and seductive, contemptible and venerable, and so on.”²²

¹⁴ Ian Marsh, “Queering Suicide: The Problematic Figure of the ‘Suicidal Homosexual’ in Psychiatric Discourse,” in *Queering Paradigms*, ed. Burkhard Scherer (New York: Peter Lang Press, 2010), 141-159.

¹⁵ Marsh, “Queering Suicide,” 141.

¹⁶ Marsh, “Queering Suicide,” 141.

¹⁷ Guthke, Karl S. *The Gender of Death. A Cultural History in Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999. The German edition of this book was published a year earlier: Guthke, Karl S. *Ist der Tod eine Frau? Geschlecht und Tod in Kunst und Literatur* (München: C.H.Beck Verlag), 1998.

¹⁸ Guthke, *The Gender of Death*, i.

¹⁹ Guthke, *The Gender of Death*, 5.

²⁰ Guthke, *The Gender of Death*, 5.

²¹ Guthke, *The Gender of Death*, 5.

²² Guthke, *The Gender of Death*, 5 (M.S. emphasis).

I want to expose a set of remarks that critically embrace the binaries proposed by Guthke, such as man/woman, male/female, life/death, image/word, figure/abstraction, and seeing/interpreting. This preliminary step is significant inasmuch as it paves the way toward a more nuanced comprehension of gender-related aspects of suicidal death. I understand such death as a specific way of dying turned into a theoretical concept, philosophical issue, and cultural phenomenon. Its materialization in textual and visual terms (i.e. cultural products) imposes one more argument to be addressed as relevant concerning those aspects of analysis that keep being omitted from dominant perspectives. As Marsh argues:

Thought of in this way – that is suicide and the suicidal as cultural products – self-accomplished deaths can come to be read less as statements concerning the internal, mental state of isolated individuals, but rather as outcomes of a play of culturally situated, relationally unequal forces. Issues of social justice, of fairness, the means by which certain groups come to be marginalized and vilified within a culture can come to the fore in discussions of the reasons why a person may have ended their life. Rather than suicide being interpreted either as an unreasonable, irrational act, determined by illness, or a rational course of action freely chosen, it could perhaps be understood as a product of cultural forces situated outside the individual. Such forces could be understood as constituting the suicidal individual, and even of forming, over time, the act itself.²³

Guthke's question (Is Death a woman?) implies a complex chain of relations from the outset. First, it implies that there is a *link* between the notion of death and the notion of a woman, even if this does not necessarily result in their equation. Second, it implies that the notion of death demands a certain kind of figuration (instead of abstraction), a personification or *embodiment* of an idea. Third, it implies that such an idea, turned into a *body* through personification, depends on gendered choices between a man and a woman. These choices allow for possible reversals (Death is a man or a woman) yet without alternatives (Death is *either* a man *or* a woman). Fourth, it implies that the question (Is Death a woman?) rests upon a doubt, while it also invokes thinking in the opposite direction: if Death is a woman, is Life a man? This switch is acceptable only under conditions whereby there are clear division lines between a 'woman' and a 'man' inasmuch as between 'Death' and 'Life.' Fifth: if Death is indeed a woman and, conversely, Life is a man, what does this process of iconographic segregation tell us about the gendered matrix of power through the language of life/death relationships? How is such a matrix constructed in the cultural history of the West and what are its limits in "the world as interpretation" as Guthke earlier contended? What does 'Life-as-Man' exclude from interpretation and which role does 'Death-as-Woman' play in the gendered matrix of power? If they are supposed to remain separated, is this in order to perpetuate some already established understandings of our world and definitions of ourselves, in Guthke's line of thought? Moreover, are human beings condemned to exist within some strict knowledge framework that has already been set up (by images of death, among other constructions) so as to orient themselves in the world? Why did the cultural history of the West need to represent Death at all and, further on, to have the idea of Death *personified* and *anthropomorphized*? Finally, how to exercise control over life and death if they have no body? Critical strands in sociology and social philosophy may suggest some helpful insights in tracing the answers to these questions.

Numerous contemporary studies have been treating the social patterns of suicidality in relation to (or, rather, in contrast to) dominating macro-sociological perspectives. This criticism is further enhanced by the fact that general attention to suicide, and consequently knowledge on suicide, appeared only throughout the nineteenth century. Due to "the newly initiated mortality statistics... it was generally suspected that the drastic social changes associated with the processes of industrialization and urbanization were somehow related to the rising suicide rate."²⁴ What interest me at this point are not the statistical and historical evidences around the socially implicated increase of self-inflicted death. Rather, it is an idea that countability has been inseparable from modes of *governance over death* through statistical measures and modernization processes. Some recent studies, in which suicide emerges primarily as a technology of governance, are of valuable support towards this idea. The sociologist Thomas F. Tierney, for example, focuses his analysis on the issue of governance and the governmentality of suicide.²⁵ Following Michel Foucault's preliminary remarks on bio-power in his *History of Sexuality* (1976), Tierney traces "the relationship between the sociological appropriation of suicide and this uniquely modern form of power."²⁶ He does so by interpreting Jacques Peuchet in relation to the views of Karl Marx and Émile Durkheim on the subject, while taking their "two nineteenth-century sociological treatises on suicide

²³ Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History & Truth*, 74.

²⁴ Ilkka Henrik Mäkinen and Tanya Jukkala, "Suicide in Changing Societies," in *Baltic Worlds* 3(1), 2010, 10.

²⁵ Thomas F. Tierney, "The Governmentality of Suicide: Peuchet, Marx, Durkheim, and Foucault," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10, 4 (2010), 357–389. See also Thomas F. Tierney, "Anatomy and Governmentality: A Foucauldian Perspective on Death and Medicine in Modernity," *Theory & Event* 2, 1 (1998), 1–50.

²⁶ Tierney, "The Governmentality of Suicide: Peuchet, Marx, Durkheim, and Foucault," 357.

as historical examples of the development of ‘governmentality.’”²⁷

It is worth remembering that the nineteenth century was a historical epoch that ‘gave birth’ to institutionalized scientific studies of suicide, most notably thanks to the efforts of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). For better or worse, Durkheim still stands out among many of his predecessors who have remained either excluded from our knowledge of suicide studies or have turned out to be less recognizable in the public domains concerned with those studies.²⁸ Durkheim’s professional attitude toward women, negatively biased when it comes to his over-discussed book *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*,²⁹ deserves special attention. This is even more necessary when compared with another, easily forgotten study worthy of notice. I am referring, of course, to Jacques Peuchet and his *Memoirs*.³⁰ Peuchet (1758–1830) was “a leading French police administrator, economist, and statistician”³¹ whose *Memoirs from the Police Archives*, published posthumously in 1838, also contained his commentary on suicides in early nineteenth-century Paris. This commentary served as a starting point for Karl Marx (1818–1883) to tackle the issue of suicide briefly in his own work. The issue surprisingly remained scarce in his own writings: “It is Marx’s only published discussion of suicide. After he published this brief article in 1846 in *Gesellschaftsspiegel* (Mirror of Society), a small German socialist journal in which Engels was involved, he never returned to the topic.”³² As sociologist Kevin Anderson highlighted on the occasion of the first English edition of *Memoirs*, “it is not, properly speaking, an article by Marx [as] it consists of Marx’s brief four-paragraph introduction, followed by his edited translation of [Peuchet’s] lengthy excerpts.”³³ In the context of my paper, this work is significant because it “contains one of the most sustained discussions of gender in Marx’s early writings, [namely] the suicide of women, linking these events to women’s oppression inside the French bourgeois family.”³⁴ In Marx’s edition, Peuchet’s opening words straightforwardly target the causality of high annual suicide rates. He is attacking the *social* rather than the individual rationality behind it, viewing it “as a symptom of the deficient organization of our society.”³⁵ Additionally, he refers to “...no society, but, as Rousseau said, a desert populated by wild animals.”³⁶

The notion of *family* is of fundamental importance at this point. Here it is seen as a social category of micro-power relations. It differs from the category of single, unmarried, lower-class, unemployed women: the most common category of female suicides at the time. This is precisely the point of contestation where Peuchet (as remarked by Anderson 1999, 13) diagnoses the persistence of that kind of organizational deficiency within which suicidal ideations continue to grow: “The revolution did not topple all tyrannies. The evil which one blames on arbitrary forces exists in families, where it causes crises, analogous to those of revolutions.”³⁷ This analogy (between families and revolutions, between tyrannies and families, and between their respective causalities of crises) is a turning point from which to place the notion of gender in relation to Marx’s view on suicide. Says Anderson:

Marx suggests that the oppressiveness of the bourgeois family is responsible for many cases of female suicide, especially of young women [and] also helps us to grasp more clearly his emerging views on gender and the family in modern society, during the same period in which he was developing his concepts of alienated labour and historical materialism and the beginnings of his critique of political economy and the state.³⁸

²⁷ See Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Anthropology of the State. A Reader*, Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, eds. (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 131-143; Jonathan Xavier Inda, ed. *Anthropologies of Modernity. Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), 2006. Also: Majia Holmer Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (New York and London: Routledge), 2008.

²⁸ Robert D. Goldney, Johan A. Schioldann, and Kirsten I. Dunn, “Suicide Research Before Durkheim,” *Health & History* 10, 2 (2008), 73-93. Also: Maria Teresa Brancaccio, Eric J. Engstrom and David Lederer, “The Politics of Suicide: Historical Perspectives on Suicidology before Durkheim. An Introduction,” *Journal of Social History* 3 (2013), 607-619.

²⁹ See Durkheim, Émile. *Suicide. A Study in Sociology* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 2010.

³⁰ Marx, Karl. “Peuchet on Suicide.” In *Marx on Suicide*, edited by Eric A. Plaut and Kevin Anderson, translated by Gabrielle Edgcomb (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press), 1999, 43-75. Originally published in Karl Marx, “Peuchet: vom Selbstmord” (*Gesellschaftsspiegel*, zweiter Band, Heft VII, Elberfeld), Januar 1846.

³¹ Eric A. Plaut and Kevin Anderson, eds., Gabrielle Edgcomb, trans., *Marx on Suicide* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press), 1999,

³² Kevin Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” in *Marx on Suicide*, Eric A. Plaut and Kevin Anderson, eds. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press), 1999, 3.

³³ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 3.

³⁴ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 3.

³⁵ Marx, “Peuchet on Suicide,” 47.

³⁶ Marx, “Peuchet on Suicide,” 50.

³⁷ Marx, “Peuchet on Suicide,” 50–51.

³⁸ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 22.

But what do the elements of this new constellation have to do with each other when perceived all together (the state, political economy, historical materialism, alienated labour, family, gender, and – suicide)? Does it seem to be but an arbitrary proliferation of terms, notions, and concepts? Have they remained *fixed* exclusively to time and space (the Western world of the post-Enlightenment era) in which both Marx and Durkheim developed their respective theories of society, politics, and culture?

“Certain similarities between the treatment of suicide by Marx and that by Durkheim [...], more in social than in psychological terms” give evidence that “both view suicide as symptomatic of broader social ills, and both are interested in empirical data on suicide rather than moral or philosophical speculation.”³⁹ Nonetheless, as Anderson points out, “it is on [the] issue of limiting divorce that Marx’s differences with Durkheim would seem to become the sharpest, given Marx’s stress on oppressive family relationships as a major factor in female suicide, and his critique of bourgeois marriage as an oppressive institution *that should not be regarded as a fixed universal*.”⁴⁰ Comparatively, what remains interesting concerning Durkheim’s professional relation to women (and thus his category of female suicides) is critically accentuated by Anderson: “At several points in *Suicide*, Durkheim makes extremely disparaging comments about women, writing at one point that women’s ‘mental life is less developed’ than men’s because ‘women’s needs are more closely related to the organism’[...] No comparable statements can be found in Marx’s work.”⁴¹ Durkheim also understands marriage (and, accordingly, divorce) very differently from Marx, arguing for the strengthening of marriage instead of liberalizing divorce.

Says Anderson:

Because divorce or ‘conjugal anomie’ is a major form of anomie, which is itself a major cause of male suicide, he recommends making ‘marriage more indissoluble.’ Durkheim acknowledges [*and this is the most upsetting comment in my view, M. S.*] ‘that the suicides of husbands cannot be diminished in this way without increasing those of wives,’ but he seems, however reluctantly, to accept this as a necessary evil. He even asks: ‘Must one of the sexes necessarily be sacrificed?’⁴²

A perverted link in this interdependency between the wife’s slavery and the husband’s slaveholding rights, as Peuchet had earlier pronounced it, was “supported by the civil code and the right of property [according to which] she is but a part of his inventory.”⁴³ Hence the *objecthood* of married women used to stand for (and still often does) the most fertile ground on which the authority of their husbands could be indispensably exercised. Within the domain of sovereignty empowered by tacit familial laws of oppression, such exercise was indirectly ‘sanctioned’ while occurring inside homes and following private ‘laws’ (i.e. outside of public view and legal control). It is in that domain of privacy where the neuralgic point of the discussion at hand needs to be diagnosed. The family home, being the site of masculine despotism against women (wives, daughters, housemaids), functions in line with gender-biased micro-governance. It also stands for the nodal point around which, in Peuchet’s words, the malign symptoms of the “deficient organization of our society” converge. If this is the governance typical of family, as Marx understood it, then its own properties of micro-power (patriarchal, parochial, chauvinist, male, etc.) are nowadays becoming increasingly visible on a macro-scale. If Death is a woman, and Life is a man, the old model of oppression still happens in our global world due to (what contemporary critical theory perceives as) neo-liberal sovereignty, namely: the colonial, capitalist, and racial patterns of imperial domination. This is but one possible answer to my earlier question concerning the many points of intersection in the constellation of power: if there is a name for such constellation today then it must be that of neoliberal ‘biopolitical’ imperial sovereignty.

Juxtaposing masculine governmentality with female subservience, through the lenses of her supposedly natural predilections for ‘mental weaknesses,’ has not come hereby as an arbitrary choice. I treat it as a constructive way of dealing with the ongoing matrix of gender-specific power that can *reposition* our general knowledge on suicidality and how it works in the world of visual representations. In that regard, art history gives many illustrative arguments.

In her recent publication, Michelle Facos deals with “the changing relationship between artists and society since the Enlightenment and issues of identity.”⁴⁴ Relying upon “a common format for representing female suicide ... in both

³⁹ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 19–20.

⁴⁰ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 22 (M.S. emphasis).

⁴¹ Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 20.

⁴² Anderson, “Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender,” 22.

⁴³ Marx, “Peuchet on Suicide,” 57–58.

⁴⁴ Michelle Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art*. New York: Routledge, 2011. See back cover. Also: Ron M. Brown, *The Art of*

contemporary literature and illustration,” Facos stresses the fact that in nineteenth-century England “suicidal women frequently were shown casting themselves from windows and bridges into rivers... This penchant for representing drowning women reflected contemporary reality – drowning was the most common means of suicide for women in the nineteenth century; men preferred hanging.”⁴⁵ In a section of her book centred on “Female Suicide,” she gives a brief and curious background to the issue while discussing the topic of “Realism and the Urban Poor.” What she points out is a paradox: the countable facts (disclosing a higher number of male than female suicides in the nineteenth-century) stand in opposition to the cultural proliferation of female suicides in the related visual representations of the epoch.

Says Facos:

The setting for these images was always the city; such despair was specifically associated with urban alienation and desperation [...] In England, *although many more men actually committed suicide*, depictions and descriptions of them are rare, while female suicides appeared frequently in popular one-shilling books, novels, newspapers, prints, and paintings. Bridge-jumping was the most commonly represented method of female suicide, *despite the fact* that most women *quietly* filled their pockets with stones and plunged into a nearby pond or canal.⁴⁶

In England at that time, like elsewhere in the European West, it was apparently not rare to find many poor single women among whom some were doomed to prostitute themselves for the sake of mere survival. In the framework as suggested by Facos, the general category of the poor was not only considered emotionally or mentally unstable but, very often, was demonized by the ruling (male) part of the society in order to be governed. In that sense, there is a question still to be answered: why were male suicides, as she writes, “conspicuously absent from nineteenth-century pictorial imagery, although they occurred with three times greater frequency”?⁴⁷ Her own response is simple:

This reflected a gap between popular perceptions and social realities. Suicide was considered deviant behavior, and men – *who did most of the describing and representing* – ascribed all human weaknesses to women. This perpetrated a false impression that women, especially prostitutes, had a high suicide rate. Conclusions of ‘scientific’ psychological studies – discussed [by the author herself in the same book, remark by M.S.] in connection with Géricault’s portraits of the insane – justified such attitudes.⁴⁸

Therefore, males – who were empowered by tacit laws (of oppression) and tools (of image production) – were the ones to materialize suicides into images: by doing most of the describing and representing, as Facos says, they also produced a *masculinist version* of suicidal death through images as cultural products (in Marsh’s terms, quoted earlier). The female representability of ‘mental weaknesses’ is hereby traded for male ‘unrepresentability’ – or the *absence* of males in the images produced *by them* for the sake of *their own* gender-safe representability and governmentality therein. One may think of more than one reason for such an unfair trade to occur: art historians could probably agree that the most evident reasons will remain dependent on the politics of representation that has historically privileged heroism (and not weakness, mental or otherwise) as the matter of men-centred imagery. Such preference was materialized in the prominence of female modes of self-destruction which, according to Facos, were also modified, constructed, or simply fake. This is evident not only in terms of the frequency or popularization (one-shilling books, novels, newspapers, prints, and paintings), but rather in terms of fabricated and spectacular ‘truths’ about *how* they did it. One may even call this way of self-accomplished death a *withdrawal* from the world: Facos describes it as *quietly*, silently *disappearing* into the water. To quietly disappear into the water does not necessarily mean to jump from a bridge! The latter makes up part of the popular voyeuristic fantasy, on behalf of male image-makers, due to their abundance of self-esteem and lack of ethical stance toward women. They obviously wanted to preserve the memory of those women (poor, single, unemployed, etc.), yet this occurred in a way that created a gendered pattern for representing them as ‘drowning women.’ The scopic ‘regime of truth’ thus produced was very different from the facts. Is this enough to answer my earlier question, the one that wraps up the arguments exposed in this paper, how to exercise control over life and death if they had no body?

Suicide. London: Reaktion Books, 2001.

⁴⁵ Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art*, 228.

⁴⁶ Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art*, 228 (M.S. emphasis).

⁴⁷ Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art*, 229.

⁴⁸ Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art*, 229.

Conclusion

“The question of unrepresentability leads directly to the way in which political violence may or may not be put into an image.”⁴⁹ If representability and unrepresentability necessarily imply the issue of violence, this paper has been but an attempt to ask how Death, Life, Man, and – last but not least – Woman expose themselves together not only to political violence but to the violent politics of representation and its epistemic effects. While being rendered visible, embodied and anthropomorphized (through images), female subjects and their male counterparts are thus becoming *open* and *exposed* to our systems of interpretation, or hidden for the same reasons. Hence we, the viewing subjects, have a possibility of engaging in the production of discourses and discursive orders of power, or its lack therein. If by ‘images’ I want to connote the materialization of what must irrevocably remain hidden or invisible from our view, then by ‘political violence’ (as a way of conclusion of this paper) I also want to connote something precise that has remained forcefully hidden or invisible under neoliberal sovereignty and its ‘biopolitical’ matrix of power.

‘Biopolitical’ power discourses, centred on the management of life and life-related issues, are also sites of exclusion, obscurity, and invisibility. What has remained excluded from their supposedly benevolent, objective, and life-improving concerns, indispensable for the forced logic of neoliberal *positivity* thus promoted, is precisely the logic of *negativity* (pain, suffering, death) within which the majority of world populations reside. What life-politics excludes from our lives, therefore, are the practical conditions of mortality, death, and our proximity to death. While defending the idea of life, the secret of ‘biopolitical’ power remains obscured, namely, “the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death.”⁵⁰ This is also why so-called biopolitics has been hiding its proper name – necropolitics. For the Cameroonian philosopher, Achille Mbembe, necropolitics stands for “the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective.”⁵¹ This is also the reason why, I keep arguing, the *overrepresentation* of female suicidality in nineteenth-century England (and elsewhere in the Western world) was the result of a necropolitical, patriarchal, and pathologizing sovereign logic of self-defence: a trend that has not been entirely evicted throughout the centuries since. It has certainly remained present not only in what concerns the dominant discourses of suicidology (where, among other issues, the gendered position still silently dwells), but in whatever concerns our ways of being a ‘contemporary,’ ‘civilized,’ ‘rational,’ and ‘developed humankind’.

Starting from these lines of thought, preliminary for my future studies around the gender-specific position of necropolitics, I want to conclude now my initial dialogues with Guthke, Facos, Marsh, and Mbembe so that I can go further with this analysis, most notably in my upcoming scholarly texts (foreseen to follow the present paper). To go further means to go beyond the challenges of already exposed arguments, so that one specific type of death (suicide) and its gendering can be put into focus. In order to accomplish such a task, I will rely upon Katrina Jaworski, the Polish-Australian social philosopher, whose work so far (collected in *The Gender of Suicide. Knowledge Production, Theory and Suicidology*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014, upcoming) will ‘serve’ as the major theoretical background for my future analysis: not only against the ‘servility’ of suicide studies in general and their gendering in particular, but against any ‘servility;’ a struggle against it that Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls *anti-imperial epistemologies of the global South*.

Marko Stamenković (1977) is an art historian and curator born and raised in the south of Serbia. Since 2011 he has been working on his doctoral project “Suicide Cultures. Theories and Practices of Radical Withdrawal – A Transnational Cultural and Media Paradigm (2001–2011)” as a PhD Researcher at the University of Ghent in Belgium. He is a member of IKT, the International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art.

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⁴⁹ Alexander Galloway, “Are Some Things Unrepresentable?” *Theory, Culture & Society* 7–8 (2011), 85. See also Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2007), 109–138.

⁵⁰ Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics, *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003), 12.

⁵¹ Mbembe, Necropolitics, 12.

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PART II

**PERFORMATIVE OF SEX AND GENDER
AND
NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY**

In/Visible: The Political and Sexual Regimes of Databases

Adla Isanović

Assistant Professor at The Academy of Fine Arts, Sarajevo,
and a PhD student at the Post-graduate School in Nova Gorica, Slovenia
(adla_isanovic@yahoo.co.uk)

Abstract:

This text focuses on the politics and sexual regimes of *databases* and archives (and art histories) and their relation to human rights, equality and democracy. The main goal is to question, problematize and analyze the cultural and political regimes and strategies deployed in the processes involved in the storage of *databases* of cultural, artistic, and historical works and events, and, in particular, the regimes of visibility by means of which non-normative sexual experiences and cultural practices are in/excluded from official archives and institutionalized *databases*, and their consequent influence on the politics of cultural memory and heritage. Setting sexuality and gender as points of investigation, as they are being lived and experienced on the social margins, this text aims to open up for discussion the very foundations of how *databases* are being conceived and what counts as an archive.

Keywords: database, archive, regimes of visibility, art, sexual regimes

Introduction

It appears that our age is obsessed with rights, both with assigning rights and withdrawing them. The rights to security, liberty and equality and the political and group rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should guarantee equality and nondiscrimination through social and political instruments, including the regulatory and juridical systems. However, proofs of exceptions and partial implementation are everywhere, from symbolic exclusions to material “deathscapes” whereby individuals and whole populations “are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead” (Mbembe).¹

Databases, as a new dominant cultural form (Manovich),² are widely promoted as gender-, class- and race-neutral, even emancipatory. Although ‘archives’ *have been* and *done* different things at different times and under different regimes, from the Greek *archeion* and the French National Archives to digital databases, archives have always been a site of knowledge production in which political power resided. This is one of the reasons why scholars should move from “archive-as-source” to “archive-as-subject” (Stoler).³

Opening a discussion on how databases are conceived and which institutions they serve, I argue in this text that:

- The database as a norm and major neoliberal governmental technology emerges, coexists with, and embodies changing relations within what Michel Foucault has called governmentality.
- The racialization and sexual regimes of databases are involved in the inscription in and exclusion from the register of citizenship (and its rights), while inscribing humans exclusively through hegemonic modernist (hetero) narratives and opposing the human to the figure of a dehumanized racialized Other.

¹ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15/1, (2003), 40.

² Lev Manovich, “Database as Symbolic Form,” in *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow*, ed. Victoria Vesna (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2007, 39–61.

³ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2, no.1–2 (2002), 87.

- Art history and institutional archives have a crucial role in “making the visible legible”⁴ and in the “distribution of the sensible”⁵ in and to the present (and possible future).
- Strategies of resisting Mastery and strategies of redistribution have to include strategies of de-classification and de-normalization.

The database as a major global neoliberal governmental technology

As Foucault has shown, *governmentality* cannot be reduced to the State, but includes all acts, institutions and rational efforts aimed at systematically shaping, managing and regulating the conduct of human beings. Critical analyses of changing relations in governmentality and life politics thus necessarily need to include three dimensions of government: *rationalities* (which render reality thinkable in such a way as to make it governable); *techniques* (the means whereby political reasons are translated into practice); and *subjects* of government (diverse types of selves, persons, identities and agents which government aims to produce and cultivate through such activities).⁶

Introducing the notions of *biopolitics* in the 1970s (referring to a way of organizing, managing and regulating the “population” considered as a biological entity, species-being) and *biopower* (referring to a range of techniques for the subjugation of bodies and control of populations), Foucault articulated why and how the modern state’s biopolitical management of life, as the ultimate bourgeois project, have centralized the categories of sexuality, race, and class. Technologies of sex have been used to link the life of the individual to the life of the species as a whole. The management of sexuality was crucial for cultivating (bourgeois) bodies, but also for producing “(internal) enemies” within the body politic. Capable of totalizing and individualizing practices, the biopolitical state became able of exercising authority over the conduct of populations and individuals at every level to “foster” life or “disallow it to the point of death,” all in the name of the benefit of its own population.

However, as several authors recognize, the concept of biopolitics is not sufficient for understanding the changes and current logic of global capitalist neoliberal governability.⁷ Foucault’s work was not directly theorizing how colonialism is intrinsic to the process of biopower in the past and present. Due to that missing link, as Stoler argues, Foucault’s concept of biopolitics fails to define the relationship between technologies of sex and colonial racism, between the notions of sexuality, race and class as fundamental categories of both modern liberal nation-states and global neoliberal capitalist societies.⁸ Racial, sexual and national powers arise not only as a European projection but among colonies and the imperial “home.” Mbembe makes the necessary link by adding the concept of *necropolitics* to conceptualize the “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death”⁹ that are related to the state of exception, technologies of destruction and war machinery of the global capitalist neoliberal world. Gržinić precisely points out that current logic is rather that of “let live and make die” and that racialization, brutal exploitation, abandonment and the production of “deathscapes” for the production of capital’s surplus value are not reserved only for the Second and Third, but are implemented in the First capitalist world as well. As Gržinić demonstrates, neoliberal *necrocapitalism* thrives on the intensification of its two primal conditions of reproduction, i.e., the privatization and deregulation of society, of all social, political, economic and even artistic practices. Moreover, according to Gržinić, it is possible to argue that today “art and culture, along with theory and criticism and education are pure biopolitical machines (dedicated solely to protecting themselves and their hegemonic Euro-Atlantic interests) while the social and the political (with its allegedly ‘autonomous’ juridical system) are pure instruments of necropolitical global capitalism.”¹⁰

⁴ Donald Preziosi, “Art History: Making the Visible Legible,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998, 13–18.

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum), 2004.

⁶ Jonathan Xavier Inda, “Analytics of the Modern: An Introduction,” in *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), 2005, 2.

⁷ See: Achille Mbembe, Marina Gržinić, Ann Laura Stoler.

⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (London: Duke University Press), 1995.

⁹ See Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” 39.

¹⁰ Marina Gržinić, “Biopolitics and Necropolitics in relation to the Lacanian four discourses,” Symposium: *Art and Research: Shared methodologies. Politics and Translation* (Facultad de Bellas Artes de Barcelona), 6–7.9. 2012.

Nevertheless, Foucault's work¹¹ is highly important for re-articulating the notion of the *archive* since it defines the *archive* as a tool, "the law," which establishes what can be said, transformed and preserved – the systems of discursive practices through the construction of which all traces are produced. What is visible and sayable is also defined by its "dark margin," the unsaid (Agamben).¹² Although we are aware of the limitation of archival knowledge (of forgetfulness, amnesia, etc.), as Derrida notes, we are burning with a passion for the archive ("*en mal d'archive*").¹³ The drive to collect, organize and store human records, to archive, include/exclude, make visible/invisible, is closely related to governmentality and life politics. As both Benjamin and Derrida recognize, the archive – as much as and more than being the question of the past or the archive of the past (the order of memory) – is the question of the present and the promise of the future, and this is where political power lies. Democratization is measured by "participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (Derrida).¹⁴

Databases are symptomatic of changes in archival power, but we do not have rights not to be digital or to avoid databases today. Besides, the integration of database logic appears, or at least is presented as, inevitable, necessary, playful, self-emancipatory, but also as a response to an emergency requiring the protection of "humans" from "undesirable aliens"/"non humans" (e.g. migration technologies and digital borders aimed at those who would like to become European citizens, or surveillance technologies aimed at depicting possible terrorists) and control over and management of "nature" and "life" itself (e.g. bioinformatics).

As Wendy H. K. Chun indicates, the database, based on memory, encapsulates the logic of *programmability* ("profligate 'programmed visions', which seek to shape and to predict—indeed to embody—a future based on past data")¹⁵ and belief in it feeds the current organization of the modern liberal state. Its formulations of freedom and flexibility and its spectres haunt us through our interfaces while we pleasurably create visions that everything is possible. What keeps haunting us in these endless "circuits of drive" are features and fantasies of "communicative capitalism" (fantasies of abundance, participation, unity, wholeness)¹⁶ which, as Jodi Dean recognizes, continue to produce ambivalent experiences: threats of total control and promises of emancipation, "master/slave" relations and their subversion, or, to use Rancière's terminology, the logic of *police* and the logic of *politics*.

Following Foucault's, Deleuze's and Agamben's definitions of *apparatuses*, I define the database as the major technology of power of global neoliberal governmentality with the capacity to strategically capture, model, control and secure the gestures, behaviours and discourses of living beings, determining what we have been, what we are no longer, and what we are becoming,¹⁷ thus operating on the intersections of power relations and relations of knowledge.

Body and archive: From flash to human database

Biopower "made knowledge/power an agent of transformation of human life."¹⁸ Knowledge, phantasies and sensations were not produced only in metropolises but in (relation to) colonies, and are crucial for the *colonial order of things*. This perspective is necessary if we want to understand what knowledge of a "healthy, vigorous, bourgeois body" was all about¹⁹ and how it created conditions for executing authority over life and death. Why and how is the "citizen" always symbolized by a heterosexual (white) man, while "Western" is read as "global" and "universal"? How are the notion and rights of "real" citizens still maintained through the production of the opposed figure of the "alien" (non-normative sexualities, stigmatized as less "human," "uncivilized," "imported from the East/West," as a threat to the "immunity" of population, to its moral and social order, and as such erased from the citizenship), especially if we bear in mind the promises of databases and networked technologies for destabilizing dominant narratives of racial, sexual and class order?

In addressing the memory politics and sexual regimes of archives/databases, we have to ask how it is that early psychoanalysis appears to have nothing to say about race, although it puts sexuality at the center of its analysis. As Brian Carr demonstrates, the "dark margins" of its archive (racial reality in relation to which the gendered white bourgeois subject is "made"), "protect" it from recognizing the racialized boundary that was produced between

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge), 2002.

¹² Giorgio Agamben, *Ono što ostaje od Auschwitza*, trans. Mario Kopic (Zagreb: Antibarbarius), 2008.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press), 1995.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4. n 1.

¹⁵ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 2011, xii.

¹⁶ Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press), 2010.

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, "What is a Dispositif?," in *Two Regimes of Madness* (New York: Semiotext(e)), 2006, 345.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books), 1985, 143.

¹⁹ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 7.

systematic humanization (the human subject's "becoming") and systematic dehumanization (how these subjects are representationally and symbolically "unmade" – how racialized/colonized "non-subjects" are made). The subaltern is, as Carr argues, a body that is systematically de-signified within a socio-symbolic structure of sexual difference and converted to a dehumanized captive "flash."²⁰ It seems that it would be possible to be inscribed as "human" (only) through hegemonic modernist (hetero)narrative.

Furthermore, the emergence of new forms of historical analysis and its discourse helped nations to set up conditions for conceiving social relations in binary terms.²¹ It is a discourse, as Stoler summarizes, whose "truth claims are made to specific rights and by specific holders of them; the rights of a family (to property), of a class (to privilege), of a race (to rule)."²² The technology of sexuality (through which the bourgeoisie would claim its privileged position, absolute rights and jurisdictions as to "how to live"), themes of evolutionism and, above all, racism, would together create conditions to make it acceptable to put certain people to death in order to legitimize bio-regulation, the monstrous idea of "superiority" (of a specific gender, race, class) and "purification" for the sake of normalization. The (re)productive family, and "healthy," "productive" sexuality have been perceived as guaranteeing the welfare of the nation and its citizenry (as morally acceptable and improving of the race), while undisciplined sexuality as a potential threat to both the individual and the population (linking it to natives and "fictive" Europeans).²³

The affirmation of such a (bourgeois) body, which is worth isolating from others, managing and protecting from numerous dangers through technologies of sex, is a part of the *political ordering of life* in which human rights are proclaimed universal but applied selectively to those who are perceived as "humans" or good "citizens." Such citizenship has also been gender-coded (women's rights being dependent on their rights of sexual and conjugal contracts with men). The archive's regimes of visibility serve to order and control bodies by inscribing them into and erasing them from humanity and citizenship, granting them and confiscating their civil/human rights.

Such technologies privilege populations over individuals and, in a strange way, as Chun recognizes, even release him/her from rights and responsibilities.²⁴ Monstrous ideas of reproductive control on a large scale – through archives and bio-technologies that focus on sexuality, materialized in movements such as "Eugenics" (Greek: "well born"), which privileged a specific population over the individual, focusing on "death" in order to foster life – did not disappear after showing their real face in Nazi labs, but developed in other forms, using the potential of programmability in so-called democratic societies. Life/death are thus both objects and objectives. In that way, Eugenics and state racism "became ways of giving the state the power of death" (Chun).²⁵ Today, killings or deaths are presented as acceptable if a proclaimed "threat to humanity" has been eliminated along with them (e.g., in the war on terror, the immunity of the social body, etc.).

Eugenics and similar bio-technologies, as Chun shows, were not only in charge of high-speed mass calculations at the level of content, but also at the level of "*logic or of operationality*"²⁶ and optimization, which returns us to the interweaving of computer /database technology and of biology (through memory and programmability), and of the current state of neoliberal capitalism. Chun argues that the drive for an "independent program that conflates legislation with execution – did not arise solely from within computation, but also from early Mendelian genetics and eugenics,"²⁷ which envision a "mechanic understanding of life, in which the human body becomes an archive."²⁸

In addition to these technologies of life, necropolitics is supported by numerous migratory and death technologies. From centralized databases such as Eurodac (The fingerprint database on EU asylum and illegal border-crossers that enables "digital deportability")²⁹ to drone warfare (capable of identifying and killing the threatening body), different database technologies treat subjects as *things* deprived of human and citizen rights. There is evident deregulation and lack of attention to any legal boundaries that would regulate the deployment of such surveillance and controlling technologies (issues of privacy, discrimination, principle of limitation, etc.). What is aimed at is standardization of

²⁰ Brian Carr, "At the Thresholds of the 'Human': Race, Psychoanalysis, and the Replication of Imperial Memory," *Cultural Critique* 39 (1998):

125. Introduced by M. Gržinić in her lectures and texts.

²¹ See Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 56.

²² Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 65.

²³ *Ibid.*, 182–183.

²⁴ Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 123.

²⁵ Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 124.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Brigitta Kuster, Vassilis S. Tsianos, "Erase them! Eurodac and Digital Deportability," in *transversal 03: Flee erase territorialize* (2013).

information, usage of all available and collectable data for multiple purposes, centralization and the automation of decision-making. Patterning, profiling a specific *type*, is increasingly present. These technologies that make bodies legible and establish divisions between citizens and (un)desirable aliens – decisive stigmatizing technologies of inclusion/exclusion that inscribe archive into the body (though biometric data, DNA, age, voice-testing used for registration) that is dehumanized, excluded from the registration of citizenship, deprived of human rights – are not inventions of the digital age but have been developed from earlier bureaucratic handlings of visual documentation. Allan Sekula showed how photography came to inscribe bodies in the archive, to establish the terrain of the Other, and to define “generalized look-typology” for deviance and social pathology (e.g. Galaton’s effort to embed archive in photography, to create a system of typology to control social deviance, or Bertillon’s attempt to embed the photo in the archive to create a system of identification and indexing). The effects of such practices are rarely discussed, although concrete political practices and decisions are determined by the knowledge obtained from these programmed memories and databases.

Today, coloniality is digital and none of us has any control of the data or digital traces that are collected about our lives, inscribed into our bodies and exploited for various purposes.

Those to whom rights have not been granted are still used in bioinformatics as a source. Their life is privatized and even commercialized, without informing them of the effects or obtaining their permission for usage (e.g. the Human Genome Diversity Project creating a database of up to 8,000 distinct ethnic populations, even patenting their cell lines). Some Patent Offices granted patents to people who claimed to be able to uncover genetic sequences, which would allow them to use these for commercial purposes for “new products.”³⁰

Apart from predictions concerning the body’s disappearance and the hype over online technologies, images of bodies are everywhere (surveilled, scanned, captured, tagged, shared, stored for future visions). The Other is continuously recalled, visualized, but only to be instantly erased from the register of humans and citizens. Non-normative sexuality is strategically visualized in and erased from the register through the image of the undisciplined, racialized and dehumanized Other, never through the image of the good “citizen” (or maybe only through the image of the straight “homonationalist” who reproduces its hierarchical ideals and whom the nation is willing to accept).³¹

Although the internet appears as an “unrestrictive colony” where one might look for experiences “unobtainable” at “home” (virtual cross-dressing, unrestrictive sexualities, etc.), “home” is not far away for “whatever beings” (Jodi Dean), with as Kroker notes, its panic at same-sex marriage, fear of gay desire³² and “all the unmourned... violence that is the everyday life experience of women suffering domestic violence and of disappeared sex workers and gays and lesbians.” The system of such power, as Kroker notes, is “haunted by paranoiac fears of revenge by those who have been excluded from the spectacle of consumption”³³ and from the Western ethical order of the “human.”

According to Kroker, “body drift” and “sex-code drifters” are today under attack, but are difficult to stop due to the blast of information culture, critical theory such as that of Judith Butler (postmodernism), Katherine N. Hayles (posthumanism), Donna Haraway (companionism), and the artistic practices that envisioned them.³⁴

Political and sexual regimes of art histories and the “distribution of the sensible”

How did it come to be that a standard college text such as H.W. Janson’s “History of Art”, first written in 1962 (reprinted and sold in more than two million copies), did not include a woman? Such an art history canon seems to welcome only white (upper class) males, omitting everything else that does not fit the official patriarchal hetero-normative (omitting women, but also avoiding treating the homosexual dimension of the life and work of specific “masters”). It produces genders while hiding the fact that it has acknowledged masculinity as universality. As Nanette Salmon notes, it appears that discursive conventions, furnished by Vasari in the 16th century and Janson in the 20th century, promote the heroic male nude and the sexualized, vulnerable female nude (within a framework of the creation of two male-centered

³⁰ According to the “Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism,” The U.S. Secretary of Commerce filed a patent claim on the cell line of a 26-year Guaymi woman from Panama in 1996 as if she were a *thing*. Due to strong protests and criticism, such patents were abandoned. However, some of these cell lines, such as that of a Hangahai man from Papua New Guinea are available to the public at the American Type Culture Collection for \$216 per sample (Source: www.ipcb.org/publications/primers/htmls/ipgg.html).

³¹ See Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press), 2007, and Jasbir K. Puar, “Mapping US Homonormativities,” in *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol.13., no.1 (2006), 67–88.

³² Arthur Kroker, *Body Drift: Butler, Hayles, Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2012, 49.

³³ Kroker, *Body Drift*, 52.

³⁴ Kroker, *Body Drift*, 4.

desires: homosexual and heterosexual)³⁵ and establish power relations among men and women.

The main function of art history is to produce a historical past that is available for systematic observations in the present. As Preziosi notes, its general areas of concern are *causality*, *evidentiality* and *representativeness*. The art objects included are seen as the resultant product of, representative, evidential of age, nation, people, and person. The principal task of all art history and museums has been that of “*making the visible legible*” in and to the present³⁶ (and consequently the future), establishing what is worth seeing and at the same time educating the public in how to read it, “how to activate social memories.” Modernity is presented as universal and as an indicator of the civilization of humans. In that way, Preziosi notes, the art of art history came to be “the very *esperanto* of European hegemony” and “its ideal horizon and a standard against which to measure all products,” including our “*exemplary lives*.”³⁷ For every race, class and gender there appears to be “legitimate ‘art,’” which leads to the conclusion that such “art history makes colonial subjects of us all” (Preziosi).³⁸

The invention of aesthetics was supposed to classify a variety of subjects and objects in line with the common axis and on an evolutionary ladder “on whose apex is the aesthetic art of Europe, and whose nadir is the fetish-charm of primitive peoples.”³⁹ Objects that addressed non-normative sexuality were positioned on the same hierarchical scale. As much as aesthetics was needed for sustaining citizenship and the modern nation-state, fetishism was needed for sustaining the figure of its opposed Other. Neither one of these can be understood in isolation from the other.

Preziosi shows that art history, from its very beginnings and though the triple superimposition that coordinated it (Winckelmann, Kant, Hegel), has been involved in “the fabrication and maintenance of a modernity that linked Europe to an *ethically superior aesthetics grounded in eroticized object-relations*, thereby allaying the anxieties of cultural relativism, wherein Europe (and Christendom) were, in their expanding encounter with alien cultures, but one reality amongst many.”⁴⁰

In that sense, rethinking art history requires “*forgetting*” it or “*thinking it otherwise*, so as to recollect it more completely.”⁴¹ In order to subvert Mastery, we have to critically approach the historical narrative of modernism/postmodernism that is conceptualized within a euro-centric intellectual tradition of exclusion. What is problematic in these notions, as Rancière points out, is that they rely on the idea of historical necessity⁴² and conceptual prejudices, creating a picture of the world in which each individual is granted with an appropriate place and role⁴³ (and is seeable and hearable only if they articulate the logic associated with that place). These confusing interrelations and classifications demand not only rejection but a rethinking of the interrelated spheres of art and politics, and of all other objects of thought.

