

AN APARTMENT  
ON URANUS

PAUL B. PRECIADO



Fitzcarraldo Editions

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‘Paul B. Preciado has the magic ability to fire off imperatives that don’t feel bossy, but rather incite us to join him in whatever crackling energy, urgent curiosity, and dynamic nomadism is flowing through him. Reading these chronological missives offers the real pleasure of Preciado’s company in time, and inspires us not just to stay with our trouble, but to greet it with unstoppable speech, complex solidarity, glitter, and defiance.’

— Maggie Nelson, author of *The Argonauts*

‘An arresting, bold and moving book about crossing boundaries — of body, sex, nation, species and language — by an important dissident of dualism.’

— Amia Srinivasan, author of *The Right to Sex*

### Praise for *Testo Junkie*

‘*Testo Junkie* is a wild ride. Preciado leaves the identity politics of taking T to others, and instead, in the tradition of William S. Burroughs, Kathy Acker, and Jean Genet, he conducts a wild textual experiment. The results are spectacular... The gendered body will never be the same again.’

— Jack Halberstam, author of *The Queer Art of Failure*

‘Paul B. Preciado’s brilliant book oscillates between high theory and the surging rush of testosterone. Flush with elegant theoretical formulations, lascivious sex narratives, and astute histories of gender, *Testo Junkie* is a key text to comprehend the deep interconnectedness of sex and drugs today.’

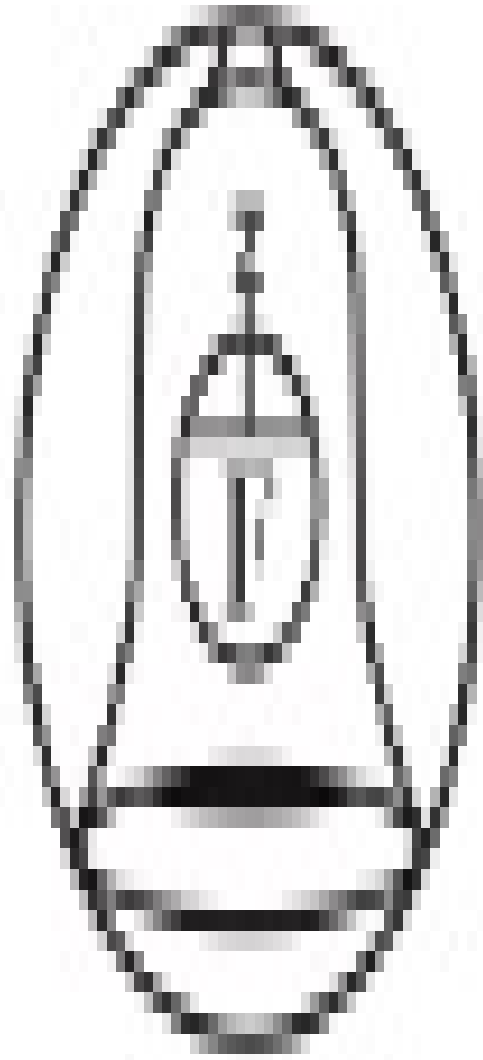
— José Esteban Muñoz, author of *Cruising Utopia*

AN APARTMENT ON URANUS

PAUL B. PRECIADO

Translated by

CHARLOTTE MANDELL



Fitzcarraldo Editions

*To Itziar*

*the broad sun*

*the loved shore*

‘The atmosphere of the planet Uranus appears to be so heavy that the ferns there are creepers; the animals drag along, crushed by the weight of the gases. I want to mingle with these humiliated creatures which are always on their bellies. If metempsychosis should grant me a new dwelling place, I choose that forlorn planet, I inhabit it with the convicts of my race. Amidst hideous reptiles, I pursue an eternal, miserable death in the darkness where the leaves will be black, the waters of the marshes thick and cold. Sleep will be denied me. On the contrary, I recognize, with increasing lucidity, the unclean fraternity of the smiling alligators.’

— Jean Genet, *The Thief’s Journal* (1949)

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Paul,

When you asked me if I would write this preface, we were in the apartment where you were living in the centre of Paris. The places you settle in always look like monastic cells. A desk a computer a few notebooks a bed with a pile of books next to it. It's still strange to be at your place without being at my place – you're the person I've spent the most time with in my life; this sensation of the familiar-turned-strange remains an enigma for me, something halfway between pleasure and pain, which might be both at once, which must be nostalgia.

You asked me if I would write this preface and I didn't think twice before saying yes. We were living together when you began writing these columns, and after our separation you continued sending me your texts so I could check your French – we both know they could very easily have done that at Libération but it's a way of maintaining a bond. For me, a way of continuing to live in your words – of not losing the thread of your thinking.

I know how you write. You don't get writer's block. I would be incapable of doing this kind of article-writing because every time, it would plunge me into a week of pure anguish – the same kind of week I've just spent in not managing to begin writing this preface. At first I thought it should be 1,500 words, the length of your articles. I thought up a plan, very quickly, but the property of writer's block is that even if you know what you want to write, and you stay seated at your desk, nothing comes. The plan I had in mind began like this, 'The day I'm writing this preface you're leaving the police station where you went to lodge a complaint because your door was covered in graffiti, death threats, on the same night the same insults and the same threats were spray-painted on the door of the local LGBT centre in Barcelona. You wrote to me via WhatsApp 'I'm leaving the police station my teeth are clenched and my bones are cold I don't like going to the police'. But that's not the first time you've gone since we've known each other, always for death threats. The first time it happened I told you let it go don't say anything if they write to you to tell you how they're going to kill you it's because they don't have any intention of doing it.' And then a gay activist in



Madrid had his throat slit when he was leaving his home and was left for dead, but he survived. He'd also received threats and so, after learning what had happened to him, you went to lodge a complaint, that first time. And you explained to the policemen everything they needed to know about queer micropolitics. That's your speciality, telling people stories they never imagined – and convincing them it's reasonable to want to see them come true.

The day I'm writing this preface, the Brazilian member of parliament Jean Wyllys is announcing his decision to leave his country because he fears for his life. The young Bilal Hassani is chosen to represent France on Eurovision and he is flooded with a torrent of homophobic insults.

When you began writing these columns for the newspaper Libération, anti-gay marriage demonstrations were being supported with a disturbing enthusiasm by the mainstream media – every day they had to be promoted: give the stand to intolerance, defend the right of the fundamentalists of heterosexuality to express their hate. This was indispensable. This was the signal – we all understood this – for the end of a decade of tolerance. Your name then was Beto and you didn't regularly take testosterone but people spoke of you with the masculine pronoun, as you wanted. You called cis-guys 'the fuzzies' and that made me crack up. Today no one on the street would think of correcting themselves with 'excuse me, madam' after calling you 'sir' and then getting confused, not really understanding how to proceed. Today you are trans and when we're together on the street what bothers me most is not that men speak to you better, it's that women don't behave in the same way anymore. They adore you. It used to be that straight women didn't really know what to make of this feminine guy this masculine girl – they weren't really at ease with you. Now they adore you, whether they're walking their dogs in the street or selling cheese or are waitresses in a restaurant – women think you're their type and they let you know as all women do, by showering you with little gratuitous attentions. You say it's strange to become a man while keeping the memory of oppression and that anyway I'm exaggerating, that they're not paying attention to you. And that just makes me laugh.

Your articles, gathered together, outline a coherent skyline. I remember each piece, I remember the time each one was published, but it's a surprise to find them all together. An excellent surprise. Several stories unfold, in a quincunx, alternatively, or in a spiral, as Barthes would say – always around the same points, but not at the same level. It's at once a book that stands out from your other books, more autobiographical, more accessible, and a book that is reminiscent of your *Testo Junkie*, which tangled several threads – you called it 'a plait'. This collection too is a plait. There is one story thread that concerns you and me – our separation and the years that followed. And other threads that are woven, to form another motif. It's also the story of the end of democracies in the West. How finance discovered it got along very well with authoritarian regimes – and even that it prefers authoritarian regimes since people consume even more when their wrists are bound. And it's the story of refugees penned into camps, dead at sea or abandoned to poverty in opulent cities that call themselves Christian – and I know you're not establishing a parallel between their situation and your own out of an aesthetic taste for a leftist pose but because you know, as a masculine dyke child who grew up at the end of the Franco dictatorship, and now as trans, that you are one of them. That you will always be one of them, that destitution, as Louis Calaferte says, 'is never a question of strength', moral or mental, or of merit. Destitution crushes you like a truck that's overturned on top of you – it seizes you and breaks you. And you don't forget it.

And it's also, of course, the story of your transition – of your transitions. This central story not of going from one point to another, but of wandering and in-between-ness as the place of life. A constant transformation, without fixed identity, without fixed activity, or address, or country. You call this book *An Apartment on Uranus* and you have no apartment on Earth, just the keys to a place in Paris, as you've had the keys for two years to an apartment in Athens. You don't settle down. It doesn't interest you, to be fixed in place. You want the status of permanent illegal immigrant. You change your name on your identity papers and as soon as your name is Paul to cross borders, you write in *Libé* that you have no intention of adopting masculinity as your new gender – you want a utopian gender.

It's as if the possible had become a prison and you the fugitive. You write

between possibilities – and by doing so, you deploy another possibility. You taught me an essential thing: not to engage in politics without enthusiasm. If you get involved in politics without enthusiasm, you're on the right. But you engage in politics with a contagious enthusiasm – with no hatred towards those who demand your death, just an awareness of the threat they dangle over you, over us. But you don't have time for hostility, or the character for anger – you deploy worlds that appear from the margins, and the amazing thing about you is this ability to continue to imagine something else. As if propaganda slid right off you and your gaze were systematically able to destabilize the obvious. It's your arrogance that's sexy – that joyful arrogance that allows you to think elsewhere, in the interstices, to want to live on Uranus and to write in a language that is not your own before giving lectures in yet another language... from one language to another, from one theme to another, from one city to another, from one gender to another – transitions are your home. And I never want to leave this home completely, never forget your intermediary language, your crossroad language, your language in transition.

That's the idea for the plan I had and I wanted to conclude by talking about this obsession all autocratic regimes have – whether they're far-right, religious, or communist – with attacking queer bodies, slut bodies, trans bodies, bodies outside the law. It's as if we had oil – and all powerful regimes want access to this oil, want to expel us from the management of our lands. It's as if we were very rich in some undefinable raw material. By dint of interesting so many people, we end up telling ourselves we must have something having to do with some rare and precious essence – how otherwise can you explain why all freedom-destroying movements are so closely interested in what we do with our identities, our lives, and our bodies in our bedrooms?

And for the first time since we've known each other, I am more optimistic than you are. I imagine that children born after the year 2000 will refuse to let themselves be dragooned into these idiocies – and I don't know if my optimism comes from a terror so great that I refuse to confront it, if it comes from a correct intuition, or if it's just that I've become bourgeois and I need to tell myself that everything's going to continue as it is because I have too much at stake in it. I have no idea. But for the first time in my life I feel it – that it's the swansong of traditional murderous raping abusive masculinity. The last time we'll hear them shouting and killing us in the streets to ward off the wretchedness that constitutes

their way of thinking. I think that children born after the year 2000 will be capable of thinking that continuing with this masculinist order – or in your words ‘techno-patriarchal’ – would be for everything to die, for everything to be lost.

And I think that these children will read your texts – and they’ll understand what you propose, they’ll want you. Your thinking, your horizon, your spaces. You write for a time that has not yet arrived. You write to children who have not yet been born, and who will also live in constant transition – which is the property of life.

And I wish the reader who enters your book all the pleasure in the world. Welcome to Paul B. Preciado – you climb into a capsule and you won’t come out unscathed, but you’ll see, there’s no violence. At some point while reading these pages, you’ll find yourself upside-down and gravity will be nothing but a distant memory. It will occur at a different point for each of you, without your realizing what’s happened. You will be elsewhere. And when you emerge from this reading, you’ll know that that space exists, and that it’s open to you – that it’s where you can become something entirely different from what you had been allowed to imagine.

Virginie Despentes

## INTRODUCTION:

### AN APARTMENT ON URANUS

As the years passed, I learned to think of dreams as an integral part of life. There are dreams that, because of their sensory intensity, their realism or precisely their lack of realism, deserve to be introduced into autobiography, just as much as events that were actually lived through. Life begins and ends in the unconscious; the actions we carry out while fully lucid are only little islands in an archipelago of dreams. No existence can be completely rendered in its happiness or its madness without taking into account oneiric experiences. It's Calderón de la Barca's maxim reversed: it's not a matter of thinking that life is a dream, but rather of realizing that dreams are also a form of life. It is just as strange to think, like the Egyptians, that dreams are cosmic channels through which the souls of ancestors pass in order to communicate with us, as to claim, as some of the neurosciences do, that dreams are a 'cut-and-paste' of elements experienced by the brain during waking life, elements that return in the dream's REM phase, while our eyes move beneath our eyelids, as if they were watching. Closed and sleeping, eyes continue to see. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that the human psyche never stops creating and dealing with reality, sometimes in dreams, sometimes in waking life.

Whereas over the course of the last few months my waking life has been, to use the euphemistic Catalan expression, 'good, so long as we don't go into details,' my oneiric life has had the power of a novel by Ursula K. Le Guin. During one of my recent dreams, I was talking with the artist Dominique González-Foerster about my problem of geographic dislocation: after years of a nomadic life, it is hard for me to decide on a place to live in the world. While we were having this conversation, we were watching the planets spin slowly in their orbits, as if we were two giant children and the solar system were a Calder mobile. I was explaining to her that, for now, in order to avoid the conflict that the decision entailed, I had rented an apartment on each planet, but that I didn't spend more than a month on any one of them, and that this situation was economically and physically unsustainable. Probably because she is the creator of the Exotourism project, Dominique in this dream was an expert on extra-terrestrial real-estate

management. 'If I were you, I'd have an apartment on Mars and I'd keep a pied-à-terre on Saturn,' she was saying, showing a great deal of pragmatism, 'but I'd get rid of the Uranus apartment. It's much too far away.'

Awake, I don't know much about astronomy; I don't have the slightest idea of the positions or distances of the different planets in the solar system. But I consulted the Wikipedia page on Uranus: it is in fact one of the most distant planets from Earth. Only Neptune, Pluto and the dwarf planets Haumea, Makemake and Eris are further away. I read that Uranus was the first planet discovered with the help of a telescope, eight years before the French Revolution. With the help of a lens he himself had made, the astronomer and musician William Herschel observed it one night in March in a clear sky, from the garden of his house at 19 New King Street, in the city of Bath. Since he didn't yet know if it was a huge star or a tailless comet, they say that Herschel called it 'Georgium Sidus', the Georgian Star, to console King George III for the loss of the British colonies in America: England had lost a continent, but the King had gained a planet. Thanks to Uranus, Herschel was able to live on a generous royal pension of two hundred pounds a year. Because of Uranus, he abandoned both music and the city of Bath, where he was a chapel organist and Director of Public Concerts, and settled in Windsor so that the King could be sure of his new conquest by observing it through a telescope. Because of Uranus, they say, Herschel went mad, and spent the rest of his life building the largest telescope of the eighteenth century, which the English called 'the monster'. Because of Uranus, they say, Herschel never played the oboe again. He died at the age of eighty-four: the number of years it takes for Uranus to go around the sun. They say that the tube of his telescope was so wide that the family used it as a dining hall at his funeral.

Uranus is what astrophysicists call a 'gas giant'. Made up of ice, methane and ammonia, it is the coldest planet in the solar system, with winds that can exceed 900 kilometres per hour. In short, the living conditions are not especially suitable. So Dominique was right: I should leave the Uranus apartment.

But dream functions like a virus. From that night forward, while I'm awake, the sensation of having an apartment on Uranus increases, and I am more and more convinced that the place I should live is over there.

For the Greeks, as for me in this dream, Uranus was the solid roof of the world, the limit of the celestial vault. Uranus was regarded as the house of the gods in

many Greek invocation rituals. In mythology, Uranus is the son that Gaia, the Earth, conceived alone, without insemination or coition. Greek mythology is at once a kind of retro sci-fi story anticipating in a do-it-yourself way the technologies of reproduction and bodily transformation that will appear throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; and at the same time a kitschy TV series in which the characters give themselves over to an unimaginable number of relationships outside the law. Thus Gaia married her son Uranus, a Titan often represented in the middle of a cloud of stars, like a sort of Tom of Finland dancing with other muscle-bound guys in a techno club on Mount Olympus. From the incestuous and ultimately not very heterosexual relationships between heaven and earth, the first generation of Titans were born, including Oceanus (Water), Chronos (Time), and Mnemosyne (Memory)... Uranus was both the son of the Earth and the father of all the others. We don't quite know what Uranus's problem was, but the truth is that he was not a good father: either he forced his children to remain in Gaia's womb, or he threw them into Tartarus as soon as they were born. So Gaia convinced one of her children to carry out a contraceptive operation. You can see in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence the representation that Giorgio Vasari made in the sixteenth century of Chronos castrating his father Uranus with a scythe. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, emerged from Uranus's amputated genital organs... which could imply that love comes from the disjunction of the body's genital organs, from the displacement and externalization of genital force.

This form of non-heterosexual conception, cited in Plato's Symposium, was the inspiration for the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs to come up with the word 'Uranian' [Urning] in 1864 to designate what he called relations of the 'third sex'. In order to explain men's attraction to other men, Ulrichs, after Plato, cut subjectivity in half, separated the soul from the body, and imagined a combination of souls and bodies that authorized him to reclaim dignity for those who loved against the law. The segmentation of soul and body reproduces in the domain of experience the binary epistemology of sexual difference: there are only two options. Uranians are not, Ulrichs writes, sick or criminal, but feminine souls enclosed in masculine bodies attracted to masculine souls.

This is not a bad idea to legitimize a form of love that, at the time, could get you hanged in England or in Prussia, and that, today, remains illegal in seventy-four countries and is subject to the death penalty in thirteen countries, including Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, and Qatar; a form of love that constitutes a common motive for violence in family, society and police in most Western democracies.

Ulrichs does not make this statement as a lawyer or scientist: he is speaking in the first person. He does not say 'there are Uranians', but 'I am a Uranian'. He asserts this, in Latin, on 28 August 1867, after having been condemned to prison and after his books have been banned and he speaks in front of an assembly of 500 jurists, members of the German Parliament, and a Bavarian prince – an ideal audience for such confessions. Until then, Ulrichs had hidden behind the pseudonym 'Numa Numantius'. But from that day on, he speaks in his own name, he dares to taint the name of his father. In his diary, Ulrichs confesses he was terrified, and that, just before walking onto the stage of the Grand Hall of the Odeon Theatre in Munich, he had been thinking about running away, never to return. But he says he suddenly remembered the words of the Swiss writer Heinrich Hössli who, a few years before, had defended sodomites (though not, however, speaking in his own name): 'Two ways lie before me,' Hössli wrote, 'to write this book and expose myself to persecution, or not to write it and be full of guilt until the day I am buried. Of course I have encountered the temptation to stop writing... But before my eyes appeared the images of the persecuted and the prospect of such wretched children who have not yet been born, and I thought of the unhappy mothers at their cradles, rocking their cursed yet innocent children! And then I saw our judges with their eyes blindfolded. Finally, I imagined my gravedigger slipping the cover of my coffin over my cold face. Then, before I submitted, the imperious desire to stand up and defend the oppressed truth possessed me... And so I continued to write with my eyes resolutely averted from those who have worked for my destruction. I do not have to choose between remaining silent or speaking. I say to myself: speak or be judged!'

Ulrichs writes in his journal that the judges and Parliamentarians seated in Munich's Odeon Hall cried out, as they listened to his speech, like an angry crowd: End the meeting! End the meeting! But he also notes that one or two voices were raised to say: Let him continue! In the midst of a chaotic tumult, the President left the theatre, but some Parliamentarians remained. Ulrichs's voice trembled. They listened.

But what does it mean to speak for those who have been refused access to reason and knowledge, for us who have been regarded as mentally ill? With what voice can we speak? Can the jaguar or the cyborg lend us their voices? To speak is to invent the language of the crossing, to project one's voice into an interstellar expedition: to translate our difference into the language of the norm; while we continue, in secret, to practise a strange lingo that the law does not understand.



So Ulrichs was the first European citizen to declare publicly that he wanted to have an apartment on Uranus. He was the first mentally ill person, the first sexual criminal to stand up and denounce the categories that labelled him as sexually and criminally diseased. He did not say, 'I am not a sodomite.' On the contrary, he defended the right to practise sodomy between men, calling for a reorganization of the systems of signs, for a change of the political rituals that defined the social recognition of a body as healthy or sick, normal or criminal. He invented a new language and a new scene of enunciation. In each of Ulrichs's words addressed from Uranus to the Munich jurists resounds the violence generated by the dualist epistemology of the West. The entire universe cut in half and solely in half. Everything is heads or tails in this system of knowledge. We are human or animal. Man or woman. Living or dead. We are the colonizer or the colonized. Living organism or machine. We have been divided by the norm. Cut in half and forced to remain on one side or the other of the rift. What we call 'subjectivity' is only the scar that, over the multiplicity of all that we could have been, covers the wound of this fracture. It is over this scar that property, family and inheritance were founded. Over this scar, names are written and sexual identities asserted.

On 6 May 1868, Karl Maria Kertbeny, an activist and defender of the rights of sexual minorities, sent a handwritten letter to Ulrichs in which for the first time he used the word 'homosexual' to refer to what his friend called 'Uranians'. Against the anti-sodomy law promulgated in Prussia, Kertbeny defended the idea that sexual practices between people of the same sex were as 'natural' as the practices of those he calls – also for the first time – 'heterosexuals'. For Kertbeny, homosexuality and heterosexuality were just two natural ways of loving. For medical jurisprudence at the end of the nineteenth century, however, homosexuality would be reclassified as a disease, a deviation, and a crime.

I am not speaking of history here. I am speaking to you of your lives, of mine, of today. While the notion of Uranianism has gone somewhat astray in the archives of literature, Kertbeny's concepts would become authentic biopolitical techniques of dealing with sexuality and reproduction over the course of the twentieth century, to such an extent that most of you continue to use them to refer to your own identity, as if they were descriptive categories. Homosexuality would remain listed until 1975 in Western psychiatric manuals as a psychosexual disease. This remains a central notion, not only in the discourse of clinical psychology, but also in the political languages of Western democracies.

When the notion of homosexuality disappeared from psychiatric manuals, the notions of intersexuality and transsexuality appear as new pathologies for which medicine, pharmacology and law suggest remedies. Each body born in a hospital in the West is examined and subjected to the protocols of evaluation of gender normality invented in the 1950s in the United States by Drs John Money and John and Joan Hampson: if the baby's body does not comply with the visual criteria of sexual difference, it will be submitted to a battery of operations of 'sexual reassignment'. In the same way, with a few minor exceptions, neither scientific discourse nor the law in most Western democracies recognize the possibility of inscribing a body as a member of human society unless it is assigned either masculine or feminine gender. Transsexuality and intersexuality are described as psychosomatic pathologies, and not as the symptoms of the inadequacy of the politico-visual system of sexual differentiation when faced with the complexity of life.

How can you, how can we, organize an entire system of visibility, representation, right of self-determination and political recognition if we follow such categories? Do you really believe that you are male or female, that we are homosexual or heterosexual, intersex or trans? Do these distinctions worry you? Do you trust them? Does the very meaning of your human identity depend on them? If you feel your throat constricting when you hear one of these words, do not silence it. It's the multiplicity of the cosmos that is trying to pierce through your chest, as if your throat were the tube of a Herschel telescope.

Let me tell you that homosexuality and hetero-sexuality do not exist outside of a dualistic, hierarchical epistemology that aims at preserving the domination of the paterfamilias over the reproduction of life. Homosexuality and heterosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality do not exist outside of a colonial, capitalist epistemology, which privileges the sexual practices of reproduction as a strategy for managing the population and the reproduction of labour, but also the reproduction of the population of consumers. It is capital, not life, that is being reproduced. These categories are the map imposed by authority, not the territory of life. But if homosexuality and heterosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality, do not exist, then who are we? How do we love? Imagine it.

Then, I remember my dream and I understand that my trans condition is a new form of Uranism. I am not a man and I am not a woman and I am not heterosexual I am not homosexual I am not bisexual. I am a dissident of the sex-gender system. I am the multiplicity of the cosmos trapped in a binary political

and epistemological system, shouting in front of you. I am a Uranian confined inside the limits of techno-scientific capitalism.

Like Ulrichs, I am bringing no news from the margins; instead, I bring you a piece of horizon. I come with news of Uranus, which is neither the realm of God nor the sewer. Quite the contrary. I was assigned a female sex at birth. They said I was lesbian. I decided to self-administer regular doses of testosterone. I never thought I was a man. I never thought I was a woman. I was several. I didn't think of myself as transsexual. I wanted to experiment with testosterone. I love its viscosity, the unpredictability of the changes it causes, the intensity of the emotions it provokes forty-eight hours after taking it. And, if the injections are regular, its ability to undo your identity, to make organic layers of the body emerge that otherwise would have remained invisible. Here as everywhere, what matters is the measure: the dosage, the rhythm of injections, the order of them, the cadence. I wanted to become unrecognizable. I wasn't asking medical institutions for testosterone as hormone therapy to cure 'gender dysphoria'. I wanted to function with testosterone, to experience the intensity of my desire through it, to multiply my faces by metamorphosing my subjectivity, creating a body that was a revolutionary machine. I undid the mask of femininity that society had plastered onto my face until my identity documents became ridiculous, obsolete. Then, with no way out, I agreed to identify myself as a transsexual, as a 'mentally ill person', so that the medico-legal system would acknowledge me as a living human body. I paid with my body for the name I bear.

By making the decision to construct my subjectivity with testosterone, the way the shaman constructs his with plants, I take on the negativity of my time, a negativity I am forced to represent and against which I can fight only from this paradoxical incarnation, which is to be a trans man in the twenty-first century, a feminist bearing the name of a man in the #MeToo movement, an atheist of the hetero-patriarchal system turned into a consumer of the pharmacopornographic industry. My existence as a trans man constitutes at once the acme of the sexual ancien régime and the beginning of its collapse, the climax of its normative progression and the signal of a proliferation still to come.

I have come to talk to you – to you and to the dead, or rather, to those who live as if they were already dead – but I have come especially to talk to the cursed, innocent children who are yet to be born. Uranians are the survivors of a systematic, political attempt at infanticide: we have survived the attempt to kill

in us, while we were not yet adults, and while we could not defend ourselves, the radical multiplicity of life and the desire to change the names of all things. Are you dead? Will they be born tomorrow? I congratulate you, belatedly or in advance.

I bring you news of the crossing, which is the realm of neither God nor the sewer. Quite the contrary. Do not be afraid, do not be excited, I have not come to explain anything morbid. I have not come to tell you what a transsexual is, or how to change your sex, or at what precise instant a transition is good or bad. Because none of that would be true, no truer than the ray of afternoon sun falling on a certain spot on the planet and changing according to the place from which it is seen. No truer than that the slow orbit described by Uranus as it revolves above the Sun is yellow. I cannot tell you everything that goes on when you take testosterone, or what that does in your body. Take the trouble to administer the necessary doses of knowledge to yourself, as many as your taste for risk allows you.

I have not come for that. As my indigenous Chilean mother Pedro Lemebel said, I do not know why I come, but I am here. In this Uranian apartment that overlooks the gardens of Athens. And I'll stay a while. At the crossroads. Because intersection is the only place that exists. There are no opposite shores. We are always at the crossing of paths. And it is from this crossroad that I address you, like the monster who has learned the language of humans.

I no longer need, like Ulrichs, to assert that I am a masculine soul enclosed in a woman's body. I have no soul and no body. I have an apartment on Uranus, which certainly places me far from most Earthlings, but not so far that you can't come to see me. Even if only in dream...

### *Chronicles of the Crossing*

If this book is written under the sign of Uranus, it's because it contains some chronicles of the crossing. These texts were written mainly in airports and hotel rooms, for the French newspaper *Libération* and for other European media outlets between 2013 and early 2018. When I began these columns, my name was still Beatriz, and, although I was a dissident as a queer lesbian, I still

occupied a social, legal position as a woman. I am ending this book, still in the middle of the crossroads, signing with a new name and furnished with a new identity card indicating my legal sex as male. I have preserved the strict chronological order in which these columns were written, since it is also the sequence of this sexual and gender transition, the story of the crossing. In this sense, these columns have at least two authors: this dissonance makes exaggeratedly visible the division of the author into a multiplicity of voices that undergo the crossing – a phenomenon that exists in any written work, but that is usually erased under the unicity of the author's name.

I will go so far as to say that it is processes of transition that best allow us to understand the political shift with which we are confronted worldwide. Sex change and migration are two practices that, by calling into question the political and legal architecture of patriarchal colonialism, of sexual difference and racial hierarchy, of family and nation-state, place a living human body inside the limits of citizenship, even of what we understand by 'humanity'. Beyond the geographical, linguistic or corporeal movements which characterize both journeys, it is the radical transformation not just of the traveller, but also of the human community that welcomes or rejects the traveller. The ancien régime (political, sexual, racial) criminalizes all practices of crossing. But whenever the passage is possible, the map of a new society begins to be outlined, with new forms of production and reproduction of life.

The crossing began in 2004, when for the first time I decided to self-administer small doses of testosterone. Then, for several years, travelling through a nameless space between female and male, between lesbian masculinity and drag king femininity, I experienced what we now call 'gender fluidity'. The fluidity of successive incarnations clashed with the social resistance to accepting the existence of a body outside of the binary gender system. I patched together this 'fluidity' like a gender alchemist by self-administering a quantity of testosterone that we call a 'threshold dose', since it does not set off the proliferation in the body of 'male secondary sex characteristics'. These chronicles begin somewhere on this threshold.

Paradoxically, I renounced fluidity because I desired change. The crossing became the laboratory of this transformation. The decision to 'change sex' is necessarily accompanied by what Édouard Glissant calls 'a trembling' [un tremblement]. The crossing is a place of uncertainty, of the unobvious, of strangeness. It is not a weakness, but a power. 'The thinking of trembling,' writes

Glissant, 'is not the thinking of fear. It is the thinking that is opposed to the system.' In September 2014, I began a medical-psychiatric sex change procedure in New York, at the Audre Lorde Clinic, one of the only institutions in the world managed by queer and trans activists. 'Changing sex' is not, as the guardians of the sexual ancien régime would have it, leaping into psychosis. But it is also not, as the new neoliberal management of sexual difference claims, a simple medico-legal procedure that can be carried out during puberty to lead to absolute normality and invisibility. A process of gender change in a society dominated by the scientific-mercantile axiom of the binary sex-gender-sexuality regime – where social, labour, emotional, economic, gestational, etc., spaces are segmented in terms of masculinity or femininity, heterosexuality or homosexuality – implies crossing a border that may be, along with that of race, the most violent of political borders invented by humanity. To cross is at the same time to leap over an infinite vertical wall and to walk on a line drawn in the air. If the hetero-patriarchal system of sexual difference is the scientific religion of the West, then changing one's sex can be nothing other than an act of heresy. As the dose of testosterone increased, the changes became more intense: facial hair is just one detail related to the rupture that the change in voice sets off in social recognition. Testosterone provokes a variation in the thickness of the vocal cords, a muscle that, by changing its shape, changes the tone and register of the voice. The gender traveller feels the change in voice as a possession, an act of ventriloquism, which forces them to identify themselves with the unknown. This mutation is one of the most beautiful things I have experienced. To be trans is to desire a process of internal 'creolization': to accept that one can only arrive at oneself thanks to change, to mutation, to hybridization. The voice that testosterone propels into my throat is not that of a man, it is the voice of the crossing. The voice that trembles in me is the voice of the border. 'We understand the world better,' Glissant writes, 'when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction.'

