Elke Bippus, Anne Ganzert,
Isabell Otto (eds.)

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Theories, Practices, and Cultures of Participation in Dissent

[transcript] Culture & Theory

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Introduction

Elke Bippus, Anne Ganzert, Isabell Otto

"Taking Sides – Theories, Practices, Cultures of Participation in Dissent" explores different perspectives on dissent, while understanding practices, cultures, and theories of resistance, dispute, and opposition as inherently participative. The concept of side-taking is hence investigated in different facets. Firstly, as assuming a position/opinion in opposition to another or even affiliation with a cause or (unpopular) standpoint. Secondly, in a play on words, thinking about side-taking also often includes the taking of sites as a manner of protest, occupation, appropriation, or acquisition. Thirdly, taking a side implies an active decision, a process of subjectification and identification, in which the subject and the position it takes are equally produced.

Under these preliminary considerations, questions arise of how dissent can be embodied in thoughts separately from actions. Is there an option to oppose without automatically participating in acts of opposition? In this collection, we are conscious of the fact that any re-sistance also re-peats, re-instates, and re-iterates that which it turns against. It could even be argued that any 'contra' inevitably reiterates or even reinforces its 'pro'. The affirmative aspect of practices of dissent, when they are inscribed or want to be visible in their respective discourses, hence also demands attention.

Additionally, historic and contemporary moments in which dissent becomes resistance or in which dissent is dissolved are compelling. Are self-proclaimed 'alternatives' really distinct, or are they merely substitutes that automatically turn into standards over time? And doesn't objection to something further close an issue rather than opening it up as resistance builds? It is also debatable, who or which processes mark something as the antipode of an issue, which is then automatically made the norm. How can we describe the processes of taking place when "being against" draws a line that halts or hinders fluctuation? What binarisms (such as inclusion/exclusion, participant/non-participation, for/against) and contradictions arise when we take a position? Is it possible to take a sid/te in a non-binary way of thinking and acting?

In June 2018, members of the research group "Media and Participation. Between Demand and Entitlement" invited participants from Germany, Switzerland,

Austria, France, Greece, Canada, and the US to come to Konstanz for a conference on "Taking Sides | Taking Sites".

Early career researchers and principal investigators from Konstanz University, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, University of Hamburg, and Zurich University of the Arts each focus on different aspects of media and participation in five subprojects. Research unit 2252 investigates media-cultural processes of *Teilhabe* (participation), positions these in an interdisciplinary framework, and develops a theory of media participation.[1] At the conference four keynote speakers, two of which are also contributors in this collection, gave inputs for the following intense workshop sessions. Athena Athanasiou (Athens) asked, how can we rethink the political implications of crisis/critique/criticality in instating a possibility for decolonial, counter-nationalist, feminist/queer, anti-fascist, social, and political life in our times (see Section 3). By connecting the humanities and academia to the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Athanasiou evoked a concept of the humanities (with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) as a space of potential action, as space to breathe when "I can't breathe" has become a widely recognized idiom, 2014 with Eric Garner, reflected 2018 at our conference, and 2021, when we are writing this introduction and have entered a new intense time of protests, following the killing of George Floyd.

Emma Pérez (Tuscon) anecdotally questioned the coloniality of feelings, which she defined as feelings that emerge from the darker side of the U.S. political terrain during the historical "Trump moment". She identified racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism as the colonization of feelings, which must be decolonized to create a hopeful future. She emphasized the "will to feel", which goes against bourgeoisie, capitalist, automated, and dystopian tendencies of our times and positioned this against more pessimistic, glum descriptions of the epistemically violent status quo while herself taking a strong side for hope (see Section 1).

Gabriella Coleman (Montreal) turned to hacker-based politics, activism, and hacktivism that forms solidarities across causes to probe the theme of the conference: taking sides. She analysed instances of successful hacker cooperation, regardless of political stance, making very clear that "Anonymous is not unanimous". She mapped some of the distinctive characteristics defining hacker political action as well as some of the possible causes behind, and limits to, hacker political intersectionality.

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1 The German term *Teilhabe* is used in differentiation to everyday understandings of participation and stresses that part-taking is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, connecting and separating. By taking part (or having part, which would be closer to *Teilhabe*), the partial emerges at the same time as the participant. The project researchers hence emphasize that any call to partake is always connected to the interpellation of subjects, to promises of benefits from the participation, and at the same time to demands towards the subject.

Judith Revel (Paris) talked about resistance and subjectivation and described processes that shift ideas, affects, and activities from "I" to "We", the latter not being predetermined but emerging. She explored ideas of community, the communal, and individual freedoms within power systems.

The conference hugely benefitted from the impulse papers participants handed in in preparation for the workshop sessions – most of which have since been developed and turned into the chapters of this collection – and from the closing panel of the event: The German performance collective "geheimagentur" sent two of their secret agents to facilitate an alternative ending, reflecting on the insights and discussions beyond being a resume or round for questions. With cut up keynote power points, temporary tongue tattoos, and movement of bodies and minds, the conference participants went on to become contributors to this collection.

By focusing on four different fields of dissent, we want to discuss aspects of the body as a political instance, the identity und subjectivity building of individuals and groups, (micro-)practices of dissent, which can also focus on the importance of the (social) media, and theories of critique. The collection therefore touches upon contemporary issues, recent protests and movements, artistic subversion and dissent, and online activism as well as historic developments and elemental theories of dissent.

The four sections of the book are "Queer Thinking", "Decolonizing Knowledge", "Media Activism", and "Theories of Critique". Each is composed of papers by academics from international universities and early career researchers, as well as framing commentary from the editors. "Queer Thinking" includes aspects of the body as a political instance, the problematizing of identity and subjectivity building of individuals and groups by gender hierarchies, two-gender hegemony, or heteronormativity. In this section, the theories of queer studies are taken up to explore forms of non-binary thinking about resistance and relate them to case studies.

"Decolonizing Knowledge" problematizes different aspects of knowledge making. Next to the pivotal aspect of coloniality and the related cultural, racial, sexual, and geographical dichotomies we focus on aesthetic and activist practices of knowledge making. The chapters in "Media Activism" discuss (micro-)practices of dissent, which can also focus on the importance of (social) media and practices within social media communities that are directed against industry standards as well as tactics that are positioned to oppose participation by default.

Finally, "Theories of Critique" enquires into the (im)possibilities of taking up an external position and highlights an insider critique that reflects on its situation as 'ecologies of practices' and partiality. The discussion will therefore touch upon contemporary issues, recent protests and movements, artistic subversion and dissent, and online activism as well as historic developments and elemental theories of dissent.

This book would not have been possible without people who are not on the cover but have done crucial work. The editors would like to thank Kristina Jevtic and Maren Kraemer for editing the manuscript and Angela Whale for the native language proofreading.

1. De-/Colonizing Knowledge

Segment Introduction

Elke Bippus

> What if instability, or rather the indeterminacy of in/stability, is the condition for the possibility of taking a stand? (Barad 2012: 80)

Autonomy and independence are associated with being a self-sufficient "I", a person who can act according to her own convictions, make decisions, and be self-reliant. This concept of personal autonomy reproduces the model of a self-governing, sovereign being, who can choose who she wants to be. Various feminist thinkers have problematized this concept, which is based in Enlightenment philosophy.

In her 1988 essay *Situated Knowledges*, Donna Haraway outlines the production of knowledge in its local dependence and exposes the transcendent status of objectivity as already partial: "only partial perspective promises objective vision. […] Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see." (Haraway 1988: 583)

Noting the plural in *Situated Knowledges*, it becomes obvious that Haraway's stance far from idealizes knowledge as situated. On the contrary, she writes:

> "There is a premium on establishing the capacity to see from the peripheries and the depths. But here there also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions. To see from below is neither easily learned nor unproblematic, […]. The positionings of the subjugated are not exempt from critical reexamination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation […]. The standpoints of the subjugated are not 'innocent' positions." (Haraway 1988: 584)

If, as Haraway writes, "'subjugated' standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world" (ibid.), the question is, whether we are able at all to decolonize modern epistemology and recognize the world from another point of view, whether from below, the periphery, or a marginalized position? I want to interrogate this through

thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Achille Mbembe, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Grada Kilomba, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and others not explicitly named. By focusing on epistemology and critique, I seek to describe in/stability, am/bivalence, and in/between as conditions of taking a side that are based in an ethical stance and move beyond colonial models of knowledge production and their epistemic violence.

Haraway's concept of situated knowledges articulates a vehement opposition to Western epistemology. This was not, as Evelyn Fox Keller puts it, to make a different science but to make "difference in science" (Keller 1987). This difference in science matters if it disrupts modern epistemology. From Linda Tuhiwai Smith we learn that the quest for knowledge is deeply embedded in imperial and colonial practices. She states that the "word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. […] The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples." (Smith 1999: 1). Counting, measuring, and classifying were the methods used to gather knowledge about the other. In his published lecture *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive* given at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg), philosopher and political theorist, Achille Mbembe identifies three central aspects that in-form our understanding of knowledge: the knowing subject, an impartial subject, and an objective universal knowledge. Global injustice and inequality make the urgency of decolonizing knowledge evident. But what does it mean to decolonize knowledge? Is it possible to constitute a situation that allows us to produce knowledges that neither follow the totalizing versions of claims to scientific authority nor various forms of relativism? What side are we able to take in knowledge-making?

How can we emancipate ourselves from the hegemonic notion of knowledge production which frames our thinking? And which "actively represses anything that actually is articulated, thought, and envisioned from outside of these frames." (Mbembe 2015)

Because research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise, the modalities of knowledge-making and research are essential. By modalities, I mean research methodologies but also research related issues – in the sense of what is accepted as a topic that we should know. I also have in mind the subject – who is empowered to be a researcher? Or, like Grada Kilomba puts it, "whose knowledge is acknowledged as such?" (Kilomba 2010: 13) Linda Tuhiwai Smith mentions more of such critical questions (Smith 1999: 10). I want to close with a remark related to the question of representation: How can or how "should one speak about what has been silenced?" (Kilomba 2010: 13), what has been objectified, what is researchable within the colonized research field?

Even if decolonizing knowledge is condemned to fail, it is of worth to practice the (im-)possibility of decolonizing knowledge. Efforts that go in this direction can be found, for example, in the field of education in demands to have more Black, Indigenous, People of Color-Professors, in the culture of commemoration through monuments or street names, and in a postcolonial remembrance, that integrates colonialism and as well novels by PoC into school curriculums. In the existing constellation of power, which stabilizes the hierarchy between indigenous and European concepts of knowledge, the efforts of decolonizing are connected with the problem of cultural appropriation. Therefore, we must ask what silenced memories are included and "who is served by the inclusion of those memories." (Frank 2015)

The normative and established narratives are crucial in representing colonized, marginalized, and oppressed histories, aesthetics or epistemologies. In this respect, mere inclusion is not possible, but it requires critical reflection on processes of 'othering', and an awareness of how our experiences and perceptions are shaped by colonial legacies.

Decolonizing knowledge confronts the person who seeks to do so with the pitfalls of their blind spots, and their own privileges. In what follows, I would like to mention some practices that sound promising to a white, European-educated person who has developed her thinking in the context of post-structuralist and feminist theories and wants to work critically on knowledge in the field of aesthetics and artistic practice. The following reflections are not so much about a decolonization of knowledge as an attempt to step aside from the legacy of modern epistemology without appropriating the so-called other side.

The Subject of Critique: Reparative and Paranoid Reading

In the essay *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out the affinity between the methodological centrality of suspicion in critical practice and the concept of paranoia. A precarious kinship, Freud already noted between "the systematic persecutory delusion" (Sedgwick 2003: 125) and the psychoanalytical theory itself. In problematizing the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (ibid.), understood as a method of detection which privileges an idea of paranoia that had become almost synonymous with critique itself, Sedgwick develops an alternative: the reparative reading.

While paranoia tends to construct symmetrical relations, in particular symmetrical epistemologies, and to form a strong theory, the reparative is additive and accretive. Like a classic camp performance, the reparative is sustained by passion, excessive erudition, or a "prodigal production of alternative historiographies." (Sedgwick 2003: 150) Yet, Sedgwick is far from privileging the reparative and marginalize

the paranoid. Using Melanie Klein's notion of position, that is built on instability and mutual inscriptions, she succeeds in discussing paranoid and reparative critical practices as changing and heterogeneous relational stances instead of ideological theories.

A comparable figure to Klein's notion of position as read by Sedgwick seems to me to be Spivak's adoption of Gregory Bateson's concept of double bind. Along with Jay Haley, Donald Jackson, and John Weakland, Bateson developed the theory of the double bind, a dysfunctional paradox (of a common, pathological) pattern that occurs in the communication or interaction between parent and child. The phenomenon of double bind arises from a conflict between two messages or a "situation in which no matter what a person does, he 'can't win'." (Bateson 1956: 1)

Spivak employs the double bind in her book *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. The double bind plays an important role in her effort "to use the European Enlightenment from below." Spivak applies "the expression 'ab-use' because the Latin prefix 'ab' says much more than 'below'. Indicating both 'motion away' and 'agency, point of origin', 'supporting', as well as 'the duties of slaves', it nicely captures the double bind of the postcolonial and the metropolitan migrant regarding the Enlightenment" (Spivak 2012: 3f).

Spivak's sympathy for the European Enlightenment calls her to a subversive and critical engagement with this heritage. In other words: Her relationship to the Enlightenment is a kind of double bind that prevents her from taking a single side: for or against it. Unlike a classical ideological (paranoid) critique that seeks to reveal the false consciousness and unlike militant decolonial concepts that claim an independent, a non-Eurocentric knowledge, Spivak seeks to learn the double bind. Not to talk about it, or "resolve double binds by playing them" (Spivak 2012: 1). Rather she advocates facing the double bind, naming the contradictions, e.g. those of the Enlightenment, or of Aesthetics. For her, it is a training for the habit of the ethical, which she also found in the thinking of Melanie Klein, among others. The double bind is not a logical or philosophical problem that can be solved. It is an experience, and it is not possible to remain in it. Spivak insists that a double bind "is the condition of possibility of deciding". To decide in this double bind is "the burden of responsibility." (Spivak 2012: 105) The double bind is not resolvable and therefore the decision is not that of a self-confident, sovereign subject. "The typecase of the ethical sentiments is regret, not self-congratulation." (Spivak 2012: 105)

What can we learn from Sedgwick's and Spivak's proposed readings of the notion of position and double bind in relation to the decolonization of knowledge and taking side? For me, the readings open up a way to confront the dilemma, the contradictions in knowledge production in a postcolonial globalized world. Taking sides means considering my lack of knowledge, my partiality, and an ethical sense of regret.

The authors of this section reflect on the decolonization of knowledge and side-taking on the levels of theory, methods of translation, aesthetics, or critical activist strategies.

Emma Pérez attempts to queer decolonial imaginaries with the intention of developing a transformative and liberating decolonial method. The "decolonial imaginary" is for her "an interstitial space in which political and social dilemmas are negotiated and deconstructed." (23) The way Pérez characterizes this space, reminds me of Sedgewick's concept of positions as opposed to normative spaces ordered along binary patterns. The decolonial imaginary opens affective knowledges, especially for "brown imaginaries of femme, of butch, of trans, of gender-nonconforming selves, of gender-fluidity, and of sexual desire's fluidity." (Ibid.) Theorizing her approach using Gloria Anzuldua, Sara Ahmed, and Francisco Galarte, Pérez designates her technique as phenomenological, "autohistoria teoria", that will "emerge from unseen and unheard life stories." (24) To prevent the decolonial having a colonizing effect, Pérez suggests entangling intersectionality with queer and trans-imaginaries. By relating a personal experience with her daughter, Pérez evolves a decolonizing potentiality that resides within the imaginary and which provides orientation, in particular for queer oriented bodies who are confronted by disorientation in the heteronormative spaces the world is mostly comprised of. Pérez calls her way "the will to feel" (26).

Elke Bippus problematizes taking a side through the notion of double bind. In her close reading of the Artworks *Funk Lessons* by Adrian Piper and Iris Kensmils three-part installation for the Dutch Pavilion 58th Venice Biennale in 2019, Bippus discusses side-taking as an attempt to understand a situation in all its ambivalences and contradictions, while dealing with them without dropping into an anything-goes attitude. According to Bippus the art works critically address the systems of organization and representation of knowledge, and focus on what becomes visible and sayable through them, what is hidden and concealed through them. While Adrian Piper does not claim an external standpoint for art or the artist, she pursues the attempt of a change within using micro-practices. The artist confronts us with the double bind and reveals the construction of habitual ways of thinking, deconstructs them, and opens a site beyond them. Kensmil's critical reading of the Western European (art) does not undertake a better art history. Her intervention into the "aesthetic regime" asks instead which exclusions, repressions, and exotifications accompany the aesthetic sensibilization of modernisms and the division of the sensual. In doing so, she raises cultural, political, and ethical questions within the aesthetic dispositive that is not reduced to art.

The notion of corpoanarchy as a form of protest is central to Kamran Behrouz's text, which is based on two installations of his artwork. Corpoanarchy, connected with bodily disobedience, is described in a diagram by Behrouz as "body without leader" (57). Proceeding from the effects of biopolitics on normalization and con-

tainment of the corporeality of trans/queer/non-binary bodies, through the neologism 'corpoanarchy', Behrouz suggests a performative refusal on a molecular level. In his involvement with the historical picture of August Landmesser, a German citizen who refused to perform the Nazi salute, he visualizes on one side "the corporeality of 'corpoanarchy'" (53), on the other side he problematizes the untranslatability of the word anarchy, or the lack of a precise word to address transgender in Farsi and interrelates that to subjectivation processes through language. His research is an attempt at re-translations that seek to include the trouble of untranslatability during the act of translation instead of focusing on smoothing contradictions and removing ambiguity to avoid "cultural discombobulation". The second installation reflected on by Behrouz is a tribute to the unspeakable deaths of queer and trans people in Iran. As transition in Iran is a "normalization process: an obligatory rule for transgender people to turn into 'corrected bodies'" (60), and the histories of bodies who refused to be normalized in this way or who never came out have never been documented, queer and trans bodies have disappeared from the Iranian collective memory of queer culture.

Magdalena Goetz examinates strategies that de-/colonize established rational knowledge in both institutionalized and everyday lives. In her engagement with the technofeminist strategy of noisification, used by the artist group *#purplenoise* for dealing with social media, Goetz expounds that queering becomes a tactic of 'feminist dissent', which subverts social media norms and proposes alternative practices through their emancipative knowledge-processes. Some of these practices work with contradictions to create disturbance "in order to challenge existing power relations surrounding social media" or apply affective infrastructures to expose how "affect is (made) infrastructural as well as how infrastructures are intrinsically affective." (74) Goetz reads *#purplenoise* as a highly self-critical group that is fully aware that social media have become a self-contradictory 'site' "where not just ordinary users but also the political establishment, […] and hate groups can develop their greatest impact." (69) Through their manifesto these artists illustrate the double bind character of social media platforms. Unravelling the various practices of taking sides and sites *#purplenoise* negotiates practices of dissent and understands the internet as an extended site of feminist resistance.

The contributions of this section explore subtle knowledge practices which are difficult to grasp as such at first glance. Some elude language by making use of other forms of articulation. They can occur in non-propositional forms of knowledge building, for instance, through the use of objects, technical instruments, and digital media or in political activism.

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Affecting Knowledges
Decolonial Brown Queer and Trans Imaginaries

Emma Pérez

One of my projects has been to queer decolonial imaginaries and through that queering apply a decolonial method that is both libratory and transformative. This move has led me to locate brown queer imaginaries within a decolonial affective mode. I have argued elsewhere that to decolonize history, a deconstructive method that I named "the decolonial imaginary" may be taken up (Pérez 1999). In my early monograph, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, is an interstitial space in which political and social dilemmas are negotiated and deconstructed; it is a space in which one is not merely oppressed or victimized, nor is one only oppressor or victimizer. Rather, one negotiates between and among one's identities in favor of the identity that is most viable for that specific political, coalitional, historical moment. There is a way in which these multiple self-identities, constructed around and by an imaginary, are in and of themselves coalitional and beyond notions of the individualist self. As a deconstructive tool, the decolonial, to which I ascribe, needs the creativity of the imaginary to open up affective knowledges, elicited through and from first person experience, too often negated when the collective experiences are brown, queer, and transgender. Yet, perhaps if we venture inside decolonial queer/trans imaginaries we will find the brown imaginaries of femme, of butch, of trans, of gender-non-conforming selves, of gender-fluidity, and of sexual desire's fluidity because desire, after all, is fluid and always already changing, transforming us toward unexpected twists and turns in which surface effects can dictate the body/mind/psyche.[1] In order to approach these imaginaries, this chapter will first turn to Gloria Anzaldúa's phenomenology of self, then, I will explore the will to feel as a concept/methodology/practice to promote brown queer/trans imaginaries as a method of critique.

1 In *The Extractive Zone,* Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017), illuminates the hidden, the unseen and that which is often neglected in submerged ecological terrains. The theorist offers up feminist perspectives for anyone intent upon decolonial theory that definitively prods the "coloniality of power." Her work is one of the first to queer a decoloniality that exposes more than cis-male-centered studies; her research also fosters decolonial queer "cuir" femme analytics.

For brown queer/trans imaginaries, the phenomenology of first-person experience draws from the collective practices developed through Gloria Anzaldúa's methodologies of autohistoria and authohistoria teoria (Anzaldúa 2016: 241-142). These are phenomenological turns that glean from an individual's personal life story, a life story inextricably linked to collective transformation. The political and cultural links to the collective are essential for life stories to matter. Moreover, Anzaldúa's autohistorias are also a phenomenological method, or autohistoria teoria, that, to phrase it with Sarah Ahmed, "emphasizes the importance of lived experience." (2006: 2) Both theorists underscore how lived experiences integrate the mind, body, and psyche to cultivate new ways of knowing and being. These epistemologies and ontologies are born deep inside the body, beyond skin surfaces, beyond the superficial outer layers that are visible and easy to touch, and beyond what is seen but not grasped because something is always hidden. The knowing is only a fragment of what lies beneath; the being is only a particle of what has been and what will be. These are the submerged terrains of the body/mind/psyche triad that Anzaldúa guided us toward and that Macarena Gómez-Barris expanded upon as she discussed extraction and the submerged with a decolonial 'cuir' femme analytics. In this chapter, I want to propose the phenomenological method of brown queer/trans imaginaries, which also emerge from unseen and unheard life stories.

Let's take a look at Anzaldúa again. In her celebrated *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa offered up affective methods long before affect was being theorized in larger academic venues. When she asked us to feel the intuitive guise of *la facultad*, or to sink into the abyss of the Coatlicue state or to embrace the shadow beast lurking inside our psyche seeking freedom from self-abnegation, Anzaldúa asked us to feel our lives intimately.[2] She not only asked us to feel our lives deeply, she also summoned us to respect the affective methods that lead to our transformation. Nepantla, that in-between state that we inhabit, became the method for traversing an affective life filled with cultural emotion. And when she asked us to acknowledge our writing as a sensuous, feeling act that could satisfy the psychic unrest in which writers dwell (Anzaldúa 1985: 71-73), we realized again the libratory and transformative methods she recommended through the very act of writing. But she also reminded us that writing was a privilege not to be taken for granted, given where we come from and how our brown, poor communities must struggle to have access to writing.

When I turn to brown queer/trans imaginaries, I am also consulting transgender scholar, Francisco Galarte, who argues: "to trans our approach is to invite change and transformation." (Galarte 2014: 118) It is a method that answers

2 Anzaldúa defines her concept, *la facultad*, as "the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface." (Anzaldúa 1987: 38)

Anzaldúa's call for a decolonial reality that is willing "to change or reinvent reality" with an imagination that encourages transformation (Anzaldúa 2016: 44). The method pays heed to Anzaldúa's call to "listen to what your *jotería* is saying." (Anzaldúa 1987: 85)[3] I would add that we must also discern what queer/trans folks are feeling, gesturing, and experiencing. A brown queer/trans imaginary is grounded in decolonial disruption of white, colonialist, hegemonic, necropolitical heterosexuality and capitalism. And by acknowledging brown queer/trans imaginaries, decolonial defies heteronormativity, patriarchal relationships, and gender norms.

At this point, I would also argue that one cannot examine race/class/gender/sexuality if queer and trans imaginaries are absent. In other words, if we neglect brown queer and trans imaginaries, we are defying a core definition of decolonial, which is to strip away at colonialist hierarchies. Without queer/trans imaginaries, the decolonial is not decolonial at all but instead another colonizing, occluding methodology without inclusive practices. At the same time, it is important that just as we contest gender as a social, colonial, raced construct, we must contest 'sex' as a social, colonial, raced construct. We have been much too invested in gender and ignored the way in which 'sex' is ordained as biological and unchangeable and as a result have discarded sex from a tangible critique. In the same way, it is relevant to interrogate desire as a colonial, sexed matrix. But how? Perhaps decolonial brown queer/trans imaginaries will allow us to contest 'sex' and to contest our notions of 'desire' as we challenge the symbolic order of patriarchy, of coloniality, of sex-gender systems that still split into false binaries in which sex is natural and gender is a social construct (Butler 1993: 16). Is desire dictated by a coloniality of feelings – that which holds us back, repeats itself in old, familiar habits and patterns of racialized and gendered hierarchies? Our desires are so often rooted in our past, ingrained in our bodies/minds/psyches, and fixed in our present that we become stultified perhaps only reacting to the present, which is imprinted by our past and perhaps equally imprinted with historical trauma.

Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* shows us the way in which bodies feel and experience how they are gendered, sexualized, and raced by *how* they "extend into space." (Ahmed 2006: 2) In other words, she asks that we pay attention to the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds. Moreover, queer orientation, how we as queer/gender-non-conforming People of Color orient ourselves toward the something that appeals to us, attracts us, makes us whole, is not an easy task in a straight world in which straightening devices are all around us (Ahmed 2006: 72). Heterosexual, cis-gender, then, is not concerned with being 'oriented' because they are already deemed 'natural' in their desires, their feelings. Institutions are always already straight and act as straightening devices in the same

3 Historically a pejorative term, "joteria," can be translated to "queer" and has been reclaimed by Chicanx/Latinx queers in the same way that "queer" was reclaimed.

way that hegemonic institutions are always already white, heteronormative, and colonialist, imposing a universality of a white world that denies queer and trans People of Color their/our right to be. To just be.

Anzaldúa understood this. She repeatedly reminds us in her writings that she is/was a brown queer lesbian working-class Chicana/Tejana from the U.S.-Mexico border, born in the mid-twentieth century when segregation, poverty, and homophobia were the norm. When she called herself *jota, marimacha, tortillera*, she embraced brown queerness, recognizing that the queer, trans, lesbian, butch, femme, brown body is worn down and worn out by spatial temporal limits of whiteness and of a heterosexual regime. The state of Tejas (Texas) in the mid-twentieth century was not a fun place to be a brown queer/trans body oriented toward other brown queer/trans bodies. But Anzaldúa instructed us to pay attention to what it feels like to inhabit the world as a brown queer/trans body. What does it mean to have to be in certain spaces, when those spaces are overwhelmingly white or heteronormative? For Ahmed, disorientation is overwhelming for the queer body that is oriented elsewhere, but an elsewhere that is often hidden from sight, occupying interstitial glances and gazes as we try to discern who is or who is not really queer.[4]

I can say that the queer butch brown body, which I myself inhabit as a gender non-conforming brown butch, is in constant battle with spaces that are normalized for cisgender, heterosexual folks. And it is not simply an issue of not being comfortable or disoriented in heteronormative spaces since, after all, that is the world for the most part. Instead, what is important is the way in which those spaces are so normalized that a specific kind of universalism grounded in a colonialist, white, heteronormative regime is privileged over and over again. Only through collective action and collective voices of brown queer/trans folks can those privileges be exposed and, once exposed, the changes and transformations are possible. But again, that spatial temporal universalizing that is invisible for so many, whether white or heteronormative or both, takes a harsh toll on queer/trans, butch, femme, genderfluid, brown, and black bodies.

The Will to Feel

In this brief chapter I have been hinting at how decolonial Anzaldúan methods inform what I am developing as 'the will to feel'. By turning to the will to feel, I want to propose this other facet that resides within the imaginary and that has the potential to decolonize, dismiss or eradicate oppressive regimes. For now, I'm calling this mechanism 'the will to feel'.

4 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (2006). Refer to pages 157-165 of the conclusion, "Disorientation and Queer Objects."

Let me begin with a personal story, my own phenomenology of spirit and mind that compelled me to linger upon will and willingness. In September 2017, I witnessed my daughter drop twenty-two pounds in the span of four weeks. In a way, she eluded her will to live, choosing instead to control calories, defy hunger, and entertain suicide. She had lost her appetite. No hunger, no craving, no life. No will. She fluctuated between depression and anger and the only will she had, was her willfulness to defy the very thing that would keep her alive – food. Her heart rate dropped so drastically that she had to be monitored nightly in the hospital for over a week. Only eleven years old, she had become a statistic, part of an epidemic that overwhelms the First World nations filled with hypocrisy and contradictions. "Eat, but don't get fat." "Consume food, drugs, alcohol, bright shiny things – but don't gain weight, don't be an addict, don't be greedy." "Be sexy, but don't be sexual." Or in other words: abide by patriarchal double-standards that still press down upon you in the twenty-first century despite the decades of the 1960s and 1970s that attempted to advance rights for women, for girls, for LGBT folks, for People of Color, for those on the margins. We made some headway but regressed afterthe 2016 election of Trump, aproblematic, bigoted President of the United States.

Eating disorders continue to rise and have not been tackled or resolved since they received national attention in the 1970s. The media has given minimal regard to the disorder and only places at its center young, white, middle-class teenage girls. I discovered after seven weeks in the Children's Hospital of Denver that although most of the patients were girls from nine to eighteen years old, and many were white and middle-class, there were also Latinas, teenaged boys, including one from Mexico, girls from working-class backgrounds with single mothers, and a teen girl from Africa. The teen boys presented somewhat queer but clearly had no permission to present in anything other than the white, cisgender heteronormative, far-right Christianity of intolerance seemingly practiced by their families. I have no intention of speaking at length on anorexia or about my daughter. I will say that therapy – both family and individual – gave us the tools to be willing to heal and she has demonstrated a willingness to face the monsters in her head.

My point in raising this brief, personal narrative is to introduce the notion of will in its various forms as I make an argument for the will to feel within the brown queer/trans imaginary: will, willfulness, willful subjects, willingness, will to power, will to know, will to truth, will to live.[5]

5 What of the "life unworthy of being lived" for those who "have neither the will to live nor the will to die." In his chapter, "Life That Does Not Deserve to Live," from the book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben (1995) cites Karl Binding's *Pamphlet in Favor of Euthanasia* published in Germany in 1920. See pages 136-143. Agamben posits that the pamphlet urged the question of sovereignty over one's will to live or die vis-à-vis the "value or non-value" of life.

Friedrich Nietzsche articulated the will to power, "an ideal that simultaneously brings with it its own form of universalization: war and conquest." (Moten 2018: 3)[6] Michel Foucault compelled us to consider the will to know and the will to truth, or we could say, the will to know the truth (Foucault 2013). We were challenged to become truth-seekers of knowledges and to question how assorted disciplinary knowledges came to be. The will to live can be attributed to Arthur Schopenhauer, a philosopher I have not read closely and have only thought of him in reference to a brief scene in the film *Frida* (Taylor 2002). There is a clever moment on the part of the scriptwriter who invokes the will to live for Frida after an accident that challenged her into yet more difference in an ableist world.[7] I ruminated about my own daughter's loss of a will to live and her resilient willfulness to individuate in ways harmful to her as she willfully toyed with death.

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Muñoz cites Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch who remind us, "[w]hat is really important here is the will that is different." (Muñoz 2009: 39) What if the will to feel is the will to be different as 'feelings' compel us to express differently in a world that anticipates 'logic', the 'rational mind', and unfeeling to explain our lives, even when there is no logic, no rationale, no real explanation that can fulfill expectations grounded in that which is not part of one's experience or phenomenological way of being. The fact is, however, that there is no hard and fast methodology, practice, or theory that can avoid misuse, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation.

The will to feel, I am proposing, is its own hermeneutics, its own method and theory. At least, that is what I am attempting in this brief meditation that borrows from phenomenology to make my point. The phenomenology of the first-person experience has a long history with various intellectuals, writers, and philosophers, particularly as I have shown above in the works of Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, as well as Sara Ahmed. What happens when we use those feelings, the woundedness and painful hurt to drive critique and analysis consciously, with an

6 Moten questions the phenomenology of "individuating" that emerges from the usual suspects, Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, etc. (Moten 2018: 4) I am fascinated by Moten's phenomenology because he is pointing us toward the communal aspects of a concept that has relied too much on the soloist as alone instead of always already part of a collective.

7 In the film *Frida*, with Salma Hayak, we see the tragic accident that debilitated her body and how she coped with disability for the rest of her life. When she is initially recuperating at home and struggling with extreme physical pain, her college boyfriend, played by Diego Luna, brings her a stack of books to read while she is bedridden. One of the books is a philosophy tract and as he hands her the book he says: "Schopenhauer because it's good for you." For decades that comment riddled me until finally, after thinking about 'will' in its many forms and my own impulse to theorize and actualize our understanding of the will to feel, it hit me: Her boyfriend wanted Frida to begin to feel a will to live again.

astute awareness? That is to say, what happens when we implement affective emotions that move us to act or react in the first place? Are we only writing subjectivities, not rational, not Lockian or Western European Cartesian, but instead, an argument and thesis guided by emotional affective intelligence grounded in willingness to feel what has shaped the mind/body/psyche. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault posits, that we must "start from the decision that universals do not exist, asking what kind of history can we do," instead of "using history as the critical method" that questions universals (Foucault 2008: 1-3).

In a sense, I am arguing that we turn to the will to feel as an antidote that strips away at false notions of universal objective science to promote brown queer/trans imaginaries as a method of critique. The rational mind can lie to itself and rely on objectivity as if one is not influenced by regionalism, history, culture, gender, sexualities, race, and class background. However, when we take brown queer/trans imaginaries into account, the will to feel as a deconstructive hermeneutic may open new avenues as we attempt to decolonize affective knowledges.

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Taking Sides and De-Colonizing Practices of Dissent

Elke Bippus

In her book *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak concentrates on aesthetics, despite all the problems with this legacy. In her view, the space of aesthetic education "allows us to survive in the singular and the unverifiable." (Spivak 2012: 2) "Aesthetic education is Spivak's call to ab-use globalizing oppression through the epistemological."[1] (Gershon 2015: 5) Affiliated to that focus on aesthetics is Spivak's idea "that can be described as sabotaging Schiller." Therefore, it is urgently required

> "to find something relating to 'our own history' to counteract the fact that the Enlightenment came, to colonizer and colonized alike, through colonialism, to support a destructive 'free trade', and that top-down policy breaches of Enlightenment principles are more rule than exception." (Spivak 2012: 4)

It is the imagination that can be trained by aesthetic education. But that implies that we have to

> "learn to do violence to the epistemo-epistemological difference and remember that this is what education 'is', and thus keep up the work of displacing belief onto the terrain of the imagination, attempt to access the epistemic. The displacement of belief onto the terrain of the imagination can be a description of reading in its most robust sense." (Spivak 2012: 10)

Gregory Batson's phrase "double bind" is fundamental for Spivak's concept of aesthetic education. A *double bind* involves a binary in which two subject positions can simultaneously oppose, yet inform one another. Spivak describes the double bind as "learning to live with contradictory instructions." (Spivak 2012, 3)

In respect of the double bind Spivak follows neither classical ideological criticism, or the "hermeneutics of suspicion," (Sedgwick 2003: 124) nor does she claim

1 Instead the formulation to use Enlightenment from below, Spivak suggests the expression "'ab-use' because the Latin prefix 'ab' says much more than 'below'. Indicating both 'motion away' and 'agency, point of origin', 'supporting', as well as 'the duties of slaves', it nicely captures the double bind of the postcolonial and the metropolitan migrant regarding the Enlightenment." (Spivak 2012: 3f)

an essential other knowledge outside the European framing, like some radical decolonial attempts do. In contrast to Friedrich Schiller, who "tried to undo the double bind of mind and body by suggesting the *Spieltrieb*," (Spivak 2012: 19) Spivak tries to be aware of the double bind. This has the effect that art is not conceptualized as a balancing act that will save society, like it is in Schiller's thinking.

I would like to describe the double bind as a side taking that is not understood as a position opposite another. Confronting the double bind means recognizing contradictions and dealing with ambivalences. It is not a side taking that positions oneself on the assumed right side, but an attempt to understand a situation in all its ambivalences and contradictions and to deal with them. Due to this perspective, the question arises: How can we differentiate side-taking and distinguish it from a binary concept of inside/outside on the one hand and from an ambivalence, or an 'anything-goes' attitude, on the other hand? With the following analysis of art projects by Adrian Piper and Iris Kensmil, I want to elaborate a side-taking which deals with the double bind of aesthetics. They reveal aesthetic practices in their 'dispositif' constitution in contrast to an (autonomous) 'aesthetic regime' (Rancière 2011),[2] meaning to expose the entanglement between aesthetics, politics, and ethics.

During our Symposium in 2018, the starting point of the book at hand, Athena Athanasiou mentioned that to take sides means to involve, to situate oneself in space and time, it signifies to act from a specific and local background, refer to local knowledge, and to feel and to think what's at stake. In the following text, I focus on aesthetics in relation to epistemology and ethics. Therefore, I remove the idealization of art or the essential connection between art and resistance which one can find in Schiller's concept of aesthetic education. I follow Spivak's attempt to think of aesthetic education not as a resolve of the double bind, or a sensual practice which is able to collapse binaries like mind and body, but as a call for displacement. She writes: "my task is to undertake such a displacement." (Spivak 2012: 32) She ab-uses binary constructions, to reverse and displace them. My perception and reading of artworks by Piper and Kensmil, which follows brief reflections on the term criticism, focuses on practices that cause such ab-use.

2 According to Rancière, the "aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art, and at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself. Schiller's aesthetic state, which is this regime's first manifesto (and remains, in a sense, unsurpassable), clearly indicates this fundamental identity of opposites. The aesthetic state is a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself. Moreover, it is the moment of the formation and education of a specific type of humanity." (Ibid. 23f)

Displace Critique through (Micro-)Practice

In the 1990s, post-structuralism, with its new take on traditional concepts, was regarded as an independent, radical form of social critique, which led to a then highly suitable formulation of critical theory. Affirmation played a central role in Jacques Derrida's attempt to "imagine another historicity," (Derrida 2006: 94) and Jean-François Lyotard countered the aesthetics of negation and examined desire as the driving force of the political (Lyotard 1993), while Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari thought of transformation as an essential characteristic of existence that equals a constant process of becoming (Deleuze/Guattari 1983). In recent years, however, the post-structuralist form of critique has come under attack. The concept of critique, developed in sociology, distinguishes itself from post-structural cultural analysis of complex power constellations and knowledge systems, and declines the problematics of subject, truth, and great order, in favor of the investigation of "society as a whole." (van Dyk 2012: 186) Sociologist Silke van Dyk notes that "the preference for (self-willed) micro-politics, complex culprit relations, and interpretive struggles […] in (recent) social criticism is […] considered obsolete in the face of the great crisis." (Ibid.) According to one argument, post-structural critique lost its political clout when it became politically established, escaping into academically harmless abstraction and rhizomatic textures. It is only about the exchange value of an academic theory but not about its usefulness as a socially critical instrument as a consequence of which there is no genuine social commitment. In contrast, post-structuralists complain that academic philosophy continues to ignore post-structuralist thinking and that it has become accepted only in cultural studies (Lorey/Nigro/Raunig 2011: 18).

The (political-theoretical) opposition entails the risk to miss a significant aspect of post-structuralist theory and critique: i.e., the critical potential of aesthetics as a cognitive instrument both analytically and performatively. This is equally important for art and art theory. Post-structuralism has led to new perceptions of art, not only based on biographic or reception aesthetics, but rather on the material and formal nature of aesthetic practices. In favor of a new criticism, post-structuralist thinkers reflected the aesthetic structure of theory itself, and questioned the normative notions of knowledge and science. In the 1960s, Roland Barthes posited such a criticism, defying the reading instructions of traditional French literary studies. While the traditional function of criticism was judging,

> "the true 'criticism' of institutions and languages does not consist in 'judging' them, but in *perceiving*, in *separating*, in *dividing*. To be subversive, the critic does not have to judge, it is enough that he talks of language instead of using it. What new criticism is reproached with today is not so much that it is 'new', but that it is

> fully 'criticism', that it re-allocates the roles of author and commentator and in so doing attacks the linguistic order." (Barthes 2007: 3)

Barthes understands criticism as a performative writing-thinking-act:

> "We know that old criticism cannot write in any other way unless it begins to think in some other way. For to write is *already* to organize the world, it is *already* to think (to learn a language is to learn how one thinks in that language)." (Barthes 2007: 12)

Similar objections to traditional forms of criticism are also found in American and British conceptual art of the 1960s. Conceptual art, with its self-critical reflection and analysis of the conditionality of artistic practices, attacks the formalist principle of modernist reduction and the accompanying normative framework. One goal was to uncover prevailing authoritarian art paradigms, which are considered natural, through analytical procedures.

While the group *Art & Language* paradigmatically advocated an analytic-theoretical and linguistic-oriented perspective (Burn/Ramsden 1974), conceptual artists such as Robert Smithson and Adrian Piper combined a deconstruction of the normative rules of artistic practice with new aesthetic procedures. Piper, whose performances are discussed in the following paragraphs, focuses on functional issues. She is self-critical and criticizes the conditionality of artistic practices and hierarchies, while working on normative boundaries and releasing a poetic force of aesthetic practices, procedures, and modes of presentation. My analysis of her *Funk Lessons* embraces the concepts of affirmation, transformation, and critique, and creates a concrete analysis of Piper's project, from a post-structuralist perspective as a political micro-practice.[3] By means of aesthetic practices, the artist put up normative notions of social and artistic aesthetic reality for negotiation, and opens the possibility of new ways of thinking and acting. Adrian Piper and Iris Kensmil are artists of color. The choice is not accidental, to the contrary. Both artists develop a critical perspective that goes beyond an ordinary institutional critique. Their works confront me with my blind spots when examining art in its normative framework and draw my attention to my privileged white perspective and the effects of unconscious identifications. I hope to fulfill the responsibility that correlates with my choice.

3 This formulation is a shift from micro-politics to the micro-practice of aesthetic procedures, which by practice aim at reflection in contrast to political action.

Funk as a Participative Collective Medium

Adrian Piper (*1948 in New York City) is a first-generation concept artist. Participatory practices play a major role in her work, which is based on artistic processes, as in the tradition of the Cage School, and the action events of Fluxus and Happening. Such participatory approaches, which integrate the audience through instructions to the production process, are fundamental to those artistic works which critically examine the divorce of art and reality (cf. Kravagna 1999). Piper remarks, that ignorance and xenophobia have shaped the audience's perception of her performances from the outset, especially in relation to the aesthetic language of a black working-class culture (Piper 1996: 201). She points to a fundamental connection between art and reality on the level of perception and understanding. Accordingly, it is not surprising that she does not take side inside or outside the aesthetic regime. On the contrary, she entangles the practices she is using in the social field with those in the artistic field. In doing so, she reflects her artistic work in the social field of community back into the art world, in order to disrupt and transform the inherent and unconscious patterns of perception in each case.

Figure 1: Adrian Piper, "Funk Lessons", 1983, Video, 00:15:17. Edited and directed by Sam Samore, produced by Tom Oden. Documentation of an audience-interactive performance of Funk Lessons at the University of California, Berkeley. Details: Stills # 250#.
Figure 2: Adrian Piper, "Funk Lessons", 1983, Video, 00:15:17.Edited and directed by Sam Samore, produced by Tom Oden. Documentation of an audience-interactive performance of Funk Lessons at the University of California, Berkeley. Details: Stills # 251


Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin. © APRA Foundation Berlin

Between 1982 and 1984, Piper performed her piece *Funk Lessons*, which was a collaborative experiment in cross-culture transfusion, seeking to combine political content with pleasurable experiences. She started this project about the history of African-American funk and soul music shortly after finishing her PhD in philosophy at Harvard University in 1981. Under the title "GET DOWN AND PARTY.

TOGETHER" she then exercised the work with participants from the university, the surrounding neighborhood, and those in the art field. A 15-minute video, directed by Sam Samore and made from footage of Piper's *Funk Lessons* at the University of California, Berkeley, begins with images of a jukebox, focusing on the music apparatus and its mechanics, which is a bit reminiscent of Dziga Vertov's imagery. This is followed by a short sequence from the American TV Show *Soul Train*, a program which was produced by People of Color for a black audience. From a close-up of dancers from the show, the video switches to Piper's performance at U.C. Berkeley.[4] The subsequent recordings are accompanied by displayed didactic sentences such as "FUNK IS MODULAR", "FUNK IS IMPROVISATIONAL", or "SHOULDER SHRUG." The cinematic presentation of *Funk Lessons* is a montage of insights into the performance, as it combines sequences from the dancers in *Soul Train*, Piper's later explanations from an interview, video music clips by James Brown and Aretha Franklin, and a documentary recording of a racist attribution to Rock 'n' Roll music, uttered by a representative of the Alabama White Citizens Council, who predicts whites becoming black through Rock 'n' Roll.[5]

The white middle-class's widespread racist rejection of the Funk idiom as black working-class culture was the point of departure for Piper's didactic approach to her lesson with *Funk* as a collective and participatory medium of self-transgression and affection (Piper 1996: 196), and a means of acquiring insight into cultural and racist barriers. With 'Funk' and 'Lesson',[6] the artist assembles two concepts that are connoted opposites.

In 1985, according to Piper's later published comments on her performances, Funk, a typical expression of black culture in the 1970s, originates with black pop music and a dance style. Piper describes Funk as "a language of interpersonal communication and collective self-expression that has its origins in African tribal music and dance." (Piper 1996: 195) Funk is a shared pleasure and a dance, based on "a system of symbols, cultural meanings, attitudes, and patterns of movement that one must directly experience in order to understand fully." (Piper 1996: 195) She continues:

> "[…] whereas social dance in white culture is often viewed in terms of achievement, social grace or competence, or spectator-oriented entertainment, it is a collective and participatory means of self-transcendence and social union in black culture

4 Cf. Funk Lessons (excerpt) http://www.adrianpiper.com/vs/video_fl.shtml, last access 3.25.2020.

5 In the documentary recording, the speaker states: "[…] the obscenity and vulgarity and the rock 'n' roll music […]. It is obviously a means by which the white man and his children are driven to the level of the Negro […]. It's obviously Negro music." (Funk Lessons 1983, 00:06:11)

6 'Dance lesson' is a standing concept, 'lesson' is not solely the (lecturing) lesson, but also meant to be an exercise.

> along many dimensions, and so is often much more fully integrated into daily life." (Ibid.)

In her performances, typically addressing more than 60 people, physical experiences of basic elements of musical dance intermix with cultural background information, such as in relation of funk to other, 'white' music. The performance not only conveys a shared experience, it also combines experience and reflection. The affirmation of funk does not invite mere identificatory intoxication, it also interrupts with affective power. Piper's method is comparable to Bertolt Brecht's model of *epic theater*, which, according to Walter Benjamin, is able to make readers or viewers participate and invites the actors to comment on their own roles. According to Benjamin, this reflection is caused by the principle of interruption, which he describes as a method of montage. The interruption has an organizing function that emancipates itself from a stimulus reaction: "It arrests the action in its course, and thereby compels the listener to adopt an attitude vis-à-vis the process, the actor vis-à-vis his role." (Benjamin 2005: 778)

Piper transforms the original learning situation of the Funk lesson into a "didactic basis for cooperation" through discussions in small groups[7] and "social union replaced the audience-performer separation." (Piper 1996: 196) The artist tries to make it clear that what she "purported to teach was revealed to be a kind of fundamental sensory 'knowledge' that everyone has and can use." (Ibid.) The performance does not "aspire to experience black culture sympathetically or through participation," (Piper 1996: 208) nor is it acting as a work of art or interactive art, nor is it intended to create a dull sense of community. The participants are rather addressed as always already partaking; in the sense that they are part of a historical and cultural dispositif, in which they subjectivize themselves, their identity, their thinking, their perception, their ideas, and their attitude. Piper does not reduce the processes of subjectification to cognitive processes. On the contrary, in her performance she reflects the interplay between self-practice and discursively conveyed norms and attempts to detach Funk from its normative constriction by breaking it down into individual exercises in order to make it effective for individuation processes in a new way. This is what it says in a handout distributed for the *Funk Lessons*:

7 According to Piper, the triggered reactions succeeded in parallel, organizing the groups to articulate dismantled beliefs. "The result was often cathartic, therapeutic, and intellectually stimulating." (Piper 1996: 198)

"1. Relaxed back […].
4. Isolation of body parts: feet, knees, hips […].
7. Personalistic: variation and play on fixed dance conventions for individual self-expression. […]
9. Participatory and nonexhibitionistic: dance as an involving communal event, *not* entertainment for a spectator audience. […]
12. Repetitive: patterns repeated multiply, or until they become second nature.
13. Improvisational: simple units of physical movement lead into different movements, gradually or instantaneously transforming extended pattern." (Piper 1996: 213)

Funk Lessons as a Reinforcing Practice

Piper wants to "restructure people's social identities by making accessible to them a common medium of communication – funk music and dance." (Piper 1996: 198) In *Funk Lessons*, body and thinking practices are related, affects are interrupted, and new feelings and transformations become possible. According to this, affects become cognizable as structured and determined by historical, cultural or social interpretive patterns.[8] By dividing Funk into individual physical exercises, she also fragments the unified and self-assertive image of Funk that has elicited different responses from middle-class white and black college graduates. She dismantles the affirmative identification, as well as the aversive racist dimensions of this image, and transforms Funk into a cultural medium of communication that is not oriented towards stereotypical patterns, but rather questions essentialist attributions based on dichotomies. Piper relates experience to analysis and a pleasurable to a critical attitude. She creates a milieu (the communicative medium of Funk) in which subjectifications on a micro-practical level are carried out in the exercise of a shared "physical language that everyone was then empowered to use." (Piper 1996: 195) Consequently, Piper's *Funk Lessons* can generally be described as a critical analysis of representation and as an exercise in self-empowerment. Instead of a critical mode of operating against racism, Piper moved to a creatively subversive one. She takes side not from an outside, but from within, she opens a position which deals with the

8 According to Butler, we are "already social beings, working within elaborate social interpretations both when we feel horror and when we fail to feel it at all. Our affect is never merely our own: affect is, from the start, communicated from elsewhere. It disposes us to perceive the world in a certain way, to let certain dimensions of the world in and to resist others. But if a response is always a response to a perceived state of the world, what is it that allows some aspect of the world to become perceivable and another not?" (Butler 2009: 50)

> "double bind: The anxiety and fear response to what is perceived as alien and threatening carries with it the implicit belief that the Other is *superior*: in strength, cunning, endurance, and understanding – hence the myth of blacks as bigger, stronger, cooler, sexier, wiser, hipper, meaner, and so on. White Americans then get to feel inferior, not only to what they are not (European) because of what they are (African-influenced) but also to what they are (African-influenced) because of what they are not (Afro-American). Blacks become an object of fear, loathing, admiration, and awe." (Piper 1996: 208)

The heterogeneous and diversified social community, sought by Piper, was at odds with U.S. society in the 1980s, which was characterized by homogenization and assimilation, and in which, by adapting, black Americans succeeded in achieving a certain political, economic, social, and economic equality. Inclusion in the (white) community was linked to the exclusion of certain cultural life practices. Thus, as a medium of cultural communication, Piper had to abandon Funk, which she describes as central to her life and her identity as a black woman. She responded to this unreasonable demand by sharing "this idiom with my audience so I could use it successfully in my work as a recognized and comprehended medium of communication, or shared language." (Piper 1996: 202) Piper's affirmation of Funk is indebted to a critical view of the norms taken at face value by white society and its high culture as well as her refusal to subordinate or adapt herself to its value system. Piper had to radically question the understanding of her role as an artist and her status as a relatively privileged member of (white) society in order to refer to Funk as "an unbelievably rich and enriching art form" and seize it "for the cultural benefit of my largely white, upper-middle-class audience." (Piper 1996: 203) Piper had to emancipate herself from the social hierarchy and not to be subsumed by it in order to realize that "black working-class culture [...] has invaluable gifts to offer that audience, and not just the other way around." (Ibid.)

Piper reflects on the conditions of inclusion or exclusion in reality and art. On one hand, she addresses the demands, requirements, and impositions linked to the offer to participate and be part of the white culture and community, and, on the other hand, the often unconscious acts required to adapt to the values of the culture in which one wishes to participate. In her performances she confirms and explores the various cultural dimensions of her identity. She uses the different communication rules and expressions that she has

> "learned in the process of my acculturation into white culture: the analytical mode, the formal and structural analysis, the process of considered and constructive rational dialogue, the pseudoacademic lecture/demonstration/group participation style, and so on." (Piper 1996, 204)

Instead of side taking in an oppositional style her aim is to switch back and forth between the different processes of the cultures with ease.

The superimposition of socio-cultural experience and analytical reflection in *Funk Lessons* reveals American culture as African-American, which suppresses its elements of blackness, constructing them as an alien and threatening Other in order to reinforce white identity. The *Funk Lessons* performances aimed at becoming different, by being disturbing and becoming existentially tangible for the participants. The aesthetic translation into the medium of video embodies and performs the implicit, fundamentally sensory knowledge that is Piper's point of departure, and inserts it in the realm of art – as a text in itself, as well as a highly composed, cinematic montage of image and text material from different sources. In doing so, the medial turns *against* the medial, meaning that it is reflected as a medium and cannot be reduced to the function of a mere transmission. In other words, the video communicates its performance, interrupts referential references and, refers to what escapes representation, and at the same time becomes open to multiple discourses. In this way, Piper's *Funk Lessons* could be described as a micro-political critique. These *micro-politics*, as envisioned by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, refer to a political experiment and political commitment, which responds to the capitalist-led neutralization of "revolutionary politics" and the "revolutionary subject". Since the 1970s, "capitalism develops an economic order that could do without the state." (Deleuze/Guattari 2005: 454) The disciplinary society is thus replaced by the control society, and the formations of power which become effective within it operate through flexible normalization requirements. As a result of these changes, the tactics and strategies of a revolutionary policy, which oppose repressive normalization become ineffective. The individuals adjust their behavior accordingly, for the norms are no longer imposed repressively, rather they emerge as changeable from the abundance of social differences and deviations and serve as guidelines, which are rejected as desired.

Piper seems to be particularly interested in these self-styling practices, when she associates her aesthetic procedures with physical self-practice. In order to tease out the importance of working with an individual body, I will further introduce the concept of *micro-practice*.[9] For even if there are many links and overlaps between micro-politics and micro-practices, the term *micro-practice* can also focus on those power procedures of governmentality that are aimed at the individual body. Self-practices are utilized in the family as well as in institutions – such as schools,

9 I owe the considerations of micro-practice to my joint research work with Sebastian Dieterich and Wiktoria Furrer in the project "Micro-practice. Forms of Resistance and Commitment". The research project was carried out at the Zurich University of the Arts and was at the same time a sub-project of the research group "Media and Participation." (Phase I, 2015–2018), https://mediaandparticipation.com/about/?lang=en, last access 2.12.2021.

hospitals, and companies, so that the individual refers to themselves in an irreducible way and subjectivizes him/herself. In contrast, micro-politics can be related in particular to the bio-politics, which is directed at the population, and thus at the generic body, as the object to be controlled and influenced and which becomes effective, for example, through discourse practices and the epistemological rules of production of fixed knowledge. This differentiation does not imply that micro-practices are independent of discourse practices. On the contrary, physical micro-practices are always accompanied by mental representations. Developmental psychology shows that micro-practices are cultivated through initial contact with the caregivers, and as they develop further "social physical micro-practices are introduced, which are socially normative, and in a sense, learned nuances." (Downing 2006: 335)[10] Thus, micro-practices are profoundly ambivalent. They allow the individual to conform to a system, via the body, and they can also work with resistance as a way to open up internalized and normalized body practices, allowing them to become permeable to new afflictions. Piper's micro-practices mobilize the ambivalence of physical knowledge. With her exercises, Piper interrupts internalized perceptual pathways, interferes with their affective effectiveness, and opens up the possibility of new afflictions. In other words, the aesthetic processes do not reduce the bodily affect as a stimulus-response, but activate diverse affinities, giving the possibility of subjectifications, beyond binary patterns. The exercises can literally set hardened habitualized body practices into motion, rendering the normative notions and attributions of Funk on a micro-practical level ineffective. On this physical basis, forces can mobilize which resist the power of norms, and keep the dualisms and the optimization of differentiations and individualizations in check.

The artistic-aesthetic practices in *Funk Lessons* correspond to basic assumptions of micro-political thinking in several ways, for instance: a political project cannot be severed from a way of life; that changed behavior of individuals can shape the world; and the awareness that "no situation is ever fully predetermined by ideological structures or codings." (Massumi 2009: 7) Micro-politics attribute a central function to an event. In contrast to this Piper relies on a micro-practice, which works on a physical and sensory level, as it modifies *The Distribution of the Sensible* (Rancière 2011) and produces sensitivity to (micro-)events, it may also have micro-political effects. Thus, Piper's performances unveil the effect of a happening, as they are influenced by this micro-political perspective: opening up new possibilities of action and new forms of subjectification. Following Maurizio Lazzarato, this "instantaneous subjective change is an act of both resistance and creation,

10 Physical micro-practice is described in developmental psychology as a competence of its own kind, as embodied skills. It stands for "what is sometimes referred to as procedural or implicit knowledge, a 'knowledge-how' as distinct from a 'knowing-that'." (Downing 2006: 337)

resistance to power and creation of possibilities whose limits are not clearly established." (Lazzarato 2011: 3) The micro-practice which has been described here, leads to an unstable state and overrides existing laws, norms, and values – that makes micro-practices comparable to the event. It opens up subjectification processes whose "modalities of existence and action are still undetermined." (Ibid.) From this perspective, micro-practices can be described as an opening, as an event, "a possibility for self-transformation and, consequently, of changing the socio-political situation." (Ibid.)

Affirmation – Transformation – Critique

Piper's affirmation transforms what is supposedly affirmed, and this is precisely where her critical potential lies. The transformant traverses the dichotomous attributions of Funk and thereby takes its basis from the logic of affirmation and negation. Piper transforms the image of Funk without dissolving the specifics of a Funk practice. Piper's project is impressive, in that it makes the interlocking of art and reality recognizable on the level of perception, thinking, and critical faculty.

Here, the artist does not limit her artistic practice to the studio, nor to the individual work on the material, nor to the mere production of an object, and does not rely on the division of labor between practice and theory. On the contrary, she actively participates in the discourse about her work. It exposes racist value judgments and perceptions in art, marks blind spots, and makes restrictions and unconscious cultural and social ideas visible, tangible, and reflective. Such delimitations between artists, art theorists, and critics are among the principles of conceptual art.

Actively she takes part in the discourse of art, creates a time-diagnostic instrument and acts as a medium of thought and action, which, referring to Barthes' quoted formulation, organizes the world in a certain way. Piper uses her methods to address the strategies of emancipatory concepts of the avant-garde: the creation of a specific experimental situation, which Benjamin once referred to as Brecht's dramatic laboratory in contrast to a total dramatic artwork (Benjamin 2005: 779). Piper's micro-practices do not fit into the notion of a (spectacular and dramatic) event. Nevertheless, the moment of interruption is just as inherent to them, as is the disruption and irritation of internalized emotions. As a result, the micro-practices exercises can develop a resisting potential. The criticism/politics of Piper's project is not judgmental and not revolutionary in the sense of a radical change. The micro-practices transform the subjectivization apparatus, and thus theorize and discuss these practices in the aesthetic translations, in video and associated image, and text materials which are exhibited. Piper performs with them as it were the discursive becoming of her practice. Piper's praxeological analytical approach

conveys itself, as a radical aesthetic process that begins with a fundamentally sensory knowledge, which dissolve the physical disciplines that follow the reductionist notion of Funk as an immediate affective expression, and transforms Funk into an affective communication medium, interpersonal communication, and collective self-presentation. Piper's aesthetic process, thus realizes an immanent critique in line with Brian Massumi – as a critique that differentiates and pluralizes in the tradition of post-structuralist thinking and thus actively changes its conditions of origin: instead of judging, instead of side-taking against something, Piper's micro-practice involves a displacement and a becoming. The artist does not take an external standpoint, art does not become an idealized entity which can resolve all the problems, but pursues the attempt of a change within. Her micro-practices confront us with the double bind, at the same time, she reveals the construction of habitual ways of thinking, deconstructs them, and opens a site beyond them. The double bind does not dissolve through this, but it becomes more understandable.

A De-Colonized Aesthetic Site

Comparable to Piper's micro-practice work, Dutch artist Iris Kensmil (*1970 in Amsterdam) addresses demarcations, polarization, and in- and exclusions of the aesthetic regime. In her project for the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019 she tackled Western European art history, and with that corresponded to Spivak's term of 'ab-use'. She dismisses traditional demarcations of the art system regarding history, genre, and aesthetics. Instead of a linear narrative she creates relations, mixes genres, and defies categorical distinctions of such as abstraction and figuration. The Dutch pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale hosted the exhibition *The Measurement of Presence* by Iris Kensmil and Remy Jungerman (*1959 in Suriname) (fig. 3), curated by Benno Tempel.

The exhibition's concept was developed in exchange with the artists, and aims to address the Biennale's history, the specific space and questions about identity beyond nationality. In an announcement in *e-flux* about the Dutch pavilion, this non-national idea of identity is connected to a danger of assimilation and negation of differences:

> "Places and societies are becoming ever more interconnected in our globalised world. But, on the whole, globalisation also causes alignment, and imposes prevailing principles. As a result, we risk losing the specific. *The Measurement of Presence* will be a post-national presentation that reassesses and debunks these notions and mechanisms." (Dutch Pavilion 2018)

The artists, both People of Color, live in the Netherlands and have connections to the former Dutch colony of Suriname, reference 20th century Modernism through

Figure 3: Left and Back: Iris Kensmil, The New Utopia Begins Here # 2, 2019, ink and acrylic paint on wall, 580 × 390 cm. Right: Remy Jungerman, Visiting Deities: Kabra Tafra, 2018–19, wood, cotton textile, kaolin and dry river clay860 × 260 × 70 cm; Horizontal Obeah GEENGESITONU I, II, III, 2018, painted wood, cotton textile, kaolin, yarn, mirror and nails, 910 × 370 × 260 cm.

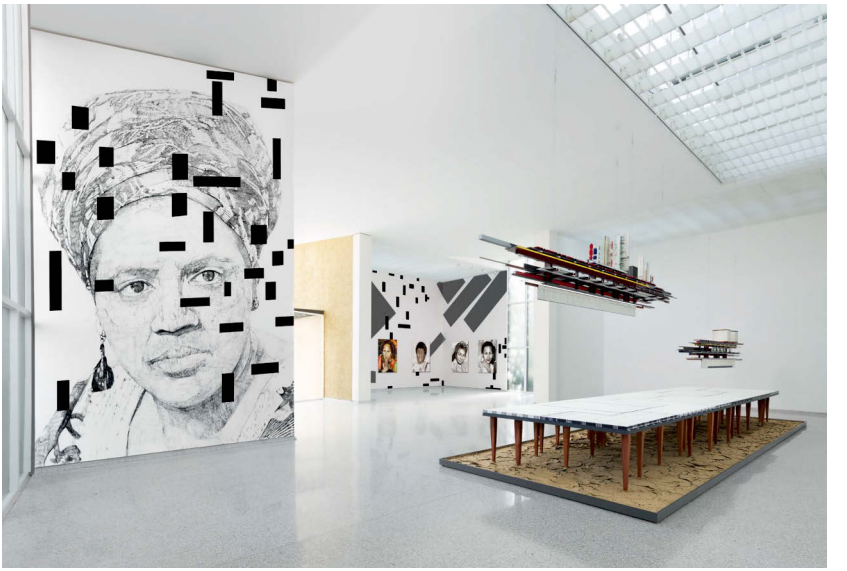

Photo: Simone Ferraro, © Mondriaan Fund.

their visual language of form and references. A spectator with a Western European trained and formalized viewpoint towards art can identify these references to modernism almost immediately: Piet Mondrian, De Stijl, the Russian avant-garde. This *im*mediate visibility is due to the aesthetic regime of Western European art history, that has marginalized and demarcated anything that deviates from that norm as problematic. This veils how the processes of in- and exclusion that construct identity need a constative 'outside', which always is also part of the identity that is to be produced.