Rancière proposes redefining the concept of *aesthetics* so as to stand for a kind of “*distribution of the sensible*” within the Western tradition. In rethinking Rancière’s major regimes of identification in Western tradition—the “ethical regime of images,” the “representational regime of the arts,” and the current ambivalent “aesthetic regime of the arts”⁴⁴ (art freed from specific rules, hierarchies of arts, subject-matters and genres)—what is at stake are different “*forms of visibility*” (“that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility”).⁴⁵

³⁵ Nanette Salmon, “The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998, 355.

³⁶ Preziosi, “Art History: Making the Visible Legible,” 14.

³⁷ Donald Preziosi, “The Art of Art History,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1998, 512.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 514.

³⁹ Preziosi, “The Art of Art History,” 514.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 523.

⁴¹ Preziosi, “The Art of Art History,” 525.

⁴² Jacques Rancière in the interview by Sudeep Dasgupta, “Art is Going Elsewhere. And Politics has to Catch It,” in *Krisis-Journal for contemporary philosophy*, no., 1, (2008), 73.

⁴³ Peter Hallward, “Jacques Rancière and the Subversion of Mastery,” in *Paragraph: the Journal of the Modern Critical Theory Group*, Vol.28 (2005), 26-45.

⁴⁴ Aesthetic regime allows old forms to coexist with new forms, and is “regime of ambivalence” (Rancière “Art is Going Elsewhere. And Politics has to Catch It,” 73)

⁴⁵ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13

Aesthetic experience, as Rancière recognizes, “grounds the autonomy of art, to the extent that it connects it to the hope of ‘changing life.’”⁴⁶ What defines the aesthetic regime is the binding together of the “autonomy *and* heteronomy”⁴⁷ of experience which define relations of art and life.

Political potential is not to be found in art itself, in a disturbing element in “a given organization of the relation between the sensible presentation and forms of meaning,” which might lead to awareness that there is something wrong with the social order, although this does not mean that such disturbance will lead to some form of mobilization.

If museums were places where the truth of the modern citizen were fabricated and read, who needs these technologies of power today? Even if conditions of visibility change, if databases can bear everything, if anything can be turned into a museum or exhibited, this is mainly because the market can create a surplus value out of it.

The programmability of databases is highly appreciated because it translates political aims into practice. Due to participative technologies and access to databases, we have the illusion of occupying a synoptic position, but from this position it is hard to perceive how liberalism is producing and controlling such illusion.

Participatory art and databases have attracted the strong attention of art institutions since 1989, a period marked by the decline of symbolic efficiency and change in the functioning of the symbolic (Žižek, Dean), de-historicization (Buden, Gržinić), a move from bio-politics to necro-politics (Mbembe, Gržinić), the marketization of art and all other fields, etc. It is also the period of the digitalization and development of “communicative capitalism.” This shift, notes Bishop, is parallel to the shift in the story of participation and democracy “from a demand for acknowledgement, to representation, to the consensual consumption of one’s own image – be this in a work of art, Facebook, Flickr, or reality TV.” But does it mean politics in Rancière’s sense, that you speak at the time and in a place you’re not expected to speak? It has that potential, but not by default, since in most cases it is just about “standardized democratization” that results in nothing.⁴⁸ The neo-liberal machine promotes such participation (in depoliticizing spaces designed for it) and arrogantly imposes self-responsibility on all forms of lives, while its authorities, who are actually creating algorithms and producing our realities, unresponsively, systematically and strategically destroys them on all possible fronts.

Instead of a conclusion

An understanding of life in which the human body becomes an archive, read by machines and identified through pattern-recognition algorithms, is the basis of politics that seeks “to rationalize and optimize human populations and capital”(Chun).⁴⁹ Dehumanized data-carriers, racialized *things*, are translated from humanity into property, upon which the “force of law” and non-application of human rights is treated as acceptable.

The roots of neoliberal governmentality and its sexual regimes are situated in the racist, patriarchal logic of the coloniality of power and its discourses, practices of systematic humanization and dehumanization, and general aims of classification and normalization.

In global neoliberal capital societies, the market is the axis in relation to which every single body, act and human practice have to be positioned. Life is estimated in terms of cost-benefit (“human capital”), and since it is widely propagated that everyone is in control of their own capital (body), “user-friendly” governments rely on the voluntary actions of “well informed” individuals. Technologies, such as databases, appear to follow a similar logic and equalize standardized and participatory practice within a designed framework as emancipation and democracy par excellence. As Chun points out, “the dream is: the resurgence of the *seemingly* sovereign individual, the subject driven to know, driven to map, to zoom in and out, to manipulate, to act,”⁵⁰ while at the same time s/he is tracked, controlled, privatized, exploited, abandoned. Databases, as memory machines, activate such dreams (and nightmares) – based on past data, they offer a promise of a calculable future.⁵¹

The current state of neoliberalism engenders the Other in the body that resists the normativity of cost-effectiveness. This is how some life decisions are acceptable (transnational child adoption), LGBT integration into consumerism rights

⁴⁶ Jacques Rancière, “The Aesthetic Revolutions and Its Outcomes: Emplotments of Autonomy and Heteronomy,” *New Left Review*, no.14, (2002),134.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 98.

⁵⁰ Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

(market' diversity, tourism, creative industries, advertisements, etc.) and "standardized democratic spheres" desirables (homonationalism), visibility instrumentalized ("pinkwashing" strategies to divert attention from denial of rights on other fronts⁵²), while full inclusion in citizenship is still denied and gender-based violence and racism is tolerated.

The programmability of databases makes the database a powerful technology of power, of distinction, transformable discourses, and control. Escape from it appears unimaginable, inconceivable, unrepresentable. However, that is the apparatus's strategic task. Lines of cracking are also one of its specificities, and cuts of its vicious circle might help us to try imagining the possibilities of resistance and of new subjectivities.

Theoretical and artistic practices have often been assigned with such promises, or even a role to resist and subvert norms and Mastery. Such resistance does not mean a break with the past, but rather a call for the de-classification and de-normalization of all these overlapping spaces and critical analysis of the performativity of epistemological practices in order to understand the promises they set for producing the past, present and future, as well as the roles and positions that have been assigned to us.

Adla Isanović is an Assistant Professor at The Academy of Fine Arts, Sarajevo, in courses on Multimedia. She holds an MA in "Critical, Curatorial, Cybermedia Studies" (Ecole supérieure des beaux arts), and an MA in "New Media" (Haute Ecole d'arts appliqués), Geneva, Switzerland. Her previous engagements include work as a researcher/analyst at The Mediacentar Sarajevo, a visiting lecturer at The International University, Sarajevo, and The Academy of Performing Arts, Sarajevo, and involvement in local and international projects in the fields of media research, culture and art.

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⁵² Jasbir K. Puar, "Israel's gay propaganda war," in *The Guardian*, 1 July 2010 (Puar argues that Israel uses a PR strategy described as "pinkwashing," equating Israel's internal policies toward gays with modernity, progressive democracy, and tolerance, as an attempt to divert due attention from campaigns of aggression against Palestinians, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/01/israels-gay-propaganda-war)

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Cyborgs From Fiction to Reality: Marginalized Other or Privileged First?

Aneta Stojnić

Dr., University of Arts in Belgrade¹

(aneta.s7@gmail.com)

Abstract:

In this paper I will offer an analysis of cyber technology, cyberspace and cyborg from its appearance in fiction to its contemporary realizations, in order to show symbolic place of cyborg has changed, in the light of contemporary power relations. I will focus on the cyborg figure in literature and film, mainly the cyberpunk genre characteristic for fictionalization of the relations between individual, society and technology.

Key words: cyborg, technology, life, cyberpunk

Numerous connections, relations and intersections between fiction, technology, art and life have been named through terms (such as robot, cyberspace, genetic engineering, computer virus etc.) that have been coined in various works of fiction, and are now used in science and technology. I find this important because the articulation of the term is equal with the articulation of the concept, which means that those specific concepts now operative in reality were first introduced in fiction.² Same can be applied to a number of technological as well as critical anticipations of social and political relations in cyberpunk dystopian societies. The anticipations at issue have obtained direct or transformed realizations in contemporary society. This is by no means reducible to the trivial claim that science fiction of the past is the reality of the future. Nevertheless, it emphasizes the political and activist potential of fiction.

Cyberpunk as postmodern science fiction genre appeared as a response to an upcoming age of information technology, anticipating its possible technological and sociological perspectives. Main topic of cyberpunk is the relation between hi-tech society and characters from the social margins cyborgs, machine outcasts, pariahs, and characters from various underground subcultures. The atmosphere largely corresponds with that of film noir, while formal aspects of the plot resemble detective novels.³ The unexpected combination of romantic impulse and the dark side of science and technology creates the dramatic ambivalence of the relation between individual and society. Usually the plots are situated in the postindustrial, dystopian megalopolises where high technology takes unexpected forms, applications and transformations. The life in futuristic dystopia is characterized by rapid technological changes, omnipresent digital databases, and technologically modified bodies.

Unlike some other SF sub-genres, cyberpunk always anticipates close future while the plots are located on Earth.⁴ This is important because it emphasizes the tendency towards re-thinking the technological growth and development in terms of actual sociopolitical circumstances.

The plots are usually generated in the tension between most advanced cyber, and information technology at one side and total brake down or radical change of the social order on the other side.⁵ Hackers, cyborgs, different variations of hybridity between life forms between human, machine and artificial intelligence, enter in the conflict with gigantic corporations that have produced them. The classic cyberpunk characters are marginalized, alienated loners, existentially

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² The very term "cyberspace" was coined by William Gibson in his short story "Burning Chrom" in 1982. However, the term will gain its popularity only after Gibson's famous novel "Neuromancer" from 1983. The term cyberspace was used to describe the computer generated three dimensional space which very much resembles, what is now known as World Wide Web. Together with Ridley Scot's *Blade Runner*, that came out the same year *Neuromancer* was one of the fundamental work of cyberpunk genre.

³ Stacy Gillis, *The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded*, (Wallflower Press, 2005), 75.

⁴ Of course there are exceptions this genre convention, the most notable being Frank Herbert's saga "Dune" whose plot is situated in far future.

⁵ Donald M. Hassler, *New Boundaries in Political Science Fiction* (University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 75-76.

and ontologically incorporated into the same digitalized hi-tech society with which they are in conflict. This means that they are literally constructed and articulated by the economic and technological systems of power. They originate from cyber technology (ontology) and their existence is determined by given parameters of cyber-society (existentially).

Cyborg is one of the paradigmatic characters of cyber fiction that over time obtained more or less unexpected realizations in reality, and earned an important place in contemporary theories of culture. We find precursors of cyborgs in the earliest science fiction novels, bordering with the genre of horror. The first fictionalized cyborg can be traced back to 1897, in the famous Monster character from Mary Shelly's novel *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus*. It will become one of the most cited and possibly most influential works of the genre, one that will obtain numerous incarnations and elaborations in fiction and popular culture of 20th and 21st century. Unlike some of his later "successors" like Robocop or a Replicants from "Blade Runner," Frankenstein's Monster does not have machine/digital components implanted in his body. Assembled from parts of dead bodies and brought to life by electricity this "protocyborg" was still not clearly positioned as cross or transitional entity between living being and machine. However, he was precisely and literally conceptualized as an organism situated between the living and the dead. As such it fits the understanding of a cyborg as a being generated in the synthesis of being and nonbeing, that is, as that which displays the interactive relations between presence, perspective and appearance, of time/space event of artificial world. Also, we can recognize the idea of intersection between living organism and machine in the fact that the Monster was "brought to life" by electricity.⁶

Here I would like to reflect on the name "Monster" that was attributed to doctor Frankenstein's creature. Since the age of Antiquity, in Western imagination, the "monsters" (dragons, centaurs, mermaids, medusas and other chimeras) defined the borders of society. Borders behind which is the realm of unregulated, anarchic, terrifying realities ungovernable by human laws. Similarly Frankenstein's Monster was cast off by the society, which perceived him as an asymmetrical other. Asymmetrical power relations⁷ are the basis for the construction of otherness that will become one of the central motives in the cyborg myth. The distinctive backdrop in the SF genre has been fascinated by the development of science combined with the ambivalent relation towards its possible outcomes. What distinguishes Monster from "Frankenstein" as a protocyborg of the later fictionalizations is the absence of symbiotic relation between living organism and a machine. The replicants in "Blade Runner" are fictionalized as bioengineered organisms, i.e., bio-robotic organisms (cyborgs), so perfectly designed that it is impossible to differentiate them from humans. The implicit, but precise analysis of (still actual) racial relations is given through the social status of replicants. Although "Blade Runner" is not explicitly about race, the latter is, in fact, one of the main motives in this movie. If we pay attention to the shots of the crowded city streets we will notice the complete absence of black people. It seems that in LA of the future there are no Afro-Americans or any other people of black African origin. Analyzing this aspect of the movie Robert Barringer suggests two possible explanations:

[...] Either African Americans have joined the white exodus to the off-world colonies or they have been exterminated. The former is unlikely in light of chronic economic discrimination and ghettoization, and the latter too horrifying to contemplate, though the darkness and despair at the film's heart would not preclude such a genocidal backstory.⁸

The numerous scenes of crowded streets are connotatively important because they show the ethnically diverse landscape of the town that makes the absence of black people even more obvious, and proves that we're talking about conscious director's decision. It functions on the level of subtext that I shall now explain following the Barringer's analyses. Although the movie doesn't explicitly touch the topic of race, one of the main subjects in the "Blade Runner" is slavery. Regardless of whether the black slaves have obtained the economic power and moved to alien colonies, or they have been eliminated by white governance, it is evident that they are not there to fulfill the social and economic functions that have been assigned to them in the present social order. In the absence of the black race, as cheap (or free) labour, new artificial sub-class have been developed: the Replicants.⁹ In comparison to humans they are superiorly strong and skilled, while different models are produced with different IQs. The use of Replicants on Earth is strictly banned. The powerful corporation that produces Replicants, exports them to colonies on other planets, where they are used for labour that is undesirable and/or dangerous for humans. Blade Runners are special agents whose job is to seek and destroy the runaway Replicants. Ironically enough this process is called retiring. The plot of the movie

⁶ In the historical context of the novel (19th century) electricity was the latest revolutionary technological achievement.

⁷ Only the dominant group has the power to determine, decide and impose its own specificity (identity) as a value, and to devalue and discriminate other specificities (otherness) ref. Simon deBeauvoir, "The Second Sex," Alfred Konoph, New York, 1952.

⁸ Robert Barringer, "Blade Runner: Skinjobs, humans and racial coding" in *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997, 13-15, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinesays/JC41folder/bladeRunner.html> acc. 08.06.2013.

⁹ Ibid.

follows the group of runaway Replicants who have found out that they have an “expiry date” and are headed for Earth to find their “maker” and change their “destiny”

“Bladerunner” opens numerous and complex questions from area of power relations between different forms of life, problematization of humanistically oriented ethics, questions of the ethical aspects of artificial intelligence and critiques of colonialism and capitalism. In other words, we can read “Blade Runner” as a metaphor about the production of life that becomes an economic category. I want to emphasize this as a key moment since it creates a direct relation between production of life (biopolitics) and production of death (necropolitics). A certain form of life, a cyborg (Replicant) has been designated as merchandise made for export, with a defined expiry date. Replicant is simultaneously biopolitical and necropolitical subject. It is produced as a life whose function is death. To this “merchandise” intelligence is allocated, but the human emotional experience is denied. The only way to distinguish them from humans is their inability for empathy. In other words, dehumanization is executed by means of deprivation of the capacity for emotional response. This problematic motive gets its twist in Rachael’s character, a new Replicant prototype. Rachael has implemented memories of childhood and is produced in such a way that she can fully develop human emotionality. As a perfect copy of the human being, Rachael embodies the greatest fears and greatest desires of cyber culture.¹⁰ Dualism between a human and a machine is destabilized momentarily with the disappearance of the difference between organic system and digital system. The title of the novel on which the film was based *Do Androids Dream Electronic Sheep?* precisely indicates the central aspect of this story: the question of cyborg experience and human inability to access that experience. Introducing the issue of android dream, this title is provocative on two levels:

- a) it suggests the psychological space of the replicant
- b) it suggests the human inability to approach that space.

The idea of a “dream of electronic sheep” suggests radically different ontological experience – Replicant’s dream is of electronics. Both fascinating and disturbing is the fact that the dream stands as a place of similarity and difference, joining and separation between human subject and bioengineered, technological or the cyber subject. This would mean that a human can understand the experience of an android or a cyborg but cannot share, nor control their experience. In this way “the dream of electronic sheep” becomes a disturbing concept that joins the trauma and the fulfillment of desire.

The cyborg entity deconstructs the binary relations between object and subject, nature and culture, being and non-being, organism and machine, male and female, possibility and impossibility of controlling (one’s own) body. Fictionalized cyborg disturbingly destabilizes the usual understanding of the concept of “natural.” Cyborgs are liminal beings that don’t strive towards stable essentialized identities. Fascination with the cyborg in fiction as well as in theory is largely conditioned by the fact that the concept of cyborg opens large space for projections in different directions. The cyborg figure is important because it joins the imagination and material reality as two pillars supporting every possibility for historical transformation.¹¹

According to Donna Haraway today we are all already cyborgs – theorized and constructed chimeras between living organism and a machine. Our ontology is cyborg ontology and it gives us our politics: “[...] a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.”¹²

Haraway uses the cyborg metaphor in her key critique of feminist essentialism and naturalism. In the myth of the cyborg she sees the political potential for feminism to rid itself of the need for unified identification. Instead, it opens possibilities for establishing alliances based on affinity and not identity.¹³ Haraway’s myth of cyborg undoubtedly undermines the idea of organic whole, placing the articulation in front of representation.

I will argue here that today, thirty years after the release of “Cyborg Manifesto” that its central thesis becomes relevant way beyond the questions of alliances within feminism and critiques of identity politics. Today self-design has become a common, one could say, an everyday practice in the first world, thus the question of the body as a social construct

¹⁰ Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

is more relevant than ever. As Marina Gržinić points out, permanent redefining of the relations between human and machine is important because it strives for absent but possible different present. According to Gržinić:

[...] Alternatives are not cynicism and uselessness, that is, some kind of abstract existence, or news about technological determinism that destroys the 'man' by 'machine', i.e. 'meaningful political action' by 'text', but immediate delinking and positioning - a different articulation of given relation.¹⁴

Different articulation by which we could reach a different present is happening both on fictional and real level. Dramatic tension brought in by cyborgs, replicants, androids and various forms of artificial life is realized on two levels:

- 1) Issue of body as constructed symbiosis between organic and technological system
- 2) Issue of artificial intelligence.

While the artificial intelligence is still in the sphere between fiction and scientific experiments, it is crucial to understand that the issue of body in relation to cyborgs has exceeded the domain of fiction and has entered the sphere of everyday life. So, here I will step out of fiction to discuss the way in which the concept of cyborg is manifested in contemporary everyday reality. Thanks to the development of technology, today it is possible to completely redesign one's own body through a number of medical and cosmetic interventions. One can change the morphology of their face, various bodily dimensions, gender, or skin color. It is not just about cosmetics. Sometimes the life indications are at stake: whether or not you'll have the privilege to replace the malfunctioning organ with a new prosthetic one can determine the length, quality or the end of your life. I argue that today the possibility for cyborgization of the body is a matter of class privilege.

Unlike replicants from *Blade Runner* these contemporary cyborgs are not oppressed, unprivileged or outcasts. This means that the cyborg is no longer the asymmetrical other. Unlike their fictionalized predecessors, today's real cyborgs are not doomed creatures from the margins of cyberpunk metropolis. On the contrary, contemporary cyborgs they are the privileged class and their class position enables them to become cyborgs.

On the other hand, in the symbolic place of the Replicants from "Blade Runner" today are those human subjects that are helplessly and hopelessly trapped in their unchangeable, bodily, biological, perishable, irreparable, deadly, exploited humanness. Human subjects of the third world are living their death by way of being exploited by cyborgized first world. Paradoxically, the social status of cyborgs in cyberpunk fiction is now inhabited by those to whom are denied the possibility of ever having a choice to become a cyborg. Today the borders of society are no longer defined by imaginary monsters, chimeras and cyborgs, situated on the other side of human law and order. It is quite the opposite. Today outside of cyborgized, privileged society remains only the dispensable, bare life.

Aneta Stojnić, theoretician, artist and curator born in Belgrade, 1981. PhD in Theory of Arts and Media at University of Arts in Belgrade, thesis title: "Theory of Performance in Digital Art: Towards the New Political Performance" (2013). Author of a various papers, critical reviews and essays on contemporary art and media, published in Serbia, Slovenia and Austria. Artist in residence in Tanzquartier Vienna in 2011 and writer in residence at KulturKontakt Austria in 2012. Ernst-Mach Scholarship holder for a research project at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna Conceptual Art study program, IBK. in 2012
<http://anetastojnic.wordpress.com/cv/>

¹⁴ Marina Gržinić, U redu za virtuelnikruh, (Zagreb: Meandar, 1998, Croatian translation of PhD thesis Gržinić Marina: "Virtualnerealnosti, Akroničenčas, paraprostor in simulacija : doktorskadisertacija". Ljubljana: 1995.

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PART III

**ACTIVISM, EXHIBITION'S POLITICS
AND
EUROPEAN UNION'S POLITICS**

Porcelain Fear

Tatjana Greif

holds a PhD in Archaeology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
and is a LGBT activist, publicist and editor

(tatjana.greif@guest.arnes.si)

Abstract:

The article is a short consideration about different faces of fear and its abuse for suppressing the society – about the political fear from non-obedient citizens, the fear of citizens from corporative state, the fear of people from other people, and between people. LGBT people are both representing fear to the others and they suffer the phobia of the society. The article is about how in the Balkans a small porcelain figurine can become a threat just with a hint of lesbianism.

Key words: capitalism, church-state, LGBT, ex-YU, fear management

Of course the Nazis were wrong to hate the Jews. But their hating the Jews was not without the cause. It's just that the cause wasn't real. The cause was imagined. The cause was fear. ... Let's think of another minority. One that can go unnoticed if it needs to. There are all sorts of minorities, blonds for example ... or people with freckles. But a minority is only thought of as one when it constitutes some kind of threat to the majority. A real threat or an imagined one ... And therein lies the fear. If that minority is somehow invisible than the fear is much greater. That fear is why the minority is persecuted. And, so you see there always is a cause. The cause is fear. Minorities are just people. People like us. ... Fear after all is our real enemy. Fear is taking over our world. Fear is being used as a tool of manipulation in our society. It's how politicians peddle policy. It's how Madison Avenue sells us things we don't need. Think about it. The fear of being attacked. The fear of threat there are Communists lurking around every corner. The fear that some little Caribbean country that doesn't believe in our way of life poses a threat to us. The fear that black culture may take over the world. The fear of Elvis Presley's hips...
From the film "A Single Man" based on a novel by Christopher Isherwood

That is how gay professor Falconer explains fear to his students in a Hollywood film "A Single Man" based on a novel by Christopher Isherwood. It is a strikingly bizarre and vulgar story of a painful truth hidden within this quite simple definition of fear. The story in the novel and the film takes place during one day in 1962 in Southern California. Just a few years later, the US government began to demonstrate certain fear of John Lennon's public appearances. At the time, the former Beatle and peace activist came to the States with his partner Yoko Ono. Lennon and Ono befriended Bobby Seale, Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and Angela Davis, members of the Black Panthers' movement and radical activists. President Nixon and FBI's head Edward Hoover decided to deport Lennon back to Europe. The 1980s brought the assassination of Lennon and the end of Black Panthers. Some of them later on became Republicans, businessmen or author of cookbooks.

The universal phenomenon of fear was used by the military couple of state and church to develop "fear management" in order to oppress and control society. Fear as such is fundamentally the same and the technologies of its abuse may vary.

Thinking of a situation of LGBT people and their lives in the states of former Yugoslavia I am actually thinking of fear – the very same fear described above, as the quote says: "if that minority is somehow invisible than the fear is much greater." It is the fear of dominant mainstream majority towards non dominant marginal minority.

Focusing on former Yugoslavia and the new states that issued from the Federation, placed on what was once a magnificent stage, and considering the war and enormous political change that happened in last two decades, I would still claim there is nothing really different here from what takes place in the West. Once multicultural and multilingual one party regime is today part of uniform capitalist world order; a one party regime, too. Only this time a global one.

In former Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Slovenia homosexuality was decriminalized in 1976 as part of a federal law reform, and followed by Croatia in 1977.

Other republics introduced decriminalization in the 1990s, Serbia in 1994, Macedonia and Bosnia in 1996. After the fratricidal and sororicidal – why nobody is using that word? – war in the 1990s and the formation of new states in the ashes of the old one, other former SFRJ republics decriminalized homosexuality too and adopted different jurisprudence on human rights.

Nowadays, protective legislation for LGBT people exists, in different size and content, but its implementation is poor. And, if there is legal protection and if there is democracy, if there is such a mental progress – how come that there is still enormously high level of intolerance and homophobia? In comparison with the 1960s and earlier, it is so that homosexuals and lesbians, who were criminalized before, even imprisoned, are now not criminalized any more by the law. But they are criminalized by the society – hostile attitudes, archaic patriarchal machismo, social distance, intolerance and homophobia remain. Strong and persistent as ever.

And in current situation the reality of LGBT people is not created by LGBT people and nor by the movement. It is created by political absence of will to ever change the *status quo*. And it is created by the digitalized slave of politics and the media. Media absolutism, news hierarchy, filtered informational overload – all this produces a homophobic culture. But the public is not like archaeology – excavating the artifacts with precise stratigraphical method, discovering and unearthing fragments. The public is just absorbing, “sucking” and consuming the bigger and bigger, the more and more, disguised manipulative information chaos. The public is not using scientific excavation method for gathering real information – it just hears, digests and walks away. And it is a paradox how easy it is to upset the public, to mobilize the politics, to attract media attention.

Recently two small porcelain figurines depicted on a theater poster promoting a lesbian play “Fine, Death Girls” deeply upset Croatian society, both Catholics and Muslims, believers and non-believers, but also politicians. The image of two holly Virgin Maries, lovingly embracing one another across the shoulder, in shining blue-and-white porcelain – that was too much of a stress for religious and political leaders. This theater poster with the image of a double Virgin Mary, a loving female couple was offensive for two different religions, historically in antagonist relationship, now supporting each other. How about that?

The media was only happy to publish an open letter written by mufti Aziz ef. Hasanović who was seriously concerned about the poster, claiming that the image on the poster was offensive for Muslims even if made direct reference to Catholic Christianity. Mufti said that both Catholicism and Islam equally respect “Mejrem or virgin Mary the mother of Christ.” He said that in the “past times” due to the “low level of civilization” the offense of religious symbols was acceptable, but the trend to offense religious filings is now growing under the cover of free speech. I wonder which “past times” he was referring to. As a reaction to such intervention a second poster appeared in which two virgins are depicted wearing burqa. Archbishop Bozanić took a turn and spoke against “painful political dictatorship and ideological totalitarianism” about harmful and dangerous “re-education of children and youth... forbidding them free choice and honesty.”

After the poster for the theater show was ostracized and removed from the public eye, many artists protested. Theater actors, and intellectuals and the whole ensemble of *Gavella* theatre where the two virgins Maries incident occurred, condemned the act of religious and political censorship of art. Only one politician supported them, the mayor of the city of Rijeka, who invited the show to his city.

Not coincidentally similar, the church in Slovenia raised a huge scandal in the end of the 1990s, when a small electro punk group Strelnikoff from Celje realized their album Bitchcraft with a cover illustrated with a depiction of virgin Marry of Brezje holding a rat instead of baby Jesus.

In July 2013 a small group of gays and lesbians with a few supporters organized the first ever pride parade in a small town of Budva on the Adriatic Coast in Montenegro; the regional scenario was the same as in Belgrade, Split or Zagreb before...flying stones, bricks, violence, wounded participants, assaults and miserable shame. A female professor, who gave a speech to support the Pride, commented: “If only our fellow citizens were so resistant and aggressive in cases of corruption, political fraud and ideological violence in this country...”

How can a public like that, how can average citizens recognize that there is a connection between them and the “others?” How can they understand the connections amongst different oppressions facing different historically underprivileged communities, repressed groups, non-whites, elders, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, low-income people, people with disabilities, sex workers, gays and lesbians, Roma, of different class? How could they see and identify, let alone confront any forms of oppression?

Humans, human society and human rights are under uniform capitalist world order, where political and media discourse are market-conditioned, and in which citizen’s rights, genders and sexualities are produced and reproduced through libidinalization of market commodities. In this uniform capitalist world order, bodies of LGBT citizens are – fit or unfit – part of political economy of the body, having their market value in multiple markets. The reasoning behind capitalist production is colonizing sexual exchanges, sexual politics and social discourses. The relationship between sexual politics and capitalism in global hyper marketplaces is fascinating. Inseparable links between politics and sexuality make the intention of political sphere to control LGBT people more militant. Homosexual people are not practicing heteronormative reproductive sex which brings capitalist state and capitalist church profits. As such they represent a threat and source of fear of profit loss. Partly this matter can easily be solved by giving LGBT people marriage and family rights, equal or similar to heterosexual citizens, by making them “normal” and obedient citizens that have been commodified. But this is only one type of a solution. Namely, not all LGBT people are interested in getting married, giving their bodies at disposal to the state and capital or fitting into the norm.

And what is strategic basis for the discussion of sexual rights in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the context of present and future of commoditization of sexual relationships, in which our bodies are actively involved? Who is in capacity to achieve social change for those who are unfit or unwilling to give their bodies for market economy reframed for profit making? Is it the LGBT movement or individuals? Nobody? Who will survive the collapse of the centuries? This question seems to be utopian multiple hypothesis.

Dr. Tatjana Greif has been active for several decades with human rights in the sphere of gender issues and sexual orientation. For several years she coordinates the lesbian group ŠKUC -LL in the association ŠKUC, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Since 2004, she is the chief editor of the book series ŠKUC Vizibilija, and as well she is member of the editorial boards of several magazines and journals (Delta, Journal for Critique of Science , Lesbo). Especially valuable is her role as promoter of non-governmental organizations for the legalization of same-sex relationships, which led to the regulation of the status of same-sex couples or to the adoption of the registration of same-sex partnerships in 2005.

AIDS/HIV as (another) Form of Governmentality

Ivan Jurica

PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia;
works in the Art Education Department, MUMOK, Vienna, Austria,
(jurica.ivan@gmail.com)

Abstract:

The following contribution is a short summary of an artistic research project on AIDS/HIV, which attempt was/is to re-open and to re-articulate the discourse on the virus and the illness from contemporary feminist and post-colonial perspectives. The idea for this project departed from the constantly imposed and in the meantime unbearable confrontation with the immensely powerful charity machine around AIDS/HIV. We conceive it within the capitalist ideology as the bottom line of processes of normalization. To open this agenda means to open an entire system of capitalist Christian mentality, which concerns contexts of visual representation, popular culture, medical industry, history writing, the “Third” and as well as the “Second” World. In the same instance these processes of normalization resulted in establishing a corrupted homo-normativism that re-produces bourgeois mentality of white supremacy and privatized privileges. Therefore we asked what meaning in such a context bears the terminology of emancipation, solidarity and of a life? These theoretical questions demanded a radicalized curatorial gesture: abandoning the classical gallery-display, and as well asked for a collective ideological positioning.

It is necessary to comprehend the virus and the illness as a site of continuing policy of racialization, segregation, homophobia and further capitalist exploitation within the capitalist post-colonial order.

Key Words: AIDS/HIV, charity, solidarity, post-colonial order, feminism

The title of this text refers to an artistic research project of the same name, released through 2012–2013 and originally based at the IG Bildende Kunst Gallery in Vienna (12.12.2012 – 22.2.2013), where the outcomes of the research could be presented in the form of an exhibition, as well as of a further discussion of these outcomes, thus shifting and re-articulating the discourse on the virus and the illness within its post-AIDS-crisis relevancy. At first we (myself, together with co-curator and my boyfriend Miltiadis Gerathanasis) must express our deep appreciation of our colleagues and friends who were ready to go with us into this agenda, the same way then people running the IG Bildende Kunst and its Gallery, as with the further research and realization, we had to experience rather general indifference toward AIDS/HIV, resulting in one primary question: What about AIDS/HIV? Everything around the virus and the illness seems to be manifested and regulated...

But exactly this question implies its very answer.

Part I.

As the bottom line of the project is the annual medial positivist hysteria/terror around the biggest charity event on AIDS/HIV in the world, the Viennese Life Ball, we can start here. It seems as if the topic of the virus and the illness (but just this virus/illness, not the topic of healthcare in general) became, so to speak, seasonable—as a spectacular exotic topic for a brighter normative audience that is acceptable just in the season of big charity events. Charity machinery should be considered a crucial mechanism within the processes of the normalization/capitalization

of AIDS/HIV. It operates, in these terms, with the notion of a *solidarity*, obstructing and reproducing racisms, economic interests and post-colonial aspirations. A major part of the Life Ball spectacle is carried by its visual representation, repeating within the current realm the classical Orientalist colonial image with its historical assignment to prove white supremacy within Euro-Atlantic colonial politics. And it is not to be forgotten that in the meantime these visual symbols and connotations are almost the only (popular) images of the current AIDS/HIV-crisis circulating within the Western media. Also due to this, the charity machinery around AIDS/HIV has in the meantime become extremely profitable within the order of a, so to speak, derived/symbolical profit. If we combine it with the aforementioned notion of a *solidarity* bound on the silence of those affected, we observe a shift/repetition of the colonial past into the post-colonial presence. Additionally, such events are widely perceived as sites of a 'high'—which ultimately means bourgeois—culture, they are highly official events. But this governmental normalization of HIV/AIDS which followed the AIDS crisis of the 1980s did not mean a dissolution of homophobia within capitalist societies; rather, the homosexual scene and representation of hetero-normative conditions, behavior and ... visual representation.

The political agenda and activities of the AIDS movement of the 1980s were being turned into a de-politicized routine and stupid repetition; anyway the notion of a *routine* might be applied to several contributions within the project (but of course they are not to be reduced solely to this term): from healthcare for those affected as political action within the crisis into the dumb raw routine of state medical centres (Iman Ithram), from a celebration-instead-of-a-mourning as a symbol of resistance toward death within the homophobic racist state into the stupid partying of the narcissistic charity machine (Jurica), from the provocatively painful presence/depiction of the AIDS-affected into the Hollywood stardom of their sterile heterosexual actors (David Kellner). Another routine, connected with historical racisms, processes of racialization and colonialism, focused on AIDS/HIV as a currently additional form of controlling, exploiting and segregating the African continent (Belinda Kazeem) or criminalizing sex-work and women-migrants seeking the life of citizens and security in the EU (Marissa Lôbo). Another focus of the project research was the Eastern European situation (with the exception of the former Soviet states, which might need their own complex research). Despite a rather consistently low number of infected persons in this area before and after 1989, AIDS/HIV introduced for the local power-structures an enormous potential in terms of the execution of homophobic and nationalistic policies (Kateřina Kolářová elaborated on these topics within the socialist ideology and conditions of Czechoslovakia of the 1980s and early 1990s). Despite, or actually because of this, we ask: What does Western capitalism with its colonial history have in common with post-socialist cultures and the globalised neoliberal market? *Relations. 25 Years of the Lesbian Group ŠKUC-LL Ljubljana*, a documentary film by Marina Gržinić, Aina Šmid, Zvonka T. Šimčič, elaborates from a reversed position the historical conditions, differences and presence of the feminist movement(s) within the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav space, placing AIDS/HIV into the complexity of the socialist past and the neo-liberal Christian-capitalist presence.

Despite the preliminary use of the term "exhibition", it is clear that the re-articulation and re-formulation of the discourse on AIDS/HIV from the post-colonial and feminist perspective (where the "feminist" became preferred to the one of the "queer") within this project is a matter of its formal realization too. From the beginning we knew we were not interested in exhibiting AIDS/HIV and in these terms adopting a classical gallery display. The central subjects of the research—in/visibility, media representation and ideology/visual regimes—became mediated by two crucial (formal) elements: the construction of a three-dimensional black cube in a white space and a journal collecting contributions of participating artists and theoreticians. These two elements, both visibly placed in the space of the gallery, complemented each other formally and theoretically. The black cube, with the possibility of being entered, was conceived as a multilayered spatial metaphor: of a darkroom (for (homo)sexual practices), of exclusion and invisibility, as well as of a reference to Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square on White*, that is, amongst others, further visual reference to questions of symbols, iconography and their readings being framed by an ideology. Which images of AIDS/HIV do we who live in Western globalized cultures know in this context? Why do we know exactly these images, or respectively, what meaning and what role do they fulfil within these cultures?

In these regards I would like to mention the third part carrying the project, a series of film-screenings, and I would like to write in these terms rather about what we didn't and couldn't get, watch, see, get to know, etc. Working on the selection of films we were, within the context of the project and its research, very interested in introducing critical positions different to that of the usual conflictless emotionalized boredom. In this short time of our research, but still taking several months into account and depending on the usual sources of internet, libraries and archives, with the exception of Rosa von Praunheim's AIDS-Trilogy detected in a private collection and still recorded on an old VHS-tape, we couldn't find any work, be it "independent" cinema, older or later documentaries, home-made videos, YouTube etc., that did not fulfil the usual scenario, dramaturgy and ideology of a melodrama. In these entire months we managed to find one single movie on AIDS/HIV made in (South) Africa, directed by a German director and produced with European

capital, and additionally, once again, embracing all the visual narrative aspects mentioned above. If, within the realm of AIDS/HIV, the binary with Africa or with the “Third World” conceives a basis of its racialization¹ in the post-colonial global order, then the condition for *white solidarity* lays in these terms in the colonial silence of the Other, thus copying the old concept of *white supremacy*. It is not clear yet what form further research will demand, but in the future we would like, returning to the context of a Life Ball, to operate rather with the more appropriate term of a *Bare Life Ball*.

Addendum

How these abovementioned practices are being transferred into, so to speak, the everyday rituals of a typical white EU-citizen, is possible to demonstrate with the following few sentences extracted from a talk between two fags from Eastern Europe, based in one of the gay-sex-centres in Amsterdam,² working for one of those multinational companies superintending deterritorialized capital but actually working and comprehending “life” within the realm of virtual space: G: “But you don’t forget that in August we have to go to Balaton to this music-festival?” L: “No.” G: “I am just reminding you as you actually meant that now after Israel you might run out of money..” L: “Yes I thought about it.” G: “But you want to go..” L: “I know, I would have to work hard for the next weeks and earn over a hundred and fifty thousand, as then we receive commission rated over five percent. It will be crazy, but it’s manageable. It is!” G: “So still we can plan Morocco we wanted do in September?” The guys were continuing the talk about the usual stuff, regularly sipping on cafe latte while checking out the cocks of Israeli and Arab men on their i-pods and i-pads.

Ivan Jurica artist and art-educator, works at intersection of art and politics, focusing history-writing and ideological conditions of art-production, including the East-West relations. Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 2009; since then involved in several individual and collective projects. Currently doctoral candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, elaborating on historical processes of (self)colonization within the post-socialist cultures. Jurica is also active at the art-education department in mumok, Vienna. Lives and works in Vienna and Bratislava.

¹ “Racialization” is a term used by Argentinian semiotician Walter Mignolo, describing historical processes of devaluation (first of non-Western people, religions and knowledge) “under the progressive and never ending face of economic growth and capital accumulation”. (Mignolo, Walter, “Dispensable and Bare Lives, Coloniality and the Hidden Political/Economic Agenda of Modernity,” in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, VII, 2 (Ahead Publishing House), 2009, 71–76.

² Despite the experience of Amsterdam as a normative post-colonial proto-fascist (Šefik Šeki-Tatlić) space, it was possible to experience, even though on a minimal scale, the opposite: we were invited to present the project within the Queeristan festival, attempting to intervene the later homo-normativism and racisms within Dutch society, organized mainly by young lesbians.

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**The Post-Human,
the Non-human and its Political Revolt**

The liberal mind and its mutants

Tomasz Sikora

Assistant Professor, Pedagogical University of Cracow

(tsikora@ap.krakow.pl)

Abstract:

The following observations have been occasioned by the 2011 Marvell comic adaptation *X-Men: First Class*. Rather than a comprehensive analysis of the movie, however, the essay is a collection of more general observations on the modern “liberal mind” and how it imagines and structures community, difference and the political itself. One of my central claims, drawing on the work of Roberto Esposito, is that the modern model of liberal humanism has developed largely in terms of what he calls the “immunization paradigm.” In this model, the inclusion of difference into the political may be interpreted in terms of immunization: a body politic internalizes a certain amount of what seems to constitute a danger in order to immunize itself against that very danger. Present-day liberalism differs from its earlier forms in that it recognizes the idea of difference and folds it into its own projections of a “common good.” But not all forms of difference are equally welcome, and the liberal regime maintains its hegemony by bargaining some kinds of difference against others. One of the key questions for the present, therefore, is which kinds of difference the dominant regime considers more worthy of life and legal protection, and which other kinds are implicitly considered less worthy or, indeed, deserving extinction.

Keywords: liberalism, difference, community, immunization, X-Men

The liberal mind

Although set during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, *X-Men: First Class* (dir. Matthew Vaughn) is a movie immersed in the political debates that have been animating American and, more generally, Western societies in recent years. One finds, for instance, an obvious allusion to the “don’t ask, don’t tell” rule that applied to US army personnel before it was lifted by Barack Obama several months after the release of the movie; the allusion occurs when, in response to his CIA boss’s surprise, Hank McCoy says innocently: “You didn’t ask [whether I was a mutant], so I didn’t tell.” The issue of the legitimacy of the use of torture on whoever happens to be classified as an “enemy of the state” is invoked as well when one of the CIA directors argues, with remarkable sophistry, that although the law prohibits the use of torture, it certainly intends to prohibit its use on human beings only, not on mutants. Thus, the movie points to the (neo-Schmittian) question of the state’s prerogatives in defining the (deadly) enemy and undertaking necessary steps for the protection of the nation’s security. While in 1962 the Cold War logic may have defined the United States’ (as well as, to be sure, liberty’s and democracy’s) enemy in a rather unambiguous way, that kind of binary logic is certainly shown in the movie to be much more problematic in the times of a “global war on terror.” True, Dick Cheney still played on that simple binary (‘us’ versus ‘them’) thinking when he proclaimed: “Just as surely as the Nazis during World War Two and the Soviet communists during the Cold War, the enemy we face today is bent on our destruction”;¹ but as George Bush Sr. noticed in support of his son’s anti-terrorist policies, in the past “we knew who the enemy was and we knew what we had to do to get rid of them” whereas “the enemies we face today are [...] shadowy. They are a terrible new problem.”²

¹ Dick Cheney, Speech at the Republican National Convention, September 1, 2004 (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/reconvention/speeches/cheney.html>).