With the change of voice came the change of name. For a little while, I wanted my feminine first name to be treated as masculine. I wanted to keep calling myself Beatriz and to be treated, according to the rules of grammar, with masculine pronouns and adjectives. But this grammatical torsion was even more difficult than the corporeal fluidity of gender. So I decided to look for a masculine first name.

In May 2014, Subcomandante Marcos announced in an open letter from 'Zapatista reality' the death of Marcos, who had been invented as a faceless

name to give a voice to the revolutionary process in Chiapas. In this same letter, the Subcomandante said he would stop calling himself Marcos and take the name Subcomandante Galeano instead, in homage to José Luis Solís Sánchez alias Galeano, assassinated in May 2014. So I thought of calling myself Marcos. I wanted to take this name as a Zapatista mask covering my face and my patronymic. Marcos was a way to de-privatize my old name, to collectivize my face. My decision was immediately denounced in social networks by Latin American activists as a colonialist gesture. They asserted that, as a white Spaniard, I could not bear the name Marcos. The political fiction only lasted a few days. This name, the failure of an attempt at a political graft, exists only as an ephemeral trace inserted into the signature to the *Libération* column dated 7 May 2014. The Latin American activists were probably right. There was colonial arrogance, personal vanity, in my action. But there was also a desperate search for protection. Who dares abandon their name to take a name without history, without memory, without life? I learned two seemingly contradictory things from this failure in grafting the name Marcos onto myself: I would have to fight for my name; and, at the same time, my name would have to be an offering, it had to be given to me like a talisman.

I asked my friends to choose a name for me: I wanted the new name to be chosen in cooperation with others. But none of the names proposed (Orlando, Max, Pascal...) leapt out as my own. That's when I began a series of shamanic rituals to find a name. I submitted myself to do whatever was necessary to change. I abandoned myself to the crossing. That is how I finally dreamed of my new first name, one December night in 2015 in a bed in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona: I accepted the strange, absurdly commonplace name of Paul, which was given to me in a dream. I asked everyone to call me by that name. At the same time, I began a legal process to change my name and sex. With the lawyer Carme Herranz, we asked the Spanish government for a legal sex change so that my body would be recognized as a man, and the name of Paul Beatriz as a masculine name. After months of silence and administrative uncertainty, the legal decision was handed down on 16 November 2016. My new name was published, according to the Spanish legislation then in force, among the names of the children born that day in the city where I was born over forty years ago. These chronicles record this change of voice and name. Until December 2015, they are signed with the name Beatriz, except for the one I signed, temporarily and briefly, under the name Beatriz Marcos. Starting from January 2016, it's Paul B. who signs. In any case, the signature, undone and remade, erased and written by a multitude of political acts, does not appear here as a mark of

authority, but as a witness of the crossing.

A gender transition is a journey marked by many borders. Perhaps to intensify the experience of the crossing, I never travelled as much as I did during the months of the most acute part of my transition and my process of searching for a name. As in the Biblical journey, my trip began with the loss of paradise: the death of Pepa, the end of a relationship, the loss of my curatorial job at the museum, the collapse of the Programme for Independent Studies at MACBA, leaving my house, going far from Paris... To these involuntary losses, other strategic losses should be added: I had made up my mind to dis-identify myself. The increase of the testosterone dose not only upended femininity as social identification code, fluidity of face, erasing of name, but also, for months, the loss of my status as a legal citizen. With an increasingly masculine appearance and a feminine identity card, I lost the privilege of social invisibility and gender impunity. I became a gender migrant. In this situation, with a passport that was called into question at every border, I accepted the job as Curator of Public Programmes for documenta 14, the international art exhibition. I moved to Athens and devoted myself to travel: Palermo, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Lyon, Kiev, Zurich, Barcelona, Turin, Madrid, Frankfurt, New York, Bergen, Chicago, Rome, Iowa, Berlin, Kassel, London, Cartagena de Indias, Vienna, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Trondheim, Mexico City, Dublin, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Bogota, San Francisco, Geneva, Rotterdam, Munich, the Greek islands, Lesbos, Hydra, Alonissos, Arles, Beirut, Taipei... I crossed countless borders with this constantly questioned passport, adapting to political contexts that required a rapid re-feminization: a good shave, a scarf around my neck, a handbag, a higher-pitched voice... and my body, in an attempt to cross the border, would reincarnate the femininity that I had erased in order to become Paul. The crossing requires both flexibility and determination. The crossing demands losses, but these losses are the requirement for the ability to invent freedom.

Without a masculine or feminine face, without a fixed name and with an uncertain passport, I settled in Athens: a gateway-city between West and East, a city at a crossroads. I arrived in a Greece hit with debt and austerity policies, confronted with managing the influx of thousands of migrants and refugees who were crossing the Mediterranean shores to escape the postcolonial wars and poverty of the Middle East. Athens was a unique observatory for understanding the processes of the neoliberal destruction of Europe, social control via debt economy, and reconstructing nation-states as phantom enclaves for restoring racial and patriarchal sovereignty in a context of worldwide war and financial



globalization. I felt as if Athens were trembling like my voice, and I loved it as I had never loved any other city. I fell in love with its streets, its inhabitants, its language. Athens became for me the school of metamorphoses.

During the summer of 2015, the city was going through a twofold political collapse. Tsipras's government rejected the democratic vote against austerity measures. At the same time, the port at Piraeus and Victoria Square became improvised refugee camps without water, food or any infrastructure. As was the case at the end of the 1980s during the AIDS crisis in New York, and then during the 15-M movement in Madrid and Barcelona in 2011, a new political form took shape on 5 July 2015, during the referendum, when hundreds of thousands of Athenians, citizens and migrants, gathered on Syntagma Square, said *oxi* [no] and chanted 'They do not represent us.' The utopia of representative social democracy was collapsing. The Greek Parliament was a building of hollow authority. The real parliament was in the streets of Athens.

Against the 'end of history' theory according to which the neoliberal forces of globalization act as a vector of democratization and homogenization that erode nation-states by building a single world without borders, a new global order was being defined by the reconstruction of borders of race, class, gender and sexuality. The economic and political restructuring that followed the financial crisis of 2008 as well as the reaction of European governments faced with the exodus of populations fleeing hunger and war in Iraq and Syria, but also in several countries in Africa, condemned a large part of the population worldwide to the position of stateless pariahs of neoliberalism. What we had never imagined could happen was coming to pass: not only did neoliberalism not destroy nation-states, but rather it established an alliance with the most conservative political segments of nation-states in order to limit the access of the lower classes to the technologies of production of power and knowledge. A new political cycle began, characterized by the process that Deleuze and Guattari called 'Oedipal resurgences and fascist concretions'.

It is not by chance, then, that the first column signed with my new name is the one dated 16 January 2015. This column speaks of another crossing, the 'process' that could lead to an independent Catalonia. A process that, like a sex change, always risks crystallizing around the construction of a normative identity of exclusion. 'Subject' and 'nation' are nothing but normative fictions that seek to put an end to the processes of subjectivation and to social creation as constant transformation. Subjectivity and society are made up of a multiplicity of

heterogeneous forces, and cannot be reduced to a single identity, a single language, a single culture or a single name. Ridiculous when it is expressed as a fight for independence of one state over another, the process underway in Catalonia only takes on all its meaning when – as in the case of Rojava or Chiapas – it is open to the possibility of imagining an anarcho-queer, anti-state, trans-feminist collective order.

The trip to Athens, and my life there, made me realize that it wasn't just me undergoing change, but that we are all plunged in a worldwide transition. Science, technology, the market, are today re-drawing the limits of what is now, and what will be tomorrow, a living human body. These limits are defined not just in relation to animality and forms of life that historically have been considered sub-human (proletarian, non-white, non-masculine, trans, disabled, sick, migrant...), but also in relation to the machine, to artificial intelligence, to automation of the processes of production and reproduction. If the first industrial revolution was characterized, with the invention of the steam engine, by an acceleration of forms of production, the present technological revolution, marked by genetic manipulation, nanotechnology, the technologies of communication, logistics, pharmacology and artificial intelligence, impacts the processes of reproducing life. In the current industrial mutation, the body and sexuality occupy the place occupied by the factory in the nineteenth century. There is at once a revolution of the underlings and the stateless underway, and a counter-revolutionary front fighting for control of the mechanisms of reproduction of life. At the four corners of the world, from Athens to Kassel, from Rojava to Chiapas, from Sao Paulo to Johannesburg, it is possible to sense not only the exhaustion of the traditional forms of politics, but also the emergence of hundreds of thousands of practices of social, sexual, gender, political and artistic experimentation... Faced with the rise in power of Oedipal resurgences and fascist coalitions, the micropolitics of the crossing are at work everywhere.

Although the political context is that of a world war, you will find in these chronicles neither pedagogy nor morality. No dogma can resist the ordeal of the crossing. Even when I am angry, when I am responding to the activists of the LMPT<sup>1</sup> or to representatives of the regime of sexual difference, even when I am discoursing on the diatribes of the #MeToo movement against which the lords of sex express themselves to preserve their techno-patriarchal privileges. These chronicles speak of sluts and faggots, they do not speak of the 'sociology of deviance', they speak of the dissidents of gender and sexuality and not of

‘gender dysphorics and transsexuals’, they speak of strategies of cooperation between the powerless and migrants and not of the ‘Greek crisis’ or the ‘refugee crisis’, they speak of the right of everyone to live in the city and not of ‘urban tribes’ or ‘marginal neighbourhoods’. I leave these words and expectations of classification and control to the experts of different disciplines – as Thomas Bernhard says, when knowledge is dead, they call it the academy. In these texts I propose to think in terms of relation and potential for transformation, rather than in terms of identity.

In the texts that follow, I use a certain amount of rudimentary critical vocabulary which was invented in the past few years by feminist, queer, trans, anti-colonial discourses of somatopolitical dissidence. I put on a terminological coat when I write, like a migrant who needs a warm coat to survive the winter of what some call ‘hospitality’ and that amounts to only the (more or less violent) negotiation of the frontier. This proliferation of new critical terms is essential: it acts as a solvent on normative languages, as an antidote to dominant categories. On one hand, it is imperative to distinguish ourselves from the dominant scientific, technological, commercial, legal languages that comprise the cognitive skeleton of the epistemology of sexual difference and techno-patriarchal capitalism. On the other, it is urgent to invent a new grammar that allows us to imagine another social organization of forms of life. In the first task, philosophy acts, after Nietzsche, as a critical hammer. In the second, closer to Monique Wittig, Ursula K. Le Guin, Donna Haraway, Kathy Acker or Virginie Despentes, philosophy becomes experimental political writing that seeks to imagine a world. Both languages are trans-border strategies. It is also a question of crossing the borders between philosophical genres; epistemological borders, between documentary, scientific, and fictional languages; the borders of gender, the borders between languages and nationalities, those that separate humanity from animality, the living from the dead, the borders between today and history.

Uranus approached the Earth in 2013, when I began these columns and when I ventured onto the paths of the crossing. I like to think that the frozen giant will return in 2096, in seventy-eight years, after a complete revolution around the sun. Then, with all certainty, my body (intersex, transsexual, masculine, feminine, monstrous, glorious) will no longer exist as conscious flesh on the planet. I wonder if, between now and then, we will manage to overcome racial epistemology and sexual difference and to invent a new cognitive framework allowing the existence of life’s diversity. Or if, on the contrary, the colonial techno-patriarchy will have destroyed the last vestiges of life on Earth. I will

never know. But I hope that the cursed, innocent children will still be here to welcome Uranus again.

Athens, 5 October 2018

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[1 'La Manif pour tous' \(The Protest for Everyone\), one of the main organizations in France advocating against same-sex marriage.](#)

## WE SAY REVOLUTION

The gurus of old colonial Europe seem determined of late to explain to the activists of the Occupy, Indignados, crip-intersex-trans-queer, feminist and post-porn movements that we aren't able to start a revolution because we don't have an ideology. They say 'an ideology' the way my mother used to say 'a husband'. Well, we need neither an ideology nor a husband. New feminists do not need a husband because we are not women. Just as we don't need an ideology because we are not a people. We are neither communism nor liberalism. And not the old Catholic-Muslim-Jewish tune. We speak a different language. They say representation; we say experimentation. They say identity; we say multitude. They say control the poor neighbourhoods; let's invent the city of hybrids. They say debt; we say sexual cooperation and somatic interdependence. They say human capital; we say multi-species alliance. They say horsemeat on our plates; we say let's get on horseback to escape the global slaughterhouse together. They say power; we say potency. They say integration; we say disidentification. They say interdisciplinary; we say undisciplined. They say man-woman, Black-White, human-animal, homosexual-heterosexual, Israel-Palestine. We say you know very well that your truth-production apparatus has stopped working... How many Galilees will we need this time to re-learn how to name things ourselves? They wage economic war on us with their neoliberal digital machete. But we are not going to mourn the end of the welfare state, because the welfare state was also the psychiatric hospital, the disability rehab centre, the prison, the hetero-centred patriarchal-colonial school. It is time to put Foucault on the crip-queer diet and write *The Death of the Clinic*. It is time to invite Marx into an ecosexual workshop. We are not going to play the disciplinary state against the neoliberal market. Those two have already come to an agreement: in the new Europe, the market is the only government motivation, the State becomes a punitive arm whose sole function will be to recreate the fiction of national identity through security-inspired terror. We do not want to define ourselves either as cognitive workers or as pharmacopornographic consumers. We are not Facebook, or Shell, or Google, or Nestle, or Pfizer-Wyeth. We do not want to produce French goods any more than we want to produce British goods. We do not want to produce. We are the living decentralized network. We refuse a citizenship defined by our labour force or our reproductive force. We want a total citizenship defined by the

sharing of technologies, fluids, seeds, water, knowledge... They say the new clean war will be carried out by drones. We want to make love with drones. Our insurrection is peace, total feeling. They say crisis. We say revolution.

Paris, 20 March 2013

## WHO DEFENDS THE QUEER CHILD?

Catholics, Jews and fundamentalist Muslims, the patriarchy freed from its complexes, Oedipal psychoanalysts, naturalist-socialists, heteronormative leftists, and the growing herd of reactionary hipsters have all come to an agreement this Sunday to make the child's right to have a father and a mother the central argument justifying the limitation of queer rights. It's their coming-out day, the huge national outing of heterocrats. They are defending a naturalist, religious ideology whose principles we are familiar with. Their heterosexual hegemony has always relied on the right to oppress sexual and gender minorities. We are used to seeing them brandishing a hatchet. And now they are forcing children to carry this patriarchal weapon.

The child that Frigide Barjot<sup>2</sup> claims to be protecting does not exist. The defenders of childhood and family conjure up the political image of a child that they construct, a child presumed to be heterosexual, with a standard binary gender. A child who is being stripped of any power to resist, any possibility of making free, collective use of their body, their organs and their sexual fluids. This childhood they claim to be protecting necessitates terror, oppression and death.

Frigide Barjot, their spearhead, takes advantage of the fact that it is impossible for a child to rebel politically against the discourse of adults: the child is always a body whose right to self-govern is not recognized. Allow me to invent, in retrospect, an opening statement, to speak in the name of the governed child that I was, to defend another form of governing children who are not like other children.

I was once the child that Frigide Barjot boasts about protecting. And I am rising up today in the name of the children that these fallacious speeches claim to be saving. Who defends the rights of the queer child? Of the intersex child? Of the trans child? The rights of the little boy who loves to wear pink? Of the little girl who dreams of kissing her best friend, who happens to be female? The rights of the different child? The rights of the non-binary child? Who defends the rights of children to change gender if they want to? The rights of the child to free self-

determination of gender and sexuality? Who defends the rights of the child to grow up in a world without either sexual or gender violence?

The omnipresent discourse of Frigide Barjot and the protectors of 'the rights of the child to have a father and a mother' takes me back to the language of state Catholicism of my childhood. I was born in Francoist Spain, where I grew up in a right-wing Catholic heterosexual family. A model family, which the naturalists could hold up as a symbol of moral virtue. I had a father, and a mother. They scrupulously fulfilled their function as domestic guarantors of heterosexual order.

In the current French discourses against marriage and Medically Assisted Procreation (MAP) for everyone, I recognize the ideas and arguments of my father. In the privacy of the family home, he used a syllogism that invoked nature and moral law in order to justify the exclusion, violence, and even condemnation to death of homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals. It began with 'A man should be a man and a woman a woman, as God willed it,' it continued with 'the natural thing is the union of a man and a woman, that's why homosexuals are sterile,' and it ended with the implacable conclusion, 'if my child is homosexual I'd rather kill him.' And this child was me.

Frigide Barjot's child-to-be-protected is the result of a formidable pedagogical system, the locus for the projection of all fantasies, the alibi that allows the adult to declare the norm is natural. Biopolitics is viviparous and paedophilic. Sustaining the national population depends on it. The child is a biopolitical artefact that guarantees the normalization of the adult. The gender police supervise the cradle of the living beings about to be born, to transform them into heterosexual children. The norm patrols tender bodies. If you are not gender-conforming, if you are not heterosexual, it's death that awaits you. The gender police require different characteristics from the little boy and the little girl. It shapes bodies in order to map out complementary sexual organs. It prepares reproduction, industrializes the body, from school to Parliament. The child that these neo-nationalists want to protect is the creature of a despotic machine: a miniaturized conservative who campaigns for death in the name of protecting life.

I remember the day when, in my convent school, the Restorative Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Pilar asked us to draw our future family. I was seven. I drew myself married to my best friend Marta, with three children and



many dogs and cats. I had already imagined a sexual utopia, in which marriage for everyone, adoption, MAP, existed... A few days later, the school sent a letter to my home, advising my parents to take me to see a psychiatrist, in order to resolve a sexual identification problem as quickly as possible. Many reprisals followed this visit. My father's scorn and rejection, my mother's shame and guilt. At school, the rumour was spread that I was a lesbian. A demonstration of heteropatriarchal representatives was organized daily outside of my classroom. 'Dirty dyke,' they chanted, 'we'll rape you to teach you to fuck the way God wants.'

I had a father and a mother but they were incapable of protecting me from repression, exclusion, violence.

What my father and mother were protecting was not my rights as a child, but the sexual and gender norms that had been painfully inculcated in them, through a social and educational system that suppressed any form of dissidence by threats, intimidation, punishment, and death. I had a father and a mother but neither of them could protect my right to free self-determination of gender and sexuality.

I fled this father and mother that Frigide Barjot demands for me – my survival depended on it. And so, although I had a father and a mother, the ideology of sexual difference and normative heterosexuality confiscated them from me. My father was reduced to the role of a repressive representative of the law of gender. My mother was deprived of anything that could have gone beyond her function as uterus, as reproducer of the sexual norm. Frigide Barjot's ideology (which was articulated at the time with national Catholic Francoism) stripped the child I was of the right to have a father and mother who could have loved me, and taken care of me.

It took us a lot of time, arguments, and wounds to get past this violence. When in 2005 Zapatero's government proposed the gay marriage law in Spain, my parents, still right-wing practising Catholics, demonstrated in favour of that law. They voted socialist for the first time in their lives. They did not demonstrate just to defend my rights, but also to reclaim their own right to be the father and mother of a non-heterosexual child. For the right to paternity of all children, regardless of their gender, sex or sexual orientation. My mother told me that she had had to convince my more reticent father. She said to me, 'We too have the right to be your parents.'

The demonstrators in France on 13 January did not defend the right of children. They are defending the power to bring up children according to sexual and gender norms, as if presumed heterosexual. They are marching to maintain the right to discriminate, punish and correct any form of dissidence or deviation, but also to remind the parents of gender non-conforming and non-heterosexual children that their duty is to be ashamed of them, to refuse them, to correct them. We defend the right of children not to be brought up solely as a labour and reproductive force. We defend the right of children not to be regarded as future sperm-producers or future uteruses. We defend the right of children to be political subjectivities irreducible to an identity of gender, sex or race.

Paris, 15 January 2013

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[2 A pun on Brigitte Bardot's name, translating roughly as 'frigid nutcase'. Frigide Barjot is one of the leaders of LMPT.](#)

## POLITICALLY ASSISTED PROCREATION

In biological terms, to assert that the sexual assemblage of a man and a woman is necessary to set off a process of sexual reproduction is as unscientific as those assertions that used to maintain that reproduction could occur only between two subjects who shared the same religion, the same skin colour, or the same social status. If today we are capable of identifying these assertions as political prescriptions linked to religious, racial or class ideologies, we should be capable of recognizing heterosexist ideology mobilizing arguments that make the sexopolitical union of a man and a woman the necessary condition for reproduction.

The fallacious confusion between sexual reproduction and sexual practice hides behind the defence of heterosexuality as the sole form of natural reproduction. The biologist Lynn Margulis teaches us that human sexual reproduction is meiotic: most of the cells in our body are diploid, that is, they have two series of twenty-three chromosomes. Spermatozoa and ova, however, are haploid cells: they have a single set of twenty-three chromosomes. Sexual reproduction does not require either the sexual or the political union of a man and a woman: neither hetero nor homo, it is a process of recombination of the genetic material of two haploid cells.

But haploid cells never meet by accident. All human animals procreate in a politically assisted way. Reproduction always supposes the collectivization of the genetic material of one body through a more or less regulated social practice, either by a heterosexual technique (ejaculation of the penis in the vagina), or by a friendly exchange of fluids, or by the discharge of a syringe in a clinic or on a Petri dish in a lab.

Historically, different forms of power have sought to control reproductive processes. Up until the twentieth century, before it was possible to intervene at the molecular level, the strongest domination was exercised over the female body, the potentially gestating uterus. Heterosexuality was used as a social technology of politically assisted reproduction. Marriage was the necessary patriarchal institution for a world without contraceptive pills or paternity tests:

whatever the uterus produced was regarded as the property of the paterfamilias. The child formed a part of a biopolitical project within which the population was the object of economic calculation, heterosexual assemblage became a system for national reproduction.

All bodies whose sexual assemblages could not give rise to processes of reproduction were excluded from the 'heterosexual contract' (in the words of Carole Pateman and Judith Butler) which is the foundation of modern democracies. It was the asymmetrical, normative characteristic of this contract that led Monique Wittig to say, in the 1970s, that heterosexuality was not simply a sexual practice, but rather a political regime.

For homosexuals, for some transsexuals, for some heterosexuals, for asexuals, and for some people with functional diversity, to provoke the meeting of their genetic materials is not possible through penis-vagina penetration with ejaculation. But that does not mean that we are not fertile or that we do not have the right to transmit our genetic information. Homosexuals, transsexuals, asexuals and people with functional diversity – we are not only sexual minorities (I use here 'minority' in the Deleuzian sense, not in statistical terms, but to indicate a politically oppressed social segment), we are also reproductive minorities.

Until now, we have paid for our gender, sexual and bodily dissidence with the genetic silence of our chromosomes. We have not just been deprived of the transmission of economic patrimony: our genetic patrimony has also been confiscated. Homosexuals, transsexuals, and bodies regarded as 'handicapped', we have been politically sterilized or else we have been forced to reproduce with heterosexual techniques. The present battle to extend MAP (Medically Assisted Procreation) to non-heterosexual bodies is a political and economic war to depathologize our forms of life and to maintain control of our reproductive cells.

The government's refusal to legalize MAP for non-heterosexual couples supports hegemonic forms of reproduction and confirms that François Hollande's government perpetuates a politics of state heterosexuality.

Paris, 28 September 2013

## CANDY CRUSH REHAB

The American Psychiatric Association (which is by no means a congress of saints) requested a few days ago that the phenomenon of Candy Crush Saga, whose number of addicts keeps increasing, be recognized as a national epidemic, and that a virtual crisis centre be put into place to help detox from it.

Created by the British company King in 2012, Candy Crush Saga (along with its Asian equivalent Puzzle & Dragons) is the most widely downloaded application in the world. It counts 80 million users and earns 700,000 Euros in profit every day. Video game analysts wonder: how can such an idiotic app, based on multicoloured floating sweets, surpass the most sophisticated games developed for years by Nintendo programmers?

But the key to success for Candy Crush lies precisely in its defects: the childlike, inoffensive nature (there's no violence or sex), the constant beginning-again (there are up to 410 levels), along with the absence of specific cultural content that could arouse acceptance or rejection. Chastity, idiocy and disinterestedness are the conditions for the globalization of dependence.

Candy Crush is a discipline of the soul, an immaterial prison proposing a constant deferral of desire and action. The game is addressed to generic subjects stripped of their secondary social defences (which might explain why the largest number of players are what we socially call 'women'): the game establishes a closed circuit between the limbic brain (which manages emotional memory), the hand, and the screen. Candy Crush is not a training game that exercises the player's skill in order to improve it. It is a simple game of chance installed in one of our most accessible, intimate external techno-organs: the mobile phone. It's Las Vegas in the palm of your hand. The aim of Candy Crush is not to teach the users anything, but to capture the totality of their cognitive capacities during a given amount of time and to appropriate their libidinal resources by making the screen into a surrogate masturbatory surface. In Candy Crush, the players never win anything: when they finish one level, it's the screen that has the orgasm.

What's more, Candy Crush calls into question the relationship between freedom

and ‘free’ defended by supporters of piracy: the new strategy to colonize the virtual world involves creating a game as simple as possible that is offered for free, so that the potential player spends a maximum number of hours online playing it. Once the game has been grafted into the user’s living habits, it’s the time of the game itself and its associated forms of expense (additional lives and boosters) that produce the profits.

The Candy Crush players manage a multiplicity of screens: they are often physically situated facing a computer or TV screen that no longer functions as main visual frame, but rather as peripheral background, while at the same time they maintain a constant to-and-fro between Facebook, Yahoo, Twitter, Instagram... The chaste contemporary tele-techno-masturbator is like a virtual traffic controller locked in a quixotic control tower from which with one hand they ‘update’ while with the other they arrange the rows of digital sweets.

The apps that can be downloaded from Facebook, Google Play or Apple Store are the new operators of subjectivity. We should be aware of the fact that when we download an app, we don’t install it simply on our mobile phone, but directly onto our cognitive apparatus. While René Schérer teaches us that pedagogical disciplines developed during modernity have served to set the masturbating hand to writing and working, we now understand that the new digital disciplines set the assembly-line hand that used to write and work to masturbate the screen of cognitive capitalism.

New York, 26 October 2013

## MONKEYS OF THE REPUBLIC

It's a constant in political history: the dominant classes try to displace the antagonism that could overthrow them by inciting the various dominated classes to fight amongst themselves. For example, as the historian Howard Zinn has shown, on the North American territory in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonial elite incited hatred between the social subclass of the poor English, German and Irish white people who worked as servants, the Native Americans, and non-white servants and slaves. To do this, the colonists invented a system of representation, promoted by scientific discourse and popular culture (vaudeville for instance, and blackface dances) according to which Native Americans and racialized bodies were biologically inferior and consequently unfit to govern. Intoxicated by racist epistemology, white workers and servants transformed their rebellious energies into racial hatred, and helped white landowners ensure their hegemony, not just over future non-white workers, but also over themselves, the poor white workers.

In the same era, early white feminists, who had begun their fight against sexual domination inspired in part by 'anti-slavery American society', ended up excluding black women from their meetings. The black activist Sojourner Truth rose up against them, asking, 'Because I'm black, ain't I a woman?'

A revolt via an alliance between white workers and servants, Indigenous People of the Americas, racialized slaves – a transversal and expansive feminist revolt against the colonial and patriarchal regime – was still possible in the eighteenth century, and would have changed not only the history of the United States of the Americas, but also that of the world to come. But, for that to happen, it would have been absolutely necessary to think politically outside the identitarian oppositions created by colonial epistemology and heterosexual-capitalism. Today in Europe, we face a comparable reduction of rebellious energies into identitarian blocks resulting from colonial epistemologies. As feminists or activists fighting for the rights of queer, trans, and non-binary people, we are constantly invited to take a stand against a so-called homophobic Islam, women who wear veils, but also non-Western cultures which supposedly bear an ancestral form of machismo. The forces of financial capitalism and those of

identitarian nationalism are the real heirs of hetero-colonial politics, and are once again trying to divide us and turn us against each other.

The violence of neo-nationalist rhetoric can paralyze us, but the form of its representations should, instead of silencing us, show us how to enlarge our libertarian alliances.

The demonstrators against gay marriage insult Christiane Taubira<sup>3</sup> by calling her a ‘monkey’ and by showing her bananas. In the protests against gay marriage, these same demonstrators hold up signs which read, ‘Why not marry monkeys?’ In all these insults, the figure of the monkey works as an abject signifier that serves, by comparison, to exclude migrants, racialized bodies, and queers from humanity, and by extension from the national political framework. In Linnaeus’s *Systema Naturae* (1758), the nomenclature *Homo Sapiens* that we still use today designates not just a difference between human and non-human primate, but serves rather to naturalize a political relationship of domination that associates species, race and nation. The monkey reappearing today in insults against Taubira is the epistemological lever of colonial reasoning: a border between human and animal, between masculine and feminine, the monkey delimits the end of ethics and justifies politics as war and appropriation. Like the monkey, racialized bodies during the Transatlantic slave trade were treated as objects and merchandise, living machines, mere forces of production and reproduction. Like the monkey, homosexuals were regarded as subhuman, unworthy of belonging to the community of humans, incapable of integrating into the social institutions of marriage, reproduction and filiation. Like the monkey, blacks and homosexuals had to be dominated, domesticated, locked up, used, consumed. The monkey is not our other, but rather points the way to the horizon of the democracy still to come.

It’s no longer a question of demanding our (homosexuals’ and blacks’) membership in humanity by denying the primate. The new face of European racism invites us to go a step further, if we do not want to reproduce exclusions and let ourselves be divided. We must reject the classifications that form colonial epistemology. We must embrace the animality to which we are constantly compared. With Virginie Despentes’ *King Kong*, the Guerilla Girls’ gorillas, with Basquiat’s *Monkey*, with Donna Haraway’s monster, Elly Strik’s simian women, Cheryl Dunye’s *Watermelon Woman*... we must take up our bananas and climb into the trees, we must open all the cages and unbuckle all taxonomies to invent, together, a politics of monkeys.