Aesthetics, art history and theory have themselves gained their identity and legitimization through such *othering*. For instance, when they started to include 'native art' in the late 19th and early 20th century in order to legitimize 'their own', non-canonical art. This in turn also meant marginalization: the 'strange' artefact of the 'others' were framed as 'primitive' or as "ritual-magical or practical objects." (Kunst der 'Primitiven' 2018: 322)

My reception of Krensmil's work aims to show, how she emphasizes this constitutive double bind of aesthetics, by refusing to oppose the aesthetic regime with the deconolonial other as well as rejecting to be partial to that other. Instead, as Okwui Enwezor puts it for postcoloniality, Kensmil makes "empire's former 'other' visible and present at all times, either through the media or through mediatory, spectatorial, and carnivalesque relations of language, communication, images, contact, and resistance within the everyday." (Enwezor 2002: 45) Not in a post-modern manner for "relativizing historical transformations and contesting the lapses and prejudices of epistemological grand narratives, postcoloniality does the observe, seeking instead to sublate and replace all grand narratives through new ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation." (Ibid.)

Kensmil uses the reflexive potential of the (aesthetic) double bind, as did Spivak and Piper. Her work is hence not about conflict within the aesthetic regime in art, and not about a better art history. It is about raising cultural, political, and ethical questions within the aesthetic dispositive. I want to distinguish the aesthetic dispositive from Jacques Rancière's aesthetic regime in so far, as it not only relates to aesthetics in art. It is not about the identification, of "what we call art", which is the goal Rancière wants to achieve through the three regimes of ethics, poetics, and aesthetics (cf. Rancière 2011). In the aesthetic regime, which mostly relates to romanticism and modernism, "the identification of art no longer occurs via a division within ways of doing and making, but it is based on distinguishing a sensible mode of being specific to artistic products." (Ibid.: 22)

This 'way of being' has been described as genuinely iconic, especially with the *pictorial* or *iconic turn*. Polarizations of the visual and the verbal, image and text, visible and sayable have been promoted and potential indistinguishabilities or permeabilities have been omitted, for the sake of pure "iconic difference." (cf. Boehm 1995)

Even if the sayable and visible can be described as mutually exclusive, as what we see is not equivalent to what is said and vice versa, they are still related to one another. They are a specific corpus within the discursive practices of a historic era, which becomes evident under specific conditions. "For visibilities, in the light of historical formations, form scenes which are to the visible element what a statement is to the sayable or readable." (Deleuze 1988: 80) Statements cannot be separated from their formations and visibilities cannot be separated from their apparatuses, that is organizations and functions that let us see *anything*.

The aesthetic and the visible hence are not only sensory, but also evoke the sensuous and sayable. As such, the aesthetic is structured by knowledge and structures it as well as producing processes of subjectification. Different to the merely sensory, the sensuous is – according to Rancière – a sense connected to meaning (both *sens* in the French original), something that can be interpreted and evaluated (cf. Rancière 2008: 43). It is important to stress that "each historical formation sees

and reveals all it can within the conditions laid down for visibility, just as it says all it can within the conditions relating to statements." (Deleuze 1988: 59) Because of this conditionality, content, form, and expression, visible and sayable coalesce in creating knowledge – despite their different ways of being. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the aesthetics of art, i.e., the iconic difference is historic as well. The visible, as sensuous and sayable, is – despite the explained differences – conditioned by hegemonial powers of construction and definition, who make things become visible and sayable and connote them with meaning. Countering strategies, aiming to redistribute the sensuous and mobilize the knowledge-power-complex, can be employed precisely because of this connection.

Im-Proper Perspectives

Kensmil's three-part installation (fig. 4) *The New Utopia Begins Here # 1*, *The New Utopia Begins Here # 2* and *Beyond the Burden of Representation* evokes positions that can be sorted into classic categories of artistic/activist and different genres in a traditional manner. *Beyond the Burden of Representation* shows books from Black Culture Studies and PoC authors on a bookshelf next to a publication by artist Stanley Brouwn: from Darby English's *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (2007), to Kobena Mercer's *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (1994), Adrian Piper's *Escape to Berlin. A Travel Memoir* (2018), bell hooks' *Ain't I a Women* (1987), Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), Carole Boyce Davis' *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (2008), Joyce Moore Turner's *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (2005), Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984), Suzanne Césaires' *The Great Camouflage: Writings of Dissent* (1941–1945) (2012), and Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1997).

Furthermore, there are paintings of installation shots of exhibitions and artworks representing artistic positions since the 1960s, which have been particularly focused on developing a radically anti-subjective yet bodily-material or processual language or which have taken a postcolonial-activist stance. These pieces are based on images a simple google image search will put out. They show, all in oil on canvas, Charlotte Posenenske's 1976 Offenbach exhibition, the *Impossible Objects* exhibition by Brouwn from 1976 at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, On Kawaras' work *One Million Years* as exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1999, David Hammons' *Untitled (Basketball drawing + stone)* which was part of the 2006 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and an installation from the *A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965–2016* exhibition by Adrian Piper at the New York Museum of Modern Art (cf. Tempel 2019). The gathered artists each problematized their positions within the artistic regime and tried "protecting his/her authenticity against institutions and critics." (Tempel 2019: para 3)

Figure 4: Left: Iris Kensmil, Beyond the Burden of Representation, 2019, acrylic paint on wall, oil on canvas, books on shelves, 580 × 390 cm, back: Remy Jungerman.

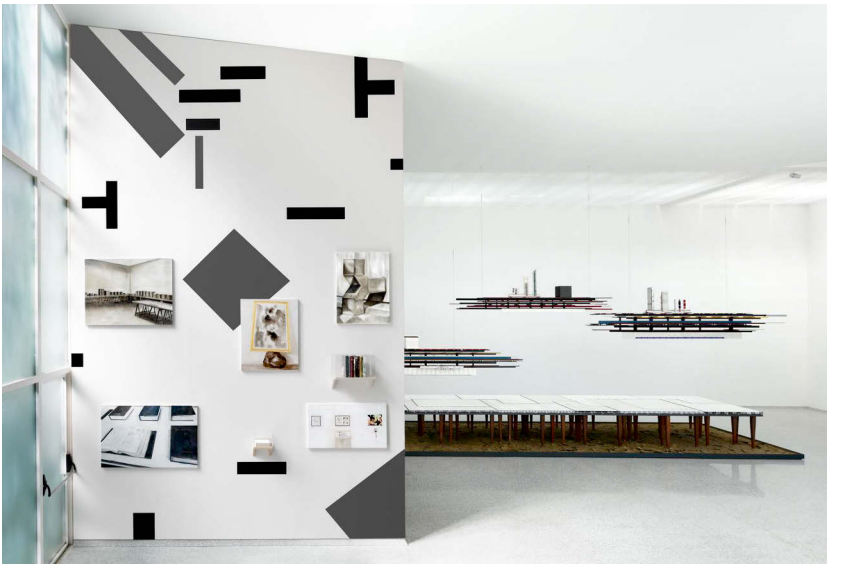

Photo: Gerrit Schreurs, © Mondriaan Fund.

Posenenske turned against the idea of the original singular masterpiece with her serial works, and ended her artistic career in the late 1960s for her path in social sciences. Adrian Piper addressed racism and xenophobia in the art world in many of her works. The artist and professor of philosophy, who emigrated to Berlin in 2005 due to mobbing at work and racist and sexist discrimination, did not attend the retrospective of her work, which was hosted at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and is what Kensmil painted here. David Hammons was active in the civil rights movement and, as an Afro-American artist, has been ignored by the white art world. He uses his art works as means of communication. The work referenced by Kensmil, *Untitled (basketball drawing + stone)*, was made by repeatedly dibbling a dusty, graphite covered basketball on a white sheet of paper. On Kawara, like Brouwn, rejected the author-centered biographical reception of artworks.

There, undoubtedly, are even more aspects to be mentioned about the artistic strategies and practices employed by these artists, and the positions they are ascribed in Kensmil's work. They all brought institutional norms to the fore, which are shaped by cultural-political, economic concept, and, certainly not only, aesthetics. And they questioned the apparent unfoundedness of inequalities.

Across the room from *Beyond the Burden of Representation*, Kensmil shows large-scale portraits, also in oil, of black feminists, authors, and activists (fig. 5).

Figure 5: Iris Kensmil, The New Utopia Begins Here # 1, 2019, Acryl, Öl, 550 × 1596 cm.

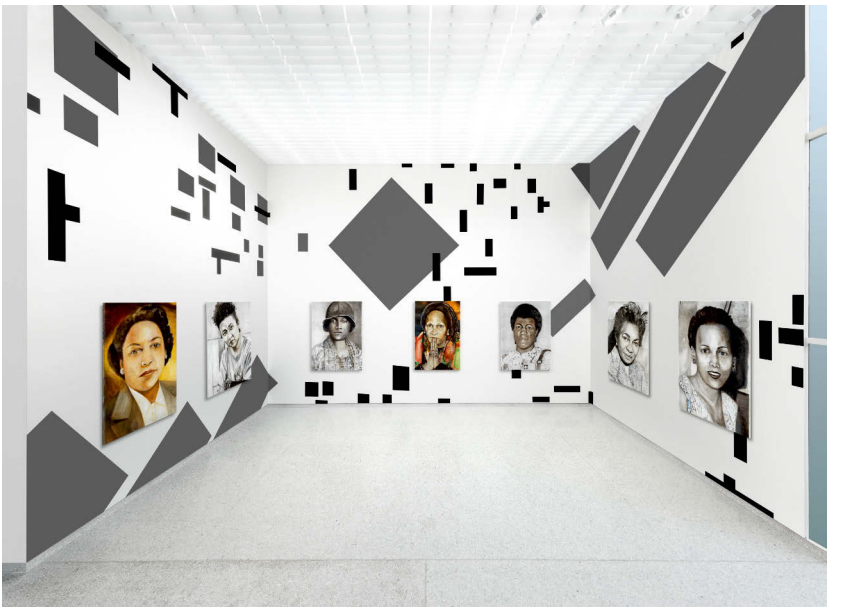

Photo: GerritSchreurs, © Mondriaan Fund.

Some of whom are also present on the bookshelf mentioned before, but all are at least represented there through their lives' work and impact. The portraits also reference utopias of black, female intellectuals. Kensmil researched, in cooperation with *The Black Archives*[11], black utopists from the Caribbean's, North-America, and Europe. The portraits show feminist and panafricanist Amy Ashwood Garvey (1897-1969), who founded the *Negro World Newspaper* with her former husband Marcus Garvey, and who was active in the feminist movement that formed around Sylvia Pankhurst; communist and activist Hermina Huiswoud (1905-1998), who fought for Suriname's independence; journalist and activist Claudia Jones (1915-1964); surrealist and anti-colonial author and activist Suzanne Césaire (1915-1966); Science

11 "The Black Archives is a unique historical archive for inspiring conversations, activities, and literature from Black and other perspectives that are often overlooked elsewhere. The Black Archives documents the history of black emancipation movements and individuals in the Netherlands. The Black Archives is managed by the New Urban Collective." The Black Archives: http://www.theblackarchives.nl/about-us.html, last access 3.13.2020.

Fiction author Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006); literary scholar bell hooks (*1952); and DJ and singer Sister Nancy (*1962), whose song *Bam Bam* became a world-wide success in 1982.

On another wall – which stretches into Jungerman's installation (fig. 3) – Kensmil's third work *The New Utopia Begins Here # 2* is placed: a portrait of author and activist Audre Lorde (1934-1992), done in ink and covered with black bars and squares.

All portraits distinctly express that they are not trying to fulfill aesthetic markers of quality, neither regarding their motives nor their painting. They resemble simple portraiture photography and do not aim to individually characterize the depicted, instead they leave the burden of representation behind for their symbolic-referential function.

In an interview Kensmil mentioned that the acrylic wall paintings in the *Measurements of Presence* installation were inspired by Mondrian and Kasimir Malewitsch, and their abstract forms and ways to use light, space, and form in their works (Jocks 2019). The artist describes the avant-garde's utopia as a one-sided ideal and places another utopia – that of black, female intellectuals – next to it: playing with the relation between ground and figure Kensmil overlays her references of modernist avant-garde and anti-racist activism with each other. Sometimes the portraits of the activist, philosophers, authors, and musicians overlay the abstract forms of the wall painting and then Audre Lorde's portrait is covered with the rectangular shapes. This balancing of figure and ground is different to modes of hiding, emerging, uncovering, or unveiling often present in biased and hierarchical depictions. Figure and ground are clearly separate and yet equally worked upon, so their relation remains indifferent.

Kensmil perforates the Western European aesthetics of modernism, includes aesthetic-political activist and by that refers to historic and geopolitical interferences and penetrations of the aesthetic dispositive. The non-European traditions are not added as new additions of the aesthetics of the global south in a presumably new, globalized art world. Instead, they are marked as immanent counter movements and transnational interlacing of modernism and mobilize the narrative of the aesthetic regime.

The narratives that become possible are not oriented at the writings of modernism's history, instead (historic) readings of colonial hegemonies and anti-hegemonies unfold in the aesthetic dispositive.

History and knowledge, it can be said, in regard to Kensmil's work, depend on a becoming, a becoming visible and sayable. The art works described here critically address the systems of organization and representation of knowledge, and focus on what becomes visible and sayable through them, what is hidden and concealed through them. The Western European knowledge dispositive is explored and shaken up regarding its aesthetic configuration and mediation. The disruption of the aesthetic regime's representation patterns by including references shines a light

on the dispositive structure of aesthetics and therefore reveal its connection to political, economic, and historic factors. The specific conditions of a time regarding what can be said or seen can then be scrutinized. The interruption of the usual shows the power-knowledge-complex that determines – through an interplay of forces, strategies, and counter-strategies – which knowledge gains space, is accepted and who can articulate that knowledge.

The artist apparently does not only want to extend the canon of the visible/sayable. Instead, she problematizes the aesthetic dispositive, which determines what can be seen or said, but also can render things invisible or unsayable through in- or exclusion. Kensmil's critical reading of the Western European (art) history asks, which exclusions, repressions, and exotifications come alongside the aesthetic sensibilisation of modernisms and the division of the sensual.

Aesthetic sensibilisation is, as Ruth Sonderegger explained in her analysis of Immanuel Kant's aesthetics in the context of colonial capitalism, based on Kant's assumption,

> "that some people are impervious to sensibilities, as in the *sensus communis*, and hence insensible to aesthetic experiences and opinions. These skills are […] a distinction, which the bourgeoisie and its intellectuals claimed for themselves in the 18th century. This includes both a distinction towards the inside and the lower class, who still need to be made sensible, as well as towards the colonial other, which is only partially eligible for any pedagogic sensibilisation." (Sonderegger 2018: 122)

Colonialism, social hierarchies, marginalization, repressions, and demarcations are at the core of the distribution of the sensible in the aesthetic regime. Kensmil's art work create the space for an aesthetic that needs to be de-colonized, and that enables a reading of the invisible/unsayable in the Western European (art) history. Her work does not perpetuate an iconic difference, but becomes a "modality of expression" (Foucault 1993: 74) that functions as a re-distribution of the sensuous and necessarily 'ab-uses' aesthetics. This ab-use of aesthetics removes the certainty of taking the right side by shifting binary logic.

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Corpoanarchy: A Molecular Act of Refusal

Kamran Behrouz

This chapter is based on an artistic research, attempting to connect interrelated parts of two multimedia installations[1] together in order to unfold the notion of 'corpoanarchy' as a form of protest. The artworks were based on research about the effects of biopolitics on normalization and containment of the corporeality of trans/queer/non-binary bodies. In several cases within authoritarian states (e.g., Iran), such effects resulted in the disposition of bodies in diaspora, camps, and exile, which introduced these bodies to new rigid forms of borders and necropolitics. This process reveals the failure of the universality of human rights. Under neoliberal capitalism, pharmaceutical industries commodified health and the representation of bodies and sexuality – what Michel Foucault analyzes as "the constitution of the market as site of the formation of truth" (Foucault 1990-98). Preciado calls it the "pharmacopornographic" era (2013: 23), where identities and even pleasure are co-dependent on the dosage of our intakes provided by the market (e.g., performance enhancers, antidepressants, or hormones). 'Corpoanarchy' suggests a critical way of dealing with this matrix through a performative refusal on a molecular level.

The main visual reference in both installations (see fig. 1 & fig. 2) is a hand painted and digital printed piece of transparent textile, similar to skin, resembling a glossary page defining the meaning of the phrase 'corpoanarchy', alongside a painting based on a famous historical photo, taken on June 13th 1936. The image presumably shows August Landmesser (Eckler 1996), a German citizen who refused to perform the Nazi salute at the launch of the naval training vessel *Horst Wessel*. This project utilizes the historical photo as a microscopic metaphor to visualize the corporeality of 'corpoanarchy'. (see fig. 3.)

1 The first multimedia installation was exhibited in Raumstation, Zurich, December 2018. The exhibition titled, *Corpoanarchy: A (trans)lational tale*, is my attempt to reflect on the politics of language and Biopolitics. The second iteration of this multimedia installation titled, *Corpoanarchy: the politics of radical refusal*, was exhibited in Helmhaus, Zurich, September 2019. My aim in this work is to identify and unfold the different forms of corpoanarchy as they appear in contemporary history. There are several interrelated fragments connecting these two installations, which this chapter attempts to analyze in depth.

Figure 1: Corpoanarchy: A (Trans)lational Tale, Raumstation, Zurich, 2018, detail.
Figure 2: Corpoanarchy: The Politics of Radical Refusal, Helmhaus, Zurich, 2019, detail.

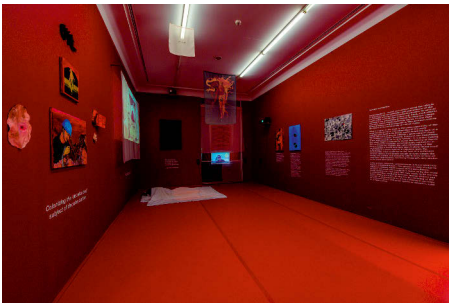


Figure 3: Left: original image of August Landmesser 1963, photographer unknown. Right: manipulated and hand-painted version of the image, 2018, Kamran Behrouz.

It attempts to raise a series of questions: What do we call such acts of refusal? Could it be resistance? Persistence? Civil courage? Or resilience? Or do we need another word to express a complexity as such?

Somatic Translation and Untranslatability

The term *corpoanarchy* is a neologism; it wants to claim existence as a new word, whilst also revealing the process of translation and 'untranslatability.' The word itself follows the semiological structure of the phrase corporeal or *corporeus* in Latin, which means "from the body" (from *corpus* "body"). Here, 'real' has been replaced with 'anarchy', and the combination is defined as: "the performative refusal of the body on a molecular level".

What is crucial in this research is the untranslatability of the word 'anarchy' in Farsi. The etymology of the word 'anarchy' goes back to its Greek roots: Anarkhia – "lack of a leader, the state of people without a government" (from *an-* "without", and *arkhos* "leader"). However, the translation of the word anarchy in Farsi is "chaos". It is a fascinating gap which might accidentally reveal a crucial piece of Persia and the Persian language's history, that is an indisputably monarchical history. From the Madian (650-330 BC) to the Sassanid empire (224-651 AD), to the Qajar (1789-1925) or Pahlavi dynasties (1925-1979) and even contemporary history, the figure of king or 'supreme leader' has never been, even temporarily, eliminated from the social imaginary. Even the history of Persian literature is filled with figures of rebels and heroes who lead the nation towards freedom or peace. Could this explain the untranslatability of the word anarchy in Farsi? How does history reveal itself in language? And how do languages forge psycho-political structures?

Languages shape and create not only subjectivity, but subjectivation. Accordingly, when subjects lack specific signifiers to register or to express their experiences (for any cultural and/or historical reason), the notions and subjects have been bent and compromised themselves in other familiar signifiers, which at some point perpetuate the lack and normalize the absence.

This issue is similar to the lack of a sufficiently precise word to address transgender people in Farsi. Likewise, the crucial distinctions expressed by the words *sex*, *gender,* and *sexuality* are conflated in Farsi into one single term: *jensiat*. The term *jensiat* is thus very similar to the Latin word *genus*.

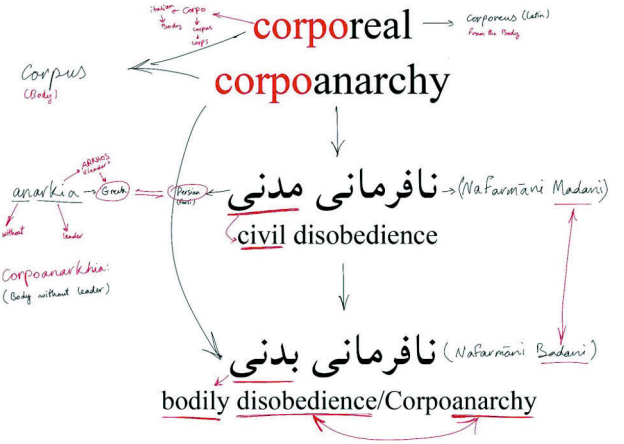
Moreover, *sex* and *gender* as keywords in trans-Atlantic feminist theory, have always been at the center of untranslatability in queer-feminist discourses within different languages. "Take the English term 'genre,', which like Greek *genos*, French *genre*, or German *Geschlecht* is an Untranslatable prime" (Apter 2013: 145). Genre interfered with the translation of "gender" in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990-99) when the book began to appear in different languages. As Butler mentioned themself:

> "Like 'genus' in Swedish which implies species-being, so Geschlecht in German implied not only a natural kind, but a mode of natural ordering that served the purposes of the reproduction of the species. That early German translators of Gender

> Trouble chose to translate 'gender' as 'Geschlechtsidentität' (sexual identity) may have been an effort to move away from species discourse, or perhaps it was a way of responding to those emerging queer arguments that claimed that binary sex was understood to serve the purposes of reproducing compulsory heterosexuality (Rubin, Butler). The problem with that choice, however, was that it confused gender with sexual orientation or disposition. And part of the analytic work of understanding gender apart from biological causality and functionalism was precisely to hold open the possibility that gender appearance may not correspond to sexual disposition or orientation in predictable ways." (Butler 2014: 1040)

As Brad Epps has noted, "Gender Trouble, in a global frame, needs to be at once supplemented (in the deconstructive sense) and recast as 'translation trouble' or, better yet, 'language trouble'." (Najmabadi 2014: 8) Drawing on these arguments, my research is an attempt to challenge the existing methodologies, to re-translate these terms, or to even come up with new terms as a solution for avoiding 'cultural discombobulation'[2]. In other word: "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) of untranslatability during the act of translation.

Figure 4: Etymology and Translation of the word Corpoanarchy in English and Persian.



2 Persian readers may find it helpful to reference: Ashouri, Daryoosh, Rethinking Persian Language, Nashr-e Markaz, Tehran, 1993

In the present research, 'corpoanarchy' is translated into Farsi as *nafarmani badani*. This phrase is very similar to *nafarmani madani*, which means civil disobedience. However, the word 'civil' (*madani*) is replaced by the word 'bodily' (*badani*). At first sight this may seem to be merely a cosmopolitical word play between *madan* ('cities') and *badan* ('body'), but in fact it also fits the meaning of the concept of corpoanarchy as it has unfolded in archives of trans, non-binary, and queer bodies in diaspora, exile, or refugee camps. *Nafarmani badani* translates back to English as "bodily disobedience" which might be the closest equivalent in Farsi to the concept of *corpo+anarchy* (*body without leader*) as a form of civil disobedience on a molecular level of concrete, embodied practice(s). (See fig. 4.)

Semiotics (Translation) and Somatics (Performance)

The other fragment in this constellation was an installation called *A room of her own*, which was a tribute to the unspeakable death of queer and trans people who silently disappear from the collective memory of queer culture. When I first read about the case of Mahtab[3] – an Iranian transgender asylum seeker (cf. Shakhsari 2013: 565), who found themselves stuck in the Kafkaesque political dispositive of borders, it immediately reminded me of Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" (Woolf 1929). In Mahtab's case, it seems that their daily existence and comfort had been so profoundly unsettled that death itself came to hold a promise of comfort: death as the only room of one's own; death as a performative refusal. (See fig. 5)

The installation depicts Mahtab's room shortly after they took their life silently in their apartment, with a storyteller stating an androgynous manifesto projected on top of their deathbed.[4]

Archive

In 2016, while I was doing research at the archives of Iran's Human Rights Documentation Center[5], looking for cases and testimonies of trans and queer refugees, as well as the rates of suicide amongst these groups, I accidentally came across

3 "[Mahtab] was waiting for several years to be recognized as a legitimate refugee by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and the Canadian embassy. In 2008, not too long after arriving in Canada, [Mahtab] quietly took her life in her apartment, which she was asked to vacate as the terms of her subsidized housing had come to an end." (Shaksari 2014: 565)

4 Cf. http://www.kamranbehrouz.com/corpoanarchy/a-room-for-her-own/, last access, 01.01.2020.

5 Cf.: https://iranhrdc.org/, last access 1.07.2020.

Figure 5: Corpoanarchy: The Politics of Radical Refusal, Helmhaus, Zurich, 2019, detail.

Mahtab's case[6], which led me directly to Sima Shakhsari's work and their crucial essay *Killing me softly with your rights* (2014). The story of Mahtab outlines an unspeakable death, which Shakhsari analyzes in depth, and sadly, this story is not

6 Sima Shakhsari (2013: 565) referred to Mahtab in: 'The transgender studies reader Vol.2 edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle' as "Naz" in order to protect their privacy.

the only one: there are several similar cases regarding the necropolitics of queer displaced bodies.[7]

Iran has a peculiar and paradoxical history of gender and sexuality:

> "Some of the conceptual distinctions among gender, sex, and sexuality within the Anglo-American context, including the distinction sometimes made between transgender and transsexual (based on surgical modifications to the body), have been shaped over the past decades by the identity politics of gender and sexuality as well as queer activism and queer critical theory. Transsexuality in Iran has not been shaped by such developments." (Najmabadi 2014: 8)

Contemporary narratives affirm that transgender people are legally accepted as "correction cases", and in fact they must go through long and absurd interviews and examinations called 'diagnostic test',[8] in order to be separated from homosexuals. (In contrast to 'correction cases,' homosexuals are considered deviants, and as a group find themselves systematically and relentlessly discriminated against).

Sometimes these interviews consist of utterly absurd and gender-normative questions such as: "Do you squeeze your toothpaste tube in the middle or from the bottom up?"[9] (Najmabadi 2014: 30) And some of these random questions determine one's gender identity as well as the fate of an individual's body. Some of these random questions determine which hormones belong to which bodies and which bodies will be illegalized or degraded.

Surprisingly, in such a conservative country, after this process, transgender people are legally accepted and have the right to go through transition, hormone therapy, and surgery and even get a new identification card or passport. However, transition in Iran is not a matter of liberating choice but rather a 'normalization

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7 Cf.: https://iranhrdc.org/in-memory-of-marjan-ahouraee-an-iranian-transsexual-refugee/, last access 01.01.2020.

8 According to the Iranian Public Conscription Organization of NAJA's last updated list of various grounds that can exempt men [assigned male at birth] from obligatory Military service (02.01.2021), Transsexuality (written only in Latin as TS without any translation in Farsi) is mentioned under "Chapter 5: Psychiatric Diseases, Section 12: Gender Identity disorder (TS) that is certified by Legal Medicine organization and confirmed by the Armed Service's medical centers (ASMC) is ground for permanent exemption".
Even though according to Iran's Islamic penal code, "Article 234, homosexuality (in case of male-male penile-anal intercourse) is punishable by death", paradoxically, in the same Chapter 5: Psychiatric Diseases, Article 7 states: "Perversions that violate the social and military code of conduct (such as sexual perversion and homosexuality) warrant a 6 month deferment. After 6 months deferment, and upon confirmation by the ASMC, the applicant is eligible for a permanent exemption." Cf. http://vazifeh.police.ir , last access 02.01.2021 (The website is only accessible in Iran or via VPN)

9 "The presumption is that females are neat and press from the bottom up; males just squeeze the toothpaste tube randomly, usually from the middle." (Najmabadi 2014: 26).

proces's: an obligatory rule for transgender people to turn into 'corrected bodies'. So, what we have as an archive of transgender people in Iran is limited to those who accepted and completed this process. What has never been documented or has simply been erased from the archive are the histories of those bodies who refused to be normalized in this way or who never came out as a transgender person.

If this is biopolitics, how should we map it? A condition that forces transgender people to either transition or leave their home country – and thus deal with other forms of necropolitics, biopolitics, or border policies, highly charged by new right-wing policies such as the U.S. Muslim-ban? A condition designed to make you depressed while you remain suspended indefinitely within the necropolitical borders.

By contrast, 'corpoanarchy' suggests a molecular resistance in such cases, by rejecting the forces of substances as a molecular disobedience. Along with compulsory hormones, substances such as strong antidepressants, which come with the explicit warning: "suicidal thoughts might be the side effect of this medication" have been often (ab)used as a technique of normalization. The problem is not necessarily the negative impact of substances (e.g. antidepressants) but the pressure applied. In other words, instead of seeking another solution or addressing the root of the illness, substances are forcefully prescribed to make people functional as quickly as possible.

Phenomenology of the Red Virus

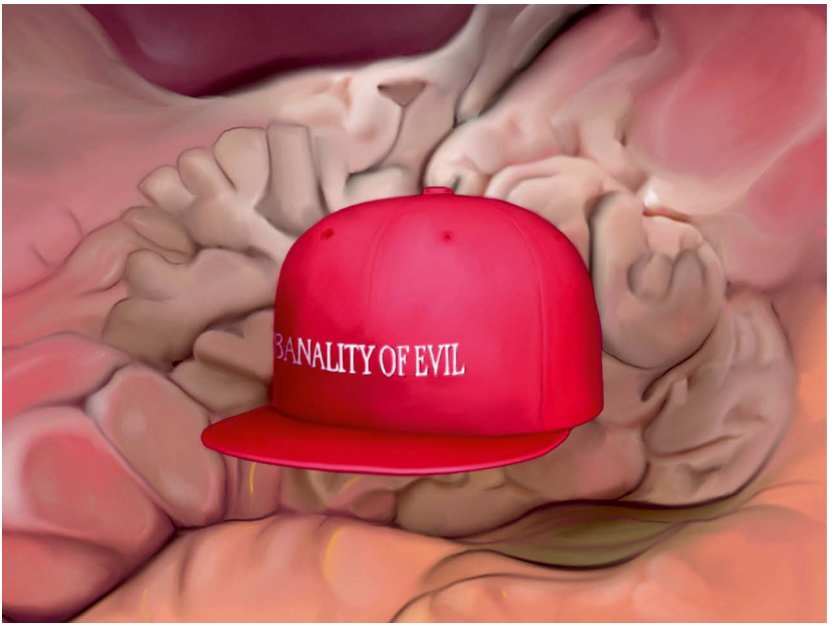
As I previously argued, 'corpoanarchy' suggests a critical way of dealing with a matrix of thoughts, a performative refusal on a molecular level. The model is based on the performance of an 'antibody' in confrontation with a virus. Here, *red virus* is a metaphor for the 'politics of fear' perpetuated by right-wing populist politicians of today (see fig.7/6).

In the final section of this chapter, I examine the performativity of social movements through the lens of the behavior of such micro-organisms. The phrase (corpoanarchy/نافرمانی بدنی) itself might be understood as a proposition for a systematic form of "micropolitics" (Paar 2005: 164).

The third fragment of my research is an animation showcased in both multimedia installations. (See fig. 6/7) In the first installation, the video is placed next to the painting of Chelsea Manning, carrying the message of "I would prefer not to" (Melville 2009) on her hat,[10] as an attempt to sum up the notion of refusal as taking a side. In the second installation, exhibited in Helmhaus, Zurich (2019), an

10 Cf. http://www.kamranbehrouz.com/corpoanarchy/phenomenology-of-the-red-virus/, last access 8.4.2021.

Figure 6: Video still of the animation 'Phenomenology of the Red Virus', Kamran Behrouz, 2018.



animation is projected on sheer fabric next to the death bed of Mahtab. This work analyzes the performance of the red virus and creates a bridge between the workings of populist movements and the notion of the "banality of evil" introduced by Hannah Arendt (1978: 148).

> The animation shows a red cap with the words "banality of evil" written on it, resembling the MAGA (short for 'Make America Great Again') hat, used in Donald Trump's election rallies. The hat endlessly spins around, and an otherworldly voice narrates the following story:"Then suddenly a red virus emerged, nobody knew who was the patient zero exactly, but it outbursts quickly. Some of them were panicked, most of them were infected. It was really a mess my dear, you can't believe that. You know, it always needs a host: a body, a brain, a political narrative, circulating on social media and news and a brain and the news and the brain, and the news... like a Red Virus, but on the other hand there was this meme saying: 'you can't spell the hatred without red hat'... I found it genius.

Figure 7: Painting, Acrylic and ink on paper, Kamran Behrouz, 2018.

> But the virus, you know, is not something new, you know that, we thought we've been vaccinated, we never did, we never really been cured. Now once again a shiny new red virus, dismembering our memory. A very simple and banal monster. Arendt calls it the 'banality of evil': something like the inability to think, to giving in your thoughts to those mad men. Haraway calls it 'thoughtlessness', I kind of like it... My grandma on the other hand used to say 'evil will repeat itself without compassion, will repeat itself ruthlessly and thoughtlessly till it destroys itself'... (sigh) you know evil can't reflect and that's the T. So, I step back to rethink everything again: am I a virus? Or am I an antibody?"[11]

It fades to the painting (see fig. 7) while the *Song for the Unification of Europe* by Zbigniew Preisner plays in the background (Behrouz 2019).[12]

The story ends with an open-ended question and harks back to the notion of reflection and thoughtlessness, which is perfectly outlined by Hannah Arendt in *The Life of the Mind*: "The sad truth of the matter is that most evil is done by people who never made up their minds to be or do either evil or good." (1978: 148)

11 Ibid.

12 Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SH_8C_p1VsE&feature=emb_title, last access 01.01.2020.

This brings me back to the first line of this paper. Can we consider the notion of refusal, or better, of 'micropolitics of remaining still', as a form of political protest? Or in other words, how is it possible to utilize the corporeal act of refusal as a form of occupying space or even a radical form of protest? (See fig. 8)[13]

Figure 8: Contemporary examples of corpoanarchy: Kamran Behrouz, Helmhaus, Zurich, 2019, detail of the installation politics of Radical refusal.

13 Three paintings part of the installation *the politics of radical refusal*. Right: August Landmesser (May 24, 1910–October 17, 1944). Left: Thích Quảng Đức (1897–June 11, 1963), who was a Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk who burned himself to death at a busy Saigon road intersection on 11 June 1963, to protest Vietnamese government led by Ngô Đình Diệm. In the middle: Sahar Khodayari: (c. 1990 – September 8, 2019) also known as the Blue Girl, was an Iranian woman who disguised herself as a man to get into the stadium in order to watch her favorite blue team. After she was arrested, she set herself on fire in protest of her prison sentence, in front of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran. She remained unsupported by her family which reflects on the 'culture of shame': When one's genitals determines one's fate.

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Feminist Dissent
Taking Sid/tes in Making 'Purple Noise'

Magdalena Götz

Illuminated in purple, a noisy concert filled the workshop space of *Hartware MedienKunstVerein* in Dortmund early on a Sunday morning in February 2019. While live-streaming the concert on Periscope via smartphones, other devices were used to take photographs of the side-swapping performers and audience, and uploaded on Instagram. Tweets got published on Twitter, and pictures of diversified gender symbols spread on the social media channels of the techno-feminist artist group *#purplenoise*. During all this, a new hashtag and concept was created: #noisefeminism. The so-called 'noise concert' was the result of participants of the workshop *#imakenoise – Playing with störfaktors*[1] experimenting with the distorting of sounds they had recorded in and around the art space. Together with three members of *#purplenoise*,[2] the aim of the workshop was to discuss and practice "noisification as a technofeminist strategy for dealing with social media"[3] as Cornelia Sollfrank, initiator of the art project, summarized. Following the practices and discourses of the art project, I argue that *#purplenoise* combines participatory tactics and feminist claims for their taking of various sites and sides. It makes use of digital mobile media to critically reflect on the harmful normalization of social media practices while using these very media to do so. Thereby, *#purplenoise* aims at collectively disobeying what they frame as 'algorithmic despotism' that entangles its users in complex power relations through social media and its platforms. Siding with feminist convictions, various offline and online sites are claimed to be occupied with so-

1 The workshop #imakenoise – Playing with störfaktors took place as part of the exhibition Computer Grrrls that brought together "more than 20 international artistic positions that negotiate the complex relationship between gender and technology in past and present." The exhibition was curated by Inke Arns and Marie Lechner and on display at HMKV Dortmund from October 27th, 2018 to February 24th, 2019, cf. https://www.hmkv.de/exhibition/exhibition-detail/computer_grrrls.html, last access 5.17.2021.

2 The workshop was conceptualized and carried out by Charlotte Bonjour, Johanna Thompson, and Cornelia Sollfrank, all members of *#purplenoise*.

3 Sollfrank, Cornelia (2019): Twitter-Post by coco sollfrank @csollfrank, February 25, 2019, https://twitter.com/csollfrank/status/1099960295559229441, last access 5.17.2021.

called 'purple noise', with social media content going viral. In doing so, *#purplenoise* intends to queer the norms of and propose alternative practices for and by using social media in ways that I would like to frame as 'feminist dissent'. Understanding dissent as an "interfering, interrupting modality," (Bippus/Ochsner/Otto 2016: 275) it can be conceptualized as "disruptions in participation processes, which can be located in the media configurations themselves." (Bippus/Ochnser/Otto 2016: 262) Accordingly, 'queer thinking' and the practices of queering become a mode of dissent. As such, queer thinking constitutes a tactic to think and act critically in contrary to 'straightening' concepts and aims at destabilizing gender hierarchical, heteronormative, binary conceptualizations. This article traces the techno-feminist art project *#purplenoise* across various sites and sides of dissent, online and offline alike. Exploring how these artistic discourses and practices engage in strategies of participation, dissent, and queering, the analysis reflects the interrelations between art and digital, mobile and "affective infrastructures," (Berlant 2016: 414). As the focus point, I pose the question: How can the taking of sides and sites be envisioned and put into practice in participatory art as ways of queer thinking and feminist dissent?

"Techno-Feminist Intervention": Art Practices of *#purplenoise*

In its manifesto, *#purplenoise* defines itself as "an erratic techno-feminist intervention operating on a global scale to noisify social media channels." (#purplenoise 2019a) Initiated by Cornelia Sollfrank, net-artist and cyberfeminist in the 1990s, researcher and technofeminist till today, and realized together with Janine Sack, Christina Grammatikopoulou, Johanna Thompson, and Isabel de Sena, all situated in the fields of art, culture and research, the self-proclaimed movement launched in 2018 with a street protest. Invited to the City of Women Festival in the Southern-German city of Esslingen, they took the opportunity to put their manifesto into practice: they claimed the streets, wearing purple-colored clothes and so-called 'feelers' on their heads, holding protest signs featuring new hashtags and self-created gender symbols, using megaphones to declare their demands while simultaneously producing 'noise' in form of, mainly visual, content for their various social media channels (see fig 1).[4]

Sollfrank explains this doubled intervention as follows: "We organized a street protest and worked on the representation of this protest on social media in order to investigate the dynamics between the two spheres that have grown together into

4 A video of the protest can be found on YouTube: Purple Noise (2018): "Purple Noise Demonstration in Esslingen", uploaded October 21, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AloTcIumf_0&t=24s, last access 6.06.2019.

an 'expanded space', as Grammatikopoulou calls it." (Sollfrank 2018: 7) Organizing events in physical sites, like street protests and workshops in art institutions, and at the same time inviting participants to join in on their producing and sharing of online content for and on their social media sites, constitute core practices of *#purplenoise*. In various manifestations, they occupy these diverse sites with a range of tactics in order to pursue their declared aim, namely the "feminist noisification of social media" (#purplenoise 2019a). These techno-feminist aims, practices, and tactics include:

Figure 1: Twitter-Post with a picture showing Cornelia Sollfrank and Christina Grammatikopoulou proclaiming demands of #purplenoise at the street protest in Esslingen on September 28, 2018.

https://twitter.com/PurpleNoise1/status/1054035140190572544, last access 10.21.2018.

> "The desire to fuck over social media, to bring down platform capitalism, to reconquer public space, to escape the social control exercised by monopolies, to refine political manipulation, to use affect in order to build the common, to turn power into care, to produce more just realities, to win the battle over Donna Haraway, and to create new narratives about the future. The explosive mix of *#purplenoise* consists of real anger, ruthless action, social (dis-)information, technical intelligence, political radicalism, and true love." (#purplenoise 2019b)

According to these wide-ranging, theoretically charged aspirations, *#purplenoise* intends to dissent from the capitalism-driven side of socio-technical infrastructures that social media platforms and its few powerful corporate monopolies constitute, and to fight for inclusive public rights, spaces, and commons, by using affect and care as ways to create new feminist narratives for possible futures. Their alleged strategies to do so make use of various affects and consist of political, social, and technological practices.

"Noise On All Channels": Virality and (Purple) Noise

On their Twitter account, *#purplenoise* connects its self-definition with a call for participation: "We are a new global feminist movement. Use this platform to say something about gender imbalance in this world, and you will be heard! NOISE ON ALL CHANNELS!" (#purplenoise 2019c) By referencing to feminist topics and intending to spread these widely, this introductory reveals the main objective summed up by the artist group's name: the critical and large-scale feminist dissenting of gender iniquities. As such, its naming evokes connotations: the color purple is, among others, associated with feminist and counterculture movements, as the Women's Suffrage movement. Noise, as a term, is used in diverse fields such as music, communication (studies), and technology to broadly describe wanted or unwanted disturbance of signals. *#purplenoise* claims to use two main concepts, noise and virality, which can be understood as strategies of dissent and participation. According to Sollfrank, the use of these notions are inspired by art theorist and *#purplenoise* member Grammatikopoulou's text *Viral Performances of Gender* (Sollfrank 2018: 7). In it, she analyzes interrelations between protests and contemporary feminist art and their online and offline interventions, framing them as "viral performances of gender" and specifying "viral noise" as their common communicative strategies (Grammatikopoulou 2019: 89). More concretely, she defines noise as "the interception and confusion introduced deliberately across communication platforms in order to make a message less clear to its recipients" (ibid.: 90) and virality as content "shared horizontally […] from a source to users who then re-share it millions of times" that "can express and reproduce existing power structures, but also trans-

forms them in unexpected ways." (Ibid.: 91) As tactics, virality and noise can thus be employed by diverse actors pursuing contradictory aims. Feminist artists in the digital age "seem to be aware of the contradictions emerging in the conflict area between activism, trolling and marketing, and use exactly these contradictions as an integral part of their work." (Ibid.: 90) Inspired by 'viral noise', *#purplenoise* situates its practices at these blurry borders within and beyond social media, aiming at creating disturbance in order to challenge existing power relations surrounding social media. *#purplenoise*, consequently, intends to use 'viral noise' as a tactic, and at the same time as a tool for spreading feminist objectives as well as to dissent against suppressive social media practices.

"The Site" Of Dissent: Social Media and Smartphones

In holding workshops, giving talks, and organizing interventions such as the street protest and events held at (media) art institutions, *#purplenoise* creates infrastructures for generating content to distribute on their social media channels, via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and the like. This large-scale sharing and spreading is first and foremost made possible through social media platforms and digital mobile devices, mainly smartphones. Acknowledging the all-encompassing ubiquity of these, *#purplenoise* aims at finding strategies to utilize, while challenging social media platforms as well as their related actors and practices:

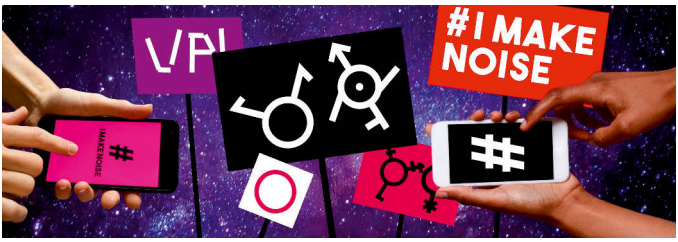
> "To use social media or not to use social media is not the question any more. They have become 'the site' where not just ordinary users but also the political establishment, law enforcement, secret services, marketers and hate groups can develop their greatest impact." (Sollfrank 2018: 7)

As "the site," social media platforms constitute the central infrastructure and site of negotiation of *#purplenoise*. By claiming to dissent suppressive social media practices, they aim at disobeying social media understood as "private enterprises, driven by greed and hunger for data and power, being elusive, non-transparent, secretive and unpredictable." (Sollfrank 2018: 7) Via the strategy of 'viral noise', the art project aims at dissenting the control of information, actors, and practices implied by the algorithms at the core of social media by practicing disobedience: "We click, we feed and we disobey/algorithmic despotism!" (#purplenoise 2019a) Interconnecting practices of participation and dissent, *#purplenoise*, consequently, poses the questions: "What is the disturbing noise you produce? How can we join forces beyond the despotic rule of algorithms?" (#purplenoise 2018) In order to analyze how this cooperation takes place and in what ways sites and sides of dissent are taken, I want to have a closer look at the concrete practices and tactics of *#purplenoise*.

"Nonspecific Disturbances": Viral Imagery and Queering

Positioning social media as sites of private and public, corporate and activist negotiation, *#purplenoise* appropriates strategies of social media for their very own purposes. In order to use social media in a way that allows for their aim of noisification, the initiators of *#purplenoise* applied the "reverse engineering [of] successful campaigns" and, thereby, noticed the need for "certain recognizable elements, amongst them hashtags, iconic imagery, a manifesto and memes." (Sollfrank 2018: 7) Thus, invitations to participate in *#purplenoise* are articulated by means of written and visual levels, distributed in public and online spaces. In order to spread and localize their claims across platforms, *#purplenoise* uses hashtags such as #purplenoise, #imakenoise, #iusemyfeelers, and #algorithmicdespotism. These are mobilized on their channels, in print media, performances, and their manifesto. Using activist strategies, purple-colored manifestos, postcards, and stickers are distributed, protest signs are created, and posters are hung, featuring visual elements and/or hashtags. The website of *#purplenoise* as well as its social media channels, especially Instagram and Facebook, feature photographic material taken during workshops and protests as well as graphics specifically produced for *#purplenoise*'s visual strategy. The latter consists of mounted photographs of a smartphone being held by a human hand with the index finger of the other hand touching the screen showing a hashtag or a 'noisified' gender symbol on its interface (see fig 2).

Figure 2: Website title picture of #purplenoise showing gender memes and hashtags.



http://artwarez.org/projects/purplenoise/, last access 5.31.2019. #purplenoise can now be found under: https://purplenoise.org/

Represented as such, and used to document the artistic practices and activities via photographs, videos, and audio including live recordings, smartphones are an integral, ever-present, and seemingly self-evident part of *#purplenoise* as both focus and strategic tool alike. Smartphones encourage engagement and invite participation, they structure, coordinate, organize, and document participatory practices. Thereby, the smartphone becomes a mobile media of storage, communication, and

distribution, inviting participation, and constantly producing and synchronizing communities practicing dissent.

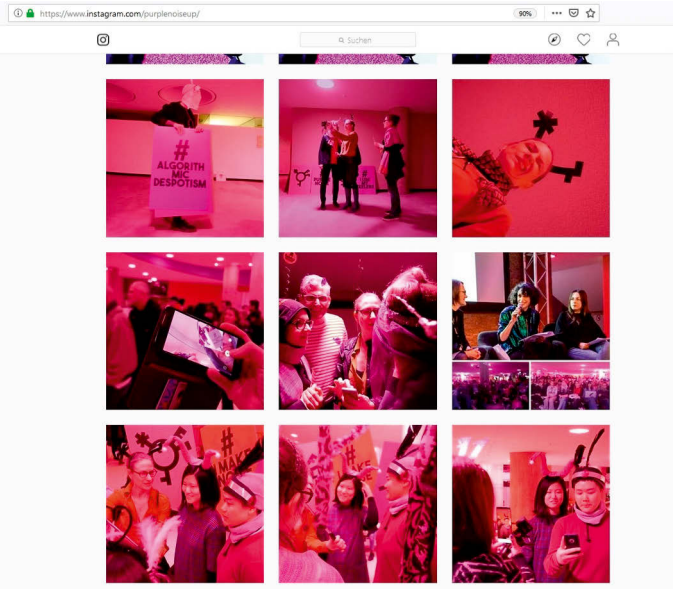
#purplenoise adopts social media's strategic use of viral imagery by creating its own in form of "iconographic signs of infinite gender variations:" newly created gender signs based on the mostly binary used gender symbols created in 'do-it-yourself'-mode as well as their so-called "feeler meme" (#purplenoise 2018), inspired by multispecies feminist and science theorist Donna Haraway.[5] The feelers, which *#purplenoise* creates with participants in 'feelers-tinkering workshops' for example at transmediale festival in 2019, titled *#iusemyfeelers – How to Grow and Use Your Feelers*[6] (transmediale 2019), are self-created wearables to be worn on the head (see fig 3).

They are supposed to function as an "extended human sensorium" inviting participants to speculate about possible futures for themselves and beyond (Sollfrank 2018: 7). The making of and tinkering with feelers and gender symbols, could be also described as a form of what media researcher and activist Sophie Toupin frames as "feminist hacking" (Toupin 2019). Accordingly, she defines it as hacking in a doubled sense: firstly, as hacking *technology* by adding a critical material dimension to traditional technofeminism and secondly, as hacking *gender* by challenging heteronormative understandings. As a form of collective resistance it creates new spaces and feminist infrastructures beyond online and offline dichotomies. (Cf. Toupin 2019: 31f) Consequently, 'feminist hacking' can be seen as a form of dissent and queering normatizing practices impaired by gender and technological hierarchies. The creation of gender symbols and feelers in workshops or performances and their virtual and spatial distribution as visual along with textual representation across various sites including art spaces and social media, serves as artistic strategies to 'add to the noise' in a disruptive manner: "The feeler meme and the iconographic signs of infinite gender variations inspire us to tell and share little stories. These mix as nonspecific disturbances with the noise of social media." (#purplenoise 2018) This re-thinking of the future in narratives that transcend notions of *her*-story cross and thereby queer binary logics: gender, then, is not limited to two but instead infinite options. In transcending the various sites, *#purplenoise*, further queers the

5 In Donna Haraway's so-called Camille stories, one follows – in an act of "speculative fabulation" – the fictitious character Camille, half-human, half-butterfly and genderless, over five generations between the years 2025 and 2425. The Camille of the second generation decides to get "chin implants of butterfly antennae" – feelers – "as a coming-of-age gift" helping in the "becoming-with" the human partner (cf. **?**

6 The workshop #iusemyfeelers – How to Grow and Use Your Feelers was conceptualized and carried out by Cornelia Sollfrank, Charlotte Bonjour, Christina Grammatikopulou, Janina Sack, Johanna Thompson and Isabel de Sena. Additional performers: Nina Stuhldreher and Gerog Gläser, for the performance () Opting out Is Not an Option! (Cf. https://archive.transmediale.de/content/opting-out-is-not-an-option, last access 17.05.2021).

Figure 3: Participants of the workshop "#iusemyfeelers – How to Grow and Use Your Feelers" experiencing transmediale festival with their 'new sensorium'.



Screenshot of Instagram-page of #purplenoise: https://www.instagram.com/purplenoiseup/, last access 5.17.2021.

thinking in spatial binaries. As such, the queering of spaces can be conceptualized as a feminist taking of sid/tes, in that it questions the binary logics of gender.

"Share Your Emotions": Already Engaged Participants

In a participatory mode, *#purplenoise* aims at "reaching out – to connect with you!" and invites "real people with real time/users, digital naïves/using platforms, being used" to participate in their "feminist noisification of social media" (#purplenoise 2019a). The manifesto, thereby, points to the double bind character of social media platforms that use the users using them. Participants are positioned as 'naïve' and, thereby, as easily available via direct requests. Prompts that are stated across the manifesto read much like imperatives akin to social media appeals: "Donate yourself/share your emotions/share your confusion/turn it into noise", "Produce more noise./Channel your noise./Feed our channels./And get in touch." "Add your per-

sonal flavor to purple noise,/join us on our social media." (Ibid.) These demands necessitate the users' ability to join in by having access to social media platforms in the first place. Further, they hint at the need for participants' willingness to contribute to the project on a personal and emotional level. Hence, participation is directed at social media users that are already familiar with the strategies and practices of sharing, liking, joining, producing content, and feeding social media channels thus at users *already* participating. In reflecting on social media and its affordances with means of digital infrastructures itself, *#purplenoise* can be described as situated in the "post-digital" (Cramer 2014) that positions participants as "already engaged" (Tyżlik-Carver 2014), as "always-on/always-on-you" (Turkle 2008), and thereby affected by the ubiquity of mobile technologies and structures of connectivity. Following media and art theorist Magda Tyżlik-Carver, post-participation "assumes participation as a condition present everywhere and enacted by humans and non-humans participating together and being already part of something regardless if it is a desired outcome." (Tyżlik-Carver 2014). Consequently, positioning oneself in a matter of taking a *site* – by interacting with social media platforms – and of taking a *side* – by siding with feminist notions – means becoming situated in a post-digital, post-participatory condition: within the omnipresence, the continuity, and the becoming self-evident of digital or participatory practices, processes, and technologies.

Feminist Dissent as Common and Affective Infrastructuring

Feminist dissent in *#purplenoise* unfolds as based on a doubled shift: firstly, in artistic practices situated as *post*-digital and *post*-participatory and secondly, in contemporary feminism "defined by the cross-pollination of digital and physical space, generating new tools of resistance through visual and media culture." (Grammatikopoulou 2019: 105) Both shifts are premised on changes brought about through large-scale digitization and datafication and their interrelations with everyday practices and offline spaces. In *#purplenoise* these 'new tools of resistance' take shape in form of artistic feminist practices, producing visual and textual content and mobilizing it via social media channels, making them sites of dissent. In utilizing the participatory structures of social media platforms for dissenting those themselves, social media is positioned as one possible and necessary site of resistance. In their co-created manifesto, the *Feminist Principles of the Internet*, "a series of statements that offer a gender and sexual rights lens on critical internet-related rights," the internet is defined as

> "a space where social norms are negotiated, performed and imposed, often in an extension of other spaces shaped by patriarchy and heteronormativity. Our strug-

> gle for a feminist internet is one that forms part of a continuum of our resistance in other spaces, public, private and in-between." (Association for Progressive Communications 2019)

Understanding the internet as such an extended site of feminist resistance, *#purplenoise* is negotiating the practices of dissent in taking sides and sites. In using social media channels and in taking to the streets and to art institutions with the aim of noisifying them, they become sites for artistic practices of feminist dissent. Thereby, the techno-feminist art project intends to interfere with and thus queer the sites and logics of algorithmic governance of corporate players, shifting power relations towards more equal access and rights. However, the project of critically intervening in power structures is a complex process affording time, endurance, and personal involvement. Accordingly, Cornelia Sollfrank describes the impacts of social media and its (infra-)structural repercussions, that affect the members and participants of *#purplenoise* on a personal and affective level:

> "We knew all of that before, but experiencing it on a daily basis, physically and mentally, and understanding how time consuming and manipulative the structures themselves are, was extremely frustrating and even depressing. I would say this first lesson was a hard one to learn. Luckily, we also had a lot of fun in the course of our collaboration." (Sollfrank 2018: 7)

As such, *#purplenoise* is shaped in its core by what cultural theorist Lauren Berlant describes as "affective infrastructures" (Berlant 2016: 414). The affective dimension of "'infrastructure' as that which binds us to the world in movement and keeps the world practically bound to itself" (ibid.: 394) critically considers, how affect is (made) infrastructural as well as how infrastructures are intrinsically affective. In introducing the concept of the common, Berlant stresses "its power to retrain affective practical being, and in particular […] its power to dishabituate through unlearning the overskilled sensorium that is so quick to adapt to damaged life with a straight, and not a queer, face." (Ibid.: 399) *#purplenoise* challenges affects created by social media, for instance, by proposing a new 'sensorium' through creating feelers or gender memes for negotiating social media practices. In doing so, the art project critically questions, how social media, its diverse users, and its infrastructure could be and act(ed upon) otherwise. Arguing for collective practices, Berlant calls on "all world-creating subjects in common struggle" to "build affective infrastructures." (Ibid.: 414) *#purplenoise* as an artist-group is continuously reshaping itself by various constant and interchanging members coming and working together for particular projects, thereby forming what could be described as an 'affective affiliation.' Taking sides and sites, consequently, can be conceptualized as a communing, especially of infrastructures of social media, through dissenting strategies that work

against these very parts of the infrastructures that impede empowerment of female and queer persons, diversification, and queer thinking.

Taking Sid/tes as "Always Figuring Out What's at Stake"

Taking sid/tes calls for self-reflexively considering the positionality of oneself in relation to others and other *sides*, as well as in relation to one's own and other *sites*. Or as social anthropologist Athena Athanasiou puts it, bridging situating and participatory practices, "taking sides involves becoming situated in space and time through the collective work of always figuring out what's at stake." (Athanasiou 2018: 6) Becoming situated as collective and processual practices, taking sid/tes in *#purplenoise* and its practices of feminist dissent can be described as a range of participatory practices and as an active process of constantly and collectively negotiating the straightening practices of social media. More concretely, the practices of *#purplenoise* aim at a critical unraveling of the power relations involved in social media through appropriating their practices and 'tinkering' with them. Thus, the feminist taking of sides and sites in *#purplenoise* is experimental in nature and constitutes a tinkering with possibilities of dissent and the questioning of positionality. These processes describe a circular movement of probing and adapting, of trial and error with the aim of disentangling what the relations (with)in (affective) infrastructures of social media are and entail.

The taking of sides and sites, as conceptualized in its threefold way, can be located in *#purplenoise* and its practices. Firstly, taking a *side*, by positioning oneself in opposition to another, speaks foremost to the taking of a feminist standpoint. Secondly, taking *sites* "as a manner of protest, occupation, appropriation or acquisition" (Bippus et al. 2018: 1), is realized in *#purplenoise* in manifold ways: by organizing a street protest, partaking in festivals, exhibitions, and workshops within art institutions, or occupying social networking web*sites* as a means of 'feminist noisification of social media'. Thirdly, taking a side as an active decision-making including processes of positionality and subjectification can be found in participants' willingness to personally join in on the practices proposed by *#purplenoise* as well as in situating the project within feminist theories and practices, thereby inviting participants to position themselves within those. In challenging gender hierarchies and heteronormativities, for example by creating new inventive gender symbols and sharing them via social media channels, participants become personally involved, and at the same time form part of a larger movement.

Feminist dissent in *#purplenoise*, then, opens in a twofold way as appropriating strategies established within digital infrastructures that display dissent by disturbing normalized social media practices, that also affect these very infrastructures and their participants by deconstructing the ways in which 'affective infrastruc-

tures' construe power. Rather than existing as a mere disturbance, *#purplenoise* thus actively intervenes in the status quo and constructs new narratives, thereby becoming a productive strategy in the collective fight for queer-feminist causes. In this way, we can see feminist noisification as a path into dissenting and common affective infrastructuring, with feminist dissent comprising a tactic for productively taking sides and sites by appropriating and loudly opposing any noise that is not purple at its core.

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2. Media Activism

Segment Introduction

Anne Ganzert

Taking a side, understood as supporting a distinct position in an argument or defending someone against oppression, inherently carries a slight difference and distance between the initial conflicting parties and those who then – somewhat later – take a stand. Taking a site however, is more immediate, can be spontaneous or planned, and is certainly a practice in the context of resistance, political activism, and protest that has manifested in a multitude of ways. In either case, individuals share a concern, resources, spaces, and practices. This section brings together four contributions that look at these processes in the context of media activism.

Taking a side and taking a site, as they are understood in this edited collection, enter an interesting relationship when we turn our attention towards contemporary media. The discussion can escalate rapidly by including commentary on hardware and software, online and offline media, and digital and (simulated) analogue media as well as the press and so called social media. Depending on how wide we extend the frame, one could consider any activism in today's world as media activism. To establish a sense of coherency in the discourse, the contributors in this section focus on the contexts of journalism, law and public opinion, the dark web, and fandom in exploring taking sides or sites.

When we discuss different areas or genres of activism, the majority of which take place outside of academic or intellectual discourse, material infrastructures arise at every instance. Infrastructures of bodies, spaces, and technology, and infrastructures of a more volatile variety, of micro-practices and skills, comparable across situations, demand to be viewed as modes of immanent critique and in context of the media they employ and are shaped by.

Discussing media activism then also implies a debate of center and margin, power structures and resistance. What is the activism aimed at, against, or for whom are people active, and who is activated or affected by the media activism of others or simply by mediated activism? We must consider how we can think about these topics without using overly simplified linear poles or without understanding power and resistance as a simple binary, and possibly include discussions on a more ambient concept of dissent.

In the media activism workshop held at the "Taking Sid/tes" conference, an instant shift to multiplicity happened when we sat down to discuss the topic and so the event's name instantly changed to media activisms – emphasizing the plurality and heterogeneity. Working on uncovering the connecting thread of the papers and people at the table, the focus was drawn towards instances in which bifurcations happen and new and potentially opposing branches of a former (perceived) unity break off. These spin-offs or splits are especially interesting if an image of unity is upheld and used as a strength and strategy to convey power. These bifurcations also pose questions such as 'where to draw the infamous line' – in language, violent behavior, adherence to the law, common practices – what does such a 'line' mean, and what are the implications of it? When does slacktivism become activism, and when does activism become criminal or labeled terrorism? And in which way does collective dissent require a mode of self-care in order not to self-destruct?

Or, employing the intensely discussed image brought to the discussion by Julia Ihls: When does a ship's crew become pirates, who says so, and why? This thought or image of pirates carried the idea of a crew engaging in mutiny in order to fight their battle against all authorities and nations, the elements, and even each other, for example for resources or power. It also led the discussion to hone in on the fact that if infrastructures and care are directed at the inside of the boat, community, or bubble, they need to be maintained and defended by a spectrum of means, and so the pirates need to occupy or destroy elements outside their shared space in order to take a stand or become self-sustained, to make a statement, to take a side.

The authors in this section sat at said table, and offered their unique perspectives. Discussions with Gabriella Coleman, one of the keynote speakers at the "Taking Sid/tes" conference, revolved around activism, hacktivism, and how online activism is often labeled slacktivism. The simple and pre-structured action of overlaying one's profile picture with the colors of the French flag after Charlie Hébdo were stood in strong contrast to the DdoS attacks on Scientology carried out by Anonymous in 2008 or the ongoing whistleblowing cases in the US. Participants left the discussion table with the open question: How can media activism be pragmatic without being arbitrary? Can we or need we be involved in media activism and how can we study it?