² “Bush’s father outlines son’s tough challenges,” *Washington Times*, October 22, 2002 (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/oct/22/20021022-093322-2942r>).

My starting point is that *X-Men: First Class* may be approached as exposing the intricacies of the (post)modern liberal mind. My use of “liberal” here is rather broad, I admit, and it does not do justice to the differences between European and US usage, nor to the multifariousness of what “liberal” may actually stand for, philosophically and/or politically. In fact, my terminological nonchalance goes so far as to blur the distinction – so fundamental, many would claim, for the contemporary political landscape – between “liberal” and “conservative.” (I leave aside another problematic issue, i.e. the relationship between “leftist” and “liberal.”) Not that I deny the obvious fact that at some level the discursive differences exist and organize, in a bipolar manner, much of the contemporary political scene; after all, conservatism is often posited (and posits itself) as precisely *opposed* to liberal modernism. I would argue, however, that at a “deeper” level, liberalism or, better, liberal humanism names a more general framework (as part of the paradigm of “universal modernity”) that effectively limits the horizon of possible or at least “realistic” politics nowadays. In other words, I take “liberalism” to stand for the ideological legitimization of the contemporary capitalist world order as well as a hegemonic discourse based on a set of axiomatic beliefs – not necessarily internally coherent – concerning “reality,” “(universal) human nature,” “subjectivity,” etc. This discourse structures contemporary political positions beyond any particular partisan divisions by determining a horizon of the possible. (One may recall here, for instance, Lee Edelman’s “reproductive futurism”³ as a structuring, goes-without-saying principle of any political grammar today; I would see reproductive futurism as one of liberal humanism’s axioms.) The discourse makes claims such as: “We’re all human, after all, and so we all want X / Y / Z.” One simple example from the end of the Cold War era may be found in the lyrics of Sting’s 1985 song which said: “We share the same biology / Regardless of ideology / Believe me when I say to you / I hope the Russians love their children too.”

Let me stress, however, that the liberal-humanist idea of a shared universal human nature does not preclude constant production of dehumanized enemies: by not adhering to certain standards, some individuals (and/or whole populations) allegedly dehumanize themselves – cut themselves off from “common humanity” – and thus justify their own extermination. While this kind of dehumanization or demonization of the enemy is more readily attributed to “conservative” positions, it is no aberration to the liberal mind, either, as Mark Neocleous makes clear.⁴ Liberal humanism, says Neocleous, first devises a common human nature, based on selected meanings of “freedom” and apparently blind to markers of difference such as race, gender, sexuality, religion etc., only to exclude, sometimes brutally, all those who fail to meet specifically defined standards of humanity; that’s why, for instance, liberal-minded Europeans did not, as a rule, oppose the extermination of Native Americans, who clearly failed to recognize the “fundamental human value” of free trade. Over the last decades, liberal humanism has folded some of the markers of difference into its understanding and practice of the political, but even when politicized, difference remains more like “stylistic variations” added to an otherwise unchallenged liberal grammar.

I see liberal humanism, then, as a general (seemingly *a-* or *post*political) framework for any “possible” political projects as well as an ideological alibi for capitalism and its (neo)colonial expansion. I do not mean to simply conflate liberalism and conservatism, but I do mean to suggest, following the work of Mark Neocleous and some other political thinkers, that the difference between them is one of scale rather than essence. (Indeed, leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were perfectly capable of combining extreme social conservatism with extreme economic (neo) liberalism – both in the name of nothing less than “freedom,” of course). The scale refers, in the first place, to the state’s readiness to use “sheer force” – i.e. the executive power’s prerogative to employ “special measures” – when “necessity calls,” i.e. when faced with a “high security risk.” What actually constitutes that security risk will, of course, fluctuate historically and across the political spectrum, but not the presumed legitimacy of the actions undertaken, allegedly, to protect the nation’s security.⁵ Conservatives seem much less sentimental about the use of force, even if they tend to dress their rhetoric in high-flown, moralistic clichés. Liberals, on the other hand, usually need more justifications, more invocations of legal procedures, more “humanitarian” rhetoric (the protection of human rights etc.); they will use force only as the “very last resort.” One way or another, the “liberal humanism” that I am so hastily trying to sketch here, i.e. a framework that in fact encompasses both “conservatives” and “liberals,” makes (neocolonial) claims to a moral superiority – or, perhaps, a vital/ zoetic superiority – which justifies any action aimed at self-protection and self-preservation. US conservatism and US liberalism play the respective parts of the bad and good policeman, both working for the very same neocolonial, capitalist-humanist cause.

³ See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁴ See Mark Neocleous, “War as Peace, Peace as Pacification,” *Radical Philosophy* 159 (2010): 8-17.

⁵ “Security,” Neocleous asserts, “becomes the cornerstone of the liberal mind, which identifies security with the freedom and liberty to pursue one’s individual self-interest.” Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 26.

In search of the enemy

X-Men: First Class exemplifies, among other things, the ethical dilemma around defining and dealing with the “enemy,” i.e. protecting the communal “self” against dangerous foreign bodies. On the ethical (and, indeed, crypto-religious) level, the movie can be read as a story of overcoming the Old Testament ethics of retribution with the Christian ethics of forgiveness, however secularized forms these ethical stances may assume in the political theatre today. It is quite ironic that Erik Lehnsherr, a Holocaust victim, eventually adopts the methods of his Nazi oppressor, doctor Schmidt *vel* Sebastian Shaw (might that be a veiled criticism of Israel’s policies in Palestine?), such that the assassination of the ex-Nazi turns out to be Erik’s personal revenge rather than a service to the human race, even if it actually helps prevent a nuclear war, incidentally. Evil may not be posited here as some transcendental, Manichean force (Erik/ Magneto’s motivation is psychologically understandable and the viewer cannot but feel sorry for him), but it is certainly contagious and always generates more evil as it keeps propelling the vicious circle of violence and revenge. For the liberal mind, it is not only imperative that there be a future, as Edelman has demonstrated, it is equally imperative that there be a *better* future, a future with “less evil.”

Magneto’s ethical attitude is overcome by “good” Professor Xavier, who represents an essentially liberal vision of the “common good.” Liberal, that is, insofar as it lays claims to a rationally determinable universal goodness (shared, apparently, by humans, posthumans and nonhumans) that leaves no room for any active dissent; if any, dissent can only be conceived of as based on plain error or unmastered negative affects. To put it simply, his ethic comes down to the Christian idea that one should hate the sin, not the sinner (that is why, for instance, the Catholic catechism condemns homosexual acts, but prescribes respect for “homosexual persons”). In this way the enemy becomes more abstract: it is not Shaw himself, not Russians, but evil itself, conceived of as a kind of cancer that may develop anywhere anytime, even in ourselves. It is against this evil that the modern body politic must guard, or immunize, itself. While partly justified to act as he does due to his childhood trauma, Magneto is not able to recognize and protect himself from the evil that took root in his own nature, he cannot rise above his personal resentment and break free from the vicious circle of evil. Unlike him, as the movie suggests, the two hostile superpowers were ultimately able to do so: just minutes away from a nuclear confrontation in 1962 (and at other times), they managed to avoid a nuclear disaster and eventually terminated the crazy arms race; they now, more or less, work together for “humanity’s common good,” because, believe me, “Russians love their children too” (or, in Edelman’s terms, they desire to have a future, and a better one at that). Liberal democracy’s main question, then, seems to be not so much WHO the enemy is any more, as WHAT the enemy (or poison, or disease) is, the common enemy of “us all.” This enemy, this cancer, may develop in the very midst of us, inside us, and so every effort must be made to prevent it, to identify the dangerous germ in due time, to neutralize the evil before it eats to the heart of (universal) humanity. Humanity must be laboriously monitored, protected and corrected lest it degenerate into an apocalyptic pathology beyond any cure.

What I am saying, in effect, is that conservatism and liberalism may, to some extent, be distinguished on the basis of how they deal with problems of security, a difference that stems partly from relatively different conceptualizations of “community.” At the same time, however, conservatism will not abstain from using the “liberal” rhetoric of, say, protecting the rights of women (as well as, increasingly, of gays and lesbians) in order to morally justify military interventions in “barbarous” (often Muslim) countries, whereas liberals will ultimately buy into the “state of emergency” rhetoric that justifies half-legal or illegal use of bare force. Take Obama. Liberal as he may be in some respects, at least by American standards, when it comes to “national security” it is business as usual. The 44th president will go to any lengths to present himself as a staunch defender of the American people and the American way of life, not the liberal softy his opponents may try to make of him. On issues of security he will not compromise. Consequently, he was quick to condemn and prosecute Chelsea (Bradley) Manning for bringing about an alleged security risk to the US army and the nation by transferring a massive amount of classified information to WikiLeaks (and now he continues to defend Chelsea’s treatment in military detention, even after it was found “excessively harsh” by the military judge presiding over Manning’s court-martial). More spectacularly, Barack Obama will be remembered for his “success” in having Osama bin Laden tracked down and assassinated. In the last instance, then, physical elimination has not really been removed from the political toolbox of liberalism: it is the disease (of, say terrorism) we try to prevent and cure, for sure, but some individuals still prove to be living embodiments of that very disease and so – to stop the contagion from spreading – they should be eliminated.

While in the US bin Laden’s death was, expectedly, met with general euphoria and the feeling of “justice finally done,” some European politicians expressed their doubts. After Angela Merkel announced she was “pleased” about bin Laden’s death, Siegfried Kauder, a member of Merkel’s own Christian Democratic Party, responded: “These are

revenge fantasies one shouldn't indulge in. That's the Middle Ages."⁶ Indeed, most experts (for what they are worth) agreed that the execution did little to fight the "real evil" itself, terrorism, and had a propagandist impact at best. Contrary to Obama's actions, *X-Men: First Class* clearly warns against the mistake of identifying the disease with the person (or, indeed, a whole population): terrorism is the enemy of all humans: Christian, Muslims or otherwise. After Americans and Russians (who, let me stress, are shown in the movie to behave in an almost identical manner) avoid a military confrontation, both sides come to believe that they have finally found the true, common, embodied enemy: the mutants. But the film instructs us that the evil lies elsewhere and rather than seek the physical elimination of this or that population, "we all," across populations and social groupings, should concentrate on curing the cancer that threatens all of us equally, because it threatens humanity's very essence.

Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) may serve as a good illustration of how the liberal mind narrates its own nascence out of the "dark ages" that Siegfried Kauder alluded to apropos of the assassination of bin Laden. Two conflicting ethics, both of which would claim to be Christian, are juxtaposed in the movie: the "pagan" (or Old Testament) Christianity of characters such as Guy de Lusignan or Sibylla and the (proto)modern, relativized Christianity of the protagonist Balian. (The conflict corresponds, roughly, to that between Magneto and Xavier in *X-Men*.) Here, the evil "other" is not simply the Muslim, but rather the unenlightened Christian, who conceives of community simply in terms of "us" versus "them." The modern Christian, on the other hand, is a self-critical and doubtful Christian, pragmatic and anti-fundamentalist. Were we to follow Žižek's provocative propositions, we could go as far as to say that the best embodiment of modern Christianity is to be found in an atheist.⁷ For enlightened Christianity, as well as its lay version – liberalism, Christian fundamentalism is nothing but (neo)paganism, whereas for "fundamentalists" relativized Christianity betrays the religion's essence. For the modern universalist Christian every human being is savable and therefore merits life (rather than elimination); every person should get the chance to become a good Christian / a good (normativized) citizen: he or she just needs to be "cured" and assimilated. Any potential enemy is simply mistaken, simply needs to be re-educated or converted. Thus every person on Earth is always already potentially Christian or liberal even before they know it. A universalist "common good" is posited here; to be against it is to be against humanity as such. The "pagan" version of Christianity (and the conservative politics that is believed to derive from it) is much more prone to eliminate potential enemies, if not physically, then at least symbolically. To sum up, if you are an infidel and you *insist* on being one, you will be either "tolerated" and, if need be, quarantined and institutionalized (in the enlightened version) or eliminated (in the pagan version). Unless, that is, you are identified as a vital threat to the community's security, which justifies your annihilation no matter what.

I do not necessarily subscribe to this genealogy (as seen in both movies) that the liberal mind has devised for itself in order to distinguish itself from conservatism, and more particularly to distance itself from any possible links with fascism. This discursive distinction between "pagan/ barbarous" and "modern/ enlightened" is true inasmuch as it creates real political and social effects, but it obscures the deeper ways in which liberalism and fascism are implicated in each other: not only was fascism, in many ways, a thoroughly modernist project, but also liberal humanism proved perfectly capable of accepting the colonial extermination of whole indigenous populations. (Admittedly, the ideas stemming from liberal humanism—particularly universal human rights—have also been used to *oppose* and combat colonial atrocities, especially when they became too public, too gory, or too offensive for refined liberal sensitivities.) I would rather delineate the genealogy along the lines of Roberto Esposito's elaboration on Foucault's analysis of modern technologies of power. I would thus claim, following some insights from Esposito, that the modern model of liberal humanism has developed largely in terms of what he calls the "immunization paradigm."

Immunoliberalism

Much of what I have said so far calls for an immunological reading. Particularly, when I noted the shift from an embodied/ WHO-enemy to the disembodied/WHAT-enemy, I was pointing towards modernity's shift towards the immunological paradigm. Identifying and eliminating, or at least neutralizing, a possible danger is what the immune system is precisely supposed to do. It may be easier to eliminate a contagious foreign body—a whole living organism—in order to prevent an epidemic, but in the increasingly medicalized modern world the tendency is rather to control and quarantine such a body and, if possible, find a cure for the disease carried by that body (or else make the disease useful in some way).

This seems to be a safer method of protection in the long run, as dead bodies may prove more difficult to handle than living ones, while an effective cure solves the problem once and for all. Hate the disease, not the diseased person.

⁶ Quoted in Michael Steininger, "What's the Fuss over Angela Merkel's bin Laden Comment?," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 5, 2011 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0505/What-s-the-fuss-over-Angela-Merkel-s-bin-Laden-comment>).

⁷ Slavoj Žižek, "Why Only an Atheist Can Be a True Christian," lecture delivered at Wilson College, Princeton University, on October 12, 2010 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gx3_2lpvZKM).

This shift towards an immunological understanding (and regulation) of bodies and bodies politic stems mostly from the fact that modernity's liberal humanism has gradually developed a much more nuanced account of externality and internality, self and non-self, as well as the border that supposedly separates them. The modern regime has recognized that the dividing line remains eternally unstable, that borders are (and must be) permeable, that the internal needs the external to survive, whereas modernity's conservatism adheres to a more rigid distinction between the external and the internal. Conservatism does recognize the risks of an internal destabilization of order and a consequent anarchization, of course, but it is liberal humanism that has truly "discovered" internality (in the form of, for instance, psychology) and made the exploration and regulation of that internality its primary goal. A well-coordinated immunity system is expected to regulate the (political) organism's life from within; Esposito defines immunization as the (communal) organism's internal mechanism which protects it not by "frontal opposition" but through the strategy of "exclusionary inclusion or exclusion by inclusion."⁸ The (conservative) idea of the border between self and non-self as simply marked by the limits of one's skin still remains relevant, no doubt, but to the liberal mind it appears grossly insufficient. The real "drama" takes place at an internalized micro-level: it is the immunity system that must constantly differentiate self from non-self; identity is no longer the state of "being one with oneself," but rather the process of constant testing of the self's borders (scanning the system for viruses and glitches), discriminating between various elements and then ignoring, assimilating, destroying or neutralizing them, accordingly. "The immune system," as Edward S. Golub succinctly puts it, "must recognize self in some manner in order to react to something foreign."⁹

The internalization or "absorption" of borders is thus one of the aspects of the shift towards the immunological understanding of communities. One example is the apparent "erasing" of borders within the European Union: the borders may have become more "virtual," but whenever the necessity occurs, in the face of an imminent threat, they quickly solidify back into place. On an everyday basis, borders – even if fragmented, diversified and projected into a myriad places – are routinely scanned by the state's functionaries for security/ immunity reasons. Indeed, the very fact that terrorism (unexpected strikes "from within" aimed at instigating panic and creating chaos) rather than more traditional war (large-scale army manoeuvres between countries) has now become a dominant mode of political militancy – the main danger to the "free world" of liberal democracies – testifies to the shift from the level of state-run war to protect (or expand) the territory to the level of shadowy and viral groups' actions that seek to destabilize the state's (sense of) security from within. It is now different, internalized and "pulverized" borders that have become potential or actual front-lines.

The (liberal) immuno-paradigm must be dynamic, intelligent, and self-learning in order to make the defense mechanisms effective. Where the static "conservative" paradigm focuses on integrity and sovereignty, the modern paradigm invests in operationality, functionality, and coordination. It is the "(w)holiness" of (communal) bodies that the conservative paradigm seeks to preserve, as contrasted with the "healthiness" that the immuno-paradigm constantly monitors against any possible signs of pathology. (Healthiness, let us notice, is far from being a *natural* state in this perspective: it turns out to be the desired effect of constant monitoring and taking corrective measures in due time.) That health, wholeness and holiness are etymologically related is no trivial matter: it points to the deeper connection between the two apparently contradictory political orientations. The difference between them, let me repeat, is one of scale and (corresponding) method: elimination versus immunization, direct confrontation versus neutralization through partial or conditional inclusion. If, in the conservative paradigm, the role of the state is to defend an integral political organism through the direct opposition of an enemy, immunization, as Esposito has it, is "a negative [form] of the protection of life"¹⁰ whereby the body "defeats a poison not by expelling it outside the organism, but by making it somehow part of the body."¹¹ It is important to see these two paradigms as not mutually exclusive, but rather as co-dependent and complementing each other in the task of keeping a modern body politic "alive and kicking."

The uses of difference

I have made the claim that *X-Men: First Class* is a classic product of the liberal-humanist mind and I have made Charles Xavier the bearer of the liberal ethics of forgiveness; for he is the one who fights evil with good, rather than with counter-evil. But have I not flattened that multidimensional character out too much? Isn't he, after all, a significant representative of difference? Is the whole movie not an affirmation of social difference as well as a critical reflection on the limitations and instabilities of the notion of "us-ness"?

⁸ Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 8.

⁹ Quoted in Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 203.

¹⁰ Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 46.

¹¹ Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 8.

Indeed, the very idea of a mutant points to the question of difference: who is a mutant, after all: (still) a human being (“one of us”), or a posthuman/monster/renege (NOT “one of us”)? In an evolution of beings, how can we possibly determine the point of bifurcation where one species turns into another? What community, what us-ness should a mutant rightfully (want to) belong to? Whose “common good” is to be taken into account and how can it be defined at all? In a rather crucial moment of the movie, Professor Xavier concurs with Erik’s opposition to the idea that “good” mutants should integrate into CIA structures. Instead, the mutants make a rather tenuous and equivocal alliance with the US government, while simultaneously building their alternative “sovereign” space, which by the end of the movie splits into Xavier’s school on the one hand, and the underground kingdom of the separatist mutants led by Magneto, on the other. Thus, even the apparently good citizen Xavier opposes the politics of simple assimilationism. This refusal to be a functionary (of the state, an institution, an existing community, a nation), this problematization of “us-ness” on behalf of a different, emerging collectivity, seems crucial from the point of view of resistance strategies based on the politics of difference (including sexual difference).

Xavier’s (but also Magneto’s) stance poses the fundamental question of what is *our cause*. There are at least two challenges in this simple question: one is defining us-ness, and the other is determining a supreme political goal around which this us-ness will get organized and cemented. As outlined above, for the liberal-humanist mind the two models of community to choose from are the “fundamentalist” one that needs an embodied enemy as its very *raison d’être*, and the liberal one that postulates an open, civic society which follows different parameters of belonging and which is unified by a common good coinciding with a universal common good of humanity at large. Xavier situates himself, no doubt, closer to the latter position: regardless of any existing (and perhaps irreducible) differences, it is possible to work out common values and goals, such as world peace or preventing a global disaster. But, let us not forget, as a mutant he is not exactly human, thanks to which he can possibly slip away from the liberal logics of modernity and become a carrier of a different, mutated “life after liberalism.”

In other words, this collaborative attitude on Xavier’s part does not entail a neutralization of difference. More: by establishing his school, Xavier creates a foothold for a new society to come, a society where, most probably, *homo sapiens* will gradually disappear. Even though Magneto’s separatism and ambition to gain hegemonic control of the world are censured in the film, Xavier’s strategy does not entail a simple “inclusion” into the existing structures and/or a pursuit of “equal rights”; rather, it seeks to build a coalition while continuing to carve out an alternative socio-political space. The “others” do not necessarily have to want to be equal (where equality is pre-defined and measured by existing standards). Magneto, as the one who essentializes difference too much, is placed on the side of “evil” (or at least “error”), whereas coalitional Xavier recognizes the values of liberal democracy, even if he continues to work, more or less secretly, on his own project. He acknowledges a certain “good” shared with human beings, but he also understands its historical limitations and refuses to stabilize one particular kind of “us-ness” into a fixed (if not, ultimately, fascist) political project. For him, “belonging” is not a straightforward notion: it is determined neither by a biological factor (being a mutant) nor by an essentialist “identity”; it is not reducible to one community nor to one totalizing political project.

This affirmation of difference, apparently postulated by the movie, becomes much more problematic when one takes a look, however cursory, at its racial politics, which immediately spurred a lot of controversy in the US. The most striking example is the black mutant Darwin, whose name connotes the idea of evolution, so crucial for the movie’s conceptual framework. Darwin’s early and unexpected death is an ironic comment on his name: the one who is rightly expected to prove adaptable and a model of survival skills, does not pass the natural selection process and is doomed to prompt extinction. The other characters possessing non-European features are not very positive (including Azazel, whose bright red skin must be read as an allusion to race, whether intended or not). Xavier’s team, on the other hand, is made up of essentially white Caucasian mutants. The movie suggests, therefore, that the future, the better future, only exists for the unmarked, simply (super)human beings, and that some forms of difference are more noble than others (which is, after all, what the very idea of “natural selection” implies). Indeed, some recognized and appreciated forms of difference are being used by (post)modern regimes to denigrate other forms of difference.¹² One example is

Israel’s pinkwashing policy, i.e. creating the image of a liberal, tolerant Israeli state in opposition to the backward and intolerant population of Palestine. I have already mentioned the Western rhetoric that employs the idea of “women’s

¹² Let me add that the movie is relatively pro-feminist, chiefly due to the woman CIA agent character. The character of Mystique merits a separate discussion. Although she seems to be the most radical proponent of an ethics of difference – one that claims each person is perfect just the way he/she is – she, paradoxically, epitomizes mimicry or the ability to imitate the most unique features of any individual. (In *X-Men 2* she refuses to simply imitate a “normal human being” on a permanent basis because, as she says, “one shouldn’t have to.”) Besides, her “natural” blue skin returns us to the question of race. Tellingly, despite her debt of gratitude to Xavier, Mystique eventually decides to join Magneto.

and gay rights” as a neocolonial, neoimperialistic measurement of civilizational progress, democracy and tolerance. Indeed, in some countries (particularly in the UK and, increasingly, in the US) even conservatives come to embrace the cause of “equal rights” for gays and lesbians, which they usually combine with exclusionary (e.g. anti-immigrant) policies in other areas. The net result is that queers’ loyalty to the state is being purchased by providing them with “rights” (especially the right to marry), and simultaneously this bestowal of “legal rights” is used to demonize and exclude other “others” from the common good. It is processes such as these that have come under criticism in some recent queer theory under the general heading of “homonationalism.”¹³

Present-day liberalism differs from its earlier forms in that it recognizes the idea of difference and folds it into its own projections of a “common good.” But not all forms of difference are equally welcome, and the liberal regime maintains its hegemony by bargaining some kinds of difference against others. One of the key questions for the present, therefore, is which kinds of difference the dominant regime considers more worthy of life and legal protection, and which other kinds are implicitly considered less worthy or, indeed, deserving extinction. The inclusion of difference into the political may be interpreted in terms of immunization: a body politic internalizes a certain amount of what seems to constitute a danger in order to immunize itself against that very danger. “To survive,” let me quote Esposito one last time, “the community—every community—is forced to introject the negative modality of its opposite, even if the opposite remains precisely a lacking and contrastive mode of being of the community itself.”¹⁴ Radical difference, I would argue, is the liberal community’s “negative modality.” Under the liberal regime, difference must be administered in tolerable doses, it must be carefully regulated and made functional by and for the system. Arguably, these injections not only help immunize the system, but they also, slowly but surely, modify the community’s internal *modus operandi* and allow the community to retain its evolutionary advantage. As in the Red Queen’s kingdom from Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, where “it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place,”¹⁵ so in the (neo) liberal order socio-political relations need to change and readjust at an ever accelerating pace for the sake of keeping that very order in place.¹⁶ It is this incessant labour of immunization and evolutionary competition (or arms race) that best illustrates the liberal-humanist (bio)political paradigm of the present time.

Tomasz Sikora is Assistant Professor at the English Department of the Pedagogical University of Cracow (Poland). In 2003 he published *Virtually Wild: Wilderness, Technology and the Ecology of Mediation*, and over the past ten years he has published widely in the areas of critical theory, queer theory and cultural studies. The several books he has co-edited include *Out Here: Local and International Perspectives in Queer Studies* (2006) and *Towards Critical Multiculturalism: Dialogues Between/Among Canadian Diasporas* (2011). He is also a co-founder and co-editor of the online journal of queer studies *InterAlia*.

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¹³ For a discussion of homonationalism, see Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 52.

¹⁵ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/carroll/lewis/looking/chapter2.html>).

¹⁶ Famously, Carroll’s Red Queen gave name to an influential evolutionary hypothesis that proposes, more or less, that species need to constantly adapt and evolve in response to the evolutionary changes of other species. Sometimes described as an “arms race” between species, the theory explains the relative permanence of a dynamic equilibrium in which, despite savage competition, the probability of the extinction of particular species remains fairly constant over time. For an interesting discussion of the biological aspects of the connection between the Red Queen hypothesis and the immune system, see http://www.researchgate.net/post/The_Red_Queen_Hypothesis_in_the_Immune_System.

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How to know a citizen when you see one?

The sex of a citizen

Adriana Zaharijević

University of Belgrade,
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory.

(adriana.zaharijevic@gmail.com)

Abstract:

The paper explores how the 19th century scientific discourses naturalized sex. Those highest ranking forms of public knowledge are situated within a broader context of knowledge production on what it is to be human and how the gradation of humanity has been made possible. The paper concentrates on the sexed 'humans' in order to show how sex worked as the political and epistemic tool which foreclosed the domains of citizenship for women. I argue that epistemic incomprehensibility is fundamentally related to the politically liminal or impossible lives. Thus, by using examples from the Victorian sciences, the paper shows how the scientific naturalization of sex actively limited the space of citizenship for women.

Key words: women, sex, naturalization, human, citizenship, science, regimes of veridiction.

Internal Boundaries of Citizenship

The proper history of citizenship begins in the 19th century. According to T. H. Marshall's seminal text which defined citizenship as the principle of equality,¹ three integral parts of which citizenship consists began to be substantiated or to gain shape during the 19th century. Marshall argued that the *civil* element, composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom, was established before the Great Reform Act in 1832, the first Act to extend the suffrage. The *political* element of citizenship refers to the right to participate in the exercise of political power, and the struggle for vote did indeed mark the history of the British 19th century. It ended in 1918, as Marshall stated, when the principle of universal political citizenship had been recognized. Finally, *social* or social class element, essentially incompatible with the force of industrialization and the *laissez-faire* state, had to wait for the last decades of the 19th century to be articulated and for the 20th century welfare state to find its, however partial, realization.²

Marshall's concept of citizenship is highly contested today and abandoned by many citizenship scholars. And it is so not only because the political and social context from which it emerged endured severe transformation. As Nira Yuval Davis noticed, "society has changed so much that the social prerequisites for citizenship—rationality and solidarity—seem to have disappeared."³ Nevertheless, for my purposes here it is still useful because it enables us to identify how this 'principle of equality,' or the "status bestowed on those who are full members of a community"⁴ has been founded on a structural omission. Before the late 19th century, women were not the possessors of civil rights, such as the individual liberty of a person, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, to name only a few.⁵ Universal political citizenship of 1918 was not conferred to all individuals universally: English female sex was still partially deprived of it until 1928.

¹ Marshall, T. H., "Citizenship and Social Class," in *Inequality and Society*, eds. Jeff Manza and Michael Sauder, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2009 [1950]), 150. Marshall speaks of United Kingdom. In what follows, I will also rely primarily on England as the topological frame of reference, for reasons closely related to the issues of citizenship.

² Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," 148-149.

³ Yuval-Davis, Nira, "The Citizenship Debate: Women, Ethnic Processes and the State," *Feminist Review*, No. 39, (1991), 65.

⁴ Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," 149.

⁵ Bodichon, Leigh Smith Barbara, *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (London: Holyoake and Co., 1854).

How women gained those rights is not subject to my interest here; what were their struggles and what obstacles they encountered in order to be recognized as full and equal members of a community is not what I will investigate. Rather, I will seek to expose what precluded them to be seen as the rightful possessors of rights. This task rests upon two premises. The first one directly confronts with Marshall's notion of citizenship as the principle of equality. Citizenship reveals itself as a principle founded on and operated within a certain set of exclusions. Genealogically speaking, it was constituted as a principle of equality within its own internal boundaries. Those boundaries were populated by people who were deemed undeserving of citizenship and were therefore excluded from the application of the principle itself.

Their exclusion was justified by their different material and symbolic positionality in the civic, political and social space. This leads us to the second premise of this text. The exclusionary character of this principle rested upon understanding of what it meant to be human. Humanity and citizenship became inextricable after the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789. To be human, to be a man, meant to have certain natural and imprescriptible rights which belonged to an individual only by the dint of his humanity. This was, however, also a basis for his being a full member of a community as the possessor of rights. But to possess rights and to be recognized as their possessor, one had to be the possessor of his own person and to be recognized as a perfectible individual – that is, the person in possession of judgement, self-control, ability for self-creation and knowledge of his own private interests according to which he would act. The discourses surrounding the extension of suffrage to women and working class men throughout the 19th century confirm this assumption.⁶ Thus, parallel to the creation of the discourses about the man and the citizen, other discourses proliferated which created knowledge about those less than human, unequally human and human but not deserving the status of full membership in the community of humans. Those discourses were not mutually exclusive: on the contrary, the notion of a perfectible citizen relied heavily on the existence of those who occupied the boundaries of citizenship, knowable either as inherently imperfectible creatures or as those who might, at certain distant point, deserve this position on the scale of humanity.

In this text, I will re-read some of the nearly forgotten materials which used to constitute knowledge about what was meant to be human or, rather, how some humans became exemplary while others did not. I will concentrate on the sexed 'humans' in order to show how sex worked as a political and epistemic tool which foreclosed the domains of citizenship for women. I will begin with the theoretical groundwork for the historicising of sex. It will be important to show the political investments into the epistemic realm, in order to show that what we *know* about sex is also, always already, imbibed with the political. In the end, by using the examples from the history of science, I intend to show how 'scientific' knowledge actively participated in the processes which delimited citizenship for and of women.

It needs to be noted that restricting the argument to the domain of scientific public knowledge is not only narrowing the argument, but it also narrows its object. The 'sex' as an entity is an effect of its constitution, articulation and manipulation within the broader space of sexuality which, according to Jeffrey Weeks, unifies discourses, institutions, laws, regulations, policies, scientific theories, medical practices, domesticity, subcultural patterns, and organisation of everyday life.⁷ I will focus on the production of scientific theories—the highest ranking 'public knowledge'—which created the meanings of sex. But these types of meanings should best be seen as entangled with legal dimensions according to which administrative and governmental production of sexuality had been enacted, and with the norms of domesticity upon which everyday life of men and women had been organized.

The construction of sex

The distinction between gender and sex is a commonplace in feminist literature. Sex is taken to be the natural/material cause or the base of gender which functions as its social/cultural superstructure. Sex is natural, gender is constructed. I want to argue that naturality of sex also belongs to the domain of the superstructure. In other words, natural sex is thinkable, knowable, but also livable, only "within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas."⁸ But how can we apply the idea of a construction to something which, so to speak, emanates from the body, which deeply belongs to the materiality of the body? The word 'construction' implies that *being sexed*, being embodied by a certain sex and being recognized as the possessor of the sex is an effect of the processes of its naturalization. Being situated in a certain sex is a process, and as such it is not devoid of discursiveness: the truth of naturality of sex, its factuality, becomes factual and true within and by means of diverse discourses. To read those discourses genealogically,

⁶ Zaharijević, Adriana, *Osvajanje prava glasa u Engleskoj [The Process of Enfranchisement in England: Becoming a Citizen in the System of Public and Private]*, PhD dissertation, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Sciences, 2013.

⁷ Viks, Džefri, „Šta je seksualnost?“, *QT Časopis za kvir teoriju i kulturu*, Vol. II, No. 8-9, 2011, 243.

⁸ Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), xi.

as Judith Butler says, is to “map out the political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology.”⁹ To read them genealogically is to open up solidified, sedimented spaces that will reveal naturality of the sex as an effect.

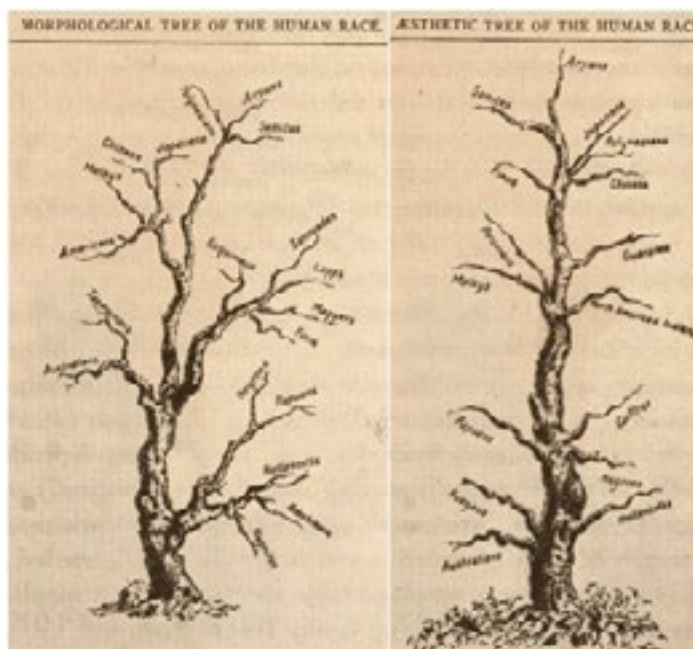
Integral to this reading is the search for what Michel Foucault defines as the regimes of veridiction, the changing constellation of rules which condition the emergence of truths. Knowledge operates not only within the regimes of ‘truths,’ but also with and within the regimes that govern the production of truths. To ascertain what would be describable, one needs to detect the sets of rules which enable “one to establish which statements in a given discourse can be described as true or false.”¹⁰ For that reason, descriptions, seemingly there to impartially depict the nature of a given phenomenon, have a normative dimension as well. Or, taking resort to Butler, whatever is subsumed under the descriptive explanation of gender is always and at the same time prescriptive. The way we think and talk of it is intrinsically related to the question what will be accepted as intelligible or describable as the truth. “Thus, the very description of the field of gender is in no sense prior to, or separable from, the question of its normative operation.”¹¹

Here, Butler speaks explicitly of gender. However, early on in her seminal *Gender Trouble*, she poses a fundamental question on the intelligibility of sex, which would be further elaborated in her later work. “Can we refer,” she asks here,

to a ‘given’ sex or a ‘given’ gender without first inquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is ‘sex’ anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such ‘facts’ for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories?¹²

Why is it more plausible to think of sex as something which belongs to a constellation of natural givens, rather than to conceive of it as a discursive product in which the epistemic and the political merge into each other? What if the very nature of sex, presented as natural and non-discursive, serves some political and social interests? Butler leaves the question of sex at that proclaiming that the distinction between gender and sex is not a distinction at all, if sex can be proven to be historisable, discursive and thus constructed.

In his *Making Sex: Body and Gender from Greeks to Freud* published in 1992, Thomas Laqueur writes on the emergence of the factuality of sex, of its history as the history of duality and incommensurability, founding his argument on the thesis that gender in fact preceded sex.



I want to propose instead that in these pre-Enlightenment texts, and even in some later ones, sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while *gender*, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or ‘real.’ Gender—man and woman—mattered a great deal and was part of the order of things; sex was conventional, though modern terminology makes such a reordering nonsensical.¹³

Therefore, what Butler states without going into historical elaboration —the claim that one might demonstrate that sex too has a history, which blurs the sex/gender distinction—Laqueur confirms by using historical evidence provided by science.

⁹ Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 45.

¹⁰ Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave and MacMillan 2008), 35.

¹¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxii.

¹² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 9.

¹³ Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 7.

This theoretical groundwork served to support the counterintuitive thesis that naturality of sex is constructed. Returning to the 19th century, the historical locus of the knowledge production which enabled the making and preserving of the distinction between the natural and the social, factuality and processuality, the discursive and the non-discursive realms, will enable us to see *how* sex had been constructed as natural. What used to be designated as the sex will in this era become naturalized, or de-gendered, reduced to 'mere nature,' even though it has never been more present in the realm of the civic, political and the social. Naturalization of sex in the 19th century created the insurmountable rift between the natural and the social possible. What it also did was to delineate and determine the capacity for sociability and, in effect, citizenship of those who were defined as *the* sex.

The regimes of veridiction change

To substantiate the claim that there was a deep transformation of the epistemological pattern which conditioned the emergence of truths about sex, I will rely on Laqueur's insights laid out in his book *Making Sex*. Until the late 18th century, male and female bodies were conceived as comparable variants of the *same* species. This 'one-sex model,' as Laqueur termed it, was founded on the Hellenistic explanation of equilibrium of humoral fluids in relation to which physiological predisposition of a body was defined. It was assumed that cold and wet dominates over healthy female bodies, whereas the balance in male bodies was due to the right proportion of hot and dry humoral elements. Sexual difference between bodies was understood as a difference in degree of a predominant fluid. Prevalence of certain fluids determined the physiological arrangements of bodily parts as well. In this way, female body was a human body which differed from the male only in terms of the degree of its perfection: in Aristotelian tradition, woman was defined as a man, but an imperfect man ('lesser man,' 'homme manqué').

However, by the end of the 18th century radical shift in paradigms occurred and bodies ceased to be seen as universally human. They would now become incomparable, ontologically dual, but complementary. Contrary to the old 'one-sex model' which emphasized quantitative difference in degree, the new 'two-sex model' was based on qualitative difference in kind. In order to understand differences between the sexes, it is necessary to divide corporealities as anatomically and physiologically irreducibly different. All of a sudden, incommensurability substituted homologies.¹⁴

What did instigate such a dramatic shift in understanding of the human? Laqueur is explicit that this fundamental turn was not brought about by the increase and expansion of the existing body of scientific knowledge. "My point here is that new knowledge about sex did not in any way entail the claims about sexual difference made in its name. No discovery or group of discoveries dictated the rise of a two-sex model."¹⁵ Instead, he shows that certain physiological 'facts', discovered on the eve of the 19th century, confirmed the old Hippocratic suppositions rather than refuting them.

Therefore, contrary to the assumption that anatomy, physiology or biology only find one such basic phenomenon as the human body and then impartially describe it, it turns out that the sheer process of 'finding' a 'given' object has to be seen as belonging to a certain regime of veridiction. What will be found is already absorbed in meanings which determine the course of truthfulness of its explanation. Furthermore, those meanings are not extra-scientific, and their circulation does not belong strictly and exclusively to the field of science. The (scientific) description, taken to be disinterested and objective, is invested with the norms upon which not only representation, but constitution of the new social and political reality depends.

Scientific knowledge is conspicuously present in the formation of the new political and social forms of life. Roughly at the same time when the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was proclaimed, the biological taxonomies adopted Linnaeus's designation of species which tied humans with the rest of the animal kingdom through the feminine mark of *Mammalia*. At the same time one distinguished humans from the other mammals through the distinctive—masculine—name of *Homo sapiens*.¹⁶ Simultaneously, the *first* female skeleton was reproduced in some anatomy book. "Up to this time there had been one basic structure for the human body, the type of the male."¹⁷

Of course, this does not mean that sciences are in some trivial way complicit with the politics in powers, or that science serves them in some obvious and simplistic way. On the contrary, it means that what we know, adopt or produce as knowledge has never been devoid of politicality. The sets of rules which define the potentials for equality, for the application of citizenship as the principle of equality, have always been entangled with our interpretation (scientific or otherwise) of nature, humanity and sex. The gradual appearance of industrial society, the new type of the state, the

¹⁴ Laqueur, *Making Sex*; see also Bock, Gisela, *Frauen in der europäischen Geschichte* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000).

¹⁵ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 153.

¹⁶ Bourke, Joanna, *What it Means to be Human? Reflections from 1791 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2011), 6-7.

¹⁷ Laqueur, Thomas, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," *Representations*, No. 14, 1986, 4.

idea of sovereignty of individuals, free market economy and the novel distribution of social arrangements, colonial dismemberment of the world, and the belief in the possibility for social change (which involved women as well), all of these had their share in the creation of a different set of rules which conditioned the emergence of new truths about the sexed body.

I will not, in what follows, develop arguments in favour or against social change—or, explicitly, women's suffrage—which were also made by some of the scientists whose opinions and theories I will now expound. This is not because I think that those arguments were not relevant in a general struggle for recognition of women's humanity or because I question their significance for the formation of the theories themselves. I want to argue that particular misogynies and 'philogynies' (which were far rarer) contributed less to the process of naturalization of sex than the circulation and embeddness of these narratives in the realm of public knowledge in general. Those authored pieces of knowledge became part of the paradigm, which outlived someone's intimate beliefs. This paradigm still lives with us, impressed on our experiences and on our rational, emotional and bodily reactions to the world. It also still shapes our potentials for equality, even in the time when the old prerequisites for citizenship seem to have disappeared. Those are the knowledges we still struggle not to (ought to) live.