Paris, 15 November 2013

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[3 A black female politician who served as Minister of Justice from 2012 to 2016 in François Hollande's government.](#)

## NECROPOLITICS – FRENCH STYLE

I grew up listening to stories about the Spanish Civil War. For years, I asked adults how brothers could have killed brothers, how death became the only way to go about politics. I couldn't understand why they fought each other, what led them to destroy each other, to destroy everything. My grandmother, the daughter of street vendors, was a Catholic anarchist. Her brother, a poor worker in the sardine industry, was an atheist Communist. Her husband, a bookkeeper in the local town hall, was forced to enrol in the Francoist militia. Her husband's brother, a farm worker, was drafted into Franco's army and made to track down the Reds. The family's most traumatic story, which was endlessly repeated, like a symptom, in an ever-failing attempt to create meaning where there was none, told how my grandmother's husband had got my great-uncle, the Communist, out of prison on the day he was supposed to be executed. Family dinners would often end in my grandfather's tears, while he shouted at my uncle: 'They almost forced me to shoot a bullet in your back.' To which my uncle would reply: 'And how do we know you wouldn't have been capable of doing it?' This question was followed by a series of reproaches, which in my child's ear sounded like a posthumous re-enactment of the same war. There was neither sense nor resolution.

It's only a few years ago that I began to understand that it was not ideological determination, but confusion, despair, depression, hunger, jealousy, and why not say it, stupidity, that led them to war. Franco had plucked a myth out of his kepi according to which a devilish alliance between Freemasons, Jews, homosexuals, Communists, Basques, and Catalans threatened to destroy Spain. But he was the one who would destroy it. State Catholicism invented a nation that did not exist, outlined the myth of an eternal, new Spain, in the name of which my uncles were ordered to kill each other. As long ago in Spain, a new French National-Christian language is trying to invent a French nation that does not exist and that offers nothing but violence.

I came to live in France following the traces of '68, which could be read through a philosophy whose athletic power was comparable only to Spanish football. I fell in love with the French language while reading Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault,

Guattari; I wanted to write this language, to live in this language. But above all, I imagined France as the place in which the imbecility that leads to fascism would be dispelled by the force of democratic institutions, developed to encourage criticism over consensus. But the stupidity and confusion that overwhelmed my Iberian ancestors could also reach France. I had forgotten its colonial history, I had forgotten the deportation of the Jews, I had forgotten Algeria.

It's hard for me to understand this recent fascination for the language of hatred used by French National-Christianity, the speed with which its sympathizers rush to it, whether they're in the opposition or in the government – like Manuel Valls, who proudly applies Le Pen-like politics from within a socialist government. The far Right, the Right, and part of the Left (those who think that the Roma, emigrants, Muslims, Jews, blacks, homosexuals, feminists, etc., are the cause of national decadence) intend to prove that the solution to social and economic problems will come from applying techniques of exclusion and death to part of the population. It's hard for me to believe that 20 per cent of the French are so confused that they base a hope for the future on the most ancient and brutal form of government: necropolitics – governing a population by applying techniques of death to a part (or a whole) of that same population, for the benefit not of the population, but of a sovereign, religious definition of national identity.

What National-Christian rhetoric advocates when they wave the flag of rupture and social rebellion cannot be called politics, but war. The militarization of social relations. The transformation of public space into surveillance space. Closing the borders, armouring uteruses, expelling foreigners and immigrants, forbidding them to work, to find housing, to have access to medical care; eradicating Judaism, Islam; locking up or exterminating racialized bodies, homosexuals, transsexuals... Ultimately, it's a matter of explaining to us that certain bodies within the Republic should not have access to governmental technologies because of their national, sexual, racial, religious identity; that there are some bodies born to govern, and others that must remain objects to be governed. If this political proposition charms them – and I'm thinking of those who voted for Le Pen, whose declarations and actions have always, unfortunately, been familiar to me – it should be called by its name: they should say that what they want is war; and that what suits them is death.

Paris, 23 November 2013

## WOMEN'S RIGHT TO (SEX) WORK

Making and selling weapons: work. Putting someone to death by applying capital punishment: work. Torturing an animal in a lab: work. Jacking off a penis by hand to provoke an ejaculation: crime! How can we comprehend that our democratic, neoliberal societies refuse to consider sexual services work? The answer is not to be found in morality or political philosophy, but rather in the labour history of women in modern times. Excluded from the realm of productive economy in the name of a definition that declared them inalienable and unsellable natural goods, women's fluids, organs and bodily practices have been the object of a process of privatization, capture and expropriation, a process which is being confirmed today with the criminalization of sex work.

Let's take an example to understand this process: until the eighteenth century, many working class women earned their living selling their services as professional wet-nurses. In the major European cities, over two-thirds of children of aristocratic and later urban bourgeois families were breastfed by working class wet-nurses.

In 1752, the scientist Carl Linnaeus published a pamphlet called *Nutrix Noverca* (Wet-Nurse) in which he urged all women to breastfeed their own children in order to 'avoid the contamination of races and classes' from the milk, and urged that governments forbid, for the good of hygiene and social order, the practice of breastfeeding for others. Linnaeus's treatise resulted in the devaluation of female work in the eighteenth century and in the criminalization of wet-nurses. The devaluation of milk on the labour market was accompanied by a new rhetoric about the symbolic value of mother's milk. Milk, represented as the material fluid through which the national social link is transmitted from mother to son, must be consumed within the domestic sphere, and should not be the object of economic exchange.

From being a product that proletarian women could put on sale, milk became a precious biopolitical liquid through which racial and national identity flowed. Milk stopped belonging to women and belonged to the patriarchal State instead. A triple process was accomplished: devaluing women's labour, privatizing

bodily fluids, enclosing women in domestic space.

A similar operation is at work with the exclusion of female sexual practices from the economic sphere. The power of women to produce pleasure does not belong to them: it belongs to the State – that is why the patriarchal State reserves to itself the right to punish clients who use this force, the product of which must go solely towards national production or reproduction. As with milk, the questions of immigration and national identity are at the centre of the new laws against prostitution.

The sex worker (migrant, with no job security, whose emotional, linguistic and somatic resources are her only means of production) is the paradigmatic figure of the biopolitical worker in the twenty-first century. The Marxist question of the ownership of the means of production finds in the figure of the sex worker an exemplary mode of exploitation. The main cause of alienation in the case of the prostitute is not the extraction of surplus value from the labour itself, but depends above all on the non-recognition of her subjectivity and her body as sources of truth and value: it's a matter of being able to assert that whores don't know how to be, can't be, are not political or economic subjects in their own right.

Sex work consists of creating a masturbatory arrangement (through contact, language and setting) likely to set off muscular, neurological and biochemical mechanisms governing the client's production of pleasure. The sex worker does not put her body on sale, but, like the chiropractor, the actor or the publicist, transforms her somatic, cognitive resources into a lively force of production. Like chiropractors, sex workers use their muscles, they give head with their mouths with the same precision that the chiropractor manipulates the client's skeletal-muscular system. Like actors, sex workers' practice stems from their ability to dramatize a scene of desire. Like publicists, sex workers' work consists of creating specific forms of pleasure through communication and social relations. Like any work, sex work is the result of a cooperation between living subjects based on the production of symbols, language and emotions.

Sex workers are the subaltern productive flesh of global capitalism. That a socialist government is trying to make the prohibition of women to transform their productive force into work a national priority says a lot about the crisis of the Left in Europe.

Paris, 21 December 2013

## DECLARING A UTERUS STRIKE

Enclosed in the neoliberal individualist fiction, we live with the naïve belief that our bodies belong to us, that they are our most intimate property, whereas the management of most of our organs is controlled by various governmental or economic apparatuses. Among all the organs of the body, the uterus is surely the one that, historically, has been the object of the most relentless political and economic expropriation. As a potentially gestating cavity, the uterus is not a private organ, but a public space that is haggled over by religious and political powers, as well as by medical, pharmaceutical, and agribusiness industries. Each woman with a uterus bears within her a laboratory of the nation-state, and it's on the management of that laboratory that the purity of the national ethnic group depends.

For forty years in the West, feminism has initiated a process of decolonization of the uterus. Spanish current events show that this process is not just incomplete, but still fragile and revocable. On 20 December, Mariano Rajoy's government voted on a proposal on the new law on abortion that will be, along with Ireland's law<sup>4</sup>, the most restrictive in Europe. The 'Protection of the Embryo's Life and the Pregnant Woman's Rights' law allows only two cases for legal abortion: if the mother's physical or psychic health is at risk (up to twenty-two weeks) or rape (up to twelve weeks). But even then, a doctor and an independent psychiatrist must certify that there is indeed risk for the mother. The text of this referendum roused the indignation of the Left and of feminists, but also the objection of the community of psychiatrists, who refuse to take part in this process of pathologizing and supervising pregnant women, thus annihilating their right to decide for themselves.

The politics of the uterus are, like censorship and restricting the freedom to demonstrate, good detectors of nationalist and totalitarian trends. In the context of economic and political crisis in Spain, confronted with the reorganization of its territory and of its national 'anatomy' (think of the process of Catalonia's secession, but also of the increasing discredit of the monarchy and of the corruption of the governing elite), the government is seeking to stake its claim on the uterus as a biopolitical site in which national sovereignty can be

regenerated. It thinks that by possessing the uterus, it can manage to fix in place the old borders of the nation-state that are breaking apart.

This law is also a response to the legalization of gay marriage enacted under the mandate of the previous socialist government and that, despite repeated attempts by the Popular Party (PP), the constitutional court has refused to rescind. Faced with that calling into question of the model of the heterosexual family, the Rajoy government, which is close to the Catholic fundamentalists of Opus Dei and to Cardinal Rouco Varela, intends today to occupy the female body as the ultimate territory on which national reproduction and the definition of masculine hegemony can be played out.

If biopolitical history could be told cinematographically, we would say that the PP is preparing a frenetic gore porn flick in which Rajoy and his Minister of Justice, Ruiz-Gallardón, are planting the Spanish flag in all the uteruses in the nation-state. Here's the message sent by the government to the women of the country: your uterus is a territory of the State, fertile ground for National-Catholic sovereignty. You exist only as a mother. Spread your legs, become a land of insemination, reproduce Spain. If the law that the PP is proposing takes effect, the Spanish people will wake up with the Council of Ministers and the Episcopal Conference inside their wombs.

As a body born with a uterus, I close my legs to National-Catholicism. I say to Rajoy and Varela that they won't set foot in my uterus: I have never given birth, I will never give birth in the service of Spanish politics. From this modest platform, I invite all bodies to put their uterus on strike. Let us assert ourselves as entire citizens, not as reproductive uteruses. By abstinence and by homosexuality, but also by masturbation, sodomy, fetishism, coprophagy, zoophilia... and abortion. Let us not allow a single drop of National-Catholic sperm to penetrate our vaginas. Let us not give birth for the sake of the PP, or for the parishes of the Episcopal Conference. Let us carry out this strike as we would perform the most 'matriotic' of actions: a way of deconstructing the nation and acting to reinvent a post-nation-state community of life where the expropriation of uteruses will no longer be imaginable.

Paris, 18 January 2014

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[4 Ireland finally decriminalized abortion in January 2019.,](#)

## THE BULLET

Homosexuality is a silent sniper who plants a bullet in children's hearts in school playgrounds, it aims without caring if they're the kids of yuppies, agnostics or diehard Catholics. Its hand doesn't tremble, neither in the schools of the sixth arrondissement nor in working-class neighbourhoods. It shoots with the same precision in the streets of Chicago, the villages of Italy, or the suburbs of Johannesburg. Homosexuality is a sniper blind as love, bursting forth like laughter, as gentle as a pet. And if it tires of using children as targets, it shoots a volley of stray bullets that will lodge themselves in the hearts of a farmer, a taxi driver, a rapper, a postwoman on her rounds... the last bullet reached an 80-year-old woman during her sleep.

Transsexuality is a silent sniper who plants a bullet in the chests of children standing in front of a mirror or counting their steps on their way to school. It doesn't care if they were born from artificial insemination or Catholic coitus. It doesn't ask itself if they come from single-parent families or if Dad wore blue and Mum dressed in pink. It trembles neither from the cold of Sochi nor from the heat of Cartagena. It opens fire on both Israel and Palestine alike. Transsexuality is a sniper blind as laughter, bursting forth like love, as gentle and tolerant as pets are. From time to time, it aims at a teacher in the provinces or at a family man, and then, boom.

For those who have the courage to look straight at the wound, the bullet becomes the key to a world they had seen nothing of before. The curtains part, the 'matrix' breaks apart. But among those who carry the bullet in their chests, some decide to live as if they felt nothing.

Others compensate for the weight of the bullet by acting like Don Juan or like a princess. Doctors and the churches promise to extract the bullet. They say that in Ecuador, a new Evangelical clinic opens every day, to re-educate homosexuals and transsexuals. The lightning-strikes of faith become electric shocks. But no one has ever figured out how to get the bullet out. Neither Mormons nor Castrists. You can bury it more deeply in the chest, but you can never remove it. Your bullet is your guardian angel: it will always be by your side.

I was three years old when I felt the weight of the bullet for the first time. I knew I was carrying it when I heard my father call two foreign girls walking hand-in-hand in the street ‘disgusting, dirty dykes’. My chest started to burn. That night, without knowing why, I fantasized for the first time that I was escaping my city and that I was leaving for another country. The days that followed were days of fear, and shame.

It is not hard to imagine that among the adults who are taking part in the current angry demonstrations that some of them bear, embedded in their plexus, a red-hot bullet. By simple statistical deduction, and knowing the virtuosity of snipers, I know that some of the demonstrators’ children already carry the bullet in their heart. I don’t know how many they are, or how old they are, but I know that some of them have chests that burn.

They are carrying banners that have been placed in their hands, which say ‘Hands Off Our Stereotypes’. But they know that they’ll never be equal to these stereotypes. Their parents shout that LGBT groups should never venture into schools, but these children know that they’re the ones who bear the LGBT bullet. At night, as when I was a child, they go to bed with the shame of being the only ones to know that they are a disappointment to their parents, they go to sleep with the fear that their parents will abandon them if they find out, or would prefer it if they died. And perhaps they dream, as I did before them, that they are running away to a strange land, in which children who bear the bullet are welcome. And I want to say to these children: life is wonderful, we are waiting for you, there are many of us here, we have all been hit by the bullet, we are lovers with chests wide open. You are not alone.

Paris, 15 February 2014

## ONFRAY IN THE FRAY OF GENDER CONFUSION

In his most recent column, Michel Onfray<sup>5</sup> says he has discovered ‘with astonishment the very concrete roots of the nebulous theory of gender popularized in the 1990s in the United States by the philosopher Judith Butler’. To explain his alarm, he tells us the story of David/Brenda Reimer. As an infant, David underwent a phimosis operation during which his penis was accidentally cauterized. Dr John Money, in 1966, suggested a sexual reassignment surgery for David: the child should become Brenda with the help of surgical operations and hormonal treatments. Money, inventor of the clinical notion of ‘gender’, claimed he thereby proved his theory scientifically, according to which gender is not determined anatomically, but can be intentionally produced by the interaction of hormonal variables and pedagogical context. David/Brenda ‘grew up painfully... he was attracted to girls’. He refused vaginoplasty, had testosterone prescribed for him, then two phalloplasty operations. Onfray exalts: ‘Faced with his distress, his parents finally revealed the truth to him. Brenda became again what he had been: David. He married a woman. But found neither peace nor serenity. He killed himself in 2002 by medical overdose.’ In 1997 Dr. Milton Diamond ‘discovered the falsification and denounced it’. Dr Money did not succeed in making a boy into a girl.

Reality, the anatomical truth of Reimer’s sex, ended up imposing itself.

And Onfray chides: ‘Judith Butler tours the world defending these ravings.’ He imagines a close continuity between Money’s theories, clinical medicine, and Butler’s feminist, queer theories. Reimer’s tragedy proves the ‘insane’ nature of Butler’s ‘dangerous fictions’. Onfray concludes by describing Butler’s hypotheses as ‘folly’ and ‘staggering postmodern ideology’ and hopes for the day when ‘reality’ will come to reveal her mistakes and prevent their ‘considerable damages’. Reading this grotesque article allows us to draw several conclusions about the lack of rigour in the Caen professor’s method, but also about the theoretical confusions currently rampant in France.

His story is full of errors and misinterpretations. What’s even more serious given the aggressiveness of his statements against Butler is that he has apparently

never actually read the American philosopher. But if Onfray has not read Butler, where does he find his arguments on Reimer and gender theory? The internet is a digital forest in which words are electronic crumbs allowing us to find the trace of the hidden reader: and voilà, Onfray's misinformation (mistaking Reimer's birth name, Bruce and not David, or not knowing that Diamond was Reimer's doctor, etc.), lead us to an article by Émilie Lanez published in *Le Point* titled 'The Tragic Experiment of the Guru of the "Theory of Gender"'. This article is an exercise of profound stupidity and great intellectual dishonesty: it establishes an erroneous relationship between Money's theories and Butler's, which is inadmissible in a context where self-serving scheming wins out over rigour in the use of sources. Even worse, entire passages of Onfray's texts are taken from an article on a website called 'For a free school in Quebec', an explicitly homophobic site, from which Onfray draws his hermeneutic pearls according to which Money 'defended paedophilia and stigmatized heterosexuality as a convention to be deconstructed'.

It is surprising that, to express himself on gender, Onfray chose to plagiarize fundamentalist Catholic sites. These staunch right-wing sources did not inform him that Reimer's story is one of the most commented-on and criticized cases in gender and queer studies. If he had read Butler, he would know that she devoted to the analysis of Reimer's story a chapter in her 2004 book *Undoing Gender*. She criticizes both the normative use of a constructivist theory of gender that allowed Money to decide that a child without a penis should be brought up as a girl, and the naturalist theories of sexual difference defended by Diamond, by which anatomy and genetics must define gender.

Unlike what Onfray imagines, Money was in no way a transgressor of gender, and neither was Diamond a hero of the authenticity of sex: they shared a normative vision of sexual difference. According to them, there can only be two sexes (and two genders) and it is necessary to lead the bodies of intersex and transsexual people towards one or the other sex, gender. Judith Butler, along with intersex associations, was one of the first to articulate a critique of the normative uses of clinical notions of gender and sexual difference. With Money, Butler writes, 'malleability is, as it were, violently imposed', and with Diamond, 'naturalness is artificially induced'.

The brutal treatment imposed on Reimer was the same as the one reserved for intersex children: these newborns, whose genital apparatus can be defined neither as masculine nor feminine, are subjected to surgical operations and

endocrinological therapies of sexual reassignment. The objective remains the same: to produce sexual difference – even when this is through genital mutilation. Why are the anti-gender people scandalized by the fate reserved for Reimer but never raised their voices to demand the prohibition of surgical genital mutilation for intersex children?

The biological interventions and cultural codes allowing the recognition of the human body as either female or male belong to an historically determined system of truth whose normative character must be called into question. Our concept of the body and of sexual difference depends on what we could call, along with Thomas Kuhn, a scientific-cultural paradigm. But, like any paradigm, it is capable of being replaced by another.

The paradigm of sexual difference that functioned in the West since the eighteenth century entered a crisis in the latter half of the twentieth century, with the development of chromosomal analysis and genetic data. One child out of 2,000 is born with genital organs regarded as neither masculine nor feminine. They have the right to be boys without a penis, girls without a uterus, and even to be neither girl nor boy. What Reimer's tragic case shows clearly are the efforts of doctors to save the paradigm of sexual difference at all costs. We want nothing more to do with either Money's gender or Diamond's sexual difference. Here is our epistemological situation: we need a new model of intelligibility that is more open, less hierarchical. We need a revolution in the paradigm of bodily representation similar to the one that Copernicus began in the system of planetary representation. Faced with new Ptolemies, we are the atheists of the current sex and gender system.

Paris, 15 March 2014

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[5 Published first on his blog \(taken down since\) and by Le Point on 6 March. Michel Onfray is a French philosopher.](#)

## LOVE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

I've just made a several-hundred-kilometre round-trip, solely to feel the warmth of Philomène. She is intelligent, a little secretive, and extremely beautiful. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and it's impossible not to smile when you look at her. Her simple presence fills me with intense joy, extreme organic pleasure. She loves me. She knows when I enter a room, without needing to look at me. She clings to me delicately, without over-imposing. Her eyes close with pleasure when I caress her. The three little wrinkles that just then appear on her forehead move me. It seems inconceivable to have to go away again, and sleep without feeling her near me.

Philomène is furry; on her white face two black patches encircle her eyes and cover her straight ears. In the biological taxonomy invented by Carl Linnaeus in 1758 and still in use today, she belongs to the species *Canis lupus familiaris*, while I come from *Homo sapiens*. If I had to write a non-anthropocentric autobiography, I would have to declare not only that I have fallen deeply in love with *Canis lupus* four times, but also that – aside from a few remarkable *Homo sapiens* exceptions – the *Canis lupus* loves are the great loves of my life. Philomène is not my projection, or my plaything, or an antidote to solitude, or a substitute for the child I do not have. I repeat, I am familiar with canine love.

As a child, I was a being of the fields, a brother to animals, their equal. Whereas at home, in school, at church... wherever animals weren't allowed to enter, I felt alone. That's how I feel, now. Like another coming out, a definitive one this time. Terraphile. Ecosexual. I am in love with this planet. I am stirred up by deep grass, nothing touches me more than the delicate movement of a caterpillar climbing up the bark of a tree. Sometimes, when no one can see me, I lean over to kiss an earthworm, and I sense that perhaps my breath accelerates the rhythm of its oxygen metabolism.

Historians of the Earth say that now we have left the Holocene and entered the Anthropocene. At least since the industrial revolution, our species, *Homo sapiens*, has become the main modifying force of the earthly ecosystem. The Anthropocene is not solely defined by the leading role we play, but especially by

the extension across the whole planet of the necropolitical technologies our species has invented: capitalist and colonialist practices, the culture of coal and oil, the transformation of ecosystems into exploitable resources that has provoked a wave of animal and plant extinctions, and global warming. How have we reached this point? For our relationship with the Earth to change into one of sovereignty, domination and death, it was imperative to initiate a process of rupture, externalization, disaffection. To eroticize our relationship with power and un-eroticize our relationship with the planet. To convince ourselves that we were outside, that we were other.

Philomène and I are children of the Anthropocene. Our relationship is marked by ties of domination: legally, I have the right to subject her, lock her up, make her reproduce, do what I like with her puppies, abandon her, sell her. But we love each other. For, as Donna Haraway tells us, *Canis lupus* and *Homo sapiens* have mutually constructed each other, throughout the past nine thousand years, as ‘companion species’. The dog is the animal that crosses the threshold of a person’s house not to eat us or be eaten by us, but to eat with us. There was a time when we were prey to the wolf, and we reconstructed that relationship, transforming ourselves, along with the predator, into prey-companions. We became humans as they became dogs. How could that happen? It’s a question of one of the most extraordinary, and unique, political processes that has ever been given to us to comprehend. Philomène and I love each other at the edge of a necropolitical abyss. Canine love, writes Haraway, ‘is an historical aberration and a natural cultural legacy’. Perhaps it’s the sole proof that a global radical democratic transformation is possible. That transfeminism, that decolonization, and the reconciliation dreamt of by Mandela... are possible.

Paris, 12 April 2014



## AMNESIC FEMINISM

As is the case in almost all forms of political subaltern struggles and minority resistance movements, feminism suffers from a chronic lack of knowledge about its own genealogy. It doesn't know its vocabulary, forgets its sources, erases its voices, loses its texts, and doesn't have the key to its own archives. In his *Theses on the Concept of History*, Walter Benjamin reminds us that history is written from the viewpoint of the conquerors. That is why the spirit of feminism is amnesic. Benjamin invites us to write history from the viewpoint of the conquered. This, he writes, is the only way it will be possible to interrupt the time of oppression.

Every word in our language contains, as if rolled in on itself, a ball of time made up of historical actions. While the prophet and the politician try to make words sacred by covering up their historicity, the profane task of restoring sacred words to daily usage falls to philosophy and poetry: undoing the knots of time, wresting words away from the conquerors in order to restore them to public space, where they can be the object of a collective re-signification.

It is important to remember, for instance, faced with the 'anti-gender' tidal wave, that the words 'feminism', 'homosexuality', 'transsexuality' and 'gender' were not invented by radical activists, but rather by medical discourse in the last two centuries. This is one of the characteristics of vocabulary that has served to legitimize the practices of somatopolitical domination in modernity: while the previous languages of domination in the seventeenth century worked with a theological system of verification or truth making, the modern languages of domination have articulated themselves through a system of technical-scientific criteria. This is the weight of our shared history, and it is with this that we will have to create meaning again.

For example, let us go down the tunnel of time opened up by the word 'feminism'. The notion of feminism was invented in 1871 by the young French doctor Ferdinand-Valère Faneau de La Cour in his doctoral thesis 'On feminism and infantilism among those with tuberculosis'. According to de La Cour's scientific theory, 'feminism' was a pathology that affected tubercular men,

producing, like a secondary symptom, a ‘feminization’ of the masculine body. The tubercular male, writes Ferdinand-Valère Faneau de La Cour, ‘has thin hair and eyebrows, long, delicate eyelashes like those of women; his skin is pale, delicate and supple, the subcutaneous adipose tissue very well-developed, and consequently the contours take on a remarkable softness, while at the same time the joints and muscles combine their actions to give movements that suppleness, that indefinable, graceful undulance that is the characteristic of female cats and women. If the subject has reached the age when virility determines beard growth, we find that this production is either completely lacking, or else exists only in certain places, which are usually the upper lip first of all, then the chin and the sideburns area. And even then, these few rare hairs are spindly, skimpy, and usually downy. ... The genital organs are remarkable for their small size.’ Feminized, without the ‘power of generation or the ability to conceive’, the tubercular man loses his condition as virile citizen and becomes a contaminating agent who must be placed in the care of public medicine.

A year after the publication of de La Cour’s thesis, Alexandre Dumas the Younger, in one of his pamphlets, takes up the medical notion of feminism to describe men who support the cause of ‘female citizens’ [citoyennes], the movement of women fighting for the right to vote and for political equality. So the first feminists were men: men that medical discourse regarded as abnormal since they had lost their ‘virile attributes’; but also, men accused of feminizing themselves because of their proximity to the political movement of citoyennes. We would have to wait a few years for suffragettes to reappropriate this pathological category and transform it into a critical site of political action.

But where are the new feminists today? Who are the new tuberculars and the new suffragettes? We must liberate feminism from the tyranny of identity politics and open it up to alliances with new subjects who resist normalization and exclusion, to the effeminates of history, to second-class citizens, to the disabled and the sick, to the stateless people and to the bloody climbers of the barbed walls of Melilla.

Paris, 10 May 2014

## MARCOS FOREVER

On 25 May, Subcomandante Marcos wrote an open letter to the world from 'Zapatista reality' to announce the death of Marcos, a character invented as a media support and spokesperson for the Chiapas revolutionary project. 'These words will be the last before I cease to exist.' The same communiqué informs us of the birth of Subcomandante 'Galeano', after comrade José Luis Solís Sánchez 'Galeano', assassinated by paramilitaries on 2 May. 'One of our own must die so that Galeano can live. And so that Death, that impertinent one, will be satisfied, we give Death another name in place of Galeano's, so that Galeano can live and so that death can carry away not a life but just a name, letters emptied of meaning, without any history or life of their own.' We know that José Luis Solís himself had borrowed his name from the author of *Open Veins of Latin America*. The Subcomandante, who always acted well ahead of the old ególatras [egotists] of French poststructuralism, put into practice, in the realm of political activity, the death of the author that Barthes announced in the space of the text.

Over the last few years, the Zapatistas have constructed the most creative alternative to neoliberalism's necropolitical governing techniques, but also to Communism. The Zapatistas, unlike any other movement, are in the process of inventing a political methodology to 'organize rage'. And to reinvent life.

Since 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (LNZ) conceived, via the character of Subcomandante Marcos, a new way of thinking of decolonial philosophy in the twenty-first century. By distancing itself from the treatise and the thesis (heirs of the ecclesiastical and colonial literary culture that began in the sixteenth century and fell into decline from the end of the last century), it acts from a techno-indigenous oral digital culture and travels through all the networks whispering rituals, letters, messages, stories and parables. Here is one of the central techniques for producing political subjectivity that the Zapatistas teach us: to de-privatize proper nouns by borrowing names, and to undo the individualist fiction of the face by wearing the balaclava.

Not so remote from the Subcomandante, I live in another political space where the same theatrical, shamanic forces are used to question the stability of the

name and the truth of the face as the ultimate referents of personal identity: the transsexual, transgender, drag-king, drag-queen and non-binary cultures. Every trans person has (or had) two (or more) names. The one that was assigned to them at birth (their 'deadname') and with which the dominant culture tries to normalize them, and the name that marks the beginning of a process of dissident subjectivation.

Trans names do not only signify one's adherence to a different gender: they describe above all a process of disidentification. Subcomandante Marcos (who learned more from the pen of the gay Mexican author Carlos Monsiváis than from the virile beard of Fidel) was actually a drag-king character: the intentional construction of a fictional masculinity (the hero and the voice of the rebel) via performative techniques. A revolutionary symbol without face or identity, made of collective words and dreams. The borrowed name, like the balaclava, is a parody, a mask that gestures towards the many masks concealing the faces of political corruption and hegemony: 'Why so much scandal around the balaclava? Is Mexican society ready to let the masks fall away?' Like the face with the help of the balaclava, the name is undone, and collectivized.

For the Zapatistas, the borrowed name and the balaclava function as second names, the drag wig, the moustache and high heels of trans culture: they are intentional hyperboles, signs of a political-sexual transvestitism, but they are also the queer-indigenous weapons allowing them to confront the neoliberal aesthetic. That cannot happen within the 'real' sex or the 'authentic' name, but through the construction of a living fiction that allows them to resist the norm.

The Zapatista, queer and trans experiments invite us to de-privatize the face and name in order to transform the body of the multitude into the collective agent of the revolution.

I allow myself, from this modest platform, to say to Subcomandante Galeano that from this day forward I will sign my trans name Beatriz Marcos Preciado, taking on the performative force of fiction that the Zapatistas have created, and creating it here from the old Europe that is disintegrating. Thus, Zapatista reality exists.

Barcelona, 7 June 2014

## STATISTICS ARE STRONGER THAN LOVE

A statistical chart of the annual chances for couples breaking up could be compiled from all the published statistics about couples, families and their love- and sex-lives. A statistical chart that measures catastrophe. Or liberation. Which tabulates enthusiasm. Or stagnation. Which measures suffering. The chaos and regrouping of the emotional world. Depending on the year the couple got together, their age and gender, salaries, number of children shared, length of time elapsed since the subjects left their parental home, profession, places of birth and residence, respective ages when their studies were completed, legal status (marriage, common-law marriage, cohabitation, separate living arrangements) and the annual GDP, it would be possible to know what the statistical likelihood is of a couple continuing together or breaking up. Everything would be there, your future break-up already codified in this graph, easier to read than the lines of your palm.

The statistics say that in France one marriage out of two lasts fewer than ten years and that 15 per cent of 25-65 year-olds live alone. That in 2013, there were 130,000 divorces and 10,000 dissolutions of common-law marriages. That people separate the most between the ages of 40 and 45. That 65 per cent of break-ups took place during holidays. Consequently, 3 out of 5 couples separate in the summer. So we are currently in a period of high statistical probability. 37 per cent of couples get back together after the first break-up, but only 12 per cent manage to make their relationship last. Marriage helps the union's stability, the chart says, as does the presence of children, but only when the couples are younger in age. On the other hand, couples are more fragile when they begin their shared lives when young or in a context that involves some economic or social precariousness. Farmers (male or female – the study doesn't mention trans people or gender dissidents), and to a lesser extent freelancers and labourers, break up less frequently than corporate employees. Among women, break-ups are more numerous with executives; the opposite is true for men. Women who work as homemakers in heterosexual couples are the ones who bring the most stability to the couple – the study speaks of 'stability' but says nothing about the husband's infidelity, or of the wife's personal fulfilment. Stability, here, is a factor of political control. A society in which all couples separate would be a

revolutionary society, perhaps a society of total revolution.