Coleman argued that hackers distinguish themselves through their avid embrace of political intersectionality and exhibit a high degree of tolerance for working across ideological differences. In many projects, pragmatic judgments or other considerations often trump ideological ones – leading to situations where an anti-capitalist anarchist might work in partnership with a liberal social democrat without much friction or sectarian infighting. Writing this introduction some time after the conference, these words can be directly transported to the many political fights and conflicts worldwide that have arisen or been rekindled since. The "ideological elasticity" Coleman diagnosed for hacker groups such as Anonymous is

effective, but it does have its limits and can exclude certain people from becoming active within the larger effort. Nonetheless, these activity or activism based temporary conglomerates of people are highly interesting as they are organized without being an organization, meet on- and offline without being a group, and only rarely engage in activities common to social media networking platforms. In addition, Christoph Brunner identified "community" as the major buzzword within social media discourse, which confronts us with the problem of inclusion and exclusion. The co-presence of bodies, the being-together, has changed with mobile media and the Internet. But, similar to any other human habitat, specific spaces emerge where online community crystalizes and actualizes.

Many authors and articles have emphasized that access to these online spaces is not distributed equally around the globe, even though early utopian ideas sometimes still shine through today's conception of the Internet. Media activism thus can also be very excluding when meaningful voices don't have access to the media channels that could share them.

This may be a matter of geography, as with China's social media politics and economic wealth concerning the distribution of hardware, connectivity, ableism, or even language dominance. It can also be platform immanent when specific channels or hashtag are jammed with expressions of sympathy, prohibiting for example the #blacklivesmatter from informing people about protest, news, and developments because the sheer utterance of support by people using that hashtag clouded its purpose (2020).

But generally speaking, online communities, or rather 'the users that come together on a platform for reasons highly variable', have proven to be extremely successful in the sharing and developing common practices or micro-practices. Teaching, coaching, and sharing are built into these spaces, seemingly even more so than in offline contexts.[1] In fandom research the passing of knowledge and skills has been studied quite extensively, bringing insights about knowledge communities that can be transferred to many other settings and media activist efforts. Research on fan fiction has especially shown how media literacy and programming skills in connection to gendered discrepancies foster learning communities amongst people actively engaging in media production. This links directly to topics Louise Haitz brought to the discussion and to this collection regarding YouTube Investigations such as those carried out in the context of sexual violence cases. The ascribed or acquired credibility of people or accounts on social media platforms, the power and truth they yield, emphasized the double entendre of media activism, meaning both

1 This is by no means meant to disregard communities of learning, or urban gardening, or repair cafés etc. which are all aiming to bring people together and sharing knowledge in order to take a stand against or for their causes. But chat room users, fans, and social media vloggers and micro-bloggers primarily are involved in these processes of information exchange.

the activism of human actors as well as media processes. And it posed the question of morality, of right and wrong and of truth, which are so very close in the realm of activism when it is framed as productive or destructive, peaceful or violent, or simply as good or bad. Yet, when a marginalized (by the media and public statements) space like the TOR Browser, which is distinctly linked to the deep web, starts a fundraising campaign, how do we distinguish the community without knowing the individuals, the morals, and the fringe perspectives?

By closely reading the Leaving Neverland documentary (2019), the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, "The Harry Potter Alliance", and the Darknet's Silk Road, Louise Haitz, Christoph Brunner, Julia Ihls, and Anne Ganzert discuss media activisms in four distinct settings. Each enquire whether dissent, resistance, or 'being against' is always both inherently personal and collective by focusing on aspects like affect, connection, greed, lawfulness, and guilt. By describing the fluctuant communities, the emerging subjectification and collectives that come into being, and which change because their individual parts constantly change in relation to each other, this section discusses how activisms are produced, reproduced, mediated and re-mediated. And the contributions show how modes of becoming, of being produced, strategies of being, and strategies of being against constitute the multiplicity that can be discussed as media activism.

The Politics of Undoing: The Movement of Activist Sense[1]

Christoph Brunner

Introduction

How does affect relay at a distance? How can one consider research as a militant practice and witnessing as a form of intervening in another time-space? Which role does sensuous experience play in forms of political struggle? And where does an act resonate across different strata of sense and the sensuous? What constitutes an act in the first place?

Let's start in the supposedly concrete: During a conversation with a friend in Montreal, we came to discuss the events of the so-called Maple Spring (*printemps érable*) in 2012 – a large-scale confluence of different political interests which achieved the resignation of the Liberal provincial government in Québec through massive forms of social protest. One of the strong resonators for us were the casseroles, a practice used in Latin American protests of the 1970s and since deployed in many social movements around the globe. My friend told me, how it blew his mind, or rather senses, when people of all backgrounds went out on the streets, banging their pots to express their disagreement with the government's passing of Bill 78, an emergency law against picketing or protesting near universities that requires police approval for public protests (larger than 10 people) throughout Québec.[2] I remember the banging pots and protests going viral on streaming-media (live and recorded) and myself, not living in Montreal at that time, being completely fixated by the sound.[3] The sound of banging pots and pans

1 I want to thank Aikaterini Genidogan for her very thoughtful and precise reading of an earlier version of this essay pushing me to be more careful and time-sensitive. I also want to thank Sophie Peterson for bringing up the importance of "fugitive community" in relation to this chapter.

2 For further information see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Quebec_student_protests, last access 2.14.2020.

3 Together with Roberto Nigro and Gerald Raunig, we explore some of these affective dimensions through Félix Guattari's concept of post-media (Brunner/Nigro/Raunig 2013).

reverberated and resonated from the balconies, streets, and screens of 2012 into our embodied present and presence in a café eight years later.

During the G20 summit in Hamburg, 2017 (July 7-8), I was involved with organizing the alternative international media center, FC/MC, housed in the Ballroom at St. Pauli Stadium, in close proximity to the Hamburg Fair where the summit took place.[4] Before and during the summit, the city was zoned by the police to guarantee so-called 'transportation corridors' for heads of states and diplomats, leading to massive displacements of people unable to access their urban environment, with many leaving town. From above, the sound of at least three or four helicopters penetrated the entire inner-city area; wherever you went, a searchlight appeared in the night's sky and the banging sound of the spinning rotors reverberated. This sound haunted those of us who inhabited that zone during the heart of the summit for months after the event. Ever since I am immediately brought back to this violent seizure of urban life by the police and other military operators whenever a helicopter flies over my head.

The sonic resonances which effect and capture through the bodily capacities for sensing are what amplify a *politics of affect* (Massumi 2015). Rather than addressing the sonorities as mere phenomena subjected to human perception, their materiality as resonant matter opens up an affective field of sensation which exceeds the individual human capacity to perceive sound. The following exploration of the term *activist sense* pertains to how a field of sensation, rather than individual meaning structures in "deliberative forms" or "reasoned argument," play a constitutive role of what Judith Butler terms alliance and supported action.[5]

I conceive of the term activist sense as both a description of a specific movement in thought and an analytic tool for better grasping contemporary affective politics. In this framing analysis does not mean revealing foundational truths but rather functions as a *pragmatic device* for the construction of an affirmative affective politics. Such politics acknowledge the power and activity of truth-making as part of contemporary mediated politics. However, the struggle over truth can become abusive from either side: from the predators of fake-news-talk and from the identity-fraction propagating a normative conception of truth. In times of a reactive, redundant, and deeply reactionary deployment of affective populism, affirmation designates a specific engagement with embracing complex relations as

4 A good overview of its function and structure can be found in (Bergerman/Grimm/Keil/Leistert 2017). I explore the work and activities of the FC/MC in two longer articles (Brunner 2019, 2020).

5 On the role of affect in public protests, see the insightful publications on "affect space" and "the zombie public" by Eric Kluitenberg (2015, 2017, 2020).

a non-predetermined activity of sense-making rather than truth-making, that is, activist sense.[6]

I want to stress that many contemporary political struggles and social movements engage in practices of naming, identifying, and calling out forms of violence, subjection, oppression, and repression. By doing so, they do not merely constitute alternative truths but weave different stories and narratives attentive to aspects of earthly survival expanding the scope of human rights towards a differentiated account of living and co-inhabiting (Haraway 2016). Without wanting to devaluate the relevance of struggles based on human rights and the more recent shift towards transformative justice, the emphasis of activist sense resides in the way activity and the power of activation through the sensuous enable an expanded conception of politics and political struggle attentive to affective relations as key to building transversal forms of resistance. I perceive such shifts integral to academic writing in the works of Saidyia Hartman (2019), Christina Sharpe (2016), and Kathryn Yusoff (2018) as well as recent discourses on pluriversal perspectives of non-Western decolonial ontologies (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018, De la Cadena et al. 2018) and their dialogues with North American pragmatist conceptions of the term (Vallega 2014). Both the redressing of the power of narrative and the pluriversal ontological politics (Escobar 2020, xv-xvii) provide a veritable ground for thinking activist sense beyond (but not without) the 'human' in relation to sense and sense-making. While the main discussion of this chapter engages with the work of Judith Butler and draws on affect theory, I want to stress the political alliance and resonances with decolonial thought and black studies in their multidimensional engagements with alternative modernities and their specific temporalities of the more-than-human. A shared point in these perspectives is their redressing of the concept of what constitutes the realm of the human, where a categorial difference between the human and the inhumanI propels a racializing modernism, while the pluriversal notes points of differential cohabitation as constitutive of human as a factor which always exceeds modernist capturing. Without promoting a divisive opposition between strands of thought, I am interested here in the affective and activating powers of existence (Massumi 2011) which foregrounds a resistant life "in the wake" (Sharpe 2016) and "blackness" (Yussoff 2018) as "fugitive community" against colonial capture (Harney/Moten 2013, 29-30).

In the following I will engage with processes of sensuous activation and their more-than-human capacities in the writings of Butler on social movements and their mediated states. I will look at her concepts of spaces of appearance, support, and alliance in order to carve out a relational thinking of sense and activity as temporalizing political procedures. Rather than a performative materialism, I conceive

6 On the relation between affirmative politics, affect, and activism, see Braidotti 2009.

of Butler's politics of the streets as one possible step towards a politics of undoing which occurs at the fringes of an event's sensuous and sense-making.

Preliminaries on Undoing as Perishing

To begin from a more-than-human point of departure, I wish to think of act, activism, sense, and sensuous as placed along an affective-relational continuum. This continuum, being extensive (Whitehead 1987) and relational (James 1996), defines experience as neither just a singular experience, a particular instance of perception or a moment, nor just a person's experience of "being-in-the-world", meaning exterior to embodiment.[7] Worlds do world – forming a worlding of sorts (Haraway 2016; Stewart 2010) in polyphonic (Guattari 1995, 6; Bempeza et al. 2019) and pluriversal (Escobar 2018) ways. They do not provide a ground or offer substances for action to seize or build upon. Rather, they engage an overall processual container through which action as mode of experience becomes felt. This is a non-linear and non-causal logic of the event. Experience designates the very ground or fabric through which "matter comes to matter" (Barad 2003) across the sensuous, social, and physical modes of existence constitutive of many worlds. In their eventful contractions, these matters make sense while resisting a hegemonic capture of the human perspective of what is designated meaningful. The art of an affirmative affective politics or activist sense pertains to the modes of participating as quasi-humans in the welter of experience, activating specific resonances, and thus co-fabricating collectively potential forms of sense.

In this processual account of worlding with and through experience, 'being' defines a minimal zone of a passing and fleeting present in which 'things' seem to happen (cf. Massumi 2011, Deleuze 1993).[8] This passing, however is neither a fleeting present of 'one's' experience, nor does the sphere of politics define it exclusively. It is shot through with a pastness and futurity that are constitutive of the actual occasion of an experience without having to actualize one. They are an activating lure for actualization. "In-acting" (Manning 2013, 21), temporalities of the not-yet and

7 For a clarifying note on the difference between worlding in this more posthumanist conception of experience and difference from a Heideggerian phenomenological subjectivism, see Haraway 2016, p. 11.

8 Deleuze explores the difference between ideal events and states of affairs in relation to temporalities, focusing primarily on the difference between Chronos and Aion, in Logic of Sense (1993).

have-been are the real immanent spheres of a politics of becoming, not a politics to come but what I call a *politics of undoing*.[9]

Undoing means opening, unknotting, to cut but also to relay in that very process. Undoing is like a "perishing" (Whitehead 1987, 60), which differs from vanishing. An undoing is a terminus (James 1996, 13-14; Massumi 2011, 140; Manning 2009, 224; Manning 2013, 12), the most actualized state of an event before it renews into a different becoming. In perishing it gives its immanent power to the time of the past and future, ready to inhabit another present. Perishing describes the undercurrent of a present's movement into a different state, not in a successive manner but in a folded temporality of process lines conjuncting and disjuncting.[10] A perishing is the marker of an event to maintain its own shape shifting active as a mooring in a worlding process always under way – it manifests the event as a singularity beyond actual states of affairs. It is a *local sign* of an event's activity as moving through experience (Massumi 2011, 128). The local sign might be the aesthetic variant of what Haraway terms situated. A tying of relations into a concrete manifestation whose relational ecology nevertheless seeps through the actualized form of an event. In perishing, this undoing of the event makes the sign flash in all its texture as a felt and embodied experience that cannot but be sensed without being rationalized. The time-form of undoing is not an instance in the overall event but the qualitative tonality that renders an event felt in a particular way (in French it would be *sens*), thus eluding chronological temporalization through its own affective power of existence.

Undoing as perishing is a process that celebrates a completion without closure. It is this very process of a perishing of the events' actualizing dimension, where it becomes palpable both as a felt and embodied experience and in its tending towards a different emergence in experience.[11] Operating on the thresholds of perishing means constantly reworking the future-past tendencies of matter informing concrete embodied experiences (that is, effects). This is what Massumi, in a speculative-pragmatic gesture, terms the "*politicality* of process" (2011, 13). Such

9 In the following, I will further explore the question of act and action in the work of Judith Butler. I do sympathize with her writings on undoing in Undoing Gender (2004); however, I will not further engage with that particular aspect of her writings.

10 On William James' conception of conjunction and disjunction in digital media, see Anna Munster 2013 and Adrian Mackenzie 2010. Elsewhere I explore this power of what might be called a "concatenated commons" in relation to activist media platforms (Brunner forthcoming).

11 It is crucial though to not confuse events with actualized, empirical states of affairs. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze opposes the ideal event as singularity to the Platonic notion of essences and thus revolts against a split between the empirical and the ideal, which he continues to problematize in Kantian empiricism (and aesthetics, I would add) and Husserl's phenomenology (1993, 51/96-97).

a speculative pragmatism of process foregrounds a sense of activity and potential activation as immanent force in a field of sensation. Affective politics engage an "alter-accomplishment" (Massumi/McKim 2009) to the repetition of events as the same, not as a rupture in the ordinary, but a lure for the sense of difference in the midst of habit.[12] While in human perception, we come to name and classify such changes as after-effects, as a denotation of what happened, and how such happening yields concrete effects, *sense* follows its own operational logic. In sense, undoing hints not at a simple more-than or difference from concrete states of affairs – both are simplified conceptions of potential – but point at a time much smaller and much more extended than the time of human perception. Undoing is the cleaving of an openness in the apparently homogenized structure of empirical worlds, not as a mere rupture but as that which was always there and will always become, a difference beyond mere distinction – a becoming. How to embrace such temporalities of undoing as activating and sensed complexity of worlding? And how could such politicality of process become an ethics in the making?

Brace for Activity

The two examples outlined at the beginning highlight what I call an "affective relaying" of mediated events through the bodily capacities of sensuous experience and their distribution across different platforms (Brunner 2013). The complex nexus of mediated experiences creates a relational field (Brunner/Fritsch 2011) through which practices of political struggle are shared and, as Judith Butler claims, only gain their translocal relevance in times of globalized media infrastructures through mediation (Butler 2011). In the following I want to further unpack and mobilize Butler's work on politics in the streets and the role of action and sense as part of what she develops through her understanding of alliance. While Butler wants to rework the question of what constitutes spaces of appearance in a (post-)media era of global social movements and their media ecologies, my interest in developing the notion of activist sense will foreground the temporal layering immanent to affective politics. I will do so by drawing on Butler's thoroughgoing engagement with Hannah Arendt. At the same time, I aim to extend their theories towards a

12 The ordinary is a crucial term which could not be further developed here. It hints at a ground of affective relationality in mundane experience as the locus of ontological politics of different modes of existence in a pluriverse. It also links to the remarks on Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman and their writings as engaging in modes of narrating the ordinary of (mostly female) black existence and the erasure of this mode of existence from hegemonic discourse. On the ordinary and affect see Stewart and Berlant (2019).

more-than-human dimension tied to the temporality of undoing in the politics of affect.

Butler pitched her conception of bodies in alliance during the lead up to the Arab Spring and just before the major events of the Occupy Movement in 2011 and 2012. Working through Hannah Arendt's political writings on the polis, which she calls "space of appearance" (1958, 199), Butler carefully recasts Arendt's conception of the public. Arendt conceives of the polis as the realm in which a public can be constituted by those who appear and speak. Butler contends that these spaces are based on a presumed social dimension of "appearing for another," an act exclusive to male citizens in Ancient Greece (2011). Butler emphasizes that this notion of appearance, requiring a "divine performative allocated to the human form," is opposed to the material, physical, and institutional practices on which the value of this form of appearance is based. Her critique of Arendt pertains to the very power and act of appearance itself. In contrast to Arendt's rather human-centered intersubjective concept of relationality, Butler conceives of the space of appearance as utterly embodied, material, and reliant on the support of the physical environment as well as the care for bodies to walk on them in a protest. These material and embodied conditions effectuate spaces of appearance as the performative instance of political struggle.

Arendt's conception of the space of appearance is tied to speech and human action. She writes: "The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be." (Arendt 1958, 198) Butler gently subverts Arendt's argument, insisting on embodied and physical matter (the physical location) as supportive infrastructures of action to occur. She wants to ensure a situated and embodied hold against unbounded abstraction through language. The concern of action, while taking on organizational qualities in Arendt and pertaining to an enabling materialism in Butler, nevertheless holds on to the power of human individuals in either conception of the term. As Butler states "acting together […] opens up time and space outside and against the temporality and the established architecture of the regime, one that lays claim to materiality, leans into its supports, in order to rework their functions […] such action reconfigures what will be public, and what will be the space of politics." (2011) A sense of togetherness and participation in such action moves through Butler's notion of the body, as developed in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). These are bodies as related to non-human life, their very organic and in-organic composition.

Public protests, as analyzed by Butler, render "the material insurgencies of the body the political concern of the square." (2011) I wonder, if this conception of the body, whether material or social, remains on a liberalist stratum in Butler's writings, taking the body and the surrounding space as support for action that is a

volitional human action? At the same time, the "constituent power" (Negri 1999) immanent to both Arendt and Butler in their understanding of appearance underlines the temporal and translocal potential of the act of emergence of such a "space of appearance." Appearance, the way I would like to think following Butler and Arendt, is different from representation. It pertains to temporal activations that come to the fore in collective forms of organized struggles. These activations have constituent power since they insert a shift into the tonality of an overall event that resonates across different bodies. The constituent power in Arendt and Butler's conception of appearance becomes a felt and sensed activation through which a different "sense" of the overall event occurs. The task for thinking activist sense pertains to adhering to such constituencies while refraining from their reduction to an inter-subjective social act amongst human individuals.

On the one hand Butler states that participating in the spaces of support generates action in alliance "precisely between those who participate, and this is not an ideal or empty space – it is the space of support itself – of durable and livable material environments and of interdependency among living beings." (2011)[13] On the other hand, she claims "that the alliance is not reducible to individuals, and it is not individuals who act." (2011) When the alliance is what acts, and acting together constitutes action, then such notions of act and action require a radical alternation from the human confinements at the heart of Butler's proposition. Shifting from human action to bodies in alliance adds a materialist foundation of intra-individual interdependence to Arendt's notion of action. Butler further extends this intra-individual dependency to "living beings" and claims to include the material environment as the supportive ground. What remains less explored in Butler's recasting of action into a more-than-human domain is the mode of relationality at stake when it comes to participation. Participating as human subject becomes possible through the support for action which is bodily and material, dependent on physical space and its affordances, all of which constitutes a space of appearance. In relation to the temporality of undoing, I wonder how "those who participate," as Butler writes, are really including not only human and living beings but also the temporalities imbued in the matter that surrounds those beings. Put differently, how can we account for a theory of assembly as constitutive of spaces of appearance in the sense of embodied manifestation of a public based on the temporalities of

13 In this respect, it is worth visiting Arendt's own deployment of the term "support": "It is the people's support that lends power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to begin with … All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them." (1972, 140) Butler extends Arendt's social conception of support towards the material environment but does not change the overall conception of action beyond the human embodied subject.

activation and their capacities of rendering felt and making sense differently from the normative enclosures of late liberalism?[14]

Arendt writes: "The reason why we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action is simply that action has no end." (1958, 233) This is because action "though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts into a medium where every action becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes […] the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation." (1958, 190) Two readings of such a conception of action and deeds arise in Arendt. Deeds, while boundless, are human deeds or deeds that constitute social interdependence as the basis for spaces of appearance and the material support required to make sense of human activity. On the other hand, such boundless deeds and actions extend beyond the human realm granted that one considers politics in the polis a more-than-human activity to begin with. Butler follows this temporalizing line without necessarily picking up on Arendt's remarks on action in relation to unpredictability and irreversibility (1958, 232-233). I want to stress Arendt's terms as crucial for a politics of undoing. While Arendt certainly talks about 'man' and 'his' deeds as yielding unpredictable effects and their irreversibility, the processual undertones can be cast beyond the human actor. Thinking of the pluriverse as a continuous relational field of activity levels the asymmetry between human and non-human – the reason why I prefer more-than-human. The materialist conception of embodied and supported action in Butler requires a further affective supplement. It is the temporality of affect, as I will explore in the next section, that extends the more-than-human not only to all life-forms and physical matter. The activation of the sensuous and its differential ways of making sense require a continuous affective temporalizing infrastructure as part and parcel of the material and embodied alliances and assemblies that Butler explores. The local sign of a successful mediated social movement, as I outline at the beginning and the way Butler stages such movements in her writings, cannot sustain its relevance if it does not take its affective envelopes into account. Appearance is not only a spatial affair but comes with a whole relational field of temporalities that constitute an assembly of bodies along their situated and timely capacities to affect and be affected. Action and activity underline the movement character of an affective field while nudging its potentials into embodied and material effects. The relaying of potentials for activation and their actualization defines the key operation of activist sense in relation to multiple temporalities.

14 Such a refined and ecological conception of participation can be found most prominently in the work of Gilbert Simondon (2005, 29).

The Powers of Affect

The force of emergence in action, if considered a more-than-human force, resonates strongly with the way Brian Massumi emphasizes the autonomy of affect (1995). Affect ensures a sensation of progress or time as passing present, that is, of materialized bodies in time and space while itself remaining a potentiality. While such informing procedures towards the making of a time that is the embodied and felt present arise through an affective relational field, the autonomy of affect maintains that we cannot know how such a relational field will cause effects. Affect engages the bodily and physical realm as a becoming, a process. Process is a mode of activation which ensures that each instance of the present as bodily felt emerges from and recedes into an affective and actively temporalizing field. Put differently, affect is not of the body or the senses but defines a field of sensation capable of activating situated forms of perception, thus rendering perception a relational force constitutive of subject and world. Affect is then an aesthetic operation because of the way it generates relays between movement, perception, and embodiment as intensive time-forms. Act and activity engage this affective aesthetic field in its capacity to process the key operation of a field of sensation. This fielding operation provides an outline of emergence in time and space as contractions of affective forces acting in resonance.[15]

Considering affect as autonomous does not mean it is relative. On the contrary, if conceived as a field activity, affect is relational and thus always engaged in matter, that is, forces relating under specific conditions. Affect enables emergence while eluding the very passing of such emergence in its embodied effects. Action and activity are the movements of affect entering instances of sensation constitutive of the time of bodily experience. This movement however, is exactly what is constantly shaped and reshaped and defines the operation of an affective politics (Massumi 2015, 117). Activity and processes of activation exceed the sensory-motor scheme of action-reaction, inserting a sense of the field of sensation's multiple, temporal textures. These textures become affectively felt through the more-than-human relationality of different materials acting in alliance, as Butler outlines. From an affective angle we need to include to these processes of material support for actioning a temporalizing quality which casts the moment of action, of bodies in alliance and the politics of the streets, beyond its representational value. Appearance as emergence resonates not just throughout the mode of sensation across different bodies but also their felt temporalities – often leading to variations of making-sense of an embodied experienced over time.

15 On the notion of the field, see Massumi (2011, 160-163/2015, 116). On the specific aesthetic understanding of affect see Deuber-Mankowsky (2017, 68-71).

Arendt's irreversibility concerns the necessity of actualization as the processual vortex through which potentialities activate; its degree of quasi-order imprints an affective-relational signature onto a specific realm of experience in time and space. Arendt's conception of the term action resonates with Deleuze's and Guattari's (Guattari 1995, 59/96; Guattari 1996, 180; Deleuze 1988, 88/97/126-127) deployment of the concept of finitude as borrowed from the work of Michel Foucault (1989, p. 340-346). Finitude is not finite. It is a tendency of emergence to move towards a certain completion or fulfillment in expression – a terminus becoming felt in a processual undoing. In this temporal relaying, an affective yet material conception of action or activity occurs where indeterminability courses through all modes of existence. It is action fabricating a time of felt experience and its variations of memory as a fleeting present informed by a future-past. Such future-past defines a time-form of its own, where the contemporaneous is not a mere contraction of a past towards a future, but where process as duration activates a time of affective consistence immanent to subjective embodied experience. At the same time, these affective enablements of emergence become finite in the way that they pertain to a completion or actualization, that is a manifest expression with concrete bodily effects. The mutual entanglement of affect and expression, indeterminability and irreversibility, are the very movements through which undoing receives its political relevance. Attending to undoing as the interval between indeterminibility and irreversibility renders it activist as power sui generis, beyond human action but not without its capacity for activation through the more-than-human. The pragmatic question I would like to outline for the rest of this text pertains to how to engage creatively with such activating forces of activity without reducing these forms of engagement to a notion of participation and agency tied to identified entities and their mere inter-connection?

The Matter of Sense

Butler writes about different practices of care and support during the first wave of the Arab Spring at Tahir Square in Egypt. She emphasizes practices such as "making the material insurgencies of the body the political concern of the square" rather than a mere discursive and perceptual concern, that is phenomenological and discursive, as would be the case in Arendt's spaces of appearance (2011). Butler herself provides a crucial opening beyond human deeds through a temporal conception of act, action, and alliance:

> "The bodies on the street redeploy the space of appearance in order to contest and negate the existing forms of political legitimacy – and just as they sometimes fill or take over public space, the material history of those structures also work on

> them, and become part of their very action, remaking a history in the midst of its most concrete and sedimented artifices." (2011)

The practices of political struggle move through the fielding operation supported by the affective materiality of the physical environment and its ingrained temporalities. Rather than just hinting at the historical semantics of such situated activity, for instance the role of architectural history of urban spheres, the different temporalities amplify and augment each other, constituting an affective field of political struggle through mutual activation. Such activation equally includes the time of individual memories and sensations and the time of gathering on the streets and protesting. Bodies redeploying the space of appearance means inserting a quality of collective resonance which builds on the material-temporal support of bodies and physical space into an affective field as much as constituting a quality of alliance that extends the possibilities of resistance. Alliance then is a crucial term if considered beyond its intersubjective tendencies.

When Butler writes "it is the alliance that acts" while stating "action in alliance happens precisely between *those* who participate in the space of support itself" (2011, emphasis added) her position potentially contradicts the very potential of alliance as more-than-human constituent power. As far as Butler is concerned, *those* who participate are acting in alliance. Such alliance beyond consensus pertains to the works of Jacques Rancière on dissensus (2010) and Chantal Mouffe on agonistic politics (2016). However, both retreat into a human-centered idea of the *who* that participates in these practices. While Rancière allows for a somewhat sensuous expansion through his notion of the "distribution of the sensible" (2010, 36 passim), the forces of that distribution pertain to the human faculty to perceive as the basis of contemporary politics.

I want to suggest including the more-than-human elements into Butler's conception of alliance. An affective politics, as I want to develop here, moves not only beside or underneath the human relationality of alliance, dissensus, and agonistic politics but defines a relational movement constitutive of but not finitely tied to material expression. With the activating field of affective forces as the foundational movement of expression, the question of alliances resides in the way a situation or a field enables openings for participation in a sphere where participation is the constitutive plane for alliance to emerge. Put differently, the fielding power of affective relationality becomes the plane through which one has to address questions of alliance and participation. Such alliances are based not on willful decisions by subjects but on the capacity to attune and amplify the affective field's potential for certain expressions to constitute an appearance. However, and this is crucial, the appearance is not for the human, for human perception, but first and foremost for itself. It is existence "self-enjoying" its very occasioning (Whitehead 1967, 177). Participating in that general "creative advance" of existence, in its duration,

means to conceive of alliance as something beyond ideological alignment (Whitehead 1967, 210). Such processes of "differential attunement" to an affective fielding operation is both immediate and determined (Massumi 2011, 123). Different from total contingency (relativism) the process of a differential attunement is processually open, towards a different becoming, while expressing itself in a determined manner as a concrete situation. A politics of undoing as a temporal invention pertains to the capture and opening of affectively constituted alliances in their very movement. Undoing is not an individual act but the interval where shifts and openings in the field can be engaged with, where potential alliances grasp the bodies and support alternate futures. These waves of amplification nesting in the undoing of an event are the immediate and immanent affective lures towards an alter-engagement or alter-effectuation, a counter-power, against dominant and redundant forms of capture in hegemonic politics (Massumi 2015b, 42).

The temporalizing role of digital media provides a vital ground for exploring the durational modes of participation towards different temporalities as affective alliances in a politics of undoing. Before the lacuna of writings about the relation between social movements and social media (for instance Gerbaudo 2012), Butler stages the importance for spaces of alliance to resonate beyond specific territories, thus contributing to such events to make sense through the sensuous. Media are not just forms of mediation and representation of the protests; they activate new modes of making sense through the sensuous by putting localized protests into a globalized perspective of alliances (Brunner 2018). Butler writes:

> "The street scenes become politically potent only when and if we have a visual and audible version of the scene communicated in live time, so that the media does not merely report the scene, but is part of the scene and the action; indeed, the media *is* the scene or the space in its extended and replicable visual and audible dimensions" (2011).

The shift from media as conveying or communicating content to its co-constitutive powers in relation to live-time for the composition of spaces of appearance is another hint at the more-than-human assemblages at work in social movements' expressive powers. While liveness defines a potential for affective engagement in a political event it disregards the multiple temporalities which digital media actually enable (cf. Munster 2006, 2013). The relaying capacities of digital media allow for both live amplification and temporal shifts before and after the event. By doing so they become archives of the immediate as much as multiplications of temporalities informing the present through sensuous mattering. In relation to the introductory example such a temporal folding and its affective relays come to the fore. While we both were live witnesses of the events in 2012 in Québec, the translocal connection through mediation allowed for us to converge on differential points of the overall event envelope that is termed *Maple Spring*. The actual embodied encounter in a

café in 2020 and our respective memories revolving around the lived experiences adds new temporalities to this texture. The question of activist sense then is how to make the relays felt beyond a specific notion of liveness and move it towards a lived continuum of resistant practices and their shades of sensation.

While Arendt promotes the emergent character of space constituted by speech, Butler expands this casting materially and in reference to the temporalities immanent to such material environments. The bodily matters of support and action are human as much as more-than-human, but they remain tied to their constitutive spatial connotations. Both Arendt and Butler tie a conception of becoming to a space – once emerging through discursive subjects and once as materially given. Butler's notion of support is the key to a what I call a *transductive conception of alliance*, but not if it remains tied to the material or to actions as subjective deeds. Support – as transductive and temporalizing force – resides in the activating power that moves through the mattering effects of sensation. The mattering effects of sensation constitute bodies in alliance while at the same time eluding them in their material expression. Such a notion sensation exceeds the human as much as the mere appearance in a perceptual or perceived present. An insistence on the "time of the interval" and a cast of appearance as a "necessarily morphological moment where the body appears" as well as the proposition of "acting in the midst of being formed" provide a vital ground for a more-than-human conception of becoming at the heart of a politics of undoing (Butler 2011). Linked to the mediated reality of contemporary forms of protest these expressions cannot be reduced to mere processes of making present or live time. Alliance occurring as support and in the interval of acting in the midst of being formed all contribute to medias' activating powers:

> "The media constitutes the scene in a time and place that includes and exceeds its local instantiation. Although the scene is surely and emphatically local, and those who are elsewhere have the sense that they are getting some direct access through the images and sounds they receive. That is true, but they do not know how the editing takes place, which scene conveys and travels, and which scenes remain obdurately outside the frame. When the scene does travel, it is both there *and* here, and if it were not spanning both locations – indeed, multiple locations – it would not be the scene that it is. Its locality is not denied by the fact that the scene is communicated beyond itself, and so constituted in a global media; it depends on that mediation to take place as the event that it is. This means that the local must be recast outside itself in order to be established as local, and this means that it is only through a certain globalizing media that the local can be established, and that something can really happen there" (2011).

On the one hand, Butler addresses the different modes of production and perception that constitute a translocal linkage, generating a mediated event all of its

own and thus constituting a sense of locality. The temporalities at work in these processes require equal consideration. If we want to extend Butler's theory of mediation as a constitutive event, we have to take the media infrastructures and their own operational qualities into account. This media mode of mattering bears potential for temporal cracks to occur in the overall perception of an event, here the undoing is felt as potential lure for difference. The affective capacities of media assemblages, which activate and resonate with human bodily capacities of sensing and sense making, rework and modulate temporalities. The live time relays of mediation are actually *life-time*: They contain a certain activating vitality of affecting and thus constitute alliances without the requirement of mediated connection (Parisi 2019).

Sensation and the practices of sense making through support and alliance foreground processes of becoming and their affectives, which is temporally potentiating, defining the core of a politics of the streets. Shifting the spatial constraints of locality and mediation towards processes of activation and undoing affords a general ontological shift of how to conceptualize relations. Rather than connecting different entities such as bodies, affect, as time-sensitive and a movement of sensation, defines the relational tissue through which an actual embodied experience comes to materialize as a becoming and not a filiation, the way Deleuze and Guattari differentiate the terms:

> "[…] becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns *alliance*. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of *symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation." (1987, 238, emphasis added)

The challenge posed by an alliance as a double movement without descendance can be transfigured onto the tension between the time of the interval and the space of appearance. Constitutive of the public are performative acts which generate "scenes", in Butler's terms, and arenas, in the writings of Arendt and Mouffe. Scenes, however, are composed, whereas arenas are rather fixed. Butler then engages such a double movement when she writes: "The media requires those bodies on the street to have an event, even as the street requires the media to exist in a global arena." (Butler 2011) If scenes were only the mediated representations of localities, one where bodies gather and one where the gathered bodies are situated through the media, then it would hardly be imaginable why my friend and I were both moved by the same event while encountering it differentially. What moved each of us was not tied to the filiation of actual bodies in alliance but a specific temporality of undoing. In the semblance of a livedness on screens, I was a participating affectively just as much as my friend in Montreal. The event moves

relationally across spaces and times, thus shaping the event's contour through a proliferation of sensational lures, of activations that lurk in the cracks of multiple becomings. These becomings share a capacity of participating in a relational field which is the support for alliance.

I want to read Butler's theory of assembly through an operational logic of affect's temporal powers of becoming. Arenas, agoras, spaces of appearance have a tendency to privilege discourses of representation – a presence and present as the face value or currency of truth (cf. Lorey 2016). *Alliance in becoming* exceeds a politics of the immediate or mediated, built on the past and leading towards a (better) future or connecting spaces on and off screen as loci of protest. In the same manner Deleuze and Guattari refuse both regression and progression as part of a conception of filiation that is opposed to the temporal logic of becoming. For them, regression would lead to something "less differentiated" whereas progression would mean "something more differentiated", of which neither provides a proper definition of becoming (1987, 238-239). In their proposition of a "creative involution," (1987, 164) rather than evolution, they criticize the chronological temporality immanent to both progression and regression. Instead, they emphasize that the temporality of the event of becoming is contemporary, not as a singular but as "other contemporaneous possibilities" (1987, 273). This notion of contemporaneity is quite different from using the 'making present' or 'making real' of mediated participation to demarcate an event as real. Deleuze and Guattari thus complicate the temporality adequate to becoming as being of a different kind than the coherent time forms of past-present and future. Creative involution describes the element of concrete form that breaks away and escapes its spatio-temporal confinement in order to open up an unattended difference which nonetheless was immanent to its existence. This time-form of undoing harbors a becoming, a way of escaping the form and eschewing the location, of a movement-character rather than a definite type. It is creatively involutive because it moves neither forward nor backwards but sideways (a double movement).

The assumption of progressive politics being more differentiated might be misleading if it is not considered in relation to the temporal specificity of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari explain: "but to *involve* is to form a block that runs its own line 'between' the terms in play and beneath assignable relations." (1987, 239, emphasis added) Beneath assignable relations there is of a relational field a not predetermined but emergent quality that is differential. Deleuze and Guattari use of the notion of alliance designates a temporal emergent collectivity as quality in itself, as becoming, and not the becoming-together of bodies, matter, and spaces. Involution is the time form of differentiating becoming, whereas the activity of involving shifts participation away from a willful act. It is more a process of being drawn into a line or situation which is neither active nor passive. Conceiving the power to involve as a mode of participation means to open the body to "an inhumanity

immediately experienced in the body as such […] outside the programmed body" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 273). The inhumanity is not a nonhuman matter but a becoming which falls outside of time through human sensuous embodiment. It is inhumane or more-than-human because it cannot be grasped other than through sensation.

Activist Sense as Practice of Undoing

Recalling the initial array of a shared and felt activist continuum at the beginning of this text, I want to close with turning towards the temporality immanent to the process of undoing as an instance in a process where the creative involution, the differential act, becomes a lure for "other contemporaneous possibilities." How can we make sense of the temporal folding of activity immanent to media ecologies as a key aspect of contemporary social movements? In the introductory examples the power of relaying felt experiences across time and space defines but one aspect. The narration and sharing of felt embodied states, recalling the events of the Maple Spring from a disjunctive time and space – my friend living in Montreal, me being glued to the screen in Zurich – makes up one key element of a politics of undoing: The affective event-envelopes reactivate memories and provide embodied experiences with a rich and layered *sense* as constitutive of the contemporary. In the emergence of a memory, as *local sign*, the affective texture of activist modes of existence unfold their extensive continuum across bodies, times, and spaces.

Undoing means to fold and insert, to attend to the edges of an embodied experience as it verges towards its own remaking. The politics of undoing are not tied to human-ordered attentiveness of the perceiving subject in the usual phenomenological sense of the term.[16] The subject and perception are of the situation and become with it, thus shifting the shape of the event towards an ecological operation that is utterly more-than-human. The more-than-human pertains less to an orchestration of human, non-human, organic, and nonorganic agents (into an alliance, as seen from a human perspective), but to the differentiating contributions of temporalities to the fabrication of the contemporary. It is the "concatenated union" of the fleeting present felt at the brink of its undoing, where politics of the event *make sense* (James 1996, 107-108). Such sense-making follows a logic of becoming that moves in a non-linear fashion, constituting contemporary alliances – alliances beyond entities and inclusive of temporalities undercutting a chronological coherence.

16 On the general rejection of the subject-centered phenomenological take on sense, see Foucault's "review" of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* in his text "Theatrum Philosophicum" (1998, 351).

The problem of an agential and mediating image of thought is its leaping back into a casting of action tied to a subject. *Sense* defines the power of the event to seep into perception while circuiting through multiple (sensuous) matters in their capacities to contribute to the event. It is here, in the midst of occurrent sense (as becoming felt and making sense) where undoing unleashes its political potential. The power of culmination without determination, a crystalline and diffracted image that weaves together the contemporary, underlines the movement of becoming which is felt when the situation takes hold of the present. It is a fleeting and emergent present as contemporaneity that expands what can be felt and how to move forwards if the making of sense suspends any preemptive categorization while taking account of the temporalities of a past informing such a present.[17] In this way, Erin Manning states:

> "I think that the biggest mistake we make is to pretend that we can categorize and compartmentalize events according to pre-established criteria. This is just too clean. I think that art can do the work of keeping experience complex by creating an open field for thought in the making. All open fields eventually get captured in all kinds of ways, but this capture does not negate the trace of the process [of becoming]." (Manning in Massumi 2015, 145)

What exactly becomes activated through the perceptual and embodied encounters with such an activist continuum and how does it make sense while moving through the sensuous? *Sense* the way Deleuze unravels the term lies before any actual sensuous experience. It inhabits the surface, as he writes, a contour of the event's potential unfolding without being resembled by the event. The sonorous contours of the banging of pots and the helicopter rotation, or the banging of protection shields of police in riot gear charging the protesting crowd, enter the experiential realm not as appearance but through an *involvement* in fields of experience. Such an involvement occurs disjunctively, that is, it activates in resonances with a plethora of other activations across differentiated bodies, times, and spaces. There is no deduction or regression possible in these situations – they seize relationally and carry bodies in their sensuous capacities with them. In this whirling of an unfolding event, the surface moves in resonance, underneath, without projecting or being actualized. Sense is a temporality all of its own – *Aion* or becoming. This temporality shapes what comes to pass as present but is never grasped other than in its movement across and underneath. Such a temporality is at work, when the temporalities of past and present events draw on forces of a life beyond the human-body-sensation-nexus. It is a futurity as contemporaneous. There is nothing but the event. But the

17 The notion of "taking account" could also be read in the way that Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes about the "art of noticing" (Tsing 2015).

event is never that what the present assumes it to be, and the present orders and confines powers, enabling and disabling.

So, how does a politics of undoing play into these temporal complexities? The media assemblages which accompany and shape social movements around the globe are far more than amplificatory devices in support of appearance. They carry the affective powers of "non-sensuous perception." (Whitehead 1967, 182)[18] Non-sensuous perception is "the immediate past as surviving to be again lived through in the present." (Ibid.) Rather than a mere linearity of a past conditioning a present, non-sensuous perceptions are the relays between an event's undoing and its shift towards the formation of another event. To lodge this process in perception is a way to circumvent consciousness as the driving operation of such transitions. Put differently, Whitehead poses non-sensuous perception as the key-activity in the process of making sense through the sensuous by applying an affective activation before conscious recognition puts things into an order. It is here, where Manning places the power of art, and which I would extend to the general realm of aesthetics, as the relay between sensation and sense-making. How does such an activist sense operate through the non-sensuous relay of an undoing to become crucial to a politics of sensation in activist media ecologies?

The media's capture of social movements for the most part bifurcate. On the one hand, they are part and parcel of the serious business of calling out acts of state-directed violence against the freedom of assembly and speech. Here the notion of "alternative media" and investigative journalism derive their relevance from contributing to the play of politics of appearance and recognition in an overall distribution of the sensible throughout different media outlets and platforms as well as archives and juridical procedures, human justice, and human rights practices.[19] On the other hand, the preemptive power of media, mostly tabloid and mainstream social media, focuses on the logic of violence, the front line (Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger calling), and what is widely known as "riot porn."[20] Such logics of violence capture the discourse at the barest level of activation, harnessing it towards a proto-fascist aesthetics obsessed with a linear logic of time, of future catastrophe or danger, as a crucial element of a politics of fear moving through sensuous activation.[21] A future fact that predates how it will be cast after the event has happened – the

18 I want to thank Diego Gil for making this important comment.

19 Recognition is another central term in the works of Butler that cannot be further engaged with due to a lack of space (cf. Willig/Butler 2012).

20 On the obsessive relation to the front and its powers of activation in Schmitt and Jünger see Wills 2016, 179 passim.

21 Without having further space to elaborate, such a linear logic of future threat or war-mongering liberation has been celebrated by Italian Futurism, most notably, Tomaso Marinetti, but also occurs in more recent sense-modulating strategies of post 9/11 state-of-emergency politics as deployed by the George W. Bush administration (cf. Massumi 2005).

pitfalls of the regressive and progressive. In the midst of these bifurcating lines the more ambivalent but also more experimental terrain of artistic-activist creativity offers an affirmative version of activist sense as a becoming.

A politics of undoing extends the artistic-experimental beyond the institutionalized confinements of art. Turning towards aesthetic practices, such experimentations permeate activist media practices and forms of protest (cf. Reed 2019). Beyond the primary reactive conception of alternative media, as a response to mainstream media and their dominant refrains of violence and opposition, another mode of aesthetic activation arises. The activating powers of different temporalities, specifically different modes of living and resisting binary captures of opposition, define a crucial aspect of activist sense in times of redundant refrains of populism. Rather than just engaging in forms of protest and counter-narrative in order to obtain recognition, be it social or legal or even a common cause entering the discourse of politics, these modes of activation operate through the power of undoing. Undoing is an affirmative process that honors the accomplishment of an event becoming a concrete and embodied situation, an effect, while accounting for the differences immanent to such a situation that are felt in their potential. Affirmation is not an act but a state of openness. It courses through each instance of an embodied experience, expressing a sense of movement as defining character of an event's singularity. Such potentiation is the work of affect and non-sensuous perception. It accounts not just for the imaginary that 'another world is possible' but also for the unbounded potential for activation in the midst of the contemporary.[22] While it is crucial for social movements to build on reliable infrastructures, to support bodies in alliance and in the streets, such activities are paired off with an entire array of differentializing (micro)-perceptions with and through the media-shaped temporalities that make up such embodied experiences, both disjunctively and conjunctively. What is shared collectively through alliance, the alliance Deleuze and Guattari hint at, is an alliance in the feeling of undoing, the power of existence through becoming. Becoming is returning. Becoming is the eternal returning of differentiation in its very own manner, not constituted entities being different.

Acting in alliance, "acting in the midst of being formed," (Butler 2011) pertains to the insertion of sense into a collective sensing of becoming, a heterogenous force operating through the "joy" of sensuous emergence. There is neither a prefabricated alliance among humans or between humans and non-humans. What accounts for the more-than-human is the very process of sense(making) as the temporal powers between thinking and feeling, moving and being moved, motion and rest. The affective politics at the heart of activist sense can be felt in the very

22 In a more extended version of this article, I would engage in Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stenger's more speculative embracing of the protest slogan "another world is possible" dating back to the global social movements stated in Seattle in 1999 (Pignarre/Stengers 2011).

powers of undoing. Undoing is the potentiation for the banging of pots to reactivate the present, the contemporary, as my friend and I shared eight years after the Maple Spring. It is the trauma of the helicopter noise haunting my memories while feeding the affirmation of experienced trauma being shared in resistance without sharing the traumatic experience. While there is singularity to each of these felt instances of actualization, activist sense as a politics of undoing allows for sharing an activist continuum across times, spaces, memories, and existential territories. It is the transtemporal and translocal conception of the spaces of alliance that builds on the disjunctive power of becoming beyond retroactive analysis of urban forms of protest and their mediated states. It is in this artful activation with and through sense that a polyphonic bundle of life-forms occur and that do not react but activate, affirming a different line of life in the present of future-past memories in the folds of non-sensuous perception. Such life is not free of capture. It will be captured, but only after its undoing has moved somewhere else, towards a different and differentiated contemporary.

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Dumbledore's Army, Still Recruiting
Fan & Media Activism as Practice

Anne Ganzert

A group of people are holding banners stating "Terminar con la Detencion de Migrantes", "End Queer Detention" and "Save Liberty. Act now", in a picture posted under the hashtag #DAfightsback. But it is their shirts, stating "Books turn Muggles into Wizards" or "I don't go looking for trouble. Trouble usually finds me. Harry" that might guide the spectator to the realization, that, rather than referring to the district attorney, DA is 'Dumbledore's Army', a branch of the Harry Potter Alliance, which is arguably one of the largest fan-activist organizations to date.

Fictional stories throughout the ages have told tales of conflict, resistance, and the oppressed rising up against far greater powers. A fair share of these texts, plays, films, or shows have provoked uproars in the public, be it from critics, conservative guards of moral, or affected audiences; however, fans of specific narratives have begun to mobilize for causes that are only remotely related to the media product of their affection.

Therefore, this chapter will focus on activist practices, their mediation, facilitation, and narrative framing, as they appear in the realms of pop culture fandom and fan activism.[1] The assumption is that activist or resistant practices emerge from a seemingly unpolitical background, mobilizing fans into action for various causes. The chapter will therefore question media activism and the taking of sides and sites from a perspective based in fandom studies and reflect on the possibility of having a pool of potential activists, connected through their shared fandom, ready and willing to engage for multiple causes of differing degrees of personal importance. Additionally, the effect and relevance of these seemingly 'petty protests' will become evident as a ground to practice, in every sense of the word, the taking of sides and sites.

1 Sports fans most certainly also employ strategies of activism or protest, but cannot be the focus of this chapter.

'Petty Protest'

Cornel Sandvoss convincingly stated, that it "has become next to impossible to find realms of public life which are unaffected by fandom" (2005: 3). Contemporary fandom has presented various levels of media activism, including protests against a show's content or cancellation with prime time shows and daytime soaps alike (cf. Scardaville 2005). Other more clearly political protests, have used pop cultural references and codes to put across their message, for example the use of *The Handmaid's Tale* (Miller 2017) costumes to protest Anti-Abortion law-making worldwide (see below). The former has in itself become a trope that is reflected within pop culture and is often framed as futile effort and petty protest by nerdish characters, when being a fan is part of a fictional character's traits. One example of this are the phone calls made by Sheldon Cooper in *The Big Bang Theory* (Lorre and Prady 2007), where he demands that the Syfy Channel either continue his favorite TV show or decrease its quality to help viewers lose interest before it is canceled (S06E21).

The efficacy of such protests, however, are often overlooked or dismissed in fiction. Real life responses to series' cancellations tend to be socially dismissed as the actions of those who have no true issues in their lives,[2] framed (in the press) as futile, or occasionally celebrated when, every once in a while, a studio is persuaded to put out a closing movie for a series or another channel picks the show up for continuation.[3] Fictional depictions of protest, for example the "Gabehcoud" demonstration[4] shown in *Homeland* (S05E05, Gordon and Gansa 2011),[5] follow more traditional structures, usually political and leaning to either the left or the right, but embody strong limitations as demonstrations, strikes, or sit-ins have a fixed duration and place of occurrence, and they end when either the event finishes, the site is taken by the police, or the demands are met. Longer lasting resistant movements that build up, evolve, and change are seldom included in contemporary narratives. One such outlier is the very popular fictional protest of *Panem* (from *The Hunger Games* series, Collins 2008).

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2 Or the other way around, where the younger generation is described as protest lazy (cf. Gafni 2015).

3 I.e. when Universal Pictures decided to wrap up Fox's series *Firefly* with a movie, after the shows cancellation (2005).

4 A crowd of protesters with different modes of disguises, masks, hoods, etc., and signs are shown demonstrating outside the Russian embassy in Berlin. Police troupes and news teams flank their chanting, while the camera follows the protagonist through the crowd.

5 Interestingly another form of protest occurred within the show's production, when street artists were hired to spray slogans on the set of a Syrian Refugee Camp with Arabic script. The graffiti read "There is no Homeland" or "we didn't resist, so he conquered us riding on a donkey" among other things and clearly went against the production's guideline of being apolitical (cf. Heba y Amin n.d.).

Student protesters in Thailand have employed the signature hand gesture described in the books and shown in the movies to signalize their protest against their government and leaders. Albeit entirely arbitrary, this symbol carries with it an entire construct of ideas, of small, oppressed groups rising up against an overpowering government. The mobilization of this protest in a country with a history of military coups and political strategizing shows that the iconography developed in the movies inspired the protest practices of Thailand's young adults who responded to the projection of choosing to make a difference (cf. Loughrey 2014)[6].

In this light, discarding fan protest as petty protest is most certainly myopic, as these brief examples convey, how the practices of protest in fandom travel, mingle, and develop. The fact that most of these instances are based on Hollywood productions, shows, or movies should not be forgotten, as it also transports ideas about consumerism, capitalism, and modes of civil engagement to countries and contexts that might significantly differ.[7] US-American ideas, concepts, and privileges therefore also manifest where and when these modes of fan protest are used to take a side, where young people live in lamentable circumstances, yet "these are the same people that in another corner of the world would instead have the luxury to argue over [Panem's protagonists] Gale vs Peeta for hours on end." (ibid., n.p.)

Turning Fans into Heroes

With these preliminary reflections, let me come back to the case mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The *Harry Potter* fandom, forming since the first book was published in 1997 (which is also four years after the Internet was made public domain), has gone through all sorts of wonderful and fascinating twists and turns (cf. Frankel 2019).

In 2005 Andrew Slack[8] started the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA). This was a time of peak public interest and fan engagement as the sixth and second to last book set for release that July and the fourth movie for that November. Hence, the HPA could tap "the existing infrastructures of the thriving Harry Potter fan community" (Kliger-Vielnchik 2013: 11). More than 15 years later, when writing this chapter, the Harry Potter Alliance is a well-structured, inviting, and professional organization, and their efforts have gained a public seal of approval, especially as J.K. Rowling has

6 Pop-culture symbolism has long been intertwined with history and protest, and is a well-covered topic in the press for example in the context of the 2019 Hong Kong Protest.

7 It certainly also re-iterates engrained structures of classism, racisms, genderism etc.

8 There is no connection to the term of 'Slacktivism', even though the latter is closely connected to social media (Cf. Dennis 2018).

respectfully acknowledged the alliance's efforts (her quote is featured prominently on thehpalliance.org).

Typically for fandom, as can be seen with fan fiction or gaming etc., more advanced writers, artists, or players, share their ways of doing things with others through social media or platforms especially created for that purpose. As everywhere, there are hierarchies within the production communities of the *Harry Potter* fandom, conflicts, and copyright issues, but fandoms in general, and this one included, are understood as transformational, and progressive even if not always positive (cf. Wojton and Porter 2018; Bennett 2014; Clements 2018).

The HPA, unlike this heterogeneous field of potential fan engagement, aims to be strictly positive, morally clean, and conflict free at least within its ranks. It offers a variety of options to engage with its causes. Be it "Accio Books" that has donated 350,000 books to communities lacking libraries since 2009. Or "Dumbledore's Army" that has recently partnered with RAICES (The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) and been especially vocal concerning the North-American migration politics. Or the "Granger Leadership Academy", a retreat for fan activists where they can brainstorm new strategies and learn skills. According to the press kit, the HP Alliance is present on six continents, and has local chapters in 35 countries.[9] While this is impressive in itself, it is not my aim to list the HPA's achievements and goals. What I find most interesting is the way in which potential fan activists are addressed and how they are educated in the practices. For example: Since its start, and with the more recent sequels and transmedia stories from the Potter Universe, the HPA has also plugged into the fandoms of *The Hunger Games, Man of Steel, Pokémon,* and other popular communities. Most of these instances tackle a specific issue, like "Hunger is not a Game"[10] and come with handbooks, pamphlets, action manuals, and free training.

For example, they address domestic violence through the fictional character of *Jessica Jones* (Marvel 2001), while the *Pokémon* themed toolkit says:

> "Through Pokémon we're going to explore the following issues: Imposter Syndrome, Environmentalism and Respectful Tourism, and Mental Health! […] This toolkit is designed to help you think like a Pokémon master in order to create a positive impact on the world around you." (HPA: 4)

All of these toolkits are downloadable and tailored to different age groups, so that group leaders, educators, and fans can use them. Additionally, the "Wizard Activist School" training section on the HP Alliance's homepage is built like a webinar, with

9 Yet in Rowling and Potter's homeland, the United Kingdom, only two chapters of the alliance exist, while in the US 136 are listed online.

10 According to one of Kliger-Vielnchik's interviewees, the campaign did not resonate as much in the Hunger Game fandom.

questionnaires, explanatory videos etc. The HPA defines itself and fan activism as follows:

> "What the HPA does is called fan activism: using the power of fandoms to promote social change. Fandoms can come from books, TV shows, movies, games – any creative media that people are passionate about. By connecting real world issues to elements from these fandoms, fan activism uses the energy, creativity, and community of fandoms to accomplish positive social change." (HPA: Wizard Activist School 2019)

Passion, as it is mentioned here, seems to be a driving factor, and a way to distinguish instances of fan activism from duty or pressure. It also defines the huge amount of free labor that goes into the HPA's activities. The whole operation is based around the idea of the infamous pupils of 'Hogwarts – School for Witchcraft and Wizardry' as presented in the books by J.K. Rowling, and fans' phantasy of going there or belonging to a magical world. Additionally, the general idea of the story is about friendship, belonging, fighting back, and standing up for what you believe in. Another motivational aspect of the narrative that attracts Harry Potter fans to activism is the idea that evil can actually be beaten. In an article for the BBC, Hephzibah Anderson noted that "the core narrative chronicles the attempted extermination of Muggles and 'mudbloods' by Lord Voldemort and his sidekicks", making the fight of Dumbledore's Army there and here one against fascism, and the causes adaptable to contemporary activism (Anderson 2018: n.p.).[11]

Structurally, the four school houses in the army have certainly adapted, the characteristics described in the books influence the way they tackle current issues: *Gryffindors* are brave and courageous and *Ravenclaws* value creativity and learning. When telling their stories of protest, the HPA members can call upon these attributes to communicate what is needed and to situate themselves within the logics of the fictional world. Notably the HPA rehabilitates the house of *Slytherin*. As the home of all dark witches and wizards, who typically have an egocentric or even cruel approach, the house is included into the positive activities of the HPA, by focusing on positive attributes such as resourcefulness and ambition. All *Harry Potter* fans tend to, and HPA members are encouraged to, sort themselves into one of the houses and help gain points for the house cup. These points are given not for good or bad behavior or magical proficiency, as teachers would award them in the story world, but through fan activism that is tagged or labeled with the house's name or colors on social media, in photos, or other documentation. Additionally, and especially through the documentation, these activities also take place within

11 Smaller modes of activism, such as SPEW, Hermione's attempt to improve the life and working conditions of the school's house elves, are also very direct sources to look at.

the contexts of social media platforms, which have their own modes of communication, politics, and visibility and are sites where fan activists can communicate with potential members. Henry Jenkins quotes Andrew Slack with the following statement:

> "Without new media, I don't know what we would be doing. I don't think we would exist. We would be like students at Hogwarts without wands. We would be a club at one or two high schools, […] we probably would have a hard time being an organization that has 50 clubs that are really active, […] and a message that gets out to 100,000 young people in Japan and in places…just all over." (Jenkins/Slack 2009: n.p.)

Even though many of the posts try to lead visitors to the blog space "This Week in Wizard Activism", the commercial aspects and 'like economy' of social media are embedded into the HPA's activism, and especially in the posts of the members, as they demand and absorb the time and energy of the users, as well as their data and other currency.

Similar overlaps can be seen with the shirts mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Some merchandise is created for charity, and hence outside WarnerBros.' economic influence, yet uses fonts, design, and quotes from the *Harry Potter* brand[12] to raise funds for charity work. The community, standing on the base of a common love for the world of *Harry Potter*, is turned into consumers of branded merchandise, and often presents their fandom to non-fans and each other through the wearing of shirts, pins, scarfs, or displays of tattoos, stationary, or stickers. Adding to the variety of items, means a source of income for the HPA and founding for their activities, and a satisfied need of fans for new themed products. It also means a commercial infrastructure, which tends to complicate the relationship between the members and the organization. While this apparent discrepancy between fan club and administration may be discussed in the fandom that exists outside the HPA, it is excluded from the discourse around the activism. Typically, when fans sell their fan art, or make a living of anything stemming from fandom, conflict ensues. Here, it might seem even more contradictory, that an activist group based on a massive commercial success would fight, amongst other things, against media consolidation and "has confronted the very system that has so successfully produced and distributed the Harry Potter content worlds." (Brough and Shresthova 2011: paragraph 4.10)

But many "networked activists strategically draw resources from and at the same time fight against structures of commercial pop culture." (Ibid.) Hence, the HPA are not alone in this contradiction, many examples from fan activism and

12 The issue of fanwork and copyright is a complicated one as is but gets even more complicated when money is generated and then donated to altruistic programs.

other, non-fictional inspired, instances of resistance and protest are strongly intertwined within the systematics they aim to take a site against. The next section will therefore focus on these relations.

Systems of Resisting

The connections and contradictions explained above shift the focus to more fundamental ideas of power and resistance. To Foucault and many others, activism, protest, or civil disobedience is inextricably connected to power: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power." (Foucault 1978: 96) Even though Foucault describes a "plurality of resistances", and even though one cannot exist without the other, a simple difference remains: that one part is in power and another is resistant to it.

In fandom, where the so called 'powers that be' describe anything or anyone that is part of the entertainment industry and somehow positioned opposite to fandom (Wojton and Porter 2018: 9f), the questions are the same as they are with any power system, any resistance, oppression, or taking of sides: who gets to call whom resistant or place them and their needs in the margins? Who is the 'I' that takes a side? Are people enabled to deflect such an ascription and is "at least in theory, the presence of protest is a marker of individual freedom" (Strate 2018: 232)? Are the processes that make one site the center and another the periphery the same? And is every act of difference, deviation, or expression against norms instantly resistance?

There is indeed a danger of watering down all involved parties, of "diluting our notion of the political to a point that makes it difficult to debate the merits of different strategies and tactics for civic participation." (Brough and Shresthova 2011: 3.11) Yet there is resistant potential even in the smallest of things, even if "it does not necessarily entail a breach of law, but does entail a breach of expected behavior, whether social, legal, or moral." (Ricks 2017: vii) Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Dahlgren Johansson show how many authors from sociology and philosophy "agree that resistance is an *oppositional act*. Like all acts, resistance is situated in certain time, space, and relations, and engages with different (types of) actors, techniques and discourses." (2013: 12f) When studying fan protests, the situatedness in time and context can become very complicated, intersectional, international, and intertextual.

An example for this can again be found in the HPA as there are various positions from which to express oneself as fan. Taking a side as a fan in this world can even mean opting for the darker side of magic, to follow he-who-shall-not-be-named, even though the vast majority of fans associate with the 'good' side of the

story and sign up as eager students of Hogwarts and members of Dumbledore's Army. This decision is relatively clear cut as the plots and values are very straight forward about what is considered 'good' or 'evil'. Most fans also choose (or have a virtual sorting hat chose) their house affiliation, thus positioning themselves in alliance with specific virtues, values, and skills. The American school Ilvermory from the Potter sequels also has four houses; however, these "new Houses do not seem to have the same resonance within the fan community" (Hautsch 2019, 143), and the American fans are also free to align with the UK Hogwart's houses. Fans are also free to choose from a variety of narratives in which to base their experiences, including the plot of the original books, the plot of the prequels or sequels, whether Hermione is a WOC[13], and whether they join the X-rated areas of fan fiction… As such, *Harry Potter* fans may make many decisions in positioning themselves long before they become involved in the fan activism described above.