How 'ought' became 'is'?

Judith Butler claims that bodies are not merely situated within certain discursively determined matrices, but that discourses actually live in the bodies. "They lodge in bodies; bodies in fact carry discourses as part of their own lifeblood."¹⁸ She speaks here about various discourses that produce codes of intelligibility, intertwined with the codes of political visibility and positionality. Discourses that live within our sexed bodies organize our position on the scale of humanity. They have the power to put our incomprehensible and politically impossible lives "in the shadowy regions of ontology."¹⁹ But the regimes of veridiction change, and so does the conception of what constitutes an incomprehensible and politically impossible life. In the 19th century, when entry into citizenship was denied on the basis of sex, the politically impossible life was that of a sexed human.

The examples of 'scientific' discourses which follow, taken from the mid-to late 19th century anthropology, biology, sociology and psychology, should show how the notion of 'natural sex' was formed (and also how it was buttressed by the interrelated notions of race and class). At the time, these sciences at issue were still novel scientific disciplines. Although all of them existed in embryo before the 19th century, they would become constituted as authoritative forms of scientific knowledge during the Victorian era, that is, only after the paradigm shift had already occurred. Amongst them, biology is the only properly 'natural' science, but all of them were characterized by their explicit belief that they primarily dealt with the natural rather than the social phenomena. All of them too, rested on an inherent faith that the natural must be prior to the social.

An example of anthropology makes this clear. Namely, contrary to the early ethnologists who formed a heterogeneous group which tried to read natural history through diversity of languages and cultures, physical anthropologists concentrated on the physical characteristics of the representatives of those 'cultures.' Establishing systematic, coherent and indisputable knowledge about man required enumerating, classifying and categorizing the vital differences between men. Those differences were neither accidental nor incidental; they were not caused by environment or any external random set of circumstances. What caused those differences was detectable—and measurable—in different skeletal structure, hair texture, skin and eye colour, and size of the skull,²⁰ and those measurable and essentially disproportionate differences were taken to be the very root of the variety between loosely defined 'cultures.'

James Hunt, the founder of the Anthropological Society of London, which broke away from the existing Ethnological Society of London in 1863 over racial issues, defined anthropology in his "Introductory Address on the Study of Anthropology" as "the science of the whole nature of Man,"²¹ the exact and exhaustive science which tackles the natural origin and development of humanity. The exactness and comprehensiveness of anthropology, according to Hunt, is confirmed by its strong links with biology, anatomy, chemistry, natural philosophy and physiology, knowledge that furnishes an anthropologist with necessary materials from which he can deduce the laws regulating the distribution of mankind.

¹⁸ Meijer, Irene Costera and Baukje Prins, "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler," *Signs*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1998, 282.

¹⁹ Meijer and Prins, "How Bodies Come to Matter," 277.

²⁰ Russet, Cynthia Eagle, *Sexual Science. The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Harvard University Press, 1991), 26.

²¹ Hunt, James, "Introductory Address on the Study of Anthropology," *The Anthropological Review*, No. 1, 1863, 2.

The distribution of humanity is understood as the allocation of races, classified according to the definition of the pure racial types inferred not from the arbitrary linkages of cultures but from the irrefutable deductions based on the knowledge of the natural laws. Although this might not be self-evident at first, the very defining process has been organized around one ultimate type which functions as the criterion for the entire comparison. This ultimate type is a white, self-governing, perfectible male individual. Hunt openly opposes the cruel treatment of some types of humans, even though they might have descended from the ape only a few generations ago – if they are now men. But he is also cautious not to be joining in the vulgar error according to which “differences between the Negro and the European might be reduced to the mere complexion issue.” When introducing ‘psychology’ as an equally important sphere of knowledge for the anthropological definition of natural laws of mankind, Hunt insists that the difference “between the European and the African is not so great physically as it is mentally and morally.”²² His contemporary and like-minded scientist Paul Broca, the president of Parisian Anthropological Society, could have not been more explicit about the way comparison, or rather gradation, between the humans functioned. Comparison between the ideally defined racial types has to take into account the principle of perfectibility, because *there is*, according to the laws of nature, unequal degree of perfectibility among races. Craniometry, a science made rigorous and respectable by Paul Broca, correlated brain size with intelligence on the assumption of racially unequally applicable principle of perfectibility. Thus he could argue that “never has a people with black skin, woolly hair, and a prognathous face, spontaneously arrived at civilization,”²³ which could also be used to affirm the racial distinction within human species.²⁴

Physical anthropology used sciences in order to factualize its underlying belief that “human races could be ranked in a linear scale of mental worth.”²⁵ The pictograms of the ‘Family Tree’ or the ‘Family of Man’ visibly witness to that. The older tree imagery comprised several key elements: common roots of all humanity, the uneven development of races shown by the position of the branches, and naturalness of this scheme. By depicting Europeans as the apex (the highest branch), as Anne McClintock argued, the pictogram worked as “an ancient image of a natural genealogy of power,”²⁶ and as a persuasive justification of hierarchy in the name of progress. Linearity and progress are even more forcefully displayed in the other pictogram, where anatomy of the human head proves not only our apish ancestry, but also leaves African and other ‘lower’ races somewhere in-between the first apes and the last Apollo-like white man. The ‘Family of Man’ is peculiar because it domesticates humanity, turning it into a huge family of those more or less prosperous and blissful creatures, who happened to have been born in different parts of the globe. According to the ‘laws of nature,’ this made their jaws more or less protruded and their skin more or less dark, and their mental worth more or less pronounced. Domestication notwithstanding, this Family of Man is represented exclusively by men, as if women contributed nothing to this familial progress—or stagnation—of humanity.²⁷

The anthropological story of human races would be unfathomable without its companion narrative – that of human sexual(ised) races. Knowledge based on the assumption that races form distinct species corresponded well with the idea of the incommensurability of the sexes. While an insurmountable rift between male and female had been created by the new duality of sexes narrative, race and sex (i.e. *non-white* race and *female* sex) became notions which were far more comparable than the divergent and racially indistinct masculinity and femininity, construed by the two-sex model. Race, and more specifically the ‘lower’ races, has been thus feminized. Females, including white women, were arrested in their development by the comparison with the representatives of the non-white races. Both racialized and sexualized members of humanity have never fully grown to adulthood which came to be inscribed in the anatomical-physiological-craniological size of their body parts, coupled by their adjunct imperfectability and lesser mental worth.

Both ‘civilized women’ and ‘brutish females’ have more often than not constituted a special case, a separate chapter in a treatise, an addendum or have simply been invisible (as in the ‘Family of Man’ pictogram). However, they are vital for the scientific explanation of the natural distribution of mankind. As the race itself, which is defined so as not to provide space for haphazardness and irregularity, the sex is also formed as static and immutable. It is firmly positioned on the scale of perfectibility and mental worth, where it had a dual role. It was used in correlation with race, in order to underline essential comparability between female sex and non-white races. This correlation served to feminize non-white races, and to racialize female sex. On the other hand, it was also used to emphasize the essential incomparability between the two sexes, or rather the whole female sex and the invisible sex of the white man.

²² Hunt, “Introductory Address,” 3.

²³ Quoted in Russett, *vSexual Science*, 27.

²⁴ Bronfman, Alejandra, *Measures of equality: social science, citizenship and race in Cuba, 1902-1940*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 30.

²⁵ Gould, Stephan Jay, *The Mismeasure of Man* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981), 118.

²⁶ McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 37.

²⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 39.

Let us give a few examples. Women were constructed as humans incapable of maturity, and thus physically and mentally analogous to the civilized (white) child and ‘uncivilized’ (non-white) adult man. German anthropologist, Emil Huschke wrote in 1854 that the “Negro brain possesses a spinal cord of the type found in children and women, and beyond this, approaches the type of brain found in higher apes.”²⁸ Civilization and skin colour notwithstanding, women are placed in a natural position which makes them sexually incomparable to the man of the same race. In his elaboration of the laws of the variations of brain volume and their relation to intelligence, Gustave Le Bon pointed to a seemingly strange fact of a race whose male subjects (Parisians) occupy the most elevated rank by the volume of their brain, while their female counterparts occupy the disgraceful rank of the females of the “inferior races, who are obliged to share in the work of man.”²⁹ (It should come as no surprise that in the midst of mathematical estimates and anthropometrical measurements, this piece of knowledge performs the function of forewarning to those who would advocate equal rights of women and men.) Women of different races differ less amongst themselves in terms of their mental worth than men do, which, according to Le Bon, make all women comparable not to men but to gorillas, savages and children.³⁰ Thus, although civilization processes put (white) man on the top the human ladder, as an apogee of evolutionary progress, women, be they white or non-white, share a position of immaturity as *the sex*. Famous Italian criminologist and physician, Cesare Lombroso, confirms this by saying that “*in general*, according to *all* authorities, and in *all* races, *but more so in civilized ones*, the female skull is more childlike in capacity and shape than the masculine, and it is *always* inferior and *always* offers less variation than that of the male.”³¹

The degree of civilization of a certain race is established, according to Lombroso and Ferrero, by the difference between the male and female skull, measured intra- racially and in comparison to other racial types. Naturalized racial differences—or, within discourses of physical anthropology, differences explained by the natural laws—relate ‘civilized’ women to ‘inferior’ races, thus supporting the naturalization of females into humans that, regardless of their degree of civilization, lag behind in perfectibility. “Geometry of the body,” as McClintock persuasively stated, had “mapped the psyche of the race,”³² but it was also used for the mapping of the ‘psyche’ of all women, almost turning them into a distinct species.

Here anthropology—the science of the whole nature of Man—required more than anatomy. In this vein, Paul Broca insisted on broader definition of inferiority of female sex:

We might ask if the small size of the female brain depends exclusively upon the small size of her body. Tiedemann [German anatomist] has proposed this explanation. But we must not forget that women are, on the average, a little less intelligent than men, a difference which we should not exaggerate but which is, none the less, real. We are therefore permitted to suppose that the relatively small size of the female brain depends in part upon her physical inferiority and in part upon her intellectual inferiority.³³

And Paul Topinard, Broca’s chief disciple, explained sexually differential intelligence in 1888 with different evolutionary histories which, although they tend to portray our very distant ancestors, in fact replicate Victorian middle-class humanity:

The man who fights for two or more in the struggle for existence, who has all the responsibility and the cares of tomorrow, who is constantly active in combatting the environment and human rivals, needs more brain than the woman whom he must protect and nourish, than the sedentary woman, lacking any interior occupations, whose role is to raise children, love, and be passive.³⁴

Although positively against the idea that the races of men form distinct species,³⁵ Charles Darwin seemed to have agreed with both Broca’s and Topinard’s account on women. In his *The Descent of Man*, after many a hundred of pages

²⁸ Quoted in Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 135.

²⁹ Le Bon, Gustave, *Anatomical and Mathematical Researches into the Laws of the Variations of Brain Volume and their Relation to Intelligence*, trans. Robert K. Stevenson, 1879, 42. <https://archive.org/details/AnatomicalAndMathematicalResearchesIntoTheLawsOfTheVariationsOfBrain>

³⁰ Le Bon, *Anatomical and Mathematical Researches*, 45.

³¹ Lombroso, Cesare and Guglielmo Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, trans. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson (Duke University Press, 2004 [1893]), 50, italics mine.

³² McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 50.

³³ Quoted in Russet, *Sexual Science*, 37-38.

³⁴ Quoted in Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 136.

³⁵ Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex*, pt. I. (London: John Murray, 1871), 232 ff.

on sexual selection of insects, fish, birds and mammals, Darwin finally arrives at sexual character of Man. There Darwin states that apart from being considerably taller, heavier and stronger than woman, the male is also more courageous, pugnacious and energetic, and has a more inventive genius. The woman is rounder, broader, and less hairy. She also matures earlier, but remains more similar to children throughout her adult life than men do. This might be related to the “formation of her skull [which] is said to be intermediate between the child and the man.”³⁶ The said size of the skull generates differences in intellectual power, and this is perhaps why man attains to a higher eminence in whatever he takes up than woman can attain.³⁷ Let us note that Darwin is, unlike many other Victorian scientists, very scrupulous in his statements. He also claimed that “males differed much more from each other than did the females. This fact indicates that, as far as these characters are concerned, it is the male which has been chiefly modified, since the races diverged from their common and primeval source.”³⁸

The last statement which places women low because of their biologically explained atavism is also very much in accordance with Darwin’s chief argument about the sexual selection, which links the combat of the males and the choice of the female. While he did admit a considerable role in sexual selection to the females of the lower animals, Darwin denied significance to the human females in the same process. Projecting the conventions of Victorian sexuality into nature by “casting animal sexuality in the terminology of courtship, marriage and spousal fidelity”³⁹ has been accompanied by socializing human female’s nature. Namely, Darwin spoke of the boldest and strongest *men* in a barbarous condition who, according to the law of the battle and to the principle of natural selection, succeeded in general struggle for life. Ancestry also mattered and “there can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with ... his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from some early male progenitor, who like the existing anthropoid apes, was thus characterized.”⁴⁰ Finally, men acquired higher intellectual and moral characteristics through the processes of sexual selection, because they needed to be prudent to dispose of their rivals over the female. The case of women has been fundamentally different. Since they are mainly nurturing creatures, they are denied agency, and by consequence the prerogative of the choice. Separate spheres, and the consequent positioning of women in the protected/covered domain, were harmonized with the conception of the lack of variation in women, or their general passivity and non-assertiveness.

The centrality of human male choice, allegedly natural in kind, in fact mirrored the prevalent social standards of Darwin’s own era. Or, as Jim Endersby noticed, “the evidence of Victorian society seemed to him to demonstrate that men had largely seized the power of choice.”⁴¹ Men, or rather human males, are thus triply advantageous: by ancestry, by variation and by being better equipped for the struggle in life. Human females, whose active role in either natural or sexual selection has been diminished, if not taken away altogether, have left with only one advantage – their passive beauty.

However, Darwin’s investigation into how and why there are differences between the races does not rely only on the assumption of an intrinsic distinction between the sexes. Standards of Victorian sexuality, smuggled into his explanation of human nature, relayed equally on a prevalent understanding of sex and class. Middle-class domestic ideology which recognized assertive and vigorous men in the public arena, and coy women who were well kept in the bourgeois fortress of home, came to have a prominent place in Darwin’s explanation of human female agency. In civilized races, where there is no longer need for the crude struggle for life, men retained the role of the worker for *mutual* subsistence. Although Darwin affirms that “women in all barbarous nations are compelled to work at least as hard as the men,”⁴² which is what make those nations barbarous still, he would simply exempt numerous women of his own nation from the very definition of the female sex – because they also worked. Thus not only did Darwin’s natural history depend on the Victorian maxim ‘incommensurable, but complementary,’ but it also entailed class prescriptive definition of what sex is.

Like Darwin, Herbert Spencer also believed that exemption of women from labour should be seen as the touchstone of high civilization.⁴³ This is somewhat baffling when one reads the first line of his elaboration of the rights of women, as

³⁶ Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex*, pt. II. (London: John Murray, 1871), 317.

³⁷ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pt. II, 327.

³⁸ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pt. II, 321.

³⁹ Jann, Rosemary, “Darwin and the Anthropologists: Sexual Selection and Its Discontents,” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 1994, 292.

⁴⁰ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pt. II, 325.

⁴¹ Endersby, Jim, “Darwin on generation, pangenesis and sexual selection,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, eds. Jonathan Hodge and Gregory Radick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 83.

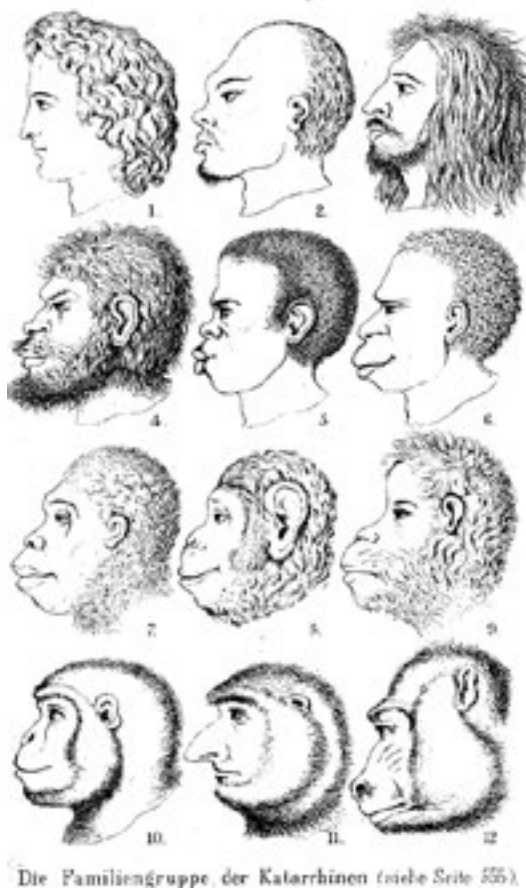
⁴² Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pt. II, 326.

⁴³ Russet, *Sexual Science*, 83.

early as in 1851, according to which “equity knows no difference in sex.”⁴⁴ Only two decades later and two years after the publication of *The Descent of Man*, Spencer would venture to demonstrate that *there are* fundamental differences between the sexes. Those differences are psychological, i. e. natural, and as such, they are crucial for understanding how society functions. Spencer thus asks, “Are the mental natures of men and women the same?” only to give his answer right away. “That men and women are mentally alike is as untrue as that they are alike bodily.”⁴⁵

One distinctive mental trait which Spencer recognized as adjusted to the welfare of the race refers to women’s fascination with power of any kind. Although this brings back woman’s choice into the discussion, it will not expand female agency in any way. Spencer argued that since the cessation of marriage by capture or by purchase, feminine choice played an important part. Women who were fascinated by power, bodily or mental—and increasingly, *social*— “and who married men able to protect them likely to survive in posterity than pleasing, and whose children were less capable of self-preservation Spencer, love of power, especially which can be really promising in becomes naturalized as the mental come as no surprise, because as primarily determined by their maternal duties.”⁴⁷

This adaptation, so vital for physiological in kind. It is also sexual difference derived from the female body. Although it matures evolution of the female also “necessitated by the reservation of reproduction.”⁴⁸ Arrested constant possibility of giving birth, *truth* that women, especially smaller quantities of carbonic cause of underdevelopment of therefore underdevelopment of them. Physiological processes become maternal, hastening at first will then arrest it when it becomes this is why women, by the laws latest products of *human* evolution and the most abstract of the emotions, the sentiment of justice.”⁴⁹



and their children, were more women to whom weaker men were both less efficiently guarded and if they reached maturity.”⁴⁶ With social power which is the only one terms of efficient guardianship, trait of the female sex. This should Spencer viewed men and women adaptation to the paternal and

the functioning of society, is responsible for the other qualitative specific procreative features of the earlier than the male body, the ends earlier and it is something of vital power to meet the cost development, substituted by the is explained by ‘the physiological when able to give birth, exhale acid than men, which is the main their neuromuscular system, and limbs and the brain that moves which prepare the female body to its psycho-somatic development, capable for reproduction. And of nature, can never arrive to the – “the power of abstract reasoning

There is only a step from here to George Romanes, the forgotten Darwinian psychologist whose text “Mental Differences of Men and Women” was widely read by the Victorian ‘general public.’ Referring to *The Descent of Man*, Romanes will develop what Darwin merely hinted at when he introduced mental sexual differences. According to Romanes, they are so colossal that “in the animal kingdom as a whole the males admit of being classified, as it were, in one psychological species and the females in another.”⁵⁰ As the title of his text suggests, Romanes did not dare to further this thesis by taking into account the whole animal kingdom, but limited himself to the part of that kingdom wherein this difference is by far the most prominent. Founding his ‘psychological’ explanation on the truths confirmed by physiology, biology and anthropology, Romanes proclaimed women to be “losers in the intellectual race as regards acquisition, origination

⁴⁴ Spencer, Herbert, *Social Statics: or, The Conditions essential to Happiness specified, and the First of them Developed* (London: John Chapman, 1851), chap. XVI. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/273/6292> on 2013-11-19

⁴⁵ Spencer, Herbert, “Psychology of the Sexes,” *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol 4. 1873, 30-31. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Popular_Science_Monthly/Volume_4/November_1873/Psychology_of_the_Sexes

⁴⁶ Spencer, “Psychology,” 35.

⁴⁷ Spencer, “Psychology,” 31.

⁴⁸ Spencer, “Psychology,” 32.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Romanes, John George, “Mental Difference of Men and Women,” *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 31, 1887, 382.

and judgement.”⁵¹ All the characteristics deemed to be necessary for the process of self-creation, all of them resolutely related to the perfectibility of an individual, are missing in women, because the average brain-weight of women is about five ounces less than that of man.⁵²

However, although it is psychologically permanently incapacitated in certain domains of humanity, ‘female species’ is by nature better equipped in some other areas of human excellence. Those qualities “wherein the female mind stands pre-eminent are affection, sympathy, devotion, self-denial, modesty; long-suffering, or patience under pain, disappointment, and adversity; reverence, veneration, religious feeling, and general morality.”⁵³ Nature has given women pre-eminence in ‘general morality’ but it has, as Spencer argued, left her out from the distribution of the sentiment of justice.

The impossible sex of a citizen

In the 19th century scientific discourse, nature was established as the key explanatory frame of what it is to be human. This was the time when it was finally resolved that “the male is defined by his humanity; the woman by her sexuality,” Joanna Bourke⁵⁴ says. With the help of science, men and women became two almost irreducible and incomparable human species, severed by what was to become their *natural* sexual difference. This coincided with the production of equivalence between ‘Man’ and ‘citizen.’ Women, as sexed humans, were hence rightfully positioned within the boundaries of humanity, but without the limits of citizenship. Their being sexed precluded them to be seen as the rightful possessors of rights – either imprescriptible rights which by nature belonged to (male) humans (of the civilised races and classes) or civic, political and social rights pertaining to citizenship.

However, the politicality of the vague and pliable term ‘nature,’ which was so easily used to justify unequal application of the principle of equality, is glaringly present in the highest ranking domain of public knowledge. “The long-established customs of their country” have placed in the hands of women of England “the high and holy duty of cherishing and protecting the minor morals of life, from whence springs all that is elevated in purpose, and glorious in action.”⁵⁵ These words might have belonged to George Romanes who described women’s natural supremacy in general morality, denying them the same in the sphere of judgement. Or they might have belonged to Spencer who domesticated woman’s body, mind and will; or to Darwin who described the whole female sex as lacking in variation, because its sphere was defined by cherishing what was being protected for them by the species that acts according to the ‘law of the battle.’ However, the author of those words was a woman, Sarah Stickney Ellis. She has been long forgotten, although quite famous and widely read in her own time, mostly by women. She was not a scientist, but a mere writer of manuals on female domestic virtues and books about women’s role in society. Ellis’ early Victorian beliefs in the supremacy of the English middle rank and in the naturalness of the separate social spheres, in the holiness of the woman’s domestic duty as her main duty within the general social, civic and political space, became integral part of the scientific explanations of the naturality of sex.

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⁵¹ Romanes, “Mental Difference,” 386.

⁵² Romanes, “Mental Difference,” 384.

⁵³ Romanes, “Mental Difference,” 387.

⁵⁴ Bourke, *What it Means to be Human?*, 5.

⁵⁵ Ellis, Sarah Stickney, *The Women of England* (New York: Dr Appleton & Co., 1839), 47.

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The War of Time: Occupation, Resistance, Communization

Benjamin Noys

Reader in English, University of Chichester

(b.noys@chi.ac.uk)

Abstract:

Contemporary theorizations of strategies of resistance and revolution often turn on affirming the concepts of speed and saturation. I want to critically consider these claims by returning to the work of Paul Virilio from the 1970s and contemporary “communization theory.” These theorizations stress the emptying-out of traditional worker’s identity and the need to re-invent forms of resistance and revolution that can address this challenge. My aim is to assess how both engage with the problem of acceleration, and particularly the relation of resistance to forms of contemporary military power. I will argue that strategies of acceleration find themselves in fraught convergence with both military and capitalist practice.

Keywords: Resistance; Communization; Paul Virilio; War; Revolution

The War of Time: Occupation, Resistance, Communization

You can have a proletarian insurrection on the condition that the others hold their fire. If they dump two tank battalions on you, the proletarian revolution is as good as nothing.
André Malraux¹

In regards to the events of 2011, the use of the language of acceleration, resonance, excess, and saturation to describe the various forms of protest has been ubiquitous. Implicit in these characterizations has been the suggestion of a politics of time. The “Arab Spring,” the *indignados*, and the Occupy movements were often taken as incarnating a new politics of time that evaded and accelerated beyond any “capture” by the state and capital. In an appropriately resonant characterization, Gastón Gordillo used the work of Spinoza and Deleuze to suggest that these forms of protest produced “nodes of acceleration, which shoot out high-speed resonances in all directions and make millions of bodies fight oppression in myriad places at the same time.”² He went on to suggest that the movements of the “Arab Spring” in particular were the sign of “an epochal clash between new revolutionary velocities and the old supremacy of the state in controlling means of speed-creation.”³ Here velocity is revolutionary in so far as it outpaces any attempt at control.

My approach to this politics of acceleration, saturation, and expansion is more cautious and critical. Instead of analysing the actual events, I want to consider different theorizations of practices of resistance and revolution.⁴ My focus will not be on the obvious, which is to say the Deleuzian (or “Deleuzoguattarian”) and Negrian approaches that have become the *lingua franca* of contemporary theorization and activism: “multitudes,” “lines of flight,” “resonance,” “minor politics,” etc. Rather, in the interests of critical displacement, I want to consider two lesser-discussed critical perspectives: the 1970s work of Paul Virilio, notably his *Speed and Politics* (1977) and *Popular Defense and Ecological*

¹ Qtd. in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* [1977], trans. Marc Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 115.

² Gastón Gordillo, (2011), “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance,” *Space and Politics Blog*, March 5, 2011, accessed February 10, 2013, <http://spaceandpolitics.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/speed-of-revolutionary-resonance.html>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For a nuanced discussion, which reflects on the organizational question of struggle, see Rodrigo Nunes, “The Lessons of 2011: Three Theses on Organisation,” *Mute*, June 7, 2012, February 7, 2013, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/lessons-2011-three-theses-organisation>.

Struggles (1978);⁵ and the work of “communization theory.”⁶ My reason for doing so is not only that both resonate in terms of contemporary struggles, but that they also pose crucial questions around the possibilities and limits of what Virilio calls “popular defence.” They remain attentive to the exhaustion of past forms of struggle, while also suggesting the *limits* of contemporary struggles. What I also want to trace in this convergence is an attention to the emergence of the “military question” as a problem of reflection, analysis, and practice.

“Occupy” obviously has a military connotation. It is a counter-discourse and counter-practice to not only the various military occupations (Iraq and Afghanistan), but also to the everyday occupation of space and time by capital and the state. Despite this reference, the military question—the question of the role, power, and the lethal nature of military intervention—has not been particularly central to the debates over the strategy of occupation. Of course, the question has been critical for those protests in the “Arab Spring”: from the equivocal role of the army in Egypt to the militarized repression found in Bahrain and Syria, and on to the ambiguous military struggle in Libya by the “resistance,” with UN support. Gordillo notes that a politics of acceleration would also have to confront the fact that: “The state still counts on powerful weapon systems that allow it to destroy resonant bodies at high speed.”⁷ Within the protest movements, and notably the occupy movements, in countries like the US, the UK and Spain (Greece would be a different case⁸), the military question has tended to be raised via the militarization of policing. In the case of the UK the deployment of tear gas and baton rounds as responses to the student protests and rioting “for the first time on the mainland,” refers to the colonial experience of Ireland and the military-police-secret-services fusion that was already tried in this “laboratory” for counter-insurgency. Questions of violence have, certainly on the side of the protestors, remained at a relatively low level.

I want to suggest that a critical consideration of the politics of acceleration as mode of resistance requires a parallel consideration of the military capacity to destroy at “high speed.” Therefore this will be the optic through which I consider the question of the politics of temporality. One brief remark before beginning this task; it is notable that often reflections on the military question can slip into a “techno-fetishism,” machismo, or replication of the nihilism of “pure war.”⁹ In a recent review of Karl Marlantes’s fictionalized account of his Vietnam experience *Matterhorn* (2010), Jackson Lears’s noted the implication of “[w]ar as authentic experience: this is the nihilist edge of modern militarism, unalloyed by moral pretension.”¹⁰ This “nihilist edge” often takes the form of aesthetic awe at the destructive power of military force and its technical means. I doubt whether I can entirely avoid this problem in what follows. I do, however, want to suggest that the military question be confronted without, as far as possible, conceding to this fetishization.

Endo-Colonization

In his work of the 1970s Paul Virilio offers a startling account of the emergence of state and capitalist power in terms of military power. While indebted to Marx or, more precisely Engels, who researched military questions in detail,¹¹ Virilio’s narrative offers significant departures from the more familiar Marxist account. Originating in his work as an urbanist, Virilio became fascinated by the spatial dimension of war and its role in crystallizing the forms of contemporary power.¹² He rethinks the proletarian condition in military terms. His analysis proposes that the proletariat is “produced” through semi-colonization by the military class, which seizes goods and value to support their own indolent and parasitic

⁵ Jason Adams (2012) has used Virilio to reflect on strategic difficulties and tensions in the “Occupy” movement, but not directly raised the military question. I owe Jason Adams for the encouragement to pursue these speculations. See Jason Adams, “Occupy Time,” *Radical Philosophy* 171 (2012): 15-18.

⁶ See Benjamin Noys, ed., *Communization and its Discontents* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia / Minor Compositions, 2011), for a critical overview of this problematic.

⁷ Gastón Gordillo, “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance.”

⁸ Leigh Phillips, “Greece: ‘A promise from the army has been obtained to not intervene against a civil uprising,’” *New Statesman*, February 24, 2013, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2013/02/greece-promise-army-has-been-obtained-not-intervene-against-civil-uprising>

⁹ Paul Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* [1978], trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), 68.

¹⁰ Jackson Lears, “Mad Monkey. Review of *Matterhorn* by Karl Marlantes,” *London Review of Books* [Online] 32.18 (2010): 15-17, accessed February 9, 2013, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n18/jackson-lears/mad-monkey>.

¹¹ “To my mind, there was some hocus-pocus between Marx and Engels. Engels was aware of the reality of war, even if he didn’t see it the way we do. There was also the idea of war as reappropriated by the working class. The working class, especially at the beginning of trade unionism, was a combat unit. This relation of Marxism to war wasn’t really clear at the outset.” Paul Virilio, in Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 105.

¹² Virilio in *Pure War*, 1-3.

existence.¹³ In response, the proletariat forms itself into a counter-“war-machine,” militarizing itself in the compact formations of the march and the violence of sabotage to seize the streets and engage in retention of the instruments of violence. In this model the forms of the traditional workers’ movement—notably parties and unions—become alternative “armies” to counter this military domination.

For Virilio this path will eventually lead to failure, as the absolute violence of nuclear war signals the “end of the proletariat”: “In this sense, the proletariat’s determining role in history stopped with the bombing of Hiroshima.”¹⁴ Military hyper-power renders any proletarian “counter-power” ineffective, as there is not available territory on which to ground resistance. The result is “a kind of absolute colonization,”¹⁵ in which the military class finally eliminates any localization or ecology of resistance. This is what Virilio calls “endo-colonization.” If this endo-colonization is successful, then the people are reduced to domesticated animals, to the status of the “human commodity.”¹⁶ The aim of military occupation is to “reduce [...] a population to the status of a *movable slave*, a *commodity*.”¹⁷ In fact, “One now colonizes only one’s own population. One underdevelops one’s own economy.”¹⁸ This collapse of the possibilities of ecological resistance is visible in the passage from the desperate holding-on of the Vietnamese against the ecological destruction of their territory, to the disappearance (in the 1970s) of the Palestinians from any territory into the final deterritorialized space of the media. Confronting the reduction of status to mere commodity the Palestinians launch a suicidal popular assault, as popular defence is no longer possible.

Virilio implicitly tracks the rise of neoliberalism by exploring the *withdrawal* of the State, which then inhabits a “doctrine of security” permitting intervention anywhere.¹⁹ In the face of the “terrorism” of the 1970s, the State evolves a new modelling of power as “a world-wide police chase, a fearsome blend of military and judicial violence.”²⁰ This characterization obviously resonates with the dominance of neoliberalism and the instantiation, in the ’00s, of the “war on terror.” Virilio presciently captured the sense of new forms of asymmetric warfare and the “hostage-holding” function of military control in contemporary mediatized societies. In this situation, traditional forms of popular resistance and what Virilio calls “ecological struggles,” “the simple freedom to come and go, as well as the freedom to remain, to stay put,”²¹ become put into question.

This “ecological struggle,” the right to stay put, obviously speaks to the situation of “occupy,” which attempts to place a limit on the intrusion into what remains of “public” space. It tries to reconstitute a new figure of subjectivity—the 99%—to find a “grounding” of resistance. In this way, implicitly if not explicitly, it tries to refigure the situation of the people from this status as “movable commodity” into immovable protestor. Similarly, the protests of the “squares” also pioneered this resistance to military domination, in direct confrontations with their own militarized ruling classes. And yet, these movements and protests also have to confront the accelerative problem of what Virilio calls the “delocalization” of the military class. The emphasis on speed and saturation of process is intended to outpace the forms of military and capitalist power without succumbing to a suicidal popular assault. In this way the protests restate the right of resistance.²² Yet the tensions of this ecological resistance remain in the disappearance of protests and occupations, not least under the pressure of police and military surveillance and re-occupation of contested spaces.

Virilio’s pessimistic conclusions concerning the erosion of ecological resistance have not simply been disproved by the events of 2011. Rather, while the right of resistance is restated in these struggles, the accelerative forms of this new resistance also have to confront effects of dissipation and exhaustion. This is the key problem that confronts the new forms of accelerative mobilization. It is in this way that Virilio’s analysis gains its power as both predictive and critical in advance of these “new” forms of struggle.

¹³ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 45-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54

¹⁸ Virilio in *Pure War*, 95.

¹⁹ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63

²¹ *Ibid.*, 91

²² Howard Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata: philosophy and resistance,” *Radical philosophy* 171 (2012): 19-26, 19.

The End of Programmatism

In a rather uncanny way Virilio's analysis also dovetails with that of the Marseille-based group *Theorié Communiste* (TC), and their announcement of the "end of programmatism." In this thesis capitalism and the workers' movement remained locked in a duel in which the capitalist negation of the proletariat generated the affirmation of the workers' identity. "Programmatism" refers to this affirmation as a programme to be realized, and one structured by the capital-labour relationship.²³ TC offer a periodizing hypothesis based on Marx's distinction between formal and real subsumption.²⁴ In formal subsumption we witness the subsumption of workers by capital, but they still produce externally to capital. For example, peasants would still till their fields, but they would have to bring their produce to a capitalist market to realize its value. Real subsumption is the process by which the act of producing is brought under capitalism, such as in production-line work or, in the case of agriculture, through the rise of mechanized agri-business. While Marx regards these as parallel processes, TC periodize a transition from formal subsumption into real subsumption. The period of formal subsumption draws to an end around 1917, with the emergence of a new cycle of struggles around real subsumption that involve affirming the worker's identity. This "programmatism" comes into crisis with the second phase of real subsumption, beginning in the early 1970s, and a new cycle of struggles that suggest the *limit* of this identity. Capital's "abandonment" of the worker, and worker's struggles of absenteeism, sabotage, and wildcat strikes, open new "lines of flight" that hollow out the traditional formations of programmatism (unions, parties, etc.) Under these twin shearing pressures the affirmative forms of worker's identity would be hollowed out. Rather than this simply being the sign of defeat, TC argue that it signals a recomposition of struggle with the proletariat as the pole of negation, structured within and against a capitalist system that no longer required the "working class" as mediator.

In the analysis of TC this cycle of struggle does not simply end the proletarian condition ("we are all middle-class now"), but reconfigures it to suggest the necessity (rather than the choice) of the proletariat as the self-abolishing class. They argue that: "Communization is prefigured every time the existence of the proletariat is produced as something alien to it, as an objective constraint which is externalised in the very existence of capital."²⁵ The "appearance" of communization is one at the edge or limit of struggle in which class itself "appears as an external constraint, a limit to overcome."²⁶ In this historical model these shifts in struggle put communism as communization on the agenda, shorn of previous "workerist" illusions.²⁷

The comparison between Virilio and TC becomes clearer if we consider the 1973 occupation and self-management by workers of the Lip watch factory in Beçanson. At the time several on the French far-left, primarily Maoists, regarded this act of occupation as the signal that workers no longer required the guidance of parties or militants to direct their struggles. This, at least, was the conclusion of Jacques Rancière.²⁸ A similar conclusion was drawn by the former Maoist militants Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet:

We came to realize at a certain point that the masses had gotten all they could out of us, that intellectuals had nothing left to give them. Everything we had done had passed over into the masses themselves. Witness the events at Lip. It was becoming clear that there was no longer any sense in militancy.²⁹

There were, however, dissident voices. The French ultra-left journal *Négation* argued that the workers of Lip had reached a *limit* – the limit of self-management.³⁰ The Lip workers had been unable to go beyond their own factory and were limited to restarting a capitalist enterprise. So, while recognizing this was a struggle, for *Négation* it is limited by its failure to go beyond the limits of the workers' identity as workers. It is this point, as we have seen, which is taken up in more detail by TC.

²³ Nathan Brown, "Red years: Althusser's lesson, Rancière's error and the real movement of history," *Radical Philosophy* 170 (2011), 22.

²⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital vol. 1*, intro. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 1019-1038.

²⁵ R.S. (2011), "The Present Moment," *SIC: International Journal for Communization* 1 (2011): 95-144, accessed December 23, 2012, <http://riff-raff.se/en/sic1/sic-1-07-the-present-moment.pdf>, 95.

²⁶ R.S., "The Present Moment," 95.

²⁷ This is also contrary to the "communizing theory" of Gilles Dauvé and Karl Nestic, who treat "communizing" as a persistent possibility yet to be realized, rather than a new historical possibility. See the journal *Endnotes* (2008), for the debate between Dauvé and Nestic and TC on this point.

²⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson* [1974], trans. Emiliano Battista (London: Continuum, 2011), 90; Brown, "Red years," 20.

²⁹ Qtd. in Peter Starr, *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory After May '68* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 91.

³⁰ *Négation*, "Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution" [1973], trans. Peter Rachleff and Alan Wallach, *lib.com* (2007), accessed December 22, 2012, <http://libcom.org/library/lip-and-the-self-managed-counter-revolution-negation>; Brown, "Red years," 20.

In the case of Virilio, his point is similar. With more sympathy, Virilio regards this struggle as the attempt to hold on to an ecological “niche” of struggle. He remarks:

The trade unions knew what they were doing when they ordered the workers to carefully maintain their tools of production. It’s as if, in their minds, these tools were the last representation of the original environment, the guarantee and mainstay of their entire legal existence.³¹

While certainly, in a fashion somewhat similar to *Négation*, Virilio sees this struggle as outpaced by the “delocalizing” forces of the State and capital, he also refuses to simply condemn this attempt at “attachment.” In both cases the “traditional” ground of resistance has been abolished.

Certainly the events of 2011 might provide confirmation for this diagnosis. They have been widely taken as signalling the end of previous forms of struggle, notably those centred on class, party, and union, and the birth of new forms of struggle organized around the fluid gathering of the multitude or the people. In fact, as Rodrigo Nunes has pointed out, the evidence is more equivocal than that.³² Certain forms of so-called “traditional” organizations retained and developed key roles in the seemingly “acephalic” spreading of protests. We can, of course, say, however, that the very changes in these forms of organization might well indicate their obsolescence. The question remains, how do we respond? We have seen that Virilio stresses the continuing, although vanishing, possibility of resistance. In contrast, TC insists that the current situation suggests, in its limits, the necessity of new configurations of revolution.

Resistance or Revolution

The tension of resistance and revolution encompasses many contemporary movements of struggle.³³ In fact we could read acceleration as the solution to this tension in that it supposes the reaching of a critical “tipping point” in which speed would lead to a qualitative transformation of resistance *into* revolution. We have seen that Virilio remains sceptical about this possibility, preferring to insist on the reinvention of resistance. He concludes that the dispersion of military power across space and time puts an end to the traditional right of resistance, which was grounded in a particular territory and the preservation of means of violence. In fact, “deprived of their productive arsenal, they [the proletariat] stop being privileged economic partners in the pact of military semi-colonization.”³⁴ The collapse of the place of the pact between the military and civilians means that: “From now on, military assault is shapeless in time and orgiastic participation is no more than the irrational support of a *techno-logistical supra-nationality*, the final stage of delocalization, and thus of servitude.”³⁵ This “disappearance” means that we cannot locate a moment of resistance, and so it enters into dissolution.³⁶

The pessimistic conclusion of Virilio is that revolution is over and only revolutionary resistance remains,³⁷ but as we have seen this seems largely ineffective or threatens to disappear. In typically hyperbolic fashion he concludes:

We can all drop dead. In any case, they no longer need us: robots and computers will take care of production. War is automatized, and along with it the power of decision. They no longer need men, soldiers or workers, only means of absolute extermination, on the commercial level as elsewhere.³⁸

While this registers capital’s abandonment of “labour,” as also registered by TC, it extends it to a vision of annihilation that falls outside the still-remaining “moving contradiction” of capital’s need for labour. In this vision there is only a desperate clinging on to the last remaining ecological niches of resistance.

³¹ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 54.

³² Nunes, “The Lessons of 2011.”

³³ Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 72

³⁶ Virilio’s diagnosis bears some similarity to that of Carl Schmitt in his *Theory of the Partisan* [1963], trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Publishing, 2007).

³⁷ Virilio may be deploying a distinction between revolution and resistance that Howard Caygill has traced through post-Kantian philosophy, and especially the work of Clausewitz. See Howard Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata.”

³⁸ Virilio in *Pure War*, 102.

On the contrary, TC argue that new forms of “suicidal” struggle by workers register the limits of this delocalization, while continuing to contest it. In these struggles workers no longer try to hold on to a wage labour that has failed, but instead are “forced” into a “rift” with that identity. The result is the burning down of factories, attempts to claim as high a redundancy payment as possible, and other “exits” from work.³⁹ These struggles have an equivocal status,

indicating both the tragedy of workers deprived of the identity of the worker and the fleeting prefiguration of a “de-essentialization” of labour.⁴⁰ Contrary to Virilio’s sense of the exhaustion of the “proletariat” under the threat of extermination, TC suggest that the “rift” of proletarian self-abolishing can lead to the possible emergence of a new communizing process of revolution.