When I run my life (my material life, my life reduced to computable information) through this graph, I note, first with surprise, then relief, that I fall within the statistical average – even though the study has not yet registered couples made up of an in-between, non-op trans man and a non-standard woman. The singularity of our gender resistance conforms to the statistical laws. Statistics are stronger than love. Stronger than queer politics. Statistics transform those nights when we have loved each other and those shapeless days that follow a break-up into inert matter for mathematical calculation. And now, the immobility of these numbers does me good.

The use of statistics as a technique of social representation appeared in 1760 with the application of arithmetic to the management of the population in the works of Gottfried Achenwall and Bisset Hawkins. This technique was developed by André-Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quetelet into an authentic ‘political arithmetic’ at the end of the nineteenth century. Francis Galton imagined a eugenicist use for these correlations. These mathematicians of the social became concerned with generating knowledge from physical or social data otherwise difficult to master. Statisticians are meteorologists and anthropometres. Just as they learn how to predict the weather, they also predict births, deaths, lightning strikes and divorces. Another study, carried out in England in 2013 according to the methods inherited from Guerry’s moral statistics, posits that, during the fifteen months of their ‘honeymoon’, couples make love once a day on average. After four years together, the average goes down to four times a month. After fifteen years, 50 per cent of couples have sex four times a year, while the other half keep separate bedrooms.

After a detailed re-reading of my journals and a scrupulous calculation carried out thanks to some free time and the obsessive energy that results from a break-up, I calculate that I loved her 93 per cent of the days I spent with her. That I was happy 67 per cent of the time, unhappy 11 per cent of the time. Because of a lack of memory or accurate notation, I cannot account for the remaining 22 per cent of the time. We made love 60 per cent of the days, with 90 per cent satisfaction in the first three years, 76 per cent the next two, and just 17 per cent during the last few years. We slept together 87 per cent of the nights, we kissed each other before sleeping 97.3 per cent of the days. We read in bed together 99 per cent of the days. The relative quality (98 per cent) of the words we exchanged during our relationship was almost unvaried throughout the time – with the exception of

the days leading up to the separation.

Our couple, an enormity of perversion according to heterocentric psychology, falls exactly within the norm. Never have the instruments of hegemonic biopolitics comforted me so much. I also note that the capacity for epistemological questioning and rebellion is inversely proportionate to the intensity of love's suffering. As Spinoza said in 1677, before the invention of statistics, one single emotion cannot be deployed in different directions. I am in the summer of my discontent, and the upheavals that directly affect the solar plexus make heroes flee. In my heart the battle between the soothing calm of statistics and the fury of revolution is just beginning.

Paris, 1 August 2014

## THE ATTRACTIVE FORCE OF A BREAK-UP

After years of talking, like Walter Benjamin, John Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, about the performativity of language, I am experiencing the ‘performative force’ like a flame meeting skin.

Since my last article on the statistics of couples and break-ups, my life has become a performative effect. The day the column was published, I was unable to open the newspaper. As if addressed to us both, the headline read: ‘Israel-Hamas: Is This War?’ The truce did not last in Gaza. Fighting started up again, the two camps rejected accusations of violating international law. She accuses me of exhibitionism, of wanting to display a relationship crisis on the public forum. Our friends – the same ones who told me that a love letter would make anyone come back – write to me to say that this time, maybe, I’ve gone too far. The column, translated into many languages by anonymous internet authors, travels to cyber monitors at the speed of 4G. Even though I am Faceless, on social networks, the comments kept coming: ‘It was about time’, ‘They had it coming’.

I am suffering from the performative force of my own speech acts. I am ashamed of loving. I am ashamed of not succeeding. I am ashamed of my writing. Ashamed of the congruence between life and writing. Ashamed of the distance, also, between life and writing. Confronted with language, I am vulnerable. I realized that our love affairs do not belong to us. I had uttered the word ‘break-up’ like a superstitious spell to avert it, an umbrella to ward off the downpour. I furtively hoped that our couple might be among the magnificent 12 per cent – the 12 per cent of people who manage to overcome a crisis. But once the word ‘break-up’ was uttered, as in a journalistic shamanic ritual, the break-up took place.

Queer theory, a punk phrase invented by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990 (theory of the abnormal, knowledge of deviants, as if to say: a theory of madness created by the mad to denounce the horrors of the civilization of sanity), was the result not just of the feminist reading of Foucault’s History of Sexuality, but also of a ‘pragmatic turning point’ in understanding the production of gender identities. In



1954, the linguist John Austin stated there was a difference between constative and performative utterances. The former describe reality; the latter seek to transform it.

With performative utterances, language becomes action. Words say nothing, they do things. 'It's raining today' utters a fact; 'I declare you husband and wife' produces effects in reality.

Derrida mistrusts Austin's rational taxonomy and postulates that the success of a performative utterance does not depend on a transcendent power of language (a kind of divine voice declaring, 'Let there be light!'), but rather on the simple repetition of a social ritual that, legitimized by power, hides its historicity. A theatre where the words and characters are determined by convention.

Performative force is the result of the violent imposition of a norm that we prefer to call nature to avoid confronting the reorganization of the social relationships of power that any change in conventions would bring about. The debate around marriage for everyone was actually a war for control over performative power. 'I declare you...', but who is declaring, and to enact what? Who has the power to decide to whom this terrifying performative utterance can be applied? What violence are we re-enacting when we say this? Can this power be distributed in a different way, can this violence be limited?

Butler would go even further in her thinking about utterances on identity (gender identity, but also sexual and racial identity, 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'black', etc.) as performative utterances that pass as constative, perlocutionary acts that pass as illocutionary, words that produce what they are supposed to describe, questions that take the form of scientific statements, or commands that are presented as ethnographic portrayals.

For the subaltern, speaking implies not simply resisting the violence of the hegemonic performative, but above all imagining dissident theatres where the production of a different performative force can be possible. Inventing a new scene of enunciation, as Jacques Rancière would say. Disidentifying oneself in order to reconstruct the subjectivity damaged by the dominant performative language. Is there something, a space, between the couple and its break-up? Is it possible to love beyond conventions? To love beyond the crisis, not as a couple? How can counter-rituals be created? By taking a chance on another performative utterance, who will we become?

Barcelona, 30 August 2014

## FEMINISM IS NOT A HUMANISM

During one of his 'infinite conversations', Hans-Ulrich Obrist asks me to pose an urgent question to be answered by artists and political movements. I say: 'How can we live with animals? How can we live with the dead?' Someone else asks: 'What about humanism? And feminism?' Ladies, gentlemen, and others: once and for all, feminism is not a humanism. Feminism is an animalism. In other words, animalism is an expanded feminism, and not anthropocentric.

The first machines in the industrial revolution were not steam engines, printing presses or guillotines... but slave labour on the plantation, sexual and reproductive female workers, and animals. The first machines in the industrial revolution were living machines. So, humanism invented another body that it called human: a sovereign, white, heterosexual, healthy, seminal body. A stratified body, full of organs, full of capital, whose actions are timed and whose desires are the effects of a necropolitical technology of pleasure. Liberté, égalité, fraternité. Animalism reveals the colonial, patriarchal roots of those universal principles of European humanism. The system of slavery, and then of wage labour, appears as the foundation of the liberty of modern 'man'; the expropriation and segmentation of life and knowledge as the other side of equality; war, competition and rivalry as the driving forces of fraternity.

Renaissance, Enlightenment and the miracle of the industrial revolution depend, then, on the reduction of slaves and women to the status of animals and on the reduction of all three (slaves, women and animals) to that of (re)productive machines. If animals were at some point conceived of and treated as machines, then machines little by little became techno-animals existing among techno-living animals. Machine and animal (migrants, pharmacopornographic bodies, children of Dolly the sheep, electrodigital brains, AI) constitute new political subjects of the animalism yet to come. Machine and animal are our quantum homonyms.

Since humanist modernity as a whole has done nothing but multiply the technologies of death, animalism should invite us to a new way of living with the dead. With the planet as corpse and as ghost. To transform necropolitics into

necroaesthetics. Animalism then becomes a funeral celebration. A celebration of mourning. Animalism is funerary rite, birth. A solemn assembly of plants and flowers around victims of history and humanism. Animalism is a separation and an embrace. Queer and indigenous, global pansexuality which transcends species and sexes, and technoshamanism, the system of interspecies communication: all are systems of mourning.

Animalism is not a naturalism. It is an entire ritual system. A counter-technology producing awareness. Conversion to a form of life without any sovereignty whatsoever. Without any hierarchy whatsoever. Animalism institutes its own law. Its own economy. Animalism is not a contractual moralism. It refutes the aesthetics of capitalism and capitalism's domination of desire through consumption (of goods, ideas, information, bodies). Animalism rests neither on exchange nor on individual interest. It is not the revenge of one clan upon another. Animalism is not heterosexualism, or homosexualism, or transsexualism. Animalism is neither modern nor postmodern. I can affirm, without joking, that animalism is not Hollande-ism. Not a Sarkozy-ism or a Marine Le Pen-ism. Animalism is not patriotism. Or matriotism. Animalism is not nationalism. Or Europeanism. Animalism is not capitalism or communism. The economy of animalism is a total system of non-agonist subsidy. A cooperation like photosynthesis. A molecular orgasm. Animalism is the wind blowing. The way the spirit of the forest of atoms still holds sway over thieves. Humans, those masked incarnations of the forest, should unmask themselves of the human and mask themselves again with the knowledge of the bees.

The necessary change is so profound that we tell ourselves it's impossible. So profound that we tell ourselves it's unimaginable. But the impossible is still to come. And the unimaginable is on the way. What was more impossible and more unimaginable, slavery or the end of slavery? The time of animalism is the time of the impossible and the unimaginable. This is our time: the only time that is left to us.

Paris, 27 September 2014

## 'SNUFF' SOVEREIGNTY

Faced with the recent ISIS beheadings, we have heard accusations of 'barbaric' more than any other epithet. In the language of the Roman Empire, the word 'barbaric' was used to describe foreigners who didn't speak Latin. By invoking the barbaric, the 'primitive', anachronistic dimension of the crime is emphasized. 'Barbaric' is an operator of alterity. It makes them the Other. It's not us. But these beheadings are not barbaric. They speak to us. They are in our language, they have been arranged to be seen by us. Their techniques of representation are not archaic, but high-tech. These are the children of Wes Craven, John Carpenter and James Wan who are 'sampling' from the Koran.

My aim is not to make a critical iconography of jihadism, but rather to understand how and why we are in the process of re-situating the dramatization of death at the core of a new filmic pharmacopornographic regime. The time when governmental techniques covered up punishment and death is over. The new management of political subjectivity demands producing emotions of terror and panic through audiovisual and biochemical means. The live broadcast of the destruction of the Twin Towers ushered us into the era of the televisual snuff video. In this new war, the mass communication of audiovisual broadcasting is just as important as the death of the enemy. Traditional sovereignty, as the power to put others to death, manifested through the flow of blood shed, whereas the new forms of sovereignty are now passing through image and sound, then through the uninterrupted flow of digital data on the internet.

In the visual imagination of the wars of the Middle East, we have seen the transition from the powerless body of the suicide bomber to the super-powerful body of the executioner, where the fabrication of a new form of snuff sovereignty is at play. In the case of the suicide bomber, the tearing to pieces of the individual body symbolizes the destruction of the political body of the territory. Then, this fragmentation is spread out in space, so that it is impossible to distinguish the dead body of the attacker from the body of the attacked. Here attacker and attacked are both victims of the same politics. The body of the suicide bomber, the incarnation of an impossible national territory, is not simply dismembered: its flesh is forever intermingled with the enemy's. This

promiscuity denies the irreconcilable difference between bodies (individual and political) at war. The social ritual of the suicide bomber takes the form of the destruction of a constantly threatened political geography whose scattered elements cannot be reconciled in a single living body, and are united only in blood.

On the other hand, the new figure of the actor-executioner that the jihadists are currently constructing echoes a transnational state-controlled superstructure, incarnated in a masculine body that exaggeratedly dramatizes the rituals of death. Where traditional masculine sovereignty – theocratic in nature – made divine speech flow through blood, jihadist neo-sovereignty is henceforth an actor in a political snuff production. This shift bears with it the risk of a reversal by sacrifice: the suicide bomber was a martyr; now the martyr is the Western victim.

The execution scene seeks to institute a new necropolitical ritual where the global city square is a web page. And what is offered for us to see is advertising – a dramatization of a new theatrical sovereign masculinity. Jihadism is inventing a theocybernetic form of the snuff genre, performed by two masculine bodies stripped of their individuality: one body incarnates the Islamic state; the other is reduced to the role of actor-victim, placed there as a sacrificial object, as a transitional political object, as a body-for-death. The horizon of the image is closed – the victim's face fills the frame. The political representation demands the close-up, the sound of the voice, intimate speech, signs capable of carrying narrative identification. Here, the snuff video capitalizes on the modern techniques of photographic portraiture as well as the intimate subjective use of cinematic diegesis. The actor-executioner lifts the victim's head and slices his throat. Tobe Hooper meets al-Qaeda: beheading, then cut to a shot of the flag. The amputation of the head destroys the political body, denies the rationality of Western power. But decapitation is not enough: the video and its digital dissemination becomes the most important necropolitical technique. We're not talking any more about Islam. This form of masculine snuff sovereignty no longer draws its power from a transcendent deity, but from the immanent, omnipotent network of the Internet.

Paris, 25 October 2014

## THE COURAGE TO BE YOURSELF

Today you are granting me the privilege of talking about ‘my’ courage to be me after making me bear the burden of exclusion and shame throughout my entire childhood.

When I received this invitation to speak of the courage to be me<sup>6</sup>, at first my ego purred as if it were being offered a full-page ad for which it would be both the product and the consumer. I saw myself already awarded a medal, a hero... then the memory of oppression attacked me and erased all complacency.

You are offering me this privilege the way you’d give a little drink to a sick person suffering from cirrhosis of the liver, while at the same time denying my basic rights, in the name of nature and nation, all the while confiscating my cells and organs for your crazed political control. You are granting me this courage the way you’d leave a few casino chips for a gambling addict, all the while continuing to refuse to call me by a masculine name, or to allow my name to bear the non-feminine form of adjectives, simply because I have neither necessary official documentation nor a beard.

You are gathering us here like a bunch of slaves who have been able to lengthen their chains, but who still remain more or less docile; who have obtained their diplomas and who agree to speak the language of their masters. We are here, in front of you, all bodies assigned as women at birth, Catherine Millet, Cécile Guibert, Hélène Cixous, bitches, bisexuals, women with rough voices, Algerians, Jews, racialized women, masculine women, women of the South. But when will you get sick of sitting down facing our ‘courage’ as if you were attending an entertainment? When will you get sick of making us the Other so that you can become yourselves?

You are granting me courage, I imagine, because I have spoken up for whores, for AIDS victims and for the crip, I have spoken in my books about my sexual practices with dildos and prostheses, I have talked about my relationship to testosterone. That is my whole world. That is my life and I have lived it without courage, but with enthusiasm and rejoicing. But you know nothing of my joy.

You prefer to pity me and you still grant me courage because in our politico-sexual regime, in the reigning pharmacopornographic capitalism, to oppose the gender and sexual binary regime is the same as denying the incarnation of Christ in the Middle Ages. You are endowing me with a great deal of courage because faced with genetic theorems and administrative papers, to deny the empirical existence of the gender binary today is comparable to spitting in the king's face in the fifteenth century.

And you say to me: 'Talk about the courage of being yourself', just as the judges at the Inquisition said to Giordano Bruno for eight years: 'Talk to us about heliocentrism, about the impossibility of the Holy Trinity', all the while gathering the kindling to make a big fire. In fact, like Bruno, and even if I can already see the flames, I think that a little change of course will not be enough. That everything will have to be turned upside-down. Explode the semantic field and the pragmatic domain. Get out of the collective dream of the truth of sex, as we had to get out of the idea that the Sun rotated around the Earth. To talk about sex, gender and sexuality, we have to begin with an act of epistemological rupture, a disavowal of category, a cracking of the conceptual vertebrae to allow for the premises of cognitive emancipation: we must completely abandon the language of sexual difference and sexual identity (even the language of strategic essentialism, as Spivak proposes, or nomadic subjectivity, as Rosi Braidotti proposes). Sex and sexuality now are not the essential property of the subject, but rather the product of various social, discursive technologies, political practices of controlling truth and life. The product of your courage. There are no sexes or sexualities but uses of the body acknowledged as natural or prohibited as deviant. And don't bother getting out your newly-minted transcendental card: maternity as essential difference. Maternity is just one possible use of the body, among others, it's not a guarantee of sexual difference, or of femininity.

So keep your courage for yourselves. For your marriages and your divorces, your infidelities and your lies, your families, your maternity, your children and grandchildren. Keep the courage you need to maintain the norm. The cold blood to lend your bodies to the constant process of regulated repetition. Courage, like violence and silence, like force and order, is on your side. On the contrary, I claim today the legendary lack of courage of Virginia Woolf and Klaus Mann, of Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, of Angela Davis and Fred Moten, of Kathy Acker and Annie Sprinkle, of June Jordan and Pedro Lemebel, of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Gregg Bordowitz, of Guillaume Dustan and Amelia Baggs, of Judith Butler and Dean Spade, of Jack Halberstam and Lorenza Böttner.



But since I love you, my courageous equals, I hope you will lack courage in turn. I hope you will no longer have the strength to reiterate the norm, no longer have the energy to fabricate identity, to lose faith in what your identity documents say about you. And once you've lost all courage, weary with joy, I hope you will invent other and unknown uses of your body. Because I love you, I desire you to be weak and contemptible. Because fragility, and not courage, is what brings about revolution.

Lyon, 22 November 2014

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[6 Beatriz Preciado wrote this text for a discussion on the courage to be oneself organized by the 'Mode d'emploi' festival at Lyon.](#)

## TRANS CATALONIA

The year has just begun in France with an attack, a collapse, a lost battle, a counter-revolution, a bereavement, but also perhaps with the possibility of building new alliances that integrate what we love, that protect it. For my part, I began the year asking my close friends – but also people who don't know me – to stop calling me by the feminine first name that was assigned to me at birth but to call me by a new name from now on. Beatriz is Paul. A deconstruction, a revolution, a leap without a net, and another bereavement. And, when I walk with this new first name in the streets of El Raval in Barcelona, I think that the systematic erasing of the normative gender and the invention of a new form of life, on which I embarked long ago, could be compared to the process of transformation in which Catalonia is now embroiled.

Who knows if that notion is the fruit of some dysphoria, which causes the borderless landscapes of the Val d'Aran or the lands of the Ponent to be confused with my own changing anatomy, or if it's the logical conclusion of the resonance between two possible shifts: I will hazard that there is a formal, political similarity between trans subjectivity as it undergoes transformation and Catalonia as it evolves. These are two fictions that are being made and unmade. In other words, the process of constituting a free Catalonia could resemble, in its relationships with power, memory and the future, the practice of inventing freedom from gender and the sexual freedom that are at work in trans and non-binary micropolitics.

Beyond national identity, what forces enter or could enter the shaping of Catalonia? Beyond the identity of gender, what forces enter or could enter the composition of trans becoming? What do I know? What do we know? What can I do? What can we do? What am I going to do? What are we going to do? In the case of becoming-trans, as in that of becoming-Catalonia, either it's a matter of following a predictable sex-change protocol (diagnosis of malaise considered as a pathology, administration of hormones in doses that allow a culturally recognizable change to occur, sexual surgical reassignment) or else, on the contrary, it's a question of instituting an array of practices to reverse the forces of domination over bodies, practices capable of giving rise to the invention of a

new form of life. A form of existence in which a radical and joyful form of political critique says goodbye to violence, and opens a space for a new relationality. Either it's a matter of going from one sex to another by replicating the normative conventions or, on the contrary, it is possible to initiate a shift allowing one to create and invent practices of freedom while outside the norm.

The important thing is not transsexuality or independence, but rather the totality of relationships that the process of transformation activates, and that until then had been blocked by the norm. In the case of becoming-free-Catalonia, independence is either the ultimate goal of a political operation tending towards the imposition of a national identity and the crystallization of a map of power, or else, on the contrary, it is a process of social, subjective experimentation that involves calling into question all normative identity (national, class, gender, sexual, territorial, linguistic, racial, or bodily and cognitive difference). Either masculinity, femininity, nation, borders, territorial and linguistic demarcations win out over the infinitude of a possible series of relationships recognized and still to be discovered, or we generate together the experimental enthusiasm capable of supporting a constituent process that is constantly open.

Becoming trans, like becoming independent, means that one must above all always resign from nationhood and gender identity. Renounce anatomy as destiny and history as prescriptive of doctrinal content. Renounce laws based on body, blood and soil. National identity and gender identity must be neither foundation nor goal. In nation as in gender we cannot look for ontological truths or empirical necessities that allow people to decide who belongs where or what the borders are. There is nothing to verify or demonstrate; everything is to be by experiment. Like gender, the nation does not exist outside of collective practices, which imagine and construct it. Cross out the map, erase the first name, propose other maps and other first names whose collectively imagined fictional nature is evident. Fictions that might allow us to fabricate practices of liberty.

Barcelona, 17 January 2015

## PEDRO LEMEBEL, YOUR SOUL WILL NEVER GIVE UP

7

Fuck AIDS, fuck cancer of the larynx, fuck dictatorship and fuck the democratic façade, fuck the macho mafia that keeps calling itself a political party, fuck censorship, fuck couples and fuck break-ups, fuck Pedro and fuck Paco, fuck TV, fuck alternative movements, fuck socialism, fuck the colonial church, fuck NGOs, fuck pharmaceutical multinationals, fuck neoliberal post-dictatorship holidays, fuck the map of South America, fuck cultural consensus, fuck tourism, fuck tolerance, fuck art biennales and fuck museums of homosexuality. Fuck you and fuck me. Fuck your body that gave up. And fuck your soul that will never give up.

Fuck the minoritarian multitude facing a single armed man. Fuck mares and the Mapocho river. Fuck the days we spent together in Santiago and fuck the nights in Valparaíso. Fuck your kisses and your tongue. We were looking at the Pacific and I was quoting Deleuze: 'The sea is like the cinema, an image in movement.' And you said: 'Stop acting the intellectual, darling. The only image in movement is love.'

You brought me up and I emerged from you like a child, among the hundreds of children you made, invented by your voice. You are my mother and I mourn for you as one mourns for a transvestite mother. With a dose of testosterone and a shout. You are my mother and I mourn for you as one mourns a communist, indigenous mother. With a hammer and sickle drawn on the skin of my face. You are my mother and I mourn for you the way one mourns Ayahuasca.

I walk through the streets of New York and I hug a radioactive tree begging your forgiveness for not coming to see you. From fear of memory and torture, from fear of dogs dying of hunger and the mines of Antofagasta. Diamonds are forever and bombs are too. AIDS speaks English. You say, 'Darling, I must die' and AIDS doesn't hurt you. Cancer doesn't speak. You die in silence like a filthy, southern, proletarian and affected Barbie. You are incorruptible, like a trans-Andean goddess. And they will come and tear from history the books you

will no longer write. But not your voice. And still thousands more children will be born with a broken wing, and thousands of girls will bear your name. Pedro Lemebel. A thousand times, in a thousand languages.

New York, 28 January 2015

■

7 Pedro Lemebel, the Chilean writer with made-up eyes and high heels, died on 23 January 2015. A popular icon, he is recognized for his questioning spirit, making provocation a tool for political denunciation. Born in 1952 to an indigenous mother, he grew up in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Santiago. First a professor of the plastic arts, but soon rejected because of his homosexuality, he chose to devote himself to writing. A figure of leftist activism, Pedro Lemebel moved from literary anonymity to artistic performance in the late 80s, forming the duo 'Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis' with the poet Francisco Casas – a veritable countercultural myth. Urban, baroque, and marginal chronicler, he painted the most obscure sides of Chilean life, especially with his collection La esquina es mi corazón [The corner is my heart]. He died at the age of 62 from cancer of the larynx.

## VALENTINE'S DAY IS CRAP

I would like to celebrate Valentine's Day by telling you a secret. Let's call it my Valentine gift. This summer I stopped believing in love. In romantic love between couples. It wasn't a gradual change. It happened like a sudden blow: the pattern of my ideas slipped and my desire was changed. Or maybe the opposite happened: I caught myself desiring differently, and my ideas imploded under their own weight. Even though I am an atheist and methodologically nominalist, up to that point love had resisted the hermeneutics of suspicion and the attacks of deconstruction. On the side of virtue, the rhetoric of love had held strong in me like a Platonic remnant. I was probably also under the influence of the hype of St Paul ('A love greater than love') that Catholics read during weddings – without our knowing if they're words of encouragement, or dice that are cast. Not having distanced ourselves sufficiently from St Paul, we were used to speaking, in gay, lesbian and trans politics, about the 'right to love'. And thus the normative fluid of love flowed in us, we pariahs of the sex-gender system. It all began when I separated from the person with whom I thought I would live forever – I followed her down to the ultimate consequences of the ideology of love, I embraced all the secondary effects of its discursive logic. But I would never have imagined that the field of suffering created by our break-up could turn into an endless scrutiny spoiling my mornings.

What's more, the sensation of failure may have nourished my utopia. But conversations with my (close and not-so-close) friends led me to dismantle the hypothesis of love. The empirical data gathered were comparable to those of a field study, in the mode of Feyerabend, allowing me to refute love rather than prove it. Speaking with my friends about my break-up, many of them expressed their concealed desire to separate and, at the same time, their lack of courage to do it. They told me they had stopped fucking a long time ago or that they had other lovers in secret. When talking about the person they were supposed to love, they showed an infinite bitterness, as if their union were a limitless reservoir of frustration and boredom. I was perplexed as I listened to them: I thought they should separate, whereas we, on the contrary, should have stayed together. But we separated and they continued on as couples. They chose love as death drive. We decided not to believe in that love in order to save it from the

institution of the couple. We chose freedom in place of love. Plato was a crook, St Valentine a piece of shit and St Paul an adman. One soul cut into two halves that find each other and join back together? What if instead of being cut symmetrically, the soul were cut into two unequal parts? What if the soul were cut into 12,568 tiny fragments? What if the soul were not divisible? What if the soul does not exist?

Then, one June morning, I got up with a single idea in my head: love is a drone. As I was already thinking of changing my first name to Paul, I saw myself improvising a punk version of the 'Epistle to the Corinthians'. I'll copy my June notebook directly here, as if I were transcribing the words of a stranger: 'Love is cruel. Love is selfish. Love does not understand the other person's suffering. Love always strikes the other cheek. Love destroys. Love is coarse. A pair of pruning shears is love. Love is false. Love is misleading. Love is greedy. A moneylender is love. Love is lazy. Love is jealous. Love wants everything. A suction pump is love. Love is voracious. Love is abstract. An algorithm is love. Love is petty. A fang is love. Leviathan is love. Love is arrogant. Love burns. A biological weapon is love. Love is aggressive. Love bruises. A cluster bomb is love. A whip is love. Love is capricious. Love is impatient. Love does not know moderation. Love is vain. Love is a drone. And St Valentine is a GI who amuses himself by shooting at a screen.' Love is not an emotion. It's a kind of government technology of bodies, a politics to control desire, its goal is to capture the power to act and take pleasure from two living machines in order to put them at the service of social reproduction. Love is a forest on fire from which you can't escape without burning your feet. Fire and burnt flesh are St Valentine's promises. Take them and flee. Cautiously, we try to invent other technologies to produce subjectivity. Paradoxically, now that I no longer believe in love, for the first time, I am ready to love: in a contingent, finite, immanent, abnormal way. I feel I'm starting to learn how to die. Happy Valentine's Day!

New York, 14 February 2015

## THE NEOLIBERAL MUSEUM

It would be hard to be in New York now without experiencing the media barrage promoting the Björk exhibit at MoMA, just as it's apparently hard to be in Paris and escape the hype around the Jeff Koons exhibit at the Centre Pompidou. Björk's voice has always been for me a magnificent hymn to vegetal love, and I feel nothing but sympathy for a guy who has himself photographed naked fucking with Cicciolina and who, like me, adores poodles. Let's set Björk and Koons aside (they're nothing but simple instruments here). These two exhibitions are signs of what the contemporary modern art museum is becoming in the neoliberal era.

What they both demonstrate is that marketing and development strategies have marched straight into these spaces. For a brief period, it was possible to transform the museum into a democratic laboratory where the public sphere was being reinvented. But now this idea is being dismantled in the name of one single argument: dependence on public subsidies must be bypassed in times of 'crisis'; the time has come to make the museum into a profitable business.

This new museum, we are told, must be transformed into a semiotic enterprise. These are the criteria that we, info-employees of contemporary art museums, must take into account when we plan our exhibitions. For solo shows, we are obedient to the 'big name' regime, the immediately recognizable names, since the museum is geared above all toward the tourist. This is one of the characteristics of the neoliberal museum: to transform even the local visitor into a tourist of the history of globalized capitalism.

This explains the architecture of the exhibition spaces at MoMA: a fluid space in which Björk's video *Time Sensuality*, filmed in Times Square in 1993, is visible from every room, while we penetrate into a labyrinth where Van Gogh's *Starry Night* rubs elbows with Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Jasper Johns's flag, or Warhol's Campbell's soup cans. The visitor will see nothing he wasn't already familiar with or that he wouldn't find in Taschen Books' 'hundred best artists' category. Like a semiotic machine, this new baroque-financial museum produces a signifier without history, a homogeneous sensorial product, smooth



and continuous, inside which Björk, Picasso and Times Square are interchangeable.

Today, a good museum director must become a sales executive able to develop global profitable services. A director of public programming must be a specialist in analysing the cultural market, in ‘multi-channel programming’, searching for new clients – sorry, we should say ‘audiences’ – managing ‘big data’ and in dynamic price-fixing (remember that full entry to MoMA costs the ‘dynamic’ sum of \$25). The curators (who as time passes are becoming more important than the artists) are the new heroes of this process of spectacularization. Exhibitions are products, and ‘art history’ becomes a simple cognitive-financial accumulation. The museum is then transformed into an abstract, privatized space, an enormous media-mercantile earthworm: the MOMAPOMPIDOUTATEGUGGENHEIMABUDHABI...

Impossible to tell where you are, where you came in, where the exit is.

This proliferation of works as identifiable brands is part of the general process of abstraction and dematerialization of value in contemporary capitalism. In the realm of the baroque-financial museum, works of art are no longer thought of according to their ability to question our habitual modes of perceiving or knowing, but rather according to their infinite interchangeability. Art is exchanged for signs and money, no longer for experience or subjectivity. Here, the consumable sign, its economic, media value, is separated from the artwork, possesses it, empties it, devours it and, as Benjamin says, destroys it. It is a museum in which art, the public space, and the public as critical agent are all dead. Let’s stop calling it a museum and call it the ‘necromuseum’. An archive of our own global destruction.