This act of positioning oneself may be one of the reasons why some fandom research frames being a fan as inherently resistant. However, the impulse of being or calling yourself a fan is not based in opposition but in affect: in the joy, or love, or fascination for whatever it is a person is fan off. If indeed: "fandom is born out of fascination and some frustration" (Ito, boyd, and Jenkins 2016, 14), the relationship between fan and object is indeed precarious. Affection and frustration can easily become action or resistance, and if the emotional connection to the fan object wavers, will the motivation to be a fan activist waver with it? What then is a fan activist? What significance does the term 'fan' bring to the act of activism? Active fans have been at the core of many studies and are often distinguished from consumers of the products. (Bielby, Harrington, and Bielby 1999) In this context they are described as participating in fan clubs, online message boards, and other channels. "An activist fan acts strategically, usually in concert with others, to achieve a particular goal." (Scardaville 2005: 882) I want to follow Brough / Sherthova and their broad take on fan activism "to incorporate the range of intentional actions by fans, or the use of fanlike strategies, to provoke change." (2011: 2.4) Fandom has been read as being resistant, as in progressive, even though countless examples of fanfiction do not express forward thinking. "Many fans have resisted efforts to bring politics into fandom, seeing their fan activities as a release from the pressures of everyday life, or preferring the term *charity* rather than the more overtly political term *activism* to describe their pro-social efforts." (Jenkins and Shresthova 2012: paragraph 1.9) But at least from a media focused standpoint fandoms are indeed oftentimes transformative (obsession_inc 2009), as are fan practices such as "appropriating and remixing content, developing communication infrastructures and

13 The debate about Hermione's ethnicity is an ongoing topic in fandom, with many art works showing her as a Woman of Color, and gained new momentum when her role was cast with actress Noma Dumezweni for the London premier of "Harry Potter and Cursed Child" (2016).

practices within fan communities, online networking among groups with shared interests, self-publication in dialogue with popular content worlds" (Brough and Shresthova 2011: paragraph 2.6). These practices are what is being used when fans take a site, when they strive to bring change to any sort of situation, and increasingly in highly political contexts. For example, and as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the dresses from Margaret Atwood's novel and the ensuing TV show *A Handmaid's Tale* have been seen at protests "from Argentina to the US, the UK and Ireland, and has emerged as one of the most powerful current feminist symbols of protest, in a subversive inversion of its association with the oppression of women." (Beaumont and Holpuch 2018: n.p.) Taking aesthetic and connoted elements from other time periods and context is of course a re-mix practice typical of the Internet era, just think of the genealogy from historical plotter Guy Fawkes, to Alan Moore's graphic novel and film adaptation *V for Vendetta* (1989), to the uptake of the mask by the hacktivist group 'Anonymous'. James Cameron's Na'vi beings from the movie *Avatar* (2009) have been aesthetically re-mediated by protesters at the West Bank, where people in Na'vi costumes and blue body-paint "approached an Israeli military barricade, where they were subjected to a tear gas attack. Photographs and video of the protest were then circulated online, catching the attention of news media outlets." (Brough and Shresthova 2011: 2.8) The media coverage and circulation of images is highly important to many forms of activism, and no less for fan activism, as already described for the efforts of the HPA for internal and external communication. But it does make a difference whether pop cultural references are employed in an ongoing protest for media attention or broader communication of issues or whether a fandom, a community attached through a shared affiliation with a fiction, a performer, or a team takes up a cause. Lady Gaga fans for example have been mobilized by the singer, so that the 'Little Monsters' have been active for causes endorsed by Gaga (cf. Bennett 2014). Based on their attachment to the star and her very direct addressing and appellation of her fans, Gaga can "encourage an active response to causes from her online fan base that reaches beyond the online currency of simple clicks and retweets." (Ibid.: 143) Similarly, as the HPA relies solely on the fandom's preexisting engagement with the story world, any member can freely join any of the diverse campaigns.

Membership in the Harry Potter Alliance does not of course automatically stem from being a fan. New members complete a specific signup procedure and join a chapter before receiving the newsletter with updates and activities. Kliger-Vielnchik examined the processes of translation, that move a person and their efforts from participatory culture to participatory politics and vice versa (2013: 15f). Through these translations networked individuals, by definition part of different groups, can develop civic identities that have a voice and political agency or that are able to take a side. Four mechanisms are mainly involved when these translations into political activism occur. First, the social and emotional connections that

fans have for their favored cultural text and for other members of the fandom. Second, the, well-practiced, modes of creative production and content spreading. Third, the space of discussion both off-and online. And fourth, the facilitation of an informal discussion, that goes about "creating and supporting spaces and opportunities for conversations about current events and political issues." (Ibid.: 16-17) For the HPA, all of these mechanisms take place both privately and publicly as well as online and offline. In being active with the HPA, fans communicate both their fandom and their activism, their belonging to a community and their affiliation with certain aspects of the story world.

Although fandom is always heterogeneous, it develops subgroups and cells, and shows gestures of othering as well as being exclusive on economic, political and sociological levels. Hence, the "We are all Humans" sign, held up at the #dafightsback protest this chapter started with, may have a much longer shadow when we consider the modes of protest and media activism connected to fans and fandom. These modes of community building, mobilization, activation, and practices allow reflections on media activism and the taking of sides in a realm that is highly political – despite the magic.

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Dark Sea Pirates

Julia Ihls

Setting Sail

Man overboard! Instead of an introduction, let me tell you a sailor's yarn. A story of heroes and villains, deception and revolution. The story of the digital trade route 'Silk Road' – a much debated black market in the Darknet – and the phantom of Dread Pirate Roberts:

Those who want to talk of the Silk Road, or perhaps rather the myth around it, will quickly find that there are at least three versions of the story – one by the authorities, another by the Silk Road community, and yet another by Ross Ulbricht and his relatives – each of which claims the truth for itself, while all are marked by rumors and opacities. Accordingly, the following summary is to be understood as an attempt to build a consensus based on the Darknet market's forum archival material, interviews, and reports:

> "I began working on a project that had been in my mind for over a year. I was calling it Underground Brokers, but eventually settled on Silk Road. The idea was to create a website where people could buy anything anonymously, with no trail whatsoever that could lead back to them. – Dread Pirate Roberts journal entry, 2010" (Ormsby 2014: Kap. 1.2).

In January 2011, the Tor Hidden Service Silk Road went online under the IP http://silkroadvb5piz3r.onion: a drug sales platform that for the first time combined the technology of a '.onion' site with the Bitcoin currency to create a completely anonymous market beyond state control. The creator, later chief administrator, and ideological-philosophical driving force behind the site was Dread Pirate Roberts (DPR),[1] who shrouded his identity in anonymity for both sellers and buyers on the Darknet market. The pseudonym was not chosen without reason, as it refers to the children's film *The Prince's Bride* (1973), in which the character of the masked Dread Pirate Roberts is portrayed from generation to generation by different protagonists.

1 In the later course of the official investigations, this role was attributed to the identity of Ross William Ulbricht.

Accordingly, his attribution of identity is still not completely clear, as the admin himself stated in an interview with *Forbes* editor Andy Greenberg that he was not the first DPR, but instead had inherited the page from his 'predecessor' (cf. Greenberg 2013). After a few months of construction and influx, the platform established itself as the hidden main hub for illegal, mind-expanding chemicals with a product range of over 300 different stimulants (Bartlett 2016: 158) and a relatively professional design for the Darknet markets of that time, based on the usual sales sites such as Amazon and eBay. During the sales process, the customer and the seller could access a platform internal encrypted messaging program to clarify any questions while guaranteeing maximum anonymity. The buyer then transferred the corresponding amount of Bitcoin to the intermediate address of the escrow (DPR),[2] who – after confirmation of receipt of the buyer's goods – forwarded the payment to the seller for a transaction fee. In addition to the sales platform, however, the Silk Road also saw itself as a social experiment and resistance to restriction by governments, which contributed to a strong forum community. Thus, the Silk Road users saw themselves largely as a conspiratorial community, pioneers of an overall social revolution, which was reflected in various forum contributions on economic and philosophical topics, decisively influenced by DPR.[3] Or as he put it in an interview with Greenberg:

> "We can't stay silent forever. We have an important message, and the time is right for the world to hear it. What we're doing isn't about scoring drugs or 'sticking it to the man,' it's about standing up for our rights as human beings and refusing to submit when we've done no wrong. Silk Road is a vehicle for that message. All else is secondary." (Greenberg 2013)

Attracted by the growing reputation of the site, *Gawker* magazine reported in June 2011 about the marketplace in the Darknet (cf. Chen 2011), which led to its explosive increase in users. However, this also brought the Darknet market into the authorities' focus, so that they already started the investigation in the middle of 2011 on behalf of senators Charles Summer and Joe Manchin. While in the following year the site achieved new turnover records, and was able to cope with occurring demands such as internal restructuring, difficulties in sales processing, and also several hacker attacks, a task force of the Justice Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration formed the secret operation 'Marco Polo' under the direction

2 The fact that DPR acted as an escrow for the community testifies to the extraordinary trust that the users had in the character, since he could potentially withdraw from the website at any time with the collected BTCs, a process known in the Darknet jargon as 'exit scam'. Likewise, the clear data of the sellers/buyers were collected by the main administrator.

3 For a detailed breakdown of the Silk Road Forum discussions, see the Silk Road Archive online: https://antilop.cc/sr/.

of Christopher Tarbell. Already in March 2012, the investigators planted undercover agents into the Silk Road community, to get into the inner admin circle and finally to DPR himself. In July 2012, the agent with the username Nob approached DPR in order to break down his reserve with the feint of a big deal. DPR responded to the proposal and referred one of its employees, user-name Flush, to the agents in order to take over the further processing. Up to January 2013 the negotiations between Nob and Flush continued, until the latter – in order to simplify the transaction – gave the investigators his real address for the proposed delivery (anonymous 2014: 76; The Silk Road Tales and Archives 2017). A week later Flush, alias Curtis Green was arrested by the authorities. When the employee seemingly disappeared from the scene, DPR suspected a fraud and ordered – probably due to fear of a leak from internal affairs – agent Nob to eliminate Green for 40,000 USD. While the investigators apparently followed the instructions by providing evidence pictures, the FBI located the Silk Road Server in Iceland in February 2012 (cf. ibid.). With the confiscated data and the access to Green's admin account, the authorities finally succeeded in arresting the alleged head behind DPR and Silk Road in October 2013 – the 29-year-old student Ross Ulbricht – in a public library in San Francisco, while he was logged into the Silk Road back-end. Due to the burden of proof, as well as the accusation of attempted murder, Ulbricht was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2015, even though he claimed his innocence until the end of the trial, affirming that the DPR account had also been used by other users (cf. Wendt 2015). And it seemed true: Because despite the agencies thinking they cut off the head of the Hydra with Ulbricht's arrest, numerous new ones grew back – and Silk Road 2.0 went online less than two months later, based on the copy of a Silk Road backup server. And even after its closure and the large-scale operation 'Onymous' in November 2014, when over 400 illegal Tor hidden services were taken offline, Silk Road noticeably launched an unstoppable movement of decentralized, anonymous (drug) markets.

Taking Sid/tes

The case of Silk Road and Dread Pirate Roberts, which is just briefly sketched here, exemplifies a recurring, heroic narrative, which probably finds its modern equivalent in the 'hacktivist'. The tale goes as follows: An oftentimes controversial character enters the public stage and begins the fight against the corrupt establishment with no less controversial means. This traditional heroic narrative of western cultural history in the style of Robin Hood or Captain Jack Sparrow usually draws its protagonists as ambivalent and dazzling figures between egocentric self-dramatization, anarchistic adventure, and martyrdom in favor of social justice. Thus, in the course of a media-theoretical examination of participation as well as its refusal

and associated positioning, the question arises to what extent technological conditions (Hörl 2011) favor, shape, or even make one think of that resistance. Is dissent in this sense possible at all? Or have the poststructuralim and critical theories not taught us that there is no inclusion without exclusion, since fixed ascriptions of identity with clear positions fall short and only produce new hierarchies? Perhaps it is also the fear of positioning and the consequences it entails that everyone – including the author of this text – must face. I would therefore like to venture into a self-experiment of a poetic statement in the confrontation with a net-activist counter-positioning using the example of the Silk Road – fully aware that such an endeavor must inevitably fall short and also at the risk of self-succumbing to those hierarchizing positions and linguistic hyperbolas. At the increasingly permeable border between phenomenon and language, I hope for an immediate experience of the very metaphorical shifting (μεταφορέω), which is both the research object and methodology of the present contribution – a reciprocal entitlement of investigation and (self-)positioning in the erratic shaft play of meaning.

As soon as 'counter-positioning' is mentioned, this statement already contains two assumptions: namely that of an existing establishment and, at the same time, a demarcating movement against it. If one were to name the established, neoliberal status quo within the modern orders of 'digital cultures', it could perhaps be grasped under the dictum of transparency and all-inclusion, which in turn entails governmental practices such as control and surveillance. So, if we now assume that those transparent, (unidirectional) mystery-free spheres of politics and economics represent the dominant position of observation, then we must turn to the subversive potential of the un-representable (cf. Galloway 2011). Upon this, media scholars Claus Pias and Timon Beyes propose a shift to pre-modern images and forms of thought in response to the demand for new attempts at representation in view of the increasing incommensurability of algorithmic structures (cf. Beyes/Pias 2014). I would like to follow that suggestion and try to strive for an observant interweaving of case study and linguistic reflection, which maintains the tension in the ambiguity of positioning, be it linguistically, politically, or technologically. Thus, the digital phenomenon of the so-called Darknet, which is based on decentralization and cryptographic anonymization mechanisms,[4] represents a promising starting point for the following reflections due to its structural nature and the resulting lack of transparency. In accepting the Darknet as a technological basis of non-knowledge and enduring dissent, we raise the question of what narrative forms a new poetics of the digital high seas can take – like an anchor raised from the murky depths of clandestine information currents. As a first clue, it is worth taking a look

4 For a more detailed technological explanation, see subchapter "The Heads of the Hydra" below.

at the terminologies of the Internet: the discourse on this phenomenon is characterized by meaningful linguistic images, especially nautical metaphors, as Matthias Bickenbach and Harun Maye have worked out (2009). This is the talk of browsers, data havens, or surfing. The result, however, is less a continuous narrative flow than a collection of sentences and gaping breaks in the story around the digital cosmos, between which the metaphors slide back and forth like elusive fish. "The term ends in mysticism, the metaphor in myth" (Blumenberg 2007: 75, transl. by the author).[5] So let us dare to drift away on the metaphorical waves in the mythical writing (μεταφορέιν) – listening to a sea tale, full of mythical figures like the Hydra and the piratical thinking that never remains in a harbor long, but always pushes out onto the sea in search of new treasures.

On the (Dark) Seas

When representability reaches its limits, the metaphor – at least in language – is often resorted to, as it were a taming act of what seems to elude understanding. Here, however, it must not be forgotten that this trope contributes not only to illustration but also to the structuring of knowledge:

> "If language is not capable of guaranteeing an unmediated and unambiguous experience of reality, then the metaphor is the reflection of exactly that - of this necessary deficit, which as a contingent world model must allow tolerance towards others." (Haverkamp 2009:18, transl. by the author)[6]

In particular, it should be referred to the theory of the absolute metaphor by Hans Blumenberg, who explains the designation of those phenomena which cannot be grasped conceptually or caught up with, as attempts of linguistic illustrations in a vague semantic context (cf. Blumenberg 2013: 14). In doing so, the philosopher pursued no lesser claim than to be able to derive a 'substructure of thinking' or rather a 'zeitgeist of an epoch' from these linguistic pictures. Although the following does not speak of an epochal understanding, it seems to me that these linguistic images contain interesting clues for a thinking of current positioning. But which metaphors are involved in the implementation of a new medium? Who decides which linguistic images are used for this purpose and what distinguishes such 'universal concepts' from other tropes? In this context, Alexander Friedrich

5 Orig.: "Der Begriff endet in der Mystik, die Metapher im Mythos" (Blumenberg 2007: 75).

6 Orig.: "Wenn Sprache nicht fähig ist, eine unvermittelte und eindeutige Erfahrung der Dinge selbst zu gewährleisten, so ist die Metapher die Reflexion genau darauf – auf dieses notwendige Defizit, das als kontingentes Weltmodell gerade eine Toleranz gegenüber anderen zulassen muss." (Haverkamp 2009: 18)

speaks of "Kulturelle Leitmetaphern" (leading cultural metaphors) which, as collective testimonies, epistemologically structure social self-understanding and thereby fulfill a central, orienting function (cf. Friedrich 2015: 10, 381f.).[7] The structure and 'dynamics of cultural metaphors as well as their relationship between original or traditional meaning and contemporary use are of enormous importance in this investigation. The same applies to the history of water metaphors: accordingly, the metaphor of water and nautical science origniates in Greek antiquity as well as in biblical writings. "Schon dort waren 'Quellen', 'Kanäle', 'Brunnen', 'Ströme' und 'Fluten' gebräuchliche Metaphern für Informationsverarbeitung in schriftlicher und mündlicher Form" (Bickenbach/Maye 2009: 11). If we take the early Argonautic myths, the Homeric odyssey or Roman authors such as Cicero and Lucretius, all these stories contain the same narrative of a security-giving, yet finite mainland and, in return, an uncertain sea as a place of new knowledge but also of dangerous daring (cf. ibid.: 11f and Blumenberg 2014 [1979]: 33f). The epistemological content of sailing, shipwrecks, or navigation is thus deeply anchored in our cultural memory in the form of mediating metaphors. Therefore, it is not surprising that these concepts have also found their way into modern self-descriptions. Perhaps as a descendant of the cybernet, which promotes nothing other than the art of steering in self-regulating, dynamic systems, the surfer or navigator in the information-sea is an explorer in an endless space of possibilities. But if the Internet – again, a discourse on the (fisher's) net as an ancient metaphor for social knowledge systems could be unfolded here – has been marked by metaphorical communication and, in particular, nautical language pictures since its early beginnings, what does the ambivalent figure of the pirate say about our (self-)understanding of net activists and their political positioning? For despite all conceptual euphoria, nautical metaphorology forgets the downside of its colonial origins (cf. Friedrich 2012: 19). Thus, the history of seafaring has always had a hierarchically imperialist aspect, as it is currently also evident in the economic Internet structures of server farms and data storage facilities. Accordingly, the aspect of piracy seems to be a necessary element that must be added to our metaphorical considerations regarding (medial) positioning.

Please allow me a brief excursion into the history of the Atlantic economy of the British seafaring nation in the 17th century, where we can already find some promising narrative borrowings from Greek mythology in relation to piracy: There, the figure of Hercules is a heroic symbol of power, centralizing unification and order. In contrast, the Hydra is used as an antithetical adversary in this attribution. As soon as one of its heads is cut off, this serpentine, multi-headed water monster

7 In this context, the question of the difference between metaphors and their special form of catachresis would also have to be discussed. Due to the required brevity, I will stick in the following only to the concept of metaphors.

from the lake of Lerna regrows another two and thus is regarded as a symbol of chaos and resistance. In the Herculean myths, the hero kills the monster in the second of his twelve tasks. At the beginning of the English colonial expansion from the early 17th century to the urban industrialization in the 19th century, however, the imperialists used the legend of Hercules and the Hydra to describe the difficulty of implementing global labor force systems and also to justify their own violent measures (cf. Linebaugh/Rediker 2008: 11). In this narrative, the sea monster took on a wide variety of forms like slaves, displaced land dwellers, and even pirates who opposed the capitalist-dominated colonialists. A no less interesting aspect in this brief historical review is the term 'hydrarchy', coined by the parliamentary poet Richard Brathwaite (1588-1673) to describe the very social orders of sailors in contrast to the rural population (cf. ibid.: 158f.). This is understood as the free self-organization of pirates, which is characterized by anarchic and grassroots democratic structures.[8] This multinational, egalitarian-alternative way of life, which follows its own rules and, especially in its illegal activities – whether on land, in the harbor areas or at sea –, almost escaped any control, represented an inconvenient form of resistance for the ruling upper class that was difficult to contain.[9]

The Heads of the Hydra

But let's get back to the starting point, because what would hydrarchic pirates be without ships and nautical infrastructures? Hence, in the following – looking back at the phenomenon of darknets and the Silk Road – the focus will be on the technological composition of the area in the net which, at least if we follow the common iceberg metaphor, is located in the darkest depths: When talking about the organizational structure of the Internet, the image of an iceberg is often used as an explanation. Accordingly, the clear-/visible net, the space freely accessible by search engines so to say, is only the small visible tip of an iceberg. The considerably larger part below the surface is called the deep or hidden web. This includes all non-indexed or password-protected areas such as archives or closed pages. The lowest part of the iceberg in this sense, however, is the Darknet. This is generally understood as a

8 One example is the Pirate Council – an assembly in which all crew members had a say and which represented the highest authority on the ship.

9 It would certainly be too one-sided to stylize piracy merely as a pre-democratic, egalitarian form of society. Nevertheless, hydrarchic structures often served as a model for social utopias, as it is the case with the ideal pirate state 'Libertalia' that is mentioned in the second volume of Captain Charles Johnson's "A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates" (1724). Cf. Renate Niemann 2002: 66.

special form of network, more precisely peer-to-peer overlay networks[10], which are characterized in particular by infrastructural seclusion and a consequential lack of transparency. Accordingly, the individual network nodes (peers) in a Darknet cannot communicate freely and publicly with any other node, but only exclusively and mostly via direct invitations from the respective users. Examples for known darknets are Tor, I2P, Freenet and GNUnet. However, the more common understanding of Darknet, which can be found in media reports time and again, usually refers to a special network known as the Tor network: This is the most commonly used Darknet, which causes a stir in the mass media due to illegal arms and drug trafficking – as was the case with the Silk Road – murder deals and whistleblowing. But from a technical point of view, what does this mean for a subversive positioning towards an all-inclusive, governmental network structure? In order to be able to undermine such a system, the usual monitoring mechanisms must be levered out. Protocols and network structures, such as those already extensively worked on by media scientists Alexander Galloway (2004) or Florian Sprenger (2015), are particularly worth mentioning here. Accordingly, the Internet is organized by standardized protocols, which – to put it simply – specify the paths that the data packets must take on their journey from sender to receiver and predetermine which information can be supplied and evaluated at which point. In particular, the nodes at which the data is collected and forwarded provide an opportunity for monitoring and influencing (cf. ibid.: 45). In the Darknet, however, such surveillance mechanisms cannot be implemented due to end-to-end encryption. For example, the Tor network – originally developed by the US Naval Research Laboratory to protect military communications and now a non-profit organization financed by donations – is based on 'onion routing'. With the help of the Tor client, all data and connections to the user's IP address are encrypted in a three-step cryptographic process that changes every ten minutes so that users can navigate the data-sea anonymously under a black flag (cf. anonymous 2014: 31). In addition to the unidirectional encryption of the user IP, which can also be easily used for anonymous Clearnet surfing, there is also the option of so-called hidden services, which span the Darknet structure in the Tor network. These are encrypted, anonymous websites that cannot be found via search engines. These 'onion sites' are based on the same code structure as the Tor client and are therefore included in the Tor browser bundle (cf. ibid.: 34). In our sea tale, the hidden services therefore represent those secret smuggler bays in which information and goods can be exchanged decentrally and with complete secrecy of the person – be it leak data or illegal substances. Thus, data havens such as The Pirate Bay, Wikileaks, or the Silk Road as well as the Dark Sea Pirates themselves escape state or economic control and immediately take a political and ideal

10 Peer-to-peer networks (P2P) are decentralized computer networks in which the individual computers are structured equally and work together without central servers.

position, through their black flag, for free, uncensored, and uncontrolled communication. If a boat is sunk or a haven destroyed, the next one immediately appears in the eternal cycle of the multi-headed Hydra.

New Shores

But what shall we do with the Dark Sea Pirate? What does the Hydra teach us watching from the shallows? In view of the fundamental question of what positioning in the digital age means and whether dissent is still possible in a culture of all-inclusion, it is probably less about concrete piracy than about a piratic way of thinking. A quick scan of shows that unhealthy totalitarianism, surveillance, and radical transparency has rarely had a good outcome in human history. Accordingly, the pirate does not necessarily occupy a fixed position, but functions as the unloved disrupter, the fluid element that withdraws any attribution on the mainland and seeks the openness of the sea. Like the metaphor that carries it, it ensures the openings for transgression. For only where the own opens to the other (cf. Blanchot 2015: 26 and Derrida 1992) does a place of common emerge – eternally remaining on the horizon as a distant cape and always carried away on the waves of the dark sea.

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Questioning Credibility
Taking Sides on, Instead of Leaving, Neverland

Louise Haitz

In January 2019, the documentary Leaving Neverland (*LN*), directed by Dan Reed, premiered at Sundance film festival. Since then, it has been aired on television worldwide. At its core the four-hour documentary relies on the stories of two men, as told in interviews. Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who both were friends with super star Michael Jackson (MJ) when they were children, relate the detailed and complex stories of their sexual exploitation by him. Among other locations, they say it took place on the Neverland Ranch, MJ's private amusement park, to which he invited children, some of them he befriended, patronized, and had close relationships with. *LN* shows many aerial long shots of the ranch, visiting and revisiting the place, as Robson and Safechuck's memories unfold, describing the estate as beautiful, best playground a kid could wish for, *and* as site of their sexualized exploitation by MJ. 'Neverland' refers to the play of *Peter Pan* (by J.M. Barrie, 2015 [1904]), famously animated by Walt Disney in 1953. It is a story about a boy who never grows up, can fly and with his little boy friends ("the lost boys") experiences adventures at the fairytale island Neverland. MJ publicly identified with Peter Pan, and used the figure to explain his unconventional, allegedly pedocriminal, relationship to children.[1] In the documentary Living with Michael Jackson from 2003, Martin Bashir interviews the star on his relationship with boys. In one interview-scene at the Neverland Ranch, MJ sits on a sofa holding hands with 12-year-old Gavin Arvizo, who later accused him of sexualized abuse.[2] In reaction to Bashir's question, if it were appropriate for a 44-year-old man to be share his bed with children, Gavin eagerly argues, MJ were not 44, but actually four years old, "a child at heart," a man who didn't grow up (Living With Michael Jackson: A Tonight Special (Shaw 2003, TC: 01:13:10)). *LN*, too, over more than a decade later, questions MJ's relationship to children, yet director Reed does not interview the now

1 For the term pedocriminal instead of pedophile or pedosexual see Gerstendörfer 2007: 46.

2 The first lawsuit against MJ was in 1993, when Jordan Chandler made claims of sexualized exploitation against him; in 2005 there was a criminal trial against MJ, when Gavin Arvizo had accused him of the same crime.

deceased MJ and a boy sitting next to him, clinging affectionately to his idol, but interviews two boys, who have grown up. Robson and Safechuck calmly narrate and reevaluate their experience with MJ as one of grooming (that is seduction in order to sexually exploit a minor). They reprocess their childhood and memory of MJ as adults, hence, in the process of leaving Neverland.

One of the great twists of *LN* is that the two men, who today accuse MJ of the crime of child sexual abuse, had defended him in court in 1993 and 2005. Safechuck and Robson both were key defense witnesses in the cases against MJ. This change of statements raises the question: do court hearings or documentaries present the truth of testimony and personal experience? While the convicting power of the state lies within the courtroom – which twice acquitted MJ in his lifetime –, the documentary and resulting public discussion also bear socio-cultural power of judgment, even after death. In this chapter I want to focus on the question of credibility that rises following the documentary. Therefore, I will analyze the media reactions and sociocultural negotiation of *LN* rather than the documentary itself.

In the first section I show that a common and today dominant reaction to reports of sexualized violence against children, is to question the (alleged) victim's credibility. I discuss the truth regime of in-/credibility in its specific processing, mediation and narration on media sites. To decide on an accuser's in-/credibility frames the negotiation of sexualized violence as a quest to take sides, which I describe as media activism. Thereby I propose an understanding of media activism as always both, activism of activists, and activism of media processing. The second section of this chapter builds up on this understanding, and presents an at length analysis of one YouTuber's execution of the media regime of in-/credibility. The rather unknown YouTuber Rob Ager, whose video I center, questions Robson and Safechuck's credibility by differentiating real and fake pain – describing theirs as fake. Ager introduces an audiovisual construction of expert empathy, serving as detector for this differentiation. By analyzing his video argument, I exemplarily carve out the complex audiovisual and sociocultural mediations of empathy towards victims/survivors, linked to the judgment of their credibility. Finally, the analysis offers an answer to the question as to why it is of social interest to decide on in-/credible victimhood in the first place, even outside the judicial demands of decision making. In my conclusion, I will question the necessity to take sides on the allegations voiced in LN, and ask for a way to, again, leave Neverland, by which I mean to reprocess our cultural possibilities to mediate and negotiate reports of sexualized child exploitation.

Mediating In-/Credibility

Many of the media's reactions to the accounts voiced in LN align along the dominant, judicially inspired, organizing principle of investigation: the contrasting pairing of accuser(s) vs. accused that in cases of sexualized violence is usually gendered as a he said/she said.[3] While the narrative of the documentary does not use this paradigm of contrasting accusation and defense in its montage, it is vehemently reinstalled in the public discourse (and Dan Reed is criticized for not executing it). In the New York Times Elizabeth Harris observes the organizing of a large number of MJ-fans on Twitter, who gathered in order to discredit the documentary and the accusers. The fans know and fear the power of a good documentary that, as Harris puts it, "could reshape his [MJ's] legacy for years to come" (Harris 2019). So, in an act of social media activism, the

> "Devoted Jackson fans had been girding themselves for the documentary, and through a loose network of pro-Jackson websites and hashtags began planning to counteract the film. When it began, they overwhelmed the #LeavingNeverland hashtag with thousands of tweets calling the men liars and the film a work of fiction." (Ibid.)

Joe Coscarelli, also for the Times, quotes the tweet that gathered the defending fans:

> "#MJFam: Here's our 2 step plan for the week of March 3rd – March 10th. 1) Flood the #LeavingNeverland hashtag with rational tweets including the FACTS about the allegations! 2) WATCH the 'This Is It' movie on @Netflix and STREAM Michael's catalog on any/all streaming platforms. — MJJLegion (@MJJLegion, February 28, 2019" (Coscarelli 2019))[4]

As to be found in the tweet, one of the successful slogans of MJ's defenders is, "facts don't lie, but people do."[5] In the fight for MJ's reputation, the defending fans

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3 The problematic of gendered power dynamics is studied widely. Patriarchy is framed as the violent structure that produces femininity as inferior to masculinity, thereby producing gender as a relation, and also violence as a form and enactment of this relational positioning.

4 The account MJJLegion rhetorically evokes the military idea of a collective – a "Legion" – to protect MJ. It addresses the fans under the Hashtag #MJFam, turning fans into fam(ily). Here, military and family, two powerful sociocultural institutions, are put forth in the endeavor of countering allegations of sexualized child abuse as told in LN.

5 The slogan was put on buses in London and removed after The Survivors Trust (the UK umbrella agency providing care for survivors of sexual violence) criticized the advertisement as inappropriate, because it perpetuates the (rightful) fear among survivors not to be believed or taken seriously (BBC News Newsbeat, "Michael Jackson 'innocent' adverts to be removed" 3.13.2019). See also: https://mjinnocent.com, last access 7.01.2019.

question the accusers' credibility and authorize themselves as rational providers of facts, thereby forefronting the asymmetrical distinction of in-/credibility as the culturally significant pair of terms indicating fact vs. fiction, objectified fact vs. humanly lie.

Notably, this paradigm extends beyond twitter. On the TV-Show *Good Morning Britain*[6] anchor Piers Morgan deems the doubtful questioning of accusers the only respectable reaction to the documentary. Complying to the 'he said/she said' paradigm, Morgan and his peer anchors interview MJ's nephew Taj Jackson, who defends his uncle. In alignment with a performed judicial investigation, the anchor plays the 'devil's advocate' by bringing up other boys, like the child star Macaulay Culkin, who say they were not sexually exploited by MJ. Relying only on witnesses' testimony, and no 'hard evidence', Morgan deduces that: "you really come down to the credibility of the accusers" (*Good Morning Britain* on YouTube, TC: 00:06:11-00:6:20). MJ's nephew eagerly agrees to the angle and affirms the framing as basic fairness and rule of law, "And that's all we're asking. We've never said: 'Just believe us'. We just said: 'look into them!'" (Ibid. TC: 00:06:27) The differentiation of in-/credibility is processed here with the difference of due process vs. unlawful media pillory, again signifying the idea of credibility using cultural concepts of media, i.e. fact/fiction, courtroom/newsroom.

In the interview, Taj Jackson presents himself as loving and mourning nephew, pained by the accusations against his uncle and longing for due process against the deceased. By questioning the accusers' credibility, the Jackson family hypothesizes the verity of the accusations and Robson and Safechuck's pain, while emphasizing their own pain caused by the reports and the alleged lack of lawful process. Thereby they produce emotional bonds towards the seemingly just and good judicial processes that would spare the Jackson family and their fans the pain and harm of media reports, that are framed as accusations.

In these examples the correct reaction to allegations of sexualized abuse is presented as the questioning of credibility and the dilemma of taking sides. The competing actors and institutions of truth and trust, of belief and proof do not come up automatically. They are the effect of a specific scheme of mediation and narration. The quest to take a side, therefore is based on a specific site of narrating the (personal) story of abuse, that structures the possibility of telling and hearing this story in the first place. The site can be a public courtroom, or the armchair in a private living-room (the chosen setting for the interviews in LN), it can be a chat room, a hashtag, it can be a movie, morning TV-show or a documentary interview. Each of the listed sites set up their own actors, specific paradigms, narratives, perspectives, technologies and standards of speaking, writing, (audio-)visualizing and

6 "Michael Jackson's nephew Taj speaks out over Leaving Neverland allegations", 3.05.2019. To be seen on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUvS9rTdzes, last access 7.03.2019.

perceiving. They mediate the talking and hearing, they mediate the possibilities of telling and hearing stories of violence as true or false, as in-/credible. I frame this as media activism.

What does it mean to include these sites or media processes in the term of activism, which usually implicates an unpaid human actor, strategically directing their will towards a political goal, using media as their tool? As I have analyzed so far, one of the dominant responses to LN is to question the accusers' credibility and to discuss the topic of sexualized child abuse as controversy on which one can take a side. To divide a topic in two (or more) sides and make spectators/listeners into potential judges, is a way of producing knowledge, linked to the (not only judicial) idea of impartiality and balance (rather than extremism as is discussed for instance in horseshoe-theory), and linked to the framing of doubt as neutral (Cf. Oreskes and Conway 2010). Furthermore, this is a way of acquiring attention and affection towards a topic, used in TV discussions, journalism, and social media debating – you affectionately identify with one of the sides or with the non-judgmental position in between, staying undecided. Following this paradigm, social discourse is, inter alia, organized along two sided, asymmetrical differences, as for instance, he said/she said, fact/fiction, due process/media pillory, in-/credible, left-/rightwing re-producing discursive rules and subject positions enacting a side or talking point (Cf. Foucault 1991: 34). Although the examples discussed above appear in different media (twitter hashtag, journalist article, and TV Show), they all are part of a digital culture, influenced by social media platforms and their logic. The controversial structuring of debates as a quest to take sides that includes spectators or users as participating decision makers, is implemented not only in cultural paradigms, but in social media sites, too. There is no such thing as media neutrality in the sense of passive representation or platform. It is commonly understood in cultural and media studies that mediation techniques always actively do structure, do narrate, do produce meaning, do subjectivate (cf. Hall 1997, Ochsner 2013, Figge 2016, Seier 2019). YouTube, the platform I focus on in the following, is not only a site for cultural, audiovisual content, where you go to research a topic, to consume content, comment, share and dis/like. YouTube is also a workplace. The money to (possibly) be earned is linked to the amount of clicks, to visibility of a video, channel and creator. Hence, to produce a video that comments on a hot topic like MJ and his alleged crimes, making it controversial and a participatory quest to take sides, is based on attention economy. To take sides on, instead of Leaving, Neverland is the effect of marketable, clickable media activism. By this I am not implying that YouTube as private company is activistly interested in doubt-mongering against accusers of MJ and has built a platform to pursue this goal. But it does profit from and produces hot, controversial debates, that affect users and motivate them, to click, to produce content, to comment and share. By calling these conditions and processes of mediation 'activist' I don't intend to promote the idea of good neutral media and

bad political and activistly influencing media. What I am doing, is emphasizing the fact that mediation and media sites have their own specific workings, which too, as well as its users, determine what and how something is said, thought, heard and done, by whom, why and when, in public and private discourse (not only for the sake of a good argument, but for economic reasons, too). Media activism always is both, the activism of activists and the activism of mediation. In this case, the mediation and narrative structuring promote the question of in-/credibility and negotiate allegations of sexualized child abuse as quest to take sides.

I will now look at one more of these negotiations of in-/credible victimhood, processed as the differentiation of fake or real pain.

Fake Or Real Pain: YouTube Investigations

Before I start the analysis, a quick remark concerning the usage of the labels "real" and "false victim". People who have undergone sexualized violence use different terms to describe themselves. Many prefer to call themselves survivor, rather than victim. Others do not mind being called a victim and claim this term for themselves. I am aware of the importance of self-determination and of the dilemma of labeling. Without being able to avoid this problem, I try to use the terms survivor and victim without preference. When I write "real/false victim" in quotation marks, I reference either the ideas produced in the example or in broader culture. The quotation marks indicate that this is a sociocultural ascription, not a self-description, and highly problematic at that.

For LN, the tentative answer to the question of expertise in detecting credible claims of pain and victimhood – I mean this in a less cynical way than it may appear – has appeared in a YouTuber, who posits himself as an expert in detecting "real victims".

Figure 1: Thumbnails: YouTuber's credibility investigations

YouTube Channel Collative Learning, https://www.youtube.com/user/robag88/videos, last access 7.08.2019.

Rob Ager is an amateur YouTube film analyst. His channel Collative Learning lists more than 100 videos, in which he mostly explains Hollywood movies from the genres of science fiction, war, and horror, often delivering interpretations of so-called deeper meanings.[7] Ager produced three videos on LN. The first is a 17-minute analysis arguing that the interviews in the documentary are edited and have not been taken in one shot at one continuous stream of time and talking. The thumbnail to this video shows James Safechuck sitting in an armchair in the documentary's interview setting. To his left and right "Leaving Neverland. Multiple Take Interviews" is written, branding the image of Safechuck's interview in the light of the media manipulation technique that is film editing. The font Ager chooses resembles the aesthetics of the horror genre, the letters italicized and melting creepily, aiming to inflict the idea of melting evidence, of dissolving comfort and trust in a survivor's account of abuse. His argument here is that continuity and consistency are only markers of truth in someone's report of suffered abuse if they are the spontaneous result of someone talking in a 'stream of consciousness' (preferably to state authorities). Coherent narrative and structure are considered to be markers of truth and at the same time of manipulation, if they are the visual or detectable effects of making up a story. Ager seeks "evidence" (as the title indicates) for the constructedness of the victims' stories by showing screenshots of the interviews which indicate that they were not taken in one shot as well as edited afterwards. He argues that they were taken at different times and maybe even be rehearsed or completely fabricated. The false dichotomy of unmediated, unnarrated spontaneity vs. edited, therefore manipulated and possibly false reports, is as problematic as it is pervasive. If a survivor talks coherently without camera and editing involved, their statement still can be confronted with suspicions of rehearsal and practicing – making sense out of an experience by telling a story is discredited as making up a somewhat fictional story. Another of Ager's videos continues this argument, while being more bold yet simple in its title: Leaving Neverland's suspicious editing (see fig. 1).

7 E.g. The hidden depths of Silence of the Lambs; A space Odyssey, Meaning of the Monolith; 10 reasons Jim Camaron's ALIEN is the best feminism. To be seen on his YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9wMJIgU25UtM-V3arDeHDyA, last access 1.13.2020. Some of the videos have close to half a million views, on average Ager achieves around one hundred thousand views on his videos. The video I center in my analysis, I do not consider relevant because of the quantity of views. Rather, I consider the argument he develops exemplary in the discourse on accusations of sexualized violence.

Visiting the Trauma Zoo[8]

The video I focus on in this section is the longest Ager has published on LN. It is an analysis of nonverbal communication, which he undertakes in order to distinguish Robson & Safechuck vs real abuse victims. In this 42-minute video argument, Ager doesn't focus on editing or making up stories in the process of sense-making, instead he announces: "In this video, I'll address the issue of whether the nonverbal communication from Wade and James actually convey genuine, truthful expression or whether the two are faking their emotions." (TC: 00:00:23) Thereby he translates the differentiation of in-/credibility, which in his other videos is processed by the media distinction of edited/non-edited film, into the question of real vs. fake emotion and performance. Thus, he executes a common cultural imagination – that one can, by the trait of rational empathy, decide in the quest of taking sides in cases of sexualized violence. How does he do this?

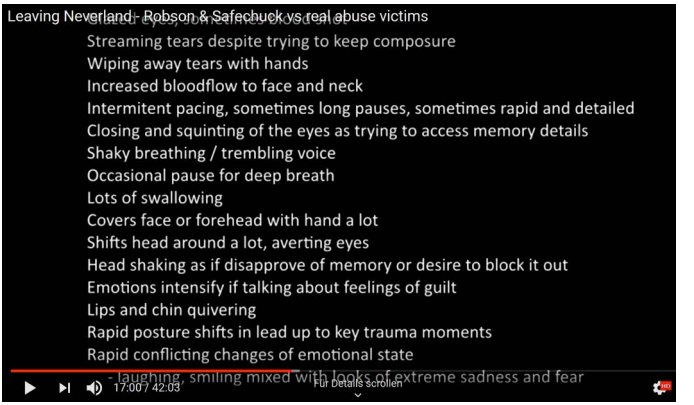
Ager sticks to his trade and provides a comparing analysis of film clips. Following popular YouTube genres of reading body language,[9] as well as retelling of traumatic experiences, he compares Robson and Safechuck's bodily expressions of pain when talking about their sexual exploitation by MJ, to eight other testimonies – that he deems credible – in found footage of YouTube Clips, documentaries or (reality) TV-shows. Acting as a film-anthropologist visiting the trauma zoo, Ager comes up with a list of observed emotional symptoms that mark "real victims". This includes glazed eyes, streaming tears, trembling voice, specific breathing patterns, quivering lips, and running noses (See fig. 2).

He measures these bodily signs of (expressed real) pain against the level of assumed difficulty to reproduce them in an acting performance. To exemplify the

8 The term "trauma zoo" is used by Aubrey Hirsch in a highly interesting panel discussion on writing trauma with Roxane Gay, Tressie McMillan Cottom, Terese Mailhot, Aubrey Hirsch, and Saeed Jones moderated by Melanie Boyd at Yale University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWe8F-8tcaY, last access 7.12.2019.

9 On TV-Shows and on YouTube you can find many tutorials to read body language in order to detect liars in criminal cases or, in an interesting connection to it, to detect someone's interest in dating you or not. It is a genre navigating questions of trust and biologistic ideas of human social nature, that mostly draws on evolutionary biologistic, heteronormative ideas. (E.g. Former FBI Agent Explains How to Read Body Language, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jwUXV4QaTw; Body Language: Brett Kavanaugh Hearing Christine Blasey Ford, 9.27.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGxr1VQ2dPI; All the Proof You Need Jussie Smollett Staged His Attack – Body Language Secrets, 2.02.2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH7IaIJyMjk; R. Kelly: Clinical Expert Says His Body Language With Gayle King Raises A Lot Of Red Flags|Access, 3.06.2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16B6c6kXqxo; Body Language of Attraction, 1.07.2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ5PF0zqQ4s; Body Language Amanda Knox- Cold Blooded Killer?, 3.17.2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vOmMsDh09c, date of access to all videos, 6.20.2019.)

Figure 2: YouTuber's list of nonverbal markers of true pain



Leaving Neverland – Robson & Safechuck vs real abuse victims https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFdnhmRpdFE, last access 7.08.2019.

skills needed to perform trauma as convincingly as his chosen "real victims", Ager uses highly praised Hollywood performances. He contrasts the perceived emotions of Safechuck and Robson with a scene from A.I., a movie directed by Steven Spielberg (USA 2001), and a casting scene from same director's blockbuster E.T. The casting scene can easily be found on YouTube, which illustrates the technique of recontextualizing and clip-montage that is specific for the medium.[10] Both scenes show little boy actors who perform desperate crying, which Ager calls "incredibly convincing" (TC: 00:17:50). His argument based on Haley Joel Osment's performance in A.I. reveals deep insight in the workings and multiple layers of mediation concerning assumed credible pain in cases of sexualized violence. In the following I will take a closer look at the mechanics of the comparison.

Empathy As Truth Detector

The science fiction drama A.I. is a dystopian take on Pinocchio meeting high tech. The highly successful film narrates a think piece on the human condition to feel emotions. In the late 22nd century the rich, white, heteronormative Swinton family is given a prototype, humanoid robot who has been designed to feel emotions. The child robot David is imprinted to unconditionally love wife and mother Monica

10 Henry Thomas audition för E.T. "Ok kid, you got the job", to be seen on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tA5giyG8E7g, last access 7.07.2019.

Swinton. The scene Ager chose to prove that children can fake emotions convincingly, is the one, in which Monica, whose human son Martin has come back from artificial coma, tries to abandon her then troublesome, envious artificial son David in the shadowy woods. Dramatically underlined with piano and strings in minor key, the little boy begs his "Mommy" not to leave him, to forgive him, to give him the chance of becoming a real boy with real, i.e. mattering pain. The camera angle puts the spectator in the position of the mother, demanded to please feel for the child and not to leave, and in the position of the child expressing his desperate need for the mother. The empathic identification with the robot (and the mother) are both produced by the angle-reverse angle montage. She eventually parries off the robot-child's painful demand for loving care. Ager edits the scene to end on this dialog: "[David:] Mommy, if Pinocchio became a real boy and I became a real boy, can I come home? [Monica:] Oh, that's just a story!" (TC: 00:18:15), he then comments in voice-over: "Intellectually I know this is acting. But still, every time I've watched this scene, I feel close to tears myself. That's the power of good acting. Even if you know it's fake, your hard-wired instinct is to empathize unless you're a psychopath [sic.]" (TC: 00:18:22).

To understand Ager's argument, we have to take in one more bit of his analysis. So far there are eight audiovisual clips of people displaying personal testimony of trauma of sexualized violence in the media formats of YouTube testimonial, reality TV and documentary interview, which are exemplarily deemed real by the YouTuber. And there is one particular scene of a boy actor performing "incredibly convincing" crying in a Hollywood movie. The boy plays it so well that Ager describes himself to be instinctively forced to feel sad and empathize with the subject's displayed pain (pathologizing any other reaction than compassionate sadness and distinguishing himself as a good, compassionate subject).[11] Ager uses audiovisual material from the genres of fiction, testimonial, reality TV, and documentary in order to discredit Safechuck and Robson's claims. Yet, there is one more filmed performance of retold trauma, in which Ager considers the expressed emotions as real. That is Wade Robson's display of pain during the autobiographical retelling of his family's split up. Joy Robson moved with her son Wade and his siblings from Australia to the US, leaving husband and parents behind in order to live closer to MJ (who then, as is told in LN, continued to sexually exploit her son). Ager comments on Wade Robson's nonverbals, muting his voice in the editing process and literally talking over his crying face, fulfilling perfect circular reasoning: "this is probably genuine, because if he was able to act this good, why not act it the same way when talking about the abuse as well? I think this is real stuff here. It's the

11 My feminist rage against the scenery of calculated demands of motherly care would be deemed psychopathological by Ager, while it should be either deemed socio-pathological or rather socio-critical.

one moment in the whole movie when I really felt empathy like what I was watching was real" (TC: 00:20:28). Ager executes double twisted discrediting on Robson and Safechuck, who he accuses of not only performing their (then fake) pain, but of performing it badly. He jumps back and forth between ascriptions of real and fake, making himself an expert activist for a dominant truth regime of questioning an alleged victim's credibility. The YouTuber thereby exemplifies the narrative, filmic mediation, and sociocultural structuring of painful emotions, empathy, and judgment while remaining oblivious of the medium and narrative he himself uses.

First, Ager installs his ability to be moved, to feel empathy, or not, as a sensory truth regime. He executes the idea of universal feelings towards real pain, by enacting them in his comments and by guiding his audience to re-feel the true feelings he expertly detects by watching the filmed (!) pain of others, who he instrumentalizes for this purpose. Thus, he naturalizes his felt, emotional reaction to fiction (A.I.), making it an instinctive fact to negate an emotional reaction to the documentary (LN), a medium deemed to show facts, making LN not only a piece of fiction but also fake.

Sentimental Empathy – Feeling For An Institution

I want to argue that Ager does not feel "empathy like what [he] was watching was real" (TC: 00:20:28), but precisely because what he is watching is fiction (in the case of A.I.) and in line with a sentimental narrative of heteronormative family stories. He is not detecting real pain, but connecting to a narrative that matches the sentimental script of his emotional willingness to empathize.

What the two scenes Ager marks as good performances of (like) real pain have in common is the idea of family love. The scene in A.I. which always moves Ager to his private tears plays out a scene of the bad, abandoning mother. The scene in LN, which moves Ager to believe "this is real stuff here", is the one, in which Joy Robson can be and is framed as a failing mother, making the retrospectively condemned wrong choices. Ager's display of feelings of empathy are structured by heteronormative sentimentalism. To explain this term, I draw on Lauren Berlant's critique of national sentimentalism, in which she links the narratives of politically relevant pain to the production of nation and privacy (Berlant 1999). Berlant describes the placing of painful feelings in the making of political worlds through the rhetoric of national sentimentality, which fetishizes the idea of true, apolitical feelings. Just as Ager enacts, the ruling idea of the rhetoric is that (real) pain of subaltern citizens is self-evident, and will be felt by every empathic human being as their own (Berlant 1999: 53). The hegemony of the national identity form then is promoted by linking the idea of true feeling, through affective identification and universalized empathy, and thereby across fields of social difference, with the idea of a conjoining nation state. The pain of subaltern others is therefore felt by "classically privileged

national subjects, such that they feel the pain of flawed or denied citizenship as their pain." (Ibid.) To ease the sentimentally narrated pain we are offered inclusion in an utopian, good nation, whose law and order guarantee a pain free life.

Ager, by choosing the described examples, uses his acclaimed true feelings in accordance to the sentimental narrative of the wholesome, happy, heteronormative family, reproducing the biological family as a safe and desirable place. His emotional response therefore does not detect true pain so much as the institution he is strongly affected by, namely motherly love and the "foggy fantasy of happiness" that is family (Berlant 1999: 60). There is no point for someone seeking to discredit people reporting sexualized violence at the hand of a powerful celebrity to disbelieve the sadness and reality of pain felt when losing the safety and order of a family, especially if one can easily blame it on an egoistic mother figure. The institution of the family is very often strategically used against survivors of sexual exploitation. They are blamed for the damage done to the family by talking about their pain and the violence, which is often perpetrated by people close to, or members of, the family. The structures of privacy that are reproduced by, among others, legal discourse on heterosexual intimacy and family (cf. ibid.: 59-70) often disguise and enable sexualized violence (for example by isolating the victim and or traditionally preventing an outsider's interference in so-called family affairs).

Empathy with someone who shows pain is not naturally caused by its realness. It is connected to a far more complex framing that redefines the distinction of real and fake when it comes to sociocultural negotiations of violence. Both fictional and real stories interconnect with cultural and traditional discourse, that is mediated norms, standards, images, and desires. Through mediated affective identification one learns to feel with someone's pain and doubt the pain of another.[12] Therefore feeling empathy in and of itself does not naturally detect real or fake pain, but instead re-produces a regime of truth, in which pain only appears to be real, if it fits the script and thereby achieves the relevance guaranteed by a sentimentally stabilized institution like family or state of law (Cf. Butler 2009, Ahmed 2014: 21-41). Obviously, once you have detected an accuser's pain to be "fake", the decision to take sides for accuser or accused is no longer difficult.

So far, I have analyzed how Ager produces himself as a sensory truth detective, by using his expert empathy which I see as structured and adapted to the emotional scripts of heteronormative sentimentality and backed up by his ostentatious (technical) knowledge of film production and pseudo-psychological expertise on body language. I now will turn to the role of the medium of film and the YouTu-

12 In the introductory to *Compassion. The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* editor Berlant observes the simultaneity of a training in appropriate compassion and in aversion and withdrawal of it (Berlant 2004: 10).

ber's comparative editing in the production of true feelings and artificial empathy by again elaborating on the example of the A.I. sequence.

Artificial Empathy[13]

The scene from A.I., recontextualized by Ager, teaches a difficult lesson on the social reality-relevance of pain organized by a regime of credibility. The robot-boy David begs his mother to give him the chance of becoming a real boy with real, i.e. relevant and credible pain. Being an artificial intelligence, the expression of his feelings, on the narrative level of the film, are the product of a complex calculating process. Artificial intelligence acts according to its assessing of context, which has to be calculable in order to calculate the fitting, deemed intelligent, adaptation to it. The intelligent computer can filter and adapt to a context, which it then acts according to. A.I.-David displays contextually suitable emotions, thereby disturbing dominant ideas on human intelligence and nature. Emotions are understood as exclusive human trait. They are deemed authentic, located inside the body at the core of our personality, and untouched by culture or politics (Ahmed 2014: 8). Sara Ahmed, as many in affect studies, proposes: "emotions should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices" (ibid.: 9). Feeling and emotions are not natural, pure sensory, but they are the effect and enaction of sociality, culture and politics. We are taught how to express, and repress our emotions (for example when we are trained to perform gender), and we are taught how to feel about all kinds of phenomena.

On the level of the medium, film follows the same model of calculating and producing feelings according to context as the A.I. boy does on the level of story. The film A.I. does induce spectators to feel something (in my case anger at the idea of viewers being manipulated into wanting a woman to show motherly love for a robot, in the case of Ager teary-eyed compassion). By using visual and acoustic technology, the film estimates the spectators' calculable emotional scripts, and produces a context in which we are made to feel. Concerning the production of emotions, it seems we, the spectators, are artificially intelligent too. The film imagery and scripts of emotions not only acutely produce the context and reaction that are 'our' emotions,[14] but also serve as prescript and model for the idea of true

13 For this section's argument, I thank Lydia Kray, with whom I discussed this chapter and whose deep intellectual and personal analysis I very much appreciate.

14 Of course, there is a negotiation process and no automatic affirmation of the proposed correct emotional reaction to a piece of medium, as Hall describes in the cultural studies model of encoding and decoding meaning (1973), or as bell hooks observes by describing the oppositional gaze black women developed visiting cinema (2015).

feelings (real, moving, credible emotions) teaching artificial, media-cultural empathy and how to perform pain. This, as much of the work in affect studies and post-structural philosophy does, problematizes the distinction of natural and artificial.

The reciprocal patterns of film and spectators' expectations of emotional performance have governmental effects (Cf. Foucault 2000: 41-67). Survivors of sexualized violence go to the movies, too. They know the audiovisual performances of "real victims", whose pain is verified by narrative and visualization techniques in cinema (cf. Koch 2015: 103-104), TV, or social media. By consuming these models, they learn how they are supposed to feel and supposed to show 'their' emotions – which are not naturally inside of them but are social in the way that they are performed and perceived, they are expected and obligatory in an emotional regime of credibility.[15] In a rape condoning, doubting culture, that takes sides rather against than for accusers, the performance of pain is crucial, the idea being that if you can move your listeners to empathize, they will believe you.[16] As YouTuber Ager has made very clear, one of the best ways to make people feel with someone and produce the desired emotion towards something, is film. In a montage later in the video, he contrasts his material of "real victims" and convincing Hollywood performances with the footage from the police interrogation of then 13-year-old Gavin Arvizo (which can be found on YouTube). Arvizo was interrogated on his accusation against MJ in 2003. Ager assesses, "[Arvizo's] allegation really lacks the convincing nonverbals of real abuse victims" (TC: 00:21:30). The YouTuber does not "come close to tears" when watching the police footage of Gavin Arvizo's interrogation, who accused mega star MJ of sexualized violence, because the boy does not display the right expressions of uncontrolled emotions, as Ager implies. And, as I want to add, because the media documenting Arvizo's claims is a not a tribute to sentimentally stabilized institutions, nor a dramatic mise-en-scène, but the recording of a police

15 This does not mean that all survivors can ultimately control their feelings and that trauma were not a bio-, psycho-, neurological reality, too. It does mean though, that the ascription of realness, connected to the complex of what is deemed bio-, psycho- or neurological, derives its meaning from the differentiation of artificial/natural, or uncontrollable/controlled. E.g. Ager pseudoscientifically emphasizes 'uncontrollable' bodily reactions (mucus in the nose) as markers of realness.

16 In the already mentioned discussion panel Writing Trauma at Yale University, the panelists reflect on readers' demands for more, excruciating detail of the survived personal trauma of the authors. Gay points out that, "part of it is that they don't believe you and so what they're saying is, 'prove it!'. And you see this all in ways that are minor and small, like idiots on twitter who are like, 'debate me!', like, 'prove me wrong', like: 'Motherfucker, you were born wrong!' And when you narrate trauma and you don't [have] dates and times and names, all of a sudden, what you have to say is illegitimate, because they don't want to believe that this kind of suffering can happen. And it's a truly dangerous thing. I don't have to prove to you that what I said happened, happened. I only had to prove it to my publisher and the legal team there. But I don't owe you shit." (TC: 00:48:00).

hearing reframed for Ager's comparing analysis of good and better performers of pain. These media build different sites for the display and evaluation of credible pain, organizing the quest to take sides.

Before I finish this analysis, I want to discuss the effects of the framing and give a possible answer as to why the questioning of accuser's credibility is deemed necessary, and activistly executed in the first place.

Real, But Irrelevant Pain

The standards of relevant victimhood are, as Butler puts it in *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?* The result of frames of "recognizability" (2009: 5). To be recognizable, intelligible as a person, and have a grievable life is, according to Butler, the effect of frames. Literal frames that surround images of war and torture, pain, and suffering, visual framings that are photographic perspectives and visual aesthetics, and written frames, Butler's focus, that are the textual embedding or context of circulating (digital) images. Some of the dominant political, economic, cultural, and social framings are the broadly acknowledged hierarchic structures of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, etc. These intersecting framings define the social ontology and recognizability, i.e. acknowledgeablity, of being somebody, whose bodily autonomy and life matters or matters less than (cf. the campaign of #BlackLivesMatter for example discussed by Butler and Yancy 2015). Whose pain is relevant, intelligible, and grievable? The frames are never stable. They constitute the very possibility of circulating, of changing and creating context and therefore meaning and affect. This means a subject can live a grievable life in one frame, and lose this position in another. Robson and Safechuck are framed as credible in LN, incredible on various YouTube commenting videos, and dubious on *Good Morning Britain*. With the changing frames the affect towards a content changes, too. As Butler describes in the example of the torture images of Abu Ghraib: "The conditions are set for astonishment, outrage, revulsion, admiration, and discovery, depending on how the content is framed by shifting time and place." (Ibid.: 11)

Now, the YouTuber Ager merely re-frames audiovisual footage – this is a dominant media practice on the platform, thus also establishes a frame and standard. Ager uses eight people's painful stories to hold them against other's, producing audiovisual evidence for his own (voice-over) performance of compassionate empathy and rationalized withdrawal of it. Thereby, he produces the position of a "good judge", who can be moved to tears (is not cold) but cannot be tricked into empathy (not too emotional), and invites his viewers to be a good judge, too – to follow his media activism and channel. The doubting and checking on real pain is an organizing and hierarchizing maneuver. The question of credibility mediates a nation's, state's, and society's decisions on not/grievable life, ir-/relevant pain, or hierarchized legally protected goods.

In *Compassion. The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, editor Berlant reflects on the same withdrawal of the status to be a human-being with mattering pain. Normatively, she writes in the introduction, the experience of pain is deemed pre-ideological as "the universal sign of membership in humanity" (Berlant 2004: 10). A response and the responsibility to other's pain is deemed obligatory, "but since some pain is more compelling than some other pain, we must make judgments about which cases deserve attention." (Ibid.) To understand the reasons behind this, it helps to look at Ager's claim of expertise in being an empathic detective of fake pain, which he explains extensively in the beginning of his video:

> "This is a subject I do have plenty of experience with. I studied tons of psychology in my entire life, I worked for 17 years at social care in various roles and in that time I encountered lots of trauma victims and sometimes abusers, so, I've seen a lot of intense pain expressed by people before my very eyes and have also seen many instances of people playing the victim and faking their pain, you know, people trying to get themselves boosted up the priority list for council housing or trying to cover for the fact that they have actually been abusive to someone else. And when directing fictional films I've worked with actors on set and in auditions and seen some pretty impressive faking of trauma in those contexts." (Ager, Robson and Safechuck vs Real Abuse Victims, TC: 00:00:28)

Ager claims various authorities. The authority of psychology and of being a film connoisseur, which has been analyzed in the above. The information that Ager was a worker in social care serves him as marker of the reason as to why question a victim's claims. This follows a conservative, economic model of social care. The "Oppression Olympics" that nowadays are deemed to be played by radical or pop-culture leftists, actually are a competition hosted by the neoliberal state, organizing its distribution of welfare. It is logical in a capitalist state to not just give social care to anyone asking for it – it would interrupt the governing ideas of 'earning' your livelihood. It becomes apparent, that the concept of earning something is applied to victimhood, too. In cases of sexualized violence the logic of possible welfare fraud is combined with the judicial weighing of legally protected goods like a man's reputation vs. a child's bodily autonomy and it is enacted, even if all a person is asked to do is to listen and believe, in a non-economical, out-or court context, for example when telling a friend of an experienced rape or abuse. The economical rational translates itself even into the 'most private', yet deeply normed and mediated, corners of the sites to talk about experienced sexualized violence. While watching a documentary interview like in LN is not the same as being the judge in a court hearing, or evaluating someone's need for social care, the necessity of questioning a survivor's story is still widely enacted in the media. I would argue that this is, due to a powerful combination of a state's harsh fight against the threat of welfare fraud (which is a very useful fear for legitimating antiwelfare policy), and the

judicial processes that promise rational authority and good reasoning, which are reinforced by the structuring mediation processes of mass, and social media, too. In the discourse Ager's video is part of, to just listen and not question a survivor's story is framed as possible welfare fraud,[17] or personal trap, and would lack the attention-drawing controversy to take sides. Ager plays his part in the economic regime of compassion and credibility, wrapped in media attention economy, and claims to detect real from fake performances of pain, reproducing them as audiovisual model for survivors and listening witnesses (YouTube users), while negating the framing he himself installs, to naturalize his media activist structuring of empathy and trust. To tell your story of abuse under the cultural circumstances exemplified by this YouTuber's video argument, is an adaptive performance at which you are likely to fail.

Conclusion

This chapter examined mediations of in-/credibility regarding the documentary Leaving Neverland. The focused media reactions to the documentary questioned Robson and Safechuck's credibility, using various culturally hierarchized oppositions like fact/fiction, due process/media pillory, true/false feelings. The investigations of credibility, this chapter argued, are structured as a quest to take sides, which as well as the media sites, their particular technologies, rules, actors, and economic interests, define the possibility to negotiate and speak of sexualized violence against children. The controversial questioning of credibility was discussed as media activism, meaning both, the activism of human actors as well as media processes. The main focus lay on a YouTube video, in which the quest to take sides for or against Robson and Safechuck was processed as the differentiation of real and fake pain. The analysis of the complex mediation of empathy, that in the YouTube video is installed as a tool to decide, lead to a problematization of the discriminatory power of real/fake, natural/artificial, fictional/factual oppositions. Deciding on realness or fakeness of a victim's pain turned out to be linked to the sentimentally stabilized institution of the family (cf. Berlant 1999); to the economic idea of having to earn welfare, hence, to earn the status of victimhood (cf. Berlant 2004); the overall framing of grievable life, ir-/relevant pain (cf. Butler 2009). Moreover, the standardizing audiovisual mediation of telling (your) trauma (on YouTube

17 To empathically decide on grievable/not grievable life, or relevant-real/irrelevant-fake pain, is not only used in cases of sexualized violence. For example, at the US-border asylum agents are charged with determining an applicant's claims of "credible fear", again taking sides on denial or access to citizenship and social care by various measures on the truthfulness of a displayed feeling (Democracy Now.org, last access 6.18.2019).

testimonials, on reality TV, in documentary interviews or Hollywood fiction),[18] was described not only in its impact on people's empathy or willingness to believe, but also in its gouvernemental impact on survivors, whose possibilities to tell their story is governed by i. a. audiovisual performances of in-/credible pain.