While Virilio tends to an apocalyptic pessimism, TC’s evasion of the military question produces some moments of seemingly remarkable optimism concerning the “communizing” process of revolution:

The confrontation with the state immediately poses the problem of arms, which can only be solved by setting up a distribution network to support combat in an almost infinite multiplicity of places. Military and social activities are inseparable, simultaneous, and mutually interpenetrating: the constitution of a front or of determinate zones of combat is the death of the revolution.⁴¹

This statement relies on proliferation and dispersion to make a challenge to the compact “military body” of the transnational ruling class. While this may be possible, or even desirable, the means and capacities to engage in this “infinite” combat seem problematic, to say the least. Elsewhere, TC concedes that there may be “the possibility of a multitude of small, barbaric wars.”⁴² While this is less sanguine, it still seems that mobility and multiplicity are supposed to win the day.

The hope of TC is that the very speed of the communizing process will outpace the military and logistical capacities of the capitalist class:

It [the revolution] permits the abolition to an ever greater extent of all competition and division between proletarians, making this the content and the unfolding of its armed confrontation with those whom the capitalist class can still mobilize, integrate and reproduce within its social relations.⁴³

It is the rapid expansion of the “proletarian condition,” no longer tied to the usual organizational and wage forms, which will permit an overcoming, it is claimed, of the fraction of the military (and its capacity for destruction) still integrated in capital. Therefore, they stake communization on an effect of acceleration:

This is why all the measures of communization will have to be a vigorous action for the dismantling of the connections which link our enemies and their material support: these will have to be *rapidly destroyed*, without the possibility of return.⁴⁴

Of course, it is again not easy to see how these connections, the logistical chains of capital and state, will be “dismantled” at a sufficient pace.

A similar trope occurs in the communizing text by the two groups Rocamadur and Blaumachen on the London riots of 2012. They conclude:

The dynamic of class struggle today can never be victorious, because it will keep finding class struggle itself as its limit, up to the point when the multiplication of rifts will become the overcoming of class belonging (and therefore of class self-organization), as a revolution within the revolution, as communizing measures, that will either de-capitalize (communize) life further and further or be crushed.⁴⁵

³⁹ R.S., “The Present Moment,” 119.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁴¹ Théorie Communiste, “Communization in the Present Tense,” trans. Endnotes, in *Communization and its Discontents*, ed. Benjamin Noys (Brooklyn: Autonomedia / Minor Compositions, 2011), 56

⁴² R.S., “The Present Moment,” 138.

⁴³ Théorie Communiste, “Communization,” 56.

⁴⁴ Ibid., my italics.

⁴⁵ Rocamadur / Blaumachen, “The feral underclass hits the streets: On the English riots and other ordeals,” *SIC: International Journal for Communization* (2012), accessed December 23, 2012, <http://sic.communisation.net/en/the-feral-underclass-hits-the-streets?DokuWiki=e19764affecb034401ae1fc9df032fbb>

Of course, the question is whether the speed invoked by TC, the spread of communization in the process of revolution, will “de-capitalize life further” “or be crushed.” It is, to me, the rather sanguinary tendency to not take seriously the second possibility that seems problematic.

This is Virilio’s question. He notes the disappearance of the military from their own war-machine. Remarking on an incident during the conflict between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland or Malvinas Islands, Virilio points out that the Captain of the British Guided Missile Destroyer HMS Sheffield had no time to react to the launching of an Exocet missile launched from an Argentine Super Etendard aircraft, whose pilot obeyed the injunction of “Fire and Forget.”⁴⁶ The ship was destroyed. Beverly Silver has also pointed out that against the great citizen-armies, which allowed workers to then make a claim on the States which had unleashed them in war, the response has been to professionalize, privatize, and minimize the role of workers in war – in line with the general tendency of capitalism to replace variable capital with constant capital.⁴⁷ In the jargon of the US military in regards to drones, the aim is the “compression of the kill chain” – the removal or minimisation of human involvement from destruction. It is perhaps not hard to imagine these hardwired “moral drones” regarding proletarian revolution as an immoral act.

The tension here is that the forms of capitalism which for TC condition the possibility of self-abolishing and the rapid and contagious emergence of revolution as “communizing” process also involve the elimination and restriction of labour from sites of production and military power. The contradictory forms of these tendencies—which involve complex “national” and “transnational” processes, both spatially and temporally—make rapidity and resonance a more complex and risky strategies than I think TC and other theorists of contemporary movements admit. Of course, they can argue that these comments are only referring to an actual process of revolution that has yet to emerge, but if that process is to be successful we might further consider the tensions of “acceleration.”

#Accelerate

Banking on speed and movement is precisely the ground of the “war of time” that Virilio identified as *the* problem of the military class. The war of acceleration turns on new technologies that push humans out of the domain of choice and control, in favour of an autonomous and automatic deterrence. It also, as we have seen, operates along the vectors of the accumulation of capital that operate by similar effects of technological displacement. Of course, for many this is the great virtue of these forms of the new forms of protest, resistance, and struggle. They engage with the actuality of capitalist and state technologies to re-tool and re-deploy them *against* power.

This was already event in the strategic theorizations of the possibilities of internet technologies. Galloway and Thacker, for example, had suggested that the power to overload the system lies in the speed and resonance of “the exploit,” a hacking strategy that can have wider application for subverting networked forms of power.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Harry Halpin argues that the ontological capacity for invisibility developed by the hacker group “Anonymous” also suggests a new mode of struggle that saturates and exceeds the control networks of the internet.⁴⁹ In these cases is the explicitly military technology of the internet, originally developed as a mode of dispersed communication to counter nuclear war, that provides new possibilities as modes of struggles that can then be realized on the streets. They both also owe a debt to The Invisible Committee’s theorization of an “insurrectional” politics premised on anonymity and evasion, which could create new spaces for “forms of life” in the “rifts” created by contemporary state and capitalist power.⁵⁰

In this modelling, the “war of time” can only be successfully waged on the same terrain of networks, nodes, and their forms of acceleration. This is, of course, the fundamental point made by Marx: “if we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic.”⁵¹ The question is where exactly do we identify these material conditions, and how far do we accept them as they are? My suggestion is that the affirmation of acceleration implies of mimicry and replication of state and capitalist relations that is insufficiently critical. In particular, what the acceleration of bodies neglects are the processes of the incorporation and elimination of labour as *the* mechanism of capitalist power.

⁴⁶ Virilio in *Pure War*, 18.

⁴⁷ Beverly J. Silver, (2003), *Forces of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Alexander R. Galloway, and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

⁴⁹ Harry Halpin, “The philosophy of Anonymous: Ontological politics without identity,” *Radical Philosophy* 176 (2012): 19–28.

⁵⁰ The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

⁵¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 159.

In some enigmatic passages Paul Virilio turns to the metaphysics of metempsychosis—the transmigration of souls—to suggest the tension of the “loading” of the soul on to various “metabolic vehicles.” He argues that we find the soul as “plural, multiform, fluidiform, coagulated here and there in social, animal or territorial bodies.”⁵² In the philosophy of the military class “weak” souls are tied to their environments, imprisoned within the body. This Gnostic philosopher presumes that the “powerful” soul is deterritorialized – the fluid transferable soul of the “gyrovagues,” (wandering and itinerant monks) which can smoothly move from vehicle to vehicle. Acceleration is predicated on the power to escape or move from body to body, and in this way to exceed any territorial “capture.” This accelerative politics is in close proximity to the politics of resonance and saturation, which also stresses a contagion that exceeds territorial grounding.

For Virilio, of course, this deterritorialization is not to be lauded. It incarnates the nihilistic politics of “pure war.” We can find a resonant figuring of this thanatopolitical acceleration in Thomas Pynchon’s novel *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973). Set during the Second World War, Pynchon explores the ways in which “[t]he War has been reconfiguring time and space into its own image.”⁵³ This “reconfiguration” takes its terminal form in the human “passenger” that is integrated into a remaining Nazi V-2 rocket, in an experiment staged by the rocket crew following the Nazi defeat. With tongue somewhat in cheek, Pynchon suggests that “secretly, [the War] was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war.”⁵⁴ In this way “War” and “Technology” become forces demanding acceleration and the integration of the human into the suicidal “war-machine.” In Pynchon’s pessimistic and conspiratorial view the emergence of great systems of control operate precisely through energy and acceleration.

Virilio’s insight into the boarding of metabolic vehicles, reinforced by Pynchon’s provocation, suggests the “metaphysical” desire for integration and dispersion of human and machine at work in the dynamic of technology, military power, and capitalism. The resulting tension is that the reading of contemporary protest and struggles in terms of endorsing this integration and dispersion becomes problematic. The “metabolic vehicles,” which is to say living bodies, risk being occluded by an assimilation of struggle to the same dynamic by which capitalism insists that we are endlessly transferable and mobile labour.

In terms of the logic of struggle, the “war of time” is coded as one between the elimination and minimization of labour from the processes of warfare and production, which will then be countered by a superior force of escape and flight. In response to this conflict, I would suggest two symmetrical risks. In the case of the minimization and elimination of labour and bodies from warfare and production we could adopt an *overestimation* of the powers of the “trans-national military class,” and thereby engender our own stasis, if not even the reification and fetishization of military power (a risk run by Virilio). The second risk is that by relying on the superior speed of revolution and resistance we could ignore the effects of military and capitalist power that operate along similar, or the same, vectors. This risk is run by certain formulations of TC and certain theorizations of the present forms of struggle.

Here, my main concern has been with this second risk. While those who theorize contemporary movements of struggle often, and rightly, insist on the embodied nature of this acceleration and resonance,⁵⁵ my concern is that this “embodiment” repeats the “fluidiform” ideology of “pure war.” Of course, “Occupy” and the related struggle are, or were, heterogeneous formations that often aimed to break outside of this kind of ossification. It could be argued that, if anything, they try to break exactly the framing I am suggesting, by positively *refusing* the discourse of “pure war,” especially as it was replicated in “traditional” forms of struggle. Obviously this seems to be an essential task. The difficulty that I am suggesting is that in supposing escape and evasion from these problems, in supposing a flight from both labour and the “territorializing” effects of power, they do not fully consider the new forms of deterritorialized power. While their aims are laudable, it might be that a politics of dispersion, resonance, and acceleration, will have to confront not only the inertial effects of the “practico-inert,” but also the militarized forms of the capitalist State that deploy and engage with exactly these new forms to produce their own de-localization and localization of power.

Benjamin Noys is Reader in English at the University of Chichester. He is the author of *Georges Bataille: A Critical Introduction* (2000), *The Culture of Death* (2005), *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Theory* (2010), and editor of *Communization and Its Discontents* (2011).

⁵² Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 96.

⁵³ Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow* [1973] (London: Picador, 1975), 257.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 521.

⁵⁵ Gordillo, “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance.”

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Of the Possibility of Immanent Revolt as Theory and Political Praxis

Katerina Kolozova

professor of philosophy and feminism at the
Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities - Skopje.

(katerina.kolozova@isshs.edu.mk)

Abstract:

The only way to immanently revolt against the world is the non-abstract way. Revolting against concrete occurrences of subjugation and violence rather than in the name of abstractions and visions of transformation of the world is political action “affected by immanence.” It is also action determined by “interests” which are real and sensuous (or material), says Marx, rather than abstract or philosophical. According to Marx, abstraction itself is what ought to be combated and a world in consonance with the real or the material immediate exigencies should be created. The world will be always made of philosophy, Laruelle would say, and it will always already persecute the human in human. The constant revolution can transform it into a socio-political order which is observant of the “real interests” rather than abstractions, writes Marx. In that way, the world could become a more just and happier place, one where persecution is minimalised by virtue of the reversal in hierarchy between philosophy and the real whereby the former would succumb to the dictate of the latter.

Key words: Marxism, Non-Marxism, the real, abstraction, immanence, victim, persecution

1. Immanence of revolt

Revolt is immanent when determined in the last instance by the lived of revolt not by a transcendental moral or political decision of either acting or reacting against another moral or political vision. The experience of revolt void of philosophy precedes language and, therefore, transcendence. The precedence in question is not temporal and the independence from the linguistic does not imply a metaphysically construed separate universe. Namely, the purely experiential or “lived” of revolt can be caused by an act of language which inflicts violence but the reaction is rebellion which is an instantiation of the conatus to stay in life. Activity which increases life is the result of the conatus (to stay in life), says Spinoza in his *Ethics*, and revolt and struggle aim to maintain or intensify life by combating the life decreasing activity of the body-mind suffered by an external or internal source of violence. Transforming violence into a “law,” into a “making sense” and assuming the position assigned to you by that universe of meaning which accommodates the violence of one part of humanity over another to which you belong is what alienates you from your suffering and joy. The operation which enables the alienating operations of socio-economic repression is abstraction. The rule of abstraction finds its purest form in capitalism, in the universe of pure speculation as the source of material domination or absolute domination over the material.

The immanent rebellion François Laruelle writes about consists in “the struggle without a goal” always already present in every human (not the human subject but the real of human or, in Laruelle’s vocabulary, “the human-in-human”). It is without a goal, because its only source and tendency is to protect itself from violence through alienation, to defend the human-in-human it is insofar as determined by radical vulnerability. Any political struggle stems from the dictate of the immanent rebellion determined in the way thus explained. The struggle is one of radical singularity which does not mean that it cannot establish solidarity or that it is individualistic. Quite to the contrary, it is pre-subjective whereas individualism presupposes subjectivity. The lived of vulnerability and struggle can be an experience of a collective and that experience can be mute, pre-lingual, radically solitary insofar as it is only the “witnesses” of the experience can

communicate it internally according to the syntax of the real of what took place. The protestants of Istanbul in the summer of 2013 were faced with the challenge to formulate their political goals, convey the philosophical (=political) decision determining their struggle whereas the only truth they knew was that of “what took place” in Gezi park and the massive solidarity it sparked. The brutality Erdogan’s government demonstrated was the reason for the issuing demand that he leaves office. Only thereof, they could define a political agenda which was still not philosophical, i.e., ideologically defined but one determined by concrete demands dictated by the concrete experienced reality. Revolt took place, struggle against institutionalized violence rose and the sheer experience of revolt-struggle proffered the foundation for the creation of a political agenda.

In order to clarify the stakes and the limits of rebellion we pose the problem outside of philosophical bad habits. Philosophy is always indifferent to man or, though this isn’t very different, too quickly compassionate. Sufferings and alienation exist in the necessity of revolt and one concludes from this that there is evil, and often evils, there too. Revolts are only ‘logical’ in this way – admirable vicious circle of uncertainty and the contingency of a *desired rebellion* in which no one believes.¹

It is necessary that the rebellion seems incredible. Credibility implies planned steps toward achieving a goal determined by a philosophical decision (about “what and how the world should be”). The resistance “to evils” is carried out from a vulnerable position and by those who are determined in the last instance by the sense of being “persecuted.”

The theory of Future Christ makes of the being-murdered and the being-persecuted a universal but real criteria of the manifestation of Life rather than an absurd condition of historical fact.²

Life is conditioned by the sense of being persecuted and that brings forth immanence or inevitability of revolt and struggle. Persecution is by definition caused by “the world” which in Laruelle’s terminology is analogous to philosophy - the universe of meaning. The universe of meaning is necessarily a universe of norm and of orthodoxy. The immanent struggle or the human-in-human determined by immanence of struggle is in revolt against the world and against orthodoxy as its foundation. The human in human in the last instance is a heretic. The world, on the other hand, seeks to control him and her by way of subjugating them by way of abstraction which controls, moulds, violates the *lived (le vécu)*, as Laruelle terms it, and acts in its stead.

“[...] to struggle in an immanent way with the World, this is the theorem of the Future Christ. In the beginning was the struggle, and the struggle was *with* the World and the World did not know it . . . That is rebellion, its reasons and cause.”³

2. The World as Persecution

“In human beings there is ‘a something’ of a radically outside-nature, and the World is a fundamental will that persecutes this heresy.” (Laruelle, Future Christ, 19)

Nature is, of course, part of the world and a creation of orthodoxy. Or, putting it in Judith Butler’s terms, nature is always already product of the imaginary upon whose edifice the Norm and “normality” are erected. The immanent rebellion is rooted in the realization about the lack of immanence in any norm and in the norm’s coercive ruse of posturing as a law of nature or of society that conforms with nature as the underlying truth of all existence.

Man-in-person is not an empire within the empire of the World but is that from whom the Real takes precedent above those empires that persecute him and who, turning himself into a victim, confesses to his being-human in spite of them. By a decision of an axiomatic kind, we therefore place the protestations of rational sufficiency and the belief in philosophical and theological opinion between parentheses. We posit that the ethics of transcendence, as much as those of the immanence of the happy life, belong to the World, that the religions of the Book, just as the others, are religions of the death-World.⁴

¹ François Laruelle, *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*. Translated by Anthony Paul Smith (London: Continuum, 2010), 5-6

² François Laruelle, *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, 19.

³ Laruelle, *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

Man-in-person or subjectivity affected by immanence is not a universe in its own right. The liberal myth of sanctity of the individual and its capacity to create its unique moral, political, esthetical universe—a “world”—is declared false. The only world we can be in and the only world we represent is the world in the sense of non-philosophy. The “world according to non-philosophy” is analogous to Lacan’s symbolic order or Foucault’s disciplining discourses of power. It is indeed formative of the subject, but the human in the last instance, according to Laruelle, is pre-subjective. It is the real of the radical vulnerability and immanent revolting. The inexhaustible force of revolt is not based in philosophy or in the world - it is situated in the radical opposition to it, it acts from the standpoint of the lived. The opposition to the world or to the ruling norms/normativity is radically *static*. It is atemporal and does not participate in the transformations of meaning the world produces. Nonetheless, it aspires to change the world in a way which will make it less brutal to the radical vulnerability the human in human is. Immanent rebellion is static in the double sense of the word, i.e., as “not moving,” but also as in the sense of the Athenian political concept of *stasis* which means a rebellion or a civil war in the polis. Although *stasis* implies unrests it remains static vis-a-vis the world and stops the endless signification the world compulsively produces. It represents suspension of *the polis*. *Stasis*, meaning both stillness and revolution (στάσις), is a *pause* in the normality of the functioning of the state or the world. Immanent revolt consists in the human-in-human’s radical externality with respect to the unstoppable auto-generated processes of subjection (of “being a subject”) in the world.

The world invades the mute *lived* (*le vécu*) of the human-in-human in the form of the installation called subjectivity. Meaning (sign), general and abstract, aims to shape the real, to produce joy and suffering according to the ruling forms of *jouissance* which are philosophically determined. The *a priori* invasiveness of the world makes the human-in-human always already persecuted. The only way to immanently revolt against the world is the non-abstract way. Revolting against concrete occurrences of subjugation and violence rather than in the name of abstractions and visions of transformation of the world is political action “affected by immanence.”⁵ It is also action determined by “interests” which are real and sensuous (or material), says Marx, rather than abstract or philosophical. As explained in the previous chapter, according to Marx, abstraction itself is what ought to be combated and a world in consonance with the real or the material immediate exigencies should be created. The world will be always made of philosophy, Laruelle would say, and it will always already persecute the human in human. The constant revolution can transform it into a socio-political order which is observant of the “real interests” rather than abstractions, writes Marx. In that way, the world could become a more just and happier place, one where persecution is minimalised by virtue of the reversal in hierarchy between philosophy and the real whereby the former would succumb to the dictate of the latter.

3. To be a victim and to be a messiah: radical humanity

“The victim is defined by a radical passivity and not by an absolute one which Levinas attributes to the self. By definition, radical passivity cannot re-act through an excess of power or by overpowering, it is impossible for it to act in a reflexive manner, but it is capable of acting quite differently - by depotentializing philosophical overpowering.”⁶

Revolt can grow immanently and also infinitely - because infinity is dictated by intensity and intensity is the mode of immanence - only if it undercuts philosophical pretension. Its power is passive since it is made of suffering. However, radical passivity is potent since it silences and cancels any philosophical decision regarding the suffering of the always already persecuted. Radical passivity and the revolt it engenders is a cry to all the masters of the world to cease their talk of the victims and of their liberation, to cease re-presenting them and alienating them through representation.

Philosophical representation is never generic. It is an abstraction whose origin is purely transcendental whereas the generic is a radical concept determined by the real and the “syntax of scientific description” it dictates (Laruelle *Intruduciton au non-marxisme*). In *Théorie générale des victimes* (2012), Laruelle explains the notion of the “generic” in the context of the study of victims and, par consequence, their revolt and the revolt of those who act in radical solidarity with them. “The generic,” says Laruelle, “is a process of reduction of any philosophical or macroscopic entity, of its nature of a double, doubling, double transcendence (the consciences, the ego or a psycho-sociological identity). Reduction to a phenomenal immanence, one, however, lived as objective, subjected to the quantum principle of superposition is not a principle of a logical identity.”⁷

⁵ François Laruelle, *Introduction au non-marxisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 48.

⁶ François Laruelle, *Théorie générale des victimes* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 30.

⁷ Laruelle, *Ibid.*

If we rid the concept of the victim of all its philosophical “essences,” of all forms of representation which transform the lived suffering of the “victims” into pure transcendence (meanings of victimhood), we will do away with the representation and the images (produced through media) of the victims that act in the stead of the reality of being a “victim.” The philosophically mediated idea of a victim, the one produced by the media and the intellectuals who represent and defend the victims, pretends to be the reality of the victims’ suffering and one is interpellated to identify with these images and the meanings assigned to them. Considering the notions of “the world” and “philosophy” are synonymous in non-standard philosophy, the media are one of the most powerful and most active “machines” of the production of philosophical images (or of the ruling representations in and of the world which dictate our actions). The more they seek to be realistic the more detached from the real they are. They establish, what Laruelle terms, amphibology of the real and the philosophical (or the transcendental), whereby the latter acts instead of the former. Absurd is produced by the pretension that the “meaningful real” is more real than “just the real,” the latter being deemed as the unruly effect of “meaningless” thrust of an almost physical symptom - *tuché* as Lacan would call it - into the universe of meaning.

In his *General theory of the victims* (2012) Laruelle invites us to establish a process of compassion (in its etymological sense) or co-suffering with the victims on the basis of a complete disregard of the mediation of victimhood by the “intellectuals” (and their world of the media). How do we accomplish this goal?

If we reduce the humanist human to a human without humanism—let’s call it a non-human—or the instance of the real made of the lived of suffering (and joy), then what we are faced with in a victim in the last instance is the lived of suffering. To establish solidarity is to co-suffer by virtue of the rudimentary cognitive procedure of identification with the pain to which the other is subjected. One “imagines” the pain suffered by the other in a unilateral way - the pain invades the “imagination” of the co-sufferer which produces a “life-decreasing” effect (Spinoza). One imagines the fundamental and founding vulnerability of the other and of oneself, which is a procedure of identification. A process of abstraction only—cognitive and metaphysical/existential—can enable alienation from the other’s suffering and failure to identify with it on the level of experience or in the form of co-experiencing. The tendency to establish compassion with “what it means to be a victim” or subject to inflicted pain or violence causing suffering, with the loss of “dignity” or “value” of the human life is a philosophical one. It always already alienates the real (the human in the last instance is). Co-suffering with the other’s real and in terms of the real implies abandonment of (philosophical) humanism. It produces radically human sociality or, in Marx’s terms, one in accordance with the interests of the “species” rather than abstract ideas of general humanity.⁸ Solidarity stems not solely from the lived co-suffering but also from the concomitant experience of “immanent revolt” or the “immanent struggle.” Therefore, it is the lived of immanent revolt for the other’s suffering as one’s own that is the basis of solidarity or, rather, of radical solidarity inasmuch as solidarity in and for the “species” or for the “non-human” (the human without humanism). Suffering immanently produces revolt, whereas co-suffering gives rise to an immanent revolt-in-species or radical solidarity (of the “non-human”). Revolt-in-species is determined by Marx’s concept of the human species as a hybrid formation of socio-political relations (forming a whole of the relations) and of nature or physiology. It is an idea of humanity as a social and biological factum without the abstractions of humanism. Therefore, the solidarity we establish with another human being understood in Marx’s (but also Laruelle’s) way is determined by biology as much as it is determined by the whole of heterogeneous and complex social relations. It is not driven by an idea of an essence of humanity incarnated in each human being.

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man [*menschliche Wesen* = ‘human nature’]. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.⁹

The human species is defined as species—among the animal species—and is, therefore, determined in the last instance by nature:

That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.¹⁰

⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959). *Theses on Feuerbach*: The 6th Thesis, available at <http://marxists.anu.edu.au/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>, accessed on 29 November 2013

⁹ Marx, *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844: Estranged Labor*, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>, accessed on 29 November 2013.

Solidarity is radically grounded in physicality. Namely, alienation—through objectification of labor—deprives the human being of his/her labor and of “means of subsistence” provided by nature and, therefore, subjugates him/her by virtue of rendering him/her first a “worker” and then a “physical subject.” Political solidarity and collective revolt are, in the last instance, about overcoming the alienation of the human animal from nature as the source of the means of subsistence and as the real universe of his/her labor. It is also about overcoming alienation from and within the human universe of social and political relations, but this process is also about the return to the real, to the material (without materialism) or to the “sensuous” human life and its relations to other beings, to nature and to the products of labor as part of nature or as non-alienated from it.

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers – he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigour is to say that he has real, sensuous objects as the object of his being or of his life, or that he can only express his life in real, sensuous objects. To be objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing.¹¹

Alienation can be overcome only in the last instance, and that instance is physicality, matter or the real of suffering and of “instincts.” Emancipation from any form of oppression is emancipation from alienation which stems from abstraction. Abstraction is a philosophical procedure of creating an auto-referential “universe of meaning” detached from the real of human existence in order to objectify it, master it and exploit it. Subject to abstraction and subjects of alienation are not only the proletariat or the precariat, but also the exploiters in the capitalist as well as in any other era. Emancipation is possible only if we all “give up our abstractions” (Marx), and everyone is equally called upon doing so. All of us are in the last instance radically vulnerable pre-subjective identities that revolt against exploitation and violence. The messianic revolt and resistance should be directed against the subject positions that maintain alienation and use the means of abstraction to exploit, subjugate and alienate its species (as well as the other species).

Brutality of exploiting what Laruelle terms “the human-in-human” (the pre-subjective instance of the real or the instance of the lived the human in the last instance is) and inflicting pain on others or profit on exploitative violence is enabled only if the human being is objectified as labor and if nature is objectified as means of production and subsistence. Nature certainly provides subsistence, but alienation from it and within it occurs when objectified. Alienation’s immediate result is violence, subjugation and exploitation (of all and everyone subject to alienation).

Thus, if the product of his labor, his labor objectified, is for him an *alien, hostile, powerful* object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him. If he treats his own activity as an unfree activity, then he treats it as an activity performed in the service, under the dominion, the coercion, and the yoke of another man.¹²

Estrangement of labor, estrangement from one another within the species and with other species and, also, estrangement from oneself—appearing as objectifying oneself as labor force or as “abstract activity and a belly”¹³—can be overcome by the radical procedure of immanently correlating with the “site” of the real of suffering and joy which in the last instance is not an abstraction, i.e., the bodily or the “sensuousness” of the self. Recuperating the determination-in-the-last-instance of the human as the physical, material or bodily, or as one rooted in and ultimately determined by “nature” aims at realization of the human animal as a non-human or as a non-animal. In other words, the human species can transcend alienation—hence, oppression—only by radically grounding itself in its material or real humanity, one which precedes philosophy and, ultimately, language. The human can come to its fullest realization by succumbing to the immanence of human animality (human without humanism) and by way of following the syntax

¹¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844. Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General*, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm>, accessed on 29 November 2013.

¹² Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844: Estranged Labor*, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm>, accessed on 29 November 2013.

¹³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), First Manuscript, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/wages.htm>, accessed on 29 November 2013.

of the real it dictates in the processes of cognition and the metaphysics they prompt.

4. Metaphysics in radical terms and as real necessity

François Laruelle's book entitled *Théorie des Etrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie et non-psychoanalyse* (1995)¹⁴ is a project of non-philosophical procedure of radicalizing Lacanian psychoanalysis to a "non-analysis." Namely, it aims to radicalize psychoanalysis by way of producing conceptual means for it to account for the workings of the instance of the real and its conditioning effects on the signifying processes. The real of the "human-in-human," according to Laruelle's non-analysis, inevitably mediates itself and the process is one of estranging oneself from the real one is. One has to transpose oneself into a linguistically conceived self, into a subject in order to mediate the real (one is) to the others and to oneself. Prior to becoming a subject one becomes a "Stranger" which is "radical subjectivity."¹⁵ Unlike the subject which can emerge only as the result of a fully completed estrangement from the lived (the real) and which is a signifying position or virtually a sheer function (of the self), the Stranger is affected by the immanence of the process of estrangement. It is "concrete," made of transcendence (language) and in unilateral affirmation of the dyad consisted of the real and the transcendental (language). In its gesture of estrangement, the Stranger transcends the real while experiencing the process of estranging from the real he or she is (in the last instance) as lived. The real from which one alienates oneself is objectified, so that one can transcend the real one is. Thus, one transcends oneself, the self in the last instance or the self-in-the-real is rendered object of control and auto-production by the language and through the function of the linguistically competent subject.

The Stranger is still in the real (of estrangement) while the trauma of the primal metaphysical procedure takes place - that of "becoming stranger to oneself" or sensing the core of oneself as an exteriority. Laruelle insists the "concreteness" of the Stranger is not "empirico-metaphysical" but rather "transcendental." My claim is that this gesture is fundamentally metaphysical. Scientific thought is transcendental with respect to the unruly real. It creates designs, produces abstractions which aim to explain the real. The experience of estrangement is however existentially conditioning—or, in philosophical vocabulary, "ontological"—introducing "spectrality" of language or thought as inalienable element of the self. The paradox—which, non-philosophically speaking, is falsehood and does not exist—engenders the creature of religion, philosophy or science or the "human species" as the most metaphysical animal. (Other animals experience metaphysical states as well, as I have been convinced by Giorgio Agamben's treatise "The Open.") Wondering or θαῦμα over the necessity of the production of the spectral self and the world of spectrality, wondering if the real self is (in) the real itself or if the truth of it (what we make out of it as linguistic subjects) is more real (than the real devoid of meaning/truth) prompts metaphysics. When metaphysics conditions the physical to the extent that it perverts its "life-increasing" (Spinoza) impulses or the conatus of survival urging "life-decreasing" activities (such as alienated labor and fruits of that labor), that means that "a sufficient thought," viz. thought that usurps the status of the real, conditions the world. It conditions the world politico-economically as well as philosophically causing radical subjection and exploitation of the "real" or the "sensuous" (Marx). By objectifying the "material" (without philosophical materialism), absolute abstraction has effaced any trace of the experience of estrangement as immanent and has committed the perfect crime against the real (Baudrillard) convincing the world that it (abstraction) has always been the only real that ever existed. According to this logic, the "senseless real" is not real. What makes sense and what is real have been equated.

In non-philosophy, the equation at issue is called "decisionism" which is what defines philosophy. This is a defining trait of any and all philosophy. Namely, it decides a priori what the real is, and, according to this grounding definition only, all further investigations of the real and of different realities are carried out. Scientific approach, both according to Laruelle and Marx, permits that thought is always "surprised" by the real, and that gaps and inconsistencies in a system of thought are permitted and, moreover, invited and unavoidable since thought succumbs to the "real" rather than to the "real's meaning." Therefore, the transcendental—which is the substance of any form of thought—is also the material scientific thought is made of. The necessary procedure of estrangement is, however, metaphysical.

Metaphysical is the effect of the necessary procedure of estrangement, of the unavoidability to create the spectral doublet of the physical self and to transcend physicality in the form of re-creating oneself as an idea of oneself. To paraphrase Lacan, the mirror image of the self tends to occupy the position of the real self. It is endowed with the ambition to become more "real than the real." In this sense, it is identical with the tendencies of philosophy. Nonetheless, the primary metaphysical experience takes place in the mist of the vagueness of concept and physicality of the real. The subject constituting process of estrangement is a sensation, it involves physicality and intense mental

¹⁴ François Laruelle, *Théorie des Etrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie et non-psychoanalyse* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1995).

¹⁵ *Théorie des Étrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie et non-psychoanalyse* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1995), 196

experience which precedes pure concept while nonetheless represents a process of conceptualization. This process is what Laruelle would call an instance of the *lived* (*vécu*) rather than an exclusively intellectual procedure, which follows the laws of logic and discipline of maintaining a consistent “universe of meaning.” Although it seeks to establish control over the real, it also seeks to “fill” the spectral self with it or for the real to legitimize the idea of the self. It seeks not to find itself and to remain in the fissure of the split between idea-(of)-self and the real, and it seeks to do so by ensuring the real will “legitimize” the idea by finding itself at home with or in it.

Philosophy enters the scene when meaning seeks to legitimize the real upon the basis of radical detachment and indifference to it; even the reverse direction of inter-legitimization, in the last instance, consists in the same gesture: by claiming that the real is reflected by thought in its totality, one produces a reality that should act in the stead of the real (as a more perfect real than the real itself). Concurring with Laruelle, let us say that the equation established between thought and the real is the essential procedure of philosophy, i.e., of its decisionism. It presupposes overcoming of the anxiety produced by the real seemingly splitting into two when the idea of the self emerges as a reality in its own right. As for the metaphysical—in the sense I am using the word here—it struggles with the real and the possibility of detachment of the “spectral self” from the real is an experience of anxiety, of pain and of pleasure. In the last instance, it is an experience, it is a pure instance of the lived (Laruelle) or of the real, albeit involving operations of the transcendental, i.e., the mental processes of duplication of the real.

Those processes of alienation that are foundational for the subject create a metaphysical drama which determines grand ideologies, universes of meaning (philosophies, political and economic contracts) as much as the human species’ “being-before-death” or sexuality. Alienation is the operation which is conditional for the possibility of exploitation, it enables the severing from the “state of innocence” in which the naive and radical human is in awe of the real (of) life so that the possibility of objectifying the real of the other living beings or of oneself is inconceivable. The procedure of objectification is indispensable and it is enabled by the operation of alienation from oneself, from the others, from the “sensuous life” (Marx), from the real. Only by virtue of absolute alienation which brings about absolute abstraction and only by abstraction’s usurpation of the position of the real (as the “most perfect real”) has the criminal rule of capitalism been inaugurated and is maintained. Such process is impossible without the immanently philosophical operation of “gradation of the real,” according to which the truer a reality is “the more real” it is. What is specific of capitalism and modernity is the fact that, unlike in the premodern times when the “most real reality” was somewhere else, in a different universe (“the world of ideas”, the Kingdom of God), the “ever perfecting real” occupies the material space and the temporality of the human. Thus it is a sheer operation, it is a methodological procedure, it is a ruse. It does not believe in the possibility of a better and more perfect universe but only in the intellectual trick which constitutes a reality in its own right. It simulates the material reality, it also operates with it and is concerned only with it but only in order to “spectralize” and accomplish its total exploitation. The materialism of the contemporary capitalist society is deprived of a sense of realness, since the real is replaced by operations of abstraction made of the meanings we have assigned to the real and to materiality. Capitalist and modern philosophy’s materialism is about the unstoppable tendency—since it is an immanent tendency—to transpose “sensuous matter” into the meanings that can be attached to it and therefore be reduced them. Perversely, it’s materialism without matter. The ruse of abstraction has mathematized matter and body, transformed economy into finances and sensations into psychological phenomena subject to biopolitical control. To speculate with resources, with lives, has brought about the rule of absolute speculation: management of realities and financial speculations as economy.

The political task of greatest urgency today is to emancipate the radically metaphysical and the “sensuous life” (the material without materialism and the real without philosophical realism) from the rule of abstraction. This is the core of Marx’s call for emancipation of the “human species.” And this call has never been answered through any other means except philosophical. “Dialectical materialism” is philosophically sufficient, put in Laruelian terms. Namely, it is a sufficient principle to determine and decide what is real. Not to betray this principle—not to betray principles of the doctrine—has become more important than not betray the real which invites the doctrine to examine its tenets. Abstraction has ruled Marxism—and Marxism has ruled through abstraction—for more than a century. Communist parties and states of the 20th century, in spite of the numerous differences, had one thing in common - the real, material, sensuous human life was the objectifiable material and means that served the greater political goals: “The perfect political state is, by its nature, man’s species-life, as opposed to his material life.”¹⁶

If “giving up one’s abstractions” (Marx) is the central and most important task of the science Marx invents and attempts to institute, then the task is to emancipate the necessary and primitive metaphysics of mediating the immediate real.

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Works of Karl Marx 1844: On the Jewish Question*, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>, accessed on 29 November 2013.

Economic emancipation and other important forms of social emancipation would only follow consequentially. The first task is to overcome the underlying alienation enabling the dichotomy between state politics and the civil society, between the “spiritual” or religion and the secular and, finally, to overcome phantomal existence and its suffocation of “real life.”

The perfect political state is, by its nature, man’s species-life, as opposed to his material life. All the preconditions of this egoistic life continue to exist in civil society outside the sphere of the state, but as qualities of civil society. Where the political state has attained its true development, man – not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life – leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community, in which he considers himself a communal being, and life in civil society, in which he acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. The relation of the political state to civil society is just as spiritual as the relations of heaven to earth. The political state stands in the same opposition to civil society, and it prevails over the latter in the same way as religion prevails over the narrowness of the secular world – *i.e.*, by likewise having always to acknowledge it, to restore it, and allow itself to be dominated by it. In his most immediate reality, in civil society, man is a secular being. Here, where he regards himself as a real individual, and is so regarded by others, he is a fictitious phenomenon. In the state, on the other hand, where man is regarded as a species-being, he is the imaginary member of an illusory sovereignty, is deprived of his real individual life and endowed with an unreal universality.¹⁷

Instead of simply concluding with this quote by Marx, let us remind ourselves: So far, both the bourgeois and the communist regimes have managed to maintain and deepen these divisions. They have accomplished this through the absolute rule of abstraction and brutal subjugation of materiality.

Katerina Kolozova is professor of philosophy and feminism at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities - Skopje. She is the author of *The Cut of the Real*, forthcoming with Columbia University Press in January 2014.

¹⁷ Karl Marx, *Ibid.*

Transbiological Re-imaginings of the Modern Self and the Nonhuman: Zoo Animals as Transbiological Entities

Marianna Szczygielska

Central European University, Department of Gender Studies
(mariannaszcygielska@gmail.com)

Abstract:

Biological and behavioral sciences rely heavily on a humanist discourse of species and matter that limits its inquiry to a set of phenomena that in some ways serve, resemble or define the ontology of the human self. In this essay I explore alternative ideas of biology that seriously restructure our thinking about the modern self. If, as Foucault suggests, power-knowledge shapes identities, norms and politics through the medical appropriation of bodies and through the production of scientific theories and practices, then what is the possible challenge to these forms of knowledge? I look at transbiology as a new branch of science that offers an alternative to the mainstream biological exploration of the body and the self, and maps new institutional cartographies of science and most importantly philosophical ontology.

Keywords: transbiology, nonhuman, technoscience, reproduction, zoo animals

Introduction

The notion of transbiology has been developed by Donna Haraway in her book *Modest_Witness*, and later by Sarah Franklin. It is an approach that aims at re-engineering the boundaries of the self, nature and the human by focusing on hybrid entities and shape-shifting categories emerging from the new technological advancements open to biosciences. Franklin looks at the practices of cloning, stem cell research, tissue engineering, and regenerative medicine to investigate modern subjectivity in relation to reproduction, kinship and genealogy.

With Haraway's cyborg and Franklin's sheep Dolly on the horizon, I want to map the new territories and spatialities of transbiology in relation to the nonhuman animal. My point of departure will be the space of the zoological garden. I am interested in how the transbiological reformulations of embodiment, becoming, living and evolving can be applied to the process of re-thinking humanness and animality that occur at the zoo. More specifically, I argue that zoo animals are postmodern, artificially engineered, hybrid entities which not only exist in relation to the human, but to put it even more strongly, they ontologically enable "the human" to exist. Zoo nonhuman animals have been bred in captivity for generations, their genetic material is an object of international trade, and most recently they have become subjects of genetic engineering – all of this makes them fall into the definition of transbiological organisms that are "made to be born."¹ I ask: what is the meaning of a transbiological re-definition of materiality and embodiment in the context of the zoo as an institution? What roles do reproduction and kinship play in this technoscientific realm of the genetic immortality of certain species? My aim in this essay is to test the transbiological inquiry of human/nonhuman relations in the space of the zoological garden in its current historical context, and therefore delineate possible points of fissure in the grand project of Enlightenment humanism. I hope that looking through the lenses of transbiology will allow me to pay special attention to the issues of sexuality and reproduction.

¹ Zoo nonhuman animals share these conditions with domestic and farm animals, however the institutional setting and scientific-epistemic practices to which they are subjected to are different.

Mapping Out Transbiological Imaginaries

I have decided to use transbiology in this research, because as a theoretical tool it helps me present my main argument about the institution of zoological garden. Namely, that it is not at all a space devoted to nature and the animals, but yet not fully to humans either. Taking a position in which the zoo serves as human entertainment only, means being completely blind to the material reality that zoo nonhuman animals are subjected to. Instead, I argue that the zoo is a “contact zone,”² to use Mary Louise Pratt’s concept, a space where nature and culture intermesh in an irreversibly hybridical manner. That is why I want to make a step away from the painfully humanist path of theorizing about the zoo as an all-too-human panoptical institution, and instead choose to critically focus on contemporary zoo practices and the status of animal embodiment. A transbiological approach to technoscience will guide my analysis, because as the remaking of the biological functions through scientific reconstruction of genetic materiality, it conceptually conceives of animal-hybrid-bodies, which I argue populate the zoological menageries. Before I go into the details of my argument, let me map out exactly what I mean when I use the term transbiology and how it is useful in a project that attempts to crush the myth of human exceptionalism.