If we want to save the museum, perhaps we should choose public ruin over private profitability. And if that is not possible, perhaps the time has come to occupy the museum collectively, to empty it of its debts and raise barricades of meaning there. To turn out its lights so that, without any possibility of spectacle, it can function as the parliament of another sensibility.

New York, 14 March 2015

## NECROMODERNITY

Necroeconomy, necrotruth, necroinformation,  
necrodiagnosis, necrontology, necroheterosexuality,  
necrohomosexuality, necroaffect, necroimage,  
necrolove, necrotelevision, necrohospital,  
necrohumanism, necrostate, necroubanism,  
necroprogress, necroliterature, necropaternity,  
necrojourney, necroEurope, necroindividual,  
necroarchitecture, necroFrance, necrocountry,  
necroentertainment, necropeace, necrodiversity,  
necropolitics, necroterritory, necroborder,  
necroscience, necromasculinity, necrofemininity,  
necrocouple, necrobelief, necrolanguage, necrovote,  
necroschool, necrofamily, necropornography,  
necrocongress, necromedicine, necrobeauty,  
necroculture, necrohouse, necroart, necroauthority,  
necroresponse, necroexhibition, necroresearch,  
necrojournalism, necrocinema, necrodesign,  
necrotourism, necrohistory, necrolandscape,

necrocomputer, necroemotion, necroblood,  
necrocuisine, necroimage, necropragmatism,  
necrohealth, necroagriculture, necrodesire,  
necrofashion, necroreason, necrorobotics,  
necrolaw, necrostimulation, necropedagogy,  
necrocommunication, necrogeneration, necrogift,  
necrotest, necroaction, necrosexuality, necrovalue,  
necroadvertisement, necroidentity, necrohospitality,  
necroimmunity, necroindustry, necrocommunity,  
necroorgasm, necroliberty, necromuseum,  
necrolistening, necrowork, necrofraternity,  
necroAmerica, necrofoetus, necrosatisfaction,  
necroequality, necroconsumption, necrovision,  
necrowater, necrosoul, necrofriendship,  
necromaternity, necroempathy, necrospeed,  
necroplasticity, necroawareness, necronarrative,  
necrojoy, necrotransport, necrotheatre,  
necroleisure, necromoney, necrofinance, necrofood,  
necroChristianity, necroIslam, necroJudaism,  
necrocivilization, necroadolescence, necrodebt,  
necroforgiveness, necrocredit, necrobody,

necrocomplicity, necromilk, necroerotics, necrooil,  
necrosugar, necroperm, necromythology,  
necroage, necroalterity, necrodiscourse,  
necrohappiness, necrotherapy, necrozoo,  
necromorality, necroperseverance, necrocirculation,  
necrorace, necroprivacy, necronet, necropublic,  
necrosubjectivity, necrosovereignty, necroaddiction,  
necroaccumulation, necrogovernment, necrodance,  
necrocontract, necropride, necrodirection,  
necromemory, necrowriting, necroMediterranean,  
necrochildhood, necrosuccess, necrosex,  
necropast, necrodream, necroapprenticeship,  
necroideology, necrohero, necropower, necrobirth,  
necroknowledge, necroexcitement, necroair,  
necroministry, necrohonour, necrobreath,  
necrofuture, necrodomesticity, necroDisney,  
necroritual, necrosincerity, necrocareer,  
necrotraining, necroelection, necrosociety,  
necrophilosophy, necrodrink, necroreproduction,  
necrowill, necroinsemination, necrotime,  
necrocare, necromusic, necrojustice, necrocrisis,

necrorepresentation, necroAfrica, necroresilience,  
necrodignity, necromarriage, necroself-esteem,  
necrotopia, necrogamy, necroerection,  
necrohunger, necrointelligence, necrosecurity,  
necrorights, necrocosmos, necrodetermination,  
necrobank, necrodemocracy, necroAtlantic,  
necropsychology, necroarchive, necroMonsanto,  
necroaesthetics, necrosoftware, necrohardware,  
necroreality, necroprofitability, necroAmazon,  
necromarketing, necronegotiation, necroawakening,  
necroflexibility, necroglobalization, necrosports,  
necrolife, necrostupidity, necrodialogue, necrothirst,  
necrodiscipline, necroLampedusa, necrogrowth,  
necrofidelity, necrohygiene, necrosurgery,  
necrorepublic, necroFacebook, necrophotography,  
necroprecision, necrobusiness, necrorespect,  
necrosharing, necroautonomy, necrochange,  
necrometropolis, necropatience, necroerudition,  
necroaid, necrotoy, necrodrama, necrokindness,  
necrocelebration, necroexperience, necroplanet,  
necroproperty, necroGoogle, necrosurveillance,

necrostability, necrocommemoration, necrocolumn,  
necroappetite, necrofervour, necroamelioration,  
necroself, necroyou, necrowe...

Can financial capitalism produce anything else? Are we still alive? Do we still want to act?

11 April 2015

## CALLING THE 'AJAYUS'

A few days ago, María Galindo, the Bolivian artist and shaman-activist, visiting Barcelona, told me she went to the door of the museum where I worked for a long time to call my 'ajayu'. María explained to me that the ajayu is like the soul to the Aymaras. Not the religious soul but the political and cosmic soul, the subjective structure that makes each of us a singular force. She told me that wherever you are wounded, wherever your dream was broken, your ajayu lingers, wandering aimlessly. And mine, assuredly, must be walking through the museum's hallways. She called it and waited patiently for it, for the ajayu, she told me, is more fragile than crystal, more delicate than porcelain. And if you lose it, it's as if you were dead.

During this time, I am wandering without my ajayu, in the streets of New York, drowning in the zigzagging noise of helicopters observing a squad of more than a thousand policemen dispersing demonstrators gathered to protest the killing of Freddie Gray in Baltimore. A drone, which could well be in search of Gray's ajayu, passes over my head. Only its intermittent red and green lights are visible in the night. I tell myself that the time of the drones has arrived. I turn on my mobile phone and discover that the interview in which Caitlyn, former Olympic champion known around the world for his sports career – and ex-father-in-law of the Kardashian sisters – talking with the ABC star anchor Diane Sawyer about her 'sex change' is now a 'trending topic' on Twitter. There was the time of the hawk and the dove, now we are in the time of the drone and the tweet. The time of interstellar surveillance and mediatic self-surveillance. And I don't know if I'm Charlie, or not, but I know that, as a wanderer going forth without my ajayu, half dead and half alive, I am an unlikely cross between Freddie Gray and Caitlyn Jenner.

The paparazzi had been waiting for days for Caitlyn Jenner to appear in the doorway of her Malibu house, wearing a dress and makeup. They were waiting the way the police wait for a non-white body to lift a hand so they can open fire. They want to make sure she's shaved off her Adam's apple, see if her breasts have grown. The greatest neoliberal democracy on the planet distributes opportunities to live, to be considered a political citizen, according to binary

visual epistemologies: sexual, racial, or gender differences. Twitter caught fire as if a green-striped dress were a Colt .45 – even though in reality, in thirty-two of the North American states, Caitlyn could carry a Colt .45 much more easily than she could wear a dress. Then there was the TV interview where Caitlyn declared, ‘I am a woman.’

She was desperately trying to find some recognition in the dominant public sphere by an athletic exercise of self-designation. But quickly she excused herself: people can still call her ‘he’, she doesn’t want to hurt anyone, the most important thing is her children, and being a good patriot. There is no recognition without normalization. The Aymaras would say that she let her ayaju be stolen. And suddenly, this TV studio, the living room of any house tuned in to ABC, any computer, my mobile phone, are converted into an operating theatre where a sex reassignment process is taking place. The intimate worldwide conversation with Diane Sawyer occupies the space previously reserved for the freak show, for the clinic, or for the tribunal. The interview condenses all these rhetorics: confession, diagnosis, medical evaluation, public punishment, submission to the system. Every attempt to call into question the metaphysics of presence is crushed against the screen. There is no linear relationship between the improvement of living conditions of transgender people and the growth of their visibility in the media. The fact that Jenner reaches the very top spot in Google searches is only a parody of a political shift: at once a strategic movement for the recognition of other forms of life, and at the same time a process of control and surveillance of gender via digital technologies of communication. It’s within this narrow space of conventions and norms that our gender is constantly fabricated, and where it can be called into question. Gender exists only as the effect of these failed or naturalized social and political processes of representation – the ayaju has no gender. But then where is Jenner’s ayaju? I’m summoning it, from where I stand.

New York, 9 May 2015



## CHEMICAL CONDOMS

If you're not a man who has sexual relations with other men, the word 'Truvada' probably means nothing to you. But if, on the contrary, it does say something to you, that's because it's in the process of modifying your sexual ecology: where, when, how and with whom. Truvada is an anti-retroviral medication, produced by Gilead Sciences and commercialized as a PrEP-prophylactic, preventing the transmission of the HIV virus. First developed for treatment of seropositive patients, it was authorized by the FDA in 2013 as a drug to prevent AIDS among 'at-risk individuals' – which, in epidemiological cartography, means being a 'passive homosexual', that is, an active receptor, an anal receiver of penetration and ejaculation. Truvada has been tested in Europe since 2012. The community-based non-profit organization Aides, as well as the French scientific committee, is calling for wider access to the medication, the release of which is scheduled for 2016. In the United States, in the first year alone, Truvada (which costs \$1,200 a month for the non-generic variety) made a profit of over 3 billion dollars. It is estimated that 1 million Americans are likely to become Truvada consumers, in order to avoid becoming consumers of anti-retroviral medications as seropositive patients.

The pill and Truvada share the same purpose: they are chemical condoms created to prevent 'risks' during a sexual encounter – whether the risk is an undesired pregnancy or the transmission of HIV.

Truvada, like the pill, marks the transition from a sexuality controlled by 'hard', external disciplinary apparatuses (segregated buildings, architectures designed for locking people up, chastity belts, condoms, etc.) towards a sexuality mediatized by pharmaco-pornographic systems, that is, by 'soft', biomolecular and digital technologies. Contemporary sexuality is constructed from molecules commercialized by the pharmacological industry and immaterial pornographic representations circulating in social networks and the media.

The move from latex to chemical condom causes a series of crucial shifts. The first change concerns the body on which the technology is applied. Unlike the condom, chemical prophylaxis no longer involves the hegemonic body ('active'

male, penetrating and ejaculating – a posture that’s identical in heterosexual and gay pairings): instead, it involves subordinate sexual bodies, bodies endowed with penetrable vaginas or anuses, potential receptors of sperm, exposed to the ‘risk’ of pregnancy and of viral transmission alike. What’s more, with chemical condoms, the decision to use them is no longer made during the sexual act itself, but ahead of time, so that by swallowing the pill (contraceptive or Truvada), the consumer constructs his or her own subjectivity in a temporal relationship of projection into the future: by ingesting the medication, one transforms one’s lifespan and the totality of one’s body, as well as one’s own representation, one’s perception of possibilities of action and interaction. Truvada is neither a simple medication nor a vaccine (it cures nothing, prevents nothing in a single dose); rather, like the contraceptive pill, it is a biopolitical machine: a biochemical device that, although applied to an individual body, ultimately operates on the totality of the social body, producing new forms of relationship, desire and affect. Thus, the pharmacological and political success of the pill in the 1970s and of Truvada lies in the fact that chemical condoms, supplemented by Sildenafil (Viagra), permit a fiction of completely sovereign ‘natural’ masculine sexuality which – in terms of erection, penetration and limitless circulation of sperm – is no longer limited by physical constraints.

If ‘barebacking’ (condomless sex between seropositive men) was thought of in the 1990s as a kind of sexual terrorism (remember the polemics of the writer Guillaume Dustan vs the Act Up activists in France), today, ‘safe’, responsible sex is barebacking with Truvada: pharmacologically hygienic, sexually virile. Paradoxically, the medication’s power is to produce a feeling of autonomy and sexual freedom. Without any visible mediation, without a latex condom, the penetrating masculine body acquires an impression of total sexual sovereignty, even if in reality each drop of sperm is mediatized by extremely complex pharmapornographic technologies. One’s free ejaculation is made possible only thanks to the pill, to Truvada, to Viagra, to pornographic images.

Truvada’s goal, like the pill’s, is not so much to improve the lives of its consumers as to optimize their docility to exploitation, their molecular servitude, preserving their fiction of freedom and emancipation while reaffirming the sexopolitical position of domination of normative masculinity. The relationship with the medication is a free (market) relationship, but one of social subjection. Fuck freely – fuck with the pharmakon.

In terms of molecular subjection, the differences between heterosexuality and

homosexuality seem to be erased. Gay sexuality has passed from the state of marginal subculture to that of a codified space, regimented by the languages of neoliberal capitalism. We can stop thinking of the heterosexual-homosexual opposition and start thinking in terms of tension between the normative and dissident uses of techniques of production of sexuality with which we are all, absolutely all, confronted.

New York, 12 June 2015

## ORLANDO ON THE ROAD

When I travel, I always have a book with me, which I open every night as I seek sleep. The book is a language-bed on which to fall asleep. Jabès and Semprún both said that language was their only homeland. I too am a foreigner with a paperback under my arm. The book is a portable pyramid, Derrida wrote in discussing the Jewish people who, fleeing Egypt, transformed architecture into papyrus, so they could carry the pyramid with them. That is how the work of Virginia Woolf turned into my paper bedroom during my travels. Because of my ambivalent relationship to her (I love her, even though she can sometimes be homophobic, often classist, constantly pretentious and arrogant), her writing is for me my own inhospitable home.

I am reading the diary that Woolf kept when she was writing Orlando. Understanding how she constructed Orlando narratively helps me think about the making of Paul. What happens in the narrative of a life when it is possible to change the main character's sex? Virginia calls the effect this writing produces in her 'ecstasy'. I sometimes feel a similar emotion. Virginia dares call her Orlando 'biography'. It is an inhuman, pre-personal biography, fragmented in space and time: a journey. I discover with surprise a Virginia more concerned with the felt of her hats and the lace of her dresses than with the miners' strikes agitating England, more attentive to the sales figures for her Mrs Dalloway (250 copies meant a bestseller at the time) than to the violence with which the London police were dispersing railroad workers. Woolf was plunged into depression because Vita Sackville-West told her she wasn't beautiful, obsessed with her own death but resolutely incapable of imagining the war (first economic, then political) that would raze the West a few years later. Her soul is more sensitive when she looks at the bison in the London zoo than when she observes Nelly, her governess, whom she treats like a slave.

Why is it so difficult to be alive to what happens? 'Solitude is my fiancé,' she writes. My reply: 'Travel is my lover.' It is an antidote to Woolfian solitude, to the domestic daydreaming that each instant threatens to distance us from what is actually occurring. Surrounded by the dead (Virginia, Vita...), I become aware of the difficulty of being alive. I could be making mistakes too, and be paying

more attention to my testosterone doses than to subjective transformation, focusing more on the translations of my books than on the necropolitical transformation of the planet.

I land in Palermo with Orlando under my arm. To go from the airport to the university, Itziar and I take the motorway on which the Sicilian Mafia killed Judge Falcone in 1992, setting off 600 kilos of explosives buried under the asphalt as his car was passing over the road I am now driving on. The remains of the vehicle exhibited in his memorial are a condensed image of European democratic institutions. Later on, in downtown Palermo, walking between the ruined palace and the strolling fishmongers, I'll have the intuition that there is a city, like the one described by Roberto Saviano, hidden beneath the official cartography: a map traced by the Mafia with blood, sperm, cocaine and money. The new capitalism.

A few days later, in Buenos Aires, in the La Boca neighbourhood, but also in Corrientes, it is hard for me to think that this territory still belongs to forms of production of what we used to call capitalism. One dollar can cost 8 pesos at the bank exchange, or 12 in the streets of the microcentro, or 18, or an animal or human head at La Boca. The market is Russian roulette. Capital is no longer the abstract reference of equivalence between work and goods; it has become the function of risk and criminality, of dispossession and violence. I travel from Argentina to Greece, stopping over at Barcelona. There, in an almost unexpected way, the inhabitants and the Indignados have succeeded, via Ada Colau<sup>8</sup> and with the help of the voting booths, to climb up to the institutional city-management level. The next day, in Exárcheia, the anarchist neighbourhood of Athens, the inhabitants are gathering to exchange information on the debt. The street becomes a public university. One week later, they will build the possibility of an oxi [no] and, with it, a new ethical-aesthetic paradigm of revolt, a micropolitics of somatic and cognitive cooperation. In the streets of Palermo, Athens or Buenos Aires, where the United Nations (inherited from the geopolitics of the Cold War) are collapsing and where a new supra-state technopatriarchal governmentality managed by the financial Mafia proliferates, experimental practices of collectivization of knowledge and production are emerging. In this way, in the midst of a nameless war, the social and political foundations of a postcapitalist life are being invented under our very eyes.

Buenos Aires, 10 July 2015

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8 Indignados: the anti-austerity movement in Spain; Ada Colau was elected Mayor of Barcelona in June 2015.

## STRAYS

The first time I see him, he is climbing the steep streets of the Beyoğlu neighbourhood in Istanbul. His fur is black and dirty; he has a wound on his neck. I follow him, but he avoids me, he moves ahead without pausing, without looking at anything or anyone. He climbs up to Firuzaga. A street vendor has unfurled his carpets here, which are completely covering the road. Pedestrians and cars can pass over them, it doesn't seem to bother him. The street is an open-air salesroom. If Parisian arcades were for Walter Benjamin an external space folding in on itself to become a bourgeois interior, what is happening here is the exact opposite. The carpet is a two-dimensional home unfurling on the asphalt, setting up a hospitality that is as intense as it is precarious. But for whose use? Who are the people who have a right to the home? How do we redefine demos, outside of domos?

With the fatigue of so much wandering I sleep while walking and dream that these carpets are my house and this strange creature is my dog. We would lie down and I would spend the day petting him. But he doesn't pause. He wears a yellow plastic ring in his ear: number 05801. A sign of traceability that says that he has been identified as a stray and sterilized. I follow him to the other side of Taksim Square, we go into Tarlabasi and Mete. In scarcely a hundred yards, we've gone from lanes where women wear the chador to streets where scantily clad transsexual workers practise prostitution. Although these versions of femininity seem opposite, they are only two modalities (personal subordination and mimetic resistance) of survival under neoliberal capitalism: here an unexpected alliance is at work between theological definition of masculine sovereignty and pharmacopornographic production of desire and sexuality. The artist and activist Nilbar Güreş will tell me that, every month, at least one trans woman is killed without the police conducting any kind of investigation.

Between the crowd and the cars in Taksim, I lose sight of the stray and continue alone along the trajectory of museums and galleries planned for the Istanbul Art Biennial. The Biennial organization transports us by boat from the Kabatas port to Büyükkada, one of the Princes' Islands, the former Greek enclave now converted into a summer destination for the Turkish upper class. I sail over the

Bosphorus feeling as though I am entering the aorta of the world's heart. The city's heartbeat becomes the systole and diastole of the planet. The humid heat is changed into fog and erases the outlines of the interminable coast of this city of 16 million inhabitants.

The printed guide to the Istanbul Biennial, headed this year by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, proclaims a commitment to feminist and ecological politics. But when we disembark on the island, the most surprising thing is the famished condition of hundreds of horses tethered to retro-kitsch wagons conveying tourists to the monastery and the watchtowers. Adnan Yildiz, Turkish curator and activist, tells me that, every winter, the horses are slain, or else die of hunger in the empty buildings on the island – it's not profitable to feed them in the off-season.

Later on, another boat takes a few collectors and functionaries from Büyükada to Sivriada, the little island on which the artist Pierre Huyghe is exhibiting his installation. Here lie the remains of the ancestors of our stray dog. In 1910, when Istanbul was being modernized, over 50,000 dogs were captured and abandoned here. With no food or water, they were condemned to devouring each other, then dying. They say that the cries resounded for weeks. What surprises me the most is not that they were deported (exclusion is an ancestral necropolitical technique) but that when people heard their moans, no one came to their aid.

By the greatest of chances, as I get out of the shared taxi that dropped me at Taksim Square, I meet again the same wounded dog, '05801'. I again start to follow it. This time, he leads me to Gezi Park, where he finds other marked dogs like himself. The race of sterilized strays. Each of them is the final link in a long history of survival. Later on, the artist Banu Cennetoğlu would tell me that, every night, the park fills with thousands of human refugees who, like the dogs, come here to sleep. About a million and a half refugees transit through Istanbul, en route to Europe. Erdoğan at first thought up a plan to keep some of them as temporary manual labour and transform them into electoral hostages who would be given asylum in exchange for their vote. But the demographic pressure was considered excessive and now Turkey aspires only to be an enormous but rapid bridge over the Bosphorus, an immense passage in which the refugee loses any identity as a political citizen, in his transit from Asia to Europe, and is transformed into a stray dog.

In Gezi Park, the foundational concepts of Western politics (sovereignty,



currency, State) lose their meaning and, against Plato and his Republic, Diogenes the cynic rises up, the philosopher of dogs, the new image of world-politics. Defying the governmental classifications of ancient Greece, when Alexander asked Diogenes what city he came from, he replied, 'I am a citizen of the world' [kosmopolitês]. Over the powers of the Athenian city, Diogenes, naked and sleeping in an urn, chose the parliament of dogs; over the laws of the strongest, he preferred the force of laughter. To the civic law of war, he opposed laziness and masturbation. Unlike Hegel's Eurocentric communitarianisms and Kant's humanistic cosmo-colonialism, Diogenes invites us to a materialist, irreverent, animist cosmopolitanism in which the living being (human or dog) as body is always the subject of a global citizenship.

The intensity of global migratory movements and the violence of neo-nationalist policies urgently demand today a transition to a new citizenship-body-carpet that would oppose and transgress the laws of nation-states within which reigns citizenship-capital-earth. This change of status has nothing to do with the form or quality of humanitarian aid. Since neoliberalism has abolished economic borders, it is now necessary to reverse the politics. Without this transformation, the European economic community will be for the refugees another Sivriada Island where, without political recognition or material support, they are condemned to devour each other before dying.

Istanbul, 26 September 2015

## IN THE ARMS OF THE RODINA MAT

I fly from Istanbul to Kiev. On the plane with me are a dozen Kate Mosses and a handful of Daniel Craigs, but mostly bodies who keep their heads down and speak no Ukrainian, no Russian, no Turkish... Where do they all come from? Where are they going? They must be asking themselves the same question if they see me reading French, writing Spanish, speaking English. The image of migrants crossing the borders has become the universal signifier that reclassifies all of us. Who am I, what am I doing here? What war am I fleeing? What is the contraband I am carrying? What is my refuge? If there were a Tarot reading for our time, the Hanged Man, the Fool, and the Hermit would appear.

Dispossession, displacement, profound renewal of learning. Their outcome is the World. We don't have a choice: we will change our way of producing reality, or we will stop existing as a species. Our plane flies low, we're flying over the Black Sea, avoiding the eastern part of the country, still at war; we pass over Odessa to reach Kiev. For the first time, I realize that the Ukraine, like Spain, France, Italy and Turkey, has a coastline on the Black Sea connected to the Mediterranean by twists and turns.

We land. With 250 grams of testosterone injected every twelve days into my body, the dissidence of gender has stopped being a political theory and become a mode of embodiment. But I would rather not have to explain that to the customs officer, who is carefully examining my passport. The Ukrainian border does not seem an ideal place to start a workshop on trans politics. The soldier opposite me is a child, he still has the fragility of a baby who cries when he needs to eat. Whatever the case, he is better off here, behind this counter, than in a trench in Donetsk. They say the army recruits at any time, and that under the pretext of military training, boys are sent for months into places from which they don't know if they'll ever return. His beard, like mine, is just starting to sprout, and, like me, he suffers from acne. But to get through customs, I can't count on the complicity that this subtle increase of testosterone doses in our blood could establish between us. The border is an immunological theatre in which each body is perceived as a potential enemy, and the two of us are placed on either side of this threshold to play the game of identity and difference.

The scene has begun: his thick hands suddenly adopt administrative gestures, they turn my passport over, scrutinize it. He has overcome the shame of acne thanks to the arrogance conferred on him by his brand-new camouflage-green uniform, while I try to smile. The smile, they say, is a mark of feminine behaviour. Looking at my photo from three years ago, he asks me if this is my passport, and what my name is. Testosterone has an impact on the vocal cords, and recently my voice has become husky. Since I haven't yet figured out how to manage it, I sound like a cigar-smoker with pneumonia. If I don't make an effort when I speak, I sound like Placido Domingo with a cold, attempting to sing like Montserrat Caballé. But opposite the young customs officer, I try to produce a high voice, without it breaking. I reply 'Beatriz', to remain legal, so I utter a name that now seems foreign to me. For nine months, I've been used to saying 'Paul', to answering to the name of Paul, turning when I hear this name uttered. But for now, it is better for me to forget it. I begin to sweat while the soldier examines my passport under a magnifying glass. He says, 'This is not you, this is a woman,' and I reply, 'Yes, it is me, I am a woman.' And I remember saying, just a few hours before, 'I am a man' when curators who knew me under my former identity continued to address me with feminine pronouns. The two statements now seem circumstantial, pragmatic, in the linguistic sense of the word: the signifier depends on the context of utterance and on the political conventions around it. The young officer looks me up and down, incredulous. He calls a female soldier over so she can search me. She touches me with the dexterity of a Roling masseuse – as if her hands were trying to separate the fasciae from my body. Finally she plunges her arm into my trousers and feels between my legs. Then she rejoins the soldier and explains to him in Ukrainian, I imagine, judging from her gestures, that she has found anatomical proof concordant with the legal status of my passport. They return my documents to me and let me pass, they free me like a dangerous animal or a sick person from whom they fear contagion.

As I leave customs, I recover my luggage and a taxi is waiting for me, the driver holding a sign with the name 'Paul'. Again, the scene changes utterance. 'Good evening, sir.' From the moving car, the first impression I get from the city is of the monumentality and disproportion of the scale, fences in front of cheap skyscrapers in the midst of fields of grass, Russian rationalist buildings lost between lakes... But there's nothing as impressive as the gargantuan statue of a woman overlooking the hills of the Lavra. Threatening, she holds up a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. The artist Anna Daučiková would tell me later that it's a depiction of Rodina Mat, the statue of the Motherland: a Soviet Medea

made of stainless steel, 62 metres high and 520 tonnes, slicing the horizon more radically than any skyscraper in the New York landscape. For this is not a building, but a body. The body (now fragmented and fragile) of the Russian nation. After the anxiety at customs, the image of Rodina Mat acquires a dream-like quality. She stands facing me like the embodiment of the law of gender, announcing the imperative of sexual difference as a condition of possibility for national identity. She is the inscription on the urban landscape of the administrative norm that demands an M or F to appear on my passport. The nation is an organic factory in which femininity must conceive the masculine body that will be sent to war. And then I see Rodina Mat, perhaps in a hallucination, waving one of my names in each hand, Beatriz-shield or Paul-sword, and saying to me, 'Come, come into my arms.'

Kiev, 9 October 2015

## AN OTHER VOICE

I'm getting used to my new voice. The testosterone I administer is making my vocal cords grow thicker, producing a lower timbre. This voice emerges like a mask of air coming from within. I feel a vibration spreading in my throat as if it were a recording emerging from my mouth, transforming it into a strange megaphone. I do not recognize myself. But what does 'I' mean in this sentence? 'Can the Subaltern Speak?': the question that Gayatri C. Spivak posed to examine the complexity of the conditions of utterance of colonized peoples now takes on a different meaning. What if the subaltern were also a possibility always already contained in our own process of subjectivation? How can we make it so that our trans subaltern can speak? And with what voice? What if losing your own voice, as an onto-theological sign of the sovereignty of the subject, were the prime condition for letting the subaltern speak?

Apparently other people don't recognize this voice shaped by testosterone either. The telephone has ceased being a faithful emissary; it has become a traitor. I call my mother and she answers, 'Who is this? Who is calling?' The rupture of recognition makes explicit a distance that has always existed. I would speak to them and they would not recognize me. The necessity to verify puts filiation to the test. Am I really her child? Was I ever really her child? I have to hang up because I'm afraid I won't be able to speak. Other times, I say 'it's me' and right away I add 'I'm fine,' as if to prevent doubt or panic from getting in the way of acceptance.

A voice that up to now was not my own is seeking refuge in my body, and I am going to give it refuge. I travel constantly: one week I'm in Istanbul, another in Kiev, then Barcelona, Athens, Berlin, Kassel, Helsinki, Frankfurt, Stuttgart... Travel translates the process of change, as if external movement were trying to articulate internal nomadism. I rarely wake up twice in the same bed... or in the same body. From all around, I hear the noise of the battle that permanence and change are waging with each other, between same and different, between border and uncertainty, between those who can stay and those who are forced to leave, between death and desire.

This apparently masculine voice re-classifies my body and frees it from anatomical verification. The epistemic violence of the binarism of sex and gender reduces the radical heterogeneity of this voice new to masculinity. The voice is the mistress of truth. There comes to mind the possibly shared root (testis) of the Latin words testimonium (witness) and testiculum (testicle). In Roman law, only a person with testicles can speak before the law. Just as the pill induced a technical separation between heterosexuality and reproduction, Ciclopentil Propionato, the testosterone I inject into myself intramuscularly, induces the separation between hormonal production and the testicles. Or, in other words, 'my' testicles – if we mean by that the organ that produces testosterone – are inorganic, external, collective, and dependent in part on the pharmaceutical industry and in part on the legal and health institutions that give me access to the drug. 'My' testicles are a small bottle of 250 mg of testosterone that travels in my backpack. The issue is not that 'my' testicles are outside my body, but rather that 'my' body is beyond 'my' skin, in a place that cannot be thought of as simply mine. The body is not property, but relationship. Identity (sexual, gender, national or racial) is not essential, but relational.

My testicles are a political organ that we have invented collectively and that allows us to produce an intentional form of social masculinity: an ensemble of modes of embodiment that, by cultural convention, we recognize as masculine. By mixing with my blood, this synthetic testosterone stimulates the anterior hypophysis and the hypothalamus, so the ovaries stop producing eggs. There is, however, no production of sperm, because my body possesses neither Sertoli cells nor seminal tubes. I imagine the day is not so distant when a 3D printer could make them from my own DNA. But for now, inside our carbon capitalist episteme, my trans identity must be fabricated from a much lower-tech makeshift arrangement. If we had expended as much energy trying to find out how to communicate with trees as we have devoted to the extraction and transformation of petroleum, perhaps we'd be capable of lighting up a city by photosynthesis, or feeling vegetal sap run in our veins, but our Western civilization has specialized in capital and domination, in carbon energy and extractivism, in taxonomy and identification, not in cooperation or transformation. In another episteme, my new voice would be that of a whale or the sound of a sledge; here it is simply a masculine voice.