By this analysis I did not intend to promote the idea of objective, emotionally uninvolved, judgment – of being neutral by not taking sides. It shall rather serve to problematize the idea of empathy as a universal, sensory, truth detector, and the quest to take sides itself. To close this chapter, I want to revisit the idea of leaving Neverland, rather than taking sides on it, as I insinuated in the title. I want to ask for a way not to take sides on the claims voiced in the documentary Leaving Neverland, without promoting ruling ideas of impartiality. Impartiality as a concept relies on the structure of taking sides. You are impartial, when you are between or above the sides, and you can overlook the sides, and non-(pre)judgmentally stay undecided, only if there are sides to be taken. Neverland has served the documentary LN and this analysis as metaphor. As LN insinuates, Neverland, where children never grow up and adventures (with Michael Jackson) are harmless play, had an exit. The boys left, became adults, and it turned out, the place was no child appropriate playground after all. Following the structure of taking sides, if you believe the narrative of LN, you take the side of Robson and Safechuck. If you do not believe it (like the discussed YouTuber), you take the other side. If you stay undecided, hold both sides potentially credible, you are on no side, non-judgmental on moral high ground – a cultural realm where the crime, violence, and trauma potentially never happened. This, as I want to argue, is a fantasy realm like Neverland. The mediating structure of taking sides, in the case of sexualized violence against children, builds a realm of escapism and avoidance, where the harm always potentially was just a story. To leave this sociocultural Neverland, it is necessary to find another way of negotiating the phenomenon. Where the question of credibility does not rule the possibility to tell a story of trauma, where empathy is not used for one, and consequentially against the other side.

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3. Queer Thinking

Segment Introduction

Isabell Otto

> "I got sick in Paris on Wednesday, March 11, before the French government ordered the confinement of the population, and when I got up on March 19, a bit more than a week later, the world had changed. When I went to my bed, the world was close, collective, viscous, and dirty. When I got out of bed, it had become distant, individual, dry, and hygienic." (Preciado 2020a)

With these words Paul B. Preciado, philosopher, curator and transactivist, who is also a thought leader in the fields of queer studies and philosophy of the body, begins his observation of a social transformation a few days after he recovered from his Covid-19 disease. He describes – in an essay published almost at the same date in *Libération* and translated into English in *Artforum* – an impression "between fever and anxiety", according to which a new form of reality had emerged after a 'great mutation', that forever changed the structures of the social and the relationships and patterns of desire: "The mutation would manifest as a crystallization of organic life, as a digitization of work and consumption and as a dematerialization of desire." (Ibid.)

In a second essay, published in the Spanish daily newspaper *El País* under the title "Aprendiendo del virus", Preciado references Michel Foucault and Roberto Esposito in his reflections on the epidemic's management in light of historical routes of biopolitical regulation as well as medical and political dimensions of immunity. Noting that a "process of global mutation was underway "before the appearance of Covid-19", Preciado describes the societal and political change using Gilles Deleuze's concept of a 'control society' as a process of medial transformation which leads to more subtle forms of digital surveillance of individuals:

> "The subjects of the neoliberal technical-patriarchal societies that Covid-19 is in the midst of creating do not have skin; they are untouchable; they do not have hands. They do not exchange physical goods, nor do they pay with money. They are digital consumers equipped with credit cards. They do not have lips or tongues. They do not speak directly; they leave a voice mail. They do not gather together and they do not collectivize. They are radically un-dividual. They do not have faces; they have masks. In order to exist, their organic bodies are hidden behind an in-

> definite series of semio-technical mediations, an array of cybernetic prostheses that work like digital masks: email addresses, Facebook, Instagram, Zoom, and Skype accounts." (Preciado 2020b)

It is not surprising that both essays are included in the German translation of *An Apartment on Uranus. Chronicles of a Crossing* published in spring 2020 by Suhrkamp under the title "Postscriptum (2020)". The book includes essays written between 2013 and 2018 mainly published in *Libération*, which documents and reflects on daily political and cultural events before the background of Preciado's transition from Beatriz to Paul B. The essays on the corona crisis are thus placed in the context of a political writing that seeks to grasp the practices of transition in new terms, in a new grammar. In *An Apartment on Uranus*, Preciado designs a nomadic writing self, which in the most radical sense is situated in the in-between, on the journey between countries and cities, in the transition between differently gendered statuses of the body.

This writing self struggles with a side-taking in this permanent state of transition and it often marks the extremes between which change takes place in a surprising binary order: between a 'before' and 'after' of the transition, between different attitudes towards transformation of a not further specified 'we' and a 'they', designated as "gurus of old colonial Europe" (Preciado 2020c: 43): "They say crisis. We say revolution." (Ibid.: 44) Even the Corona crisis offers in this way of thinking the potential to act as a nucleus of political struggle. Preciado's diagnosis of a social transformation ends with activist appeals:

> "Let us use the time and strength of confinement to study the tradition of struggle and resistance among racial and sexual minority cultures that have helped us survive until now. Let us turn off our cell phones, let us disconnect from the internet. Let us stage a big blackout against the satellites observing us, and let us consider the coming revolution together." (Preciado 2020b)

When in this segment "Queer Thinking" is considered as a mode of taking sides, we want to ask about the dilemmas that arise when positions are taken for and in transformation. Preciado's essays stand in the tradition of queer thinking both as a philosophical practice and as a form of protest, both as mode of thought and a rebellion against any normalization and categorization of subjects. In this way of thinking, an ontology of gender is rejected. It is replaced by the performativity of gender, the play with gender clichés and the constant transgression of the supposedly normal. This way of thinking not only refers to the categorization of gender but includes all forms of classification and subjectivation based on the hegemonic consolidations of 'gender', 'class', and 'race'.

The authors of this section negotiate two central issues arising from this activist positioning and theoretical reflection. On the one hand: Taking a side for transfor-

mation threatens to put a stop to this very change and even introduce new binarisms. How can a queer way of thinking, which always includes one's own position as a researching, teaching, and writing scientist, avoid leading to new solidifications and categorizations? On the other hand: Transformation can be understood as an ambivalent process of de-subjectification, which implies being thrown into change and puts at risk the security of clear subject positions. How can we think of change in all its facets and discontinuities?

Athena Athanasiou opens this section with her contribution "Taking Sides as Taking a Stand: Critical Conditions of Co-Implication and Im-Possibility". She addresses fundamental aspects of *Taking Sid/tes* as a gesture of positioning contradiction and equally a violent classification or (self-)categorisation. Athanasiou asks how the problem of positioning can be dealt with without extrapolating ideas of a previous, intentional subject and by instead locating positioning, in all its ruptures, at the core of becoming a subject itself. Therefore, she explores the concept of 'taking a stand in time', which combines movement and momentary standstill. She illustrates this with the example of the social movement "Women in Black" in former Yugoslavia, where standing still is used equally as a physical form of protest and taking both a side and a (public) site.

Side-Taking as a process of violent (self-) classification is in the foreground of Lann Hornscheidt's paper "Re-Nouncing Violence – Differentiating Linguistic Violence". Hornscheidt focuses on structural violence based on language, such as divisions according to gender or nation, appeals, addresses, or attributions. She shows how fixations of subject positions are effective even in everyday language use and in this way examines the problem at which queer side-taking is directed. In a constructivist and discrimination-critical perspective, the article distinguishes between three forms of linguistic violence: symbolic violence, subtle violence, and epistemic violence and shows how constructivist speech analysis can make this violence visible.

The next article in this section focuses on violent categorization of subjects not only in structural dimensions but also as physical action. In her article "A Side Taken. Relating to Slavery in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*" Ulrike Bergermann designs, with precise historical references, taking sides as a challenge to all of us, descendants of profiteers and/or victims of slave-owning societies, to be involved in the history of slavery and thus in a history of violence. In her analysis of the novel *Kindred*, Bergmann not only focuses on numerous references to black power activism but also takes literary writing itself as a form of involvement in the history of oppression, in which violence overrides the temporal order of the past and the present. In Octavia Butler's novel, as Bergermann shows, 'remembering' becomes a 're-membering', a violent inscription on a black body that sees itself thrown back into history.

The theme of writing as remembering is also central to Julia Bee's contribution "Writing through the Milieu: Social Mobility and Queer/Feminist Critique as Existential Practices". In her discussion of Didier Eribon's recent theoretical-autobiographical books, Bee shows how queerness, as a motor of social mobility, can escape the power structures of French class society, although the social background remains inscribed in the body in the form of shame. Bee takes this continuation of a social side-taking, which is as it were an act of self-exclusion, as an opportunity to reflect on our own practices of teaching and learning in the German education system. Bee looks at the practice of writing as an experimental form of resistant side-taking in order to render social power structures visible and transformable.

The possibilities and limits of transformation through practices of experimentation are discussed by Isabell Otto in her contribution "Change by Changing Smartphone-Users? The Fairphone as an Experimental Side". The impulses of queer thinking are asserted here in order to focus on the complex intertwining of resistant practices and subject formation for the question of media participation as a smartphone user. The contribution shows how questions of positioning and its possible transformation continue in everyday practices and shape our entanglement with digital networked media.

Sophie Vögele's article "Dissident Participation and its Post_Colonial Implications. An Exploriation of Positionalities of Critique Considered in Reference to the Institution of Higher (Art) Education" closes the segment. The article discusses the concept of critique in Judith Butler's reading of Michel Foucault and asks how a critique understood in this way, which remains closely embedded in the power structures of subject formation, nevertheless creates possibilities for dissident participation. She directs this question to the findings of an empirical study she co-authored on privileges based on social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and body, as can be observed at Swiss art schools. Taking Sides, as the authors of this segment show, is thus always a gesture that affects us in its challenges and ambivalences as scientists in our practices of teaching and writing.

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Taking Sides as Taking a Stand
Critical Conditions of Co-Implication and Im-Possibility

Athena Athanasiou

> "No one can write without passionately taking sides (whatever the apparent detachment of his message) on what is going wrong in the world". (Roland Barthes, "Taking sides", in Critical Essays, 1972, p. 163-170)

Taking sides takes place as a performative way of inhabiting, re-occupying, acting and reenacting (in) the world. It takes place in bodily relation to, and potentially in differentiation from, prevailing frames of subjection, which precede and exceed the subjects' reach although do not fully and unilaterally determine these subjects' positionalities (Butler 1997). As an agonistic engagement with the political, it does not preexist or exist apart from the complex social fields of intelligibility that are in place within specific contexts. Rather, taking sides is contingent upon those existing discursive formations that constrain and orientate in advance the kinds of "sides" that can appear as available, reachable or sustainable possibilities.

It is this contingency that holds an ineradicable critical potential for resistance to reigning regulatory social norms and for political transformation. Tracing and accounting for this critical potential, I argue, requires deconstructing the individualistic and voluntaristic conception of sovereign intentional subject-formation. In this regard, the analytics of taking sides would not require resorting to the notion of an originary self-identical subject who pre-exists the act of side-taking. Therefore, it should not be reduced to the desire of a pre-discursive constitutive subject to transgress norms and constraints. From this perspective, the purpose of this paper is to begin reflecting on the critical agency of taking sides as (dis-)continuous (rather than singular) performative (rather than constative, referential, and intentional) acts, which work to displace the very terms within which they take place and through which they have been enabled. I am interested in the ways the question of taking sides comes out of, and indexes, social positionings in our historico-political moment, notably collective struggles against rising fascism, racialized violence,

sexism, neoliberal governmentality, as well as imperialist militarization and securitization. And so, I would like to think through the question of taking sides as taking a stand to propel a reflection on instating possibilities for anti-fascist social and political life in light of the present moment.

What does it mean to be on the same side of a political struggle, and despite which social cultural inscriptions and ascriptions are the battle lines drawn at any given time? The social poetics of taking sides denotes a shared affective experience as a site of intense politicization and performative historicity: a site where the thoroughgoing relationality between social embeddedness and dissent comes into being. We are always already posited and positioned within, despite, and vis-à-vis dispersed discursive matrices through which we are constantly and incompletely constituted -at once constrained and enabled. We differentially occupy multiple subject-positions and intersubjective nexuses by excluding -and being excluded by- others. And we perform these conditions of im-possibility in unanticipated and incalculable ways, occasionally unconventional and transformative. The question is what are the ethicopolitical implications of such melancholic performative engagement with productive limitations conferred by existing power formations. It is the urgency of this question, I think, that compels us to attend to the critical ways the questions "which side are you on?" and "whom you stand with?" are interrelated with the questions "what we fight for" and "how we come together around a common purpose." The words "side," "stand," "we,", "with," "together," and "common" indicate, precisely by not being able to fully capture, the complex considerations occasioned by the question of taking sides. They also, importantly, indicate the need to be attentive to the nuanced historico-political specificity of struggles within which this question makes sense. The complex dynamics of this specificity prompts us to consider the practice of taking sides as a political gesture of responsiveness and response-ability along the lines of registers such as engagement, collectivity, loss and comradeship, courage and vulnerability, belonging and unbelonging.

Although this account of the subject's emergence as enmeshed and complicit in, and passionately attached to, the terms of its subjection might seem to diminish the possibility of taking sides, or to disallow the taking of sides that have been made unavailable or impossible, it is precisely this founding ambivalence and undecidable tension at the heart of subjectivation that becomes the condition of possibility for critical side-taking. Not all acts of taking sides are merely scripted in advance by power configurations, and the emergence of side-taking agency that eludes or rearticulates processes of subjectivation is an always undecidable, aporetic possibility. The challenge here is to resist the notion of critical side-taking agency as standing aside from prevailing modes of signification and subjectivation. Such perspective compels us to move beyond the liberal understanding of taking sides in terms of one's own assumption of an available "option" over another. It would

prompt us to trouble the calculative, individualistic accounts that posit subjectivity and subjective agency in terms of sovereign will that masters an array of "choices." In this light, a problem that I would like to introduce in what follows is how a thinking of taking sides might be allowed to reconsider and reformulate the paradigm of the will-to-act through the perspective of a critical account of the complicated intersections between will, power, desire, and subjectivation.

Taking sides raises the questions of how embodied and situated subjects come to materialize and reenact the political, who is fighting whom and why, which epistemic and political frameworks enable us to take sides, and what other sides are put aside or left out. In other words, taking sides is brought about in its relation to multiple forms of undoing and being undone within matrices of power that shape sides, bodies, and possibilities of worldmaking. It involves becoming situated in space and time through the collective work of always figuring out what is at stake.

From this perspective, my suggestion here is to think of taking sides in terms of agonism rather than pure affirmation; in terms of being-with-others as a modality of strange (or estranged) familiarity rather than ontological identification. The critical conception of agonism as what remains a troubling force, or a spectral challenge, is akin to how Foucault has theorized agonism between power and freedom in his definitive essay *Subject and Power*:

> "The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot, therefore, be separated. [...] Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' – of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation." (Foucault 1982: 790)

In maintaining his critique of the juridical model for understanding power, Foucault posits "the relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit" in terms of mutual susceptibility and ongoing struggle.

Thus understood, taking sides bears suggestive resonances with *taking a stand* but also *taking of sites* as a manner of collective protest, occupation, and critical appropriation. Drawing on those resonances, to address the question of taking sides includes accounting for bodies mobilized and mobilizing, responsive and put on the line in concert with others. Thus, the question of taking sides names the possibility of critically embodying and performing the political through what Judith Butler has theorized as bodily experience of exposure and expropriation, which implies both addressing the other from an inescapable perspective of an opaque self that resists narrativization (Butler 2005) and the corporeal condition of differential vulnerability and susceptibility as a galvanizing force in plural forms of performative actions (Butler 2015). In other words, I argue here for an understanding of what it means to take sides through a performative entanglement of criticality and corporeality.

In this sense, what concerns me in this essay is the question of taking sides in relation to the critical and aporetic structure of becoming engaged. Although we are always already engaged, in spite of all volitional or deliberate acts of engagement, we can also *become* critically engaged: that is, answerable to the pervasive social norms and resources through which we come to be formed as intelligible subjects. And yet, one's engagement can never be assumed as entirely one's own. It can occur only with others and through others, potentially in critical and agonistic ways. It is precisely this indeterminate possibility that enables the always unprefigurable, and potentially subversive, performative politics of critical engagement. What is politically significant about the performativity of critical engagement is precisely that it does not entail an absolute rupture between possibility and impossibility. In this sense, taking sides, it seems to me, prompts us to attend to open-ended epistemologies of criticality –as both crisis and critique, and as an assemblage of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. So the very idea of taking sides must be critically revised in ways that allow for *disorienting* and *decentering* the dominant ways of being in the world and in which we are all differentially tangled up.

Sides not in Place

Those "sides" involved in acts of taking sides, however, are not merely "in place." They may be contingent and contentious. Not all confrontations can be reduced to siding with one of the available "sides" or to an unambivalent distinction between affirmation and negation. Moreover, the act (which is not merely singular) of taking part and taking sides in the political contest does not necessarily amount to staying on line or to being at home in this "side." Rather, it may involve taking critical sides within the side one has positioned oneself, or disrupting and reordering the available sides or lines of association. In other words, taking sides may involve making turns, going astray, wandering off, and deviating from assigned lines of demarcation, and even, hopefully, taking apart the apparatuses that generate injurious and exclusionary lines of demarcation. Indeed, dissent often involves refusing to take sides between equally injurious and mutually complicit names or norms through which we are interpellated as subjects. It is in this sense that I am arguing here that taking sides can be about unsettling the paradigm of taking sides itself and its designated positions. And so, taking sides may be also about defending the disjointed position of neither here nor there, or the position of being out of line or out of place.[1]

1 In a seminar delivered in 1978, in Collège de France, Roland Barthes defined the notion of "neutral" as that ethical and aesthetic position which "outplays" and "baffles the paradigm" (p. 6): in other words, as a way of troubling the terms by which a paradigm compels us to take

Sara Ahmed has offered an insightful account of how family gatherings "direct," orientate, or push us along compulsory and idealized positions, lines, and avowable affective objects: "For me," she writes, "inhabiting the family is about taking up a place already given. … I feel out of place in this place, but these feelings are pushed to one side. We can consider how families are often about taking sides (one side of the table or another) and how this demand 'to side' requires putting other things aside" (Ahmed 2006: 88-89). "Sides," from this viewing point, refer to directions, demarcations and orderings meant to shape and celebrate the straight body and desire while blocking other acts of becoming, notably those not aligned with compulsory heterosexuality and familial genealogy. In this sense, the demand to side can work to straighten different, eccentric, or queer affects and effects in domestic and public spaces. Such disciplinary straightenings and boundings rest on ingrained distinctions of sameness/difference such as the ones that play out in an anecdote Ahmed herself narrates, in which a neighbor called out to her and, propelled by her homophobic curiosity about two women living together in a house, asks, in a distinctly either/or manner: "Is that your sister, or your husband?" As we take sides, in familial gatherings and genealogies, but also in political conflicts and allegiances, we risk not only being injured for not being commensurate with assigned norms and names, but also being taken up by the ambient logic of straight directionality such as the one underlying that scene of the family table that Ahmed delineates. The "side" one might come to call one's "own" is often a site of idealized social regulation, whose operations are not readily knowable or detectable by the subject itself.

However, taking sides holds out another crucial political possibility as well: norms become appropriable and are possibly reworked and altered as a way of creating critical spaces for responsiveness and dissent – or, responsiveness *as* dissent. In other words, injurious address may work to fix us into normative dispositions and designations, but it may also give rise to unexpectedly enabling and dissident responses. In light of this problematization of "straight lines," I would argue that taking sides involves both being implicated in those unwilled lines of demarcation that act upon us *and* the agonistic performative appropriation of injurious terms against the interpellations they harbour. In other words, this latter form of taking sides refers to a performative *re-taking* of sides, which derives its political power from taking up those prior, assigned registers of subjectivation in new and improper, potentially critical and agonistic ways. As asymmetries of power related to intersecting race, gender, class and sexuality compromise our capacities for taking up space, taking place, and thus taking sides, at the same time our taking sides may

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one side or the other within a binary opposition. For Barthes, the "neutral" does not indicate the self-assuring, quiet, or "objective" middle-ground or in-between. Rather, it is a manner to be engaged, to be "present to the struggles of my time." (Barthes 2005).

work to unsettle those power configurations (as in siding with political struggles for equality and justice and against racism, heteropatriarchy and nationalism).

The inherently unstable and ambivalent processes of subjectivation complicate the possibilities of taking sides. Through a perspective that engages with the co-implication of subjects in crisis and subjects of critique, the question for me is how to tackle the problem of taking sides without reiterating the terms of self-willed individualism set by liberal imaginaries. The act of taking sides does not imply positing a pre-discursive sovereign 'I' that performs its volition as independent from, and invulnerable to, power formations. On the contrary, it denotes a possibility for a performative rupture in the regulatory repetition of the norms that sustain and are sustained by subjectivation. The subject of taking sides, then, does not refer to a pre-existing and self-determining volitional agent, but rather to a performative approximate occasion of its subjectivation. It is the space of this approximation which opens up the possibility of disruptive reworking of the terms by which subjectivation takes place as an ambivalent embodiment of norms – at once formed by and acting upon them. To understand the act of taking sides as a (dis-)continuous and incalculable process of subjectivation, one enabled and restricted by formations of power/knowledge, is to mobilize the critical potential of taking sides without assuming a primary locus of critique and without taking available configurations of sides and lines for granted.

What is at issue in the question how to take sides while disrupting the normative ways of taking up space is how to think about agonism alongside the political intricacies of non-sovereign subjectivity, finitude, courage, and responsiveness; and how to enact agonism as a contingent occasion to perform dissent while remaining bound to its aporetic or inherently contradictory condition of possibility as both possibilizing and impossibilizing. Aporia, writes Jacques Derrida, does not indicate a failure, a problem awaiting solution, or a mere terminus before an impasse. It rather indicates the experience of the undecidable, which has performative power, as through which a decision can take place (Derrida 1994; 1986). So the question becomes in what ways the non-linear, open-ended *poros* ('path or passage through') of taking sides as taking a stand can be precipitated and take shape each time so that it does not elide or suppress its constitutively aporetic structure, that is, the encounter with the pathless and the "non-way": the undecidable and the indeterminable. This raises the crucial question of whether it is possible to "take sides" in "ways" not consigned to the habitual linear tropes of fixed "lines" and "paths." How might this question, then, provoke new, nuanced and transversal "directions" for knowledge practices of taking-sides to-come?

Taking sides is a complex ethicopolitical performative experience, which involves both the urgent necessity and the imperative move or the event of taking a stand in time and, at the same time, the perhaps slower, even (too) late, and less capturable pace of critical reflexivity. In other words, it implies at once motion

and motionlessness; uprising and contemplation. It takes (its) time to take place at a given time. Claiming a space beyond the active-passive ontological distinction, these semantic registers are simultaneous and inextricable components of the political; they pertain to the interrelated defining features of stasis, which, as Nicole Loraux has significantly suggested, is constitutive of democracy (Loraux 2002).

What kind of body politics and public intimacy would such work of taking sides/sites as taking a stand entail? Different activist protest movements working within and on the limits of the present moment, as they gather and take to the streets or occupy spaces to contest power configurations of racism, neofascism, police violence, heteropatriarchy, and the differential terms of neoliberal precarity, have performed the questions: who comes together, who has not been included in concerted actions of "the people," and whose lives matter as lives? The international activist movement Black Lives Matter, which started out through public demonstrations seeking justice for the shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin in 2012, struggles against racialized deadly violence and embodied disposability so thoroughly embedded in the ordinary. The Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York City's financial district in 2011 and the occupy movements in Southeastern Europe demanded equality and protested the abusive power of the ruling financial elites. The transnational Latin American feminist movement Ni Una Menos ("not one woman less") contests the conditions of gender-based violence that turn public space into a fixed landscape of hegemonic, patriarchal memorability. The Istanbul Gezi Park occupation of spring 2013, which began as a protest against plans to remove a public park and turned into an uprising against authoritarianism, has defended and opened up the public space against the neoliberal calculability of bodies and resources. In such street performances, by articulating and transmitting dissident claims and struggles, political actors assemble in and reclaim a public space and contest the conditions of possibility for their appearance through norms of gender, sexuality, nationality, raciality, able-bodiedness, as well as land and capital ownership. The sociality of coming together and taking sides/sites with others emerges as a performative engagement that defends and mobilize processes of embodied public dissent.

In these street actions, in all their situated specificity and singularity, activists do enact plurality and relationality outside of oneselves and along with others in the public space. They embody their own and others' precarious belonging vis-à-vis power assemblages of racism, heteropatriarchy, and neoliberal governmentality. It is from this perspective that I ask here whether and how the critical agency of taking sides/sites might be rethought and re-politicized as a critical means to carve expansive cartographies of dissent in the *polis* and build new affiliations of political subjectivity in light of historically shaped collective claims of political self-determination and freedom. These acts of collecting and re-collecting space are inextricably bound up with the performative dimension of taking space, also conceived as tak-

ing position. It is to these emerging spaces akin to bodies together, bodies apart, and bodies on the line that I now turn.

Taking a Stand

In order to tackle the poetics and politics of taking sides in terms of taking a stand and as a gesture of stasis (cf. Vardoulakis 2017), I would like to draw on my research with the feminist antinationalist movement "Women in Black" in former Yugoslavia, whereby the activists position themselves not along the authorized lines of gender, kinship and national normative belonging, but rather in the side of the other.[2] By means of an agonistic mourning and mnemopolitics for the dead of the "other side," they take up the position of the internal enemy. They take a stand against idealized ways of siding with one's own and as a political possibility of being with others across ethno-national lines of (un)belonging. Their political action of reclaiming a public space for remembering others and otherwise work to traverse and transfigure the *polis* and its normative rituals of remembrance and recognition.

Through the performative registers of dissident belonging and becoming-enemy, these activists mobilize cross-border grievability to counter the biopolitical economy of enmity, with all its racial, ethnic, and gender inflections. Their enduring attachments to such affective intensities, as they play out in their commemoration of the annihilated victims of the "other side," their acts of camaraderie with the "enemy" community generate spaces for transvaluating afflicted losses into possibilities of critical agency. In hauntingly re-inhabiting and thus estranging the contained place of home, as both kinship and homeland, and in assuming the gender-marked position of the "internal enemy," these activists affirm relationality with disturbing and unruly others situated out of place and estranged as external enemies. It is through this political performativity of self-estrangement that they address the disavowed memory of those who have been absented and effaced from the *polis*. These activists dress in black and stand still and silently, usually at rush hour, at central spots of the city and noisy crossroads, or in front of iconic national landmarks: squares, historic monuments, and fraught dividing lines. It is precisely the established intimacy of public recognisability that the activists' black-coloured appearance defamiliarizes. In making themselves appear to others through their characteristic black clothing and silent standing, they take on the quality of a spectre in order to perform an unauthorized relationality with those who can no longer appear.

2 This section draws extensively from my book *Agonistic Mourning: Political Dissidence and the Women in Black* (Athanasiou 2017).

Their ephemerally "monumental" standing-in-silence, as a bodily mode of perseverance and protest, reoccupies and perturbs the monumental topography of memory and turns it into a performative field of contention and dissent. Since the years of the war that lead to the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, standing in silent actions for an hour, early in the afternoon every Wednesday at the Republic Square of Belgrade, had become the trademark of their political activism. Women in Black actions of *stajanje* ('standing still') resignify the territory of the memorable, despite and against the normative premises of blood affiliation, fatherland, and gender and kinship codes that found and sustain it. Indeed, a public space charged with contentious narratives of national history and politics, in all their idealized property and propriety of the "common place" (as a suitable and familiar space, national fatherland and home), is *spaced* by these activists' bodies. Public space does not come to be presumed as an empty and unmarked container waiting to be filled with things, processes, and embodied encounters. Rather, it is reappropriated through a process of becoming that both relates and separates, as Derrida has shown through his concept of spacing ('espacement'): "*Spacing* designates nothing, nothing that is, no presence at a distance; it is the index of an irreducible exterior, and at the same time of a *movement*, a displacement that indicates an irreducible alterity." (Derrida 1981: 81)

In such events of *stajanje* as standing and stasis, the activists' bodily posturing, steadfastly but also fleetingly counterposed to the national monumental architecture, textures and complicates the imperative to remember by opening it onto the disconcerting question of whom the remembrance of nationalist war requires effacing. In effect, the activists re-mark what has been established as remarkable about the monumental landmark. They occupy Belgrade's central square, performing a spectralized plurality of bodies, present and absent, living and non-living. Their silent "stubborn choreography" (Sosa 2011: 70) embodies an acting monument that defies monumentalization. By re-positioning their political bodies at the centre of the *polis* as a means of embodying their own and others' ambivalent and precarious (un-)belonging vis-à-vis its demarcation lines, these political actors become themselves "other" and turn the public space into a scene of dissent. They publically actualize the multilayered modalities of stasis as taking a stance and taking a stand, standing up for someone or something, but also bearing witness and giving testimony.

The Women in Black contemplative standing ensemble becomes a restless performative occasion of stasis. In standing at and across the border, in its multiple tropes of external and internal frontiers, enclaves, refugee camps, routes of mass expulsion, and states of siege, these political actors embody the *polis* in ways that echo what Loraux has described as "divided city," constituted on the basis of that which it disavows. As marked subjects of gender, women, Loraux argues, performatively embody the awareness of this internal stasis –as both division and revolt.

These activists put into play the ec-static character of political subjectivity as constituted through the address of the other (denoting both being addressed by and addressing others). As they become "moved" by, through and toward, the disavowed losses that haunt injurious mnemopolitics, they deal with the question of how responsiveness might appear in the languages of activism. Stasis, in this context, involves an embodied practice of inhabiting the public through one's own and others' dissident belonging. So how might we think activism as taking sides in terms of responsiveness exercised precisely in conditions of dispossession, rather than in terms of achieving sovereign autonomy through transcending structures of subjugation? How might we think taking sides as one's being collectively moved and moving with others despite and against the powers by which one is subjectified?

In summary, such performative actions of taking a stand articulate dissent as eventness of social agonism through relating with others. The disquiet these activists insert into the reigning domain of intelligibility manifests courage – a notion that Foucault has associated with critical work (Foucault 2012) – as not restricted to verbal acts of truth-speaking, but rather performed through a multiplicity of embodied daily acts, gestures, and aesthetics that enable the elaboration of critical matrices of de-subjugation and relationality. In the words of Holloway Sparks: "Courage, we might say, is a commitment to persistence and resolution in the face of risk, uncertainty, or fear." (Sparks 1997: 92) In the context of our inquiry, then, rather than a state of individual honorable self-mastery and heroic, manly, moral transcendence, courage emerges as a historically situated performative ethos of collective endurance and resistance, necessarily linked to power relations.

This line of inquiry is about the challenge of attending to and accounting for the aporetic space of taking critical distance and taking a critical stance vis-à-vis the present order. In this sense, the critical re-elaboration of taking sides as a political figure here is not about presuming an event (as a singular, time-shattering, apocalyptic event) but rather about enacting multiple and perhaps discontinuous possibilities for taking up and disrupting the normative social scripts of race, gender, and class privilege, and enabling other visions and enactments of the world. The political performative figure of taking sides indicates a precarious exercise of subjectivation and de-subjectivation, which haunts, while remaining haunted by, the constraints of power but also the absent presences of other, de-realized subjectivities. Simultaneously constituted and constituting, complicit and disengaged, this critical exercise in taking sides to trouble and subvert regimes of subjection is always inflected with and strategically reworking these power/knowledge regimes, always underway and slow-burning, persistently taking place and taking time, bringing about and calling for the struggles and transformations of one's time.

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Re-Nouncing Violence – Differentiating Linguistic Violence

Lann Hornscheidt

Why is structural discrimination, which I call violence, so enduring, so restabilizing, so indissoluble, despite countless instances of lip service and political equality programs? Is the idea of speaking and writing without discrimination hopelessly utopian? What role does language play regarding the fundamentality and longevity of violence in society? Or, how are language and violence connected? I will debate different ideas regarding the latter question throughout this chapter.

My epistemological starting point is a constructivist understanding that sees all violence as structural discrimination and all language as speech acts. From this starting point, I argue, that, as speech acts are potentially and complexly violent, language is never a mere representation of violence but inherently conveys it.

Understanding and Differentiating Violence

Contemporary German-speaking societies mostly understand violence an individual act or individual suffering: Individuals perform violent acts, and individuals suffer performed violence. This notion is supported, among other things, by a legal understanding that primarily penalizes individuals who intentionally perpetrate violence. This predominantly legal understanding of violence informs societal concepts of *right* and *wrong*, *guilty* and *innocent* in social discourse and media coverage to the degree that violence is irrevocably associated with the bodily acts or bodily harm inflicted and received by individuals (cf. Herrmann, Kramer & Kuch 2007). Because these societal concepts and implicit definitions of violence are so rooted in the physical, the idea that speech acts can be violent is barely recognized in the public consciousness – except perhaps as intentionally uttered *Hate Speech*. Hate speech is mostly understood as a precursor to 'actual', corporeal violence. Within this concept, linguistic actions can potentially pave the way for, incite, or mobilize violent actions. But the speech act itself is not considered violence. This is also closely connected to the fact that speech is is seen as inherently subordinate to action rather than a central course of action for individuals and groups. The struc-

turalistic understanding of language, prevalent in our society, therefore subtly depoliticizes any general understanding of speaking as acting. Only such an understanding could render language analyzable or socially perceptible as violent and thus allow for critical, anti-discriminatory courses of action that could eventually condition a different legal understanding of speach, language, and speech acts.[1]

Structural Violence

Understanding violence as structure in a social context, usually a society, makes it unavoidable for individuals. When this violence is realized through language, through speech acts which include silence, ignoring, and omission, I call it *linguistic violence*. Individuals, as part of a society, are exposed to constitutions of structural violence in multiple ways. From references and appellations, to National or gender categories, to language-based ratings and gradings, to formal addresses or lack thereof, to allocations and attributions, and different modes of conversation. Language conventions in society have to be understood as fundamental and reiterative to the normalization of structural violence. It is telling that the idea of structural violence that manifests in conventions and simulations of language and linguistic systematics has gone widely unrecognized in German and other languages' philologies, whereas it has been widely received and understood as highly relevant in sociological research (cf. Neckel & Sutterluty 2005).[2]

When discriminated individuals point out the directional violence of specific speech acts, the public often defames and dismisses such complaints as censorship, limitation of free speech, or an intervention by the *language police* (exemplary for a reflection of these systematics are Sow 2018; Hornscheidt & Agwu 2010; Kennedy 2002). How these speech acts are handled in the public, as well as some of the linguistic discourse, is based on and reiterates the understanding of language as merely mirroring reality and subordinate to the 'real' actions of people. All of these things combined have a massive stabilizing impact on public and individual views on the connection between language and violence. Under this chapter's lens, constructivist and discrimination-critical, structural linguistic violence is therefore unaddressable and socially un-recognizable. By recognizing violence as structural, this chapter offers a different perspective on power and predominant understandings of language. I will further differentiate specific dimensions of structural vio-

1 The idea that language, not only paves the way for bodily violence but is violence itself, has been brought forth and empirically and theoretically grounded in constructivist and anti-discriminatory linguistic (cf. Frank 1990; Hornscheidt 2014; Hornscheidt & Landqvist 2014), philosophical cf. Herrmann & Kuch 2007; Kramer 2007; Liebsch 2006), and rhetorical (cf. Butler 1997) academic positions.

2 This could lead to a longer debate on the disciplinary normalization of topics and their depoliticization through academic disciplination.

lence that will be relevant for a more foundational and constructivist take on spoken realizations of violence: symbolic, subtle, and epistemic violence.

Symbolic Violence

Maybe the most famous concept of language as violence was introduced by Bourdieu and culminates under the label of 'symbolic violence'. Here, symbolic power is the power to assign meaning. It is about establishing a specific concept of the social world (Bourdieu 1989). The influence of the individual stems from their symbolic capital, which is "a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition." (Ibid.: 23) "In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles which maybe juridically guaranteed." (Ibid.: 21) With the concept of symbolic power it becomes clear how general ideas of meaning are naturalized and conventionalized through discursive processes. Furthermore, the concept opens up the option to investigate which groups of people within a group of speakers have the prerogative of connotation and can normalize and naturalize meaning (cf. Raijlc 2018). Conventionalized language norms are hence a form of symbolic violence. At the same time, this subtle exertion of violence and power remains unrecognizable because it seems so natural and normal.

Subtle Violence

Burkhard Liebsch uses the term of subtle violence and approaches linguistic violence as a base of human existence with it. Liebsch understands the self as radically experiencing itself dependent on the perception of language, and therefore focuses on violence *in* language rather than *with* language. Aspects like speechlessness or silence as violent speech acts are at the core of his philosophical elaborations. Liebsch writes about the ineluctability of experiencing a life shaped by inherently violent language:

> "Don't we constantly move along the border of a double strangeness, inherent to our own language? On the one hand its original foreignness remains attached to it, on the other hand we subsequently become an estranged from ourselves as pre-symbolic beings. We cannot go back, behind language. Even approaching this border can only ever happen linguistically. Yet, this does not mean that language is a closed cage." (Cf. Liebsch 2007: 17, translation A. G.)

What I want to focus on, is the fundamentality of violence within this concept of language and speech acts, and that Karsta Frank called "Sprachgewalt" ('linguistic violence') in the early 1990s.

> "This archive [of conventionalized linguistic norms] provides new generations with knowledge, in a twofold way: Firstly, the individual accesses objectifications saved in the archive (vocabulary) whenever they talk, whenever they objectivize their experiences, emotions, thoughts, or perception and thus realize them for themselves and others. Language provides those who speak it with prefabrications while simultaneously forcing them into its pre-molded patterns." (Frank 1992: 116, translation A.G.)

At the same time these categorizations and conceptualizations that Frank calls 'prefabrications' are perceived as reality, making them hard to become aware of. In a feminist interpretation of Berger and Luckmann's "Social Construction of Reality" (1966) the matter of how specific groups in society use designations and normative language to make their view of reality a binding norm for all, is of special interest. In this context, the double meaning of the term "Re-Nouncing Violence" becomes evident: conventionally it would mean to forgo the use of violence – but also the metaphorical reference to nouns and annunciations ties it back to language and speaking as more than a mirroring of corporeal violence. At the same time, it also underlines, that the majority of societal violence is not announced, not named, and therefore, in constructivist terms, powerfully perpetuated. This connects concomitantly to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and the idea of epistemic violence.

Epistemic Violence

Under this term I want to gather facets of violence and power that are realized through the production, distribution, and reception of knowledge. What is socially understood as knowledge and which knowledge is authorized by whom is influenced by social, political, and historical conditions. The idea of knowledge is fundamentally ideological. There is huge structural power in the authorizing, audibility, and nomination – as well as the deauthorization, delegitimization, hierarchizing, and (de-)valuation – of knowledge. The groups that determine what is considered knowledge and which knowledge is recognized as a guiding principle for action, being ethically and morally desirable as well as legally binding, are tremendously and violently impacting the lives or non-lives of other humans, creatures, and nature. Epistemic violence is therefore all-encompassing, fundamental, and at the same time evasive, as it is inherent to social structure and a base for our collective understanding as a society. Very few authors therefore debate the linguistic aspects of knowledge as an integral part of epistemic power. Because of this I will follow two different tracks in this chapter's second half in order to address different areas of the larger concept of language and make it analytically applicable.

Knowing Violence

A first dimension of the connection between language and epistemic violence is the linguistic expression of knowledge. This includes explicit violent speech acts (so called pejoratization or German: *Pejorisierung*, cf. Hornscheidt 2011), which are also possibly closest to an everyday discussion of the idea of linguistic violence. Widening this approach then also means including not only what is said but also what is un-said, re-nounced, or de-named.[3]

A second level of knowing violence in language is the presumed possibility to talk about violence: violence can be put into words – even if only after the fact – as is important in the context of epistemic violence. Epistemic violence can be expressed retrospectively, analytically, and meta-reflexively. This, problematically, means that any reflection may be stuck in the paradox that any form of post-phrasing will necessarily occur in a space of knowledge authorization, e.g. Universities or other research institutes, that may be an institutionalized or societally legitimized space of epistemic violence.[4]

Beyond this assumed expressability there is a third dimension of epistemic violence where precisely what is deemed unspeakable becomes unimaginable and unintelligible time and time again.

So, what could this unintelligible exclusion from what is considered to be knowledge, in a society at a specific time, be? What lies beyond the battlefield of socially relevant, legitimate, and socially accepted knowledge? Because in omission, in the denouncing of relevance and validity, and in the de-normalization of specific modes of knowledge (production) lies a recognition of their existence through their explicit denomination. This third dimension of epistemic knowledge through speech acts – knowledge that is made de-un-intelligible – can be precisely analyzed through constructivist speech analyses.

In the following I will shortly address concrete examples of speech acts and the re-production of epistemic knowledge, in order to demonstrate the complexity of violence as such and of its intertwined strategies. This will be exemplified with the question of verbalized social categorizations.

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3 Un-said refers to the omission of priviledged postions, while re-nounced, and dis-mentioned refers to a refusal or avoidance of acknowledging discriminated positions. The German term "Entnennung" was coined by Hornscheidt (2005), "Ent-Erwähnung" by Lockward (2010).

4 The bashing of Gender Studies as a research and study subject by rightwing parties and groups can be understood as a violent expression and a power claim regarding the canon of what is considered academic knowledge (and what is considered ideology) and what can or can't be institutionalized at universities. The highly ideological charge of this attempted delegitimization of Gender Studies by rightwing actors with a strongly ideologized concept of knowledge is apparent and comes to the fore as paradox specifically through the attempt of assigning Gender Studies ideological qualities (and neutralizing their own stance with this rhetorical gesture).

Social Categorizations

Verbalized social categorizations are the organizational patterns of society. They enable interactive identification, simultaneously facilitating a sense of belonging and a specification of difference, thereby demarcating and excluding. Social categorizations are significant to society. The categorizations that I am specifically interested in are those established through structural violence, or rather those through which structural violence manifests itself. The levels of structural violence I refer to here are colonial racism, antisemitism, nationalism, genderism, and dis-abling. In other words, this means the collective and identificational assignment of people to groups of race, religion, nationality, gender, or ability.

Verbalized social categorizations that operate through these power structures are, in my constructivist view, always also re-actions to or the long-term products of structural violence. This leads us to the paradox that we often have to reiterate these categories in our language in order to address discrimination. Yet by doing so, a central dimension of discrimination becomes reified: that of the linguistic differentiation into distinctly named groups. Social categorizations can never evade fundamental structural violence, but are in fact conditioned by it, reiterate it constantly, and re-affirm its power, even if their aim is to work against it. Social categorizations as (self-)descriptions would not exist without the structural violence precluding linguistic differentialization and therefore affirmation. The current consensus is that sorting people by race is racist. Assuming, and academically justifying, the idea of different human races – supported by epistemic violence – is now considered unscientific.[5] All categorization of people by race is at heart racist – no matter how the different groups are then connoted, valued, and hierarchized. Likewise, any differentiation between abled and dis-abled people puts the discrimination, created *by* that differentiation, onto the people. But people are not dis-abled, they are labelled as dis-abled by society. The same argument can be made for gender: sorting people into gender groups is a fundamental part of structural violence manifesting itself and becoming uncontestable.

As part of structural violence, social categorizations develop their own dynamic. They are de-historicized and are thus moved towards universal status. Revealing this process is an important task in critical, constructivist speech analyses and a crucial part in the deconstruction of epistemic violence.

In the following examples, I will specifically seek out more subtle forms of epistemic violence performed in language practices as well as hone in on the linguistic acts in creating memory as the creation of temporal dimensions.

Let me start with an everyday negotiation of antisemitism in the German speaking public. In different media outlets, image captions, exhibitions, or school-

5 Science as such is not under scrutiny in this scenario. The system of the authorization of specific forms of knowledge hence remains intact.

books we can find statements like: "*Because* his father was a Hungarian *Jew*, the family *had to leave* Berlin within 24 hours in 1939."

The social category is established as preexisting and axiomatic, and the structures of discrimination and antisemitism remain unnamed. Nobody had to leave Berlin because their relatives were Jewish, they had to leave because Germany was antisemitic. The personal categorization 'Jew' was used as part of antisemitism and pared down to a definition created by the national-socialist ideology. People were then categorized in a racist way using this label. As such labels persist in cultural narratives and media, this narrow definition and the genocide of those people categorized as Jewish following the national-socialist party's criteria still informs, what is understood as 'Jewish'. The implied connotations have engraved themselves and been engraved into the structures of knowledge and today's interpretation of what the personal appellation 'Jew' means in German speaking countries.

Structural discrimination violently and powerfully inscribes itself into societal normalized knowledge about identities and social categories through the specification of collective categories that the discrimination created in the first place. They are then no longer seen as effects of discriminatory structures but taken as *a priori* in common knowledge. Why is this relevant? Let me demonstrate my point with a few quotes from literature using the antisemitically charged category of 'Jewish'.

Katja Petrowskaja writes about the memories of herself and her family in her autobiography, titled "Maybe Esther" (2015). In a chapter about a visit in Babi Jar she reflects on the layers, stories, and histories in the remembrance of violence:

> "Does a place stay the same place if, at this place, people murder, bury, blast, hollow out, burn, grind up, scatter, hold their tongues, plant, lie, create landfills and backfills, fill up with concrete, once again hold their tongues, block off, arrest mourners, and then later construct then monuments, commemorate their own victims once a year, or think they have nothing to do with it? […] Most people talk about these victims as Jews, often meaning simply 'the others'. That is misleading, for those who had to die were not the others; they were, rather, friends from school, kids next door, neighbors, grandmas and uncles, biblical elders and their Soviet grandchildren, who were last seen on September 29 on the streets of Kiev in an endless train of their own funeral procession along Bolshaya Zhitormiskaya." (Ibid.: 164-165)

The social category 'Jews' – defined, written in stone, and essentialized by the Nazi regime, in order to forcefully tie antisemitism as a naturalized attribute to bodies and people – simultaneously lead to an alienation, an Othering, a distance in the collective memory. The quote shows how these forms of collective memory seep into even this smallest units of language's knowledge production.

"I have never understood", Petrowskaja continues, "why this misfortune should always be the misfortune of the others." (2018: 165) Throung the unchallenged use

of these discriminatory, absolute social categorizations, racism gains a life of its own that seems so natural and self-explanatory that the inherent structural violence is unnoticeable and has become the condition for any conversation *about* the discrimination. When people are perceived as primarily part of social groups which are embedded in a regime of discrimination – and not as individuals or with a focus on the distinct individual relationship to a person when addressing them – this can be taken as a tangible linguistic sign of structural discrimination.

One's own identity is always a battle field when structurally discriminated against. This becomes apparent in a scene from Marion Brasch's autobiographical family story (2013). The author and her father, both living in the GDR, are standing at Marx's grave in London:

> "'When we arrived here, I was still a catholic', my father said. 'I wanted to become a priest, do you remember?'
> Of course, I remembered.
> 'It took me long time, to bide farewell to my god. I kind of put him in a dinghy and pulled him along for quite a while, but here I cut the cord' he says softly. We stood in silence at the Marx grave for a while.
> 'And what about your Judaism, dad?' I asked him after a while. His gaze came back to the present.
> 'What about it?', he answered irritatedly.
> 'I was only ever a Jew according to the Nazis' racial laws. This never meant anything to me. I was a catholic, now I am a communist.'
> 'But you had to leave Germany as a Jew. And if it weren't for that, there would have been no dinghy, and you wouldn't have become a communist, right?'
> 'Had, were, if', my father coolly replied, 'hadn't I have been a Jew, many things would have gone differently.'" (Ibid.: 294-295 translation A.G.)

Another linguistically obvious marker for structural racism could be when people can no longer decide if or how they can relate to a category as it has become so almighty and unavoidable for their own cognition and that of the others that people simply cannot avoid it and all its existential consequences.

This holds especially true for the category of gender. First of all, humans are – usually at birth – categorized by others in one of two, maybe three, groups of gender, based on medical indications. Second of all, from this moment on there is no option for a gender free life: regardless of how you define yourself, most people will project their gender expectations onto you at first glance. There are different lifestyle, medical, and legal options for changing one's gender, but there is no way to opt out of the categorization created by genderism. The categories are deeply entrenched in our social constructs and receive constant reference an everyone, like it or not, has to continually realte to them (cf. Hornscheidt/Oppenländer 2019).

Without language, without the potential to create, use, and take for granted linguistic categories such as gender, nationality, disability, residency, and solidifying them by describing people as *woman, tran*, man, German, Syrian, Somalian, Swiss,* or *stateless*, the respective structural discriminations would not exist. They can only exist, if the social sorting of people into these categories continues. This is also what I read into a paragraph from Deborah Feldman's autobiography:

> "Sitting at the table under the neon lights and cleaning the cabbage from grubs, that would make it *treife*, non-kosher, Bubby absentmindedly says, that Yaweh has only put the other people on this planet so they could hate and persecute the Jewish people. After all, it is this opposing force that defines us, just like Yaweh created day and night, darkness and light. One is necessary to define the other. Our Jewishness exists precisely within the framework of the attempts to extinguish it." (13, translation A.G.)

Being-Jewish, exists as a racist, violent categorization and valuation because other, mutually exclusive collective categories exist simultaneously. Collectively they unfold a difference, often imagined as natural, between racial groups, national groups, gender groups, and people, who are dis-abled or abled. Such socially collective allocations are a matter of power. This power is often enacted by naturalizing structural violence, which becomes indiscernible as violence, against all of society. This level of subtle, epistemic violence that evades social detection as violence is the most powerful of all violences.

Shohat/Stam (2012: 92) makes a case for a clearer understanding of social categories as relational and contingent, always prior, and always embedded into concrete social and history situations. Similar to how I understand Petrowskaja's pledge for the denormalization of social categories. Marica Bodrožić writes in her travel report *Mein weißer Frieden (My white peace):*

> "People, who never in their lives find their own language, can be easily seduced by the speeches of the powerful. When they submit themselves to them, they also acquire access to their power and their (however shaped) ability to speak, that they themselves don't have." (2014: 193, translation A.G.)

Part of symbolic power is the normalization and naturalization of linguistic categories and labelling of people into collectives. This enables and dis-ables potential actualizations of people as part of social groups. In this perspective, socially standardized speech acts are an essential base of collective, and common knowledge.

Petran and Thiel (2012) conclude that a symbolic order is necessary in order for power relations to stabilize as it makes specific kinds of violence feasible and then produces and legitimizes such violence. Their example is sexualized violence against women, lesbian, gay, and trans*people, with the categories themselves establishing people as open to being hurt.

In this chapter I have explicitly focused on aspects of symbolic order and how some of them are stabilized while others are rendered unimaginable because they are re-nounced. To this end I have employed the concepts of symbolic, subtle and epistemic violence.

Translated by Anne Ganzert

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A Side Taken
Relating to Slavery in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*

Ulrike Bergermann

We're not all here –
the drowned are missing.[1]

What does it mean, "to take sides"? While the first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen not only many governments of both the global North and South overtaken by right-wing conservative to right-wing populist parties but also a radical turn in polarizations during political debates, the urgency of taking a stand has dramatically increased for liberals, the left-leaning, academics, and all who have long managed to keep themselves out of such debates as well. Calls for restitution,[2] demands for the return of pillaged cultural goods through to reparation payments for the destruction of countries, if not even continents, due to the abduction and enslavement of 60-100 million African people,[3] and for the genocide

1 Slogan from demonstrations for saving refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, 2018, in Germany and elsewhere ("Wir sind nicht alle, es fehlen die Ertrunkenen").

2 On the issue of the sum of reparation payments, based on surveys by the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent 2015, Kehinde Andrews writes: Reparations were paid to the slave-owners; the enslaved received nothing and fell into new relations of dependence at former slaveholders' operations as a result of exploitative paid labor; nations that had been released into "independence" from the colonial powers were forced to pay enormous sums for the colonial powers' legacies, something which they are still doing to this day (between 1825 and 1947 totally impoverished Haiti paid 90 million francs to France). Andrews 2017: n.p.. If solely the wages of enslaved persons in the USA were calculated, the sum would be 6-14 billion dollars. Historian David Olusoga cites the research by University College London/The Wales Office, "The Legacies of British Slave Ownership Project", and a Slave Compensation Commission: From 1834, compensation equivalent to 17 billion pounds today was paid out to 46,000 Britons (refinanced through the increased value-added tax, which in turn affected the poor disproportionately; slaves were forced to continue to work without payment for years, those in the house for four years, field hands for six), Olusoga 2015. "Slavery Reparations Could Cost Up to $14 Trillion, according to US Surveys", Craemer 2015: n.p. See also Shanahan 2019.

3 Between the late fifteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, 12.4 million Africans were kidnapped (two thirds of them between 1700 and 1808). It is not known how many people

committed against aborigines in Australia as well as in South and North America, are beginning to send shockwaves through the European colonial states. On paper, taking sides seems feasible for a major proportion of white Europeans: We condemn the crimes of the past. But deducing from this history today's extreme differences between prosperous and impoverished countries, or among population groups within western nations, and taking action accordingly is less of a smooth procedure. There are films such as *13th* by Ava du Vernay, which traces the continuity of, for example, US slavery and persistent racism into the jail system and up to Black Lives Matter;[4] there are exhibitions on the history of the wealth of specifically named British merchants and their families due to the slave trade, as at the Bristol Museum, the Museum of the Docklands London, the Museum of Slavery in Liverpool, and others; there are numerous fine art works and projects that work through the complicated connections between global and individual history up into the here and now. A rethinking is demanded by the specific relationships between today's extreme imbalances and subjectivities: How are we as individuals, in the present day, to take sides within a history of violence, and how much of this history has been adopted in the things we take for granted, not only consumption habits, but also language and worldviews, emotions, and structures of desire?

A further reaching potential of taking sides examines the part of the self as part of the 'side'. Privileges and spheres of influence can be in play in this context. After taking sides, you are not the same. Octavia Butler writes it thus in *Kindred* (1979), the novel that connects the US present day with the US history of slavery,[5] as the

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died on the inner-Africa route to the ships; researchers assume one tenth to up to one half of all captives. A conservative estimate of 15% yields a further 1.8 million dead in Africa. 1.8 million died en route on the Middle Passage. 10.6 million survivors became forced laborers, mostly on plantations. A further 15% (or more) died in the first year of forced labor. Across categories, 5 million people died. In other words, 14 million people were enslaved, and 9 million forced laborers survived (Rediker: 2007, 5). This is also recorded by Michael Zeuske (1495-1880: 12.5 million abducted; 11-12 million arrived in the Americas alive) (Zeuske 2015: 19).

4 In 2016 Ava du Vernay's Film *13th* (named for the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution on the prohibition of slavery) illustrated present-day intersections of race, justice and mass incarceration in the United States in order to demonstrate the hypothesis that slavery has been perpetuated in practices since the end of the American Civil War through such actions as criminalizing behavior, disenfranchisement, lynchings, Jim Crow, and the prison-industrial complex. Today there are 2.3 million detainees in the USA, the highest percentage rate of any national population in the world. Today more black US citizens live under criminal surveillance than there were slaves in 1850.

5 Prior to American independence, the majority of African enslaved persons (approx. 300,000) was abducted to the British colonies of North America, followed by a further 100,000 enslaved persons between the American War of Independence and the War of Secession. In the Southern states the figure grew to approx. four million enslaved persons by the end of the War of Secession in 1865. "This forced migration [of the Atlantic trade in people]

new German translation of the title, *Verbunden* ('connected') (2016, in Berlin's publishing house w_orten & meer) suggests, and not only in respect of kin, or relatedness, although this latter becomes a component of the complicated novel structure. We are descendants of slaveholder-societies, children of the children of profiteers and/or victims, not necessarily blood-related, but part of societies that are founded thereon in economy, culture, and ideology; these lines of descent become tangled, do not always deliver clear sides and positions, but at the same time they issue a persistent call to answer for the consequences, even for sides that we have not sought out for ourselves. These days, presumably, taking a stance on the situation also means getting engaged in the situation ourselves.

But how fictitious is the involvement of abstract temporal expanses? That Afrofuturism formats, with their own understanding of time and historiography by and for Blacks, African people, and people of color, are becoming so popular in the late 2010s[6] is perhaps owed partly to this invitation to take sides. Does this history's vast scale not surpass individual agency?

Kindred 1976/1815

Dana vanishes in her living room and reappears a few feet away, covered in mud, just seconds later. As she tries to explain to Kevin what she has experienced, we the readers are initiated into their relationship, the shocking nature of the event, and the place where Dana was. The feeling of nausea marks her transition into the world of the Southern states during the period of slavery, to a farm in Maryland in the early nineteenth century, far away from the new apartment in California, of which the couple is currently taking occupancy in 1976. Amid shelves and typewriters the two intend to try and write their books; that Dana is Black and Kevin white becomes clear only through descriptions of the way people react to their

made America. Between 1450 and 1830 6-8 million people came from Africa to America, but only 2-3 million people came from Europe. The indigenous population of approximately 60 million in circa 1600 had shrunk to some 5 million and did not grow to 15 million again until circa 1850. In the nineteenth century, post 1819/20, another 3-4 million people were abducted from African regions via the Hidden Atlantic [...] and an unknown number was smuggled (estimates assume up to one million)." In 1840-1940 more than 30 million "coolies" were transported from India and China to North America. There was no mass migration of Europeans to America and Oceania until 1830. (Zeuske 2012: 42. Cf. Baucom 2005)

6 For comments on the popularity and the "strange attractor" Afrofuturism, see: Greg Tate, Rise of the Astro Blacks, 199-201; Anna Everett, Afrofuturism On My Mind: Imagining Black Lives in a Post-Obama World, 251-277; John Akomfrah, Kodwo Eshun, The Secessionist Manifestos of Certain Received Wisdoms, 363-369, and others in: Henriette Gunkel, kara lynch (eds.), 2019.

wedding.[7] For the Black Lives Matter movements of the 2010s, Dana's time travels would be exactly the plot to form a backdrop for persistent racism. In the 1960s and 1970s, when the Black Power movements were formulating clear positions, Octavia Butler becomes a voice of Black literature and the civil liberties movement – and simultaneously she thinks through existing complicities with the history of oppression. The sci-fi mechanism of time travel is employed for the protagonist's transfer back to the slavery era, and as we read we are led to confront a history of violence we are reluctant to see, reactions (shock, defense, the attempt to influence the casting back) are played through for us, and various genre-typical variants are reworked. During a time when the black civil rights movement in the USA was ever more clamorously denouncing the persistent discrimination, Octavia Butler wrote a novel which, for all its critical positioning, also investigates complicities and such things as 'minor kinships' – between present day and past, between black heritage and white heritage. Where Dana, an independent, feminist woman, lands, she is considered a slave. Once, when she accidentally takes Kevin along with her, he is regarded as her owner. Both of them learn how to deal with the horror of being cast back and the atrocity of slavery society, but are unable to influence the time travel deliberately – in this instance, taking sides has as its cause no free decision, no courageous planning out of conviction. But there is a trick.

Dana finds herself in the past whenever Rufus is in mortal danger. First she saves him, a four-year-old white boy, from drowning; she is almost shot dead by his father, and lands back in her living room a few minutes later. After the second and third trip, during which she is obliged to come to the ever-older boy's aid, she recognizes the pattern: He seems to call her – and she can return home only when her own life is in jeopardy. Written from the perspective of the astonished time-traveler, who attempts to come to terms with what she perceives, with the emotional confrontations, Dana tries to figure out as much as possible about the historical slavery context, in order to survive within it. The reader gets entangled in an exemplary, violence-steeped setting of a specific family history, in an abyss of ownership structures, contempt for humanity, and acts of rape, and has to reflect this confrontation: How are we to apply ourselves to this cruel past? Dana has no choice, she cannot look away, and she realizes that the boy whom she saves is going to have a child with a black slave, a child who is to be her own great-great grandmother. Here, what is a typical figure in the genre of science fiction literature – the 'grandfather paradox' (would I have been born had my father not been conceived,

7 For more about the *burden of interracial romance*, see Parham (2009): 1327: "The couple will always draw black looks, the black gaze: Don't you know that they raped our women?". The various consequences of the trips for Kevin and Dana are discussed by Donadey 2008. More about the relationship in Paulin 1997, and about the role of books within the relationship in Levecq 2000: 528.

can I influence the course of history, would I ever come 'back'?) – reveals itself to be most profoundly political: as a reference to another unspoken element of history (slaveholders raped female slaves, even for years; the conceived children were de jure their property and were often sold on, which once again ruptures the enslaved's lives socially and psychically;[8] also, women as slaveholders are only recently coming into focus[9]); but it is also political in the sense that these impure affinities depict relationships between oppressor and oppressed, relationships from which it is impossible to liberate history right to the present day. Dana is not simply an opponent of slavery, and she is not only a victim in the house of the slave-owning Weylin family in 1815. She observes Rufus, who as the son and heir is set to assume the role of plantation master one day, and attempts to weave notions of humanism and justice into this structure. To do this, she herself must adapt to the structure of the house and turn collaborator, in order to secure her own life in the nineteenth and the twentieth century at once. She will persuade Alice to let Rufus enslave her also sexually, which saves Alice's life at first, but Alice goes on to see her husband and children sold, to give birth to two children forced upon her by Rufus, and to hang herself when the latter (she mistakenly believes) are likewise sold – and Dana had hoped that Alice would live until the birth of her great-grandmother. This story exudes complicity from every pore.

Complicity / On Not Taking Sides

Though Octavia Butler was involved in Black Power activism, she was unable to espouse the anger directed by that movement toward the generations who had not emancipated themselves, who despised the stereotypes of conformist Uncle Toms and mammies while in their resentment restated such figures; while Butler works equally on the erosion of these figures and on the ideals of heroic resistance (Dubey 2013: 34). She prefers to reference the slave narratives that openly professed their

8 The "abolition" of slavery was not only fought for for a very long time, it was also drawn out over decades and left the wealth with the slaveholders and the servitude with the enslaved. At first, it was not actually "slavery" that was prohibited, but initially (1808) only the import of "new slaves" from Africa. The four million enslaved in America largely remained where they were at first (and the "40 acres and a mule" promised to them were never realized). One of the consequences of this was the enslaved went on to produce more children, who automatically were slaves; it is a largely unknown fact that there were at least two large camps for this purpose in the Southern states, in which women were raped; enslaved men were forced to this end, sometimes the women's own relatives. "Two of the largest breeding farms were located in Richmond, VA, and the Maryland Eastern-Shore", writes Spivey 2019: n.p.

9 North 2019: n.p.; see also Jones-Rogers 2019; see also Dietze 2013, about white feminism's relations to Black struggles.

restricted agency, as did Harriet Jacobs, who was able to hope not for genuine liberty, but for "something akin to freedom" (Jacobs, in Dubey 2013: 34); skeptical toward a rhetoric that focused solely on revolutionary agency, Butler formulates, rather, an "ethics of compromise". (Crossley, in Dubey 2013: 34)

Complicity means that Dana does not cut a heroic figure; she is no savior, no liberator of the enslaved, by whom she is even insulted as a "white n*". (Dubey 2013: 347) When she, the uncompromising and emancipated author of the present day, subjugates herself to the violent rule of the plantation and notes her inner conflicts, it becomes clear in the novel's "double-voicedness of the discourse" (Donadey 2008: 70) that the present-day reader would probably do the same thing.

Practiced neither in subordination nor in survival skills and constantly exposed to the inner struggle between rebellion and fear, Dana jeopardizes herself repeatedly, almost dies of a punishment by the white master, is betrayed by a slave who is afraid of the consequences of Dana's forbidden reading and writing lessons to the black children, and is herself ultimately obliged to fend off attempted rape by Rufus. Her ruse is to slit her own wrists, in order to set off the mechanism of time travel when her life is under threat – which absolutely means risking death, since the journey through time cannot be scheduled with precision.[10] Time travel is often associated with vehicles, with devices or magical places, and the journey itself is never a matter of life and death. But *Kindred* is about heritage and descent, no longer about 'what if…' thought experiments and potential variations, but about one single shared history. Devotion to this past, which has not passed and is embedded in the present, does not lead to a symmetry, but leaves you one-sided.