Transbiology is deeply concerned with stories of origin – the origin of life, of reversing and controlling the cycles of reproduction, and the place of the body and humanness in these processes. To find the origins of the transbiological field it is necessary to go to Haraway’s famous *Cyborg Manifesto* and her figure of the cyborg. It is defined as a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.”³ In the context of technological advancements and the proliferation of chimerical bodily realities, the cyborg is a highly political entity that grows in parallel to the Foucauldian biopolitical subject. Haraway points out that “cyborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate; in our present political circumstances, we could hardly hope for more potent myths for resistance and recoupling.”⁴ Moreover, she sees biotechnologies along with communication technologies as tools for re-crafting bodies in a posthuman reality – “cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves.”⁵ Reproduction and kinship play a crucial role in Haraway’s re-thinking of biological discourses, which avoids anti-scientific demonology. It is especially visible in her later work, where the cyborg becomes an offspring of a material-semiotic lived reality, inhabiting “less the domains of ‘life,’ with its developmental and organic temporalities, than of ‘life itself,’ with its temporalities embedded in communications enhancement and system redesign.”⁶

Haraway’s genealogy of embryology has been taken up by Sarah Franklin, who, in her essay “The Cyborg Embryo: Our Path to Transbiology” puts reproduction in the centre of her definition of transbiology, and the ambiguous figure of the embryo (a not-yet-human entity that can have a form of a two-celled zygote, a blastula, or an embryonic body) as the main actor of her analysis. In transbiological laboratories, with stem cell research and tissue engineering on the table, the fusion of the technological and the natural creates new worlds and entities that quickly leave the sterile space of the laboratory and become our everyday companions. Throughout the article, Franklin makes a suggestive comparison between transbiology and the figure of the cyborg. She writes that, “like the cyborg, transbiology is also made up out of the complex intersection of the pure and the impure, where quality and biological control are literally merged to create new kinds of organisms, but this purity is hedged about by pathology of various kinds.”⁷

The transbiological organism and the cyborg share the same technoscientific pedigree, but do they share the same politics? It seems that Haraway’s cyborg politics was meant to be an emancipatory feminist and socialist project that with a tint of perverse illegitimacy would turn the tables of both, the grim biopolitical scenario and the puritanical myth of scientific control over the natural and artificial phenomena. Transbiology has its own politics that might seem less radical and more bound to the logics of the market in the age of late capitalism. After all, regenerative medicine, IVF (in vitro fertilization) clinics, cloning and stem cell research labs are top biomedical businesses with budgets higher than many countries’ health care investments. Franklin notes that “like the cyborg, the transbiological is not just about new mixtures, playful recombinations of parts or new assemblages: it is fundamentally defined by the effort to differentiate

² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008).

³ Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶ Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium.FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York, London: Routledge, 1997), 12.

⁷ Sarah Franklin, “The Cyborg Embryo Our Path to Transbiology,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7–8 (December 1, 2006): 176, doi:10.1177/0263276406069230.

these dirty descent lines into functional, safe and marketable human biology.”⁸ Social theorists and philosophers of science often easily take up the notion of technoscientific hybridity as an appealing concept that allows the mixing of social reality and embodied experience, forgetting about the messiness of this operation and the power relations that are not so easily erased from the picture. This is why it is important to remember the hybrids’ insubordination and their monstrous lineage that is inherent to corporate scientific creations. Technoscientific objects are not easily limited to any rigid economic, institutional, social and epistemic settings, and tend to spill over the boundaries set up by laboratory standards with rather insubordinate consequences to the material and political realms. This should be the benchmark of a post-anthropocentric turn that I think transbiology as a new language of biology can help us realize. According to Franklin, “*transbiology*—a biology that is not only born and bred, or born and made, but *made and born*—is indeed today more the norm than the exception.”⁹ I think that this short definition resembles Bruno Latour’s argument about western modernity being ultimately a proliferation of natureculture hybrids. For Latour the biggest myth of the Occidental modernist project is that the realm of nature can be smoothly separated from the domain of culture. Paradoxically, the more militant the Westerners become in guarding the boundaries of these two entities, the more impossible it is to neatly separate pure beings that would not be contaminated, or as Franklin says, dirty. It happens partly because the tool that was imagined to be the best at keeping the boundaries non-permeable is science. In his book *We Have Never Been Modern* Latour argues that to be truly modern means to engage in two practices: *translation*, that creates the natural-cultural hybrids, and *purification*, that creates two distinct ontological zones of Nature and Culture.¹⁰ The tension between the two zones creates an in-between area populated by hybrids and cyborgs. In this sense, according to the Actor-Network Theory, transbiological imaginary has its origins in the Enlightenment project of modernity and is a product of the scientific revolution. Latour’s main argument is that we have never actually been modern, although we are convinced of even being post-modern. Donna Haraway in her book *When Species Meet* titles its first part “We Have Never Been Human” paraphrasing Latour. She writes: “modernist versions of humanism and posthumanism alike have taproots in a series of what Bruno Latour calls the Great Divides between what counts as nature and as society, as nonhuman and as human.”¹¹

Coming back to Latour, in his later book *Politics of Nature* he tries to show how a human-nonhuman collective would look like and what steps would be necessary in order to make these fuzzy assemblages work. Deeply imbedded in the field of anthropology of the laboratory,¹² he shares Franklin’s observation that scientific practice is far from creating risk-free objects with clear boundaries. According to both theorists, any belief in scientific objectivity should have been buried a long time ago. What about the hybrid creatures that start to enter the world whether we like or not? Should we be alarmed by their existence? Latour responds to that concern:

[W]e do not need a dramatic and mysterious “conversion” to search for new nonhumans: the small transformations carried out by scientific disciplines in laboratories are entirely sufficient. Yes, there is indeed an objective external reality, but this particular externality is not definitive: it simply indicates that new nonhumans, entities that have never before been included in the work of the collective, find themselves mobilized, recruited, socialized, domesticated.¹³

These new domesticated entities come about with the new language of post-molecular biology. The transbiological domain rests on the *trans*-coding between discourses, intensive work of *translation* revealed by Latour, and the *transfer* of both knowledges and material substances. The domestication and wilderness of nonhuman animals seems to be the crucial part of what constitutes the work of translation that is taking part in the zoological garden. I argue that the language of genetic code together with the evolutionist discourse of extinction provide a model for transbiological rethinking of the function of the zoo in its discursive, and most importantly, material form.

The perfect semiotic-material example of the new transbiological language is genetic coding and the gene as a concept that emerged as a central category for molecular biology in the twentieth century. Hans-Jorg Rheinberger analyzed the trajectory of this concept to argue that the gene is an “epistemic thing” – a fuzzy concept with imprecise boundaries. “Such objects” – he writes – “derive their specific historical contours from variable epistemic practices. In classical genetics, the gene unquestionably served as a formal entity that made it possible to explain in the context of ever more ingenious experiments in cross-breeding, the emergence or disappearance of certain characters in subsequent

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 10–12.

¹¹ Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 9.

¹² Bruno Latour and Stève Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton University Press, 1979).

¹³ Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 38.

generations.”¹⁴ Rheinberger argues that “what makes a gene a gene” in molecular biology is its impreciseness that later translates also into the imprecise objects of study that are constantly “in flux”. He eloquently demonstrates that what we now think about genetics, heredity and evolution is structured by series of translations, negotiations, meaningful mistakes, half-baked definitions and shaky hypotheses that occur both in the laboratory and outside of it. He argues that this impreciseness and fuzziness has positive effects in science: “as long as epistemic objects and their concepts remain blurred, they generate a productive tension: they reach out into the unknown and as a result they become research tools.”¹⁵ Maneuvering between concepts like the gene, the molecule, nuon, DNA, genome and integron, Rheinberger traces the new language of post-molecular biology in the sequence of terminological/linguistic shifts “from control to information, message and code, thence to communication and signaling systems, and finally to language itself, to the text, written and read.”¹⁶

From the point of view of this hybrid terminology that eventually enabled the transbiological approach, organisms that become subjects of science can be treated as symbolic, and not just as material outcomes of the scientific machinery. I would like to use Rheinberger’s term “contained excess” to examine how zoo animals inscribe into the transbiological imaginary.¹⁷ I treat “contained excess” as the theoretical counterpart of caged animals, because it brings about the zone of indistinction from which hybrid creatures emerge. For Rheinberger “contained excess” equals productive tension coming from the friction of the rough, imprecise edges of scientific fuzzy objects and their work of running into different situations/realities. Latour calls these kinds of objects “hairy” as if they were overgrown with socionatural relations, revealing the work of different actors and actants in their structural appearance. In contrast to the “bald objects” of epistemological naturalism, these fuzzy hybrids “have no clear boundaries, no well-defined essences, no sharp separation between their own hard kernel and their environment. It is because of this feature that they take on the aspect of tangled beings, forming rhizomes and networks.”¹⁸ In this sense I argue that zoo animals are contained within the friction zone¹⁹ of culture and nature clashing – they are supposed to stand for wild animals, while at the same time they are exhibited in the middle of contemporary cities in fabricated naturalness. The institution of the zoo itself is hard to be clearly defined. Is it a place of science? Is it an entertainment venue? Or maybe an archive of endangered species that helps to conserve the last reservoirs of wild nature? Therefore, I argue that the zoo itself is a place of contained excess – a bricolage made up from various interconnections between science, the market, and a specific kind of ecological politics.

However most importantly, it is the zoo nonhuman animals that are truly transbiological, fuzzy objects. Franklin notes that “transbiology is real, material, factual and consequential in all of the senses that Latour articulated so vividly in his account of the birth of new entities such as somatostatin, which become not only things, objects, stable functions, but part of a genealogy of other objects ‘sedimented’ through their increasingly routine use to become the taken-for-granted conditions of the world around us.”²⁰ In this sense, zoo nonhuman animals are often taken for granted as just being there in the space of the zoo. I suggest looking at these nonhumans from a different perspective, as organisms that have been subjected to series of genetic manipulations, trainings, trade and also torture. I look at zoo animals as having a long history of scientific appropriation and colonial past. I would even dare to say that zoo animals are transgenic creatures, because of their ambiguous relation to the environment they are forced to inhabit, and their supposed function in the space of the zoo. I find it extremely ironic that a cheetah is exhibited in a space with fake rocks and an African savannah landscape painted in the background of its wall. A plaque with the description of the specimen refers the visitors to a certain place in Ugandan jungle, while the actual cheetah is fourth generation zoo attraction bred in a laboratory and bought from another zoo. I will now explore this paradoxical relationship between animal embodiment, its environment and discursive framing of its existence, along with new possibilities posed by the transbiological approach.

Trans-zoological Encounters

I decided to investigate the zoological garden from the perspective of transbiology, because most analyses of the zoo are limited to a spatial and visual analysis of this institution. I will first exemplify this approach in studying the zoo.

¹⁴ Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Timothy Lenoir, *An Epistemology of the Concrete: Twentieth-Century Histories of Life* (Duke University Press, 2010), 154.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁸ Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 24.

¹⁹ Anna Tsing, “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species,” *Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species*, n.d., <http://tsingmushrooms.blogspot.com/>.

²⁰ Franklin, “The Cyborg Embryo Our Path to Transbiology,” 178–179.

Irus Braverman in her article “Looking at zoos” seeks to go beyond the Foucauldian notion of panopticism.

Despite this declaration, she ends up glorifying “the importance of vision in the zoos’ presentation of animals as well as the major technologies that are used to intensify such animal visions.”²¹ Randy Malamud in his book fully devoted to zoo stories, *Reading Zoos*, also places a lot of emphasis on zoo spectatorship. Investigating humans more than animals, he argues for closeness between spectatorship and voyeurism or even exhibitionism understood here as social disorders. “Zoo spectatorship” – he writes – “is passive, minimally imaginative, cheaply vicarious, at least slightly distasteful, conducive to a range of socially inappropriate or undesirable behavior, and inhibitive, rather than generative, of the creative experience and appreciation of nature.”²² However problematic this graphic and clinical equation of spectatorship and voyeurism might be, Malamud makes an argument against the objectification of zoo animals. By exposing (and in a way condemning) the erotics of the zoological gaze of the visitors, he also points to the resemblance between the zoo and panopticon – another classic trope in theorizing zoo. Following Foucault from *Discipline and Punish* Malamud suggests that the zoo semantically and institutionally reiterates the prison’s surveillance system. Foucault actually wondered if Jeremy Bentham, the famous architect of the Panopticon was inspired by the construction of La Vaux’s menagerie at Versailles: “one finds in the programme of the Panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space. The Panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual distribution by specific grouping and the king by the machinery of a furtive power.”²³ Not to deny the intense power relations that permeate the zoological institution, but this kind of framing is bound to purely historical accounts of the zoo machinery and in some ways it commits the common sin of a classically poststructuralist approach in the humanities – it fetishizes the event of the Enlightenment and its imaginative power over the present. In this way it never gets to the point of seeing the zoo in its current form, and therefore omits new kinds of practices and power relations that spring from technological advancement and that occur at the “backstage” of the zoo.

Malamud notices that “the spectator’s position is circumscribed by paradox: the zoo promises it will allow them to see everything, but they may really see nothing.”²⁴ Indeed, from the perspective of the visitors the complicated machinery of the zoological industry remains largely concealed. The curious and arrogant gaze of the audience of the zoological spectacle is spared the view of a different technological spectacle that takes place behind the scene. I argue that the contemporary zoological garden is closer to a hi-tech laboratory than to a prison. Most importantly, this technology is all about reproduction and sexuality.

According to Donna Haraway “transgenic creatures, which carry genes from ‘unrelated’ organisms, simultaneously fit into well-established taxonomic and evolutionary discourses and also blast widely understood senses of natural limit.”²⁵ This description of a transbiological organism could be easily applied to zoo nonhuman animals. The “genes from ‘unrelated’ organisms” do not necessarily mean that they are from different species; the “unrelatedness” is a crucial factor for zoo scientists who control and plan animals’ mating in order to avoid interbreeding. The goal is to create another healthy specimen that will “fit into the taxonomic” table that the zoo exhibits. Despite the fact that the whole story of the zoo’s genetic manipulations is wrapped up in an ideological framework of wildlife conservation, ensuring biodiversity or even rescuing “endangered species”, one of the main reasons for introducing these cautious and sophisticated breeding plans and costly IVF technologies is that due to international treaties and commerce law it is often impossible to acquire specimens from “the wild” anymore. Nigel Rothfels in his essay on immersion exhibition as a new trend in zoo practices, writes: “When we hear about the impressive Species Survival Programs (SSPs), in which accredited zoos work together to breed endangered animals, we are not supposed to trace their origin to the difficulties of obtaining new wild-caught specimens in a world of international laws and treaties designed to protect animals from commercial trade.”²⁶ Species Survival Programs are part of zoo propaganda that is actually all about saving the institution from extinction. The new immersion exhibitions promise zoo-goers not only a better, more realistic imitation of nature and an exciting encounter with exotic animals, but also pad the conscience of zoo spectacle consumers. The zoo ticket is promised to be a “ticket to paradise” for endangered species, as part of the fee is supposed to go nature conservation in “the wild”. However, let’s not forget that the technology invested in recreating a piece of a Congolese jungle in the middle of the Bronx has to pay off too. Rothfelds concludes that “the point is that elaborate new high-

²¹ Irus Braverman, “Looking at Zoos,” *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 6 (November 2011): 810.

²² Randy Malamud, “Zoo Spectatorship,” in *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*, ed. Linda Kalof and Amy J. Fitzgerald (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007), 220.

²³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 203.

²⁴ Malamud, “Zoo Spectatorship,” 222.

²⁵ Haraway, *Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium.FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse*, 56.

²⁶ Nigel Rothfels, *Representing Animals* (Indiana University Press, 2002), 217.

tech immersion habitats/enclosures/cages for primates and pandas and other animals—exhibits that make celebrities out of the animals and out of the zoo directors—seem only to generate a need for more spectacular exhibits and more spectacular animals.”²⁷ In addition, only certain animals are good celebrity material, as the recent panda-mania, or whale obsession after the movie *Free Willy* seem to demonstrate.

What kinds of technologies are employed in a contemporary zoo? The landscape immersion revolution that Rothfelds talks about requires modern equipment to produce “jungle sounds” from camouflaged speakers, fake mountains with computer systems hidden inside to manage the temperature, air humidity and light intensity. Some plants are not real, some branches are made out of epoxy, steel and urethane, some trees are just replicas; the waterfall is controlled by a computer program and can be easily shut down. Recently visitors have also been encouraged to look up information and watch short presentations on LCD touchscreens situated near the cages with nonhuman animals on display, or to pick up cards with a QR barcode that after being scanned by a smartphone will lead you to the zoo’s website. Every new generation of planners and designers create virtual worlds and landscapes believed to do a better job of re-constructing and mimicking nature. Nowadays, they promise a “shift in zoo philosophy, from the ‘homocentric’ perspective that had long prevailed to a ‘biocentric’ ethic more in tune with the environmentalism of the day.”²⁸ This ideological stagecraft is the modern bioparks’ trademark. As Jeffrey Hyson noticed, “the ecological exactitude that planners so admire in contemporary exhibits seems to be utterly lost on most visitors—a situation that seriously compromises any claims for the educational power of environmentalist landscape architecture.”²⁹

Apart from these popular entertainment industry alterations of the zoo exhibition, there is another side of technological immersion. I am referring here to medical technologies, which are the most interesting from the point of view of transbiology. Zoo nonhumans exist in an artificially created environment that is supposed to be a perfected, better “nature” for them: “food is plentiful and more and more interesting; parasites are carefully managed; sicknesses are combated with the full range of modern medical technologies.”³⁰ With an army of veterinarians and teams of biologists, the zoo manages animal welfare and ensures reproductive success for animals who are now “freed” from the dangers of the wilderness, where diseases, poachers (a very racialized category in the zoo rhetoric), and the destruction of their natural habitats seem to lurk behind every non-plastic tree. Special feeding plans and antibiotics are necessary to make some of the animals survive in an environment that is far from their natural habitats. The difficult process of acclimatization is technologically boosted, so that penguins can survive in the Singapore Zoo and meerkats in Budapest Zoo.

It wasn’t always like that – the rates of animals that died because of and during the transfer to new climate zones and failed acclimatization were much higher in the 19th century. Part of the reason why, is due to the fact that animals which populate the zoos nowadays are quite distant relatives of those first founding specimens. Just as the invention of antibiotics was a breakthrough in human history, for zoo nonhumans it was also a revolutionary step.³¹

The biggest zoological gardens have modern laboratories as part of their institutional setting. The title of one of Bruno Latour’s essay “Give Me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World” could be an accurate description of the zoo lab – inside a production and re-modeling of critters happen as parts of recreating the natural world in a miniature. Latour writes that “the very difference between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, and the difference of scale between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ levels, is precisely what laboratories are built to destabilize or undo.”³² Microlevel scientific negotiations taking place in the zoo laboratory later translate into macro-societal changes in the form of the aforementioned discourse on wildlife conservation and ecological principals as part of the zoo’s rhetoric. Moreover, Rothfelds argues that “the enthusiasm with which zoo professionals have embraced such reproductive technologies such as in-vitro fertilizations, frozen-thawed embryo transfers, and nuclear transfers to ‘reproduce’ particularly endangered or charismatic species such as elephants, pandas, great apes, and African wildcats suggests just how deeply the idea of the zoo as an Ark has resonated within the zoo world.”³³

²⁷ Ibid., 218.

²⁸ Jeffrey Hyson, “Jungle of Eden: The Design of American Zoos,” in *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 23.

²⁹ Ibid., 40.

³⁰ Rothfelds, *Representing Animals*, 202.

³¹ Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³² Bruno Latour, “Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World,” in *Science Observed. Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, ed. Karin Knorr and Michael Mulkay (Sage, 1983), 143, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/12-GIVE%20ME%20A%20LAB.pdf>.

³³ Rothfelds, *Representing Animals*, 217.

Reproduction lies at the heart of zoo's scientific laboratories. A recent story from the Chicago Zoo about the breeding of lowland gorillas revealed different factors of control over animals' reproduction, and the technology involved in making a successful genetic match. According to the BBC article "zoo biologists use genetic analysis, demographic statistics and keen familiarity to plan the sex lives of their charges. Their goal is to avoid inbreeding and produce healthy offspring."³⁴ They use computer analysis to pair a genetically suitable couple. Genetic tests, a software that traces pedigree way back to the wild, and international databases all become intrinsic elements of the breeding plan. The reasons for such careful calculations are partly revealed by Sarah Long from the Population Management Center at the Lincoln Park Zoo: "We're not getting new founders... wild-born animals. Now zoos are more focused on preserving what we have."³⁵ Later the article shows that the female gorilla was even given oral contraceptives before the biologist thought it would be appropriate for the couple to mate. Oftentimes, the sexual act is excluded from the breeding process by the use of IVF technology - the conception of new specimens takes place on a Petri dish in the laboratory. Some zoos even specialize in breeding certain species, and are well-established brokers of animal gametes on the international zoo market. The rescue from extinction is provided by gametes and tissue samples being preserved cryogenically.

While Malamud argues for "the zoo as a venue for symbolically playing out issues of human sexuality – straightforwardly or ironically", I try to switch the attention from human animals to the control of the nonhuman animals' sexuality and sex lives.³⁶ Maybe it does not strike us as much as it should, because we are used to pets, domestic and farm animals being objects of human genetic manipulations for centuries. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that a sentimental attitude towards domestic animals developed in Western Europe and later in North America from the 17th century onwards.³⁷ He sees the reason for that in the growing distance between humans and nature. "Wild animals" – he writes – "and even farm animals were becoming less and less the common experience of men and women in an increasingly urbanized and industrialized society."³⁸ Interestingly, this alienation from nature coincides historically with the menageries and zoos emerging as new sites of human-animal encounter. Judging from the examples of pets and zoo animals, the affection towards animals with which humans try to reconnect takes a form of total control of their reproduction and sexual behaviour.

Genetic immortality, designed kinship structures and controlled genealogies – these seem to be the main components of the zoo's transbiological enterprise. The result is that zoo animals are "made to be born." Some specimens are more valuable than others, due to their specific characteristics, genetic make-up, or simply a better pedigree. Sarah Franklin in her essay on human reproductive practices wrote that thanks to the IVF method people commit to "the cycle of the removal of 'natural' limits through technology."³⁹ If one thinks of the nonhumans, the same technology is used to remove limits of breeding in captivity that is often a huge obstacle for certain species. But can one really compare zoo animals to lab nonhumans? I argue that this comparison is not only justified, but even valuable as something that might reveal layers of human-animal relations that occur at the zoo – some of which have been obscured by too much focus on spectatorship and the human side of this posthuman relationship. This relationship is thick from layers of colonial exploitation, multiple re-demarcations of the human/animal boundary, centuries of scientific manipulations, animal capital, bioethics, legal frameworks, battles between architects and landscape designers, ecologists, and finally environmentalists who have stepped in recently. I argue that investigating these many layers could help in understanding the connections between kinship, descent, species, sexuality, reproduction and science. This perspective is similar to Franklin's approach in her book *Dolly Mixtures*, devoted to the infamous cloned sheep, where she "tries to situate her emergence as part of the history of agricultural innovation and its close connection to life sciences – in particular reproductive biomedicine."⁴⁰ Digging into Dolly's genealogy and the rich significance of her existence to the politics, medicine, ethics and economics, Franklin manages to reveal the historical trajectory that made the sheep a biosocial entity, queering the notions of the biological, cultural, technological and political. With the new form of reproduction (trangenesis) Dolly still belongs to the long history of animal husbandry, control over their bodies and reproduction, and even imperial expansion. Franklin writes: "because Dolly's assisted creation out of technologically altered cells confirms the viability of new forms of coming into being, or procreation, her existence can be seen to redefine the

³⁴ Daniel Nasaw and Matt Danzico, "The Science and Heartbreak of Zoo Romance," *BBC*, December 5, 2011, sec. Magazine, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15725454>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Malamud, "Zoo Spectatorship," 226–227.

³⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan, "Animal Pets: Cruelty and Affection," in *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*, ed. Linda Kalof and Amy J. Fitzgerald (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007), 150.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁹ Sarah Franklin and Helena Ragoné, eds., *Reproducing Reproduction: Kinship, Power, and Technological Innovation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 108.

⁴⁰ Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

limits of the biological, with implications for how both sex and reproduction are understood and practiced."⁴¹ What she calls the "remixing of sex" shows how the transbiological imaginary thoroughly affects reproduction, sex, and sexuality. Later in the book, Frankling mentions how cloning is associated with the fear of same-sex reproduction.⁴² She draws on Jackie Stacey's analysis of science-fiction cinema that featured new genetics. Stacey notices: "The reproduction of sameness through sexual difference is no longer so straightforward when the means for assuring its continuity are new technologies of replication that trouble the authority of paternity, inheritance, and heterosexuality in the cultural imagination."⁴³

I want to point to the close relation between Dolly and zoo animals. The futurism of the zoo's genetic research shifts the discussion toward the topics of extinction, immortality, and even toward the possibility of turning back time by reproducing species that have already gone extinct. These kinds of magic tricks have already happened before – for example the attempts to recreate aurochs, an ancestor of domestic cattle that went extinct, started in Germany in the 1920s. Brothers Heinz and Lutz Heck, both directors of zoos in Berlin and Munich tried to "breed back" the aurochs by selective breeding of their domestic descendants with the biggest phenotypical resemblance to the extinct species.⁴⁴ Their project continues till today. The Polish Foundation for Recreating Aurochs established in 2006 has already extracted DNA material from bones and horns of museum specimens of the ancient ox.⁴⁵ Scientists plan to use the cloning method and modern biotechnology to bring these creatures that went extinct over 400 years ago back to life. Another project called "TaurOs Project" by a Dutch Foundation called "Stitching Taurus" mixes the Heck brothers' approach and the biotechnological method.⁴⁶ Dutch scientists select DNA sequences from primitive breeds of cattle to match it with the aurochs DNA from museum samples. With these kinds of projects that proliferate in zoos all around the world another layer needs to be added – the national dimension of animals' genetic manipulation. It is not a coincidence that Polish scientists are attempting to recreate aurochs – a symbolic, strong and magnificent animal that appears on many cities emblems and takes people back to the "glorious" past of their country. New biotechnologies promise almost infinite possibilities for zoos to reproduce and re-create specimens, but also to invest in post-modern animal totemism, by feeding some people's politics of resentment.⁴⁷

Conclusions

In this essay I have argued that zoo animals are hybridical, transbiological entities that activate different registers of politics, science, and economy. They resist extinction and a linear understanding of evolution by existing as technologically enhanced creatures, sharing bloodlines with Haraway's transgenic mouse and Franklin's cloned sheep. Zoological laboratories can be understood in terms of Rheinberger's "contained excess", which ends up releasing productive tension for re-thinking certain categories that are widely used in science and everyday life. While he looks at the concept of the gene, I would like to suggest that transbiological negotiations that occur at the zoo transform concepts of species and reproduction. Donna Haraway notes that:

The word *species* also structures conservation and environmental discourses, with their 'endangered species' that function simultaneously to locate value and to evoke death and extinction in ways familiar in colonial representations of the always vanishing indigene. The discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution—is at the heart of racism and flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism.⁴⁸

The transbiological zoo nonhuman animal bears the history of colonization, animal husbandry, national pride and genetic appropriation. Imbedded in the past as a symbol of biological and environmental conservatism, at the same time it "mixes sexuality" as a product of an alienated nature. Positioned somewhere between wilderness and domestication, the embodied reality of zoo animals makes them part of the transbiological imaginary. As species-types they are supposed to be perfect examples of their kinds, but as they are subjected to the same technology that created

⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

⁴² Ibid., 203.

⁴³ Jackie Stacey, "Masculinity, Masquerade, and Genetic Impersonation: Gattaca's Queer Visions," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (March 2005): 1873, doi:10.1086/426798.

⁴⁴ Cis van Vuure, *Retracing the Aurochs: History, Morphology, and Ecology of an Extinct Wild Ox* (Pensoft, 2005).

⁴⁵ Katarzyna Burda, "Wróćą Tury Do Natury?," accessed April 25, 2012, <http://www.newsweek.pl/wydanie/1195/wroca-tury-do-natury,58488,1,1>.

⁴⁶ "Project TaurOs," *Project TaurOs*, n.d., <http://www.stichtingtaurus.nl/cStdPage.php?ref=54&userID=5a026820ac22db0fc627bb00ac22f4d5>.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Horace Barnett Samuel (Courier Dover Publications, 2003).

⁴⁸ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 18.

the sheep Dolly, they queer the pathways of genealogy, reproduction and descent.

Marianna Szczygielska is a PhD Candidate in the Gender Studies Department at Central European University in Budapest. With a background in philosophy and gender studies Marianna is interested in posthumanism, queer theory and the philosophy of science. Marianna's current project, "Queer(ing) Naturecultures: The Study of Zoo Animals," examines how the concepts of nature, animality, and humanness have been and continue to be constructed in relation to sexuality through the specific site of the modern zoological garden. Apart from academic work, Marianna is also a feminist-queer activist.

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Dancing to the Rhythm of a Geiger Counter: Modern(ist) Narcissism and the Anthro(s)genic Shock

João Florêncio

Goldsmiths University of London

(j.florencio@gold.ac.uk)

Abstract:

In 2011, the biggest nuclear accident since Chernobyl took place at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. Soon after the nuclear accident, a video appeared on YouTube in which a rogue power plant worker walked towards one of the site's CCTV cameras and pointed to its centre while watching his own image being streamed live on his smartphone. Despite it clearly being a reinterpretation of *Centers*, the 1971 performance by Vito Acconci, this essay argues that the Fukushima reenactment not only questioned the cultural paradigms that grounded Acconci's original gesture, but also signaled the urgent need for humankind to reconsider its own ontological and epistemological grounds in the face of imminent extinction. By comparing Vito Acconci's *Centers* with its Fukushima reenactment, the essay tells the history of Modernity and of its failure as a project of human emancipation, grounded on a fantasy of human mastery of 'Nature.'

Keywords: Performance, Anthropocene, Modernity, Modernism, Acconci

(After the heathwaves: Heath Death, Entropy,
Absolute Zero...)
—Peter Reading¹

Setting the Scene

On the 11th of March 2011, at exactly 14:46 JST, the Pacific Coast of Tōhoku in the Northeast of Honshu, Japan, was hit by the 9.0 magnitude-strong Great East Japan Earthquake. Immediately after the beginning of the seismic activity, the emergency shutdown system of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, located in the most affected coastal area, went into operation in Units 1, 2, and 3, which were active at the time.² However, due to the severity of the tremors, the electricity transmission between the Tokyo Electric Power Company Shinfukushima Transformer Substations and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was also damaged, resulting in a total loss of electricity and in the consequent automatic activation of the emergency diesel generators, which were responsible for powering the core cooling down process in the three active reactors.³ Following from this, and as it is often the case, a major tsunami was formed as a consequence of the disturbances in the oceanic crust and reached its peak at 15:37 JST. As if the damage caused by the earthquake hadn't already been enough, the tsunami flooded and destroyed the emergency diesel generators of the nuclear power plant, along with its seawater cooling pumps, the electric wiring system, and the DC power supply for Units 1, 2, and 4. By the time the water had retreated, the site was powerless and full of debris, and its monitoring equipment was left irresponsive.⁴ Ultimately, the lack of electricity made it extremely difficult to cool down the reactors and the lack of access made it harder to bring in cooling alternatives such as fire trucks. As a result, a series of reactor core exposures and damages started at approximately 18:10 JST in Unit 1, followed by Unit 2 at 9:10 on the 13th of March, and Unit 3 at approximately 17:00 on the 14th. These events led to hydrogen explosions at the Unit 1 building

¹ Peter Reading, *-273.15* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books, 2005), 1.

² See Japan, NAIIC, *The Official Report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission* (Tokyo: The National Diet of Japan, 2012), 23-24.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

on the 12th of March, at Unit 3 on the 14th, and at Unit 4 on the 15th, followed by an explosion and mass discharge of radioactive material from Unit 2 also on the 15th.⁵ It is estimated that a total of 900PBq of radioactive substances were released, 1/6 of the emissions of the Chernobyl accident, leading the Japanese government to evacuate 146,520 people living within a 20Km radius of the power plant, several foreign embassies to advise their citizens to evacuate areas extending as far as Tokyo, and the disaster to be rated 7—“Major Accident”—on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale.⁶ According to the World Nuclear Association, most radioactivity accumulated in the soil was due to the release of Caesium-137, an easily dispersible radionuclide with a 30-year half-life, which can contaminate land for some time and, due to its solubility, end up being consumed by humans.⁷ In July 2011, data collected by the Japanese Government identified the presence of accumulated Caesium-137 at radioactivity levels ranging between 10KBq and 3000KBq/m² in locations up to 80Km away from nuclear power plant.⁸ Although the levels of radioactivity were much lower than those released during the archetypical nuclear accident that was Chernobyl, and even if there is no consensus amongst experts on the long-term health effects of exposure to low radiation levels, Chernobyl has taught the world that the levels of radioactivity accumulated in mountain and forest areas do not naturally diminish for many decades, and that wildfires, floods, and other events, whether natural or not, can cause the contamination to spread even further.⁹ Still, one cannot as yet know what long-term consequences will the radioactivity released during the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster have both on the humans that were exposed to it and on future human generations. And neither can we predict with absolute certainty how far will the radioactivity reach and for how long. Nevertheless, one thing is already certain amidst all that uncertainty: in June 2013, a paper was published by scientists at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa, presenting the outcomes of a series of physiological and genetic tests done to the *Zizeeria maha*, a pale grass blue species of butterfly common in Japan which, like all butterflies more generally, is used as an indicator species in the evaluation of environmental conditions.¹⁰ The results were clear: not only were mild morphological abnormalities found in 12.4% of the individuals caught in 7 localities near Fukushima in May 2011, but, perhaps most importantly, those abnormalities were inherited by their second generation, which also presented a much higher overall rate of abnormalities at 33.5%.¹¹ What that shows is that, only two months after the Fukushima accident, the local ecosystems had already been forever changed as a result of the spread of artificial radionuclides.

Exterior. Nuclear Site.

Soon after the Fukushima nuclear disaster a video appeared on YouTube in August 2011 and quickly went viral. In it, a power plant worker wearing full protection clothing is seen walking towards one of the power plant's CCTV cameras in the aftermath of the explosions and radioactive discharge. Carrying in his hand what seemed to be a smartphone streaming live images from that particular CCTV camera, the worker uses the live stream on his mobile device to help him position himself at the centre of the frame in the foreground of the image. Behind and besides him, the otherwise vegetal landscape is punctuated by metal pipes and vertical steel structures. As soon as the worker is positioned at the centre of the screen, he opens his right arm 45 degrees to the side and pauses there, pointing to the site on which he stands. After a few seconds he raises his arm up to the sky and then down again towards the front until his index finger is pointing at the centre of the camera. As he stays there, his right index finger pointing at the camera, his left hand holds his phone close to his face so he sees the live streaming. After about 20 minutes, he leaves.



Image 1: anonymous worker points a finger at a monitoring live camera, Fukushima 1 nuclear plant, 2011. Video still.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 34. See also Rama C. Hoetzlein, “Visual Communication in Times of Crisis: The Fukushima Nuclear Accident,” *Leonardo* 45, no. 2 (2012): 113 and World Nuclear Association, “Fukushima Accident 2011,” <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Safety-and-Security/Safety-of-Plants/Fukushima-Accident-2011/> [accessed April 3, 2013].

⁷ World Nuclear Association, “Fukushima Accident 2011.”

⁸ NAIIC, *The Official Report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission*, 40.

⁹ See Ibid.

¹⁰ See Atsuki Hiyama et al., “The biological impacts of the Fukushima nuclear accident on the pale grass blue butterfly.” *Scientific Reports* 2, no. 570 (2012): 1.

¹¹ Ibid., 2, 5.

After the video went viral and started attracting the attention of internet users worldwide, the media, and even TEPCO and the Japanese government, the mysterious worker reemerged in late 2011, this time online, with a blog on which he published documentation and texts on the now infamous event, and acknowledged it was a reenactment of Vito Acconci's 1971 work *Centers*, adapted to the site of the Fukushima nuclear crisis and the present global time of the Internet and closed-circuit surveillance systems.¹²

The worker's reference to Vito Acconci became less of a surprise after March 2012, when Tokyo-based artist Kota Takeuchi announced his intention of including the Fukushima CCTV video in a solo exhibition he was due to hold in Japan's capital city.¹³ Soon, all the speculation on the identity of the worker seemed to have turned into a safe degree of certainty. Although Takeuchi still refused to confirm he was the man pointing at the CCTV camera even after having announced the inclusion of the video in his solo show, the news stories ran by media titles such as *The Japan Times* seemed to leave little room for doubt: according to the newspaper not only was 29-year-old Takeuchi about the same height and built as the rogue Fukushima worker, but he had also admitted to having been working at the power plant at the time the video was shot.¹⁴ Little room for doubt, then—the Fukushima CCTV video had been officially recognised as art.

With such qualifier grounding the visioning of the video and with its reassuring passage from the anonymity of the internet to the signed white walls of a Tokyo art space, a few questions arise: to which extent did the radioactive spatiotemporal context of Takeuchi's video added to, expanded, or problematised the original gesture of Vito Acconci? In what way or ways does the viewing of a man pointing at himself pointing at the centre of a screen acquire a new set of possible readings when it is framed by the anxious clicks of a geiger counter? What happens to Acconci's video when the man who reenacts it stands on the contaminated grounds of a nuclear disaster? Or, ultimately, if Acconci's *Centers* is agreed upon as a paradigmatic moment of late Modernity, what can Takeuchi's video tell us about the urgencies of our own present time?

Interior. White Cube.

When, in 1971, Vito Acconci decided to sit in front of a television connected to a video camera and film himself pointing at the centre of the screen that, in turn, was showing his own mirror-image, live, pointing back at himself, time stopped and the whole ethos of Modernity was condensed in the 20-minute duration of the video-performance.



Image 2: Vito Acconci, *Centers*, 1971. Video Still.

According to Rosalind Krauss, writing five years later, in 1976, in the first issue of *October*, Acconci's work, a "sustained tautology: a line of sight that begins at Acconci's plane of vision and ends at the eyes of his projected double" is a paradigmatic example of the "narcissism so endemic to works of video."¹⁵ It is because *Centers* reveals the human

¹² n.a., "About the pointing a finger toward Fukuichi live cam," <http://pointatfuku1cam.nobody.jp/e.html> [accessed February 25, 2013].

¹³ See Edan Corkill, "Are we pointing at the right guy?," *The Japan Times*, March 8, 2012.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October* 1 (1976): 50.

body bracketed from its environment by being caught within the feedback loop of a visual apparatus that is able to simultaneously record and transmit images, that Krauss uses it as the ultimate example of video's underlying narcissism. Whereas established art forms such as painting, sculpture, or even film, defining themselves through the exploration of the material specificities of their particular medium, in video work the artist is left surrounded only by him or herself, eventually collapsing the present through self-encapsulation, spatial closure, and self-reflection.¹⁶ Like the lake that reflects Narcissus back to himself, video is, according to Krauss, revelatory of a self that is "split and doubled by the mirror–reflection of synchronous feedback".¹⁷

Through his use of a mirroring apparatus, Acconci staged the fusion of the artist with his own artwork. In Krauss' words,

[the] self and its reflected image are of course literally separate. But the agency of reflection is a mode of appropriation, of illusionistically erasing the difference between subject and object. Facing mirrors on opposite walls squeeze out the real space between them.¹⁸

Although it is not hard to follow Rosalind Krauss' view of Vito Acconci's *Centers* as a paradigmatic instance of the narcissistic obsession with specular images, it is less easy to agree with what she saw as video's rupture with the ethos and aesthetics of modernist art practices or, at least, with Modernism as it was theorised by modernist art critics. Even if in *Centers* the object did indeed reflect back the narcissistic subject, it is difficult to accept that such a mirroring was not a logical development of Modernism itself and that, as such, its relation with the artistic gestures found previously in modernist art was one of rupture rather than continuity. Such continuity could have been easily recognised by Krauss had the art critic taken into consideration the ideology on which Modernism and Modernity more broadly have been grounded since their inception as, respectively, artistic and civilisational projects. In other words, had Rosalind Krauss looked at modernist art in the context of the broader project of Modernity, she would have had to at least recognise the possibility that Acconci's work and the narcissism which she identified in video were both not a break away from but, rather, the logical culmination of a long social, political, and artistic enterprise, the history of which started around the same time Immanuel Kant answered the question "What is Enlightenment?"

Narcissist Modernity

According to Kant, the Age of Enlightenment was the moment in history when humankind realised that freedom and autonomy were its ultimate destiny. Answering the question *Was ist Aufklärung?* in 1784 in the newspaper *Berlinische Monatschrift*, Kant famously started by stating that "[enlightenment] is man's [sic] emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."¹⁹ Strongly grounded on his own philosophical project, Kant's answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" saw as the ultimate task of humankind to reach for perfection through the pursuit of autonomy and the free use of reason. It was reason that, from the moment in which it was awoken in the history of humankind, led humans to raise themselves above other animals by allowing them to project themselves into a freer, righteous and fairer future, and, as a consequence, to separate themselves from the natural environment through the realisation that humankind itself was the "true end of nature."²⁰ However, because thought has its own limits, Enlightenment was not only a programme aimed at the progressive liberation of reason and, as a consequence, of *man*, but it was also, and because of that, a project of *critique*, of recognising the barriers which thought must not cross if it is to produce valid knowledge.²¹ It was there that Kant placed his own *Critiques*. Widely recognised as the inaugural texts of Modernity understood as a set of social and political values and as an epistemological attitude grounded on a critical ethos, Kant's three *Critiques* were written as a field guide for what is knowable and what is, instead, ungraspable. One of their most striking conclusions was

¹⁶ Ibid., 53–54.

¹⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹⁸ Ibid., 56–57.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (London: Penguin Books), 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 94.