Every morning, the tone of the first word I utter is an enigma. The voice speaking through my body does not remember itself. The changing face, too, cannot serve as a stable place for the voice to seek as a territory of identity. On

the contrary, it declines its subjectivity in the plural: it does not say 'I', but 'we are the journey'. Perhaps that's what remains of the Western 'I' and that absurd claim to individual autonomy: to be the place in which the voice is made and unmade, the place, as Derrida would have said, from which the deconstruction of phono-logo-phallo-centrism operates. Dispossessed of the voice as truth of the subject, and knowing that my testicles are always a prosthetic social apparatus, I feel like a comical Derridean case study, and I laugh at myself. And in laughing, I feel my voice going off its rails in my throat.

Athens, 24 October 2015

## [YOUR WHEELCHAIR TURNS ME ON](#)

Whereas the dominant modern sexual imagination depicts a white, healthy, strong, thin, active, independent, reproductive body, bodies with functional diversity are still represented as disabled and considered asexual and undesirable. Against this visual and political epistemology, the ‘crip-queer’ movement refuses to pathologize bodily differences.

You will probably agree with me when I say that the sexual life of a Western citizen consists (regardless of sexual orientation) of 90 per cent discursive material (images or narratives, based on physical supports or simple mental productions) and (if s/he’s lucky) 10 per cent actual events (let’s disregard, for the moment, the problem of the quality of such events). What’s more, as the not-very-feminist Guy Debord has demonstrated, in the society of the spectacle this discursive material increases exponentially and makes the event in itself increasingly fugitive and volatile. Fighting for ‘sexual freedom’ implies a twofold labour, an emancipation that’s not just practical, but also discursive. A sexual revolution is always a transformation of the imagination, of the images and fantasies that mobilize desire.

That is why the sexopolitical battles of the last century were waged around the theme of the re-definition of our sexo-discursive toolkit (or, if you prefer, in poststructuralist jargon, of our dispositif, or apparatus). The changes in language, in representation and pornography have transformed our ways of desiring and loving. Although feminism and the gay rights movement have called into question the dominant modern sexual imagination, its representation of a white, healthy, strong, thin, active, autonomous, reproductive body has contributed to diverting attention from other forms of sexual oppression.

For example, sex and disability continue to be antagonistic concepts in medical and media narrations. The disabled body has been represented as asexual and undesirable, and any expression of its sexuality was either pathologized or repressed. Over the past few years, however, we have seen a ‘crip-queer’ movement emerge, hybridizing the critical resources of the politics of emancipation of somatopolitical minorities, along with the strategies of



production of pleasure and visibility of queer and post-porn movements. Directed by Antonio Centeno and Raúl de la Morena, the film *Yes, We Fuck!* emerged from this new activism.<sup>9</sup> It recently won the prize for Best Documentary at the 2015 Berlin Porn Film Festival. *Yes, We Fuck!* tells the story of the meeting and collaborative work of PostOp, a group of post-porn activists (including Majo Pulido and Elena Urko) and activists from the *Vida Independiente* (Independent Life) movement in 2013 in Barcelona. The sexual landscape of people with functional-diversity is made up of bodies that get turned on by prostheses, have orgasms without erections, and in which all skin, never mind the genital hierarchy, is converted into erotic surface.

Like feminist movements, or sexual and racial minority movements, the *Vida Independiente* movement came about in the 1960s through a kindred process of epistemological rupture and politicization of the body. Here, the central figure is the crip-activist-researcher who, deploying the hegemonic knowledge of the doctor, the sociologist and the social worker, claims the power to produce and collectivize a knowledge based on the shared experience of diagnosis and treatment as a political subject with functional diversity. In his book *The Body Silent*, published in 1978, Robert Murphy politicized his experience of living with a tumour in his spinal column that paralyzed him. He wrote, 'My tumour is my Amazon.' Murphy's goal was not so much to describe the illness from the perspective of the person with functional diversity as to develop a critical awareness of bodily difference capable of resisting the processes of exclusion, discrimination and silencing imposed on the body regarded as disabled. At the same time, in various places in Europe and the United States, 'independent living centres' were created that fought to de-medicalize, de-pathologize, and de-institutionalize subjects declared disabled.

Just as the queer movement refuses to define homosexuality and transsexuality as mental illnesses, the Independent Life movement rejects pathologizing corporeal or neurological differences. Whereas the queer or critical race movements analyse and deconstruct the social and cultural processes that produce and establish the relationships of sexual, gender or racial oppression, the movement for functional diversity shows that disability is not a natural condition, but is the effect of a social and political process of 'disabilitation' or 'decapacitation'. The audible world is no better than the deaf world. Biped, upright, mobile life is not a better life without the architecture that makes it possible.

These movements criticize the processes of normalization of the body and of sexuality that unfold within industrial modernity, with its imperatives of production and reproduction of national populations. It's not a question of establishing a better taxonomy of deficiency, or calling for a better functional integration of the 'handicapped' body. It is not a question of having better medicine and more pharmacological industries. It is a question of power, of analyzing and critiquing the processes of construction of the corporeal norm that make some bodies more vulnerable than others. We don't need better disability industries, but architectures without barriers. We need collective structures of habilitation.

In its most recent work, *Yo Me Masturbo* [I masturbate], the Independent Life demands, for people with functional diversity, the right to sexual assistance as a condition for the possibility of accessing one's own body to masturbate or have sexual relations with other bodies. Antonio Centeno declares, 'They threw us out of our own bodies; we have to reclaim them. Recovering them for pleasure is the most subversive, transformative thing we can do.'

*Yes We Fuck and Yo Me Masturbo are examples of the creation of a network of alliances of transverse somatopolitical dissidences that already no longer function according to the logic of normative identities, but according to what we could call, with Deleuze-Guattari, a logic of assemblage. An alliance of bodies refusing the norm.*

Barcelona, 7 November 2015

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[9 https://vimeo.com/yeswefuck](https://vimeo.com/yeswefuck)

## BEIRUT MON AMOUR

I leave Athens for Beirut on Thursday, 12 November. The fingers of the Peloponnese unfold and seem to touch the coast of Lebanon. A flight that lasts less than an hour makes me realize how close the edge of Europe is to the Gaza Strip. Syria is there, just behind the chain of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. If water, rather than earth, were the geographic unit, the Mediterranean would be a new liquid territory capable of undoing the political and linguistic borders of Europe, Asia and Africa. The White Sea, as the Turks call it, as opposed to the Black Sea and the 'Red Sea', connected to Alexandria, Tripoli, Oran, Marseille, Rijeka, Lesbos, Palermo, Athens, Beirut... what has been represented as far away is becoming close.

I am going to Beirut to attend the inauguration of Home Works 7, a ten-day forum of cultural practices organized by Ashkal Alwan. Artists, activists and critics are gathering there from all over the region. The canvassing I am conducting to organize documenta 14, which will take place in Athens and Kassel in 2017, led me, recently, to attend quite a few Biennales and artistic gatherings all over the world. And I can affirm that none of them has seemed as profoundly creative or rigorously organized as Home Works.

Two small buildings survive, stuck right in the middle of paths that war has kept from developing into streets or open trenches for real-estate development. On the roof of one of the two buildings, Marwan Rechmaoui has sewn an immense canvas made up of flags from the different neighbourhoods of Beirut, thereby calling to mind that before political and religious divisions, the neighbourhoods bore the names of flowers, animals, or plants. You have to climb up onto the roof to survey the mountains of rubbish accumulated behind the surrounding motorways, rotting on soil as soft as it is implacable. At times, a nauseating stench makes the air unbreathable. Activists tell me they're preparing a campaign to criticize the government's corruption and its ties to the local mafias: 'You stink.' The stench of the effluvia (intense, diffuse, uncontrollable, corporeal) acts like art: it makes perceptible what, without it, would have remained hidden.

Around the exhibition over 300 people gather every day in seminars, conferences, workshops or performances. Rasha Salti, Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, Walid Raad, Natascha Sadr Haghghian, Bassam El Baroni, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ahmed Badry, Walid Sadek, Christine Tohme, Marwan Hamdan, Akram Zaatari, Ahmad Ghossein, Leen Hashem, Haytham el-Wardany, Ayman Nahle, Arjuna Neuman, Rabih Mroué, Manal Khader, Lina Majdalanie, Marwa Arsanios, Bouchra Ouizguen, Nahla Chahal... The artistic renaissance of the Middle East. The critical mass generated by just one of these encounters would make any New York exhibition seem like a debutante ball.

As the opening is taking place, news spreads of the explosion of two bombs in Burj el-Barajneh, a Shi'ite neighbourhood in a southern suburb of Beirut. The Islamic State has struck a district known for its alliances with Hezbollah. Here, it's not a rock concert that's hit, but people leaving a mosque. They speak of at least forty dead and a hundred wounded. The artists present say it's been at least two years since this has happened in Beirut. Despair – not fear – can be read on all the faces. But the opening isn't interrupted. Music and friendly embraces construct a refuge in which it is possible to go on living. Joana Hadjithomas tells me that the news of the bomb has a somatic impact on them. 'It explodes in the city and it's as if it were exploding in your body, it's a site of memory that's exploding.' Rasha Salti says that after thinking things could change, only the certainty of having lost everything, everything except sadness, remains, 'a sadness that has become our skin'.

While we have dinner, on Friday, in a restaurant in the Christian quarter, we get news from Paris. Many of us, Arab and European alike, have family or friends in Paris. We know and love the street of Paris, the Bataclan. How can you hear a bomb exploding in Beirut, from Paris? How do the bullets shot in Paris echo in Beirut? Here, no one talks about religion, but about oil.

The Islamic State, they say, has nothing to do with Islam. It's a global, capitalist apparatus, inspired by the West. Its references might be Quranic, but its role models are Hollywoodian. They don't even know, people around me are saying, how to speak or read Arabic. This is the battle: ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, Shell. It's a matter of controlling the oil wells, the territories through which the pipelines pass, the security of the passage. It's politics converting oil into blood, and blood back into oil.

I return to Athens: the stench of Beirut has followed me and takes away my

appetite. I feel dizzy. The world is upside-down. When I arrive at the apartment where I live, on the Philopappos hill, I find a catalogue that Monika Szewczyk has left for me. It's by Ika Knezevic, an artist from Belgrade. The title is a Serbo-Croatian saying: 'Hope is the greatest whore.' I want that whore to spend the night with me. I want to caress her and sleep with her. I want to get into bed with that whore. I want to sit down next to her and wash her feet. Because that whore is all that's left to us, and she is the greatest.

Beirut, 21 November 2015

## AGORAPHILIA

I have known four kinds of amorous passion in my life: the kind that a human causes, the kind that an animal provokes, the kind that is generated by a historical fabrication of the mind (book, work of art, music, or even institution), and the kind a city can trigger. I have fallen in love with a handful of humans, five animals, a hundred or so books and artworks, one museum, and three cities. Whether it's a matter of cities, humans and animals or even constructions of the mind, the relationship between happiness and love is not in direct proportion. It is possible to be happy in a city, just as it is possible to establish a satisfying relationship with someone (human or animal), or to establish an instrumental or pedagogical link with an artwork, without being in love. Neither origin, nor time passed, nor residence determines the possibility of urban love. The beloved city does not coincide with heritage, or with blood, or nation, or success, or profit. The city where I was born, for example, evokes many emotions in me, but none of them crystallize in the form of desire. New York, where I spent eight of the most important years of my life, was a constitutive city for me, but I never fell in love with it. We were close for a while, friends at times, enemies at others, but we were never passionately in love with each other.

The first stage of urban love is the map: it occurs when you feel that the cartography of the beloved city is superimposed over any other cartography. To fall in love with a city is to feel, when you travel its streets, the material limits blurring between your body and its streets, when the map becomes anatomy. The second stage is writing. The city proliferates in every possible form of the sign; first it becomes prose, then poetry, then, finally, scripture.

I remember how I fell in love with Paris, during the first winter of the new millennium. I had just arrived from New York; I was moving in order to attend Jacques Derrida's seminars at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*. At the time, I was researching the relationships between feminism, queer theory, and French post-structural philosophy. I went directly to Nantes, to the 'New York fin de siècle' festival, in which many of my friends from the New York literary scene were taking part. Having learned French by reading Rousseau, Foucault and Derrida, though never having practised it, I found starting a

conversation as complex as if I had to do it in Latin. Caught in that linguistic nebula that the first reception of a still-incomprehensible language produces on the brain, I was exchanging a few words with the artist Bruno Richard. I no longer know how this was syntactically or semantically possible, but we ended up talking about dildos and sexual prostheses. In an agreement comprised essentially of 'yes' and 'thank you', I accepted the keys to Bruno Richard's apartment in Paris to spend my first week in the city there: from what I had been able to understand, he would not be there.

My entrance into his apartment was worthy of a scene from a Dario Argento film: opening the door, I discovered a studio full of dismembered, bloody bodies. It took me five long, horrifying minutes before I realized that they were mannequins, and that the blood was red paint. Bruno Richard had played a joke on me, testing the ontology of the prosthesis we had spoken about in Nantes. Of course, I wasn't able to stay in that apartment. But that inaugural scene would mark my relationship to the city forever: Paris is a prosthesis-city, both living organ and theatre. Afterwards, Paris became the prosthesis of the home I never had.

I left Bruno Richard's apartment-theatre and called the only person I knew: Alenka Zupančič, a Slovenian philosopher and member of the school of Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, whom I had met at the New School for Social Research in New York. I ended up settling into her place, a place where Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian were spoken, where Nietzsche was quoted in German, Lacan in French, and Plejanov in Russian, and where vodka was drunk at breakfast to cure hangovers. That's where I fell in love with Paris. A Paris-language invented for nomads and polyglot translators.

Years later, I fell in love with Barcelona. I did this a little in secret, the way someone falls in love little by little in a clandestine affair. Culturally deserted, transformed into a merchandise-city for the consumption of tourists, divided by tensions between Catalan and Spanish nationalisms, between anarchist history and petit-bourgeois heritage, between the dynamism of social movements and the persistence of corruption as sole institutional architecture, Barcelona was not love at first sight. Paris was my wife, but Barcelona slowly became my mistress.

Life is distancing me from both these cities, and is leading me into a dozen others. Today, without planning it, I am falling in love with Athens. I notice a new throbbing in my chest when, in Beirut or Dublin, I think about Athens. Now

that I have neither house, nor property, not even a dog, I realize that the greatest of privileges is offered me: to be a body and to be able to fall in love again with a city.

Athens, 5 December 2015



## WHO IS THE GREEK DEBT KEEPING WARM?

The cold has arrived in Athens. It threads its way between the abandoned naval yards at the harbour, it climbs up the Avenue Pireos and embraces Omonia Square, it descends from the hills of Lycabettus and Philopappos and takes hold of the streets of Exárcheia. In Athens, the cold works like a catalyst of poverty. Without the sun which, like a Photoshop filter, camouflages everything, the city looks like a huge, decrepit palimpsest, made up of an endless superimposition of ruins: Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman ruins, fragments of English and German imperialism, modernist ruins, remnants of the industrial revolution, residue of the electric era, scraps of the global capitalist diaspora, skeletons of burnt-out cars abandoned after the bacchanalias of fire in which anarchists indulged... Over all these strata now rise the new neoliberal ruins strewn by the fall of Europe. Opposite the Parliament buildings and the National Library, stray dogs, as if they were the frozen souls of citizens, lie motionless, coiled into themselves. Who is the Greek debt keeping warm?

Inside houses, lowered temperature becomes a sign of the inhabitants' precariousness. In most of the buildings with central heating, the radiators are turned off to save money. Using electric radiators is not an option. As a consequence of the political decision to levy a tax on property through the electric bill, the price of electricity has increased by 30 per cent in the last few years, so it is much more expensive than in Germany or France. Athenian living rooms are converted into cold steppes, and the hallways become frozen mountain passes into which you can only venture if you're wearing a coat. Only the smallest room in the house, like a refuge in a polar landscape, remains warm thanks to a stove. Beds stop being sexual places and instead are transformed into chaste divans on which two or more people can talk under the covers. Who is the Greek debt keeping warm?

In the apartment of Marina Fokidis, the contrast between the heated room and the rest of the house has attracted cockroaches. We call the exterminator company. The saleswoman is decisive: 'They're merkelitas, pale cockroaches that attack Greek houses. We'll send you an exterminator tomorrow. It will be 50 euros, poison included.' After the exterminator has come and gone, the floor is

covered with dozens of dead merkelitas. Who is the Greek debt keeping warm?

The shock of temperatures also affects public buildings. Empty halls, silent and frozen, heated by the monotonous wheeze of small electric radiators, offices are noisy and suffocating. In one of these offices, someone mentions the transfer of 40,000 refugees from a sports stadium to the former airport outside the city, in Elliniko. 'They can't stay in the parks with this cold. Plus, Germany is promising to improve the conditions for restructuring the debt if we keep them inside our borders.' He adds: 'We'll offer them food and a roof, but they'll have to work for free in exchange.' Who is the Greek debt keeping warm?

The museums and public institutions of Athens are frozen: they can barely programme new exhibitions, since the funds they receive are completely devoted to paying salaries and bills late, and paying off previous debts. Speaking about public and private funds, about the heat and the cold, an eminent director of a cultural institution doesn't hesitate to develop a theory resting on what – for him – seems to be related to politico-sexual evidence: 'No one wants to direct a museum in Greece. When someone offers you a job to direct a museum here, it's as if you were being invited to marry a woman who's already been raped twice.' This is the new techno-financial-patriarchal politics: a budget, a director, a rapist, a husband. Who is the Greek debt keeping warm?

There comes to mind the image of an Athenian modernist building that gets up and walks, created by the architect Andreas Angelidakis. Inspired by Norse mythology, Angelidakis imagined that the Chara ('cheerfulness') building, built in 1960 by the architects Spanos and Papadopoulos, is transformed into a huge troll who cuts his concrete roots, tears itself out of the ground, and walks away from a city that has become toxic. Angelidakis dreams of ruins that could come to life and escape the political and economic context that oppresses them. For my part, I desire, with Angelidakis, a complete uprising of ruins, a levitation of ruins-museums-raped women who would seek no administrator, no budget, no father, no husband, no director, and who would flee the neoliberal city.

Athens, 19 December 2015

## [A SCHOOL FOR ALAN](#)

The day after Christmas, Alan died in Barcelona. He was a 17-year-old trans boy. He had been one of the first transsexual minors to obtain a name change on the national identity document issued by the Spanish government. But the certificate was powerless against prejudice. The legality of the name was powerless against the force of those who refused to use it. Law was powerless against the norm. The scenes of harassment and intimidation he underwent for three years in the two schools he attended brought him to the end of any trust he had in his ability to live, and led him to suicide.

You could call Alan's death a tragic accident. It is no such thing: over half of trans and homosexual teenagers declare they have been the objects of physical and psychological aggression in secondary school. The highest number of suicides is recorded among just these same adolescents. How is it possible that his secondary school was incapable of protecting Alan? The answer is simple: school is the first place to train in gender and sexual violence. Not only did school fail to protect Alan, but it fostered the conditions for his social assassination.

School is a battlefield to which children are sent, with their tender bodies and their blank future as sole weapons, a theatre of operations in which a duel is waged between the past and hope. School is a factory for little machos and queers, for the pretty and the fat, the bright and the slow. School is the first front in this civil war: the place where you learn to say 'We boys are not like those girls', a place where conquerors and conquered don a signifier that ends up becoming a face. School is an arena in which blood is mixed with ink and where whoever can make them flow is rewarded. The only language that is spoken is that of the secret, mute violence of the norm. Some of the pupils, like Alan, probably the best ones, will not survive. They won't be able to take part in this war. School is not just a place to learn things. It is a factory of subjection: a disciplinary institution whose goal is the normalization of gender and sexuality.

Every student must manifest a single, definitive gender at school: the one attributed to them at birth. The one that corresponds to their anatomy. School

encourages and rewards the conventional enactment of the codes of masculine sovereignty and feminine submission. At the same time, it surveys the body and its movements, punishes and pathologizes any form of dissidence. Alan's classmates ordered him to pull his jumper up to prove he didn't have breasts. They insulted him, called him a filthy dyke, refused to call him Alan. There was no accident, just a deliberate agreement to administer punishment on the dissident. The duty of institutions was fulfilled – it consists of branding those who call their epistemology of gender into question with a burning iron.

The modern school, as hierarchical structure of authority in the reproduction of knowledge, still stems from a patriarchal definition of masculine sovereignty. Women, gender minorities, racialized bodies, and children with functional diversity have had access to education only recently: women have had it for a hundred years, but it's just been fifty or even twenty years that racial minorities have had it, and barely a dozen for those with functional diversity. To the prime task of fabricating national virility are added the tasks of shaping feminine sexuality, and marking racial, class, religious, functional or social difference. The epistemology of gender difference today holds the place in our institutions that the dogma of the divinity of Christ in the Middle Ages occupied. School functions according to an essentialist anthropology. The idiot is an idiot, the queer is a queer. School is the most brutal and manipulative of the factories of heterosexuality. Seemingly asexual, secondary school values and foments heterosexual desire and the bodily and linguistic dramatization of codes of normative heterosexuality. These could be the subject matter of course taught in schools: 'Principles of machismo'. 'Introduction to rape'. 'Practical workshop on homophobia and transphobia'. 'Xenophobia'. A recent study carried out in France showed that the insults most widely used by students, since they were the most hurtful, are 'homo' [pédé] for boys and 'slut' [ salope] for girls.

To put an end to the assassin-school, it is necessary to establish new protocols to prevent exclusion and violence of gender and sex, in ALL schools. I am not thinking of some humanist fantasy of an inclusive school (or of its motto, 'we tolerate difference, we tolerate the sick so he can adapt'). On the contrary, we must de-hierarchize and de-normalize school, introduce heterogeneity and creativity. The problem is not transsexuality, but the constitutive relationship between pedagogy, violence and normality. It is not Alan who was sick. To save him, there would have to have been a queer pedagogy capable of working with uncertainty, with heterogeneity, capable of conceiving of sexual and gender subjectivity as open processes and not as closed identities.

Faced with the assassin-school, it is necessary to create a network of secondary schools in flight, a web of trans-feminist-queer schools that welcome minors who are being excluded or bullied in their schools, but also all children who prefer experimentation to the norm. These spaces, although always insufficient, would be healing islands where minors could be protected from institutional violence. In New York, for example, the Harvey Milk School (in homage to the gay activist murdered in 1978 in San Francisco) has been open since 2002. It welcomes 110 queer and trans students, victims of harassment and exclusion in the schools they had previously attended.

I want to imagine an educational institution more attentive to the singularity of the student than to the preservation of the norm. A micro-revolutionary school where it would be possible to favour a multiplicity of processes of individual subjectivation. I want to imagine a school in which Alan could have stayed alive.

Kassel, 23 January 2016

## FORGETTING THE IDEA OF BEING SPECIAL

Sometimes I picture the world as a theatre company that numbers a little over 7.3 billion human actors. A company in which we are all, without exception, acting in the same play.

On the Internet, hypnotized, I watch the World Population Clock spinning. 7,381,108,786. During the time it took to write this number, the number on the world clock has changed. This time is also that of my life: the time in which my own self-dividing is written and erased. Two new actors enter onto the stage every second, while another leaves every five seconds. Today, 272,000 new actors will climb onto the stage. And 113,900 will make their exits.

In this strange drama, the stage is divided by uncrossable borders, so that the actors who enter on the other side are not recognized as belonging to the same company. A migrant actor tries to cross a border of the world stage every twenty-seven seconds. One out of eight will lose their life in the attempt.

I wonder how we could have decided to embark blindly on staging such an insane script. How and why we've come to submit to the role each of us holds. When people accept this production that's been assigned to us, they call it 'faith' or 'approval of the divine plan'; others invoke social determinism or human nature; neoliberalism speaks of the free market as if it were a meteorological given. And psychology of the ego makes identity into a quantifiable object that leads each actor to affirm his, her or their role in the scene as real, authentic, and irreplaceable. Even more incredible: why call an actor a citizen if he has no access to the definition of the terms of his entrance onstage, or any chance to rewrite his role?

But who profits from the stability of these assigned roles? How are they cast? Why endlessly rehearse the same texts? Why are whole paragraphs missing from the story? How is it possible that one can neither add acts nor change the script?

First Spinoza, then Nietzsche saw the problem: we refuse to acknowledge that we are the ones who write (and act in) the script. We prefer submission rather

than being responsible for this calamitous stage production.

The first act of cognitive emancipation consists of realizing that, in this monstrous and naturalized work of theatre, anyone could act in place of anyone else. Look how the numbers on the world clock move and forget the idea of being special. A body is any body. A soul is any soul. Nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnic group... so many avatars of the same script. An actor who plays a soldier and sex slave in the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army could just as easily play a heterosexual middle-class housewife in a Milan suburban villa: he'd exchange his machete for an ironing board and would learn how to make panettone. One fine day, as she was nibbling on a slice of panettone with a glass of Asti Spumante, she would remember a few images from her old role: scenes of massacre in a Sudanese refugee camp. She would re-discover images of a path at night, groups of child-actors walking towards the city of Gulu, fleeing the refugee camps. She would remember, with incredulity, having raped. She would remember him, with his seemingly masculine sex, when he was raped.

Today, fully settled into her Milanese role, she'd go to her medicine cabinet for an Ibuprofen and a muscle relaxant, then would stretch out on the living room sofa, waiting for these memories to fade as if they had been dreamt. Another actor doing a perfect interpretation of waiting on death row in the depths of a Montana prison could abandon his role and take up the vehement position of Alain Finkielkraut, in the midst of debating French nationality on Radio France Culture. Another actor trying to escape the border controls of Melilla could be transformed into a daily newspaper reader, European passport in his pocket, one Saturday in an airport.

There is no secret. The other can't manage to change his role because you refuse to change your own. But every second, when a new actor comes on the stage, it is possible to modify the script, not to want the role that has been assigned to us, to change the text, to skip an act. The revolution does not begin with a march in the sun, but with a hiatus, a pause, a tiny shift, a deviation in the game of improvisations and appearances.

Having ventured onto the sites of digital clocks on the Internet, I find myself at [Death-clock.org](http://Death-clock.org), an arrangement that allows you to calculate the day of your death according to your date and place of birth, your weight, and your height. I choose my mood, between optimistic, pessimistic, neutral, or suicidal. Despite

this world theatre, I am unquestionably an optimist. I am then confronted with the inevitable requirement of the scenario: sex, male or female? I try both.

As a woman, my death clock indicates that I will live ninety-two years, eight months and thirteen days, with as the date for my exit from the stage: Sunday, 22 July 2063. As a man, eighty-six years, two months and eleven days. Date planned for my death: 20 January 2057. I imagine there is not, in this work of theatre, any role for trans actors. But the rewriting of the script has already begun.

Berlin, 6 February 2016



## ETYMOLOGIES

Life in Athens, along with my first Modern Greek lessons, are making me more sensitive to etymology. Or, to say it in a more Nietzschean way, to the historicity of language, to the way a sound, a grapheme, encloses a succession of gestures, contains a series of social rituals. Each letter is the movement of the hand drawing on air, a mark traced in the sand, a touch. A word is not the representation of a thing. It is a slice of history: an endless chain of uses and citations. A word was first of all a practice, the effect of a perception, or a moment of surprise, or the result of a struggle, the seal of a victory, which is only converted into sign much later. Learning language in childhood induces a process of naturalization of language that makes it so that it becomes impossible for us to hear the sound of history when it resounds through our own language. We can no longer even recognize that the Cyrillic alphabet is made up of what were once a series of arbitrary marks. Paradoxically, in pragmatic terms, becoming the speaker of a language means that one progressively stops hearing the history that vibrates in it, so that one can utter it and hear it only as it sounds today, and now. Thus, using words is repeating the historicity they contain while being unaware of the processes of political domination or social repetition that have forged their significations.

Childhood, art, political activism, shamanism, madness... can be envisaged as modes of intensity of perception and intervention in language. If we perceived the alphabet as a series of gouges, we wouldn't be able to read. If we constantly heard the history of language in each word, we wouldn't be able to speak: the affect would be, as with Artaud, similar to a flash of light crossing millions of chains of speakers, piercing the body and emerging from the mouth. On the other hand, any revolution, subjective or social, demands an exile of the voice, a suspension of gesture, a rupture of utterance, the reconnection with etymological lines that had been closed, or else an outright cut into living language in order to introduce a difference to it (*différance*), a spacing (*espacement*), or as Derrida would say, 'an improvised anarchy'.

In the past few months in Athens, faced with the Greek language, I am situated in the same place as faced with gender: on the threshold. A place pregnant with

maximum historical awareness, while my capacity for movement is still restricted. I look at everything with surprise. My old language and my new one. For the first time, I am hearing the history of language, I am feeling the strangeness of the outlines of the alphabet. I hear etymologies fighting like bumper cars. A space opens up for the transit between the female gender which had been assigned to me and this new gender which is appearing subtly in me and which cannot in any way be reduced to male. My body from before and the one that is being fabricated day after day. And, running through everything, the newness of the voice.

I have a coffee in the sun, on Exárcheia Square. I see removals trucks passing by. The inscriptions in the Greek alphabet take on meaning for the first time in my eyes: 'metaphors'. Transport. Metaphor is the transport of a meaning from one place to another, just as today this truck is transporting the material remains of a life in transit towards a new fate. This week, I'm struggling with the fear of not being recognized, with the panic of being abandoned once again. In a process of gender transition, desiring change does not imply that one is prepared to take on the transformation when it occurs. Change is never the one we were hoping for. Change, says the devil with a sarcastic laugh, is C-H-A-N-G-E. Everything is metaphor. I get my most recent blood analysis and the doctor tells me that my haematocrit has increased, as it should after several months of testosterone injections. 'You now have half a litre more blood than before,' she tells me. Since then I've been thinking about this half-litre of blood flowing through my veins now, I feel it bombarding my torso with a threatening, musical intensity. I have the feeling that this transition, which social convention and medical regulation call 'towards masculinity', is actually more a process of becoming animal, becoming horse. What will I be able to do with this extra half-litre?

Athens, 20 February 2016

## HOMAGE TO THE UNKNOWN NANNY

Itziar is going to Madrid to meet Esther, the woman who took care of her when she was a baby, whom she has never seen again. She is nervous. She wants to film everything, record everything. She is like a child who has decided to collect all the sand on the beach, down to the last grain, using a little shovel. I'm travelling from Athens to accompany her. I become a bucket in which she'll be able to put the sand that won't fit in her pockets.

She has been looking for Esther for years, in vain: she knew her only by the name she used when she was her nanny, when she was only twenty. First, she looked for her in the village in Galicia where she lived at the time. But a person is like a river, it flows and changes, and no one can swim twice in the same water. In almost fifty years, the young twenty-year-old nanny has become an old woman; she has changed names, houses, towns. She has got married, then divorced; she has moved to a prefab housing development erected during a building boom in the middle of the desert in Murcia. Esther will explain later that the development looked dead, there was nothing around for kilometres, but that she was happy there because a bird came to see her every morning, at her window.

They had arranged to meet at a hotel on the Avenue America. They're both wearing white, as if they're celebrating a birth. When they see each other, it's as if the hotel floor is swaying beneath their embrace, and anything that isn't the two of them remains outside their circle. 'My little one, you are my little one, my doll, I washed you, dressed you, fed you, put you to sleep. I did everything except bring you into the world,' Esther says, making a gesture that sweeps from her belly to her legs. 'But I did everything else.' Esther's biological children and I observe the meeting, standing to the side, we stay outside the magnetized circle. This embrace has the force of a manifesto: it declares that bonds exist that are not recognized either socially or legally. This embrace is a living monument, to the memory of the unknown nanny.