It is the minor considerations – will I need to take my toothbrush? – the minute practical considerations concerning clothing, the introduction of aspirin to early-nineteenth-century medicine before its invention, that lend the novel its force of conviction. What would I do if I found myself in a situation like that? Historical novels not featuring time travel also draw the reader, for as long as she is reading, into another world, but here the state of being drawn is itself a constant theme. This world is, and is also not, different; it is mine without my knowing it, without my having decided whether or not I want to see it. Colonial crimes and crimes against humanity are part of the history that defines my culture, my prosperity, my everyday life.[11] I cannot decide against it, the question is only what do I do

10 Of course, what Dana and we as the readers can not experience is the "Social Death" of slavery described by Orlando Patterson 1982. I thank Anja Michaelsen for pointing Patterson out to me.

11 This also applies for epistemological forms after the European Enlightenment, see on the relation between European philosophy and the slave trade Buck-Morss 2009; Därmann 2009; Diefenbach 2018 (about Hobbes' Anthropology of slavery); Därmann 2018; Därmann 2020; Sonderegger 2018a; Sonderegger 2018b.

about that circumstance; I barely need to take sides, for the side has already taken hold. This spatial, physical metaphor is played out in *Kindred*: Dana will lose her arm at a particular location.

> "I lost an arm on my last trip home. My left arm. And I lost about a year of my life and much of the comfort and security I had not valued until it was gone." (Butler 1979/2018: 1)

Thus begins the novel. In the face of the inexplicable history, it is language and storytelling that yield a meaning. "Not that what had happened to me made sense, but at least I could tell it coherently." (Butler 1979/2018: 9) Dana tells Kevin everything with such precision that she even remembers things she had not been consciously aware of noticing in the first place. Other media from the Gutenberg galaxy are able to assist (historical books, printed maps, forged passage papers), may be insufficient (such as the absent documentation of Black life in the official archives, the covering up of crimes), or are accessories (*Gone with the Wind* remains intolerable; a biography of Sojourner Truth must fall victim to a book-burning), but they are better than television. Experiences afforded by the latter remain second-hand; the first trips feel like something that Dana has seen on television,[12] and no movie has been able to prepare her for witnessing a whipping (Butler 1979/2018: 32) or getting whipped herself.

Writing Slavery

Christina Sharpe retraces these connecting lines between slavery and today's life reality also in her own family. "I include the personal here to connect the social forces on a specific, particular family's being in the wake to those of all Black people in the wake; to mourn and to illustrate the ways our individual lives are always swept up in the wake produced and determined, though not absolutely, by the afterlives of slavery." (Sharpe 2016: 8) The afterlives signify the persistent racist exclusion of Black people and people of color from areas of society associated with prosperity, from education systems through residential districts to workplaces, career opportunities, and the chance to build up material security over several generations, which is linked with improved health, higher life expectancy, and a lower likelihood of ending up in jail, for example. 'The wake' means: "the track left on water's surface by a ship, the disturbance caused by a body swimming or moved, in water; the air currents behind a body in flight; a region of disturbed flow" (Sharpe 2016: 2) – Blacks in the USA are in the wake of slavery up to the present day. As Saidiya Hartman did before her, Sharpe employs her autobiographical examples "to

12 "[…] like something I got second hand", Butler 1979/2018: 11.

tell a story capable of engaging and countering the violence of abstraction." (Sharpe 2016: 8) Here speaks an I that feeds off negation, off the absence of kin, genealogy, and anchoring in the world.[13] The objective is that 'we' "encounter the ways we are positioned through and by them, the ways we occupy the 'I' of Hartman's '*I am the afterlife of slavery*'" (Sharpe 2016: 33) – here, people of African descent are primarily addressed in the We, but whites will be obliged to face this issue too.[14] This issue of addressing, being concerned by, and responsibility for this persistent history is complicated by the fact that the historical lines therein cannot be defined so easily. Individual family histories may have been preserved that combine abduction, slavery, and the enslaved's descendants and provide exemplary narratives; and no less powerful, in a different register, are the statistics that have mapped the distribution of wealth, life expectancy, social segregation etcetera across the twentieth century and are able to deliver, in figures and graphics, the probabilities with which a Black or a white person will land in which part of the pie chart.[15]

At the same time Christina Sharpe formulates, "terror has a history and it is deeply atemporal." (Sharpe 2016: 5) Something does not add up in the spoken narratives, or in the mathematical proofs either. They come up against blanks, the un(re)countable, and these are not only the millions of undocumented abducted dead, the absence of archive material or of people who might remember the dead. It is also the unthinkable aspect of the whole history, the inhumanity as part of the normal.

The non-representability of cruelty meets the non-portrayability of temporal relations in trauma.[16] A traumatic event cannot be repeated in the recollection; it has a lingering presence, but it cannot be taken into consideration directly. For her book *Lose Your Mother* Saidiya Hartman bore down as closely as possible on the traumatic condition of slavery; her writing goes into its interweaving of individual

13 "We are the descendants of Middle Passage survivors. […] It was the tribe created by the rapacity of African elites, the territorial expansion of strong states, and the greed, cruelty, and arrogance of white men possessing the world. It was the tribe of those stolen from their natal land, stripped of their 'country marks', and severed from their kin. […] A philosopher had once described it as an identity produced by negation." Hartman 2007: 103.

14 "This is the afterlife of slavery – skewed life chances, limited access to health and of slavery." Hartman, cited in Sharpe 2016: 33.

15 "White Americans have seven times the wealth of black Americans on average. Though black people make up nearly 13 percent of the United States population, they hold less than 3 percent of the nation's total wealth. The median family wealth for white people is $171,000, compared with just $17,600 for black people. It is worse on the margins. According to the Economic Policy Institute, 19 percent of black households have zero or negative net worth. Just 9 percent of white families are that poor. Today's racial wealth gap is perhaps the most glaring legacy of American slavery and the violent economic dispossession that followed." Lee 2019: n.p. See also: Desmond 2019.

16 For "the central paradox at the heart of trauma literature", see Donadey 2008: 70.

history and history of the Atlantic, into both archives and the craving for absent persons and into the present day. "My journey along the slave route is a device, a vehicle for posing a relation", a hybrid form comprised of "personal narrative, a historical meditation, and a metadiscourse on history." (Hartman 2011: 111) There is no other way of witnessing. Hartman spends a year in Ghana, visits the slave jail Elmira Castle, and attempts to imagine the thousands of captives in the dungeon there (Hartman 2007: 119) or even individuals, and since this does not work, she describes herself as a "failed witness" (Hartman 2007: 98), in an impossible time again, because how could she have witnessed enslavement. Simultaneously the present day is full of racism, people enslaved in jails, people held back at school, people receiving deficient medical care, people affected by HIV who possess only three cents of every dollar etcetera, and that is the present day of slavery: "I, too, live in the time of slavery, by which I mean I am living in the future created by it." (Hartman 2007: 133) "My present was the future that had been created by men and women in chains, by human commodities, by chattel persons. I tried hard to envision a future in which this past had ended and most often I failed." (Hartman 2007: 233)

Saidiya Hartman's book is a self-experiment. (Hartman 2007: 118) It speaks (out) of an I that is at once constituted and undermined by what it describes. It learns, it is self-critical, it sees itself with the eyes of others. It dissolves its own boundaries with the history of the dead, it links itself with the dead, not in the mode of the visual but, at crucial points, via hearing. "[W]hat could I remember after hundred years of forgetting?" is an impossible question that equates the I with a part of the enslaved We and ignores the temporal leaps. (Hartman 2007: 157) An impossible combination of the unmanageably big and the subjective. The necessity of representing what we cannot represent must be affirmed as the impossibility that conditions our being able to know something about the past.[17] Storytelling is crucial for this undertaking, because it produces a relationship between past, present, and the futures. (Hartman, 2008: 13) Hartman's writing does not intend the text functions of objectivity and subjectivity as narration in the sense of the closed form of exposition-climax-dénouement (and not the narration reconstructed by Elahe Haschemi Yekani as the medium of bourgeois class identity[18]). A journal is an identity-giver; a historical record refers to the truth; an account means: report, reckoning,

17 "The necessity of trying to represent what we cannot, rather than leading to pessimism or despair must be embraced as the impossibility that conditions our knowledge of the past and animates our desire for a liberated future." (Hartman, 2008: 13)

18 The slave novel is part of "the emerging novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The act of reading as empathetic identification with Others – accelerated by the technical revolutions and increased literacy at the time – becomes the principal means of emotional access to this middle-class identity […]", Yekani 2016: 117-134; among other points she refers to the convention of describing atrocities (as marker of authenticity and affectivity

perhaps counting of slaves, counting of dead. *Lose Your Mother* counts/recounts all of that (under an imperative that does not address all in equal measure). Hartman describes her writing method as "critical fabulation" (Hartman 2008), in a combination of historical research, critical theory, and fictional forms.[19]

Historians, too, problematize the limitations of scientific writing, the forms of representation for information, for things past, for facts gleaned from documents. Marcus Rediker's book "The Slave Ship" (2007) begins with a scenic description of an abducted Black woman; his book too alternates between facts, analysis, political categorization, and narrative elements, while his repeated notion of 'drama' is less a critical reflection on his own writing than a marker of the combination of universal and individual, and it functions metaphorically: 'it was a drama', in the sense of: 'it was bad'. Between his extensively researched passages on the "global history of the slave trade in the Atlantic region", as well as on what he described as the "Hidden Atlantic", Michael Zeuske also works repeatedly with biographical passages, kept more sober than empathic, in order "to complement", as a contrast or a juxtaposition, a "history devoid of people" (Zeuske 2015: 235) with the method of "microstoria", for, he writes, the history of slavery is not narratable (also not filmable) – not, for instance, for lack of documents, but because these are disparate, form no narrative, and are "decaying" (Zeuske 2015: 1).[20]

White male representatives of the discipline of history consider slavery in a different time than Black female scholars do. For Hartman and for Sharpe the past has not passed, it is captive in our time; what they miss (rootedness, life, equal rights) is here and now. The one time has passed and has consequences for the present day; the other time is always with us, like the call from a dying family member can come at any moment. Christina Sharpe depicts family photographs, deploying captions like this one: "Everyone in the photograph is now dead." (Sharpe 2016: 23) Saidiya Hartman says of the museum in Elmira Castle that, amid all the objects and documents of the slaveholders, the slaves were missing. (Hartman 2007: 116) If she ever does succeed in placing herself in relation to the past, then it is not via

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trigger), to forms of self-representation in reaction to prejudices (125) as well as to the role of the genre in the construction of British nationality (123).

19 She also sees a tool for dealing productively with the given ruptures and leaps in working scientifically; cf. Hartman 2008: 11. Cf. Hartman 1997. For an attempt to think and write the non/reification of human beings, see Moten, in: ibid./Harney 2016; for the question of violence and academic writing see Bergermann 2020.

20 Zeuske 2015: 1. Cf. by contrast: "Schauen wir - indem wir uns vorstellen, wir stünden in einem imaginären Raumschiff mit riesigen Panoramafenstern etwa über dem Zentrum des Atlantiks - auf die räumlichen Strukturen des Meeres, so ergibt sich eine klare Gliederung." ("Let's have a look – imagining ourselves standing on an imaginary spaceship with enormous panorama windows approximately above the center of the Atlantic – at the spatial structures of the sea, a clear structure thus emerges.") (Zeuske 2012: 39)

the eyes but while hearing. Her book (although it comprises photos) ends with a song, which she hears with her eyes closed. (Hartman 2007: 235) This is the time of the present day. Hartman thinks and feels her way to the others' position, the slaves' position, against the background of kinship, of genealogy. Here, the empathic woman is the depicting/writing woman herself. Reading can appeal to or alter one as a subject, and this I is also never complete, it can remain characterized by an open desire, as Hartman formulated it in relation to the historical crime and the ever-absent slaves: "[…] missing the dead was as close to them as I would come." (Hartman 2007: 135) Despite this, with these unreachables she forms a we in a common country: "We may have forgotten our country, but we have not forgotten our dispossession." (Hartman 2007: 87) An exhortation to all of us whose kinship with the past is yet to be comprehended.

Kin and the Nation

In the 1960s and 1970s critical historians and the Black Power movement applied themselves to a "history from below" and to antebellum fugitive slave narratives. (Dubey 2013: 346) Subjective testimonies of slaves were pronounced to be historical evidence for the first time, and there were heated debates over who in the literary field may speak on behalf of the slave. Movies and television shows offered a specific perspective on slavery, usually filtered by white narrators. The most popular shaper of national remembrance of slavery was Alex Haley's neo-slave narrative *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (published 1976), which was translated into more than twenty languages, received the Pulitzer Prize, sold almost nine million copies and was adapted into an eight-part, ABC television miniseries (1977) that attracted more than 130 million viewers from all over the world. (Mitchell 2002: 33) Madhu Dubey opines that *Roots* "established slavery as marketable material for mass entertainment" and crucial for "the post–1960s process of national reconciliation."[21] Nadine Flagel considers it an irony that *Roots* aimed at "genealogical and psychic completion and wholeness, achieved though contact with and knowledge about one's ancestors"[22], while *Kindred* stages a wounded, disfigured, unwhole character. Where most neo-slave narratives dealt with healing, *Kindred* dealt with maiming – getting close to the past is dangerous, and the wounds of slavery are still open. (Flagel 2012: 232) Additionally, *Kindred* alternates between familiar scenes of the modern

21 "Haley's genealogical saga fed black nationalist pride through its recovery of African origins for contemporary African American identity, while his 'up from slavery' narrative endorsed the promise of the American Dream, impressing upon viewers the long distance traveled from slavery to the post-civil rights present." (Dubey 2013: 347)

22 Flagel 2012: 232, and she quotes Butler: "I couldn't let her come back whole", 233.

present day and a defamiliarization of American life: "Sharing the bleak view of racial progress that impels the neo-slave narrative genre, Butler revisits slavery in order to dispute dominant public narratives of the civil rights movement as inaugurating a postracial phase of national history." (Dubey 2013: 360) Numerous dates in *Kindred* refer to the national historiography of the USA, the self-conception of the USA as a white nation, in an "intersection of a science fiction of the body with American history" which Benjamin Robertson read as a biopolitical one. (Robertson 2010: 363) Dana embodies a history of the nation based on rape (she is alive only because Rufus raped Alice), she is unable to change the course of things, she involuntarily assumes shared responsibility for a violent history that causes her problems to this day ("that she is white as well as black; that she is American and not American"),[23] although Dana's final trip takes place on July 4, 1976 and hence on the day on which the bicentennial of the founding of the USA is to be celebrated, the independence of the thirteen British colonies. (Mitchell 2001: 52f.) Is slavery, are the slaves' descendants part of this history, of this nation? It can be a nation only if it embraces its entire history, and US-citizen Dana "cannot become fully American through synthesis or by ignoring that part of her that is understood as an impurity in a nation defined by whiteness." (Robertson 2010: 375) But at the same time it can be argued that precisely "[t]his split between competing forces within one's own body conditions what it means to be American."[24] Hence it would be precisely Dana who is American, and the true America will have only one arm, being obliged to regard its maimed state. Dana is as little capable of dissuading Rufus from committing his crimes as a trip from the American present day into his story is capable of changing the course of history, but the trip can accomplish a turn to taking responsibility for the crimes. Anne Donadey read *Kindred* as a "national allegory" and found further allegorical dates, for instance the year 1819, the period of Dana's third trip back in time, another bicentennial since, after all, the first enslaved persons arrived from Africa in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619; and she indicates Juneteenth, June 19, 1865, which is regarded as the day slavery ended, African American Emancipation Day

23 Robertson 2010: 374. "When I got into college [...], the Black Power Movement was really underway with the young people, and I heard some remarks from a young man who was the same age I was but who had apparently never made the connection with what his parents did to keep him alive. [...] He said, 'I'd like to kill all these old people who have been holding us back for so long. But I can't because I'd have to start with my own parents.' [...] That was actually the germ of the idea for *Kindred*. I've carried that comment with me for thirty years. He felt so strongly ashamed of what the older generation had to do, without really putting it into the context of being necessary not only for their lives but his as well." (Octavia Butler, cited in Parham 2009: 1320)

24 Ibid. "(In some sense, Butler here offers a solution to the problem of e pluribus unum, the individual within the collective.)" (Robertson 2010: 376)

(Dana comes back for the final time on June 19th, 1976). (Donadey 2008: 67) Moreover, Dana's and Kevin's last name, Franklin, is a reference to Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders at once of the nation and of the history of slavery (he "owned" two slaves, granted them freedom, and advocated for the abolition of slavery and education of the freed in 1790). Finally, Donadey asks why California and Maryland were chosen as plot locations; after all, they cannot be so easily located in the "Northern states v. Southern states" contrast (California did not become a federal state until 1850 and was not a slave state; in many Americans' perceived geography, Maryland is more of a state of the North or the East than of the South); Donadey posits that it can be interpreted that all Americans are addressed, from coast to coast: "By choosing states that cannot be easily identified today as North/Yankee or South/Rebel, Butler is intimating that the entire country is implicated in the need to confront the history of slavery. In particular, racism should not just be seen as something other regions can easily eschew responsibility for by blaming it only on the Deep South."[25] A feminist reading will be obliged to note in addition that the two defining people in Dana's life are male and white – allegorically, the instances of agency remain more immutable than the institution of chattel slavery.

A Side Taken

Dana realizes that she and Kevin are able to adapt to plantation life because they feel like actors who can return home at some point.[26] The year 1976 seems to be a kind of 'cushioning', and yet Dana states that she is not always able to maintain this double consciousness.[27] What is more is that she feels herself, in a certain

25 Donadey 2008: 68. Angelyn Mitchell offers a slightly different interpretation: "Although below the Mason-Dixon line, Maryland is often not remembered as a state of slavery, even though it is the birth state of the self-emancipated Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman as well as the state from which they both escaped. By choosing the setting of Maryland, Butler reminds her readers of how widespread slavery was and that slavery was not confined to the deep South. Her choice of setting also allows Butler to dispel the notion of 'deep South slavery' as the worst, when in fact, any type of slavery is barbaric and inhumane." (Mitchell 2002: 52)

26 "And I began to realize why Kevin and I had fitted so easily into this time. We weren't really in. We were observers watching a show. We were watching history happen around us. And we were actors. While we waited to go home, we humored the people around us by pretending to be like them. But we were poor actors. We never really got into our roles. We never forgot that we were acting." (Butler 1979/2018: 104)

27 "… most of the time, I'm still an observer. It's protection. It's nineteen seventy-six shielding and cushioning eighteen nineteen for me. But now and then […] I can't maintain the distance. I'm drawn all the way into eighteen nineteen, and I don't know what to do." (Butler 1979/2018: 107)

manner, drawn toward Rufus; at any rate, she does not hate him on account of his cruel conduct – until, ultimately, his proprietorial ambition extends to her as well, whereupon she demurs as in veiled intimacy before she stabs him. Then, her side is taken.

> "He lost his hold on my hand for a moment, but caught my arm before I could get away. Then he brought up the fist of his free hand to punch me once, [...] he collapsed across me, somehow still alive, still holding my arm. [...] I pushed him away somehow – everything but his hand still on my arm. Then I convulsed with terrible, wrenching sickness. Something harder and stronger that Rufus's hand clamped down on my arm, squeezing it, stiffening it, pressing into it – painlessly, at first – melting into it, meshing with it as though somehow my arm were being absorbed into something. Something cold and nonliving.
> Something... paint, plaster, wood – a wall. The wall of my living room. I was back at home – in my own house, in my own time. But I was still caught somehow, joined to the wall as though my arm were growing out of it – or growing into it. Form the elbow to the ends of the fingers, my left arm had become a part of the wall. I looked at the spot where flesh joined with plaster, stared at it uncomprehending. It was the exact spot Rufus's fingers had grasped. I pulled my arm toward me, pulled hard. And suddenly, there was an avalanche of pain, red impossible agony! And I screamed and screamed." (Butler 1979/2018: 291f.)

Kevin, who is unable to return without Dana and is obliged to stay in the past for five years by his own time calculation, comes back not physically, but psychically 'maimed'. Turning to (even one's own) history leaves scars. Why is it the loss of the arm, in Dana's case? To what purpose serves the disfiguring transition? Not only the white man Rufus, the past too has Dana in its grip. She loses a limb. Arm and hand, which she could use to make a grab, are lost precisely where a separation is accomplished, in a wall between two rooms, in a presumably white wall, dismembered. Does one grow into history, does one grow out of it? How is one absorbed, how is one melted, meshed into it? Screams cannot explain; written language plays a role in the novel's epilog, when Dana and Kevin travel to Maryland in order to research the plantation's history in archives.[28] They reconstruct one more small piece of history, the demise of the farm, the covering up of Dana's murder, and Hagar's path, but all in all the violent nature of the history of slavery remains largely undocumented – and in a certain manner, unwritable. What remains is a side taken.

28 Donna Haraway uses the term Plantationocene (alongside Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Chthulucene) for her concept of *Making Kin*, in order to emphasizes the plantation system as a historical era that is just as significant as the oft-mentioned Anthropocene. (Haraway 2015: 160; Haraway 2016)

Marisa Parham offers the following interpretation for the fact that time passes at different speeds in the two rooms: While one person is in the past, for the person in the present as much time passes as is required to read the history of the past.[29] On all levels, *Kindred* thematizes the unavoidable mediacy of conjointness, the body as archive, but within it also the "privileging of daily, bodily, lived experience [a]s central to the African American expressive tradition: Shit is real." (Parham 2009: 1322-1323.)

Mediality of Genres

For perception of the novel and for perception of slavery equally, realism plays a major role. Its markers are physical pain and the portrayal of pain. Pain guarantees testimony, both Dana's and ours. Long passages are devoted to the constant threat of whipping,[30] the witnessing of whipping and of one's own experience of pain: Dana has arrived in slavery, and Butler never dismisses us from the presence of

29 A "[...] radical temporal disjuncture between the two timespaces. When Dana and Kevin are together in either timespace, they experience time in the same way. But when only one is in 1815, for instance, the one left behind in 1976 experiences the other's absence as roughly equivalent to the amount of time it would have taken for him or her to read about what transpired in the other's life in the past, thus illustrating within *Kindred* the difference between the time of living and the time of reading. What to Dana feels like two hours in 1815 feels like just minutes to Kevin, feels just as long as it would take to read this page." (Parham 2009: 1322)

30 Recent research links the exploitation strategies and biopolitical economies of the plantation system with the factory and the history of management. Here it is not yet about bodies having to adapt to machines, but about measuring and notation systems. During a recording process not yet appraised to its full extent, daily notes were taken for every single slave of how much cotton he or she had picked, thus gauging individual performance that yielded a personal "quota"; this taking of measurements by the overseers very quickly transitioned into a penal system, for after weighing of the daily yield per person, every downward deviation was punished by a defined number of lashes; then the master transferred the yield to a ledger and the slate was wiped clean again (ledgers and slates were produced in the Northern states, which indirectly also profited from slavery in many ways), and a new quota was set for the next day. Quotas rose and rose, and between 1800 and 1860 plantations' productivity grew to meet the increased demand for material by the new spinning machines in Manchester. The complexity of measuring bodies (also noted according to age and gender), measurements, accounting, whippings, and mutual inspection levels is viewed by Desmond as a vast test bench for the future violent subdivisions of capitalism. "During the 60 years leading up to the Civil War, the daily amount of cotton picked per enslaved worker increased 2.3 percent a year. That means that in 1862, the average enslaved fieldworker picked not 25 percent or 50 percent as much but 400 percent as much cotton than his or her counterpart did in 1801." (Desmond 2019: n.p.; Ott 2014)

violence,[31] the effect of which is all the stronger for Dana's repeatedly asking herself how she is meant to shift and manage the translocation from her time into the present of the past, which is likewise our question when we apply ourselves to this journey as we read – in the to and fro between experience (it must be "real", Dana insists, because "it hurts too much not to be", Butler 1979/2018: 44) and mediality ("As real as the whole episode was, it's beginning to recede from me somehow. It's becoming like something I saw on television or read about – like something I got second hand", Butler 1979/2018: 11). Although *Kindred* is comparatively Butler's most realistic novel, she employs time travel and, with it, a means for a reflection on distance and the necessity to translocate that allows neither progressive storytelling nor other forms of illogical conclusion.[32]

Timelines are suspended, while even identities appear no longer clear-cut (in Rufus's eyes, Alice and Dana seem to be one being; Dana sees similarities between Rufus and Kevin) and desire and descent move into proximity with incestuous relations when Rufus tries to rape Dana, but has conceived her great-great grandmother prior to that…[33] What kind of temporality is that meant to be? Neither

31 "I could literally smell his sweat, hear every ragged breath, every cry, every cut of the whip … I had seen people beaten on television and in the movies. I had seen the too-red blood substitute streaked across their backs and heard their well-rehearsed screams. But I hadn't lain nearby and smelled their sweat or heard them pleading and praying, shamed before their families and themselves. I was probably less prepared for the reality than the child crying not far from me. In fact, she and I were reacting very much alike. My face too was wet with tears. And my mind was darting from one thought to another, trying to tune out the whipping." (Butler 1979/2018: 33 (original ellipsis). Cf. Flagel 2012: 235f., Dubey 2013: 351)

32 One illogical conclusion is performed and immediately rejected again: Now and again, with critical irony, Dana's colleagues call their Californian workplace a "slave market". "Yet the novel contains several tricky moments that elicit, only to then cast doubt on, reading procedures that too neatly conflate past and present. In a much-cited passage that appears early in *Kindred*, Dana carelessly uses the phrase 'slave market' to describe the casual labor agency through which she seeks employment. Critics have unanimously interpreted this analogy as evidence of historical continuity between antebellum chattel slavery and the late twentieth century, but Dana immediately corrects herself: 'Actually, it was just the opposite of slavery. The people who ran it couldn't have cared less whether or not you showed up to do the work they offered. They always had more job hunters than jobs anyway' (52). Clarifying that the labor market in Dana's present is marked not by shortage, as it was in the antebellum era, but by the existence of a vast pool of surplus workers, this passage highlights the critical shifts in the dynamics of inequality that get obscured when the present is viewed as essentially continuous with the past." (Dubey 2013: 349)

33 "The sexual encounter between master and slave is necessarily a rape, evacuating erotic and loving desire. Additionally, Dana expels the thought of incest. While genealogical relationships can be creatively reinvented and inverted in Kindred, incest needs to be avoided at all cost. The novel is full of genealogical reversions and new offshoots that turn descendants into ancestors, and twohundred-year-old elders into same-age siblings." (Loichot 2009: 44)

linear nor non-linear, no straightforward continuity but still, a deep entanglement of centuries – linear slave narratives interrupted by the unpredictability of science fiction time travel.[34] The blending of genres shakes up the individual genre's conventions; the realism of the biographical slave narrative is opposed by the fantastical aspect of science fiction. An array of authors wrote in this new genre of the 'fantastic neo-slave narrative' in the 1970s; *Kindred* ranges between identification perspectives for readers (through the first-person perspective) and distanced reflections.[35] *Kindred* tells the story of a Black American who has ancestors among both the enslaved and slaveholders, the great-great granddaughter of a *métissage*; the book itself is a *métissage* of two popular forms, slave narration and the sci-fi novel. (Flagel 2012: 217) *Kindred* hybridizes genres. (Cf. Loichot 2009: 40)

In the early twenty-first century several literary critics drew a link between *Kindred* and African and Afro-diasporic traditions, for instance the West African concept of *sankofa*, which says, "one must return to the past in order to move forward." (Donadey 2008: 77; Mitchell 2001: 51) Stella Setka recently situated the novel in a "phantasmic reincarnation" of Igbo cosmology and claims that Dana corresponds to the Ogbanje figure, a spirit that journeys between worlds. Thereby, Setka proposes, Butler refers to African traditions, rejects the Western concepts of descent and linear time,[36] and utilizes Afro-centric epistemological forms that have

34 "Crossley argues that Dana's unexplained time travel may be 'the vehicle that looms behind every American slave narrative, the grim death ship of the Middle Passage from Africa to the slave markets of the New World. In her experience of being kidnapped in time and space, Dana recapitulates the dreadful, disorienting, involuntary voyage of her ancestors' [...] [Dana's] disorienting nausea and fears of her travels owe as much to speculative fiction as they do to slave narratives." Flagel 2009: 1321. Toni Morrison wrote that authors of slave narratives such as Oladuah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Ann Jacobs were obliged to address a white audience, in her view; however, she sees her task in representing even sexualized violence and other unpopular topics regardless of a white audience's expectations. (Morrison 1995: 91)

35 "The 1970s marked the emergence of a new genre of African American literature – the fantastic neo-slave narrative, which draws on nonrealist devices such as time travel and supernatural possession to revisit the history of slavery. This genre includes literary as well as mass-market novels by writers including Stephen Barnes, Charles Johnson, Toni Morrison, Phyllis Alesia Perry, Ishmael Reed, and Frank Yerby and is generating a proliferating body of critical scholarship. According to critical consensus, contemporary novels of slavery disrupt realism in order to challenge established norms of historical representation but nonetheless retain a stable sense of their referent – that is, the historically specific institution of American chattel slavery." (Dubey 2013: 345)

36 Setka 2016: 93f. She refers to two Black scholars, who however do not write about Butler: Christopher N. Okonkwo, A Spirit of Dialogue: Incarnations of Ọgbañje, the Born-to-Die, in African American Literature, Knoxville (University of Tennessee Press) 2008. Okonkwo teaches African American and African literature at the University of Missouri. See Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, An Abiku-Ogbanje Atlas: A Pre-Text for Rereading Soyinka's *Ake*' and

been oppressed, Setka writes, by the European Enlightenment (Setka 2016: 95).[37] But Butler does not simply side with a Black heritage. Just as little is time travel a "metaphoric Middle Passage" (Mitchell 2001: 52).

Re-membering

"Allegorically, Dana's severed arm can also be interpreted as a reference to limbs that were broken off family trees through the discontinuities caused by slavery, both because of the silences of history around the prevalence of white male rape of enslaved black women and because black family members were purposefully severed from one another through being sold to different owners", writes Donadey (2008: 74), thus aligning with the common interpretation that sees the arm as a 'member' and speaks of a dismembering[38] or also disarming[39] in reference to *Kindred*. While the destruction of Black parenthood by white slaveholders effects 'amputations' in the illustrated family tree on the one hand, trees are generally no longer fitting symbols since "slavery troubles the clear distinction between blood

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Morrison's *Beloved*, in: African American Review 36.4 (2002), 663-678, idem., Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1996. Onguyemi analyses Nigerian women's literature. The Black scholars produce no link to *Kindred*; a white researcher undertakes that a decade later.

37 Setka 2016: 95. Regardless of the fact that no statement on the subject by Butler appears in her numerous interviews, this interpretation seems to be very deliberate and there is not really any evidence for it in the text, unless the Igbo figures were to be expanded so that ultimately, one could use them to explain every time-journey in every novel or movie: "Traditionally understood, *ogbanje* is an Igbo term used to signify spirits who manifest themselves in human flesh by taking over or causing a pregnancy, are born into the human world, and die young, only to begin the cycle all over again." Setka 2016: 99. "The sense of connectedness through time and across generations that arises from Dana's ogbanjism reflects the African cosmological view that all entities are rooted in a 'cosmic totality' that links everyone and everything together as inextricable parts of a cosmic whole" (Setka 2016: 98f.). Strictly speaking, the character of Dana does not at all correspond to the more detailed description of the Ogbanjes, this embodiment of a mischievous being who is "not him/herself human and who has little interest in committing to a human lineage"; the rebirth of *ogbanjism* always completes a full life cycle (with reference to Christie Achebe idem.), which is not the case here, etcetera. However, one can interpret the desire for such a reference as a symptom.

38 "The slave family is marked by a series of amputations: an immense and abrupt severing from original African roots and memory; a dismemberment of family units by practices of kidnapping or selling; literal amputations of limbs of fugitive slaves; splits between bodies turned into economic tools of production and mind; substitution of mothering and fathering by breeding; and attempted disassociation of humanity from black subjects." (Loichot 2009: 41).

39 "The loss of Dana's arm [... shows] that history can disarm the present." (Flagel 2012: 224)

and law in kinship constructions because biological filial relations between masters and slaves, for instance, are complicated by the master's legal position as owner." (Loichot 2009: 42) Rather, new terms take effect in this situation, such as "fictive kinship" (Patterson) or "plantation kinship", creating a "w/hole" (Brathwaite)[40] and, often enough, offshoots from the severed limbs. Valérie Loichot even speaks of a "poetic of limbs" (which she even sees visually reflected on the cover of the first edition, right down to the typography, see fig. 1).[41]

One part of 1976 stays in 1819. Dana and Rufus remain connected through a dead limb. Organic and inorganic fuse in the wall, they are unable to fully detach themselves from the past, the arm is not here and not there, not inside and not outside, it is on no side; but the wound also opens the body to new growth, a possible "bidirectional movement: growing out and growing back in." (Loichot 2009: 45) Where there is no written archive of slavery, Dana's body remains the 'the primary signifier', marked by the whip and by amputation in the 'hole' of the 'w/hole', the 'whole' paradox of which is sketched as a "matching strangeness" (Butler 1979/2018: 24). Dana looks at Rufus and asks herself what their connection consists of.

> "Looking at him confused me. But he had to be the one. There had to be some kind of reason for the link he and I seemed to have. Not that I really thought a blood relationship could explain the way I had twice been drawn to him. It wouldn't. But then, neither would anything else. What we had was something new, something that didn't even have a name. Some matching strangeness in us that may or may not have come from our being related." (Ibid.)

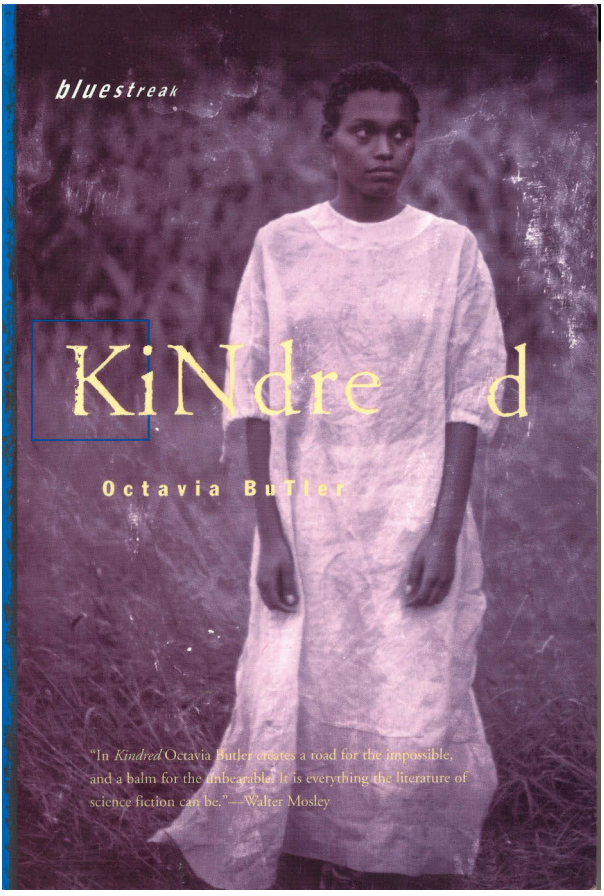
Here the rejoining of limbs, 're-membering', the capability of remembering are one with the experience of dismemberment, according to Therí A. Pickens. (2015: 170) The arm with no place links anniversaries that are meant to celebrate founding myths of freedom and equality, but Dana's disability marks these myths as wrong and dangerous. (Pickens 2015: 171) National belonging relies on a normalcy that excludes missing members and needs this exclusion to function.[42] Whereas, as a

40 Ibid. Loichot quotes the notions from Kamau Brathwaite and from Orlando Patterson in *Slavery and Social Death* (2018).

41 "Butler's oeuvre, from Kindred to Xenogenesis, is also traversed by this poetics of limbs, which are severed from an original body, or which, by growing back again, create unexpected links. Images of dismemberment and of regrowth of amputated bodies abound in Butler's science fiction novels. The title of *Kindred* itself performs a severing. On the cover of the 1988 edition, "Kindred" graphically appears as 'KiNdre d'. The title itself therefore textually contains the severing that is at the basis of the family reconstruction". (Loichot 2009: 43)

42 "Given that enslavement is historical fact and disability a natural corollary thereof, the conclusion would be that the integrity of the nation requires disability to function as whole." (Ibid.)

Figure 1: Kindred, book cover of the first edition



rule, national allegories are represented by white women's bodies, it is a disfigured Black woman who is genuinely able to symbolize the nation.[43] Or better: who has thwarted the nation of white lines of descent. Who conceives kinship out of different blood, violence, and responseability.

Translated by Alexandra Cox

43 "Dana's traversal of both worlds on the eve of the bicentennial, prompted as it is by nationwide remembrance of America's origins, positions Dana's particular racialized, gendered, and abled experience at the crux of any memory of the nation-state." (Ibid.)

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Writing through the Milieu
Social Mobility and Queer/Feminist Critique as Existential Practices

Julia Bee

In this paper, I will discuss Didier Eribon's recent books *Retour à Reims, Société comme verdict* and more specifically, his more conceptual collection of essays *Principes d'une pensée critique* in relation to my own teaching and writing as well as in regard to modes of writing in academic contexts. Both teaching and writing are key scenarios of taking a side/site. I want to propose re-thinking forms of academic and biographical writing like Eribon's as an "existential territory" (Guattari 1996: 134) which is not simply a place but a milieu for new individuations or subjectivities to emerge. By producing situated knowledge of and from the side/site of his social background, Eribon entangles two operations: in considering his social milieu he both affirms his background and investigates it as a place of departure or 'anchoring point' by leaving this place of shame and self-destruction. Thus, *Retour à Reims* is at once both a return and a new becoming, an entanglement of past and future acts of subjectivation (Foucault 1986, 2005).[1]

Eribon's more recent work is situated in a genealogy of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory and is markedly influenced by the latter's *Sketch for a self-analytics / Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (2004). The notion of the side/site in Eribon can be traced in at least three ways: First, in his biography as he, at least institutionally, transgressed social classes by becoming a university professor. Secondly, in his combination of social and queer theory. Thirdly, and specifically of interest here, in his style of writing through experimentation with combining theory *and* biography, thinking *and* feeling, the personal *and* the political in the very same text. His project of self-analysis is the reason for his return to Reims after the death of his

1 In this regard I want to acknowledge Max Walthers current PhD project at the graduate school media anthropology at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. In his dissertation he shows how feminist writing constitutes acts of subjectivation in the work of Simone Weil, Chris Kraus, Kathy Acker and Annie Ernaux. Particularly self-reflexive literature not only constitutes biographical accounts of lives but is very much a technique of existence and a "performative philosophy" as Walther writes in his exposé (2).

father. The return is to be understood literally and philosophically. It considers not only a return but also a method of writing the future by writing through past and therefore present.

His academic writing is entangled with his life since the place where Eribon writes from – now as a Sociology professor in Amiens – is itself marked by his situation of double oppression as a queer person with a working-class background. As I want to propose, this is not only his topic in terms of content but informs his method or say, technique of writing. This writing style is very much entangled with the production of subjectivities, reminiscent of Michel Foucault's aesthetics of existence (2005, 1986).[2]

Habitus

In his semi-autobiographical, semi-theoretical book *Retour à Reims,* Eribon invites the reader to think of the university as an institution not only key to the regulation of knowledge production but also to the act of learning as gaining access to symbolic and economic capital, which in turn stabilizes social hierarchies. In other words, *Retour à Reims* contributes to the ongoing debate and class struggles not only between France's elite school and university system with its prestigious *Grand Écoles* in Paris on the one hand and the regional schools in the periphery on the other, but also beyond its borders. The German education system, for example, has often been described as one that perpetuates class differences and having 'very low social mobility'. In fact, studies have repeatedly revealed how non-permeable the German education system is compared to other European countries.[3] Eribon's

2 In Germany especially, *Retour à Reims* has been widely acclaimed and was broadly discussed as an academic bestseller. A play has been written based on *Retour à Reims* and an opera has just premiered in Berlin. It has even been cited in the German Bundestag. Its reception was accompanied by Eduard Louis' biographical book *En finir avec Eddy Bellegueul*. For the discussion in Media Studies, see the issue *Class* of ZfM, edited by Ulrike Bergermann and Andrea Seier (2).

3 For example, the recent PISA study showed the relation between social background and grades in school, especially reading capacities, which are much more elaborate even at a young age among children from academic families. OECD states: "Chancengerechtigkeit bleibt eine der Herausforderungen für das deutsche Bildungssystem. So hat sich in Deutschland seit der letzten PISA-Studie mit Leseschwerpunkt (2009) beim Leseverständnis die Abhängigkeit der Leistung von der Herkunft noch verstärkt." / "equal opportunity is one of the challenges of the German education system. Since the last PISA study with focus on reading (2009) the connection between reading capacities and social background concerning reading understanding have even become worse." Press release OECD PISA study 2018: http://www.oecd.org/berlin/presse/pisa-studie-2018-leistungen-in-deutschland-insgesamt-ueberdurchschnittlich-aber-leicht-ruecklaeufig-und-mit-grossem-abstand-zu-den-spitz

works are thus extremely insightful in that they highlight and address these experiences from within and from a more distanced perspective as a professor and author. In his writing, he folds inside and outside, creating an act of subjectivation (Walther 2018: 4).

In his biography, Eribon demonstrates how much of the power of the social world works through learned and internalized self-exclusion from institutions, particularly in higher education. This is what Bourdieu has long argued since his extensive studies in *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* / *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, originally published in 1979. As an illustration, in *Retour à Reims*, Eribon gives an account of how his school choices were influenced by what he himself describes as a stubborn inner drive for self-exclusion by not attending classes and engaging in political activities (2013: 176). Selecting Spanish classes instead of German for example, he adds, results from a lack of knowledge that academic families inform and often 'silently' guide their children that as a future Humanities scholar in the French philosophic-centric system, some knowledge of German is required to read the German philosophers. (Ibid. 177-178)

Bourdieu, as it is well known, hails from a rural non-academic family in the Pyrenees and became France's sociology superstar in the second half of the 20th century by passing through the elite system at the *École normale supérieure*, Sorbonne. He went on to hold a chair for Sociology at *Collège de France* without ever losing his critical perspective on the academic world. In fact, most of his success is built (as he writes) on his critical distance as an outsider to the academic system, which provided him with an analytical clarity and almost brutal sharpness in critiquing that said system. This is what he has described at the end of his life in *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* as a so-called "*cleft habitus*, inhabited by tensions and contradictions" (Bourdieu 2008: 100), enabling him to clearly see many mechanisms of how the social world reproduces itself on a daily basis.

The dominant mechanism of power in terms of social reproduction is the habitus, stemming from *habit*, practice, or repetition of customs and behavior. The principles of the habitus include the force of gravity of the reproduction of *doxa* through *hexis*, meaning values, opinions, and cognitive schema as well as bodily inscribed sets of behavior, feeling, pleasure, speech, etc. (Bourdieu 2008: 141). The doxa *is* the hexis: the position or attitude towards the world equals its cognitive schema and vice versa. (Ibid.: 184ff) The overall principle of the habitus is a constant effort applied to sustaining an equivalence between habitus and habitat, or social place and body. Here, too, correlate sites with sides. The mechanism of their amortization is socially determined. A habitus always seeks to be in sync with a place. People from families of non-academic or informal education often lack the impetus und the

enreitern-03122019.htm, translation JB. See also PISA 2018 results, "where all students can succeed," Volume 2, chapter 4 "social diversity and equity in learning outcomes" (83-105).

social, economic and mental security to attend university and even the networks that help kick-start, sustain, or complete an academic education or career – or make sense of this form of abstract education.[4] Alongside values, modes of thinking, behavior, dress, and tastes in art, food, clothing, and furnishings reveal one's belonging to a social group. Groups seek to include what they know: a group will include members with similar affinities, and a person having a background in a certain milieu will orient herself towards such a (familiar) milieu. Increase in formal education by university education will therefore often lead to an alienation between the family and a student, as seen in Eribon's account (2018: 115). In this way, people can become refugees of class (in the German translation 'Klassenflüchtlinge'). So, much more than being formally inaccessible, the social world consists of informal, habitual, and invisible regulations that prevent people from accessing positions of high symbolic and economic capital. One form of capital often leads to the other and relates to the former.

Exclusion thereby works in a double manner: Not only will those who profit from exclusion stabilize them, but also those who are excluded reproduce them with their actions and involuntary acts of self-exclusions. Bourdieu outlines a practical sense of one's place:

> "The knowledge supplied by incorporation of the necessity of the social world, especially in the sense of limits is quite real[…] like the submission which it implies and which is sometimes expressed in the imperative statements of resignation: 'That's not for us' (or 'not for the likes of us'), or, more simply, 'it's too expensive (for us)'." (Bourdieu 2008: 185)

Because the social world gains a relative stability, making itself appear eternal, patterns of thinking, feeling, and judging seem to be naturalized. Hexis and doxa will act as mutual mirrors and orient the subject towards the familiar social world and will act as if the social world is eternal by naturalizing social hierarchies. Embodied patterns of recognition will lead to cognition and perception that stabilize these patterns (Bourdieu 2002). Following Bourdieu's theory of practice as well as Eribon's report of his childhood and youth, social exclusion operates in a very bodily way: "So as the child of a worker you experience in your very flesh the sense of belonging to the working class" (Eribon 2013: 99).

4 See for studies about social reproduction in academia and a practiced-based concept of "habitus sensitive teaching" in cultural and film studies Eckert/Martin 2019, for social security esp. 279-280. Eckert and Martin propose a concept of in-class-writing as a strategy to include diverse students and to informally address and prevent class hiatus in teaching that is often based on oral exams and therefore oral self-representation. On the contrary Eckert and Martin suggest a self-empowerment in writing practices according to bell hooks.

The social background is inscribed into the body: reproducing what this body learned, by which principles it is formed on the one side, and on the other, the socially formed body contains an affective power that orients it towards places, positions, and hierarchies – and even desires and wishes. The body is the embodiment of a biography that inscribes itself not only superficially into one's thinking but produces a body open or foreclosed to certain impulses, such as learning and thinking, etc. Often affective registrations like feeling comfortable in a place, belonging to a place (like the classroom, a conference venue, etc.) create an affinity that prompts engaging with such places. Or, vice versa, feeling awkward in a place by feeling clumsy or shameful about one's speech, manners, accent, etc. leads to an avoidance of these exact situations and places. In other words, the habitus is first and foremost a set of affects that determine one's bodily response to the world: "the body is in the world as the social world but the social world is in the body" as Bourdieu summarizes it in his late work *Méditations pascaliennes* (2008: 152). Shame of inappropriate behavior, of not knowing codes or manners, or even laughing about these codes is a "political feeling" (Cvetkovich 2012: 132). For Eribon, it is the shame of being seen as having a worker's background that stimulates the dominant affect:

> "Comme c'est compliqué, la honte! Un affect qui s'insinue partout, surgit tout le temps, sous des formes multiples, se déplace selon les situations, les espaces sociaux et relationnels dans lesquels on se trouve (au point de s'inverser du tout au tout : honte de ce que j'étais devenu devant ceux que j'avais quittés pour pouvoir le devenir en ayant honte d'eux)" (Eribon 2016 : 85-86).

> "How complicated shame is! An affect, which insinuates everywhere, appears all the time in multiple forms, which shifts according to situations, to social and relational spaces one finds herself in (up to the point where it is completely reversed: shame for what I became, in front of those I had left to be able to become this by being ashamed of them)"[5]

Following Bourdieu's praxeology, Eribon analyses his social background, his affects, and his way into academia, which he vividly describes as a constant struggle in a world absolutely alien to him in the first place. In his report he depicts his queerness as both a vehicle into a different social world *and* an impetus to leave as he could not stay in Reims and reproduce his family's patterns of living. On the one hand, being gay was *why* his place of origin could not facilitate him with an environment he could live in. His psychological survival was nearly impossible in Reims. Homophobic violence and discrimination in Catholic France in the early sixties forced him to leave for Paris and later, University of California Berkeley and Princeton.

5 Here and below, my own translation, with the essential help of my colleague and native speaker, Marion Biet, to whom I am very grateful for her indispensable corrections.

On the other hand, being gay facilitated his access to networks providing him with his first jobs as an author.

His writing is not in a traditional sense autobiographical but a way to explore the *political* in his *personal* history, recalling this basic feminist axiom. Shame for example is not something personal since it belongs to the realm of social and political feelings (Probyn 2010: 81). Similarly, so is the I: The I is never just an individual being owned and known by the individual but partly impersonal as Eribon explains in regard to Annie Ernaux' biographical writings that often avoid the personal pronoun I (Ernaux 2018):

> "Car si je dis ‚je' tout au long de Retour à Reims, ce ‚je' est toujours-déjà pris dans les filets et les jeux du monde social, et donc, d'une certaine manière, c'est un ‚je' non personnel, ou ‚impersonnel'. C'est d'ailleurs le cas de tout ‚je', puisque le ‚moi' est toujours produit par son ancrage dans le monde social, son inscription dans l'histoire (les époques dans lesquelles on vit) et la géographie (les lieux – notamment les milieux – dans lesquels les vies se situent)" (Eribon 2016 : 89).

> "(Because) when I say "I" all along in Returning to Reims, this 'I' is always already caught in the nets and games of the social world and therefore, in a certain way, this is a non-personal or an impersonal "I". This, by the way, is true for every "I" since the "me" (moi) is always produced by his situatedness in the social world, in history (the epoch one lives in) and in geography (places – and most importantly, the milieux — in which these lives are situated)"

Here, the places in particular – *lieux* and *milieux* as Eribon writes, are sites of de-/subjectivations of shame or of the illusion of the career awaiting one's becoming (Bourdieu 1986).

As I want to argue in more detail, Eribon does not use his biography and the "I" simply as an example but takes the social scenes of his life as well as those of his mother's in his later works as a point of entry into an exploration of the power structures of France's class society in the last decades.

The very key topic for participation, as is the topic of this volume, is education and the education system. In what follows, I reflect on teaching as a practice in the German academic context in order to analyze a few key aspects of exclusion and self-exclusion. The expression *self-exclusion* by no means places blame on the victims, on the contrary, it starkly underlines the power issue: both terms are interconnected since exclusion works as an indirect, unconscious form of power that is at the same time inscribed into the body *and* internalized through the habitus.

Teaching

What does the above mean for my own teaching and learning? I do not wish to include biographical episodes like Eribon's in teaching or install a culture of confession in my seminars. Although I encourage my students to test theories or concepts with their daily experiences, I want to propose that techniques of writing are not limited to a self-mirroring. Instead, it should facilitate teaching that is mindful of this very powerful and responsible practice (Eckert/Martin 2019).

"A master's degree? That's not something for me," was the response a student gave mine when asked about continuing her studies upon the completion of her undergraduate degree. The power of self-exclusion underlying her blunt answer struck me. The student was being graded outstandingly (I am consciously avoiding the problematic word talented here) and displayed a scientific interest in all her projects. How could I respond to her? How could I make her aware of what I consider to be an act of self-exclusion based on her social background without using words and terminology that would cross personal boundaries by analyzing a social background that I could only assume existed. One could give positive feedback and suggest practical possibilities about a master's program and other supporting practices. But where does one draw the line between offering support or guidance and imposing one's own or the university's sets of values?

It is my field, academia, science, that I value so much and aim to defend against anti-intellectual impulses such as the extreme right that is currently spreading across Europe.[6] As scientists, we tend to value our respective fields of knowledge production so much higher than others, and there is much informal and practical knowledge in the world that holds worth for people. Furthermore, do I really want to encourage a future in academia to someone in times of omnipresent job precarity, a lack of possibilities, and self-exploitation? Isn't that the same principle of self-reproduction Bourdieu criticizes and of which I am already part?

Despite all these rationalizations and self-preventions, it is one of the many situations which I observe as an act of self-exclusion. And there are many more nuanced ones and even further examples from my colleagues at different universities. Usually it is not *someone* that tells the students that they do not belong to a place or that a certain career path is blocked; more often than not it is the body that tells a person where – in the most violent and direct sense of the word – their place

6 This was discussed in a workshop within the conference "Taking Sides – Theories, Practices, Cultures of Participation in Dissent" with Athena Athanasiou in Konstanz in summer 2018 from which, among other activities, this book has materialized: The political situation characterized by austerity, neoliberal attacks on the university and right-wing opposition to academia often forces one to defend a place that has for so long excluded women, subaltern and other groups – and still partly does so.

is. When someone feels comfortable or uncomfortable, motivated, or excluded, the body will register these conditions of thinking and enfold the effect into thinking before self-reflection starts, and consciousness kicks in. Self-reflection and consciousness are by no means always rational choices or free of an embodiment of social background.[7] However, investments in ambition and self-empowerment – which should not be underestimated – have also been critiqued by feminist scholars because of their overemphasis on the one-dimensionally strong and neoliberal subject that emerges instead of a collective solidarity and a perspective of structural power (McRobbie 2009).

The question of how to educate critical, self-reflective subjects is not new, but co-existent with emancipatory and decolonial movements leading to critical pedagogics such as bell hooks' (1994, 2003, 2010) teaching trilogy. However, the problem persists in everyday teaching: How to demonstrate the ubiquity of various and even paradoxical power relations to students without making them feel even more powerless? How to avoid addressing students as neoliberal subjects who can fully control their life choices and change them with pure will and effort? The latter solution would underplay the power situations that are structural. That is, the individual is not to be blamed for them, but first and foremost, there is emancipatory power in thinking that needs to and can be learned. Teaching in one of the less permeable education systems in Europe, with the highest rate of social reproduction in positions, such exclusions and self-exclusions need to be confronted, even if, as isolated teachers, it might not be our individual endeavor to change them. It is a systemic situation but at the same time we deal with individual social backgrounds in the classroom every day.

One approach to making conditions of teaching and knowledge production transparent is to 'situate' someone on the social landscape. Much power stabilizes itself by backgrounding itself or becoming invisible. But when we aim to make power relations visible, we are often in a situation in which we do not want to be victims or turn someone into a victim of power relations. That is, you make a person feel powerless or at least seen and marked in the field of power relations. But, again, the social world, as Bourdieu writes, gains its relative stability from people thinking their choices are theirs. Who owns their choices? – as he refers to in "a biographical illusion." The self-transparent subject making "rational choices" is an illusion as is the idea that someone could entirely self-analyze themselves and remove social backgrounds on that basis. This, furthermore, stabilizes current neoliberal regimes of individualization. With regards to the reaction to *Retour à Reims,* Eribon reflects on this mechanism of being 'placed' on the social map:

7 Self-reflection and consciousness are by no means always rational choices or free of an embodiment of social background.

> "Je les situais dans l'espace social, et donc dans la hiérarchie sociale. Ce n'est jamais agréable : cela ne correspondait pas à la manière dont ils se pensaient eux-mêmes. Un point de vue est toujours situé, mais il ne s'éprouve pas toujours comme tel (ou peut à la fois s'éprouver et se dénier comme tel […])" (Eribon 2016: 78).

> "I situated them in the social space and therefore in the social hierarchy. This is not always pleasant: it did not correspond with the way they imagined themselves. A standpoint is always situated, but it isn't always felt as such (or can at the same time be felt and be in denial of itself[…])"

Although some reforms in pedagogics and academia have led to more social heterogeneity in the classroom, there is, in general, scant reflection in my field of how learning and networks form careers, theoretical schools, etc. When self-reflection does occur, it often takes place in semi-professional, often privatized spaces, deemed as gossip and not as necessary reflection. Learning is not just a cognitive act, but a cultural, gendered, and social one, among many others. It involves bodies in spaces. I have not, thus far, even begun to consider the historical and local (among others) exclusion of groups from the university which would extend to many more formal cases of exclusion – those we will *not* encounter in our teaching as I did with the student in the above-mentioned situation.

These encounters inform the system of self-production in academia in which projections of one's own biography are projected onto a young scholar's life: One sees him or herself in the next generation and therefore builds a school. In this way, the principle of one's own life is stabilized by the reproduction of the rightness of one's existence. In academia, not only schools and ways of knowledge production but also subjectivities become key to the system of reproducing of biographies and careers (Bourdieu 1986: 1995).

Learning is made up of diverse variables amongst which is the motivation to read complex texts, to trust that these texts can open ways to understanding the world, to stay with a subject even if it is very challenging, and, very importantly and key for every discussion about power at the university, to speak up in the class room. Didactics address the problems of multiple types of learning and of methods adapting teaching to learning styles. Yet, students with academic parental backgrounds often adapt much more easily to the academic world. They are able to mobilize knowledge about the importance of reading techniques, of establishing networks even as early as the undergraduate level, to have an opinion when it is asked for, and to mimic a neutral commentator when not. The adaption is intuitive and seems almost "magical" (Bourdieu 2008: 169). It actualizes itself in reading the signs and behaving 'properly'.

It is worth underlining once more that not all these issues can be addressed by us as individual professors since they are obviously structural ones. But we can

attend to these by asking ourselves what will happen if we provide spaces for other voices to speak up, to facilitate spaces (and I mean literally physical space) that undo blockages to speak up as well as responding to less elaborate comments in the classroom. How can we avoid the danger of disciplining students into an academic habitus in discussions with the underlying paternalizing idea (in the back of our head) of wanting to 'help' them? And how can we address structural issues of our very situation without transgressing personal and professional boundaries?

These are pressing issues for scholars today and it often seems as if there is never enough time and space in our daily lives to turn to these questions for a genuine democratization of the university. Indeed, it is by no means a singular endeavor to solve these. It is, however, very much in our reach to re-connect spaces of teaching and research where situated knowledge production could take place. I do envision to some extent (see at least at some level) finding a solution by experimenting with methods and styles of writing. That is, importantly, to understand what is so important in Eribon's writing and not to reduce it as an instrument for socially analyzing the students in the classroom. More importantly, a new understanding of what methods *do* when we deploy them is required. Techniques of writing have the potential to reflect and inflect power relations. To situate writing is a key aspect of making power relations perceivable and debatable.

Writing

Eribon is not the first to experiment with biographical writing, oscillating between personal experiences and theory. In his work he is deeply influenced by writers like Annie Ernaux and John Edgar Wideman. Writing, for Eribon, is not only reflection and retrospective but a technique of subjectivation that opens up to future becomings. According to Gilles Deleuze, writing is becoming (1998: 1). It can be a technique of transformation; a performative practical thinking through one's own conditions of existence. These conditions are not necessarily an object but a field of thinking in Eribon. The social milieu becomes a power saturated conceptual milieu through which he thinks. According to Eribon, writing can become an "existential territory" (Guattari 1996: 134). And, as I want to discuss in more detail, writing is not about one's identity or habitus, it is about an *existence in writing*, a becoming in a technique – given the technique is not an instrument but a technical milieu (technical as in the meaning of *téchne*).

Donna Haraway (1988) and Didier Eribon (2013, 2016), two thinkers speaking from very different genealogies, places, and traditions, both underline the importance of situated knowledge and a voice that is situated rather than speaking from a universalist point of view (often the white, male, heterosexual, bourgeois and able bodied point of view). In their very different yet connectable ways, Eribon and

Haraway address the situatedness of the production of knowledge. In Eribon, I perceive situatedness to be a method (technique) (he uses the term "méthode" to describe his writing (Eribon 2016: 87)) of what I suggest is 'writing of social immanence' and through which he writes about his milieu and biography without taking it simply as an example of oppression. Rather, it becomes a complex scene in which he is involved and which has constituted him. The scene is multilayered and fractal; constituted not only by himself and his family but also friends, the university, and many theorists he engages with among which are Foucault and Bourdieu. Here, theory and experience are sides of a complex and ongoing dialogue that constantly feed into one another, providing sides/sites for subjectivations.

With the concept of *social immanence*, I propose a practice of situating oneself in the social world as a gendered being with a racial and cultural background amongst others. What often makes it so difficult to speak from a position that can be marked in a social hierarchy is the renunciation of (to give up) immunity which is postulated by academia. Speaking from nowhere is an ideal that ignores concrete bodies, partial perspectives, etc. Objectivity here is often taken as neutrality. However, neutrality is in turn never neutral – because there is no neutral position in the world from which to speak (Haraway 1988, Barad 2007). Objectivity might be understood as coming to life in the very articulation of situated knowledge. The acknowledgement of one being formed by others often goes along with fear of contingency of the social world. To be positioned means to be vulnerable and overshadowed by fear of being powerless. In fact, situatedness does not reproduce but changes the side Eribon writes from.

What Eribon demonstrates in his writing is that knowledge is not something pure that becomes polluted by secondary social conditions but always emerges from specific backgrounds (Lagasnerie 2017). "Thinking with," as is proposed by Haraway, is constitutively connected not only to cultural or historical but also *social* situations. Thinking and feeling as well as learning and the affective body are constitutively intertwined. Once more, in line with Bourdieu and Eribon, affect becomes a bodily technique of power by making bodies feel uncomfortable or comfortable in certain milieus. It is precisely this affective power that transforms them into bodies with the (in)ability (including the desire) to learn. That feeds their trust in the outcomes of learning – or, contrarily, does not.

Thinking through the milieu is how Isabelle Stengers (2005) describes scientific practices by which she not only means the social but also the non/human milieu. Based on thinking though the milieu, writing through the milieu is a technique combining queer and class movements in Eribon. For him, his place of childhood, Reims, did not facilitate a milieu he could exist in and thus, he had to leave this

place in order to survive.[8] As a gay man, his social milieu forced him into self-denial and flight. This writing about the past is also directed towards the future since it enables him not only to *reconstruct* but also to *construct* a place of writing: a technique of existence as a mode of "immanent critique."[9] In his books, he starts his analysis with a situation and a place, and this brings him to his life today: All his writing is a movement back and forth between place and time: Paris, Amiens (where he teaches at the university), and Reims, forming a constant struggle for a position and a side/site of articulation. This movement is, nonetheless, a vector of becoming even though it starts with destruction and shame. Struggle does not mean a lack of side/site but rather conveys or even embodies a process of de/subjectivation: a written existential territory. Eribon is writing himself in *and* out of his childhood milieu; he is writing himself from a precarious position, not a sovereign one, a position of being hurt and of existential vulnerability, as Judith Butler conceptualized throughout her late works (2009, Butler and Athanassiou 2013).

Writing in and *with* vulnerability in this case becomes an existential technique. Eribon begins *Retour à Reims* with his family, specifically his mother's and grandmother's living and working conditions. In this way, he repeatedly writes about (subjective) lived experience as a starting point for (objective) power analysis. Rooted in the social world and daily life as a site of constant struggle, he reports scenes of power from school, the factory, and the retirement home where his mother spent her final years. During his career as a scholar and author, it was his class background and not his homosexuality that caused his painful shame, as he has noted in various interviews. This is also what can be termed "writing shame" (Probyn 2010): In one of his latest books *Principes d'une pensée critique* (2016), the affect of shame caused by his class background stimulates and modulates positions of critique instead of preventing him from thinking. It is, furthermore, a notion of critique whose starting point is not a detached and distanced analysis, but with one's affective existence in the social world: A feeling that makes the conditions of existence felt.

> "Une émotion, oui ! Car si la pensée critique ne peut pas être éradiquée, c'est bien parce qu'elle ne se limite pas à énoncer des analyses destinées à porter au jour des réalités objectives : elle communique aussi des affects grâce auxquels nous sommes à même de saisir la force de vérité que contiennent ces analyses et, par conséquent, de résister, au nom de ce que ces affects nous permettent d'appréhender et de comprendre, à toutes les tentatives pour effacer les conceptions du

8 In Bourdieu, the concept of habitus is also developed in relation to space and time: In the colonial situation Bourdieu introduced his notion of a habitus that cannot actualize itself in relation to space and place since French colonialism fundamentally destroyed the subjects' milieu (Bourdieu 2010).

9 For the discussion of immanent critique, see Massumi (2010).

monde social qui parlent des classes, de la domination, de l'oppression, de la violence, etc." (130).