²¹ As Michel Foucault has put it:

Kant in fact describes Enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority; now it is precisely at this moment that the critique is necessary, since its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped. Illegitimate uses of reason are what give rise to dogmatism and heteronomy, along with illusion; on the other hand, it is when the legitimate use of reason has been clearly defined in its principles that its autonomy can be assured. The critique is, in a sense, the handbook of reason that has grown up in Enlightenment; and, conversely, the Enlightenment is the age of critique. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 104.

that, because the mind is only able to grasp the world through appearances that are passed on to it by the senses and organised under conceptual categories by understanding, knowledge of nature is only valid as long as it is understood as knowledge of things *qua* objects of experience and not knowledge of things in themselves. In other words, because things in themselves are outside the mind and are only able to be judged once they have been converted into thoughts, thought is only ever able to think thought and never the things outside thought to which thought itself refers.²² Given that time and space or, in other words, duration and extension, are a *priori* concepts of understanding that precede empirical reality, Kant defined his Transcendental Idealism as the doctrine that all appearances are regarded as mere representations, not as things in themselves, and that space and time, therefore, are only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given independently by themselves, or conditions of objects taken as things in themselves.²³

Following from the above, it is possible to identify the formation of a double separation of humans from 'Nature' in Kant's project for Enlightenment: not only are humans separated from it once through the development of their exclusive high mental faculties, but those mental faculties themselves, due to the conditions that must be in place for their correct operability, end up producing a second kind of separation, this time a separation of thought from world in itself. It is this twice-enforced divide between human and world that can still be seen today as the epistemological paradigm grounding a great amount of work that falls under *critique*, a dominant methodology of scholarly work that is perhaps better illustrated by Michel Foucault's archaeology of knowledge.

In his rethinking of Kant's answer to the question of what is Enlightenment, Foucault saw Kant's original text as the first time a philosopher has connected his work on knowledge with a reflection on history and on the particular moment in which and because of which he is writing.²⁴ It was because Kant saw his own age as calling for humankind to fulfil its duty of pursuing freedom through Enlightenment, that Foucault characterised the German philosopher as being the point of departure of the "attitude of modernity."²⁵ Modernity was, according to Foucault, an attitude because it was, first and foremost, a way of conceiving one's own time in relation to humanity's progression towards emancipation. Such attitude was not circumscribed in time because the project of *critique* was seen by Foucault as still ongoing: humankind was yet to reach its final cause, Enlightenment. It was, thus, in line with that ongoing critical enterprise that Foucault placed his own work, albeit with a crucial difference separating it from Kant's. Whereas Kant used critique in order to map the limits of a necessarily finite knowledge, Foucault put critique at the service of a genealogy of the present in order to demonstrate the historical contingency of knowledge and to then consider the possibility of breaking away from it. Like Foucault, himself, wrote:

But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a Positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.²⁶

It is Foucault's openly political version of critique that can be found today across academia. From Feminism to Queer Theory, from Deconstruction to Postcolonial Theory, the critical ethos of the Humanities, much indebted to Foucault's work, has taken as its primary role to reflect upon the limits of human knowledge in order to understand how what is taken for granted is indeed produced at the level of discourse through complex articulations of power and knowledge. Foucault's critical project, as it was seen, was one that aimed to reveal how knowledge, rather than describing a stable and graspable exterior reality, is indeed responsible for its production. As Deleuze put it, in Foucault the "subject is a variable, or rather a set of variables of the statement. It is a function derived from the primitive function, or from the statement itself."²⁷ By focusing on the performativity of knowledge, the critical project seeks to reveal how realities previously assumed to be universal are instead produced by knowledge itself. In other words, the aim of critique is that of revealing how, to quote Eve Sedgwick, "knowledge *does* rather than simply *is*."²⁸ To this primacy of the revelatory,

²² See Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 35-63.

²³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Marcus Weigelt (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 342.

²⁴ See Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?".

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), 47.

²⁸ Eve K. Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 124.

Sedgwick gave the name “paranoid reading” and characterised it as a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” a term borrowed from French philosopher Paul Ricour.²⁹ By privileging how knowledge performs the world rather than merely reflecting it, suspicion has taken over criticality, ultimately becoming an obstacle to its own project of separating the contingent from the universal. In other words, contemporary critique, in all its suspicion, ended up betraying itself by only allowing as certain the claim upon which critique itself depends for its own survival, i.e. the one that posits the historical contingency and performative nature of all knowledge. As Sedgwick asked, “*Always* historicize? What could have less to do with historicizing than the commanding, atemporal adverb ‘always’?”³⁰

Sedgwick’s diagnosis of the state of contemporary critique is also shared by French sociologist Bruno Latour. In the aftermath of 9/11 and as a response to the overwhelming proliferation of conspiracy theories pointing to ‘the real’ masterminds behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Latour wrote a piece for *Critical Inquiry* in which he examined the role critique had played in his own work and the ways in which uncritical suspicion has become the dominant feature of criticality. Giving as an example French philosopher Jean Baudrillard’s claim that “the Twin Towers destroyed themselves under their own weight, [...] undermined by the utter nihilism inherent in capitalism itself,” Latour argued that critique has become synonym with “*instant revisionism*” and inundated both academia and the non-academic public sphere with more or less sophisticated conspiracy theories.³¹ The problem is that whereas the critical enterprise had, since the dawn of Enlightenment, been concerned with disputing systems of beliefs such as those advocated by various religious doctrines and replacing them with scientifically validated *facts*, at the start of the 21st century and there being no beliefs left to disprove, critique has now started targeting facts themselves, often by negating their existence or by turning them into a mere product of their dialectical counterpart, the observing human subject and its world-making language.³²

The unfortunate outcome of that phenomenon is clear: while scholars spend their time trying to reveal the arbitrary nature of everything other than the critical enterprise itself, very real phenomena are having rather real consequences: global warming is happening, the Arctic ice cap is melting, natural resources are diminishing, sea levels are rising, and old and new pandemics are killing millions (unless you can pay to survive). The most obscene aspect of the unrestrained reign of critique is that, as Latour argued, it has gone from being a progressive, left-wing enterprise to having become the weapon of choice of conservative rhetorics, one that is used to discredit everything from the existence of global warming to the true causes of the 2008 banking crisis.³³ In short, widespread critique has become the cause of society’s inability to act upon issues as pressing as persisting social inequalities or climate change. In the 21st century the only thing humanity seems to be able to do is to argue while hoping that one day the cows will eventually come home (by themselves).

Granted, such such ethos of radical and widespread critique has brought undeniable benefits to human societies— from highlighting the nature of gender and ethnic inequalities to actively challenging the colonialist and Eurocentric structures of power that still operate today. Nevertheless, it has done so at the expense of its being able to make claims about anything other than knowledge itself: through its exclusive focus on relations of (human)power-(human) knowledge, critique has been unable to address anything beyond its human door step. In other words, because the critical attitude of Modernity has restricted itself to reflecting upon the limits of human knowledge as a way of driving (human) emancipation and freedom, it has progressively lost contact with the reality of the nonhuman ‘outside’ against which modern *man* had defined himself. As a necessary result of the modern narratives of progress towards autonomy and of the split between ‘Nature’ and “Culture,” humankind is today alienated from everything other than itself, living

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 125.

³¹ Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 228-229.

³² This is how Latour put it:

I want to show that while the Enlightenment profited largely from the disposition of a very powerful descriptive tool, that of matters of fact, which were excellent for *debunking* quite a lot of beliefs, powers, and illusions, it found itself totally disarmed once matters of fact, in turn, were eaten up by the same debunking impetus (Ibid., 232).

³³ As an example, in his essay for *Critical Inquiry*, Latour quoted a *New York Times* editorial from the 15 of March, 2003:

Most scientists believe that [global] warming is caused largely by man-made pollutants that require strict regulation. Mr. Luntz [a Republican strategist] seems to acknowledge as much when he says that “the scientific debate is closing against us.” His advice, however, is to emphasize that the evidence is not complete.

“Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled,” he writes, “their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the *lack of scientific certainty* a primary issue” (Ibid., 226).

in a house of mirrors where every single wall reflects back a version of ourselves and where the only possible task seems to be that of realising which of those reflections are true and which ones are, instead, fictitious. And so, the modern human, pilgrim of progress and reason, was left unable to grasp anything other than itself: its qualities, its capacities, its politics, its beauty. Like Narcissus stuck by the lake or—better—like Narcissus drowning in the lake, breathing the liquid of its own reflection (and happy ever after), civilisation keeps on going until the day comes when, after the heat waves and after all the heat deaths, we reach absolute zero.

Specular Modernism

In the previous section Modernity was seen driven Humanity into narcissism. In what follows, attention will be paid to how the narcissist attitude of modernity manifested itself in its art, leading modernism to become, paradoxically perhaps, yet another human mirror despite the supposed progression towards aesthetic autonomy that culminated in abstraction. In short, how was it that, unlike what was put forward by Rosalind Krauss, Vito Acconci's *Centers* did not represent a break with Modernism but was, instead, the fulfilment of Modernism's own unsung promise?

In order to answer the above question, one needs to start by looking at the most prominent advocate of modernist art: Clement Greenberg. Known for having defined Modernism as the culmination of art's path towards autonomy, Greenberg claimed that not only was Modernism a direct result of art's pursuit of autonomy but, very much like Kant and Foucault, it also had critique as its preferred method.³⁴ It was because Modernism was primarily a self-critical project that artists eventually turned their attention away from representations of everyday life and started instead focusing on the limits of their particular media.

Almost two decades later, in 1980, Michael Fried, also him a modernist critic and very much indebted to Greenberg, traced art's pursuit of autonomy all the way back to the latter part of 18th-century France.³⁵ What Fried identified in French painting of that time was the beginnings of a tendency to paint figures in a state of what he called "absorption," i.e., figures 'behaving' as if the beholder was not present. Referencing Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Un Père de famille qui lit la Bible à ses enfants*, Fried noted that,

each figure in the painting appeared to exemplify in his or her own way, i.e., the state or condition of rapt attention, of being completely occupied or engrossed or (as I prefer to say) absorbed in what he or she is doing, hearing, thinking, feeling.³⁶



Image 3: Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Un Père de Famille qui Lit la Bible à ses Enfants*, 1755. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

³⁴ In his words:

Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting—the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment—were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Modernist painting has come to regard these same limitations as positive factors that are to be acknowledged openly. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1988), 6.

³⁵ Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1980), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

According to his argument, that tendency appeared in France as a reaction against Rococo style which was predominant at the time. In order to illustrate that point, Fried quoted Diderot's devastating critique of Rococo painter François Boucher in which the author of *L'Encyclopédie* criticised the way the former painted children "frolicking on clouds" and never "studying a lesson, reading, writing, stripping hemp."³⁷



Image 4: François Boucher, *Angélique et Médor*, 1763. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre.

In Rococo painting, the figures seemed to exist in function of the beholder, they seemed to do nothing but 'posing' for him or her. According to Fried, what Diderot valued instead were figures fully absorbed in their own lives, figures that seemed oblivious to the fact that they were being looked at. In other words, and this is the crux of Fried's argument, it was because the figures of Greuze and Chardin "treated the beholder as if he were not there," that their paintings can be seen as marking the beginning of art's progression towards autonomy from life, where 'life' is indexed by the presence of the beholder.³⁸

However, what Fried seemed to overlook in his thesis was that, rather than calling for art to detach itself from life, what Diderot really intended was to strengthen the ties binding the two. By calling for the depiction of everyday scenes in painting and for a theatre that was oblivious of its audience, Diderot was not invoking art's autonomy *avant la lettre* but was instead favouring realist subject matters and naturalist acting as a tool of public education in the context of a growing bourgeois *polis*.³⁹ Rather than proposing that art should emancipate itself from life, Diderot's plan was for art to embrace life in its subject matter and assume a didactic function.

This tension between claims of art's autonomy on the one hand, and an emphasis on its didactic function on the other, can also be traced all the way back to Kant. At the beginning of his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant famously made a case for aesthetic's autonomy from life by claiming that judgements of taste are independent from all individual interests and desires. In other words, in order for a judgement of taste to be pure, a representation must be contemplated without influence from one's interest (or the lack of it) in the thing represented.⁴⁰ It is because judgements of taste are independent from personal interest that they must remain the same for everybody and, thus, be universal.⁴¹ However, on §59, Kant makes a crucial move, whereby he claims that, although beauty is autonomous from personal interests, it is nevertheless "a symbol of morality," i.e. of *practical* reasoning.⁴² By this the philosopher means that the beautiful and

³⁷ Ibid., 40.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

³⁹ Like Frans Grijzenhout writes, in clear opposition to Fried,

For Diderot, life and truth were the ultimate objectives of art. He eschewed excessively complex allegory and symbolism. In number 314 of his *Pensées détachées sur la peinture*, he pointed to the Dutch painter De Lairese, whose pictures are often beautiful but whose themes are obscure. By depicting 'honest' and 'simple' subjects realistically, the artist could hit what should be his true target, namely the heart of the viewer. Diderot hoped this would inspire the public to such things as filial and parental love, domestic happiness, and integrity. Frans Grijzenhout, "Between Reason and Sensitivity: Foreign Views of Dutch Painting, 1660-1800," in *The Golden Age of Dutch Painting in Historical Perspective*, eds. Frans Grijzenhout and Henk van Veen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

⁴⁰ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James C. Meredith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36-37.

⁴¹ Ibid., 42-43.

⁴² Ibid., 178.

the moral are *analogous* to one other, that is, their operation follows similar rules so that “the agreement [between the two] is merely in the form of reflection, and not in the content.”⁴³ Put very simply, when judging the beautiful, pleasure derives from the fact that the “*freedom* of the imagination [...is...] represented as in accord with the understanding’s conformity to law,”⁴⁴ whereby the understanding’s “conformity to law,” means its recognition of the “purposiveness of both nature and art.”⁴⁵ Therefore, in a judgement of taste, one experiences personal freedom (of the imagination) while nevertheless abiding by external universal *a priori* laws (those recognised by understanding in ‘Nature’ and art). Beauty is, thus, a symbol or metaphor of morality because, when acting morally, one’s will is also free despite the fact that “the objective principle of morality is set forth as also universal, i.e. for all individuals, and, at the same time, for all actions of the same individual”.⁴⁶

That apparent tension between art’s autonomy from life and its role as an agent of Enlightenment was in fact concomitant with the values and ideology of the emerging bourgeois order. As Peter Bürger notes in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, art’s supposed emancipation from life was deeply contradictory: whereas, on the one hand, the Kantian moment was responsible for inaugurating modernist aesthetic with its defence of art’s autonomy from life and, consequently, of the universality of the aesthetic judgement, on the other it was clearly the product of particular historical and social events by being deeply connected with the desire of the bourgeoisie to replace the individual interests of the Ancient Régime with the universality of Reason and moral law.⁴⁷

Given the above, it is reasonable to argue that, far from being detached from life, modernist art was in fact inseparable from it. In other words, rather than being autonomous from (human) life, modern art played an essential role in emancipating Humanity from ‘Nature’ by wrapping the former in an opaque layer of reassuring mirror-images. And so, the path that, following Michael Fried, had led from Greuze and Chardin to abstract expressionism was the exact same path that led Vito Acconci into the narcissistic loop of his own reflection.

The Anthropocenic Shock

Driven by humanity’s pursuit of autonomy, it was Modernity that, through its cutting of the Gordian knot that tied humans to nonhumans, eventually brought about capitalism and liberalism. In line with Modernity’s programme for an autonomous humankind, capitalism unfolded with the promise of shifting man’s exploitation of man towards man’s exploitation of ‘Nature.’ By seeing nature as the great outside rich in resources waiting to be exploited as fuel for the progress of humans and the accumulation of capital, capitalism thrived on the idea that the route towards the emancipation of all humans could only pass through a rise in the production of goods made possible by an intensification in the exploitation of ‘Nature.’

The problem was that Modernity and capital did not manage to put a stop to man’s exploitation of man and to bring about the autonomy that Modernity dreamt for all humans; on the contrary, capital has simply shifted exploitation to the global south, to those geographies at the fringes of the ‘civilised’ modern world where people live unaccounted for, uncared for, nonhumanly. And, similarly, humankind has in recent decades been forced to recognise not the limits of its own knowledge that the critical project sought to reveal but, instead, the reality of our imminent catastrophic extinction, triggered as it is by feedback loops resulting from our own disregard of the planet and unsustainable exploitation of its resources, driven by fantasies of teleological progress and economic growth. That is the shock of the Anthropocene, the time when the edges of the human-inflicted cut between ‘Nature’ and ‘Culture’ are finally reconnected albeit at the expense of a rather painful scar.

Writing in 2002 in *Nature*, chemist Paul Crutzen proposed to assign the term “Anthropocene” to “the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene—the warm period of the past 10–12 millenia.”⁴⁸ Crutzen’s proposed to set the beginning of the Anthropocene around 1784, the year when James Watt first designed the steam engine and when analyses of air trapped in polar ice first revealed growing global concentration of carbon dioxide.⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid., 179.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 174.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁷ See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 43.

⁴⁸ Paul J. Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” *Nature* 415 (2002): 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

According to data quoted by Crutzen, since the dawn of the industrial revolution in Britain, the human population increased tenfold to 6 billion, being expected to reach 10 billion before the end of the 21st century. Driven by changes in the human dietary habits made possible by the industrialisation of human food supply chains, the methane-producing cattle population has risen to 1.4 billion and the fishing industry has removed more than 25% of the primary fish production in upwelling ocean regions and 35% in the temperate continental shelf, while 30-50% of the planet's land surface is being exploited by humans. While dams and river diversions have been made possible thanks to the development of engineering and become common realities around the globe with cities like London having its small rivers now flowing through underground systems, tropical forests are disappearing and more than half of all accessible fresh water is being used by humans. Energy use has increased 16-fold during the twentieth century, leading to the emission of 160 million tonnes of atmospheric sulphur dioxide per year, more than twice the sum of its natural emissions, while more nitrogen fertiliser is applied in agriculture than is able to be fixed naturally by all terrestrial ecosystems. Added to that, fossil-fuel burning and agriculture have caused substantial increases in the concentration of greenhouse gases—carbon dioxide by 30% and methane by more than 100%, reaching their highest levels of the past 400 millennia. As a consequence of all those effects, caused so far by only 25% of the world population, the Earth's climate is changing dramatically and faster than it ever did in the previous 12 millennia of the Holocene, with global warming, climate change, and carbon emissions now often coming at the top of party-political debates.⁵⁰

In what can be seen as the planet's response to the modern dream of human autonomy, the Anthropocene on which we now stand has showed us that 'Culture' and 'Nature' are deeply entangled in one another. While Modernity fed on the dream of a human existence twice split from the real thanks to its mastery of reason and ethos of permanent critique, the Anthropocene has proved that emancipation and eventual human autonomy are impossible tasks in a world in which everything is always-already enmeshed in everything else, forming networks of systems and environments from which no single thread can safely be removed without the danger of the whole fabric falling apart.

Walking on thin ice

If Vito Acconci's *Centers* highlighted the narcissism of Modernity, what does the reenactment of that gesture in Fukushima tell us about a humanity awoken to the reality of the Anthropocene? Although at first both gestures seemed to trigger similar narcissistic loops, a few differences between the two point to the significant gap between original and reenactment. In Acconci's video, the frame was occupied exclusively by a close-up of the artist against a white wall, his face and pointing finger at the centre of the screen. In the Fukushima video, on the other hand, the artist occupied only a small fraction of the frame and was surrounded by a very specific and identifiable environment, the Fukushima power plant. Whereas Acconci's video was filmed in the clinical, sanitised white cube of a generic art gallery, its reenactment in 2011 was captured by CCTV in the contaminated site of a nuclear disaster. If the image of Acconci dominated *Centers*, the radioactive landscape of Fukushima dominated its reenactment, eventually troubling the certainty of the human figure and its reassuring presence. Also, whereas Acconci's body was caught in the closed circuit of early video technology, framed by the camera on one side and by the television screen on the other, the existence of the Fukushima video was expanded in time and in space, 'viralised' thanks to the Internet and YouTube, able to be played in every single corner of the world at the same time, forever. In other words, whereas Acconci's loop only included the artist, the camera, the TV screen, and a very localised group of spectators (the ones watching the video in the gallery), the Fukushima reenactment, although also circular, by its being almost immediately uploaded onto YouTube, it was able to circulate in a much larger network and thus to implicate individuals and geographies that could otherwise be seen as detached from Fukushima and the clicks of its Geiger counters.

Finally, one small but crucial difference separates Acconci's performance from its nuclear reenactment, a difference in the pointing gesture itself: whereas Vito Acconci raised his arm upwards and forwards until it was pointing at the exact centre of the frame, the Fukushima worker initially raised his arm to the side, pointed to the site on which he stood, and only afterwards finalised the gesture by rotating his arm upwards along his side and then downwards along the front towards the centre of the frame, in a folding gesture that stressed the enmeshment of Fukushima, the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, "green" nuclear energy, cesium-127, himself, and all his viewers in the global ecological crisis.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



Image 5: Vito Acconci vs. Fukushima worker.

Therefore, whereas *Centers* revealed narcissism as the condition of Modernity, its reenactment in Fukushima replaced self-assuring narcissism with anxiety, the latter being the symptom of a time when progress and civilisation seem to have failed and the reality of an anthropogenic end of days becomes not a matter of 'if' but rather one of 'when.' While Modernity was leading humanity to fall in love with its own ego-ideal, the Anthropocene was progressively settling in to remind us of our inability to flee the global ecological catastrophe for which we have contributed. Eventually, the promises of modern narcissism gave way to the extinction anxiety of a species being forced to face the certainty of its own demise. In the end, after the heathwaves, the certainty of absolute zero.

João Florêncio is a final-year doctoral candidate in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he is rethinking existing theories of performance from within an ecological framework that rejects the rigidity of existing divides between 'Nature' and 'Culture.'

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Quantum Queer: Towards a Non-Standard Queer Theory¹

Michael O'Rourke

Independent Colleges, Dublin

Abstract:

This essay looks at some potentially fruitful lines of correspondence between Laruelle's non-philosophy and gender, feminist and queer theories. Drawing on the work of leading Laruelle scholars I seek to outline some highly tentative principles for a non-standard queer theory which would help us to think about democracy, the human, performativity, sexual difference and some other crucial questions for current queer theorizing.

Keywords: Laruelle, queer theory, non-philosophy, flat ontology, the human, sexual difference, the stranger.

Black Box

The French non-philosopher François Laruelle writes that:

Like an artisan, engineer, or designer, I am going to attempt to construct in front of you a so-called apparatus of photo-fiction ... [I]t is an exercise in the construction of a theoretical object, and is thus transparent, but which will function more like a black box.²

This paper is my latest attempt to bring Laruelle's non-philosophy and queer theory into productive conversation with each other.³ I am going to attempt to construct in front of you a so-called apparatus of queer-fiction, a theoretical object which will not seek to render either queer theory or non-philosophy transparent, but rather to allow them to function more like black boxes. With that disclaimer in place, it must be said that the aim of the present article will be to demonstrate that Laruelle's non-philosophy has much to offer to queer theory, feminist thought and gender studies. Ian James' recent book *The New French Philosophy* (2012) begins its chapter on Laruelle by exclaiming:

Of all the recent attempts made by French philosophers to effect a break or rupture within contemporary thought, there is perhaps none more radical than that made by François Laruelle. Since the early 1980s, Laruelle has sought nothing less than a decisive break from the entirety of philosophy itself. His thinking of radical immanence and of what he calls "The One" (*l'Un*) unequivocally demands that thought leave the terrain of philosophy, that its structuring principles and fundamental operations be suspended in a new discursive gesture, a new kind of thinking, theory or knowledge. This new discursive gesture, theory or knowledge takes the name of "non-philosophy."⁴

Three texts devoted to charting the latest developments in French philosophy (by John Mullarkey, Alexander Galloway and the above-mentioned by James)⁵ list Laruelle as an important voice in post-continental thought. It is only recently, however, that Laruelle's non-philosophy has gained popularity in the Anglophone world and so far his work has made very little impact (with the exception of Katerina Kolozova's important body of scholarship) on feminist and queer thinking.⁶ This is despite the fact that Laruelle has written a book on minorities, essays on sexuality, gender and

¹ A version of this article was first presented at the "Ohrid Summer Institute for Sexualities, Cultures, and Politics" in Macedonia on August 17 2013. I would like to thank Stanimir Panayotov and Slavco Dimitrov for the invitation and for their thoughtful responses.

² François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics* (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2012), 11.

³ See my "Towards a Non-Queer Theory" in Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian and Beatrice Michaelis (eds) *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism and the Political* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2013), xiii-xxv.

⁴ Ian James, *The New French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 158.

⁵ John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London: Continuum, 2006), 125-156; Alexander Galloway, "François Laruelle, or The Secret," *French Theory Today: An Introduction to Possible Futures* (New York: The Public School, 2010).

⁶ See for example Kolozova's *The Lived Revolution: Solidarity with the Body in Pain as the New Political Universal* (Skopje: Euro-Balkan Press, 2010).

queerness, and given over substantial time—from Philosophy II to Philosophy V— to the figures of the victim and the stranger.⁷ In their preface to their recent translation of *Principles of Non-Philosophy* (2013) Anthony Paul Smith and Nicola Rubczak correct the misunderstanding that Laruelle’s is a “non-humanist” philosophy (and by extension that it is masculinist or heteronormative). They explain that what we find in his non-standard philosophy is not “a privileging of some claimed universal human being that is in reality taken as a heteronormative, white, healthy, male.

But instead the question of the human is open in non-philosophy.”⁸ Drawing on the work of Smith, Mullarkey, Kolozova (and other Laruelle scholars) this article will seek to develop some *highly provisional* principles for a non-queer theory which would take up Laruelle’s non-standard philosophy in order to think about democracy, the human, performativity, sexual difference, among other pressing concerns for current queer theorizing. A non-queer theory would not be a negation but rather what Mullarkey and Smith describe as an “amplification” and “mutation” which would re-open and re-frame the philosophical contexts for thinking queerness and the real.⁹

This article represents a preliminary attempt to sketch out a chapter on Laruelle for a book I am working on called *Queering Speculative Realism*. The impetus for the book came from my sense that there was something compatible about the projects of Queer Theory—which I have been writing about since the mid 1990s—and the newly emergent field in continental philosophy called Speculative Realism. Since 2006 we have witnessed the rapid rise to popularity of this new branch of (post)continental philosophy which, at least for now, goes under the name Speculative Realism. The term was coined by Ray Brassier—a figure largely responsible for bringing attention to Laruelle in the Anglophone world¹⁰—who has subsequently distanced himself from it denouncing it as an “on-line orgy of stupidity.”¹¹ This dismissal—attractive to the queer theorist in me for its suggestions of promiscuousness, stupidity and failure at attaining the level of the serious—should remind us that Teresa de Lauretis who coined the term queer theory in 1990 famously ditched it four years later as a vacuous creature of the publishing industry. Fascinatingly De Lauretis has more recently returned to queer seeing in it a stubborn vitality.¹² For me much of this perceived vitality, ineradicability and stickability is attributable to what I would call the *speculative* energies of queer theory. My sense is that there is a promiscuous entanglement between queer thinking and speculative realism and this is, at a superficial level, etymological given that queer has connotations of weirdness, strangeness, oddness and there being something *unheimlich* about it. The French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous was one of the first to draw attention to this significant etymological tangle when she noted that there is something queer about Freud’s uncanny and, going further, that there is something uncanny about the queer (or queerness).¹³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick was just as quick to spot these etymological threads. Indeed she referred in *Tendencies* to queer as being “relational and strange.”¹⁴

Cixous was right to suggest that queerness occupies some shadowy position between life and death given the many pronouncements of the death of the field (Brassier’s attempt to kill off Speculative Realism is just one more such attempt to bruit the demise of that which can yet be barely said to exist). In a 2011 state of the field report on queer theory Michael Warner opines that “queer theory now has the shape of a searching and still largely undigested conversation, rich enough to have many branches, some different enough to be incommensurate with one another” and that “queer theory in this broader sense now has so many branches, and has developed in so many disciplines, that it resists synthesis.”¹⁵ Warner’s mood seems (unlike Brassier’s) nothing but hopeful: “At its best, queer theory has always also been something else” and, by his lights, the time of queer theory, our time, is very much a time of promise as queer theory branches out and extends its flexuous lines everywhere. It miscegenates as it feels its way forward toward, gestures at, another future, other futures, futures which are incalculable. I would add to Warner’s claim about queer theory’s always being “something else” by saying that at its best queer theory has always been *somewhere* else

⁷ One reason may be that Laruelle’s *Le Principe de Minorité* (1981), *Une Biographie de L’Homme Ordinaire: Des Autorités et des Minorités* (1985), *Théorie des Identités* (1992), *Théorie des Etrangers* (1995), *Ethique de L’Etranger* (2000) and *Théorie Générale des Victimes* (2012) remain untranslated into English.

⁸ Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith, “Cloning the Untranslatable: Translator’s Introduction” in *Principles of Non-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xv.

⁹ John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith, “Introduction: The Non-Philosophical Inversion: Laruelle’s Knowledge Without Domination” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 16.

¹⁰ See Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 118-149.

¹¹ Ray Brassier and Marcin Rychter, “I am a Nihilist Because I Still Believe in Truth.” Interview, *Kronos*, March 4 2011, <http://www.kronos.org.pl/index.php?23151,896>.

¹² Teresa DeLauretis, “Queer Texts, Bad Habits, and the Issue of a Future,” *GLQ* 17.2/3 (2011): 243-263.

¹³ See Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 42-43.

¹⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.

¹⁵ Michael Warner, “Queer and Then?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 1 2011, <http://chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/>

(Laruelle might say it is a “world-thought”). José Muñoz asserts in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) that “[q]ueerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough.”¹⁶ In detaching from the hegemonies of US dominated queer theory and laterally exploring its elsewhere(s) we can begin to desire queer theory as a world-building project again. One such elsewhere or world-thought is, I would argue, Laruelle’s non-philosophy.

In words which echo Laruelle’s in *Photo-Fiction* (2012) (as we shall see) Muñoz asserts that queer and its attendant political aspirations are promissory: “I argue that queerness does not yet exist. I instead offer the proposition that queerness is an ideality or a figuration of a mode of being in the world that is not yet here.”¹⁷ He explains that “a queer politics of the incommensurable” or “queer politics of life” is “most graspable to us as a *sense* rather than as a politic” and he proposes “an understanding of *queerness as a sense of the incalculable* and, simultaneously, *the incalculable sense of queerness*.”¹⁸ This is, he asserts, a profound challenge to calcified terms, ones which we like to think of as set in stone: identity, politics, the human, the very terms and conceptual frames which queer theory and Laruellian non-philosophy seek to upend and decenter. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s essay “Queering the Inorganic” thrives on these very theoretical instabilities and celebrates the fact that “fugitive vectors are in fact queer theory’s strengths.”¹⁹ But he worries about another kind of stalling of queer theory’s mobility, that of its often unquestioned anthropocentrism: “as a verb, as an action, queer holds limitless possibilities for unanticipated conjugations. Yet the queer domains I have been sketching so far harbour a recurring and perhaps inescapable limit: anthropocentricity, an unfolding of the world from a human point of view.”²⁰ He wonders then: “what if queer theory were to lodge the nonhuman firmly within the sexual? What kind of queer domains, queer homes, queer ecologies (from *oikos*, house) might open?”²¹ These questions were ones already asked in Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird’s *Queering the Non/Human* (2008)²² but Cohen (who wrote the afterword to that collection) goes a little beyond them: “can we have not just a queer non/human, but a queer in/organic?” Indeed he asks: “can we imagine a zōē-egalitarian ethics, where zōē indicates not just bare or animal life but a life force that vivifies all materiality, without caring whether it is made from biotic carbon, is endowed with organs, possesses DNA?”²³ Laruelle’s work provides one possible answer as we shall see shortly.

Cohen’s questions and arguments for the motility of stone and a more generously envisioned zōēpolitics are concrete instances of what Jack Halberstam terms “queer betrayals” insofar as they generate “counter-intuitive ... forms of queer knowing” and “the road to oppositional forms of being and knowing” must pass through “the vexed territories of betrayal” and “disloyalty.”²⁴ For Halberstam queer betrayal must “flirt with and risk engaging homophobic logics”²⁵ and for some readers, not very careful ones to be sure, Cohen’s displacement of the centrality of the human will seem like the ultimate betrayal. But Halberstam is clear on this point: “Betrayal in Bersani’s work, like failure in my work, like ‘aberration’ in [Roderick] Ferguson’s work, and like violence in Chandan Reddy’s, does much more than just offer a perverse reading of the human; instead Bersani’s version of betrayal unmakes the queer project itself and demands that we let it collapse under the weight of its own contradictions.”²⁶

Queer Theory Meets Non-Philosophy

Unmaking the queer project itself and allowing it to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions might sound terribly negative. But we could argue, by turning to Laruelle’s non-philosophy, that this crumbling of the concrete conceptual edifice of queer theory is precisely what will allow for and carve open an expanded queer theory in (and as) the future. In her forthcoming book *The Cut of the Real* (2014) Katerina Kolozova inaugurates a long overdue conversation between Laruelle’s non-philosophy and feminist theory.²⁷ She explains that “[g]etting to the roots, the ‘radical’ theoretical position, at least the one argued for by this particular text, would consist in questioning the content and mechanisms of auto-constitution and auto-legitimization inherent in the founding conceptual constructs of one’s

¹⁶ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 96.

¹⁷ José Esteban Muñoz, “Race, Sex, and the Incommensurate: Gary Fisher with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick” in Yekani, Kilian and Michaelis (eds) *Queer Futures*, 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Queering the Inorganic” in Yekani, Kilian and Michaelis (eds) *Queer Futures*, 149.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

²² Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird (eds) *Queering the Non/Human* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

²³ Cohen, “Queering the Inorganic,” 153

²⁴ Jack Halberstam, “Queer Betrayals,” in Yekani, Kilian and Michaelis (eds) *Queer Futures*, 177-178.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁷ Katerina Kolozova, *The Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming 2014).

own theoretical discourse.” Kolozova’s own theoretical discourse, which she heretically questions, is contemporary gender theory and her aim is to call “into question the putative truths” which “function as axioms within that discourse.” For queer theory it is the putative truths of identity, being, life, politics, the human and so on which get undermined and this “effect of undermining seems to be always and as a rule understood as destructive, rather than as a gesture that brings forth a problematic aspect ... without dismissing it altogether.” Kolozova sees negativity as potentially fruitful or productive and goes on to say that “questioning from within of a particular discourse contributes to its conceptual vitality and to the re-invigoration of the doctrine it underlies. My aim here is to open up from within their own discursive horizon certain questions pertaining to the axiomatic structures that underlie gender theory.” In

putting into question or under suspension the “axiomatic structures” which undergird queer theory and subsequently re-invigorating them, “the goal is not,” Kolozova cautions, “to attain definitive and irrefutable solutions, but merely to propose a few stimulating examples of questioning. Accordingly, the ambition is reduced to the mere exercise of an awakening of thought from the rigidity of doctrine and to the emancipatory move of stepping out—albeit for an instant—from the scholastic enclosure which constrains the discourse of contemporary gender theory.” These stepping stones on the way to stepping out “may result *at least* in hinting at a critically new positioning of thought, in moving toward something more radically different,” something which lies beyond dichotomous thinking (the current relationality/anti-sociality debate in queer studies, for example). Here Kolozova echoes Halberstam directly: “in order to enable the release of thought from the grasp of dichotomy, it seems necessary to grant oneself *the right of disloyalty* to the school of thinking one adheres to [my emphasis].”

Kolozova offers a way out of such aporetic situations in which neither queer nor politics offers epistemological certainty by suggesting we turn to Laruelian non-philosophy:

[O]ne of the possible approaches to such re-positioning of the thinker is the critical situating of thought provided by François Laruelle’s non-philosophy which consists in a theoretical gesture of radical stepping out of any sort of *discursive* autoreferentiality. This means performing a doctrine-unattached (without a pre-emptive theoretical argument of corroboration and discursive legitimization) leap of abandonment of the enclosure of thought within the tradition of a certain discourse and the (epistemological, ideological) obligations of adherence. The leap itself, made on the basis of a mere ‘non-’without the knowledge of any pre-existing discursive grounding, is a leap of and into uncertainty.

Laruelle’s non-philosophy offers a way out of the aporias we so often find ourselves in, ones which are seemingly impassable, and these moments of *productive disloyalty* allow us to exit what Kolozova calls “the binary clench:” “Laruelle’s *Principles of Non-Philosophy* is an attempt to invent a mode of thinking which is outside the aporetic labyrinth, to confer a possibility of thinking in a non-aporetic situation.” The kind of non-dichotomous thinking Laruelle argues for instantiates a radical gesture of stepping out and might be one answer to the myopic, auto-referential, narcissistic perception US dominated queer theory currently has of itself as self-sufficient. What I am gently pushing toward is a *non-queer theory* where the non- is not to be misunderstood as negative. As Rocco Gangle explains in his “Translator’s Introduction” to Laruelle’s *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy* (2010): “it is important to emphasize that it is not in any sense anti- or counter- philosophical. It is a broadening or generalizing of philosophy rather than an opposition or antagonism to it. Which is not to say that a strong, critical element ... is not set upon philosophy by non-philosophy in an especially rigorous way.”²⁸

In his preface to Kolozova’s *The Cut of the Real* (2014) it is of huge significance that Laruelle himself refers to *queer* as the “radical” of gender (in his sense of “radical” which we have already seen). Here is his concluding pair of paragraphs:

Finally it becomes possible for the determination of the *queer*, which seems to sit awkwardly with the classical sexual distributions, to be re-appropriated provided that it is inserted into the generic matrix and its conceptual and effective levels are changed. Sexed genders are affected by the imaginary number that is the condition for vectoriality, the matrix itself, or the knowledge of generic matrix is entirely [*globalement*] indexed on one such number, somehow inclined by generic humanity which we have called the fading or disempowering of sexual sufficiency that is not its negation and no longer a simple subtraction but its transformation. What is the relation with the queer? This final concept is related, or often interpreted as related, to that of

²⁸ Rocco Gangle, “Translator’s Introduction” to François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010), ix.

transversality (Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault), destined to collide with the Cartesian rectangular coordinates of philosophical space and to trace the complex sexual becomings there. But, as complex and hazardous as they are, they retain a final frame of reference in the simultaneous duality of the sexual genders' frame of reference; they are perhaps becomings that are infinite or unlimited but predictable and able to be discerned, in some sense philosophically calculable. "Transversality" provides us with a supplementary nuance to "trans-cendence," the version of "tending" [*verse*] (operation of tending [*verser*]) which at the same time carries out a "trans"-cendence, a transition or leap which tends to go from one instance to another, so as to flow past.

Now what we have called the inclination or slope, assured, algebraically, and which carries out a certain "dis-inclining" [*dé-clin*] of sufficient or corpuscular sex. This is even a version or an act of tending towards or even a transition, but one that is not reabsorbed in itself, which is not closed upon itself and an *ad quem* instance or an object-in-itself. It is a vector, it has a departure point, a transition point in which it provisionally completes itself, but not an arrival point where it would shut itself away. This is a new concept for the *queer*, no longer Deleuze's n-sexes for a sexuality of the "full body" that is virtually infinite, but a sexual complementarity, a gender unilaterally sexed within every identifiable sex, a transfinite or vectorial queer. It seems possible to us in this way to extract the nuance of the queer from its traditional philosophical context – to remove it from that frame and bring it back to a humane or generic level.²⁹

Laruelle's take on queer, which is clearly ambivalent about itself is full of the speculative energy that Michael Warner located in the early "active," ACTing UP, moments of queer theory. He renews the term and reiterates it so that we have a "new concept of queer" one radically wrenched from the familiar coordinates of queer thinking and their conceptual indebtedness to Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Laruelle's new concept also occupies a speculatively prophetic stance as he dreams that queer could be drawn out of its "traditional philosophical context" and opened up to a "philosophically" incalculable future. Queer, for Laruelle, comes very close to Muñoz's "crisscrossing and intersecting vectors of singularity" and Cohen's "fugitive vectors." Laruelle returns to queer its "ability to work so unpredictably across registers to produce a knowledge that is both *live and speculative*"³⁰ and his transfinite or vectorial queer with its lateral relays is asymptotic and tinged with promise. And this non-philosophical move should not be misunderstood as a negativity which leads to inaction. On the contrary, Laruelle's queer is productively negative (this is something like the *queer art of betrayal*) and always on the move. It refuses to get stuck in normative grids of intelligibility and in so doing could lead to a world-making which is concrescent, a growing-together. His play on the word *tenser* ("to tend" or "to pour") should call to mind what we noted earlier about the concrete and calcification. Laruelle's pourings (and we should also note the connection between Laruelle's tendings and Sedgwick's tendencies) are never allowed to solidify or calcify, become predictable or discernible. Non-philosophy leads to escape routes, out-pourings, lateral shifts to elsewhere, into unknown futures. Laruelle's messianic queer is without end and it does not close on itself or in itself. It widens the field of possibilities for future queer thinking and thoroughly reframes everything as it draws queer away from its current philosophical context.³¹

Laruelle's Flat Ontology

Anthony Paul Smith, John Mullarkey and Katerina Kolozova would all agree that non-standard philosophy, Speculative Realism, and Object Oriented Ontology challenge anthropocentrism and that their shared project is the reorientation of thought. Laruelle's non-standard philosophical project sets itself the task of reorienting our relation to the real, and to re-opening the concept of the human (or the human-in-person). Laruelle's posture, his stance is, as we shall see, a queer one. Queer orientations are movements, vectors, behaviours, postures. And they are oriented towards The Real which is not inaccessible or ungraspable (as feminist/queer theorists such as Teresa De Lauretis or Lee Edelman would have it); it is inexhaustible (we might recall that for Sedgwick queer is inextinguishable [Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, xii]). As Mullarkey and Smith have argued, the reorientation of the philosopher's orientation causes a mutation which is to say that when philosophy engages with an object it mutates itself. Laruelle in his writings has introduced a non-Marxism and a non-psychoanalysis.³² I will venture to argue that he approximates and introduces a non-queer theory too.

²⁹ François Laruelle, "Gender Fiction," translated by Anthony Paul Smith, preface to Katerina Kolozova, *The Cut of the Real*. I would like to thank Anthony for sharing his translation with me.

³⁰ Warner, 2011.

³¹ Anthony Paul Smith's talk "Faux Amis? François Laruelle and the Speculative Turn," Flat_Pack Gallery and Studios, Dublin, January 2013 was a huge help to me in understanding this text by Laruelle and what he means by "generic man."

³² François Laruelle, *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, translated by Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, forthcoming).