The invention of the social figure of the biological-domestic mother in the nineteenth century and the definition of the maternal as the sole, legitimately

constitutive bond has forced us to erase the importance of other relationships. The mother is attached to the home by making the maternal bond natural and sacred. But the modern mother is only a mask behind which other mothers are hidden, who have been denied any recognition of their bond. Constantly tormented by the guilt of leaving home, the biological mother finds herself at once obliged to see to the children's care when she is not there, introducing a substitute figure, and to suppress, emotionally and politically, the presence of this replacement.

In *Oédipo brasileiro: a dupla negação de gênero e raça* [Black Oedipus, on nannies and mothers], the Argentinian anthropologist Rita Laura Segato studies the political and psychological relations that are established not just between a daughter and her mother, but also between the nanny and the baby she takes care of, and the bonds maintained by the child who grows up with her mother and her nanny. In the United States, during colonial times, as well as in our neo-colonial societies, the bond with the nanny was accompanied by racial and class oppression that separated mothers and nannies. The baby was then situated in an ambivalent space, between care and class- and race-struggle, in which affection and violence were confused. Although represented as passive and loving, the biological mother, in order to become the sole mother, must deploy a class and race violence that allows her to discipline and subject the nanny, and to cut the bond that the nanny establishes with the baby.

A family of leftist intellectuals from the Catalan middle class settled in Galicia a few years before Franco's death, and looked for a young woman to take care of their children. The biological mother was writing a doctoral thesis in political science, on electoral behaviour in rural communities. She would later become the first female Dean of a public university in Spain. The nanny received no university education; she never left her village. When the family returned to Barcelona, the nanny, who at the time was seen as simple manual labour, a machine to dispense care with whom one must not establish any emotional or political relationship, should have remained behind and been forgotten forever. But in this case, the biological mother recalled Esther's existence, and urged her daughter, Itziar, to look for her. Finding her took her over forty years.

It's a lie to say that we have only one mother. The social body welcomes us with many arms, without which we would not be able to survive. Every middle-class child has another invisible mother, every child of the Catalan bourgeoisie has another hidden mother – Galician, Andalusian, Philippine, or Senegalese – just

as every white child raised in the United States during segregation has another black mother, in the shadows. Today every white child in United States has another Mexican or South American mother. Every white French child has another African mother. The fiction of the stability of racial or national identity can only be constructed by eliminating the emotional and political strength of this bastard, mixed-race filiation.

The time has come to decolonize our mothers, to honour the multiple, heterogenous bonds that we have constructed and that keep us alive. Esther and Itziar have already begun the task of decolonization.

Madrid, 5 March 2016

## JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE BED

These last few months, every waking transforms me into Gregor Samsa, the hero of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Becoming conscious arouses in me a profusion of doubts about the stability of the relationships between interior and exterior. Where? In what body? These two questions become downright Kafkaesque as soon as they are accompanied by the certainty that the 'where' is not solely a question of external context, just as the body cannot be reduced to the space covered by the skin. The bed, like the bed built by the architect and photographer Carlo Mollino for his secret study of Turin, in the shape of a boat leading the soul through the underworld – my bed is transformed into a metaphysical platform in which the passage from waking to dream activates a process of travel from which the sleeper emerges potentially transformed.

I look into my notebooks and calculate that over the course of these last six months, I've never slept more than ten days in a row in the same bed. I've visited no fewer than thirty-three mutating platforms. There have been urban beds and rural beds, hospital beds with plastic-covered mattresses and motors that lifted your legs or head; impeccably re-made hotel beds; Airbnb beds with soft pillows and floral sheets; there have been very narrow plane seats and hard benches in train stations that acted as beds; folding beds and sofa beds; beds with mosquito netting and others with eiderdown duvets; mainland beds and island beds; beds in the North and beds in the South; beds too high up and beds on the ground; beds in the East and the West; neoliberal beds and post-communist beds; economic crisis beds and capital gain beds. And since then, regularly, the Maasai bed.

Next to a bed in southwestern Dublin, I find the biography of Gandhi, a great specialist in converting the ground into a bed. Gandhi speaks of using his modest life as a field of experimentation aiming to transform the human: he experiments with food and education, reading and writing, dream and waking, walking and dancing, nakedness and being clothed, silence and conversation, darkness and light, fear and courage. I think of my own transgender process and journey as so many experiments in subjectivity. Nothing that happens to me is exceptional. I am part of a global metamorphosis. The time has come to reinvent everything.

We are, on a worldwide scale, the Gregor Samsa civilization. Movement and mutation, voluntary or forced, have turned into universal conditions of our species.

On Victoria Square, in the centre of Athens, I observe the way hundreds of refugees improvise beds made of cardboard boxes and blankets, in a grassless park. There is no public infrastructure to welcome them. We are producing a new form of necropolitical nomadism combining huge urban establishments with a greater influx of bodies and merchandise every day. Over sixty million people are coming from Azerbaijan, Kashmir, the Ivory Coast, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine... They have had to abandon their beds to escape hunger or armed conflict. That's one of the consequences of the capitalist war affecting the entire planet.

In an anonymous hotel room, I dream again of images I saw a few days earlier at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, in the exhibition devoted to the work of the Dutch architect and artist Constant. Taking inspiration from the way of life of gypsy communities in Europe, Constant imagined the New Babylon project between 1956 and 1974. For Constant, the architecture of New Babylon had to respond to the nomadic conditions of post-war society; he set out to make physical movement accentuate the possibilities of subjective and political transformation. That's why Constant decreed that in New Babylon there was no 'building', in the traditional sense of the word, but an immense, single shared roof that protected a multitude of forms of life, covering them all under a vast mutant carapace allowing both freedom of movement and interconnection. Constant imagined a Gregor Samsa architecture, made for a post-traumatic civilization that must invent a new form of life after the war.

In 1958, Constant already believed in the mechanization of work and in the generalization of play as forces of social transformation. In the mid-1970s, with the end of feminist movements, of the sexual and labour revolutions, and the decline of communist utopia, Constant abandoned all hope of realizing his project and let it sleep in a museum, 'In the hope of more propitious times that will see the interest of urbanists awaken.' The apogee of neoliberalism would follow, along with the expansion of technologies for eco-destructive extraction and production, generalized war...

The time has come to take Constant out of the museum and invent another Babylon. I imagine the refugees at Victoria Square creating another society

under a mutating roof, I imagine the spread of warmth and sound, the echoes of a thousand conversations, and I want to be able to sleep in a bed in this other Babylon. And I wonder: What will the beds look like, over there?

Hydra, 19 March 2016



## SLEEPLESS NIGHT

You spend the night standing up on the Place de la République and I spend the night with you, awake in Athens. The day dwindles an hour earlier here, and the red sky is bending behind the Parthenon, like wallpaper on a computer screen that will later descend on Paris. The revolution (yours, ours) always demands waking up in the middle of the night: you have to activate your conscience precisely when it should be turning off. The revolution (yours, ours) is always a trans-becoming: it's a matter of mobilizing a state of existing things to lead them to another state, one known to desire alone.

You spend the night standing there in the Place de la République while a group of refugees gathers to convene the Silent University, in an occupied house in Exárcheia in Athens.

In the hall, they speak almost as many languages as there are people. A chain of translators explains the functioning of this university created in London in 2012 by the artist Ahmet Ögüt and set up since then in (among other places) Stockholm, Hamburg and Amman. The phrase 'everyone has the right to teach' resounds a dozen times, in Urdu, Farsi, Arabic, French, Kurdish, English, Spanish, Greek. Thought of as an autonomous platform for exchange of knowledge between migrants, this university allows those who know something and those who want to learn it to meet, regardless of academic accreditation or institutional recognition of titles, language spoken, or processes of acquisition of residence or nationality. Someone says, 'Ever since I asked for asylum, I've had nothing. The only thing I have is time, and during this time, I could learn and teach.'

It's during this seemingly dead time of administrative delay that the exiled artist Hiwa K learned to play classical guitar, taking classes with Paco Peña in England – the reply from the English government never arrived, but Hiwa K plays flamenco as if he were born in Córdoba. Here are some of the courses on offer at the Silent University: Iraqi history, Kurdish literature, Herodotus and the civilization of the Medes, the foundations of political asylum according to the 1951 convention, how to start up your own company, history of food as revealed

in the visual arts, Arabic calligraphy... By having his status as political citizen denied, the migrant in exile is reduced to passivity and to 'silence'. By acknowledging the migrant as subject of knowledge, the Silent University seeks to activate a new global citizenship.

You spend the night standing up in the Place de la République and the collective of anonymous Syrian filmmakers Abounaddara broadcasts every Friday, since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, a video detailing – via documentary or fiction – the life of the Syrian people, away from the media representations in the Christian West and the Muslim world. How is the image produced and spread? Why has no one seen any of the victims of September 11 while the massacred bodies of Aleppo make newspaper headlines? Does one have the right to photograph a migrant arriving on the coast of Leros clutching the body of his dead child?

In response to the media and government capturing of the image, Abounaddara proposes to add an amendment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that would recognize the right to one's image as fundamental.

You spend the night standing up on the Place de la République while other bodies wake up in Amman, Damascus, Athens. The expert with his diagnosis will come, the historian with his memory will come, the professor with his title will come, politics and their parties will come. They'll tell you that you're crazy and naive. They'll tell you that it is impossible for people to teach if they don't know how. They'll tell you that any journalist has the right to do his informational work. They'll tell you that it has already happened and it has served no purpose. They'll tell you that the important thing is to translate the power of the demonstrators in the squares to the voters in their booths. But the revolution has no finality apart from the process of transformation it experiments with. What we need, as Franco 'Bifo' Berardi says, is to eroticize daily life, to displace desire captured by capital, nation or war, and redistribute it through time and space, so it can penetrate everything, and so it can penetrate us all.

We wake up during the day as if the whole day were night. We learn from those who are not allowed to teach. We occupy the whole city as if the whole city were the Place de la République.

Athens, 16 April 2016

## THE NEW CATASTROPHE OF ASIA MINOR

Much has been said about the similarities between the management of the present banking crisis and the period preceding the Second World War. It is likely that in 2008, the global time clocks mysteriously adjusted themselves to 1929. But the most curious thing is that since then we haven't been advancing to the 1930s, but instead are progressively regressing to the beginning of the twentieth century, as if Europe desired, in an ultimate melancholic delirium, to relive its colonial past, returning to an era from before the independence movements.

The error we usually commit, when we learn of the politico-economic crisis, is to do so from the point of view of the space-time of the European nation-states, in their relation to the United States. We leave out of our perspective the space-time that exceeds the here-and-now of the 'Europe' fiction, from the South to the East, in relation to its history and its 'crypto-colonial' present, to paraphrase Michael Herzfeld.

Only by returning to the history of the invention of the European nation-states and to their colonial pasts can we understand the present management of the refugee crisis in Greece. On 18 March, the European Union and Turkey signed an agreement on the massive deportation of refugees. This agreement establishes the relationships of political exchange between two asymmetrical entities with three radically heterogeneous variables: human bodies (living, at best), territory, and money. On the one hand, the agreement stipulates that starting from its date 'all migrants and refugees who arrive in Greece in a clandestine manner must be immediately expelled to Turkey, which undertakes to accept them in exchange for money.' In return, 'Europeans undertake to settle in their territory Syrian refugees today in Turkey, up to a maximum of 72,000.' You just need a few minutes' conversation with the refugees in Greece to understand that they will only go to Turkey if someone forces them to.

Inevitably, the operator that could function in the practical application of such a massive process of deportation and 'population exchange' is violence. An institutional violence that, in the framework of relations between state entities

(supposedly democratic supra-state entities) acquires the name of ‘security force’. The agreement, which will cost 300 million Euros, involves the intervention of 4,000 functionaries of member States and the European security agencies Frontex and Easo, the dispatch of military and intelligence forces from Germany and France to Greece, as well as the presence of Greek officials in Turkey and Turkish officials in Greece. This violent police deployment is presented as ‘technical assistance for Greece’, a necessary aid to the ‘return procedures’. The only political framework that lets us comprehend such confinement, criminalization, expulsion, and branding of the population as legal is war. But then with whom are Europe and Turkey at war?

Although this agreement seems, as much by the elements of exchange (living human bodies) as by its scale (at least 2 million people), closer to Game of Thrones than to an actual pact between two countries, there exists a historic precedent that Greek families know all too well: the ‘Great Catastrophe’ that took place during and after the Greco-Turkish war (1922-1923).

In 1830, after four hundred years of Ottoman domination and a lost war for independence, the Greek territory that we know was still a vassal of Turkey. The fall of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War awakened the Greek nationalist dream (called ‘Megali idea’, the ‘Great Idea’) of a reunification of all the ‘Byzantine’ territories. With the victory of Turkey in 1922, this Greek plan for expansion failed.

To construct the new fiction of nation-states – both Greek and Turkish – it was necessary not just to separate the territories, but also and above all to recode as national the bodies whose lives and memories were made of hybrid histories and languages. In 1923, a ‘population exchange’ treaty was signed between Greece and Turkey. It involved 2 million people: a million and a half ‘Greeks’ who were living on Anatolian territories, and half a million ‘Turks’ who up to that point were living on Greek territories. The presumed ‘nationality’ was then reduced to religion: Orthodox Christians were sent to Greece, and Muslims were sent to Turkey. Many of these ‘refugees’ were exterminated, others were settled in unsanitary camps, where they stayed for decades, with a precarious status of citizenship.

Almost a hundred years later, these same nation-states seem to be orchestrating another process of nationalist construction, reactivating the protocols of war, recognition and exclusion of populations, which constituted them in the past. A

declaration of war by Europe and Turkey on migrant populations likely to cross their borders. That's the impression we have when we walk the streets of Athens: a civil war against those who, having once escaped another war, are trying to survive.

Lesbos, 14 May 2016

## IDENTITY IN TRANSIT

A person presents himself at the departure gate of an airport, or else at a border, at a hotel desk, at the counter for a car rental agency... He shows his passport and the flight attendant, the employee, the receptionist, the manager or the customs officer looks at this document, then looks at the body standing in front of him, and declares, 'This is not you!' A systematic fault line in the legal and administrative conventions that construct living political fictions then occurs. The social apparatus of identity production collapses, as if in slow motion, and its techniques (photographs, documents, declarations...) collapse one after the other, as if on a video game screen when a glaring GAME OVER signal flashes. For the space of an instant a frozen, Wittgensteinian silence reigns. The sensation of being offside in regard to language: the terror of having exceeded the limits of social intelligibility; the fascination of being able to observe from outside, or more precisely from the threshold, even for an instant, the apparatus that constructs us as subject.

It could be a scene out of a nightmare, or the climactic moment from a Pataphysical novel. It is, however, an ordinary event in the daily life of a trans person waiting for their legal change of identity. To the exclamation 'This is not you!' I sometimes want to reply 'Of course it's not me! Show me your passport and tell me if it's you.' But instead we're stuck, the agent and I, replaying Hegel's central scene: 'Independence and subjection of self-awareness: domination and servitude.' I don't act clever. I know that in this scene the role of slave, not master, falls to me. I return to the fold of recognition: the borders of this language game are full of institutions, imprisonment and punishment.

I deny what queer deconstruction has taught me and I reassert the apparatus of social gender production: I explain, holding up a letter from my lawyer, that the female sex was wrongly assigned to me at birth and that my request for recognition of male identity is now being reviewed by a Spanish judge. I am in transition. I am in the waiting room between two mutually exclusive systems of representation.

'Transition' is the word given to the process meant to make one pass from

femininity to masculinity (or vice-versa) via a medico-legal protocol of reassignment of gender identity. In general it is formulated as 'I am (in the process of) transitioning'. The expressions seek to describe the transformation from one state to another, while emphasizing the temporary, hence provisional, nature of the process. However, the transition process does not designate the passage from femininity to masculinity (these two genders do not have an ontological entity, just a biopolitical and performative one) but rather the passage from one way of producing truth to another.

The trans person is represented as a kind of exile who has left behind the gender that was assigned to him/her at birth (the way you'd abandon your nation) and who is now seeking recognition as a potential citizen of another gender. In politico-legal terms, the status of the trans person is comparable to that of the migrant, the exile or the refugee. They all find themselves in a temporary process of suspension of their political condition. In the case of trans people as in that of migrant bodies, what is being requested is a biopolitical refuge: to be the subject of a system of semiotic assemblage that gives meaning to life.

The absence of legal recognition or biocultural support denies sovereignty to trans and migrant bodies, and situates them in a position of very high social vulnerability. In other words: the ontological-political density of a trans body or a migrant body is inferior to that of a citizen whose gender and nationality are recognized by the administrative conventions of the nation-states they inhabit. To use Althusser's terms, we could state that trans and migrant people are placed in the parodic situation of asking to be recognized as subjects by those same State apparatuses that exclude and violently threaten them. We ask to be recognized (and thus even subjected) in order to reach a social platform from which it would be able to invent new practices of freedom.

What trans and migrant people are asking for, by requesting the change of gender, asylum or nationality, are the administrative prostheses (names, right to residence, papers, passports...) and bio-cultural ones (food, medicine, biochemical components, refuge, language, self-representation...) necessary to construct themselves as living political fictions.

What is being called the refugee 'crisis', or the so-called 'problem' of trans people, cannot be resolved by building refugee camps or clinics for sexual reassignment. What is in crisis are the systems of production of truth, of political citizenship, and the technologies of the nation-state, as well as the epistemology

of binary sex-gender. Consequently, it is the entire political space that must begin to transition.

Kassel, 28 May 2016



## MY BODY DOES NOT EXIST

The continuous administration of testosterone leads to increasingly visible changes in my body, at the same time as I undertake a legal process of gender reassignment that should allow me – if the judge accepts my request – to change the first name on my identity card. The two procedures – bio-morphological and politico-administrative – are not convergent. Although the judge regards physical changes (backed by a requisite psychiatric diagnosis) as the conditions for reassignment of name or sex to my legal person, these transformations cannot in any way be reduced to the dominant representation of the masculine body, according to the epistemology of sexual difference. As I get closer to acquiring the new document, I realize with horror that my trans body does not exist and will not exist in the eyes of the law. In a show of politico-scientific idealism, the doctors and judges deny the reality of my trans body in order to be able to continue to affirm the validity of the binary sexual system. And so the nation exists. And so the judge exists. And so the records office exists. And so the map exists. And so the document exists. The family exists. The law exists. The Book exists. The detention centre exists. Psychiatry exists. The border exists. Science exists. Even God exists. But my trans body does not exist.

My trans body does not exist in the administrative protocols that guard the status of citizenship. It does not exist as embodiment of ejaculating masculine sovereignty in pornographic representation, or as sales target in ad campaigns for the clothing industry, or as referent of architectural segmentations of the city.

My trans body does not exist as possible and vital variant of the human in anatomy books, or in representations of healthy reproductive systems in secondary school biology textbooks. Discourses and techniques of representation give credence to my trans body only as a specimen belonging to a taxonomy of deviation that ought to be corrected. They assert that it exists exclusively as corollary of an ethnography of perversion. They declare that my sexual organs do not exist, except as missing or as prosthesis. Outside of pathology, there exists no correct representation of my breasts, my skin, my voice. My sex is neither a macro-clitoris nor a micropenis. But if my sex does not exist, are my organs still human? The growth of my hair does not conform to any form of

rectification of my subjective movement towards masculinity. On my face, hair is growing in places that have no obvious signification, or else it stops growing where its presence would indicate the 'correct' shape of a beard. The rearrangement of body-mass and muscle does not make me more virile. Simply more trans – even though this denomination does not meet with an immediate translation into terms of binomial man-woman. The temporality of my trans body is the present: it is defined neither by what it was nor by what it is supposed to be becoming.

My trans body is an insurgent institution stripped of a constitution. An epistemological and administrative paradox. Becoming without theology or referent, its non-existent existence is the ruin both of sexual difference and of homosexual/heterosexual opposition. My trans body turns against the language of those who name it in order to deny it. My trans body exists as material reality, as a totality of desires and practices, and its non-existent existence calls everything into question: nation, judge, archive, map, document, family, law, freedom, the detention centre, psychiatry, border, science, God. My trans body exists.

Athens, 25 June 2016

## JOURNEY TO LESBOS

Cities are socio-architectural machines that can produce identity. The most powerful cities are without a doubt the ones that were built historically as religious enclaves. But the ones that condense the spirit of an era, or the ones that are the Meccas of cultural industry, are also endowed with great power. In the eleventh century, the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage constructed the Catholic individual, just as seventeenth-century Amsterdam transformed the explorer into a bourgeois, eighteenth-century Paris sculpted the freethinker or the revolutionary, Buenos Aires created the colonial mind of the nineteenth century, while the New York of the 1970s and post-Wall Berlin produced the identity of the contemporary artist.

In the 1990s, when I was still constructing my subjectivity as a lesbian, spending the summer in Lesbos was part of a veritable process of politico-sexual initiation. During the 1980s, the island had become the favourite tourist destination for lesbians. Mythology and capitalism had assigned Mykonos to gays, while lesbians had landed Lesbos: Sappho's island. Obeying the historical law of sexual hierarchization of value, the gays would get tanned in cotton hammocks or on waterbeds, sipping their mojitos on a blue and white island in the Cyclades. During that time, the lesbians could be found on the island closer to the Turkish coast, known more for its military base than for its beaches. Mykonos and Lesbos represented two opposite modes of political spatialization of sexuality. Mykonos was homosexual, privatizing, consumerist, a bank of pink dollars. Lesbos was queer, radical, precarious, vegetarian, collectivist.

For a radical lesbian, the journey to Lesbos was a constitutive pilgrimage. We travelled from New York to Paris, then to Athens. We would go directly from the airport to Piraeus – I barely looked at Athens, I didn't understand it, didn't imagine that one day I could love this city. That would come later. We would spend the night on a boat that took us to the harbour of Mytilene, on Lesbos. Then we'd take taxis driven by men who held the steering wheel with one hand and fingered a string of komboloi, worry beads, in the other. Two hours of curves and ravines on gravel-covered roads later, we had crossed the island from the northeast to southwest, and were in Skala Eressos. The first image of the beach

at Eressos has stayed intact in my memory like a hymn to utopia, like a summons to revolution. It was the impossible become reality: a kilometre of sand and sea occupied by 500 naked lesbians.

We would stay in the campground, or in a little guest house with a library in which the traveller could find a book by Annemarie Schwarzenbach, Ursula K. Le Guin, or Monique Wittig. In the evening, when the sun was setting, we would form two teams to play volleyball: butch vs femme. On one side, the German and English women, skulls shaved, shoulders sculpted by swimming and tattooed with labrys; on the other, the Italians, with long hair and tanned, agile arms – usually, they won.

I return to Lesbos, over twenty years later. The island has changed. I have changed. Lesbos is, along with Leros and Chios, the first port of call for migrants into Greece. As for me, I have stopped constructing my identity as a lesbian, and today I am fabricating myself, with the help of other techniques (hormonal, legal, linguistic...) as trans. These are the years of the crossing. Of transition. Of borders. The military ship Border Front occupies the whole first pier of the harbour.

Today I'm on the beaches of Mytilene for the international conference 'Crossing Borders'. Activists and critics talk about resisting the building of 'Fortress Europa', which is defined by the criminalization of immigration and the forced imprisonment of migrants in detention centres. Lesbos has become the Tijuana of Europe. Mytilene has the vibration and violence of a militarized zone. Highest level of governmental vigilance, maximum precariousness of the migrant body: the ideal context for mafias and nationalist populism. The images of the refugee camps – the ones on Lesbos, as well as the ones in Athens – hit me right in the chest, with an equal intensity but an opposite emotion, the same sudden blow as on the Eressos beach years ago. The border is a space where identity is destroyed and produced. While the Eressos beach was a place for seizing power and resignifying the stigmata of lesbianism, the camp is now a space of otherness, exclusion and death. I don't know how to bear witness. I don't know how to sound the alarm. Have a nice holiday.

Lesbos, 27 July 2016

## FIRST NAMES: PAUL BEATRIZ, REQUEST 34/2016

I've been waiting for months for a magistrate in Spain – which is still to this day a constitutional monarchy – to authorize the replacement, on my identity papers, of the feminine first name that was assigned to me at birth with a masculine name. This wait affects my ability to travel freely, rent a car or an apartment, use a credit card, or stay in a hotel. Technically, it's a 'registry office file for sex change'. I carry out the various steps in Catalan, a language I understand but don't write, at the registry of births, marriages and deaths in Barcelona – Catalan judges are, apparently, more permissive than judges in Castile. It's a relatively complex, seemingly rigorous administrative procedure, but which in actuality is full of contradictions. A procedure, when all is said and done, that is closer to conceptual performance art than to a legal act.

To put together this application, it is necessary to add a medical certificate diagnosing what the Spanish government calls 'gender dysphoria'. According to the terminology invented in 1973 by the child psychiatrist John Money, this is a 'clinically observed disturbance associated with the gender one is born with'. In agreement with the epistemology of the sex-gender binary, Western medicine defines gender dysphoria as discord between the gender assigned at birth and the gender with which the individual identifies. Before acknowledging my masculine first name, the institution posits the condition that I must first acknowledge myself as dysphoric. Here, nothing is free. The State says to me: if you want a name, first give me your reason, your conscience, your mental health. The State addresses me first as dysphoric. I would never have thought that I would accept this. But I did. I renounced notions like reason, conscience, mental health. I am now constructing myself with other technologies of consciousness.

Article 4 of the application declares that I must 'bring proofs that I am receiving medical treatment with the object of conforming my physical characteristics to the masculine sex'. To these proofs, I add my doctor's signature, the clinic's stamp, and the name of the medication I'm taking – Testex Prolongatum, 250 mg in injectable solution.

My lawyer added a special clause to the application: she requests that my feminine name not simply be replaced by the masculine one, but that I keep it as a middle name. I request the Spanish government to recognize this name as my own: Paul Beatriz. To support this request, my lawyer added a series of examples attesting that the first name is the one that indicates the gender. There is nothing extraordinary about being called Jean-Marie.

The administrative secretary who receives the file asks: ‘Why Paul Beatriz? He doesn’t want to change his sex?’ Then he calls another civil servant to make sure he can accept this request. He clarifies: ‘Paul, they can grant him that, but I’m not sure about Beatriz. They might refuse him, to prevent any gender ambiguity.’ I find myself in that paradoxical situation where the Spanish government can refuse to give me the first name it gave me at birth! I think (but in silence) that I have the right to have my ideas, even if they are stupid. I have a right to my first name. I have a right to have a utopian first name, a heterogenous first name.

The administrative agent informs me that, as part of the procedure, the civil registry of Barcelona will give an order to the civil registry of Burgos to destroy my birth certificate dated 11 September 1970. When its destruction is effective, they will order a new birth certificate to be drawn up, with a new first name, ‘signed in 2016 or 2017 but dated 1970’. Several days, or even several weeks, will go by between these two dates, during which I will no longer have a birth certificate in my name. The idea that my birth might not have existed during this period of time makes me tremble. Who am I, faced with the technology of the law? Who am I when my birth certificate does not exist? On my birthday, I’ll take a bus from Athens to Delphi to consult the oracle. Perhaps at that same moment, on the other side of the Mediterranean, an Apollo-magistrate will be destroying my birth certificate – or perhaps, who knows, writing a new one.

Delphi, 10 September 2016

## MY TRANS BODY IS AN EMPTY HOUSE

I live in Athens in a house that I can say is mine for the first time in over two years. I do not own it. That's not necessary. I simply have the use of it. I experience it. I celebrate it. After having passed through three houses in different streets and neighbourhoods – Philopappos, Neapoli, Exárcheia – and through a dozen hotels – I especially remember birds singing in the morning on the Strefi hill at the Orion Hotel – I finally decided, not without difficulty, to sign a rental contract.

For over a month, I lived in this empty house. Stripped of all furniture, a house is just a door, a roof and a floor. Because of the delay in delivering the bed (standard in Greece), for two weeks I was forced to sleep in a completely empty apartment. During the night, my hips would get crushed against the wooden slats and I would wake up all swollen. Without a doubt, the experience is inaugural and aesthetic: a body, a space. I would sometimes wake up at 3 a.m. and wonder, stretched out on the ground, if I was a human or an animal, in this century or another, if I truly existed or if I was just a fictional subject. The empty house is the worldly museum of the twenty-first century and my body – nameless, mutant and dispossessed – is the work on display.

In an empty house, the domestic space constitutes an exhibition scene in which subjectivity is displayed as the artwork. Paradoxically, every artwork is displayed within a private scene. 'I hate the public,' said the pianist Glenn Gould. In 1964, when he was 32, at the height of his career, he abandoned concert halls and withdrew forever into a recording studio to make music. An empty house is something like that: a studio where you can record your life. Except that our subjectivity is at the same time the music, the instrument and the recording technology. First, I thought that if the apartment stayed empty, that could be explained by a conjunction of various circumstances: too much work, lack of time, absence of goods that could be accumulated in this space. I just have a few items of clothing (A.P.C. jeans, white and blue shirts, felt coat, black shoes), the indispensable suitcase, a few books and three dozen notebooks, which in themselves constitute an independent sculpture in the space, sign of a kind of cult, if not a pathology.

It took me some time to realize that it was not by chance I was keeping this space empty: I established a substantive relationship between my gender-transition process and my way of inhabiting space. Over the first year of transition, as the hormonal changes were sculpting my body like a microscopic chisel working from within, I could only live as a nomad. Crossing frontiers with a passport that barely represented me was a way of materializing the transit, making the shift visible. Today, for the first time, I can stop. Provided this house remains empty: suspend the techno-bourgeois conventions of table, sofa, bed, computer, chair. Body and space are confronted without mediation. In this way, face to face, they are no longer objects, but social relationships. My trans body is an empty house. I am taking advantage of the political potential of this analogy. My trans body is a rented apartment, a nameless space – I'm still waiting for the right to be named by the State, I wait and I fear the violence of being named. Living in a completely empty house gives each gesture its inaugural character, holds back the time of repetition, suspends the interrogation that challenges the norm. I see myself running through the house, or walking on tiptoe while eating; I see myself stretched out on the floor with my feet leaning against the wall to read, or leaning on the window ledge to write.

Freedom from habit extends to other bodies that penetrate this space: when she comes to see me, we can do almost nothing else except look at each other, remain standing while holding hands, lie down, or make love. The beauty of this singular experience, which could be called 'unfurnishing', makes me wonder why we force ourselves to furnish houses, why it is necessary to know our gender, know what sex attracts us. Ikea is to the art of inhabiting what normative heterosexuality is to the desiring body. A table and a chair form a complementary couple that is not open to question. A wardrobe is a first certificate of private property. A bedside lamp is a marriage of convenience. A sofa facing the TV is a vaginal penetration. The curtain hanging from the window is the anti-pornographic censorship that looms when night falls. The other day, as we were making love in this empty house, she called me by my new name and said, 'The problem is our mind. Our minds fight, but our souls and bodies are in perfect harmony.' A few minutes later, as my chest was opening up to breathe a few more atoms of oxygen and my cerebral cortex was taking on the consistency of cotton, I felt my body dissolving into the empty space and my mind, authoritarian and normative, almost dead, abdicating.