"An emotion, yes! So if critical thinking cannot be eradicated, it is precisely because it is not constrained to the realm of analysis aiming at bringing out the objective reality: it also conveys affects thanks to which we are able to unfold the power of truth contained in these analyses and therefore, in the name of what these affects enable us to understand and comprehend, to resist all attempts to efface concepts of the social world speaking of classes, domination, opression, and violence etc."

Writing one's critical biography is, in the first place, a feminist practice and Eribon situates himself in this tradition and often repeatedly identifies with experiments like Simone de Beauvoir's, Annie Ernaux', and others'. About Saidiya Hartman's semibiographical account *Lose your mother* (2008), in which she returns to the places of slavery on Africa's west coast, there seems to be a similar feminist methodology as Ann Cvetkovich writes: "Hartman extends the feminist use of memoir as a research method by underscoring the historical and archival value of personal narrative. She must write a 'history of slavery that is a personal story'." (Cvetkovich 2021: 137)This is evidently a strategy of undoing the boundary between the private and the political: Today, the politicization of one's own biography could even be a side/site of experimentation to resist neoliberal forces of individualization and the production of self-responsible, economic subjects.[10]

Eribon's self-analysis are never just objective and neutral self-rationalizations enabling a masculinist self-creation. Regarding self-objectivation, he departs from Bourdieu who has conceptualized these techniques in depth. They are creative and emancipatory practices, as he underlines: Writing a self-analysis is a practice in which one radically thinks through one's social make-up without reproducing its underlying dynamics of determinism. Additionally, self-analysis is also a form of resistance against the neoliberal regime of self-improvement and identity management.[11] It could be related to what Butler famously wrote in *Gender Trouble* in the beginning of the 1990s about the subject of feminism being based not in same-

10 In neoliberalism, the individual is responsible for her own 'failure'. Shame, resulting from this, intensifies this process even more: "La honte isole! Nous le savons. […] On se déteste soi-même, et donc on déteste les autres, qui sont d'autres soi-même" (115). "Shame isolates! We know it already. One hates oneself and therefore one hates others, who are only another self".

11 The German title of Butler's/Athanasious' Dispossession (2013) expresses this more clearly than the English one: Die Macht der Unterdrückten. Translation by Thomas Atzert. Zürich, Berlin 2014.

ness and identity but difference and heterogeneity: writing (in) difference ([to] oneself).[12]

In Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the subject*, which Eribon as his biographer knows very well, subjectivation is a technique to create new forms of desire (Eribon 2016: 215ff.). Unlike confessions which belong to an epistemic power of subjectivity, subjectivations can also be acts of inflecting power, as Elspeth Propyn suggests: "Thinking, writing, and reading are integral to our capacities to affect and to be affected." (Probyn 2010: 77)

Eribon's writing can be described as this very inflection of the powers of shame:

> "La honte et l'abjection constituaient pour eux [Genet and Jouhandeau] le point d'ancrage et d'appui d'une reformulation de soi, d'une esthétique de soi. […] La honte, l'abjection deviennent donc des leviers pour des pratiques transformatrices. Ce sont des chemins qui mènent quelque part, même si on ne sait pas très bien où." (221).

> "Shame and abjection figured for them [Genet and Jouhandeau] as an anchor point and as point of departure for a reformulation of the self, for an aesthetics of the self, […]. Shame and abjection become instruments for transformative practices. They are ways, leading to somewhere, even if you do not know exactly where."

In writing, the academy does not produce knowledge alone. It is widely claimed that we do write parts of our subjectivity into the processes of knowledge production. We not only construct subjective knowledge in the form of texts but conversely, one can write subjectivity anew by reformulating one's social heritage. According to Foucault, existential practices of subjectivation exist in different forms like bodily practices, diets, exegesis, etc.[13] For Foucault in the 1970s and 80s, new forms of queer subjectivities were possible. New gay movements and life forms are also essential / key for Eribon to escape the homophobic background of his social milieu.

Deleuze reads these new forms of existence as individuations, with reference to Foucault and particularly Gilbert Simondon (following Foucault but having Simon-

12 Eribon obviously writes from a different conceptual background than Butler but in *Réflexions sur la question gay* as well as in *Retour à Reims* and *La société comme verdict* (2013), there is an insistence on the performative act of assembly in contrast to a politics of representation of already existing subjects, which Butler also emphasizes in *Notes toward a performative theory of assembly* (2015).This might seem a dangerous point of comparison since Eribon bases his writing on a critique of psychoanalysis, which is key to Butler's writing and understanding of precariousness.

13 Subjectivation is a process of iterative acts and not a substance expressing itself in acts of speaking (and writing), claims Butler in Bodies that Matter (1995) and Gender Trouble (1990).

don in the back of his mind) (1997: 116). According to the latter, individuation does not necessarily result in the individual.[14] The individual is more of a new platform for becoming, a metastable milieu.[15] Deleuze describes writing with Félix Guattari as a relational practice of building a series of acts of writing. Not only a text but a subjectivity emerges from this act: he describes this as an act of creating a series between both writers and the text. Both become intercessors ("Intercesseurs")/mediators for each other, helping each other to articulation. (Ibid.: 121-134) The series consists in acts of writing and acts of becoming. Becoming and writing are processual passages intersecting with each other.

There is an existential dimension to this writing which has consequences for media theory as well: the performative act of writing becomes an existential one creating an existence in writing.[16] Similarly, for Probyn, "shame is produced out of the clashing of mind and body, resulting in new acts of subjectivity consubstantial with the words in which they are expressed." (2010, 81) Furthermore, according to Probyn, shame can be recoded in writing. For both Probyn and Deleuze, writing *is* becoming and does not just represent it.[17]

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14 Simondon emphasizes the process more than the individual herself: "In order to think individuation, being must be considered neither as a substance, nor matter, nor form, but as a system that is charged and supersaturated, above the level of unity, not consisting only of itself, and that cannot be adequately thought using the law of the excluded middle. Concrete being, or complete being – that is, preindividual being – is being that is more than a unity." (Simondon 2009: 6)

15 "The individuated being is not all of being, nor the first being; *instead of understanding individuation starting from the individuated being, the individuated being must be understood starting from individuation, and individuation from preindividual being*, according to several orders of magnitude." (Simondon 2009: 10) The metastable is neither stable nor unstable: it is stableness as far as new becomings are based on it. To explain this, Simondon uses the image of the crystal growing on a solution. Eribon himself works with metaphors of figure and ground as Simondon does in his metaphor of the individuation as crystallization: "Car la cristallisation que constitue le 'je' est toujours fragile, provisoire, aléatoire, et, surtout, partielle. Le 'je' est hanté par les autres 'je', qui sont nécessairement exclus, effacés, expulsés du présent, mis de côté, même si ce n'est que provisoirement, pour qu'un 'je' puisse émerger et se définir comme tel" (51-52). "Because the crystallization that the self constitutes is always fragile, temporary, aleatory, and most importantly, partial. The 'I' is haunted by other 'I''s, which are necessary, excluded, cut out and effaced from the present and who are even just put aside temporarily to let an 'I' emerge and become one as such." Here, Eribon points to the powerful dimension of 'emergence theory': Reminiscent of Simondon's theory of the transindividual in structure, it brings forth a whole different genealogy, requiring a more in-depth reading of both.

16 Here, Probyn again links the interest over the last few years in writing methods to the interest in the affective registers of power: "The gulf between research and writing is becoming especially fraught with the increase in academic studies about emotion and affects" (2010: 74).

17 Probyn advances the act of writing as "corporeal activity" (2010: 76).

Shame is the affective code of producing a site of subjectivity which immobilizes not only a self but also an affective power of working through one's social background. This can be linked to Butler's and Athena Athanasious' description of the agency of the powerless which is effectuated precisely by acknowledging one's own situatedness in a milieu. Shame also enables the production of insights into power relations as Ann Cvetkovich argues:

> "[…] it has become important to take seriously the institutions where we live […] and to include institutional life in our approaches to intellectual problems. At this point, theory and affect are not polarized or at odds with one another, and Public Feelings operates from the conviction that affective investment can be a starting point for theoretical insight and that theoretical insight does not deaden or flatten affective experience or investment." (Cvetkovich 2012: 133)

Following the approach of the political affects group *Public Feelings*, of which Cvetkovich is a founding member, affect can cause thinking – at the very side/site of one's own existence. Take for example the site of the university. Specifically, by feeling shame (or depression which is her more specific topic), one can learn about one's own embeddedness in power relations. As Probyn also argues, we can learn from the body, from shame. These feminist strategies also resonate in Eribon at a point where he writes much more from a Foucauldian perspective and less from a Bourdieuan: he invents strategies that inflect shame and build a technique of "writing shame," to deploy a term by Probyn.

Eribon re-owns his past through his writing and at the same time, he writes a nexus of historical and social belonging which undoes this individualized self. Furthermore, he writes a future by creating an existential form precisely through the creation of a public rather than a private self; a self as historical embedded becoming. This does not come out of the blue, it is not a willful act of masculine self-creation, but a collective formation, a concept with which he responds to theories of negativity in queer theory:

> "[…] je voudrais opposer l'idée d'une créativité, d'une invention – individuelle et collective – de soi qui repose sur l'idée d'un futur, d'une transmission de l'héritage (il faudrait dire : de multiples héritages […])" (217).
>
> "I want to respond with the idea of creativity, of - individual and collective - invention of the self, which is based on the conception of a future, of a transmission of heritage (one should say: of multiple heritages)."

He meticulously works through the milieu of his past existence. Doing and undoing are producing some sort of agency here. The agency of the dispossessed, as Butler and Athanasiou would describe it.

Nowadays, humanities increasingly deal with methodology. Methodology does not imply the adaptation to a fixed procedure, what Stefano Harney (2018) terms logistical knowledge of the neoliberal university. Rather, in the genealogy of thinking along the lines of Foucault, Deleuze, and Eribon, media technics are techniques of existence, of "*self-fashioning*" (Eribon 2016: 219), like writing. The production of knowledge is not only a representation of the world detached from the subject, but an act of co-becoming of subject and knowledge. Not subjective knowledge, but subjectivation in knowledge production could provide a framework for critical scholarship.

By Eribon's methodology, habitus (self-) analysis, facilitates the production of situated knowledges that acts through and in the body by writing through one's social background. This might sound phenomenological, but it addresses no particular subject but subjectivities in the plural: collective individuations. These techniques intra-act in specific ways with contents and they produce a specific assemblage of knowledge: assemblages of methods *and* knowledge. They produce subjectivities, as Guattari once termed these self-relations coexisting in one body, around a body and in between bodies (1995, 2015: 167).

A (writing) technique cannot be isolated from its contexts as Eribon illustrates by addressing the social background and the power of the social world. Knowledge and subjectivation in *Retour à Reims* and his other recent books go hand in hand with the biographical background because this is his subject; a technique of becoming by returning to the scene of constitution, which will never be fully possible.[18] The biographical turns this into a genre that is apparently well-known to the reader. Nevertheless, this form of situated knowledge can exist in all sorts of texts in our everyday academic life. As we write, we reproduce a site/side of knowledge production and create acts of subjectivations as well as existential territories from which new acts of speaking and writing can emerge.

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Dissident Participation and its 'post_colonial' Implications

An Exploration of Positionalities of Critique Considered Regarding the Institution of Higher (Arts) Education

Sophie Vögele

How is it possible to criticize predominant structures and institutionalized processes in order to achieve transformation? What are dispositions of critique and their specific positionalities? How, while theorizing critique, can we take account of current power relations that are grounded in a colonial legacy? These are the main questions I would like to touch on and partly tackle in this chapter. My focus thereby is on the workings of tertiary education and modes of intervention into these institutionalized settings. In the first section, I consider how critique contributes to the functioning of institutions. I am interested in the relationship between structures and institutions that define the normative order and the positioning of critique as well as their potential for transformation. In my second section, I look into dissident participation as a mode of critique. In my third section, I briefly question challenges to specific positionings. The fourth section draws on my earlier and ongoing research on in- and exclusion within Higher Arts Education to introduce a perspective anchored in empirical considerations. In my last section, I highlight the significance of introducing a post_colonial[1] perspective to the discussion and considerations of dissident participation and theorizing critique in general.

1 Notation of post_colonial with the underline represents the complex entanglements and historical contingencies that bind the colonial past to the present. Furthermore, the critical epistemology that questions colonial patterns of discourse in public, arts, and in science is emphasized (also see Hostettler and Vögele 2016).

How critique contributes to the functioning of institutions

In his work *On Critique* Luc Boltanski explains institutional structures to produce a specific norm, entity, and continuity (2011). Thereby, the structures not only confirm a value but contribute widely to the value's creation (Boltanski 2009: 122). He writes: "Far from being limited to confirming a value, in large measure they help create it." (2011: 78) Thereby, normative structures and their value systems are set. Boltanski explains that by transforming small gaps of differences into distances and thereby categorizing individuals and social groups, differences loaded with significance initiate a powerful multiplier effect in demarcation. Moreover, institutions must continually be subjected to a process of re-institutionalization to maintain their form and prevent them from 'unraveling' (ibid.: 80). Beyond their reproduction, they primarily have the function of self-justification (Bogusz 2010: 139f). This has the effect of naturalizing the occurrence of institutional structures and concealing their continual reproduction. The working of institutions enables the re-identification of abstract authorities and hence also their stability through time and space. This is the main reason for them to appear attractive and to re-enforce adherence to the existing structures (Boltanski 2011: 78). Institutional structures are also simultaneously a source of experienced power-relations and violence. According to Boltanski, critique must therefore be positioned from the vantage point of denouncing the institutions' power and symbolic – or epistemic – violence. The existence of symbolic violence is the main justification of critique, whose first move is to unmask and denounce the violence concealed in the folds and interstices of the institutional structures. Critique has the task to re-describe the mechanisms of institutional confirmation by rendering visible the violence held within it (ibid.: 96). Critique, in Boltanski's understanding, actually is inscribed in the tensions contained in the very functioning of institutions: "My main argument is that the tension incorporated by institutions harbours the possibility of critique, so that the formal genesis of institutions is inextricably a formal genesis of critique." (2009: 152, 2011: 98) In addition, Boltanski views critique as potentially taking on similar modes of domination that institutional structures themselves employ: "Modes of domination are necessary to the extent that institutions themselves are more strongly associated with the perpetuation of the asymmetries and forms of exploitation at work, and/or that the voice of critique makes itself more loudly heard." (2011: 117)

Judith Butler's discussion of Michel Foucault's text *What is Critique* (1978) adds a further dimension to the understanding of how critique contributes to the functioning of institutions in general. She too explains critique as always being of an embedded practice (2001: 1). The moment in which it is abstracted from its operation and made to stand alone as a purely generalizable practice, critique loses its character: critique only exists in relation to something other than itself. In a general

sense, Butler notes that according to Foucault, critique is a practice in which we pose the question of the limits of our most sure ways of knowing. This is guided by the inquiry into the relation of knowledge to power that produce epistemological certainties. These turn out to support a way of structuring the world that forecloses alternative possibilities of ordering (ibid.: 2). Critique, thus, is to unveil other and new realities by leaving established grounds of validity. However, as Butler points out, this is particularly risky: "The problem with those grounds is precisely that they seek to foreclose the critical relation, that is, to extend their own power to order the entire field of moral and political judgment. They orchestrate and exhaust the field of certainty itself." (Ibid.: 6) The position of critique seems to be located in the task of constantly risking the denunciations of those who naturalize and render hegemonic the very moral terms put into question by critique itself. Butler explains that in the understanding of Foucault, critique is a multiple act in that is the stylized relation to the demand upon it, and that, within a specific stylization of critique, a subject is produced that is not readily knowable within the established structure. (Ibid.) In this context, Foucault talks about *desubjugation*; whereby, a desubjugation from the established grounds occurs when a mode of existence is risked – a process of self-making through disobedience. The self is compelled to form itself within practices that are more or less in place – a process characterized as modes of *subjectivations* (ibid.). Foucault's understanding of critique thus suggests that critique also means re-composition and invention (ibid.: 1). However, as Butler further emphasizes in her text *Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity* (2012) "critique has something to do with a disposition of the subject." (Ibid.: 18) This entails questioning the basis of critical inquiry. Butler concludes that critique is a political dissent. It is a way of objecting to illegitimate claims of public and governmental authority that "cannot be sustained without institutional supports." (Ibid.: 20) Now, if critical practice opens up this new possibility for elaborating the subject as Butler demonstrates, how can we understand this process and the disposition necessary for the positioning of dissidence? As this consideration seems to suggest, subjectivity that occurs in self-making through disobedience is sustained through institutional structures. Dissent relates to modes of knowledge that articulate modes of governmental authority (ibid.: 24). By stating that dissent is established inside the purview of the polity and simultaneously as the principle by which a departure from an established polity can take place (ibid.: 25), Butler suggests that dissent is located both inside and outside of the very grounds it questions.

Terms and conditions for dissident participation

In the first section of my chapter, my aim was to sketch out how critique relates to the established structures and institutions. However, the question of how critique and dissent can be transformative despite their embeddedness remains. Posed the other way around: which context enables critique to have the potential of re-composition and invention as Foucault terms it? What further, additional, or even contradictory ways of understanding and conceptualizing critique are necessary to contribute to an understanding? To start tackling these questions, I am particularly interested in investigating if critique can be articulated from a positioning within. Thereby, I mean to ask, in what terms embeddedness allows for which degree of radicality in critical inquiry or, on the contrary, renders certain lines of questioning impossible. How transformative, re-composing, and inventive can critique be? What kind of not-knowable subject can possibly be produced within the established structure?

To at least address these questions partly, I would like to look into *dissident participation* as a form of critique. I thereby assume that the positioning of dissident participation is a less risky form that does not imperil its existence, but remains in acceptance of the structures, partly embracing them as they sustain one's own position. To tackle dissident participation, I will confine the discussion to the realm of Higher Education and thereby predominantly refer to Sabine Hark's extensive study (2005), in which she discusses the position of feminist and gender studies in the field of academia. Hark interrogates the potential of a critique from within academic structures, and states that inclusion into the structures subject to critique is a necessary condition for producing findings and understandings outside the hegemony (ibid.: 68). She writes:

> "To change a field means to first of all change the rules of the game. The transformation of the rules, however, does not only demand a certain degree of virtuosity in understanding and navigating them, but it asks for – and this is precisely where the challenge and precarity of an ascertained critical project is located – the *acceptance* of the rules – and be it out of pragmatic necessity." (Ibid.: 70, translation S.V.[2]).

2 Original quote: "Denn ein Feld zu verändern bedeutet vor allem, die Regeln des Spiels zu verändern. Die Transformation der Regeln setzt allerdings nicht nur eine gewisse Virtuosität im Umgang mit den Regeln voraus, sie verlangt zunächst – und genau hierin besteht die prekäre Herausforderung für das sich herrschaftskritisch verstehende feministische Wissensprojekt – deren Akzeptanz –, und sei es aus pragmatischen Gründen."

Thus, we must inevitably acknowledge the very structures subject to critique as entry into them is necessary to developing ground-breaking critique and achieving change. Hark subsumes this as a "dissident participation":

> "Dissidence and participation are, in other words, intricately enmeshed: participation, and yes, acceptance of the reigning rules of the game is the paradoxical premise for achieving change. […] we actually (would like to) object the powers from which our being is dependent." (Ibid.: 73, translation S.V.[3]).

Abolishing the structures is therefore not the primary goal of dissident participation. Rather, in Hark's understanding, we are forced to work within the structures if we are to understand and develop effective possibilities of critical practices of knowledge. It is, then, a task of dissident participation to uncover the workings of institutional structures and systematic obscuring of their reproduction, and search instead for ways that offer other dealings with these structures (ibid.: 392).

In Hark's terms, attaining power *within* the structures requires a specific anchorage into them. Although such a positioning within participation admittedly seems to enable a better access to the structures subject to change, the problem of the blind spots remains. They are not lapses but inevitably form part of the strategy by allowing a more enabled participation within the dominant discourse (Thompson 2004:39). Through participation, the intervention into the structures becomes more effective, but it is very likely that the ability to question power relations and privilege diminishes. This recalls Boltanski's understanding of critique in which the back and forth between effective intervention and lessened critique is essential to the existence of institutions – thus benefitting the normative structure. Boltanski's and Foucault's explanations suggest that critique, especially if accepted by the structures, always remains tied to the institution it criticizes – and is governed by its hegemonic structures, eventually optimizing it in Boltanski's terms (2009: 156). This observation allows the understanding that dissident participation (in the realm of Higher Education) renders palpable the proximity of affirmation and dissidence, participation and transformation, subversion and normalizing, and critique and regulation. It reveals how dissident participation is challenged to constantly be aware of its own immanence, privilege, cooption, and blind spots (Hark 2005: 250) – while navigating these contradictory dimensions and believing in its own critical and transformative agency. The work by Sara Ahmed *On Being Included* (2012) is a very conclusive account of the proximity between the endeavor to fight discrimination within institutional structures of Higher Education that ultimately

3 Original quote: "Dissidenz und Partizipation sind, mit anderen Worten, unauflöslich verknüpft: Teilhabe, ja Akzeptanz der herrschenden Spielregeln ist die paradoxe Voraussetzung für Veränderung. […] dass wir nämlich gerade den Mächten widersprechen (wollen), von denen unser Sein abhängig ist."

enforce institutional racism. Hark, in her account, suggests locating oneself on the margins between the inside and the outside of the institution to acquire the structures rather than being subjectivated. To be able to take on this defiance an oscillation between scientific and activist positions is necessary. This could come close to the undoing of structures in Athena Athanasiou's understanding.[4] She states that critique takes a side insofar as it always also is undoing the structures subject to its inquiry. At the same time, she endorses that dissent has to be understood as *refusing* to take a side; that dissent is *against*. She says: "Taking on a side/site refers to disciplinary bonding and is strongly linked to boundary. It can be very normative. But it also entails dissent: critical agency refuses to be complicit with the structures."[5] She explains that the dissent entails contradicting by participating and that it has to perform doubly in a dissonant temporality that conquers rather than preserves the futurity. It is about transforming and appropriating the structures rather than abolishing them. This could possibly relate to the process of self-making in disobedience by Butler discussed above.

Challenges to the positioning of dissident participation

The discussion so far suggests that in order for a critique's radicalism to be understood and perceived as such, it has to maintain a certain relationality and to be tied into the dominant system to avoid becoming unintelligible. This leads me to the assumption that any actor or activity in critique necessarily occupies a place of dissident participation. However, although seemingly critique always is complicit with the structures it hopes to manipulate – especially within dissident participation –, contradictory and simultaneous workings of dissent do have a radical und un-known potential for transformation. The consideration I would like to briefly raise here and suggest developing further, is the one of theorizing the positioning of the dissident participant: critique being understood as relational, the positionality of dissident participation becomes a circumscribed space. Taking into account the intersectional working of societal discrimination, dissident participation in quest of a certain critique within a specific structure cannot be occupied by any person in the same way. Subjectivities marked by gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, body, etc. necessarily are allocated to a specific realm within the structure

4 This talk by Athena Athanasiou was entitled *Taking sides, or what critical theory can (still) do* and held during the conference *Taking Sid(t)es* on 28.–30.6.2018, in Konstanz. It was convened by the research group *Mediale Teilhabe*. For more information, refer to: https://mediaandparticipation.com/2018/06/27/taking-sides-conference/, last access 10.24.2020.

5 This quote of Athena Athanasiou is taken from my notes during the conference *Taking Sid(t)es*. For the full argument see her chapter in this book.

and thus also to specific ways of being able to articulate dissident participation. The blind spots pointed out by Hark and briefly touched on above, decisively, probably are not random, but inherently tied to the position of a particular dissident participant. This means that a person with other blind spots cannot be there as a dissident participant. Dissident participation is tied to a specific positioning that asks for particular subjectivities and identity markers. This pertains to questions of survival such as who will be a subject and what will count as a life addressed. In reference to desubjugation by Butler (2001: 9f), she asks

> "Who can I become in such a world where the meanings and limits of the subject are set out in advance for me? By what norms am I constrained as I begin to ask what I may become? And what happens when I begin to become that for which there is no place within the given [norms and structure]?" (Ibid.: 6).

Indeed, certain subjectivations are not part of the established framework of reference. How can they have access to dissident participation? And how can they avoid being jeopardized by the riskiness of critique?

Against the backdrop of these questions, it seems even more challenging to understand dissident participation with a potential for radical transformation. In her talk, Athanasiou too took up this question by asking who can this critical I be? She went on stating that it cannot be the self-willed individual of neoliberal formations. Instead, it has to refer to a performative situational subjectivation that is political, reigned by critical reflexivity, and based on responsiveness, collectively moved and moving others.

The Critical I and 'post_colonial' Implications: The Case Study of Swiss Art Schools

Two interrogations about who the critical I can be and which positionalities actually enable dissident participation, are at the center of this chapter. Questions arise such as 'who is heard through which channels?' 'who can take on what kind of positioning?' 'who can talk about what and in which way?' My assumption is that there are post_colonial implications to the consideration of these interrogations and that engaging them with the theorizing of dissident participation is very fruitful. To start unpacking some of this, I would like to refer to the field of Higher Education and briefly touch on research about in- and exclusion in Swiss art schools.

The project entitled *Art.School.Differences* (2014-2016)[6] interrogated processes of in- and exclusion in Swiss art schools with a special focus on the admission process (Saner, Vögele, and Vessely 2016).[7] In a very brief nutshell, I would like to point out some of our main findings about impossible positionalities within these institutions. Our findings are embedded in research that found that higher art and design education was "a preserve of the privileged" (Malik Okon 2005). Various studies circumscribe this privilege in terms of social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and body (Burke and McManus 2009; Guissé and Bolzman 2015; Henry et al. 2017; Kuria 2015; Lange-Vester and Sander 2016; Rothmüller 2010; Seefranz and Saner 2012; Stich 2012). In their selection processes, art schools tend to constantly re-instate privileged groups of students. Especially in their intersectional working, the social conditions of the favored maintain existing privileges and allow for the ignorance of the latter. We, in our research, mainly interrogated the processes and mechanisms through which discriminations happen. The need to select, the deliberative process of decision making, and the openness of selection criteria within juries and the admission process in general, effected the choice of a very normative student cohort in that it is very similar to those present in the institution (Saner, Vögele, and Vessely 2016, chap. 5, chap. 5.3.4). Juries chose candidates that they deemed most likely to reflect the specific values of the institution in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, and body. Our data analysis furthermore finds that the non-normative students missing from art schools are lower class, have experiences of migration, have non-normative bodies and/or genders, or are older. Class appeared to be the most decisive category in that the few students and candidates accepted from the lower class were all Caucasian. Physical ability was also a consideration concerning students' flexibility and perceived endurance for long working hours.[8] Along with the predomination of bodily normativity, social competencies or a reputable network were highly valued – sometimes more than artistic practice. Within the selection process, these exclusions and discriminations remained unnoticed and their institutional anchorage blurred (ibid.: chap. 5.5). Indeed, when discrimination is recognized within such kinds of structures, it is usu-

6 Together with a team, Philippe Saner and I co-lead the project initiated by the Institute for Art Education, IAE, at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK. The Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design (HEAD – Genève) and the Haute Ecole de Musique (HEM Genève – Neuchâtel) were cooperating partners along with the ZHdK in this self-reflexive interrogation of in- and exclusions to art schools.

7 For more information on the research, publications as well as subsequent initiatives and projects, refer to bit.ly/a_s_d, last access 10.24.2020.

8 Sarah Whatley talked about the "tyranny of ability" in this regard. She proposed this very trenchant term during the conference *Disability and Performer Training – A Colloquium* offered by the research project *DisAbility on Stage*, Institute for the Performing Arts and Film (IPF), ZHdK, 10.25.2016, Zürich.

ally attributed to either individual (racist and sexist) misbehaviors of certain faculty members and employees or relegated to societal and historical events (Williams 1985:331). We termed this structurally and institutionally facilitated discrimination, and accompanying ignorance of privilege, *institutional normativity* (Saner and Vögele 2016: 202; Saner, Vögele, and Vessely 2016) in reference to research led by Ahmed, Shona Hunter, Sevgi Kilic, Elaine Swan, and Lewis Turner. Ahmed et al. found an "Institutional Whiteness" at work – meaning that institutional structures privilege white people at all levels (Ahmed et al. 2006: 73). By introducing institutional normativity, we draw attention to the fact that, alongside skin color, ability, a middle class or privileged backgrounds, and a certain gendered and ethnicized aesthetic understanding are set as the norm within institutions. Institutions reproduce and reinstate this norm beyond their student body with faculty and other members, albeit tacitly and unreflectively. I termed this the camouflage of discrimination through normalization (Vögele 2020). This institutional normativity and the camouflage of discrimination through normalization is enhanced through processes of *Othering*. We, on different occasions, encountered a great desire for the Other, more precisely an interest in being creatively inspired by someone exotically Other. Among jury members, this interest often was articulated as a great opportunity to enrich the status quo of the institution. This articulates itself as a particular case of tokenisation that is an appropriation or even usurpation of the Other. We also encountered Othering that articulated itself in the refusal of the foreign and unknown (Saner, Vögele, and Vessely 2016, chap. 5.5.3, 6.3). However, Othering as a desire for the Other is inherently hierarchized and thus enforces power relations (Hall 1997). It entails not only a denial of the Other but also the means to reinvigorate existing racist and sexist differentiations (Mecheril and Plösser 2009).

These considerations of institutional normativity and Othering clearly show that, within the art schools under investigation, an array of subjectivities are impossible: lower class, racially or ethnically marked persons, termed as disabled by majoritarian discourse, trans*-persons, identified as queer and critical subjects, etc. These exclusions are not particular to art schools but mirror the outcomes of societal processes of exclusion present in the field of Higher Education in general. Such processes are the continuing effects of colonial power relations and thus require a post_colonial perspective to perceive, chart, and renegotiate them (Vögele 2020). Considering this, the question about which positionalities could allow for dissident participation within the structures set by art schools remains. Or put differently: what exactly is the premise of dissident participation, and what kind of subjectivity can possibly access it? Additionally, questions arise on the ways in which historically grown power-relations grounded in colonialism with effects on current racism, classism, sexism, and ableism enable or hinder the critique of (western) institutional structures. What kind of critique can possibly be articulated in a situation of institutional normativity, Othering, and the camouflage of

discrimination? What is the in-between here, and who can inhabit what kind of in-between? How can such limiting structures be adapted in order to be less discriminating? Referring to Boltanski's perspective, we could ask: in what ways can critique go beyond re-instating the predominant structures and transform them by integrating a previously concealed perspective? Is this practice at all possible without totally abolishing the structures (of the art school)? And maybe most importantly: how can we avoid putting certain subjectivities even more in peril through critique?

Dissident Participation that is Political, Reigned by Critical Reflexivity, Based on Responsiveness, Collectively Moved, and Moves Others

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, I think, it is necessary to consider the positioning of dissident participation from a post_colonial perspective. Against the backdrop of the led considerations, the ongoing societal processes of discrimination, largely effected by power relations that were implemented through colonialism, have to be accounted for. By introducing a post_colonial perspective to the theorizing of dissident participation, I suggest that rejection and other forms of Othering can be addressed and challenged. Decolonizing strategies have to be mobilized in order for dissident participation to deploy a simultaneous contradiction and adherence as a potential for transformation. The art seems to be performing institutions beyond interiority versus exteriority while defending them as a site of critique: critique entails the performing of institutions in a counter-institutional way.[9]

For this thinking, it is helpful to read Ruth Sonderegger. She exposes critical theories, as put forward by Boltanski and Foucault, to "implicitly at least, aim at a fusion of all requirements of critique." (Sonderegger 2012: 260) However, Sonderegger is critical of endorsing an encompassing conception into critique, claiming instead an inherent finitude (ibid.: 261). Thereby, she seems to suggest that theories of critique must be contradictory in order to approach their potential, a characteristic I have stressed above regarding Athanasiou. Sonderegger emphasizes that critique must endorse a collective practice in its theorizing and conceptualization. She mentions a collective perceiving, as in feeling, moving, or talking differently than our environment would predict (ibid.). Indeed, a post_colonial perspective anchored in heterogeneous theoretical traditions and disciplines entails a critical stance, which is always a critique of both the forms of knowledge and the forms of practice that correspond to them. Furthermore, a post_colonial perspective located at the margins to activism allows being practical and emancipatory in the sense, that it aims not only to understand but also to contribute to a transformation of the

9 Taken from my notes of the talk by Athanasiou during the conference *Taking Sid(t)es*.

social world that is already under way. Finally, post_coloniality addresses critique as being immanent, focusing on the internal contradictions and crises of a specific social order and its social imaginary. Accordingly, it cannot be reduced to a purely normative undertaking, but involves empirical analyses. Analysis and critique are thus inextricably linked and unveil the potential, to tackle institutions in a counter-institutional way.

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Change by Changing Smartphone-Users?
The Fairphone as an Experimental Sid/te

Isabell Otto

The Virtue of Fair Smartphone Practices

"This is not a phone. It's an opportunity to change the industry" – "The phone that cares for people and planet" – "Change is in your hand".[1] With slogans like these the Dutch company Fairphone promotes their fairly, modularly produced smartphones – the Fairphone. Following the company's intention statement, this 'change', has two implications. Firstly, Fairphone B.V. is invested in transparent, pro-social production chains. They seek to make a difference by avoiding components sourced from problematic labor conditions, e.g. child labor; obtaining integrated resources like tin, tantalum, or gold from mines that are not financially entangled in civil wars or other conflicts. Secondly, the modularity of the fair smartphone means its users can repair or upgrade parts themselves by ordering and replacing each individual component.

Fairphone calls on their customers to resist the smartphone-industry and its standard, non-durable devices that are harmful to the environment, through practices of tinkering and rebuilding. The Fairphone is not only 'fair' in terms of fair trade but also because it invites users to secure a long lifespan for their phones and thereby conserve natural resources. However, these ideals are not easily achievable. Fairphone founder, Bas van Abel, has noted arising "dilemmas when you want to change an industry that you are a part of" while attempting to produce profitable products: "If you try to do things differently you run into every single wall that this system has to offer." (Garrigou 2018) The demands of customers to participate in the fair and environmentally sustainable practices of Fairphone's business model follow similar dilemmas: Users are invited to join the commodity circle by buying smartphones or phone-modules and thus securing Fairphone's profit. At the same time,

1 The first Fairphone slogan was announced in 2018 (https://web.archive.org/web/20180914145416/https://www.fairphone.com/en, September 14, 2018), the second is part of the campaign for Fairphone 3 (https://web.archive.org/web/20190919034911/https://www.fairphone.com/en, September 9, 2019), the third is a general tag line, i.e. printed on the Fairphone's battery.

they are requested to resist the smartphone industry (including Fairphone B.V. and its profit orientation). Fairphone's business strategy shows that resistive practices and (economical) power structures are inseparable form each other. Additionally, the subject formation within and by these practices – in our case: the becoming of a 'Fairphone-user' – at the same time paradoxically endangers her subjectivation as 'smartphone-user', which I want to understand (and explicate below) as a 'hybrid actor' (Latour 1994: 33) with reciprocal bonds, or 'attachments' (Hennion 2017) between human and device.

The complex entanglement of resistant practices and subject formation is elaborated on by Michel Foucault in his late writings on "The Subject and Power" (Foucault 1982) and reflected by Judith Butler in her discussion of Foucault's concept of "Critique" as a specific form of resistance or rather: a special virtue of the subject. (Cf. Butler 2001; Foucault 1997) According to Foucault, power and resistance are so closely intertwined that, in his proposition to study power, he suggests using resistance as "a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations". (Foucault 1982: 780) Investigating resistant practices or "attempts made to dissociate these relations" can thus show, "what power relations are about". (Ibid.) Foucault is not interested in resistance to a certain authority or in an opposition to a concrete institution of power, but in withstanding a general "technique" of power "which makes individuals subjects". (Ibid.: 781)

Thus, what is brought to light by discussing Fairphone's claim for fairness? Following Foucault, it is not so much the (resistance against) power structures of the smartphone industry but the struggles of the individuum within power relations of the smartphone production cycle and accordingly the struggle with its subjectivation as a smartphone-user. The calls to change the industry are of less importance here than the demands on users to change themselves. The practice of 'critique' in Foucault and Butler's perspectives is significant for describing this change in the self: "To be critical of an authority that poses as absolute requires a critical practice that has self-transformation at its core." (Butler 2001: 5) When Foucault and Butler describe the transformation of the self in and through practices of critique, they are not simply concerned with resistance but with a certain virtue which has both ethical and aesthetical implications: an "art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability" (Foucault 1997: 47; cf. Butler 2001 5, 6) or even a performance of "self-stylization" (Butler 2001: 10), a "release from its usual discursive constraints" (ibid.: 9), which has nothing to do with a foundationally resistant 'nature' within an ontological subject.

This theoretical framework also touches questions that arise with the abovementioned dilemmas of Fairphone-users and allows positing them more precisely. How can we rethink the demand on customers to simultaneously participate and *not* to participate in the commodity circle of the smartphone industry as a specific positioning of the subject in assemblages of power? As Foucault argues, the mean-

ing of 'subject' is twofold: "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to [their] own identity through a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to." (Foucault 1982: 781) Resisting this form of power accompanies not only an artful attitude of knowledge and awareness of the power relations the subject is bound in; the subject also risks its "very formation as a subject", (Butler 2001: 8) because the production of the subject is bound to the very norms its attitude of critique opposes to: "[I]f the selfforming is done in disobedience to the principles by which one is formed, then virtue becomes the practice by which the self forms itself in desubjugation, which is to say that it risks its deformation as a subject". (Ibid.: 10)

In this chapter, I want to reflect on resistant practices that the Fairphone enables and demands as forms of sid/te-taking. The core of my argumentation is the attachment of smartphone and user as a subjugating technique of subject formation within the power relations of smartphone industry. Which constraints can a fair smartphone-user artfully release and what are simultaneously the risks of her attitude of critique?

The Site-Taking of Smart Phone Users

The taking of public places as political resistant practice is closely linked to the visions of collectivization by mobile phones, especially in the early phase of their distribution. One of these visions is phrased by Howard Rheingold in his book *Smart Mobs* from 2002. He defines 'Smart mob' with the term "Mobile Ad Hoc Social Networks", brought up earlier by computer scientist Gert Kortuem and others (2001).[2]

One prime example for the potentials of a smart (phone) mob in Rheingold's argumentation is a historical event in the Philippines: "On January 20, 2001 President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines became the first head of state in history to lose power to a smart mob." (Ibid.: 157) Within one hour, after a text message with the call "Go 2EDSA, Wear blck" had been initially sent, more than a million citizens assembled on Epifanio de los Santas Avenue (EDSA), a historical site of a much earlier, peaceful demonstration in 1986. The precondition for this event was the

2 "Both terms describe the new social form made possible by the combination of computation, communication, reputation, and location awareness. The mobile aspect is already self-evident to urbanites who see the early effects of mobile phones and SMS. Ad hoc means the organizing among people and their devices is done informally and on the fly, the way texting youth everywhere coordinate meetings after school. Social network means that every individual in a smart mob is a 'node', in the jargon of social network analysis, with social 'links' (channels of communications and social bonds) to other individuals." (Rheingold 2002: 169f.)

early and large distribution of mobile phones in the Philippines and a special relationship between user and device, which historian Vincente L. Rafael calls 'manic', describing it as an over-identification with the phone:

> "The 'manic' relationship to the cell phone is just this ready willingness to identify with it, or more precisely with what the machine is thought capable of doing. One not only has access to it; by virtue of its omnipresence and proximity, one becomes like it. That is to say, one becomes an apparatus for sending and receiving messages at all times." (Rafael 2003: 403)

Since the mobile phone can be "idealized as an agent of change, invested with the power to bring forth new forms of sociality" (ibid.: 402), an envisioned ability to act as part of a powerful crowd arises in the 'cell phone-user' from this manic relationship, instilling the potential to change the political system.

The observation of an intimate attachment with the mobile phone is not confined to Philippine media culture. For the western world, a similar binding was described by Sherry Turkle, with the notion of the 'tethered self' (Turkle 2008). Along with her intimate relationship with the mobile phone, the user gets a personal address that goes hand in hand with the potentials and demands of being always and everywhere connected and available (cf. Linz 2008) – a hybridization of human and device that even intensifies through the internet connectivity of smartphones. In Foucauldian terms, one can argue that through the attachment (cf. Hennion 2017) of mobile phone and user, human individuals become subjectified as 'mobile phone-users'. They not only become tethered to their phones but are also tied into social, technical, political, and economic power relations.

Seen in this light, the imagination of the smart mob that overturns a political regime neglects this enmeshment of the mobile phone-user. It conceptualizes the phone as a powerful tool or: a handy vehicle for resistant communication that enables a revolutionary site-taking. At the same time, the 'smart mob imagination' disregards the mobile phone as a 'site', that is itself steeped in power relations. The Philippine example is especially evident here: The Philippines are among those countries providing the electronic industry with child-mined gold that is built into mobile phones and other electronic devices because of its qualities as a conductor of electricity.[3] In comparing the 'smart mob' to the 'fair phone imagination' of change we can recognize the difference between political resistance and resistance as 'critique' in Foucault's terms. Political resistance concerns the mobilization of

3 The report *Gold from Children's Hands. Use of Child-Mined Gold by the Electronics Sector* (Schipper/de Haan/van Dorp 2015) states: "The quantities in each device might be small, but they add up to a large amount of gold. In 2014, more than 1.2 billion smartphones were sold worldwide, containing 37,347 kilos of gold." (10)

people using mobile phones as a dynamic communication channel. Critique concerns the subjectivation of the mobile phone-user, her own involvement in power relations and the virtue to care about herself and others in this relatedness. The 'smart mob imagination' states the mobile phone as a means, the 'fair phone imagination' challenges it as a mediator, that changes all involved entities (cf. Latour 1994).

Siding with Smart Pigeons and Fair Gold Miners

But to close the gap between Foucault's virtue of the self and Fairphone's work against oppressing labor conditions or environmental pollution we have to regard another theoretical position and another exampleUS-American biologist, philosopher of science and literary scholar Donna Haraway pleads for *Staying with the Trouble*. In the face of environmental disasters, climate change, and species extinction, Haraway seeks ways to "live and die well with each other" (2016: 1) on a damaged planet – beyond despair and hope. 'Making kin' is her slogan-like approach to the problem. What she has in mind are not the genealogical or biogenetic kinships. Instead, she calls for demonstrating, enduring, and redesigning the close relatedness of humans, plants, animals, and technologies. Haraway's books are known for their provocative, fabulous, and exaggeratedly formulated programming. In *Staying with the Trouble* she is anxious to counteract an exceptional human position. Instead, she emphasizes a "multispecies becoming-with" (ibid.: 10) that enables a mutual empowerment, a partial recovery, a revival of destroyed habitats for going on together. For this utopian-visionary draft Haraway chooses the term 'Chthulucene', which refers less to an era than to a place of time, a "thick present" (ibid.: 1). The book has an obvious activist gesture: "Living-with and dying-with each other in the Chthulucene can be a fierce reply to the dictates of both Anthropos and Capital", (ibid.: 2), Haraway says introductorily.

In her speculative fable, Haraway refers to examples from artistic and scientific activism. The Cat's Cradle becomes a guiding figure for a practice of resisting, writing, and thinking. Similar to a network of string figures that are passed from hand to hand and change in the process, people are variably connected to kindred non-human things or beings. Through this line of thought, Haraway also calls for a way of thinking that connects the most diverse elements with each other and invents new stories with open ends which can be enmeshed further and further. Thus, her book also aims at the invention of new research practices and explores them in numerous examples.

One of Haraway's cases is presented here in detail because of its similarities the 'fair phone imagination'. PigeonBlog is a project that artist, activist, and scientist Beatriz da Costa carried out in the summer of 2006 as a collaboration of racing pi-

geons, artists, activists, engineers, pigeon fanciers, and do-it-yourself electronics. The project is an environmental activist experiment. It aims to collect data on urban air pollution in California and publish it on the Internet. In addition, the goal is to promote resistant practices through cross-species co-production. (Cf. ibid.: 16-29; da Costa 2008) Haraway discusses PigeonBlog as a way to facilitate recovery from fundamental environmental damage. It is about repairing polluted neighborhoods and social conditions, she argues, people and racing pigeons enable each other reciprocally through an intimate connection with communication technologies. (Cf. Haraway 2016: 20) In months of development work, the pigeons are fitted with backpacks containing various modules that are also built into mobile phones, as da Costa explains:

> "The pigeon 'backpack' developed for this project consisted of a combined GPS (latitude, longitude, altitude) / GSM (cell phone tower communication) unit and corresponding antennas, a dual automotive CO/NOx pollution sensor, a temperature sensor, a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card interface, a microcontroller and standard supporting electronic components. Designed in this manner, we essentially ended up developing an open-platform Short Message Service (SMS) enabled cell phone, ready to be rebuilt and repurposed by anyone who is interested in doing so." (Da Costa 2010: 35; cf. Haraway 2016: 21)

According to Haraway, the project tries to enable cross-species trust and knowledge so that the connection between birds, technology, and people can actually be fabricated. This takes time and must be done carefully, in learning processes of all participants, e.g. with "lots of fitting sessions and balance training in lofts" (Haraway 2016: 22) and overcoming objections of animal protectionists. But then, according to Haraway's positive reading of the project, arises a mutual empowerment for care and responsibility: The official apparatus for measuring air pollution in California is installed in such a way that it cannot fully comprehend the health impact on humans and other living beings. In contrast, technologically advanced smart pigeons with their "multispecies team" are able to collect data continuously 'on the fly', even at critical altitudes or near the ground. They "trace the air in string figure patterns of electronic tracks" (ibid.): The data can be published and visualized in real time on the pigeon's 'blog'. The visualization of pollution areas by the pigeon data can thus also show social inequalities in the habitation of damaged habitats.

But the dynamic network of relationships has an openness that can become problematic. PigeonBlog was conceived as an environmental-activist project, but its reception has not only been understood in this sense. In the course of the great public response to her project, da Costa also received an offer from an engineer to jointly submit a research proposal to the Defense Advance Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for the development of flight monitoring devices modelled on pi-

geons. The great openness of the project makes it suitable even for military contexts. (Haraway 2016: 22)

What it makes instructive for me to compare PigeonBlog in Haraway's perspective with the strategies and tactics of the Fairphone is an aspect both cases have in common: the work on the technological connection between humans and other things or beings that is directed against standardized industrial default. While Fairphone invites their users to open, disassemble, repair, and reassemble the black box smartphone, Costa assembles modules of mobile phone technology and expands pigeons into partial phones. Both examples take the mobile phone as a building site, as an experimental constellation. These steps are taken before every form of resistant sid/te-taking – e.g. against the pollution of underprivileged neighborhoods or the harmful work of children in gold mines. Using Haraway's view of the PigeonBlog and the critique made by Fairphone resistance we can further clarify that: In the virtue of critique the power relations of the mobile phone are not taken for granted but contested in an experimental taking of the phone as a building site. This is not a simple opposition in the sense of a binary antagonistic gesture. The user-subject experiences itself in a confusing network of various kinships, where changing a situation can only mean to make new kin and to transform the self, likewise.

Outsmarting the Smartphone?

Let us have a closer look at the Fairphone as an experimental building site in order to better understand, what transformation of the self in this framework could mean. Opening Fairphone's black box can be described as hacking. Hacking is a practice of transformation, a reformatting of systems, structures or constellations by testing and actualizing previously only virtually available possibilities. In this respect, hacking is not an oppositional resistant practice, but a playing with possibilities and system states that have not yet been put in effect. According to media studies scholar Claus Pias, the hacker is an ambivalent figure, both subversive and state-supportive. Hacking oscillates between data theft and protective practices against governmental or corporate interference in the private sphere. (Cf. Pias 2002) Practices of hacking have been developed in historical situations of programming digital computers. However, the term 'hacking' has now been transferred – almost inflationary – to different cultural and social areas. In this broader sense, hacking generally refers to the changeability of routine processes in politics, culture, and society. (Foit/Kaerlein 2014)

Fairphone's strategies in this broader sense can be described as hacking of the smartphone industry. The production of fair and sustainable smartphones should increase the demand for these devices and thus transform the industry as a whole.

What makes it plausible to describe this cooperate strategy as hacking is a circumstance mentioned by Pias: The hacker is located at the border between the visible and the invisible. Hacking shifts the boundaries of the inaccessibility of digital computers. It makes data and processes transparent, brings secrets to the public, and thereby creates new areas of secrecy. (Cf. Pias 2002: 254) This also applies to the smartphone, which is, among other things, a mobile digital computer. In this sense, Fairphone is pursuing the idea of hacking by strategically linking the transparency of production chains with the openness of the device. Fairphone reveals the blueprints of their devices as well as the source codes of their software. It is transparent both in terms of open source hardware and software and ethics. In its corporate strategies, Fairphone combines ethics with hacker ethics of open access and free information. (Cf. Levy 1984)

With this concept the small Amsterdam company literally invites its users to undertake hacker practices. Every Fairphone 2 comes with a default open operating system based on Android, originally developed by Google. The operating system Fairphone Open OS enables the users to get the so-called 'root rights' over the smartphone, that is to get almost complete access to the system. The users thus become 'superusers'. On an online platform about IT security, developer Rascal Privy demonstrates that by this makes it possible to bypass Google's default settings and, for instance, to install an Internet browser on the Fairphone via an alternative provider of software products, which protects user privacy, and does not collect any data about visited websites or online purchases. (Cf. Privy 2017) According to the blog's announcement, Privy's experience report is not only helpful for "Fairphone enthusiasts, but also for users who want to free themselves from the 'tentacles' of the big data collectors". (Ibid, trans. IO) Accordingly, a Fairphone includes the necessary tools with which its users can counter the grasps of the smartphone industry with resistant practices.

The company's request for users to repair their own Fairphone is similarly perceived by hardware hackers and electronics hobbyists as an invitation to redesign. On the site of the collaborative hardware development community HACKADAY.IO, Christoph Kirschner posts a manual entitled "Hacking a Fairphone", in which he describes how the mobile device can be extended by three capacitive keys, i.e. keys that react solely to touch, and how the access possibilities of the phone can thus be specified. The open development environment of the Fairphone is the necessary prerequisite here, too. (Cf. Kirschner 2018) The Dutch electrical appliance manufacturer Aisler publishes Kirschners do-it-yourself project in the form of an AISLER Genius Box, which includes everything hobby electronics enthusiasts need for this Fairphone extension, the key module, all other individual parts, and even a template for simply soldering the new components together. (Cf. Bouschery 2018)

Do we encounter technologies of the self in these hacker practices that are, in Foucault's sense, both critical and virtuous? There is a lot to be said against it, that

should not be omitted: The described Fairphone practices are based on the myth of a comprehensive power to act. The self-proclaimed 'hackers' present themselves as an intentionally acting human and usually male user subject who retains control over the technical object and, just like himself, can free it from the tentacles of the smartphone industry. Here in particular, the connection between hacking and Fairphone's ethically modular corporate strategy is particularly close, and they share the same problems: In their plea for sustainability, 'repair cultures', i.e. communities of repairing or handicrafts that come together in repair cafés, for example, are also shaped by the idea of self-empowerment, the ability to act and the promise of community building. Repairing produces long-lasting, reused, or recycled things from short-lived industrial products. It is to be understood as a transformative practice of material objects. The creativity of repairing can be designed – similar to hacking – as an appropriation practice of ethically correct action in order to save the planet. (Cf. Krebs/Schabacher/Weber 2018; Schabacher 2017)

Hacking and repairing in this sense are based on the idea of a positively 'abused', transformed, or extended technical function tied to a human intentionality of purposes. An idea that, to take up once again Claus Pias's (2002: 261) theses on the hacker, does not make sense for digital computers – and thus neither for the smartphone. With the instructions being so conveniently presented on Fairphone's community website in the form of clickable requests for actions, the question arises whether this is a form of activism at all.[4] Comparably, in the packed and delivered Fairphone hack packages, soldering template included, activism appears rather as a customer service. Steven Levy formulated the slogan "Mistrust Authority/Promote Decentralization" in his *Hacker Ethics* already in 1984. Based on this ethic, the questions regarding Fairphone hackers are: Who is the untrustworthy authority, which center do hacker practices want to attack, and from which periphery? Hacker practices resemble more the forms of political resistance that take the smartphone as a handy (and here: transformable) tool of a subject that conceives of itself as powerful and potent. Hacking myths of outsmarting the device do not consider that the subject is interwoven in power relations and that every change in this relatedness concerns its very position as a user-subject.

4 Cf. "Welcome to the Fairphone Community, https://www.fairphone.com/de/community/?ref=header, last access 7.16.2020.

The Paradoxical Claim, not to be Governed Thusly

To analyze this in a final step I want to come back to one of the introduced Fairphone slogans: "This is not a phone. It's an opportunity to change the industry." Obviously, it is advertising that is supposed to work within the industry. The company Fairphone does not take an external standpoint, but pursues change from within, which cannot avoid being shaped by at least some economic interest and can by no means completely clear itself of the grievances it seeks to change. These are not the clean hands of heroic resistance, but resistant practices with dirty hands that result from an unmanageable pluralization of possibilities. However, I am more interested in the first part of the slogan: "This is not a Phone". In the Fairphone Community Forum, one user can serve as an example for numerous users who express their despair with the problems of the device: Her Fairphone 2 has a bad battery and even after trying a new one the device does not get through the day with one battery charge. The microphone is already defective again after being replaced three times. The opening of the camera or of other apps takes a long time, apps crash and send error messages once opened. "I want to love you Fairphone but I can't!", she closes her post. A 'Fairphone Angel' writes back to her and explains in detail how the company is working on improving these shortcomings. However, he ends with the following words: "The Fairphone stands for other values: for movement and for change. It's about the idea, not the smartphone." (Fairphone Community Forum 2018)

The resistive Cat's Cradle that the Fairphone involves its users in, by working on the smartphone industry, opens – again with Haraway – "partial and flawed translations across differences" (2016: 10). It initiates new forms of relationships, a constellation of participation that imposes itself to the participants and produces all participating entities anew. In this constellation, the smartphone does not appear as a reliably functioning device that follows human intentions. Rather, it proves to be an independent and dysfunctional mediator. The complexity of the heterogeneous relations of a fair smartphone is difficult to acknowledge and to withstand: "Es ist aus"[5] – that is the title of an article in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, in which a frustrated user describes her failing relationship with a Fairphone. (Djahangard 2017) The Fairphone opens up a resistant medial participation in which the exclusive relationship between human and device, the intimate bond that the smartphone makes possible, is constantly at stake and the user at risk of losing herself in an unmanageable multitude of cross-species relationships. Following the threads from each part of the phone to its production conditions and the well-being of the involved actors complexifies the attachment of user and devices and accordingly the becoming of a user-subject. But it is precisely in this opening, I would like to

5 The title plays with a double meaning in German: "It is over"/"It is off".

conclude, where the resistant potential of Fairphone practices lies – where a Foucauldian form of critique can emerge. It is an uncomfortable and straining way to throw sand into the gear of the smartphone industry, that goes hand in hand with changes in the subjectivation of smartphone-users. It is a plea 'not to be governed thusly' in Foucault's sense. Not a big heroic upheaval like the smart mob or hacker utopians have in mind. But a resistance in small steps that involves the subject by paradoxically challenging its very position; a resistance that disturbs, shifts, and irritates.

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4. Theories of Critique

Segment Introduction

Roberto Nigro, Erich Hörl

In his well-known commentary on the Kantian Text *What is Enlightenment*, Michel Foucault writes: "The question which seems to me to appear for the first time in the texts by Kant […] is the question of the present, of present reality. It is the question: What is happening today? What is happening now? What is this "now" in which we all live and which is the site, the point [from which] I am writing?" (Foucault 2010: 11).

In his commentary on Foucault, Pierre Macherey (1989) has brilliantly shown that in this text by Kant we see the appearance of the question of the present as a philosophical event to which the philosopher who speaks of it belongs. The question also is: what is the present to which I belong? What does it mean to be a subject? To be subject means to belong both as an element and as an actor to a global process that defines the field of possible experiences. The subject does not exist in isolation but co-exists with other subjects and is part of a global process. According to Foucault, Kant's text speaks about the membership of the subject to a certain 'we'.

Foucault also asserts that this question about the present emerging for the first time in the Kantian text will find another example later. However, although he does not specifically name another author, one can legitimately believe there was more than one. For instance, we can imagine that Marx gave a very specific answer to this question when he showed that any form of critique of the present must also be a critique of capitalism. This is the kind of temporality to which we belong: Capitalistic relationships define the field of our possible experience. It is as if Marx suggests that it is impossible to define the ontology of the present without centering the analysis on the critique and genealogy of capitalism.

But let us now imagine that we had to answer these questions today. What could we say in this regard? What is this "now" in which we all live, and which is the site from which we are writing?

We would like to suggest a possible answer to this question. It seems that the most appropriate answer in this case would be to situate our present from within the singular plural event known as *1968*: a name and an event that entails, of course, a plurality of meanings.

1968 was a global event under whose name we can gather together different temporalities and events: "anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles, antiracist movements, feminist movements, worker revolts, various forms of refusal of capitalist discipline and control, and numerous others", if we wanted here to follow the account given by Hardt and Negri in their book *Assembly* (2017: 64).

1968 was a historical conjuncture, an encounter, a disjunctive synthesis also characterized by epistemological breaks, by the emergence of new questions and problematizations ranging from the debate on human sciences to the emergence of structuralism, from the crisis of ancient forms of Marxism to the rise of heterodox currents of Marxism, from the appearance of the *nouveau roman* to the beginning of the *nouvelle vague,* to name but a few intellectual, important changes.

Maurice Blanchot gave an interesting account of 1968, when he defined it as a happy meeting, "like a feast that breached the admitted and expected social norms" (1988: 29). For him, 1968 was explosive and spontaneous communication, an event that could affirm itself *without project*. It was *la prise de parole* in the words of Michel De Certeau, the capture but also the dissemination of different undisciplined speeches. 1968, if we wanted to refer here to an interesting formulation by Michel Foucault, was in its broader sense "the insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (2003: 7). What is quite important to note in connection with the analysis of Foucault is that the appearance of these disqualified or inferior knowledges, i.e., knowledges stemming from below, maps the emergence of multiple points of resistance and of critique: a microphysics of points of resistance disseminated throughout society.

Bearing in mind all of these aspects, let's now note a paradox: when people, probably for the first time with such intensity, started to speak by using their local, marginal, 'from below' knowledge ("and this is by no means the same thing as common knowledge or common sense but, on the contrary, a particular knowledge, a knowledge that is local, regional, or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it," (ibid.: 7-8)), a specular movement also started and began to denounce the loss of impetus of critique, its disenchantment, paralysis, and unraveled power. It is worth mentioning that we are still part of this movement or feeling that we can probably define as a form of critique of critique.

One could say that the two tendencies (people starting to speak, on one hand, and the denunciation of the loss of impetus of critique, on the other) do not intersect at the same level since the latter has to be interpreted as the attempt to warn against the coming dangers stemming from the beginning of the counter revolution. Counter-revolution has to be interpreted as the (long) process intended to iron out 1968. *May 68 did not happen*, or as Gilles Deleuze elsewhere also wrote: "It was a competition to see who could piss on May 68 the most" (Deleuze 2007: 144). With their article published in 1984 under the title *May 68 did not happen*, Deleuze

and Félix Guattari noted the incapacity of French society to assimilate Mai 68. A double incapacity involved in the term 'assimilate', as Étienne Balibar points out, since it implies both a lack of comprehension and the inability to swallow it (2020: 89).

However, not all discourses denouncing the loss of intensity of critique warned against the dangers stemming from the counter revolution. On another level the denunciation of the loss of impetus of critique also met and still meets the detractors of 1968. This has to do with the fact that some analyses recognize the seeds for the triumph of neoliberal rationality in the spirit of 1968. It is a widespread thesis that takes different forms in the analyses of different authors. For Slavoj Žižek, for instance, the spirit of 1968 is essentially individualist and bourgeois: hence it prepared the triumph of neoliberalism. From a different perspective, authors like Luc Boltanki and Ève Chiapello see that a large part of the critique of 1968 at work in the student's movement, in particular, has been largely recuperated and used to modernize the system of production. Even though these positions do not complement one another, they share the idea that the emergence of a neoliberal governmentality is not only the result of a counter revolution but also the deployment of seeds ingrained in 1968. Against these assumptions, one should assert the necessity to pay attention to the meaning of the idea of individualism, since it is a concept that seems to be at the root of both 1968 and its deployment in neoliberal practices. As Balibar remarks, the idea of individual freedom takes two different meanings and even opposite trajectories depending on whether it is considered from capitalist, market-oriented logic or from a working-class autonomy perspective (ibid.: 113, footnote).

As you remember, our initial point in these pages or, if you like, our thesis here, was based on the following apparent paradox: the more forms of critique spread, the more the feeling that critique is losing its intensity grows. The more different forms of critique and resistance emerge and are disseminated in different points of society, the more a feeling of melancholia pervades us.

It would be no consolation to remark that if we deserted for a moment our focus on short cycles of history to devote our attention to long periods of time, the situation would not improve.

Certainly, it makes sense to say that in order to grasp the ontology of the present, in order to understand how we have been trapped in our own history, one should equip him- or herself with bifocals, as Pierre Rosanvallon suggests: On one side, the focal length of a short history like that which began in the 1960s and, on the other side, that of a long history dealing with the modern project of emancipation (Rosanvallon 2018: 12-13).

However, despite enlarging the focal length, the sentiment of melancholia remains. It is likely that we are so accustomed to this feeling of powerlessness from before the Leviathan that we will never be rid of it. One should incidentally re-

mark that Walter Benjamin coined the concept "left-wing melancholy" in 1931, not to indulge a negativistic quiet, but to investigate possible transformative politics.

Next, the melancholic mood took other forms in some of his fellow travelers. With Adorno and Horkheimer, for instance, we instead face a pessimistic perspective. The Frankfurt School philosophers developed in-depth studies about new forms of authoritarianism, domination, and submission of the entirety of society to the market-oriented logic of capitalism. In particular, their focus is on the subsumption of culture and social relations. They also destroy the myth and illusion that art, or culture in the broader sense, could still constitute the last bulwark against the expansion of capitalist valorization. In their account, the emergence of the cultural industry cannot but shatter this last hope since the cultural industry only subdues and closes the creativity of the artist. Thus, Adorno and Horkheimer give an interpretation of capitalist domination where its power is omnipresent and totalitarian.

If we cross the line, that is to say go beyond left-wing melancholia, we can recognize the same diagnosis in the account of other influential thinkers. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Heidegger also maintains that the theories of progress have reached their point of exhaustion. Heidegger even enlarges the focal length by encompassing a metaphysical perspective. In that way the genealogy of capitalism and technological devastation can be retraced back to the Greek/western metaphysical rationality which began with the platonic moment. We could still include other authors in our broad account. During the 19th century different authors from very different perspectives have studied the processes of industrialization, rationalization, automation, and massification of society. From the representatives of the Hegelian left through Nietzsche, Freud, Weber, Heidegger, Bloch, Sartre, and the philosophers of the Frankfurt School, to name a few, there was a keen interest in the study of the new challenges stemming from the industrialization and massification of society. These authors did not work on the same object, indeed their research had very little in common. Yet they all contributed to an understanding of the development of productive forces and the relations of production on an abstract and impersonal level. In this regard, a common point between these disparate research topics can be formulated as that they all contributed to liberating the philosophical way of thinking from metaphysical residues. By doing so, they allowed social and economic transformations to be considered in historical terms (De Feo, 1992: 347-348). This was certainly an important contribution.

However, they also completely overturned the understanding of the processes they were analyzing. Their theoretical patterns became the starting point for an ideology of totalitarian and technological domination of capital. This was also the starting point for catastrophic and pessimistic interpretations concerning the fall of critique and the disappearance of any form of resistance.

Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that the web of misunderstandings and illusions in which contemporary thought is caught stems from its failure to register that critique only speaks the language of subjectivity and that subjectivity cannot be reduced to an *effect* of capital and technological domination. In forgetting that subjectivity is both *constitution* and *subversion*, dominant forms of contemporary thought have become entangled in the illusion that the disappearance of the subject could only lead to the fall of critique. Classical philosophy, henceforth deprived of a subject and unable to analyze new emerging forms of subjectivity, ended up hypostatizing critique in a movement that constantly address itself could not but engender the twin figures of nihilism and powerlessness.

Against this nihilistic trajectory, one should recall that critique is an *alethurgic practice* (a manifestation of truth in the broader sense given by Foucault to these terms) revealing itself through subjectivity. If one wants to recognize the new forms of critique, one has to simultaneously study the metamorphosis of subjectivity. The fragmentation and dissemination of critique today reflects the fragmentation of subjectivity. One can consider this fragmentation as the result of new modes of capitalistic production. But simply viewing life and subjectivity as invested, subjugated, managed, and controlled by capitalistic processes remains insufficient as life and subjectivity are constantly solicited, produced, and formed. In the interstices of these processes, life resists and resistances multiply. In this regard, we have also to witness that the term subjectivity as we are using it no longer refers to just a human or anthropological dimension, requiring instead the articulation of a new conception of *human*. Subjectivity is the name for the social machines. This term does no longer implies an opposition between human being and machine and does not lead to ideas of dehumanization and alienation. Gilbert Simondon recognizes that humans and machines belong to the same ontological level. What resides in machines is a human reality, a human gesture fixed and crystallized in machines. His reflections can be put in continuity with the words of Deleuze and Guattari, who in the *Anti-Oedipus* affirm that the question does not consist in comparing humans and machines but in putting them in relation. to show how humans are a component of machines In 1992, Guattari also wrote:

> "It's a question of being aware of the existence of machines of subjectivation which don't simply work within the 'faculties of the soul,' interpersonal relations or intra-familial complexes. Subjectivity does not only produce itself through the psychogenetic stages of psychoanalysis or the 'mathemes' of the Unconscious, but also in the large-scale social machines of language and the mass media- which cannot be described as human." (Guattari 1995: 9).

It is probably by pursuing this analytical trajectory that we will be able to overcome the feeling of powerlessness and nihilism and be able to grasp the powers of a non-teleological critique, even in the misery of our present time.

The following essays focus on three modalities of critique: Didier Debaise contrasts different ways of side-taking within metaphysical thinking in his contribution "Critique of Naturalist Thought: From Naturalism to Perspectivism in Contemporary Thought". He formulates a critique of the modern concept of nature that follows a bifurcation between 'real' and 'apparent' nature and subjugates the multiplicity of beings in a unified order. Following Alfred North Whitehead (and referring to Eduardo Viveros de Castro et al.) Debaise outlines a metaphysical perspectivism and thus an alternative way of inhabiting the earth and including different modes of existence. In this theory of critique every being is conceived as a subjectivity with a specific perspective, where everything that exists is viewed in the same univocal logic and all subjectivities are conceived on the basis of their possessive relations to the world.

In his critical audiovisual analysis in his contribution "Flows of People. Comments through Migration Discourse in the Video *Bibby Challenge*" Mathias Denecke discusses the close relationship between 'water' and 'migration' via concepts such as 'refugee flows' or 'waves'. Denecke is particularly interested in the political dimensions of these concepts, which migrants discursively seem to produce as 'not yet controlled'. By considering the filmic footage as well as means of sound production the chapter shows how the video *Bibby Challenge* contributes to recent migration discourse by posing the question, "what remains unheard when we speak of the refugee flow as a matter of course?" (273) Denecke refers to the history of the concept 'liquid crowed' in order to open up the metaphorical relations between people and aspects of water. The chapter shows that it is precisely the metaphorical connection to 'flow' and 'liquidity' that designs movements of people as controllable and steerable.

In his chapter "Being Lonesome Amongst the Many. Of Bloom and Multitude" Michel Schreiber concentrates the term multitude in conjunction with current modes of production and existence. He interweaves and transverses publications by Paolo Virno with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who describe "subjectivity as [an] unstable and ever changing" (281) part of production. Reading their concepts through the lens of Tiqqun, Schreiber shows "how subjectivity is simultaneously produced and neglected through a preliminary sharing" (282). In doing so he evolves a new critical analysis of the term of multitude and asks whether we encounter Bloom, who is lonesome among others and self-estranged, within the multitude? With Tiqqun he wants to step back from the "analysis of becoming, relationality, and processes and go somewhere else." (285) Bloom is outlined by Schreiber as a circular (argumentation-) figure of a schizophrenic existence, marked by a principle incompleteness, a radical insufficiency. Describing this as the base of human existence Schreiber concludes, "subjectification of the many as a singularity in multitude cannot exist without the desubjectification of the singular beings in their mode of existence as Bloom." (289)

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Critique of Naturalist Thought
From Naturalism to Perspectivism in Contemporary Thought

Didier Debaise

I will start from an assumption: the moderns invented a concept of nature in order to inhabit the earth. This hypothesis seems to me to be a good guide for articulating a set of transformations that have taken place in recent decades concerning the variety of ways of inhabiting the earth on the basis of inter-capture operations between anthropology and metaphysics (cf. Descola 2013 and Viveiros de Castro 2014). If it is essential to question this invention of nature today, it is not only because it defines the status and function of the categories of metaphysics, right up to its contemporary iterations, even obviously when they do not have nature as their explicit object, but because the invention of nature constitutes a necessary condition for thinking about the consequences of the 'new climatic regime' (Latour 2017).

Let us begin by taking this hypothesis in its most immediate form. By connecting nature to the question of the moderns, the hypothesis implies two fundamental displacements which clash with the current vision of nature. First of all, it mobilizes the idea that nature is historic or, more exactly, in terms that I take from Alfred North Whitehead, that it is epochal. By this we mean that nature, in the form that we have inherited it, would have had a moment of birth, a temporal origin, and that it would have developed, consolidated, and propagated throughout different spaces, within different regimes of existence, to the point of merging with all the dimensions of modern experience. We can situate in the invention of the modern sciences, on the basis of the gestures and experimental operations that began the moment at which this nature was constituted. This period has come to its limit today, to the point of toppling over.

Next, by affirming that the moderns have invented a concept of nature in order to inhabit the earth, we set forth a difference between 'nature' and 'earth'. Let us clarify the difference: the earth would be the common soil that we could inhabit in multiple ways, while nature would mark a particular way of relating to it. The confusion that we ended up taking for granted between nature and the earth is not

the result of chance or an accident external to the implementation of the concept of nature: it is one of the tendencies inherent in the concept, a tendency towards hegemony – a propensity for the concept of nature and the categories that implement it to overshadow all alternatives, even if it means annihilating other ways of relating to and inhabiting the earth. The concept of nature has thus become the site of all the political redefinitions of the moderns: a tool for the domestication of their knowledge and their practices, an instrument of the domination of others by the imposition of a single manner of inhabiting the earth.

I would like to question the way in which nature became for the moderns an operator for the disqualification of minority knowledge practices and a tool for the colonization of others.

The Modern Invention of Nature

What is nature for the moderns? It is above all a matter of gestures and operations. Among the multiplicity of gestures, it seems to me that two deserve special attention. I take them from Whitehead, who evokes them for the first time without defining them in terms of gesture or operation in one of his first philosophical books, *The Concept of Nature*. They form one of the constant obsessions that run throughout his work. He calls them bifurcation and localization. Nature is the product of this double operation. What is bifurcation? In *The Concept of Nature*, Whitehead expresses it in the form of a protest:

> "What I am essentially protesting against is the bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality, which, in so far as they are real, are real in different senses. One reality would be the entities such as electrons which are the study of speculative physics. This would be the reality which is there for knowledge; although on this theory it is never known. For what is known is the other sort of reality, which is the byplay of the mind." (Whitehead 1920: 30)

To understand this passage and its importance today, we must understand what this bifurcation operation is and what made it necessary.

It is above all an absolutely practical and essentially local question which makes it necessary. Given a natural body (physical, chemical, biological, etc.), how can we distinguish, or more exactly extract, the relatively invariant qualities which would be essential to it and which would characterize it in its own right? This question is properly posed in an experimental framework (Stengers 2000: 82) based on the techniques and formalisms that made it possible to generalize the status of the qualities of bodies. It is expressed philosophically in the great distinction that forms the constant obsession of modern philosophy, that of primary and secondary qualities. What is first is therefore the gesture of dividing bodies; what

derives from it is the economy of qualities which will then determine the distinction of substances that gives rise to dualism. The great 'error' of the bifurcation and the reason for its hegemonic propensity, which is unjustified from the point of view of the operation, must not be located in the experimental practice in which it finds its origin, but in its reification. By a strange movement, the terms that issue from the local, located gesture placed on the inside of bodies, resulting from an experimental, artificial division, acquire an ontological status in their own right.

We will not cease to be astonished at this fundamental inversion in the constitution of the concept of nature: from the fact that it is always possible to extract heterogeneous qualities from bodies, we have deduced that nature was made up of distinct regimes of qualities of which bodies would be the expression. On the one hand, there would be 'real' nature with its own qualities which are expressed in terms such as matter, extended substance, etc.; on the other, 'apparent' nature, with its own regimes of existence and entities such as spirit, value, sense of importance, and aesthetics. It is a question of seeing all the operations of disqualification that are implemented behind the 'innocence' of an operation of knowledge: the exclusion of secondary qualities, that is, values, aesthetic dimensions, and subjective apprehensions referred to as 'simple psychic additions', which is to say, external to nature, and the disqualification of all knowledge practices based on these secondary qualities. The bifurcation became a veritable war machine against all forms of interested knowledge attached to beings and situations, returning them to merely subjective, superficial knowledge restricted to the perspectives of those who used it. As Isabelle Stengers writes: "We live in a veritable cemetery for destroyed practices and collective knowledges" (Stengers 2015: 98).

But this gesture of bifurcation would have been incomplete by itself, for it left an obscure zone in its wake. The whole modern experience of nature deployed within the bifurcation points to these primary qualities of bodies which are both constitutive of experience and inaccessible to it. In order to give sense to the complete scene that it produces, it cannot avoid a proper qualification of the natural bodies themselves. The obscure zone, staged, dramatized, and intensified to its maximum comprises the primary qualities. The question, left open by the bifurcation, is how to positively qualify bodies once they are dissociated from their phenomenal dimensions. In order to see how this qualification is made possible, we must understand the second great gesture of the instauration of nature, a gesture which also prejudges everything, determining the set of ontological categories that will come to give meaning to nature.

In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead defines "localization" as follows:

> "To say that a bit of matter has simple location means that, in expressing its spatiotemporal relations, it is adequate to state that it is where it is, in a definite finite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any

> essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time." (Whitehead 1948: 58)

Everything occupies a point in space and time. A thing is real insofar as it is localizable in space and in time. By contrast, it will be said that a thing is unreal from the moment that we cannot locate it in a precise space and time. To the question 'what is matter?', the simplest answer that can be given is: "an expanse of space in a moment of time." But how could we localize an extension, a point in space, a moment in time, without already having at least a geometry, a determination of space, a priori, and a timeline? In other words, how can one speak of matter as it is defined by its localization without a formalism of space and time? It is this strange gesture that completes the 'bifurcation' and which provides formalism by constructing it in order to qualify what is real as a set of localizable entities.

In this sense, I agree entirely with Latour's diagnosis, in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, that the fabrication of the modern concept of nature is the result of an "amalgamation" between distinct regimes of existence. He writes:

> "this amalgam is 'material world,' or, more simply, 'matter.' The idealism of this materialism—to use outdated terms—is the main feature of their anthropology and the first result of this inquiry, the one that governs all the others." (Latour 2013: 98)

As with bifurcation, we are dealing here with a local gesture that finds its *raison d'être* and its consistency in the necessities and techniques of experimentation. It is not the gesture that is problematic, but its reification, the moment when the act of localizing is lost and only an abusive definition of the real as localizable matter is retained; it is the becoming-ontological of the act that is the source of the innumerable false problems inherited by the metaphysics that take up the effect of the operation and forget the cause. Now, this definition of the real as a set of realities localizable in space and in time was again at the origin of a set of disqualifications: attachments to non-localizable beings, and to the practices and rituals in which these attachments are realized. Localization was behind reducing the practices of 'others' to the simple 'beliefs', 'representations', and 'fetishisms' through which the moderns deal with reality. I see, in these two gestures and their reification, the origin of the modern invention of nature. Established on the basis of principally experimental questions, they were transposed by the corresponding operations of reification and deployed at all levels of modern experience without translation or particular attention to different domains. This is what I intend by the naturalist origin of modern metaphysics. According to the converging observations of Henri Bergson, William James, John Dewey, and Whitehead, this is what remains entangled in a multiplicity of false problems linked to the translation of operational gestures into real entities, which are then taken to be originary themselves.

The Perspectivist Experience

Nature no longer seems to be able to fulfill its functions. It articulated beings at the cost of innumerable subtractions: the reduction of modes of existence to only two, the subtraction of secondary qualities, the strict delimitation of subjective experience, the exclusion of a set of knowledge practices, etc. It is this diagnosis which is at the heart of the necessities from which a metaphysics of another kind is constituted, a perspectivist metaphysics which is becoming more and more vivid (cf. Latour 2002, Despret and Galletic 2006, Viveiros de Castro 2014, Montebello 2015). I would now like to lay out some of its requirements. Above all, perspectivism intends to replace the idea of nature. The general feeling which animates it is that everything which had been excluded from nature, set aside or reduced to the status of a superficial aspect, is returning in force, imposing itself through ecological transformations and by representing the voice of new spokespeople who replace, at the heart of nature, the dimensions that had been temporarily excluded from it. Everything must be re-articulated on the basis of a new requirement: philosophy can no longer exclude anything.

This philosophical decision traverses Whitehead's speculative thought and I would like to grant it all its contemporary relevance. It is a posture that consists in placing on the same plane, on the same surface, everything that had been hierarchized and differentiated, replacing secondary qualities, a sense of importance, values, aesthetics, relationships, on the inside of beings. There should no longer exist domains founded a priori by successive bifurcations, of the real and the subjective, being and appearance, fact and value. Rather everything should be relocated within each being, in the importance of the relationships it weaves with every other. A universe specific to each being, a singular way of existing, with its tendencies, its attachments, its aspirations and its renouncements: this is the sentiment that we will call perspectivist in metaphysics. Perspectivism redoes the oppositions of naturalistic metaphysics almost term by term; it undoes the idea of nature so as to maintain only the secondary dimension, the effect of a particular mode of the arrangement of beings, a singular organization of perspectives. In short: nature is no more than a provisional economy of perspectives. Recently, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro recalled its importance as a mode of interpretation of animism:

> "This double, materialist-speculative twist, applied to the usual psychological and positivist representation of animism, is what we called 'perspectivism,' by virtue of the analogies, as much constructed as observed, with the philosophical thesis associated with this term found in Leibniz, Nietzsche, Whitehead and Deleuze." (Castro 2014: 55)

I propose to establish three operations inherent to the establishment of a metaphysical perspectivism. As I am unable to avoid being too cursory on a subject

which would require particular attention to the differences and variations of concepts, I would only like to indicate the elements of metaphysical perspectivism in the form of general prescriptions. First of all, make of every being a subjectivity. Whitehead expresses it very clearly when he writes in *Process and Reality* that "apart from the experiences of subjects, there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness." (Whitehead 1978: 167) It is undoubtedly this central element of perspectivism that is the most difficult to grant as the notion of subjectivity seems inevitably associated with a set of categories (intentionality, consciousness, anthropological experience) which at first glance reduce the field of its application or extension. In what sense could this concept of subjectivity be of any help in articulating all beings more broadly than the concept of nature? Is it not even more beholden than the concept of matter to the bifurcation operation which we have made the central term of modern experience? How can we understand the rejection of naturalist metaphysics when we take up a term that was so strongly associated with it as that of intentionality and affirm, in the manner of Viveiros de Castro, that "every existent is a center of intentionality apprehending other existents according to their respective characteristics and powers"? (Castro 2014: 55)

What a strange vision it is that animates perspectives and which is expressed in the obsessive questions that traverse the multiplicity of the philosophies that put it to work: what would become of intentionality if it were applied to all levels of existence? What sort of subject would emerge if one made desire (in the manner of Tarde) the very stuff of beings? More than a description, or a general conception of existence, it must be seen as a methodological decision for each category that seems to us to define human exceptionality, grant it maximum extension, and place it at all levels of existence. It is then subjectivity, in the anthropological sense of the term, which finds itself decentered as it becomes a particular mode, a singular perspective that is established within a larger logic in which it takes shape, is just one focus among many, and by no means the model or the cause. If perspectivism takes subjectivity as the starting point for a metaphysical investigation, it is not out of the desire to consolidate its form, nor because it would be the limit of all experience and the authentic foundation of any investigation in a kind of homage to correlationism. On the contrary, it is with a view towards weakening the evidence for exceptionalism is neutralized by the operation of extending the categories that set it to work.

Next, register all beings within the same univocal logic. At first glance, all perspectives are on the same level, manifest the same principles of existence, and are composed of the same fabric. As Whitehead writes, using a neologism:

> "Actual entities (subject of perspective) differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space. But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of function, yet in the

> principles which actuality exemplifies all are on the same level." (Whitehead 1978: 18)

There should be no exceptions, no leaps in principles; this is a radical rationalism as the schemas and categories of perspective must be identical everywhere, meeting the same requirements. This obviously does not mean that all perspectives are equal, that they are basically similar or that their diversity is only apparent, which would imply a kind of flat democracy of beings. As Whitehead writes, there are "gradations of importance, and diversities of function." How then are we to explain that hierarchy exists on univocal grounds? Plurality is first, but how does one subject relate to another, under what modality, how does it differentiate itself, and by what means does it impose a certain version of the universe? All of these questions can be treated within the framework of generic principles whose purpose is to highlight how the subject exists. Univocity has, as its object, the how, manners, and modes of existence.

Finally, make perspective a possessive activity. From Friedrich Nietzsche to Viveiros de Castro, via Gabriel Tarde and Whitehead, we can identify a generic feature of perspective, a veritable principle of individuation. The terms vary – taking, capture, possession, integration, or even grasping – but the features associated converge. Tarde expresses it as a 'universal fact': "Every being wants, not to make itself appropriate for external beings, but to appropriate them for itself." (Tarde 2012: 55) And he made it the program of a philosophy yet to be invented:

> "All philosophy hitherto has been based on the verb Be, the definition of which was the philosopher's stone, which all sought to discover. We may affirm that, if it had been based on the verb Have, many sterile debates and fruitless intellectual exertions would have been avoided." (Ibid.: 52)

Subjects, as beings of perspectives, therefore do not precede their relations to the world; they are constituted through them. What is first, on the contrary, are the acts of possession, the taking, the whole economy of having of which Tarde speaks. How does one being capture another? By what means and with what intensity does one make the other the material of its own existence? Deleuze expressed it most clearly in the portrait he drew of Whitehead in the chapter devoted to him in *The Fold*:

> "Everything prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and, by degrees, prehends a world. The eye is a prehension of light. Living beings prehend water, soil, carbon, and salts. At a given moment the pyramid prehends Napoleon's soldiers (forty centuries are contemplating us), and inversely." (Deleuze 1993: 78)

Subjects therefore extend to infinity by the step-by-step capture of all other beings; they experience themselves, their value, their importance, their aesthetic traits

through their possessive activities. It is as if, by the repetition of the activity of prehension, of capture or of possession, subjects acquire an increasingly private life, an experience of themselves, a subjectivity all the more intense as it is constituted by the experience of other subjects. Thus, taking account of a subject means following the ways by which it appropriates others, translates them into its own logic and gives them a value in the image of its own type of existence.

By way of conclusion, I would like to revisit the hypothesis that I formulated at the beginning: the moderns invented a concept of nature in order to inhabit the earth. I tried to pinpoint what they thought they found there, namely the possibility of unifying the profusion of beings, entities, and things that are all more or less resistant to a unitary inscription. The moderns could only achieve this unification at the cost of multiple subtractions and abusive hierarchies. Forgetting the operational nature of their abstractions and functions, forgetting in other words their constructions, they reified their abstractions until they ended up believing that they were dealing with nature itself. Metaphysics followed suit by defining the general frameworks of being and thought, as well as the conditions of truth for these strange reified abstractions. If this diagnosis is correct, then it is without a doubt the concept of nature itself which must give way to other ways of articulating beings and instaurating new compositions (Latour 2010). Metaphysical perspectivism presents itself as an alternative to naturalist metaphysics, as another way of articulating beings and inhabiting the earth. It in no way pretends to reach a better-founded reality, a reality of which naturalism would be a distortion. We will find in perspectivism no claim to define an authentic metaphysics, no search for adequation to a presupposed reality whose features it would reveal. Perspectivism is just as artificialist, constructivist, pragmatic in its functions, and as fabulatory as naturalist metaphysics was before it got lost in its disastrous reifications. What distinguishes it radically from naturalist metaphysics is that perspectivism aims to exclude nothing: neither beings nor modes of existence.

Translated by Tano S. Posteraro

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Flows of People
Comments through Migration Discourse in the Video *Bibby Challenge*

Mathias Denecke

Designed as floating housing for people working in coastal regions or at sea, the Bibby Challenge[1] is an accommodation barge that can house up to 670 people. From February 1995 to February 2003, the city of Hamburg hired the Bibby Challenge, among others, to provide accommodation for refugees, particularly from Eastern Europe.[2] Adnan Softić's video includes archival photographs and footage by artist Marilyn Stroux, who filmed life around and on the Bibby Challenge.[3]

Figure 1: Bibby Challenge

Screenshot Bibby Challenge (TC 08:04)

1 The idea for this contribution was developed in a panel discussion on the metaphoricity of water with Adnan Softić at "Hallo-Festspiele" 2018 in Hamburg.

2 For the client list, see https://www.bibbymaritime.com/why-choose-bibby; last access 05.20.2021.

3 In addition to "high quality en suite" housing, the company Bibby Maritime Limited promotes the comfort of the Bibby Challenge with the ship's large restaurant, bar, fitness room, and "games room". See http://www.bibbymaritime.com/bibby-challenge/; and https://www.bibbymaritime.com/our-fleet, last access 05.20.2021.

The video was part of an installation shown in the exhibition "Mobile Worlds" (2018) at the Hamburg *Kunst- und Gewerbemuseum*.[4] It provides the foundation for a critical reading of the recent European migration discourse in this chapter. Of decided interest is the way in which the video produces the connection between water and migration on the basis of the filmic fabrication of the *Bibby Challenge*. Here, the "audiovisual production has to be taken seriously as the 'fabrication' of a specific knowledge space within and through which something that is supposed to be *re*presented first comes into being." (Bippus/Ochsner/Otto 2016: 264-265; emphasis in original) This filmic fabrication is not to be confused with "depiction." (Ibid.: 266) Where the video visually focuses on images of people on boats in a global-historical context, the spoken commentary deals with metaphors associated with water. Functioning as a commentary on migration, this can especially be noted in the production level of the sound. Close analysis of the video's complex audiovisual commentary highlights issues in the discourse on migration. In particular, the relationship between the terms 'refugee flows' or 'waves' and associations with water can be critically addressed. On the one hand, these metaphorical associations are not apolitical as they are part of discursive power structures (Foucault 1982). On the other hand, this reference, i.e. the invocation of the reference to water, is itself subject to certain politics. In concrete terms the latter refers to the motivation to describe power relations that remain largely unheard through the seemingly self-evident talk of the refugee flow. Yet the images, the voice-over, and the found-footage material from the 1990's, as well as its actualization today, explicitly point towards the historicity of migration. Therefore, I will include the metaphorical history of the "liquid crowd" (Gleich 2017) in order to contrast it with contemporary talk about refugee flow. Going beyond the 'image' of water, to take the question of control into account, elucidates a certain political agenda where migrants are discursively produced as *not yet* controlled.

Within the filmic layers as *sides* of audiovisual production, the discourse on refugee flow presents various points of view, or *sites*. Following the concept of "'medial participation'" (Bippus/Ochsner/Otto 2016: 261),[5] in these sites "the conditions for in- or exclusion can change and […] the specific challenges for participants and

4 The video Schiffe mit Waren und Stoffen stoßen mit ihren Wellen die Bibby Challenge an (in short: *Bibby Challenge*) was shown as a multi-channel installation (10 min, 11 sec.). In addition to two video projections, a model of the Bibby Challenge was illuminated in a display case. Several soundtracks were included, which were only audible at certain points in the room due to their ceiling placement and focused output.

5 "By using 'medial participation' as a key concept, the research group proceeds on the supposition that participation is located in media-cultural exchange processes. This reconceptualization is founded on a process-related understanding of media, which allows the description of the relations between demand and entitlement in the assemblages of subjects, technological objects, practices and communities." (Bippus/Ochsner/Otto 2016: 261)

non-(or not yet)-participants are posed. These configurations are regarded as socio-technical power structures." (Ibid.: 262) The analysis of these sites addresses the way the talk about flows "mobilizes (discourses of) interactions between humans, practices, and technical objects." (Ibid.: 264) As Bippus, Ochsner and Otto point out, "participation essentially focuses on the addressability of future participants (and non-participants alike!) in complex socio-technical arrangements." (Ibid.: 267)

Audio-Visual Production of the Relationship Between Migration and Water

Arrangements of stills separated by black screen define the first half of the video. These single images and subsequently shown film sequences focus on crossings of people over water and their temporary accommodation on boats. Archival footage of the Bibby Challenge is shown in split screen as well as in montage with depictions of overcrowded ships and inflatable boats. Historical pictures, like the raft of the grounded Medusa by Géricault[6] and a section-view of a slave ship, are put in relation to the Bibby Challenge. The slave ship is directly followed by Massimo Sestini's 2015 award-winning press photography of a boat with migrating persons.[7] Through this interplay of footage from the residential containers and the other images, the video marks a semantically loaded connection between water and migration. Especially the images invoke a historical and global context. Hereby, the montage puts *Bibby Challenge* into an ambivalent context of globalization and the history of people moving and being moved. Underlining this visual montage, the voice-over accompanies these pictures and claims: "This is not a boat." Commentaries, spoken by a female and a male voice, expressly take up a figurative sense of the Bibby Challenge anchored on the city docks: "We also do swim. Here, too, one has no firm ground under one's feet." (TC: 00:06:35-00:06:45) What initially refers to the prevailing living conditions in the containers can easily be understood as a reflection of an imagined observer 'on land': "Even here in this country one has neither a job nor an apartment forever. No furniture anyway. Also, very often no friends and family." Ideas of work, family or home are dynamized in connection to the figurative talk of water: "The constant of the home, the firmness of it, the habits, are not to be held tight." (TC: 00:06:48-00:07:20) Permanent floating of the housing unit sets allegedly fixed concepts in motion by transferring them metaphorically into the liquid and volatile state of water. "The fortress and everything that was fixed to it has long collapsed. The home is in crisis. Seen in this light, we are all displaced, aren't we?" (TC: 00:07:21-00:07:39). Applying non-metaphorically to the persons on

6 Théodore Géricault, "The Raft of the Medusa", oil on canvas, 1819, Louvre.

7 Massimo Sestini, "Rescue Operation", photography, 2015.

board the floating containers, this also indicates an imagined observer, who overlooks a larger history in terms of a global history of migration. What can be interpreted as an argument on permanent movement of people within the larger scope of civilization history has distinctly negative connotations: "Ships with goods and materials from all over the world bump into the Bibby Challenge with their waves." (TC: 00:09:05-00:09:13) Here, the former layers of observation merge. Migrating people are paralleled with the idea of a global circulation of "goods and materials," whose proximity to an economic logic dehumanizes them to mere items.[8]

Revolving around the anchored residential containers as a fixed point, the video further hones in on the relationship of water and migration. Considering the figurative sense of water and indicating its ambivalent meanings is not just an accessory to the video, but forms its core. Pointedly, the spoken comment both refers to the fact that the conveyed meanings of water render migration describable and highlights the problems that arise when notions of water are equated with migrating humans. Before discussing this equation in detail, this position is strengthened by the sound production.

Sound Production

In addition to the spoken commentary, background sounds from the found footage organize the auditory level. Yet they do not correspond to ambient sound recorded on site, but are produced retrospectively. Although corresponding to a common practice in documentary filmmaking, it proves interesting here precisely because of its particular mode of production. In his performances including the Bibby Challenge Adnan Softić discloses what can be recognized by paying close attention: the sounds are all produced with cleaning utensils. A cleaning rag, wrung out into a bucket of water corresponds to light waves hitting the ship, while a window scraper imitates the screeching of seagulls. In addition, and more obviously, there are dripping tap and teeth brushing sounds (from TC: 00:03:02), as well as a slowly swelling vacuum cleaner noise (from TC: 00:06:28). Softić's video plays with negatively occupied conceptions of water conjured by the figurative sense of 'cleaning', referring to conservative ideals of 'purity', 'homogeneity' and ultimately to 'purge'.[9] Marking the difference between atmospheric sounds as taken for granted and the negative connotations created through produced 'cleaning' sounds, the video addresses the seemingly self-evident meaning of the figurative sense of water. By playing with the difference between the sounds heard initially and upon closer listening, the specific production of atmospheric sounds confronts the relation of migration and

8 See also Mbembe's (2017) argument.

9 See also the texts read by Adnan Softić during performances.

the self-evident talk about flows. Considering the sound production using cleaning utensils alongside the off-commentary's problematizing of the ambivalent notions of water metaphors leads to the question: what remains unheard when we speak of the refugee flow as a matter of course? And this question can be translated into the recent discourse of migration.

Criticizing the talk of refugee flows has a broad bandwidth, ranging from online and blog entries, magazines, and newspaper articles to political speeches and scholarly debates. In turn, the criticism refers to the talk of refugee flows both in news coverage about migration and in public statements by politicians. Critical positions note that the talk of flows, waves, and tsunamis is about water metaphors that determine our perception of the so-called refugee crisis. In general, they aim for a picture-like quality: "It's the image of refugees or migrants as water, as in 'waves of refugees' or 'the flow of migrants'. It can also become a 'flood' or a place can be 'swamped' by recent arrivals." (Goyette 2016; cf. Packer 2016) It is already indicated here that water metaphors often refer to catastrophes (Albisser 2016), with which their use proves to be political (Parker 2015: 8; cf. Agnetta 2018: 19) or ideologically motivated in the discourse on migration (Mujagić 2018: 108-109; 123). "The metaphor of refugees as water tells a shrill story. Fugitives are not victims, but a threat." (Wehling 2016; cf. Parker 2015: 7) According to Eisenberg, terms such as 'stream of refugees' also imply "that we must protect ourselves against it, defend ourselves, build dams, otherwise we will sink, we will be flooded." (Eisenberg 2015: 2) Agnetta notes that the metaphor of the stream of refugees "subtly favors the description of the fugitive as a reified threat." (2018: 20) Thus, in language terms, migrating people are tailored as part of an indistinguishable, threatening mass. Kainz and Petersson argue that "the attribution to people of qualities ascribed to water runs the risk of metaphorically dehumanizing them due to the substance's lack of shape and colour and the impossibility of distinguishing one drop from another." (2017: 54) Albisser emphasizes this finding and states that "a collective reification and dehumanization takes place." (2016) According to Shariatmadari's conclusions, migrating people are 'dehumanized' by being compared with the forces of nature (2015). To the same extent, this logic fuels fears of the unfamiliar as a danger, which is why the inclusion of water metaphors in the talk of migration proves to be racist overall (Lee 2007: 3).[10] "A flood is submerging and destructive, a tsunami is even deadly and destroys everything", Biermann writes. "Whoever says something like this in connection with refugees wants to stir up fear of them, wants to intensify racism and xenophobia" (2015).

According to these passages, the politics of the talk about refugee flows as the interplay of creating an 'us' and a (threatening) 'them' is unheard. What seems to be

10 Cf. Goyette 2016. For a detailed description of the interweaving of language and violence, see Krämer 2010; Hornscheidt in this collection.

taken for granted in the speech about the stream of refugees aims at catastrophic connotations of water and its consequences in connection with migration. Its use has become so engrained in the news coverage that possible negative connotations cannot be described directly and therefore are no longer the subject of discussion. Corresponding with the video, the critical positions stress the ambivalence of the figurative speech of water and its self-evident meaning. However, contrary to the video, historical references only play a minor role in the discourse criticism. Similar to the historically charged pictures in the video, the found-footage material relates to a certain history of people moving and water. Recordings of the Bibby Challenge take a material and thematic detour through their actualization in the video and therefore relate to a past tense. In the following, I connect a possible history of the relationship between people and their metaphoric description with notions of water.

On the History of the "Liquid Crowd"

Sketching a history of flows, Moritz Gleich (2017) unravels the metaphor of the "liquid crowd". At the core of his analysis is the "petty door" at the entrance of the Crystal Palace, which was built by Joseph Paxton in 1851 as part of the first World Exhibition in London. This entrance mechanism forms a technical "threshold that could henceforth be crossed in one direction only, at a limited speed, and in an orderly manner." (Gleich 2017: 56)[11] The flow of the crowd is inextricably intertwined with power relations. Gleich notes that this regulated entrance for large masses of visitors is exemplary in a far-reaching discussion involving "[u]rban planners, architects, and engineers" (ibid.), concerned with "the question […] of how best to control and organize the movement of large numbers of people." (Ibid.: 46) Specifically,

> "the motif of 'flow' came to play a pivotal if not preeminent role in the resolution of the problem. For the numerous techniques and procedures developed for observing, controlling, and steering people in motion drew for their description – to varying degrees but almost without exception – on images and concepts of flux and fluidity." (Ibid.)

Due to its figurative character, flow is understood as metaphorical speech. Gleich argues that it "draws on the image of flowing or eddying waters to convey the

11 The "petty door" is part of an ensemble of techniques, including the "ground plan", which provides different paths. "The primary concern was to keep the crowd moving at all times so as to assure its steady and equal distribution throughout the space." (Gleich 2017: 55)

potentially *incalculable* features of a moving crowd: its dynamics, volume, and diversity." (Ibid.: 46; emphasis MD) The linguistic function of flow is not exhausted in its metaphoricity.

Using an early example of urban planning which seeks to direct 'streams of passers-by', Gleich illustrates a time-specific (non-)discursive ensemble. First, the "ever-more-regular occurrence of large human crowds in motion" especially in rising metropolises must be taken into account, which in turn is made describable via "the positively connoted image of a stream". Then, "a specific system of discursive production" is applied in which "the liquid crowds no longer represented an uncontrollable or accidental phenomenon but were raised to the status of an operable entity that could be planned, produced, and controlled by resort to the image of flow." (Ibid.: 51) Thus viewed, flow provides architects and planners with a means of making the incalculable crowd describable. And this raises the talk of flow into the "status as a regulatory discursive practice, above and beyond any merely contingent metaphorical function." (Ibid.: 52)

These efforts to perceive people and their movements as flow are united in the fact that they no longer read the stream as a metaphor. Instead the controlled crowd *is* the liquid flow: "techniques and procedures specifically directed toward the object of the moving crowd […] were rooted, technologically as well as symbolically, in an understanding of the human crowd as a fluid 'stream'." (Ibid.: 57) The disappearance of the metaphorical character of the flow provides a "strategic element". And therein lies the essence of Gleich's considerations: "it allowed the physicality and dynamism of the moving crowd to be referenced as a natural and calculable nexus" (ibid.). The transition point is at the moment where the mass becomes controllable, i.e. calculable. Gleich adds: "The formerly chaotic 'stream of people' – intimating absolute unpredictability and uncontrollability – could be seen in the motif to have been domesticated by cultural and architectural techniques and converted into a term for an organized and organizable movement." (Ibid.: 57)[12] Altogether, Gleich illustrates the historical course in which the 'flowing of the crowd' becomes "naturalized". Following the metaphorology of Hans Blumenberg, it becomes "'indistinguishable from a physical proposition'" (Blumenberg quoted in Gleich 2017: 59). Importantly, the transition from flow as a metaphor to flow as the designation of a crowd moving in a controlled manner cannot be unrelated from questions of power. This is already implicit in the petty doors as they force the body to move in a particular way. Functioning as borders in order to regulate a large mass of

12 The discourse finally came to a halt around 1900. Ludwig Boltzmann "transferred the characteristics of atomistic physics to a human crowd. In applying concepts of mathematics and physics to the representation of a human crowd, Boltzmann made of the latter a calculable fluid. Thus, at the close of the nineteenth century, Boltzmann laid the discursive as well as scientific foundations for crowd descriptions through fluid dynamics." (Ibid.: 58)

persons, they are the materialization of decisions which can be grasped with the concept of "governmentality" (Gleich 2017: 49; Foucault 2005: 247-269). Therefore, the flow became "a vehicle for a system of governance that no longer sought to suppress mass phenomena but to promote, support, and optimize them by regulatory means." (Gleich 2017: 57)

Steering the (Migratory) Flow

Considering the so-called refugee flow today from the point of view of a water metaphor, against the backdrop of its 'naturalization', the metaphor has reappeared. Analyzing the difference between the historical meaning of the flow of people at the end of the 19th century, including its conventionalization, and the current *analytical* readings in terms of a natural catastrophic view of refugee flows is fruitful. Once again it is stressed that the relation to water is productive and problematic at the same time. Although the flow metaphor seems to make large movements of people easily graspable, it is inevitably accompanied by negative connotations like the dehumanization of persons. Additionally, it is possible to compare where the respective moment of control sets in. The control of refugee flows starts at a different imagined point than the flow generated by petty doors. While, for Gleich, the flow of people is thus a mechanically induced effect, the refugee flow is connoted as still uncontrolled and uncontrollable. People flows controlled by the door mechanism contradict the assumption invoked by the natural catastrophic imaginary of the flow, according to which this flow must first be contained in a controlling manner (cf. Mujagić 2018: 115-121). Viewing today's flow of refugees in light of the question of control, a political agenda becomes discernible. To this end, the off-commentary of the *Bibby Challenge* video asks: "If we look at the whole thing as a transport metaphor, then what is the state? Should it be a vehicle, or a road, or a way?" (TC: 00:03:33-00:03:42) Thus, flows are not only portrayed as related to natural catastrophes, but – as Gleich indicates – also refer to a form of "governmentality" (Foucault 2005: 247-269). Contrary to the history of the metaphor, in the contemporary discourse on migration the flow is depicted as still to be steered.

The metaphor allows to describe the work of the state as the "art of steering" although the state less steers 'the ship' (Foucault 2005: 249-250; 267, note 7) than aims to control the flows. It refers to a political agenda that goes beyond a suggestive negative politicization of the migration discourse through the metaphor. The gap in between a regulated flow of people produced by petty doors and contemporary's talk about uncontrolled flows of people hints towards the violence of political measures necessary to produce a *controlled* flow. In the case of flows in the World Exhibition, mechanical doors sufficed to make the mass of people move

in a regulated manner. However, since today's flows are connotated with natural catastrophes, from a governmental perspective this requires more forceful steering. Mechanisms of regulation are applied where refugee flows are perceived as the most threatening: 'Floodgates', 'locks', and 'sluices' then find their administrative pendants expressed in demands for an expansion of border protection. Furthermore, it materializes in the development of identification techniques and the organization of fleeing people according to a *distribution key*, in specific facilities such as – specifically in Germany – *anchor centers*, as well as eventually in the attempt to *contain* so-called causes of refugee flight preventively through economic programs. Petersson and Kainz note that "metaphors depicting natural events and disasters tend to frame restrictive political action as a key element in order to retain state sovereignty and control over national territories." Seen in this perspective, "the primeval forces of nature alluded to in these metaphors locate political measures concerning immigration on a spectrum ranging from palliative measures at best to utterly futile at worst." (2017, 54; cf. Mujagić 2018, 115)

This perspective is exemplarily underscored by William Walter's analysis of the British government's document *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* released in 2002. Also, pertaining to the logic of (forceful) exclusion in order to produce and maintain an inclusive us, Walter strikingly notes that "[t]he pre-eminent task of government is to attract and channel flows of resources, whether investment, goods, services, and now flows of (the right kind of) people into one's territory." (2004: 244) In the document Walter registers the government's "political ambition […] to combine two forms of security – the imperative of economic security which now entails attracting mobile human capital, and personal and internal security." Hence, there is "the quest to make the border into a membrane, a tissue which can filter movements across its threshold." (Ibid.: 255)[13] This illustrates the mechanism by which the deliberate inclusion of a specific group of people inevitably leads to signification of 'others' who are not welcome and therefore are excluded. Within this framework, the flow of refugees is degraded to a control variable that still needs to be regulated. Consequently, it makes no difference whether "goods and materials from all over the world" (TC: 00:09:05-00:09:13) or fleeing persons arrive. The orchestrated control of refugee flows appears in the residential containers anchored off Hamburg. They are the product of a political agenda according to which refugees may stay on a ship on the shore but not enter the country as a politically sovereign territory.[14]

13 Thanks to Milan Stürmer for mentioning this paper.

14 The image of a boat with fleeing people anchored outside national borders is updated in the summer 2019 in view of lifeboats being refused entry into northern Mediterranean ports. In this regard, Mujagić concludes "that metaphor use is not just a matter of rhetorics, but that this particular word choice actually depicts a reality where migrants are prevented from entering countries they come to by physical obstacles." (2018: 121)

What remains widely unheard in the talk of 'refugee flows' is the historically conditioned, negative semantic charge. Making it recognizable thus requires a semantic shift of the metaphor. Instead of a detour via associations to water, the flow of refugees must instead directly carry its political semantics with it; it demands a reconnotation. Jeanne Féaux de la Croix (2014) underscores this necessity and problematizes the metaphor of flow in the sense of a 'self-evident image' borrowed from nature. She asks: "But are streams and rivers truly the root image of 'flow' talk?" (2014: 98) In view of "globalization" and specifically the talk of migration "by now the root metaphor may have shifted", which in turn results in "a new dynamic of word associations". She concretizes that "flow would come to have […] a far more political taste." (Ibid.) It is not a matter of finding another idiom for the flow of refugees, but of challenging both the seeming self-evidence of its meaning as well as the reference to natural catastrophes.[15] In particular, the negative, dehumanizing control logic must be a reflexive part of the talk about migratory flows. Including the regulatory aspect of the metaphor through its history, the talk of refugee flows is describable in the logic of governmentality that perceives fleeing persons as a variable which is controllable by the state. However, this resemantization does not simply mean assigning a different meaning to flow, but rather to capture precisely this control function in its historicity.

Inscribed into the multiple layers of the video, this "political taste" (ibid.) is contained in the very sentence: "this is not a boat". Referring to such ships that cannot be considered adequate vehicles, the same holds for the Bibby Challenge. Anchoring before the city of Hamburg, it does not fulfil a conventional boat's function to transport people from one place to the other. And this insufficiency pertains to the metaphor of refugee flow, too. Concerning its linguistic function, it does not *transfer* from one meaning to another. The docked Bibby Challenge itself is a metaphor for the metaphor. With respect to the Greek *metapherein*, i.e. to "carry over",[16] the transfer itself is suspended. Hence, the metaphor proves to be deficient of its "political taste", as it isn't 'carried over' with it. As a result, the metaphor 'flows of people' refers to more than notions of water, and it has to become self-explanatory that talk about 'migrant flows' is part of a dehumanizing control logic that depicts migration as a regulable variable.

15 However, Walters provides a good example for another metaphor, i.e. "antivirus software": "The image is of the state/home as a computer terminal located in a proliferating network which is both a space of resources and risks. The asylum system is a core element of this scanning infrastructure regulating the passage of flows which traverse the state/home. Properly organized it is to work in the background, effectively and silently. It blocks malicious incoming traffic, while the non-malicious can smoothly cross its threshold." (2004: 255)

16 https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=metaphor, last access 05.20.2021.

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Being Lonesome Amongst the Many
Of Bloom and Multitude

Michel Schreiber

> "What tremendous happiness not to be me! But don't others feel the same way? What others? There are no others." (Fernando Pessoa – What Happiness)

In this chapter I will argue for an experiment in political thinking which has an unusual accomplice at its core: the existentialist notion of a neglected existence by the name of Bloom. Being Bloom is being simultaneously lonesome amongst the many and stranger to oneself. It therefore poses a myriad of questions to the concept of the many as a singular subject: multitude. The tension created by these different formulations of subjectivity can be made productive and be of great importance in analyzing our current modes of production and existence.

By combining different standpoints of post-operaist and autonomist thought I will look at present forms of subjectivity from three angles that are alternately individual, overlapping, and diametrically opposed. All three texts were published within the first decade of the 21st century. Tiqqun published their *Theory of Bloom* in 2000, Paolo Virno gave his lecture on *A Grammar of the Multitude* in 2001 (2004), and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri published their ideas on what they are calling *Commonwealth* at the end of the decade in 2009. From the early years of our century these authors describe subjectivity as unstable and ever changing. They agree on the fact that subjectivity is not a durable, constant, or given category but part of a process of production. To these authors subjectivity, especially in its different forms of being produced, is a term at the center of political thought. Hardt/Negri put it this way: "A key scene of political action today, […] involves the struggle over the control or autonomy of the production of subjectivity" (2009: 11). Hardt/Negri and Virno describe the current form of subjectivity as the result and basis of a certain mode of production (Hardt/Negri 2009: 11; Virno 2004: 41). The form of subjectivity they encounter in the era of global, post-fordist capitalism is that of the mass, of the many as singularity, multitude. This term, rooted in Spinoza (1994) and Hobbes (1949/1987), is used by Hardt/Negri and Virno in both similar and divergent ways

(cf. Lotringer 2004). Rather than provide a stringent differentiation of the term in the respective works, I will examine the convergences and differences through the lens of Tiqqun.

Virno stresses in his lecture that multitude characterized by a preliminary sharing "is itself the base of today's production" (2004: 41). Hardt/Negri note in their preface that "[t]he multitude makes itself by composing in the common the singular subjectivities" (2009: 11). I want to suggest that we can gain insights into the way the multitude is composed in the common; how subjectivity is simultaneously produced and neglected through a preliminary sharing by looking at it through the eyes of Tiqqun's 'Bloom'. For Tiqqun, Bloom is "like the sorry product of the times of multitudes", "[l]ast man, man of the street, man of mobs, man of the masses, mass-man, is the One […]." (2000: 15) As a product of the times of multitudes, as One, the figure of Bloom allows for a new critical analysis of the term of multitude; a critique that neither neglects nor renounces the term per se but aims at refocusing on the singular being rather than the always produced and continually reproduced multitude. Who do we encounter within the multitude? Bloom. This critique is formulated as a siding with an existentialist truth raised to the point of departure for a different political thought.

> "And that truth is that we are the tenants of an existence that is exiled in a world that is a desert, into which we were thrown, without a mission to accomplish, without assigned place or recognizable filiation, in complete neglect. We are at the same time so little and ever too much." (Tiqqun 2000: 16)

Therefore, the following will be an attempt to critique certain notions of the multitude by accepting me being Bloom to start my political thought from the realization that "[t]here is no social question of insecurity or marginalization, but this existential, inexorable reality that we are all alone, alone in rending it before death, that we are all, for all eternity, finished beings." (Tiqqun 2000: 16)

This text is obviously not fit to provide a discussion on the entirety of the discourse. Therefore, I will focus on three aspects that I think are crucial to the debate I engage in. First, I am going to discuss the notion of the becoming of the multitude in contrast to Tiqqun's idea of finished beings. My second focus will be how mass and individual as well as sociality and subjectivity relate to the social individual. Lastly, I will shed light on the relation of bio-politics and economy as it is precisely this relation that simultaneously produces and negates subjectivity.

Becoming and Finitude

Multitude is "the mode of being of the many" (Virno 2004: 22). This is the mode in which the many singular subjectivities come together to form the singularity of the subjectivity of the multitude. The concept of multitude does not oppose the idea of being 'One';

> "rather, it redefines it. Even the many need a form of unity, of being a One. But here is the point: this unity is no longer the State; rather, it is language, intellect, the communal faculties of the human race. The One is no longer a *promise*, it is a *premise*." (Ibid.: 25)

Being the premise of Virno's thoughts, multitude becomes a starting point, "the base which authorizes differentiation" (ibid.). The multitude as a singular subjectivity is therefore nothing less than producer and product. Being itself a result of a certain mode of production, it is the starting point and authority of differentiation. It hence brings forth the singularities of which it is composed of as One. Multitude always already is, it is produced and it is producing.

Hardt/Negri rely on Gilles Deleuze when they describe their project as a reorientation of the ethical horizon "from identity to becoming." (2009: 11) With Deleuze they stress that it "is not what we are but rather what we are in the process of becoming – that is the Other, our becoming-other." (Deleuze 1992) Before investigating this Deleuzian concept, I will show how multitude is thought of in its mode of being: the becoming-other. Hardt/Negri are even more direct than Virno in their post-modern formulation of multitude: "The multitude makes itself by composing in the common the singular subjectivities that result from this process." (2009: 11) Virno is afraid "to sing out-of-tune melodies in the post-modern style," (Virno 2004: 25) yet here we are: Multitude is a post-modern subjectivity producing that of which it composes itself. Therefore, it is a mode of being, but only if being is a mode of becoming. Multitude is differentiation and the One from which differentiation is possible. Thus, multitude is clearly something incomplete, unfinished, and ever changing. I suspect this is why Virno decides to call on Simondon's idea of metastability and individuation (Virno 2004: 78; Simondon 1989). By doing so he intends to show that individuation takes place

> "within the collective endeavor to refine our singularity, to bring it to its climax. Only within the collective, certainly not within the isolated subject, can perception, language, and productive forces take on the shape of an individuated experience." (Virno 2004: 79)

But Virno and Hardt/Negri – with Virno being less quick in his conclusions – seem to overlook or simply neglect the singular subject, that singular self amongst the many, the single part of the partiality of the multitude. In their attempt to stress

the possibilities of the many, the force that can be created through becoming multitude, they overlook the coexisting modes of being that are occupied by the singular subjectivities that produce multitude. Of course, one could argue that it is impossible to know every singular subjectivity and its mode of being. However, this automatically buys into the capitalist lie of individuality. In contrast, Tiqqun provide us with a description of a mode of being that is the great negator of difference and differentiation: Bloom. For Tiqqun, Bloom is anonymity and unifier at the same time. Bloom is unity in anonymity. Virno seems to have a similar notion when he describes Simondon's idea of the subject on which he rests his argument for the individuation of the multitude: "The subject is, rather, a composite: 'I', but also 'One,' unrepeatable uniqueness, but also anonymous universality." (Ibid.: 78) He continues: "Either an 'I' that no longer has a world or a world that no longer has an 'I': these are the two extremes of an oscillation which, though appearing in more contained forms, is never totally absent." (Ibid.) Virno seemingly forgets to reflect on this when describing the positive features of multitude – or he is not able to fit the notion into his argument.[1] But it is easy to connect these ideas with the "sorry product of the times of multitudes," (Tiqqun 2000: 15) with Bloom. For Bloom names a historical shift in the *Stimmung* in which we are, with which we are, and by which we conceive of the world and ourselves as: "that which corresponds with the moment of retreat of the subject from the world and the world from the subject." (Ibid.: 22) Being the product of multitude that is the product of differentiation which is always subjected to differentiation again and again, Bloom lives a life that "experiences itself negatively, in the indifference, the impersonality, the lack of quality." (Ibid.: 23) It is exactly for the lack of phenomenological stability that Bloom is thought of as somehow being closely connected to a mode of becoming: "Incompleteness is the mode of being of all who stay in contact with the power, the form of existence of all who are dedicated to becoming." (Ibid.: 33) The singular self of the times of multitudes is "the witness of its own desubjectification, of its interminable becoming-other." (Ibid.) The locus of differentiation will remain in itself indifferent. With this I return to Deleuze's quote stressing the need for our becoming-other that became the focal point for Hardt/Negri. For as we have seen by now, the description of a mode of being focused on becoming-other does not necessarily lead to becoming One as many, as multitude. It can just as well lead to witnessing your own desubjectification and incompleteness. Bloom is the singular, lonesome subjectivity within the coming multitudes of our time.

1 Virno describes the individuation of the multitude as a second degree individuation. Within the first degree individuation of the singular being within the many of the multitude there are a lot of different struggles between for example the pre-individual and the general intellect etc. But to Virno it is more important to stress the individuation of the multitude as many for it is therein, in the collective that individuation can actually take place. (Virno 2004: 77)

Bloom "is not alone in being alone, all men [sic!] have that solitude in common." (Ibid.: 96) But how should there be familiarity in becoming other again and again? The ever-changing relation of Bloom to multitude, creating it and being produced by it, ensures that "[i]ts becoming is a becoming-stranger." (Ibid.: 77)

To evade that strangeness, that perfect alienation, that indifference and counter the power impacting our bodies and lives that is closely connected to becoming – as it is only within a mode of becoming that bio-power can develop its impact – I want to suggest with Tiqqun that we step back from our analysis of becoming, relationality, and processes and go somewhere else.

Virno stressed that bio-power is closely related to the mere potentiality that is work-force (Virno 2004: 81). Speaking with Virno we could say bio-power is interested in controlling workforce because it is the potential to work. Bio-power is interested in controlling our becoming-workers, the future aspects of our ability to be productive, rather than our working bodies and minds as they are now. This notion brings the experiment mentioned at the very beginning of this text into play: Rather than focus on that which is controlled through the myriads of electrodes comprising the world-wide net of bio-power or interests in controlling and exploiting the commodity of our potential to work, I suggest to start by acknowledging that "[t]here is no social question of insecurity or marginalization, but this existential, inexorable reality that we are all alone, alone in rending it before death, that we are all, for all eternity, finished beings." (Tiqqun 2000: 16) There are a lot of implications in this notion. But I want to stress the existentialist aspects:

> "Insignificance and anonymity, separation and estrangement are not the poetic circumstances that the melancholic inclination of certain subjectivities tends to exaggerate: the impact of the existential situation thus characterized, the Bloom, is total, and above all political. Whomever is without community is sacer." (Ibid.: 115)

Empty Multitudes

The topic of this short chapter is not one of a division of public and private property, for: "what is there left to own?" (Ibid.: 89)[2] I will rather concern myself with the question of poverty and misery and that of sacredness. In 'Commonwealth' Hardt/Negri claim that Multitude is the name of the poor (2009: 39). To them *the poor* does not address those who have very little or nothing. It tries to speak "to the

2 Hardt/Negri and Virno go into great detail to explain why this division is no longer needed (Hardt/Negri 2009: 3; Virno 2004: 40).

wide multiplicity of all those who are inserted in the mechanisms of social production regardless of social order or property." (Ibid.: 40) They mark the conflict within their conception but stress that it is at the same time a political one. For it is the productivity of that conflict that "makes the multitude of the poor a real and effective menace." (Ibid.) They surely have a point. Walter Benjamin already knew that

> "[w]e have become impoverished. We have given up one portion of the human heritage after another, and have often left it at the pawnbroker's for a hundredth of its true value, in exchange for the small change of 'the contemporary'." (1996: 735)

Benjamin also does not speak of financial poverty or lack of wealth. *The poor* in his case lack experience and human connection to others and to life. *The many* in his argument are those who have to adapt and begin anew again and again (ibid.). But are *the many* per se multitude? We could easily think of becoming poor as a process of singularization but not of the many as One but a singularization of each on their own. Poverty then is something common although not shared, just as property and wealth. If we understand poverty in this way, it becomes a metaphysical variable influencing the mode of being that is Bloom:

> "Ultimately dispossessed, disqualified of everything, mutely estranged from its world, ignorant of itself as of that which surrounds it, the Bloom realizes at the heart of historical processes, and in its fullness, the absolutely metaphysical breadth of the concept of poverty." (Tiqqun 2000: 79-81)

Making use of that concept in connection with the existentialist understanding of the mode of being of Bloom, they contrast poverty with the concept of misery. Poverty is described as the state of "[those] who can use everything, having nothing of [their] own" whereas misery is the state of those "who can use nothing, being that [they have] too much, lack time and [are] without community." (Ibid.) With this Tiqqun argue that we actually encounter misery, not poverty, when looking at Bloom. Therefore, they encourage us to share poverty instead of the misery of the wealthy as that would mean ceasing to be *Bloom* since Bloom only understands the language of exchange value. (Ibid.) Sharing poverty would mean giving up on everything that denotes value to another thing, establishes rank or class, or creates a social heterogeneity that then creates a multitude and its political body and thus produces the differentiations that are at the end effects of misery. To me, this notion was crucial when thinking about the relation between singular subject and multitude as it is here that it becomes clear that multitude as a mode of production brings forth the crises of the singular subjectivity, the social individual. Multitude, as something that is becoming as it is produced and producing the singular subjectivities it is made up of, can be no more than a descriptive tool to uncover the

current mode of production of our being together as perfect strangers. Multitude as a place of a probable shared solidarity is something to be created by the finished beings that are Bloom through sharing their lack of experience in hoping to intensify life itself. Benjamin remained optimistic: "Let us hope that from time to time the individual will give a little humanity to the masses, who one day will repay him [sic!] with compound interest." (1999: 735)

But hope, just as becoming, is aimed at things to come. For now, it seems, the giving of humanity to the masses seldom occurs. Because Bloom is sacred. Bloom is without community or represents the many lacking the ability to form a self. Being of the masses, Bloom is produced by the mass Bloom produces. As pointed out before, this leads to an indifferent life. Bloom is always either mass or individual, with each one as the negation of the other. In being individual Bloom is the most generalized individual there is: Absolute interiority or absolute exteriority. As mass or multitude Bloom is perfectly indifferent to the mass itself. In this case Bloom is the many. Living up to the norm of production, Bloom as mass is a generalized being. According to Hannah Arendt this means a loss of the rights of Man, but not a loss of the virtues of humanity, whereby these beings "no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them." (Arendt 1968: 175f) This generalization takes place in Bloom and in multitude. It is the paradoxical side of desubjectification that is not included in Hardt/Negri and Virno but takes place in Tiqqun's analysis of the relation between bio-power and spectacle. It is in this very moment that Bloom becomes sacer. (Agamben: 1998) There only is Bloom as product of the many and Bloom as singularities composing the many as singularity. But there never is both, there never is the one *and* the other. The existential situation of Bloom is one of schizophrenia. There is the subjectification of Bloom as multitude that produces generalization, and there is the desubjectification of the single non-subject that is Bloom as individual. Both are viable to be exploited in the convergences of bio-power and spectacle:

> "Biopower is the benevolent power [...] the power that wants the salute of its subjects, the power that wants you to live. Held in the vice that is simultaneously all-emcompassing [sic!] and individual, ripening in a double constraint that annihilated us in the same act as it brought us into existence, most of us adopt a sort of political and hopeless nature: to feign internal death [...]. In subtracting themselves from all positivity, these spectres steal from a productive power that very thing upon which it could be exerted: themselves. Their desire not to live is all that gives them strength to oppose a power that claims to make them live. In doing so, they remain in the Bloom, usually burying themselves therein." (Tiqqun 2000: 30)

Existentialist alienation

In this last part of my argument I will show the positive effects that the existentialist trick used by Tiqqun can have on our reflections on subjectivity. It is because of the notion of a somehow finite being that we can think of becoming within biopower and spectacle as both subjectification and desubjectification, subtraction of self and becoming other – although, I admit this sounds strange at first. The subtraction of self is closely connected to the idea of a coexisting desubjectification and subjectification which are the becoming-other. For "THE OTHER IS THE ECONOMY IN US" (ibid.: 31). It "*posesses us*: it is this dissociated body, a simple peripheral artifact in the hands of" bio-power. (Ibid. emphasis Tiqqun) This understanding of the Other brings movement into the being that was described as finite, endlessly finished. It is not a motion of becoming as a social being, of becoming positively of the mass. The movement we are witnessing is that of a draining of the finished being. Becoming as negation: "The internal presence of the Other is established at all levels of our conscience: it is a minor and constant loss of being […]" (Ibid.). I suggest that this is the condition Virno has in mind when talking of nihilism "put to work" (2004: 74). To counter this inner loss of being Bloom projects itself even more violently outside. One aspect of that is that Bloom needs to stick ever more rigidly to ideas of any kind of social identity. More interestingly for my thoughts on Bloom and multitude is Tiqqun's idea that

> "we *play* at being subjects. […] The Bloom does not signify that we would be failing subjects in regards to the superb sufficiency of the classic subject; instead, it reveals that at the base of human existence there is a principle of incompleteness, a radical insufficiency. What we are is precisely that failure, which can, if it pleases, designate itself the mask of the subject." (Tiqqun 2000.: 31-32; emphasis Tiqqun)

With this it appears we have created an inner contradiction. Bloom seems to be the existentialist truth of a finished being and the principle of human existence as incomplete and insufficient. Just as Hardt/Negri found the contradiction they encountered in their reading of poverty to be productive, I suggest we can gain a lot by taking the ideas of Tiqqun seriously. They allow us to reveal the workings of all the books and courses and coachings that promise to teach people how to find their selves, be themselves, or find their inner peace. The inner contradiction of Bloom is best described in this strange obligation of Bloom to be as self, that social pressure "to 'be oneself', that is to say, in a strict assignation of residence in one of the identities recognized by the autonomous Publicity." (Ibid.: 99) Within this pressure to be oneself and the impossibility to be as self, the existentialist contradiction described above has found a materialistic realization. Multitude as the mode of production brings forth the being called Bloom that is always of the masses but forced to find an impossible existence as self. To be oneself is just as

much an imperative as it is imperative to be sociable. Bloom in becoming-other is becoming stranger to itself. Alienation is then not only a fact of socio-economic realities, it is also an existential reality of the sorry product of the times' of multitude. Multitude as the mode of production generates singular beings that are both subjectificated as they make up the singular subject of multitude and desubjectificated in their negation of self – which they are forced to counter on their journey to be oneself thus being productive themselves. Alienation has therefore become total. Being Bloom is being simultaneously lonesome amongst the many and stranger to oneself. The subjectification of the many as a singularity in multitude cannot exist without the desubjectification of the singular beings in their mode of existence as Bloom.

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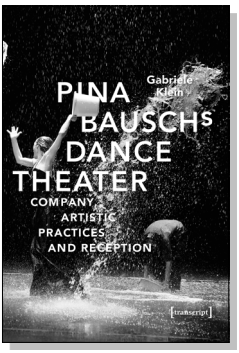

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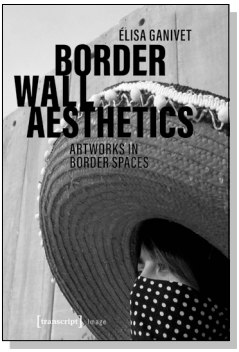

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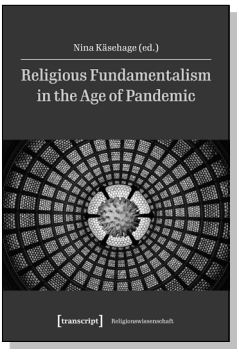

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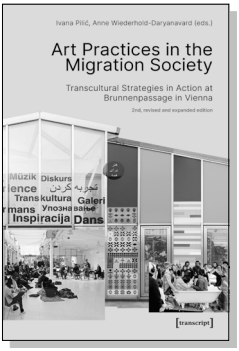

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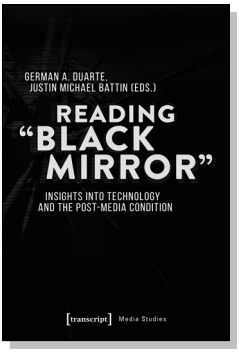

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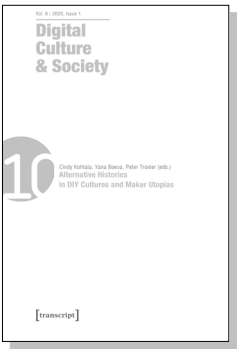

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