Laruelle may not call himself a queer theorist but he does call himself a realist and the real, for him, is the thing in-itself in its actuality: one-in-one, human-in-human. This is the core—first outlined in *The Principle of Minority*³³—of Laruelle’s flattened ontology, his non-hierarchical approach. He advocates a flat ontology of objects, what Levi Bryant in his “onticology” terms a “democracy of objects.”³⁴ For Laruelle standard philosophy is chauvinistic insofar as some things appear as objects and others as subjects. This is a prejudicial error because for Laruelle everything is included: this is his Vision-in-One, his theoretical pluralism. Nobody, no/thing is left behind.³⁵ As Kolozova explains Laruelle refuses to define the human precisely because there is no set humanism in his work.³⁶ His philosophy is performative (at least partially in the Butlerian sense). He begins from the question of philosophy as an approach to the real (not realism) and material (not materialism), from philosophy as a thing and not a representation. Laruelle’s theoretical experiment reintroduces non-philosophy differently each and every time. It is critically and reiteratively queer (very much, this time, in the Butlerian sense).³⁷

Laruelle’s non-standard approach to democracy, to the public, to the *demos* turns on its flatness. He treats, as do Bryant and Ian Bogost (and Graham Harman to some extent) all philosophies and ontologies equally. The non- is not a negation, it is an extension, a quantum mechanical superimposition or entanglement. In every sense Laruelle listens for and is attuned to the dignity of objects: to non-life, the undead, bare matter, the animal (Kolozova’s non-standard human). He creates a further extension of Agamben’s bare life where disenfranchisement, discrimination and a violent structure of regard and disregard in the politics of life means *all life*. He gives this the name of the generic human. And, as we shall see, queer is another name for generic humanity, for Laruelle’s victims, minorities, strangers.

Kolozova in “Solidarity in Suffering with the Non-Human” (2013) argues that Laruelle’s human is human without the humanist dimension. Comparing his non-philosophy to Butler’s *Precarious Life* (2006) Kolozova asserts that Laruelle aims to minimize the discursive category of the human. And this is opposed to Butler’s attempt to expand or plasticize it: human-in-human. In the last instance, Kolozova writes, we are always already broken subjects, bodies exposed in their vulnerability. Agamben would call it bare life while Laruelle would perhaps say it is bare matter. This is Cohen’s zōē-egalitarian ethics, a life force that revivifies all materiality. In the essay “Is Thinking Democratic? Or How to Introduce Theory into Democracy” Laruelle outlines his “flat thought.”³⁸ As Mullarkey and Smith describe non-philosophy and the development of a theory of the democratic or generic subject: “this generic subject is necessarily, in the last instance a living utopia, because the generic subject is always a stranger, *xenos*, or one-without place.”³⁹

Levi Bryant’s onticology, his version of “flat thought,” and his theory of withdrawal opposes any “phallogocentric totalization.” Since he wrote *The Democracy of Objects* (2011) Bryant has coined the term “phallosophy” and acknowledged more explicitly how formulating Jacques Lacan’s graphs of sexuation in “ontological terms” illuminates feminist and queer thinking.⁴⁰ Instead of interpreting Lacan’s graphs in terms of sexuation (he follows Bruce Fink in this) Bryant understands them in terms of “ontology.”⁴¹ He explains that “on both the masculine and the feminine side of the graph of sexuation, what we get are two different ways of handling the withdrawal at the heart of being. The left side of the graph refers to masculine sexuation, while the right side of the graph refers to feminine sexuation.”⁴² And in Bryant’s post-phallosophical onticology, queer theory or queerness is to be found on the feminine (“not-all”) side of the graph. We could, after Laruelle, rename this flattened theory of sexuation as non-phallosophy.

Rather than unproductively focusing on castration or lack, Bryant’s onticology swerves away from Lacan’s phallic function and he explains that “rather than referring to a masculine and feminine side of the graph, we can instead refer to a side of the graph that refers to object-oriented ontologies (the feminine [and subsequently he has placed the

³³ For a small portion of the text see “Who are Minorities and How to Think Them” translated by Taylor Adkins, March 24 2013, <http://speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2013/03/24/translation-of-laruelles-who-are-minorities-and-how-to-think-them/>

³⁴ Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

³⁵ This is the argument made in John Mullarkey’s “How to Behave Like a Non-Philosopher; Or, Speculative Versus Revisionary Metaphysics,” *Speculations IV* (2013): 108-113.

³⁶ Katerina Kolozova, “Solidarity in Suffering with the Non-Human,” *Basic Space*, Dublin, 24 June 2013.

³⁷ See, for examples of these shifting definitions, the texts collected in *The Non-Philosophy Project*, edited by Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjevic (Telos Press, 2012).

³⁸ François Laruelle, “Is Thinking Democratic? Or, How to Introduce Theory Into Democracy” in Mullarkey and Smith (eds), *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, 227-237.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, “Introduction,” 15.

⁴⁰ Levi R. Bryant, “Phallosophy,” *Larval Subjects*, March 15 2011, <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2011/03/15/phallosophy>

⁴¹ Levi R. Bryant, “Lacan’s Graphs of Sexuation and OOO,” *Larval Subjects*, June 28 2010, <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2010/06/28/lacans-graphs-of-sexuation-and-ooo/>

⁴² *Ibid.*

queer here too]).” So, “what we get in this schema are two fundamentally different ways of discoursing about being” and Bryant reformulates the schemas for masculinity and femininity in terms of philosophies of presence where “all are submitted to withdrawal with one exception” and object-oriented ontologies where “*not all* are submitted to withdrawal. But there is *no exception*. There is none which is not submitted to withdrawal.”⁴³ What Bryant is getting at here is that there is no master signifier outside the set of all objects and there is no top or bottom object in this non-hierarchical philosophical system. He goes on to say that...

...if the graphs of sexuation are rewritten in terms of ontology and withdrawal we can see how we get radically different ontologies depending on whether or not we’re dealing with a metaphysics of presence or an object-oriented ontology. What the metaphysics of presence seeks and is always dependent upon is an exception or an entity that is not subject to withdrawal. In other words it seeks an entity that is *fully present* without any withdrawal whatsoever.⁴⁴

Bryant rethinks flat thought in terms of what Timothy Morton has called in various places the “strange stranger.”

[T]he arrow pointing to the barred object would thus indicate a desire oriented to welcoming the stranger or that which disrupts the familiar world of local manifestations. Where the logic of desire underlying metaphysics of presence is predicated on overcoming a loss and thereby attaining presence, the logic of desire underlying object-oriented ontology would emphasize the excess of all substances over their local manifestations (there’s always more) and *would welcome difference* or those eruptions within stable regimes of local manifestation where the strange stranger surprises and indicates this excess.⁴⁵

For Bryant, every “entity is a becoming that promises to become otherwise” and this is why entities are not only strange strangers to other entities but are also strange strangers to *themselves*.” Morton has in his essay “Queer Ecology” extended his idea of the strange stranger to queer (hyper)objects, guaranteeing a theory of withdrawn objects which recognizes the strange strangeness to *everything*.⁴⁶ In its unruliness queer theory is a *cosmopolitical* theory of precisely *everything*. And I mean a “theory of *everything*” insofar as queer theory (in all its uncanny weirdness) could open up to and mesh, in Morton’s terms, with the strangeness of others, the strangeness of objects, *the strangeness of anyone and anything*. Queer Theory is a stranger thought, as Anthony Paul Smith has dubbed Laruelle’s non-philosophy.

Bryant’s non-phallosophy has, I think, a strange affinity with Laruelle’s non-philosophy, his theory of strangers. In his talk, “Towards a Philosophy Deemed ‘Contemporary’” Laruelle argues that the future is an aleatory region “of the anticipated coming of some unknown, un hoped for or strange thing that it cannot define precisely because of its imminence.”⁴⁷ The contemporary also, for Laruelle, retains “a ground of indetermination” and a productive “opening” comes before it and inspires it. He describes this very opening as “a relation that is not closed up on itself or in itself” (recall his definition of *queer* as non-reabsorbable in itself) and, moreover, that its futurity “is not of course ontic or ontological, in any way a being or thing, ecstasy or horizon” (recall what Muñoz says about the promissory not-yet of queerness and ekstasis above). Instead the contemporary (the unanticipatable future of philosophy) has the nature of a directed throw. It is, Laruelle says, “vectorial.” And the way he describes this “insurrection of the vector” resonates, I think, with Bryant’s neo-Lucretian reading of Lacan’s graphs of sexuation. Vectoriality, Laruelle says, is an “ascendant or invented clinamen that pushes into the individual subject instead of finding its origin and basis there.” The law of the vector is accretive: it is “superposition” or “addition” and “another vector can always be added to it.” Bryant has been moving in the direction of this law of vectoriality recently in his shift from the terminology of objects to machines in his MOO (Machine-Oriented Ontology) and “pan mechanism.”⁴⁸ The vector is an open process by definition and it allows philosophy to no longer arrive at becoming an object in itself, thereby destroying itself as an object. Vectorial ontology is a “controlled ruin of philosophy,” an auto-deconstruction, a queer betrayal, which allows it to collapse into itself. Queer too, for Laruelle, does not have an “arrival point,” a telos where it “would shut itself away” (“Gender Fiction”).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Timothy Morton, “Queer Ecology,” *PMLA*, 125.2 (2010): 273-282.

⁴⁷ François Laruelle, “Towards a Philosophy Deemed ‘Contemporary,’” translated by Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith, Liverpool Hope University, 30 June 2012.

⁴⁸ Levi R. Bryant, “Machine-Oriented Ontology: Towards a Pan Mechanism,” *Larval Subjects*, June 21 2012, <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/06/21/machine-oriented-ontology-towards-a-pan-mechanism/>

In an essay in *Identities* Bryant has brought together this idea of politics as an event, his ontology, queer theory and Jacques Rancière's radical democratic politics (this allows us, I think, to push Rancière and Laruelle closer together).⁴⁹ In the partition or distribution of the sensible queers and other minoritarian subjects (Laruelle's strangers) do not count, have no-place. But, in Rancière's political philosophy the paradoxical or paratactical subject, a subject falling *between* identities, is precisely from their non- or de-ontological (queer) position able to redress the wrong of so-called democratic politics. In Rancière's post-politics of re-distribution of the sensible the political subject, the individual who has not been validated by the dominant order (women, queers, immigrant workers for example) polemically irrupts and has his or her speech validated. The impossible, de-substantialized subject—Laruelle's man-in-man or man-in-person—attains their place in a regime where they have been invisible, silent, and unknowable. These queer subjects have a certain fidelity to what Rancière calls dis-agreement, conflicted speech situations in which certain subjects are seen and heard while others are not. Out of this conflict and incommensurability new forms of political community (Bryant calls them collectives), new regimes of visibility and sayability, and new regimes of politics and aesthetics, surface. This radically democratic politics facilitates the eruption of valid political subjects, able to take up their share in the distribution of the sensible, however impossible their identity and speech may be, and these political subjects are created within a situation of tort, an ontological torsion, twisting, or wringing.

However, as Bryant is quick to point out the political subject—in contradistinction to Laruelle—for Rancière is always the "human" subject. Man is a "literary animal" and it seems that only humans are capable of speech. Yet an engagement between Rancière's political thought and Bryant's non-anthropocentric ontology reveals an altogether different distribution of the sensible, of what parts get to count in large scale objects. It is clear, then, why Bryant's thinking is shifting towards pan mechanism, parts and machines. An anarchic ontology perturbs our knowing in advance who and what is capable of participating, counting, acting. Bryant pushes Rancière's politics in this "strange" or "weird" direction:

I argue that it follows that all politics is *queer* politics. Here I return to the original etymology of the term "queer," extending its signification beyond the domain of the politics of sexual orientation and gender. Queer refers to the strange, the odd, that which twists, and is out of place. Insofar as politics *only* occurs in those sites where *parts* contest their status of elements, revealing the volcanic anarchy beneath every system of counting, disclosing the *contingency* of every object or system's way of counting or producing elements, it follows that all politics is essentially queer. If queer theory initially stumbled upon questions of sexual orientation, gender, etc., then this is because these are mechanisms by which larger-scale objects govern parts and constitute elements for themselves (thereby erasing the bubbling chaos upon which they stand). It matters little whether the politics is what we ordinarily refer to as "queer politics," whether it is Marxist insurrections of the proletariat as universal motor of history, whether it be women, people of color, or whether it be genuine eco-activists asserting the truth of spotted owls, in all cases the political moment is the moment where the queer or odd as in-apparent appears and challenges systems of constituting elements, governance, and the erasure of parts.⁵⁰

What Bryant is arguing here is that queer-as-inapparent (the Real in his thought) extends far beyond gendered and sexual politics (and the politics of identity) to include numerous other sites of political struggle and "praxis." The parts—"cyborgs, computers, whales"—that compose a larger scale object or machine are again, what Morton calls "strange strangers."⁵¹ Bryant, following Jane Bennett, argues that if we cannot know *a priori* "what part can suddenly appear and speak, there seems to be no reason to restrict the domain of political subjects to the *human*. Indeed, any part, human or otherwise, can rise up within an assemblage or large-scale object and force its reconfiguration, the disconnection of certain elements and new connections among elements. These moments where nonhuman agents such as cane toads, natural gas leaks produced through fracking, and hurricanes can rise up and disrupt the orderly auto-reproduction of systems looks suspiciously like the agencies of *political subjects*."⁵²

This de-anthropocentrizes and renders more vibrant what Rancière calls the "politics of literarity" in such a way that Rancière might mean that bodies/entities (whether human, animal, objects, machines, disciplines) which refuse to stay in their place have the "aesthetic capacity" to imagine new forms of life, to open up an interval for promiscuous, incommensurable, excessive communications, fugitive vectors between *anyone and anything*. This is perhaps, Bryant claims, the "queerest dimension of the politics advocated by ontology: in a resolutely posthumanist turn, ontology

⁴⁹ Levi R. Bryant, "Of Parts and Politics: Ontology and Queer Politics," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* 8.1 (2011): 13-28.

⁵⁰ Levi R. Bryant, "Strange Politics," *Larval Subjects*, August 23 2011., <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2011/08/23/strange-politics>

⁵¹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁵² Bryant, "Of Parts and Politics," 27

refuses to restrict the political subject to the human."⁵³ We do not know, he says, what entities, what parts, human and nonhuman "might come to occupy the *an-archic* site of the political."⁵⁴ This sounds a lot like Laruelle's vectorial "flat thought." For example, in one of his only explicit engagements with ecology, which Anthony Paul Smith discusses, Laruelle makes an argument for a "human ecology." He writes there: "A human ecology in-the-last-instance will be theoretically more rigorous. As the man of the Last Instance is never a foundation, he must renounce or give up every 'earthly' or 'land-owning' foundation of an ecology of the ocean and start thinking the sea not as such but from itself, according to the sea which is also human in the way in which the human is every Last Instance."⁵⁵ Again, we have a zōē-egalitarian ethics, a queered ecology, where all life is equal in the last instance.

Uni-Sexuality

Benjamin Norris in "Re-asking the Question of the Gendered Subject after Non-Philosophy" attempts to theorize a non-philosophical gendered subject using Laruelle's *The Concept of Non-Photography* (2011).⁵⁶ Norris argues that the "identity of the photo and correlatively of the (non)gendered identity is something that is not reducible to either the immanent (philosophically understood) or the transcendent. The photographic identity is more properly the space between the proposed doublet/deadlock."⁵⁷ Norris goes on: "gender can now be understood as an immediately experienced unity that is never reducible to either its immanent expression or the transcendent category it is measured against. It is never stable yet never fragmented. It is a constant experiment, limited only by itself. Gender is no longer oppositionally defined splitting into male or female, queer or straight, etc."⁵⁸ This, as we shall see, is similar to what Laruelle means by "uni-sexuality." Norris again: "we can instead turn to the fractal nature of temporality as the 'between two' to ground an experience of gender that is infinitely free, unitary and productive, always affirming and self-realizing ... [G]ender is an expression of a fractal temporality that is always already beyond, and more importantly indifferent to and before, any form of binary dichotomization."⁵⁹

In their article "Sexed Identity" Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid implement a "non-anthropological, truly universal paradigm equal for all humans in place of sexual difference (which is not All-sexual), and not determined by it. Instead of projecting sexual difference onto the human paradigm, they propose, first of all, a pre-sexual 'difference' or duality encompassing all humans, and enabling a certain usage or pragmatic of sexual representations."⁶⁰ This utopian, democratic paradigm thus allows for thinking a transformation, an amplification and mutation of sexual difference. Sexual difference must, they say, be universalized. Hence the idea of "uni-sexuality:"

[T]he uni-sexual subject does not mean that there is only one sex unifying the two (this is the transcendental appearance, where we oscillate from one contrary to the other). Rather, it signifies that every (one) subject is individuated by a status of the human as using sexuality and sexual norms and transforming them each time in a way that is proper but human each time. There is no all-sexual in which we can decompose subjects into singularities or *n sexes* as in Deleuze. There are subjects determined as humans and specified by sexuality and, consequently, using sexual difference each time according to a practice or a combination proper but each time human in the last instance.⁶¹

What Norris terms non-gendered identity, Laruelle and Schmid identify as non-sexual identity and Laruelle will later go on to call queer, "no longer Deleuze's *n-sexes* for a sexuality of the 'full body' that is virtually infinite, but a sexual complementarity, a gender unilaterally sexed within every identifiable sex, a transfinite or vectorial queer."⁶² Liberation from sexual difference is, Laruelle and Schmid argue, "not an ideal to be reached, like truth, but a practical task, a posture rather than a position." This is, they conclude, a "modest but effective transformation of sexual difference." Unisexuality too is vectorial and can be re-framed or removed from its traditional philosophical context, from what

⁵³ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁵ François Laruelle, "L'Impossible Foundation d'Une Écologie de L'Océan" cited in Anthony Paul Smith, "The Real and Nature: A Heretical Nature Contra Philosophy's Nature," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* 8.2 (2011): 60.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Norris, "Re-Asking the Question of The Gendered Subject after Non-Philosophy," *Speculations* III (2012): 7-42.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ François Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid, "Sexed Identity," translated by Nicola Rubczak (forthcoming in *Angelaki*). I would like to thank Katerina Kolozova for sharing the French original (published in *Identities*) of this text and Nicola Rubczak for sharing her translation with me.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Laruelle, "Gender Fiction."

Laruelle calls the “Principle of Sufficient Sexuality.” This is a new concept of sexual difference “brought to a humane or generic level.”⁶³

By the Principle of Sexual Sufficiency Laruelle is suggesting that Kolozova moves away from traditional philosophical understandings of gender and sexual identity and mutates them, inventing and creating a non-sexual identity. This latter, Laruelle admits, is not well understood. He opens his preface by saying: “Gender has become the new scene, the new enclosure that is necessary to think, and the problematic that is possible to work through once again. Katerina Kolozova boldly takes her place in ‘gender studies’ with a look towards what I call non-philosophy. Her work is all the more interesting to me because non-philosophy’s first and final word concerns the human as ‘generic,’” which I oppose to the metaphysical and even to the philosophical.”⁶⁴ Laruelle marries his line of thought and Kolozova’s by claiming that they both schematize a non-standard conception “not of the sexes but of genders in so far as they include, extend beyond, and run through the classical distributions of sexuality. The meta-sexual dimension of gender is affirmed here, one may even want to say non-sexual if the usage of ‘non’ were well understood, as a partial negation of what is dominant and harassing there, in a word what is ‘sufficient’ in theories of sexuality.”⁶⁵

Photo-Fiction, Queer-Fiction

It is significant that Laruelle entitles his preface to Kolozova’s book *Gender Fiction*. Just as Norris draws on *The Concept of Non-Photography* (2011) to theorize a non-gendered subject we might look to Laruelle’s more recent *Photo-Fiction: A Non-Standard Aesthetics* (2012) to supplement, or further mutate, Kolozova’s non-sexual dimension in the direction of a non-standard queer theory. *Photo-Fiction* is, in my opinion, Laruelle’s queerest book.⁶⁶ On every page we could substitute queer where he writes photo. Even if the target there is the Principle of Sufficient Aesthetics or “photo-centrism” we do not have to look far before we get a critique of phallo-centrism and the Principle of Sufficient Sexuality. In the first chapter, tellingly entitled “Art-Fiction, A New Aesthetic Genre” (everywhere Laruelle plays with the multiple meanings of genre and gender in French) he writes “one must construct non-aesthetic scenarios or duals, scenes, characters, or postures that are both conceptual and artistic and based on the formal model of a matrix.”⁶⁷ The connections between Laruelle’s thought and that of Bracha Ettinger are startling (especially the hyphenization of words and the invention of conjugated democratic concepts) but never more than here when he deploys the “matrixial.”⁶⁸ He explains: “the matrix is ordinarily directed by philosophy and its objects, such as art, but it can also be directed differently toward generic uses or humane ends rather than towards philosophy.”⁶⁹ In effect what Laruelle is asserting here is that the matrix *is* queer. We should remember that at the end of his preface to Kolozova’s text he argues that the queer is oriented out of its traditional philosophical context (PSS) towards the generic and the “human.” The installation, as he calls it, of a new genre “art-fiction” could just as easily be read as the instantiation of, the vectorially inclining or tending towards, a new genre of “queer fiction.”

Installing this new genre is reparative (in the last instance) in Sedgwick’s sense (and it is noteworthy that she first outlined her theory of reparative reading in a book *Novel Gazing* on reading fiction⁷⁰). As opposed to a strong theory (reading motivated by the hermeneutics of suspicion) Sedgwick advocates weak reading, queer as a weak eventual force in the act of reading. Laruelle develops a similarly weak ontology: “it is less determinant than under-determinant, it is a weakened or weakening causality that removes determination from the resulting image.”⁷¹ We should take note here that performativity (as Laruelle rewrites performativity) is *radically passive*.⁷² The queer stakes of this *de-puissant* photo-fiction (and its many betrayals) which is less cock-sure of itself than rigidly philosophical discourse are readily

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid..

⁶⁵ The Principle of Sexual Sufficiency could, I think, go under the names of either heteronormativity or homonormativity in current queer theory. We need, as Robyn Wiegman, Elizabeth Wilson and Annamarie Jagose have recently been proposing, a theory of anti-antinormativity. See, for example, Annamarie Jagose’s *Orgasmology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁶⁶ One wonders however what the as yet unwritten *Principia Amoris, La Science Des Amants*, a proposed “erotic conclusion” to a triptych begun with *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy* might look like. See “The Triptych: Author’s Foreword” to *Future Christ*, translated by Anthony Paul Smith (London: Continuum, 2010), ix.

⁶⁷ Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 3.

⁶⁸ Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

⁶⁹ *Photo Fiction*, 4.

⁷⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You’re So Paranoid you Probably Think This Introduction is About You” in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁷¹ *Photo Fiction*, 18.

⁷² See *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 163-230.

made apparent.⁷³ Photo-fiction is “formal and contains objectivity but a milder, non-apodictic or axiomatic form. It produces materiality but in the form of enjoyment [*jouissance*] or lived experience.”⁷⁴ Photo-fiction aligns humans with generic humanity (elsewhere termed queer) “rather than a narcissistic delirium of the modern individual that uses photography.”⁷⁵ If photo-fiction “suspends” the Principle of sufficient philosophy then we might infer that queer-fiction (or Kolozova’s gender-fiction) interrupts the principle of sufficient sexuality. Photo-centrism might be rewritten as phallo-centrism, here and elsewhere throughout Laruelle’s non-standard aesthetics. The crucial ethics which follows from the development of photo fiction is that the *jouissance* of photo-fiction leads to the decline of photo-phallo-centrism and an “ethical safeguarding of humans within photo-fiction.”⁷⁶ Later on Laruelle writes that “the generic photo is ethically people-oriented, in service of their defence, and passes from the positive photo, devoted to narcissism of the world to the generic photo which is not that of subjects but rather objects.” We could extend this even further to say that the All-sexual is what enslaves and interpellates and that uni-sexuality is an ethico-political safeguarding of the human or the stranger within the world. To reiterate: photo-fiction is queer, it “is a *genre*.”⁷⁷ Laruelle is again playing on gender/genre and we might infer that queer-fiction is a genre too, in the “spirit of the quantum.”⁷⁸

The onto-vectorial, immanent insurrectionary ascension of photo-fiction is later described as a quantum deconstruction of logo-photo-centrism and again the sexual connotations are hard to miss. For example, “[I]et’s unfold the figure of the flash and the theology that accompanies it from the first emergence or without origin if not void to which its precipitation give rise, let’s unfold the thrust [*le jet*] in its onto-vectoriality.”⁷⁹ We might immediately object to the phallic language of thrusting and spurting here but it is vital to note that photo-fiction is deconstructing the potent, phallic auto-confirming ipseity of the self: “generic man as an onto-vectorialized subject is a superimposed flux of vectors.”⁸⁰ This approximates the fractal temporality of non-gendered identity Norris was theorizing insofar as Laruelle’s “quantic model” works “via a futural retroactivity” and this “model comes to shatter the macroscopic schema of the doublet and introduces another schema that is messianic and christic in ‘quartialising’ according to the negative quarter turn, the circle of time or eternity. A quasi-Judaic dimension is reintroduced in a weak and non authoritarian mode without giving rise once again to the eternal return of the same... it is futurity in its messianic dimension.”⁸¹ We could say then that queer-fiction is a world-oriented weak art of vectorial insurrection, a queer messianicity without messianism.

The Stranger

In “Inside/Out” (1991) Diana Fuss says that “change may happen by working on the insides of our inherited sexual vocabularies and turning them inside out, giving them a new face.”⁸² This folding inside/out perfectly describes what Laruelle does to our inherited vocabularies (including our sexual ones). He makes them alien and strange. It is no wonder then that an early book of his is a theory of strangers and that the stranger plays such a privileged role in his non-philosophy (and Kolozova’s reworking of and through it).⁸³ Contrary to other philosophies of the stranger (Levinas’ for example) Laruelle sees the stranger as part of the self. The *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy* (2013) explains that the self is no longer encroached upon by the other and “there are only Egos without strangers.”⁸⁴ The existing-stranger-subject, as Laruelle calls it, is non-ipso-phallic and part of a *demos* of stranger-subjects. Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1994) makes a similar argument regarding the way we relate to strangers outside ourselves if we acknowledge the presence of the stranger inside ourselves.⁸⁵ This levelling, ethical gesture of Kristeva’s has however not made her thought less of a stranger to queer theory. Laruelle too, as we have seen, has not made much impact *inside* queer theoretical debates.

⁷³ On philo-rigidity and the need to de-potentialize philosophy by creating a new amplifying and weakening genre of philo-fiction see Laruelle’s “Introduction” to *Anti-Badiou: On The Introduction of Maoism into Philosophy*, translated by Robin Mackay (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xviii-

xli.
⁷⁴ *Photo Fiction*, 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23; On “quantum queerness” see Karen Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/Continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come,” *Derrida Today* 3.2 (2010): 240-268.

⁷⁹ *Photo Fiction*, 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸² Diana Fuss, “Inside/Out” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 7..

⁸³ See Katerina Kolozova, “The Figure of the Stranger: A Possibility for Transcendental Minimalism or Radical Subjectivity,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 11.3 (2011): 59-64.

⁸⁴ See the entry for “Stranger (existing-stranger-subject)” in François Laruelle (and Collaborators) *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, translated by Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2013), 142-143.

⁸⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Perhaps, to borrow a topological figure discussed in *Photo-Fiction*, we might see Laruelle's non-philosophy as a kind of Möbius Strip, his work characterizing a torsion or twisting motion between the inside and outside (of the self, of queer theory, of non-philosophy). This model of the Möbius Strip is too simple however because the two sides eventually merge and become one. Laruelle's non-philosophy as queer theory's stranger and queer theory as non-philosophy's stranger retain their difference and specificity even as the insides and outsides (of the self, of the theory) remain indistinguishable. Laruelle's thought must at the very least hold on to its heretical, marginal and insurrectionary character. Our desire ought to be (as with queer theory) not to allow non-standard philosophy to become institutionalized. In this way we can emphasize the definitional instabilities of queer theory and non-philosophy (Laruelle's *Dictionary* in many ways wilfully frustrates the impulse to fix or determine or institutionalize his lexicon). The initial shock value of queer (its acting up) was the catalyst for developing a disruptive politics which was productively unsettling (as non-philosophy is) precisely because queer has had and continues to have (and ought to have in the future) no stable referent. The future promise of non-philosophy, as Mullarkey and Smith argue, is that it will transform and mutate across other fields. Queer's initial promise, as Sedgwick observed was to cut across domains, genders, sexualities, theories. As she notes the indo-European root of queer "-twerkw" means across.⁸⁶ Non-philosophy will, as Warner says about queer's branching out, cut into various other realms, making trouble for compartmentalized and self-sufficient kinds of academic and philosophical theorizing. Laruelle's altered definitions (or non-definitions) of non-philosophy in each new book or interview are Butlerian insofar as she avowed that if queer were to retain its subversive power to wrench frames of thinking then it would "have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."⁸⁷ But this has nothing to do with the divisiveness of identity politics or the so-called sexual dissidence of the queer subject which is something we must confront when making a case for the queer potential of Laruelle as a straight, white, male theorist. Elizabeth Grosz would agree insofar as she claims that the ambiguity of queer theory terminologically implies that both the objects of speculation and the knowledges that deal with them *are* queer.⁸⁸ Michael Warner concurs when he states that in contrast to a tidily disciplined lesbian and gay studies, those involved in queer theory "want to make theory queer, not just to have a theory about queers."⁸⁹ Laruelle's *democratic* thought and invention "liberates an infinite, really universal, field of possibilities from all philosophical closure" and in doing so attempts to create "a new democratic order of thought which excludes conflictuality between philosophies and between philosophy and regional knowledges."⁹⁰ Laruelle has persistently identified his work as a heterodox and even heretical form of thought, one which will necessarily be misunderstood when viewed according to the norms philosophy sets for itself. Non-philosophy's future will depend above all on its ability to create "forms of discourse and genres which are other than philosophy."⁹¹ So, in the last instance, perhaps it would be best to remain heterodox, heretical and undomesticatable.⁹² Laruelle's is a queer stance or posture and his tending towards queer (theory, reading, writing) is equally slantwise and athwart, inside and outside, relational and strange, a "quantum xenography of the Stranger."⁹³

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Michael O'Rourke lectures in the school of Arts and Psychotherapy at Independent Colleges, Dublin and works mostly at the intersections between queer theory and continental philosophy. Some of his many publications can be found here: <http://independentcolleges.academia.edu/MichaelORourke>.

⁸⁶ Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, xii.

⁸⁷ Judith Butler, "Critically Queer" in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), 228.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁸⁹ Michael Warner, "Fear of a Queer Planet" in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.

⁹⁰ Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 13.

⁹¹ François Laruelle, *Philosophie Non-Standard* (Paris: Kimé, 2010), 16.

⁹² On the stranger and philosophical homeless see Anthony Paul Smith's "The Philosopher and the Heretic: Translator's Introduction" in *Future Christ*, xi-xxv.

⁹³ Robin Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided" to François Laruelle, *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012) 31.

Reviews

Book review

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Ecologies of Thought by Anthony Paul Smith is one of the rare examples of creating an autonomous non-philosophical project of theoretical investigation whereby the author thinks with or via Laruelle's theory instead of being just a commentator of his work. By way of rigorous elaboration of the operations of the radical dyad as conceived in non-philosophy - or by recourse to Laruelle's "dualysis" - Anthony Paul Smith explains the possibility of thinking nature in the radical mode as determined by non-standard philosophy. He also develops complex modalities of such approach. Namely, if nature is *always already* transcendental - a construct of the mind - in the last instance, it is a concept which is lived, "known" through bodily suffering. It is, therefore, inseparable from the real as experience (or the "lived," in Laruelle's vocabulary). One could say it is "the first transcendental," since it is the product of the most immediate urge to "speculate" the real. Anthony Paul Smith terms this transcendental that is most immediately linked with the immanent "one of the first names of the Real." That is why the author claims that "thought never thinks unnaturally."

An idea can lead to or participate in a change to a society. An idea can lead us to destroy an ecosystem or to restore a degraded one. Yet, none of this destroys or saves nature as such. The thought can never become unnatural; it is never not a real idea and what is real is natural. Thought can have real effects, but cannot affect the Real; thought can think the unnatural, but it does not do so unnaturally. (15)

Thought's most immediate form is the product of its immanent tendency to reflect the effects of nature and fix the unruly real (of nature) into a meaningful "being." As soon as translated into the register of "meanings," nature undergoes the unavoidable, radical estrangement whose form is explained by Laruelle as an operation of "the Stranger" or "the radical subjectivity." It is one founded upon an operation of dualysis. It also engenders any theoretical or scientific form of dualysis. It is an instance of thought which recognizes, affirms and departs from the lived experience of the inevitability of the dyad formed by the real and the transcendental. It does not see this duality as a "constitutive split" which should be overcome. It does not have any aspiration for or dream of (re)unification (of thought and reality, forming "the Being"), but rather radically affirms this dyad and the unilateral positioning of each of its components. Anthony Paul Smith calls upon creating an ecological theory which departs from the lived representation of nature rather than from philosophical abstractions. Philosophy's pretension to unveil "nature which hides" is one of its own (philosophy's), defining perversities. Nature does not hide. Philosophy only can postulate it as hiding and engage into an endless process of "unveiling" her. The same process of estranging objectivization and reduction of "the physical" (or of nature) to a concept, product of speculation is what enables capitalism to exploit nature as "resource," a value created philosophically, viz. by the operation of abstraction (of thought).

No, nature is not veiled, but thinking this allows our regional knowledges to think that they can unveil nature, that they can touch and circumscribe nature with thought and thereby either exploit her for our own gain or save her. Our contemporary climate, both in the physical and intellectual sense, is determined by a single force: the neoliberal capitalist ideology that demands everything reduce its value to the quantitative measure of money so that it can produce more of this measure. (14)

Bruno Latour's ecology without nature remains philosophical since it departs from the decision (not just a premise but a decision) that ecology should subsume itself within what he calls "political epistemology." This vision supplements the philosophical creation of nature with another philosophical creation - the idea of a "parliament of things." And this creation holds the status of a grounding philosophical decision since it does not permit any challenging from the outside (of the discipline of philosophy), including by the ecological science. "It does not allow the scientific practice of ecology to challenge the philosophical 'parliament of thought he proposes'" (167). In his vision of ecology, Anthony Paul Smith proposes postulation of nature in a non-philosophical manner "which begins with the perversity of nature, aims to think nature as irreducible to an idealized matter (i.e., materialism) nor reducible to a transcendental idea that forms matter (i.e., naturalism)" (167).

For a thought which pretends to be ecological, the only way to depart from nature the only way which is not philosophically alienated and alienating is the one which takes recourse to the immediate effects of the lived (or the suffering) or the experienced. Ecological science works with the empirical, meaning with the experiential. In order to become fully non-alienating and non-alienated theory of nature, ecological science must disburden itself of the tenets of philosophy it has always already contained.

Anthony Paul Smith's "Ecologies of Nature" is a brave and inspiring theoretical project that emancipates not only ecology and thought of nature, but also "naturalness of thought" from the self-estranging, self-mirroring and auto-referential grip of philosophy.

Katerina Kolozova

Clayton Crocket,
Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity, and Event.
New York: Columbia University Press, 2013
ISBN: 978-0-231-16269-2

In *Deleuze Beyond Badiou* Clayton Crockett takes Badiou's interpretation of Deleuze in *The Clamor of Being* as a provocation to offer his own meticulous and close reading of what the author identifies as the chief tenets of Deleuze's thought. Crockett focuses on what one would call, in terms of traditional philosophical vocabulary, the ontology in Deleuze's work, but also on its ethical and political aspects such as the conceptualization of the subject and the political implications such conceptualization entails. The analysis of Deleuze mainly relies on a heuristics of *Difference and Repetition*, while it builds on other works as well such as *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *Cinema 1*, *Cinema 2*, *What is Philosophy* and other works. Crockett exposes the materialist or realist foundations of Deleuze's ontology by way of demonstrating how his ideas of intensity and time correspond with contemporary physics. Unlike Badiou, Deleuze does not believe that mathematics is the language of philosophical aligning with science. He writes: "Problems are always dialectical [...] What is mathematical are the solutions." Crockett is able to identify the "heart" of Deleuze's philosophy and extrapolate it from the intricacies the Deleuzian scholastics habitually deals with: its materialistic and realist core. Conceptualizations of time - and hence the ontology of intensity - are not subjectivist in the sense of subjectivism pertaining to 20th century philosophy grounded in the so called linguistic turn.

Although played out through subjectivity, time is a plane of reality which is material and also external to the subject, namely inter-subjective. According to Deleuze, among ideas there is no negation, only difference and change as differentiation. Deleuze's references to physics (thermodynamics) and mathematics in explaining how the dialectics of ideas work and how ideas transform themselves from potentialities into actualities may resemble Hegel and sound fundamentally non-materialistic (in spite Deleuze's express intention to do the opposite.) Crockett unravels a different truth of Deleuze in a convincing way, corroborated by a rigorous and close reading of the author's own texts (emulating the way in which Deleuze himself reads authors like Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche).

Crockett points to passages of unequivocal arguing in Deleuze's texts that "biology is the locus of actualization of ideas" (Crockett 470). Concepts are born only via the medium of the pre-conceptual, i.e., via the bodily and through the instance of the subject which is, in the last instance, pre-lingual or "a world [...] of pre-individual singularities" (DR 277). "Deleuze argues that the Cogito does not think; it is essentially a stupidity. [...] Deleuze is profoundly anti-Cartesian here, in contrast with Badiou, who philosophizes according to the model of indubitability and clear certainty" (Crockett 54). Crockett's book represents a significant contribution to not only the scholarship on Deleuze but also to the more recent non-philosophical debate. It offers a reading of Deleuze which unveils the non-philosophical core of his theory and its fundamental engagement with realism beyond postmodernism. Crockett's style is clear, relentless in its striving for precision; his arguments are always firmly corroborated and the pace of argumentation is intense in a way which reminds me of Deleuze's own breathlessly intense writing.

Jordan Sishovski

Book review

Simon O'Sullivan, *On the production of subjectivity: Five diagrams of the finite-infinite relation*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, ISBN: 978-0-230-24980-6

With the publication of the *On the production of the subjectivity*, Simon O'Sullivan delivers to the contemporary thought on the *subject* a wide scope of theoretical possibilities of subjectivity production, explained through a series of highly descriptive diagrams that integrate various models relevant for political potentialities towards a non-capitalist mode of such production. The return to the question of the subject as undertaken by O'Sullivan is one that evades the object-subject opposition in favor of a philosophy that acts simultaneously as speculative thought process but also as a pragmatic undertaking that informs a way of life. The enquiry that this book provides is a diagrammatic move towards a production of subjectivity which always already precedes the subject as a fixed entity and poses itself in an open confrontation against the capitalist subjection. It is this site, of the subject, that O'Sullivan following Felix Guattari declares to be the locus of the struggle against the capitalist homogenization, reduction and standardization. The opening of the finite being towards the infinite as its resource, represents a major political challenge of *On the production of the subjectivity* in its specific non-theological claim of the finite-infinite relation that opposes capitalism's tendency to exploit all potential for production of subjectivity.

In the challenge to locate the subject in the finite-infinite relation, which results as an effect of the process of subjectivity production, O'Sullivan adopts a Deleuzian approach, focusing on the non-hierarchical and non-fixated state of the subject, allying himself to Deleuze's mode of production against Badiou's principle of fidelity. O'Sullivan's *On the production of the subjectivity* delivers five diagrams of the finite-infinite relation through a series of works of the most important philosophers of the *subject* including Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Foucault, Lacan, Badiou and finally concluding with the works Deleuze and Guattari that serve as a philosophical bedrock for O'Sullivan's investigation into the modes of production of subjectivity.

The book begins with the construction of O'Sullivan's basic diagram of the finite-infinite relation that is a composition resulting from Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge, Nietzsche's affirmation and eternal return and Bergson's matter and memory. To the specific ideas of the three thinkers, O'Sullivan employs Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts in order to trace the similarities and to integrate them into one coherent diagram of the process of production of subjectivity. Further, he constructs, through Nietzsche and Spinoza the argument against the passive, reactive subject of capitalism as a result of a subjectivity produced by a transcendent operator, which in our times all the more is being identified with Capital. In that sense, O'Sullivan introduces the optimism and the call to creativity, to creation against reaction and in opposition to the morality steaming of any kind of transcendent authority.

Further on, O'Sullivan immediately reveals the political aim of the book against the capitalist production of the subject which in the words of Lacan works in the 'service of goods' and reveals the revolutionary potential of desire which is unpredictable, non-productive and unconscious and thus upsets any morality, which as such nowadays is traced to the protestant logic of austerity in the times of crisis in Europe. The price to be paid for one's following of his or her desire is a form of betrayal that acts as a form of a non-capitalist mode of production of subjectivity via the desire. In Foucault's 'Care for the Self', O'Sullivan locates the mode of the finite-infinite relation in the 'idea that the access to truth must involve a prior preparation by the subject who is then in turn, transformed by that very truth'.

Guattari's ontology receives a special attention of O'Sullivan in which he stresses out the importance of the aesthetic paradigm to the contemporary field of creative life practices. In elaborating Guattari's genuine concept of *chaosmosis* O'Sullivan gives us a profound explanation:

Chaosmosis contains the most condensed and worked out statement of Guattari's very particular and complex schizoanalytic cartography. It also operates itself as a machine of sorts: a grasping and gathering of different materials that might be mobilized in the general project forming an ontology 'beyond' the subject-object split and, leading on from this, of constructing a form of institutional analysis beyond Lacan. (111)

To the thought of Guattari and Deleuze and their collaborative works, the author ascribes the diagramming of a new relation of the finite and the infinite. Thus the author throughout the book traces the inconsistencies in other thinkers' modes of production of subjectivity while trying simultaneously to find points of diagrammatic convergence, a gesture

that amounts to an event in the theory of the subject. In that move, O'Sullivan contests Badiou's claim that truth is one of inconsistent multiplicities and masterfully point out the problem of the remaining gap between the finite and the infinite, or the event and the subject, which necessitates a heroic subject, one which is barred from an infinite that has nevertheless called them into action.

Having praised the return of the speculative thought on the subject, the author also takes a close investigation in the pragmatic aspects of production of subjectivity in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, focusing on the practical organization of subjectivity against the dominant forms of subjection enacted by the operations of Capital. Speculation is indeed not only a metaphysical operation of thought, it is rather a move from the perspective of the subject towards accessing the 'outside', which amounts to a particular kind of practice that requires experimentation. *On the production of the subjectivity* is an endeavor of rigorous theoretical construction and affirmation of the author's political claim to a mode of production of subjectivity beyond capitalism, one that finds traces of fidelity to its proclaimed idea through a complex inquiry into the works of the most prominent thinkers of the subject.

Artan Sadiku

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