Athens, 8 October 2016



## FOR MARX, HAPPINESS IS POLITICAL EMANCIPATION

At a time when the psychology of personal success presents itself as the ultimate Grail of neoliberalism in response to the sinister procession of political, economic and ecological violences, the biography of Karl Marx written by the British journalist Francis Wheen<sup>10</sup> can be read as a powerful antidote to life-coaching plans for personal development. Throughout the joyful misfortunes of Marx, one can imagine a kind of anti-psychology of the ego for inhabitants of a world in the process of decomposition. Happiness as personal success is nothing but the extension of the logic of capital to the production of subjectivity.

Studying the difficult, tumultuous life of Marx, one can conclude that, unlike what the psychology of the self and success seeks to make us believe, happiness does not depend on professional success or the accumulation of wealth. Happiness cannot be found via management of the affects, does not reside in psychological balance understood as management of personal resources and control of emotions. And even if it's hard to admit, happiness depends on neither health nor beauty.

Marx spent most of his life persecuted, sick, suffering from hunger and poverty. His career as an author began with censorship and ended in a publishing failure. His first article, written at the age of 26, was a criticism of the censorship laws promulgated by King Frederick William IV. As he might have guessed, the article was immediately censored. The same prohibition struck the first article he wrote for the Rheinische Zeitung, the text having been declared 'irreverent criticism disrespectful of government institutions'.

The most important of his works was received to the indifference of critics and readers. The first volume of *Das Kapital* – to which he had devoted five years of his life – passed almost unnoticed, and, during his life as an author, Marx only sold a few hundred copies. And he didn't live long enough to see the other two volumes of *Kapital* published.

He scarcely met any success in writing, and he lived in constant discomfort. Starting in 1845, and for over twenty years, he was a political refugee in three

different countries: France, Belgium, and especially the United Kingdom, with his wife, Jenny, and their children. During his exile, Marx, who himself said he wasn't physically or psychologically fit for any work other than the intellectual kind, was forced to pawn all his possessions, including furniture and clothes. Two of his children were carried off by illnesses caused by hunger, damp, or cold. Marx himself suffered from biliary colic, rheumatism, toothaches and migraines. He wrote most of his books standing up because infected boils prevented him from sitting. He shared the majority of the racial and sexual prejudices of his era, and although of Jewish origin, he didn't hesitate to use anti-Semitic insults.

Francis Wheen portrays Marx as authoritarian and boastful, incapable of accepting criticism, constantly involved in arguments between friends, enemies and adversaries to whom he would send long letters full of insults.

Marx knew neither economic success nor popularity – if he had lived in the Facebook age, he would have had more trolls than friends.

However, one can say that Marx was an intensely happy man. Supporters of personal development could even say that the key to his happiness rested in his boundless optimism. But this passion had no connection with the stupid neoliberal exhortation to 'feel good'. Marx's optimism was dialectical, revolutionary, almost apocalyptic. An optimistic pessimism. Marx didn't want everything to get better, but rather for things to get worse to the point that they would be perceived by collective conscience as having to be changed. That is how he dreamed, in incessant conversations with Engels, of prices increasing, and of the total economic collapse that, according to his predictions – which we know today were wrong – would lead to a workers' revolution.

He was only 27 when they took away his Prussian passport, accusing him of political disloyalty. Marx welcomed the announcement with a declaration denying any sense of victimhood: 'The government,' he said, 'has given me back my freedom.' He didn't ask to be recognized as a citizen, but to use the freedom offered by exile. In the gatherings of refugees from every country, there ripened the idea for the First International as transversal proletarian force, capable of challenging the nation-state organization and its empires.

Marx's happiness also resided in his incorruptible sense of humour when he said, 'I don't think anyone has written so much about money while lacking it so acutely.' His happiness also showed in the passion with which he read

Shakespeare to his children, in the conversations with Engels, and in his desire to understand the complexity of the world.

Marx's life teaches us that happiness is a form of political emancipation: the ability to refuse the conventions of an era along with success, property, beauty, fame, dignity... as principal organizational lines of an existence. Happiness lies in the ability to feel the totality of things as being part of ourselves, the property of each and every person. Happiness resides in the conviction that to be alive is to bear witness to an era, and thus to feel responsible, vitally and passionately responsible, for the collective fate of the planet.

Barcelona, 22 October 2016

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[10 Francis Wheen, Karl Marx: A Life , W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.](#)

## THE PLACE THAT WELCOMES YOU

It's the Mediterranean. It's the place you come to. It's Greece. It's the place that welcomes you. It's the ground that could be under your feet. It's the sea that drowns you. It's Europe. It's the sky that seems to be the same for everyone but isn't. It's the world. It's the 'cash-flow'. It's the earth you tread. It's the street you leave behind you. It's the city you enter. It's the empty Parliament. It's the crowded square. It's Calais. It's the world. It's Paris. It's the house in which you were happy, to which you'll never return. It's the Mediterranean. It's the coast. It's London. It's the bottom of the sea. It's 'stop-loss' insurance. It's the sound heard in darkness you take for a voice. It's the language you speak. It's Mytilene. It's Ibex 35. It's the place you've arrived in. It's the language you don't speak. It's the ouzo that changes colour when it's stirred with water. It's Izmir. It's movement. It's the hair spray Frau Merkel uses so that her real hair looks like a wig. It's the smell of diesel that reminds you that you're alive. It's the calm.

It's the debate on national identity. It's the waves. It's your brain. It's the news in real time. It's sound. It's electricity. 'If you're not afraid as you're buying, you're buying incorrectly' – broker's advice. 12,563 friends like this. It's the Mediterranean. It's the capital that shifts and drags everything in its wake. It's the numbers 95 to 118 on the periodic table of the elements. It's all the good and all the bad mixed in perfectly identical proportions. It's Casablanca. It's the Dow Jones Industrial. It's the air that seems to be the same for everyone but isn't. It's the skin. It's the variable-rate debt. It's the hand that caresses itself. It's love.

It's the wind that comes from Chernobyl. It's access to life in business class. It's the bird with its wings bedraggled. It's an ace of pentacles up your sleeve. It's falling out of love. It's the hand that caresses itself. It's Merkel's hair that shines as if it were on fire. It's Cairo. It's what you're thinking while you're talking about something else. It's simultaneity. It's the precise spot in your mind where something is expanding that you can't stop. (What is the existence of the thing you're thinking about? Is it more or less important than the life you're living?) It's Kassel. Milate ellinika signomi? It's the impossibility of erasing from your memory what you said one day. It's the three emails per minute you should write to increase productivity. It's the green colour of a religious stole resting on the

open book in front of you. It's testosterone. It's the politics of preventing Muslim radicalization. It's Europe. It's the world. It's menopause. It's cultural integration. It's the darkness covering the city like a teenager's hood. It's the Mediterranean.

It's femicide as divine plan. It's the rubbish rotting in the river in Beirut. It's the place you've arrived in. It's the shoe that flies and reaches Bush's head. It's torture. It's the feeling that under your shirt you have no body. It's time that seems the same for everyone but isn't. It's the coast. It's the bottom of the sea. It's the place that welcomes you. It's the deforestation of your imagination. It's three milligrams of Lorazepam.

Teaching gender theory at school is a global war against marriage, says Pope Francis. 666fxck likes this. It's the lobster tail plunged into boiling water. It's censorship.

It's the eco rate of awareness. It's Luanda. It's the suicide of David Foster Wallace. It's the body you imagine you don't have. It's the soul of a dog. It's the rate of survival of seropositive individuals proudly announced by the Ministry of Health. It's Kiev. It's the increase of cancer, respiratory insufficiency, the destruction of the immunological barrier. It's Johannesburg. It's yesterday. It's tomorrow. It's 4 per cent of the territory of the United States dedicated to Indian reservations. It's the state of agglomeration of matter. It's the selection of the hundred best books: once again, they're all written by men, except for two. It's representative democracy as a cover for corruption. It's the resistance of maps to change. It's the Nasdaq Composite Index. It's the Mediterranean. It's Europe. It's the place you've arrived in.

Beirut, 5 November 2016

## DESTRUCTION WAS MY BEATRIZ

On 16 November 2016, my new name, Paul Beatriz Preciado, was published in the official journal of births as well as in the daily paper in the city of Burgos. We had been awaiting a legal decision for months. But neither the judge nor the administration had informed us that the decision would be announced through simultaneous publication in the official State journal and in the local press.

The first person to learn it, before my lawyer, was my mother. She read the paper, as she does every morning, and saw this name mentioned in the birth announcements. She panicked. She immediately sent me a photo of the printed page, like someone sending a hieroglyph to an institute specializing in decipherment. She called me up: 'What's this all about?' My mother was witnessing my birth, once again. In a way, she brought me back into the world, this time as a reader. She gave birth to her son, born outside her body, as printed text.

My first name, this name that was not mine and that now is, appears in the middle of the list of those who have just been born. In the paper, you can read: 'Births: Paul Beatriz Preciado Ruiz, Lara Vázquez Mena, Esperanza Rojo Soares, India García Casado, Ariadna Rey Mojardín, Marco Méndez Tobar, Bruno Boneke Esteban, Dylan Boneke Esteban, Juan Moreno Miguel, Ariadna Antolín Díaz, Johan Sánchez Alves, Paula Casado Macho, Izan García Caballero, Íker Ojeda Dos Santos, Nerea Fuente Porras, Abigail Barriuso López.' And in the column next to it, there are the dead: 'Iluminada Sanz Sanz, 87, Miguel Collado Serrano, 81, and Tomás Arija Prieto, 84.' My old first name does not figure in the list of dead. But it could, since in order to legalize my sex change, it was necessary to destroy the birth certificate my father had signed, on 11 September 1970. It was necessary to destroy the legal fiction 'Beatriz Preciado Ruiz' in order to invent the legal fiction 'Paul Beatriz Preciado'. So I am born for the second time, outside of the father-mother configuration, in an administration-press configuration. My own parents stop being progenitors and are converted into parent-readers. Secretary Blanca Esther del Hoyo Moreno agreed to 'annul the inscription in Volume 42-2, page 411, section 1 of the civil registry, at 3.30 a.m on 11 September 1970' on which the mention 'female'

appeared. And she agreed to write ‘at 2.57 a.m. on 15 November 2016’ in virtue of the new ‘authorization planned for Article 26 to amend the civil registry, Volume 00 199 page 263, Section 1 of the civil registry’ the mention ‘male’ in the ‘sex’ column next to the masculine name Paul Beatriz. Then she affixed her signature on 16 November 2016, next to that of the secretary, María Luisa Miranda de Miguel. The medico-legal system forced me to carry out a legal suicide in order to authorize my rebirth as ‘male’. I witness my death and my legal rebirth. I am both cadaver and legal newborn.

They say that astral travel is an out-of-body experience that, in the framework of a guided meditation or a lucid dream, gives the sensation of being projected into space, of floating outside your own body. It’s an exercise of doubling; in certain cases it’s the result of a hallucination chemically or electrically induced by the brain, while in others it’s the effect of powerful auto-suggestion, during which the awareness ‘separates’ from the physical body, is externalized and observes itself from outside. They say that this form of dissociation is also one of the cerebral experiences on the threshold of clinical death, described by those who have survived it, during which the patient sees his own dead body and can sometimes even hear the declaration of his decease.

I feel as I’ve embarked on a sort of epistemological astral journey, or on an experience at the threshold of semiotic-legal death. I am leaving the biopolitical and historical fiction that I was embodying – the femininity that the binary sex-gender system at the end of the twentieth century constructed in a Francoist society that relied on a medico-legal system for which the notion of transsexuality did not exist – and I am observing from the outside the physical destruction and administrative, legal construction of a new biopolitical fiction where my body is denied as well as acknowledged as ‘masculine’. There is coercion and agency. Subjection and distortion of the norm. I myself signed the authorization to destroy my birth certificate; I also signed the request to issue a new one. Like a monster who has learned how to speak, I am seated in the centre of the baroque administrative machine that produces the truth of sex, and I am touching all its keys at once, until the system enters a blackout phase. I feel a certain dizziness.

I can barely understand what’s happening to me. I am divided between a present that does not belong to me and a future that is absolutely my own. My life is a message in a bottle sent to the future so that someone, somewhere, can read it someday. I think that perhaps someone, someday, somewhere, will once again

approach the sex machine and will write the biography of my body, and will understand my life.

Kassel, 26 November 2016



## ATHENS TEEN SPIRIT

Once again, Greece is grinding to a halt. Thursday, at the call of the labour unions of government employees and in the private sector, a general strike paralyzed the entire city of Athens. Syntagma Square is again becoming the scene of oppression and resistance, of the systematic dysfunction of democratic institutions incapable of supporting a process of collective emancipation. The Greek Parliament has become a bunker that stifles the citizens' voices instead of amplifying them.

Two days ago, the streets of Exárcheia – the anarchist neighbourhood in Athens – were on fire. The cars and rubbish bins of the Zaimi squat and of Stournari Street became huge pyres around which over 200 armed policemen attacked the demonstrators. Eight years ago, on 6 December, the police shot to death Alexandros Grigoropoulos, aged fifteen. Thousands of students are again going out onto the streets to protest against police violence, government corruption, the criminalization of migrants and their imprisonment in detention centres, and against the exploitation of business enterprises, against the destruction caused by tourism.

Greece is the repressed unconscious of Europe. At once rubbish heap and frontier, Golden Fleece and inexhaustible resource for the European community, it was constructed, by over-codification, via three-fold discrimination: racial, sexual and economic. On the one hand, it is celebrated in historical imagination as the cradle of the West: the bourgeois and colonial renaissance invented a Greek corpus (monuments, archives, text and body) that's white and Christian, it glorified a Greece that never existed (Greeks have never been exactly white, or strictly Christian) and denied the Eastern, hybrid reality of the actual Greece of today. On the other hand, the European Union has placed the country in the situation of a sex worker: it ero-touristizes it at the same time as it insults it, makes it its debtor and also desires it, forbids it from travelling and demands it to spread its thighs to financial speculation. Europe is transforming the Greek territory into a huge concentration camp for migrants and the working poor, making its islands into open-air prisons with no walls.

The demonstrations, fires and strikes in Greece are, however, the sign of the impossibility of completely destroying the processes of resistance. Greece is not the 'naked life' of Agamben, but rather the insurgent, furious body of a teenage multitude. Virginie Despentes and Nirvana: Teen Spirit. Athens has converted urban revolt into a festival of rage. A group of youths are smoking calmly on Exárcheia Square; two minutes later, they put on motorcycle helmets or pull up their hoods, and from their Eastpak backpacks covered in black, white and red stickers, they take out small homemade Molotov cocktails: they walk forward, poorly armed, facing the squadron of policemen whose equipment confirms that the Ministries of the Interior and of Defence are the only ones not to have suffered from any budget cuts. Protest is a collective street performance that makes it evident that the last political characteristic remaining to Greece is, in Weber's terms, the legitimate use of violence.

Although one can find people of all ages among the demonstrators, the energy of the protest is without a doubt adolescent. In this fire burns something youthful and vital. If you were to imagine a story superimposing government macro-politics upon gender micro-politics, you could say that the police state has taken on the paternal role in the story, while the welfare state has tried to fill the roles the patriarchy assigns to the mother. The police state disciplines and punishes; the welfare state takes care and plans ahead. Starting from this equation, it would be possible to describe Greece as a family in which the daddy-police-state is alcoholic, corrupt, abusive and violent, while the mummy-welfare-state has abandoned her home, or else will only come back to demand money.

Exárcheia is the daughter of this violent, dysfunctional family. The sole relationship the State has with the citizen is on the order of abuse and violence. Here, there is no protection. In this situation, the teenage girl has no other option than to shout and burn the furniture – that's what's happening in Exárcheia, every three or four weeks. She could also leave the family home and go off to make her living. That's what a few anarchist groups are trying – they are opening squats welcoming migrants, and, on Notara 26 and City Plaza, they're building alternative communities to survive.

The time has come to invent a political form that short-circuits the patriarchal models of power and government. We must abandon the father's house, we must stop waiting for the mother. Exárcheia must be able to live.

Athens, 10 December 2016

## PACK UP YOUR THINGS

Don't produce anything. Change your sex. Become your professor's teacher. Be the disciple of your student. Be your leader's lover. Be your dog's pet. Anything that walks on two legs is an enemy. Take care of your nurse. Go into a prison and replay the main scene in Animal Farm. Become your secretary's assistant. Go clean the cleaner's house. Prepare a cocktail for the bartender. Close the clinic. Cry and laugh. Renounce the religion that was given to you. Dance on the graves in your secret cemetery. Change your name. Change your ancestors. Don't try to please. Don't buy anything you've seen advertized on a screen or any other visual prompt. Bury the statue of Apollo. Don't try to please. Pack up your things without knowing where you're moving. Abandon your children. Stop working. Go into a refugee camp and play the main scene in Animal Farm. Sell your father as a prostitute. Cross a border. Exhume Diogenes's body. Shut down your Facebook account. Don't smile when your photo is taken. Close your Google account. Go into a museum and replay the main scene in Animal Farm. Leave your husband for a woman ten years younger than you. Anything that walks on four legs and anything that has wings is a friend. Close your bank account. Shave your head. Don't search for success. Leave your husband for a dog. Write an automatic reply for your email: 'During 2017 and until further notice please contact me by writing to Post Office Box 0700465.' Give away all your clothes and start taking a class on pattern-making and sewing. Destroy the Dropbox file on your computer. Prepare an empty suitcase and leave. Cross a border. Don't make any new work. Leave your wife for a horse. Open your suitcase in any street and accept what others give you. Learn Greek. Go into a slaughterhouse and replay the main scene in Animal Farm. Stick a flower in your beard. Give away your nicest shoes. Change your sex. No animal will wear any clothes it hasn't made itself. Lie down on the floor of your office and move your feet as if you were dancing on the ceiling. Go out and don't come back. Leave your wife for a poplar tree. Don't analyse any situation. Express yourself solely in languages you don't know, with people you don't know. Cross a border. Stop voting. Don't pay off your debts. Burn your voter's ID. No animal will murder another animal. Destroy your credit card. Assign value to what others consider useless. Admire what others consider ugly. Try to be invisible. Try not to be represented. No animal will sleep in a bed made industrially. Change the object

of your libido. Decentre genital pleasure. Orgasm from anything that goes beyond the limits of your body. Let Gaia penetrate you. Drop off medication. Exchange tranquilizers for strolling. Plait. Weave. Don't build a house. Don't accumulate. Don't eat other animals. Don't encourage human development. Don't multiply. Don't increase profits. Don't improve yourself. Don't invest. Go into a psychiatric hospital and replay the main scene in Animal Farm. Don't coordinate your actions. Search through bins. Don't take any insurance. Don't write the story. Don't organize your work day. Reduce your output level, consciously and unconsciously. No animal will drink Absolut vodka. Don't download YouTube videos. If you haven't already done so, don't reproduce. Don't modernize yourself. Don't use communication in a strategic way. Don't plan the future. Try to do the fewest things possible in the maximum amount of time. Don't try to improve your productivity. Go into a retirement home and replay the main scene in Animal Farm. Don't give any explanation. Admire the learning that others don't regard as knowledge. Don't digitalize anything. Don't leave a trace. Send a note to your competitors: 'I'm done. Happy New Year.' Don't increase the logistical infrastructure. Choose life rather than scientific prolongation of hope for life. All animals are equal.

Barcelona, 24 December 2016

## OUR SCREENS ARE WATCHING EACH OTHER

I am working at a table – one side is in Athens and the other in Barcelona. At one end of this table, Itziar is drawing literary maps of the city. To represent the Besòs neighbourhood, she uses as scale the street in which the depressive, masturbatory Catalan writer Miquel Bauçà lived, then she draws the outline of the Gràcia neighbourhood based on the strolls described by the poet Enric Casasses. While this is going on, at the other end of this table, I am imagining the forms that a collective could take that meets to think, act or fuck. These forms are governed by pact or contract, by autonomy or interdependence, by demonstration or experimentation, by improvisation or written score.

This table, separated by thousands of physical kilometres, is assembled by the prosthetic framework of the Internet. The music that comes out of the speakers of Athens is heard in Barcelona. The voice – the most prosthetic and fantastic of all the body's organs (remember that we are born 'without a voice' and that it's only after having been socialized that the voice is 'implanted' in our bodies, like software being installed) – is the only thing that manages to cross the distance. A single time and two spaces. Or, if we pay attention to the seconds you need for music or voice to reach from Athens to Barcelona, note by note, we could say that there are two times in one single space. But the Newtonian categories of space and time (topology and chronology) seem to be collapsing. We float. We look at each other and I wonder where this gaze is, wonder how it is possible to look at each other when what the eyes see are not other eyes but eyes on a screen.

I watch her as she looks at a map on her screen. It is impossible to say at what instant her eyes stop seeing me, at what instant she has replaced my image with another. Our screens look at each other. Our screens love each other. When that happens, we are properly speaking neither here nor there. Music, maps, writing, we ourselves as relational entities, and our love, we exist at that point as constituted, in the space that Deleuze calls 'the fold', whose internal externalities are made up of thousands of internet cables, folded, folded over, and unfolded over hundreds of thousands of screens.

Screens are the new skin of the world, I say to myself as I move her image with my finger to make it coincide with my own. They are the skin of a new collective entity radically decentred and in the process of subjectification. Soon, electronic implants will transform our skins into screens. We are going through a transformation comparable to the one that humans experienced when Gutenberg invented the printing press. With the mechanical reproduction of the Bible came the era of the secularization of knowledge and the automating of production. Today, the swiftness of technological transformations is surpassing the most unlikely predictions science fiction made. Every year, we witness the obsolescence of machines and applications that had seemed eternal to us, along with the birth of innovations that we incorporate in a few hours.

We are nearing absolute dematerialization and total automation. We are trying to naturalize everything; we persist in recounting our passions as we did during Homer's or Shakespeare's time. We insist on worrying about production, ideology, religion, nation... whereas everything is in the process of change. We want to continue to assert that God exists, that the nation exists, that sex exists, that work and unemployment exist. But perhaps they don't. I don't share the utopian dreams of post-humanism, but neither do I share the idea that technology is a neutral instrument that works as a mediation in our relationship to the world. What the West calls 'technology' is nothing but a scientific-technical modality of shamanism, and thus one of the forms our consciousness takes when it is deployed collectively: an externalization of our collective conscience. Let's leave behind the patriarchal and colonial visions of technology (oscillating between superpower ravings and the paranoia of complete powerlessness) and let's get to work on consciousness itself. We are all in metamorphosis, but only a few of us (the ones who have been marked as monsters, the ones whose own subjectivity and bodies were publicly pointed out as fields for experimentation and material proofs of mutation) realize it.

Turin, 14 January 2017

## [AFTER THE BOOK, LET'S PRINT ON FLESH](#)

I am not going to talk about Donald Trump. I am going to talk about the possibility of printing a sexual organ with a biological 3D printer. Which is perhaps another way of responding to Trump. Up until today, the anatomical transformation of a transsexual body involved a twofold process: destruction of the genital organs and sterilization. That was, and still is, the case in most operations for vaginoplasty and phalloplasty. These operations are the scientific-technical secularization of a ritual sacrifice during which the trans body is tortured, mutilated and made unfit for any process of sexual reproduction. The aim is not the intensification of the body's vital potential (called health, pleasure or well-being) but the reaffirmation of the phallocratic norm and the penetrating-penetrated heterosexual aesthetic.

We will soon, without a doubt, be able to print our sexual organs with a 3D bio-printer. Bio-ink will be made starting from a composite of aggregates of stem cells coming from the body for which the organ is intended: this organ will first be drawn on a computer, then will be implanted in the body, which will recognize it as its own. This process is already being experimented on to print organs like the heart, kidney or liver. Curiously, research laboratories don't mention the printing of sexual organs. They talk about 'ethical' constraints. But what ethics are implied here? Why would it be possible to print a heart but not a penis, a vagina or a clito-penis? Wouldn't it in any case be possible to imagine an  $n+1$  quantity of implantable sexual organs? Must we consider the ethics of sexual difference as an ethical limit on the transformation of the human body? Remember that when Johannes Gutenberg declared, in 1451, that he was able to print 180 copies of the Bible (supposed to be the word of God) with 42 lines of text per page in just a few weeks (whereas it used to take several months to make one by hand), he was regarded as not just immoral but also heretical. Today, we know how to conceptualize a 3D biological printer but we are not able to use it freely. Our machines are freer than we are.

Soon, we'll stop printing the book and will print on flesh instead. We will enter a new era of digital biological writing. The era of Gutenberg was characterized by the de-sacralization of the Bible, the secularization of knowledge, the

proliferation of vernacular languages against Latin, along with the multiplication of politically dissident languages. Entering the 3D biological Gutenberg era, we will experience the desacralization of modern anatomy as living dominant language.

The regimes of masculine hegemony and sexual difference (which are today still prevalent, although in crisis since 1968) are equivalent in the domain of sexuality to what religious monotheism was in the theological domain. Just as it seemed impossible (or sacrilegious) for the medieval West to call into question the divine word, today it is an aberration to call into doubt the binary sex-gender regime. But these are only historical categories, mental maps, political limitations to the infinite proliferation of subjectivity. The logics of binary sexuality and the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality are the effects of the submission of the body's plasticity and radical multiplicity to a process of industrialization of sexual reproduction. Our bodies are only recognized as potential producers of eggs or spermatozoa that one submits to a familial-factory-like assembly chain in which they are meant to reproduce.

Masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality are not natural laws, but contingent cultural practices. Languages of the body. Aesthetics of desire. Being able to draw and print our sexual organs will make us face new questions. No longer what anatomical sex we are born with, but what sex we want to have. Just as we, trans bodies, intentionally decide to introduce hormonal or morphological variations that cannot be recognized as exclusively masculine or feminine according to the binary codes of gender, it would be possible to implant a multitude of sexual organs onto one body. It would be possible to have a penis with a clitoris or neither of the two or a third arm in place of the penis, or a clitoris on the solar plexus or an eroticized ear devoted to sexo-auditory pleasure. The time will come of contrasexual aesthetics defined not by laws of sexual reproduction or political regulation but by the principles of complexity, singularity, intensity and affect.

Berlin, 4 February 2017



## HISTORY'S BACKSIDE

On 2 February 2017, Théo Luhaka was interrogated, insulted, and raped with a telescopic baton by three policemen in the Rose-des-Vents neighbourhood of Seine-Saint-Denis, near Paris.

‘History,’ said the revolutionary Andrei Zhelyabov, ‘moves very slowly, and sometimes you have to give her a shove in the backside.’ Macho political heroes (on both Right and Left) readily feminize history so they can imagine themselves titillating it a little. However, neither Théo nor history needs someone to push them. For they are wrong: history’s backside leaps like a hare’s rear end and jumps like a particle. Einstein understood the phenomenon better than Lenin’s friend: physics refers to the relativity of movement which is always dependent on the observer’s space-time. History changes, while we persist in believing, our eyes riveted on the little glass panes of our mobile phones, that everything remains stable: it’s still the Cold War, we’re still in the 1930s, in the colonial empire, the era of apartheid, during the Inquisition, the Crusades... Our perception is so conservative that it is easier for us to feel the wind of the Paleolithic era than to breathe today’s biochemical cloud.

Now, though, France is Théo. History does not stop. It is our perception that is constantly pressing down the brake pedal. Obsessed with contradictory but mutually complementary ideas of nature and linear progress, we don’t know how to calculate the hopping movement of history, which prevents us from getting on the right train at the right time. Some people think the train that’s passing is Trump, Brexit, Marine Le Pen... they are only the reflections of old trains called homeland, nation-state, national grammar, national health, national paradise, national masculinity, purity of national race, national rape, national concentration camp... All the while history’s backside is galloping ahead while we remain in place.

We are going through a period of epistemological crisis. We are experiencing a paradigm shift of technologies of inscription, a mutation of collective forms of the production and archiving of knowledge and truth.

Any machine we operate daily has a capacity ten thousand times greater than individual human intelligence: it compiles, manages, and analyzes data better and faster than any of us individually. We have sequenced our own DNA. We can intervene in the genetic structure of a living being. We intentionally modify our hormonal cycles and are able to intervene in reproductive processes. We use nuclear technologies whose radioactive residue will persist in the earth long after the extinction of our own species, and whose accidental deployment could lead to the total destruction of life on Earth. We have given free rein to machines, and during this time we want the technologies of political government and of the production of subjectivity to remain permanent.

The gravity (the potential and risk) of the historic moment that we are experiencing could be compared, on the evolutionary level, to the period in which, when we were still only animals, we invented language as social technology. This transformation was accompanied by a hypertrophy of symbolic functions and marked by the devotion to a 'useless' (in terms of production) time given over to ritual and narration. A literally delirious attention to the non-existent and the invisible. Terence McKenna, ethnobotanist and theoretician of the prematurely vanished rave culture, stated that we are monkeys whose neural cortex exploded after the accidental consumption of the hallucinogenic mushroom *Psilocybe cubensis*. If that were true, the time has undoubtedly come for us to take another dose.

Every context, every crossroads forces us to rethink once again the how and why of revolutionary organization and action. The technologies of subjectivity and of government that modernity has invented to legitimize the sexo-colonial supremacy of the West over the rest of the planet are today in crisis. White masculinity as the embodiment of total political sovereignty and monopoly of the technologies of violence (embodied by the truncheon), the subject understood as free consumer, representative democracy, and the party system – all these are called into question.

Since the 1999 riots in Seattle, since the uprisings in the French suburbs of 2005, since the peaceful demonstrations on Tahir Square in Cairo, Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona, Syntagma in Athens, movements are gaining in amplitude and intensity. History is Théo. The trains of history that are being announced are the struggles of different subaltern political subjects who are challenging the definition of sovereignty as being embodied by white masculinity and the consumer of the free market. The potential transformation of

these heterogeneous struggles cannot be neutralized by the logic of parties, or reduced to a few electoral seats. Those do not represent us. Transfeminism, the politics of decolonization, anti-productivism: political transformation can come only from the twofold process of insurrection and imagination, from transfeminism, the politics of decolonization, and anti-productivism. From civil disobedience and upheaval of consciousness and perception. From destitution of patriarchal and colonial structures and foundational creation. From revolution of affects and techno-shamanism.

In 1849, when the suffragettes were fighting to win the right to vote for women, the socialist and feminist labourer Jeanne Deroin subverted the grammar of patriarchal democracy by presenting herself as a candidate in the legislative elections. Deroin shows us that there exists a possible path of revolutionary action. They do not represent us. Théo for president. Maybe it's time for us to eat another hallucinogenic mushroom, to finally see history clearly?

Athens, 25 February 2017

## SAN FRANCISCO, THE 'CLITORIS OF AMERICA'

We are driving along San Francisco Bay in a car, by the Pacific Ocean. Annie Sprinkle is in the driver's seat and I am co-pilot, along with her dog, Butch. The ancient trees remind us that this land was once inhabited by the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, before being torn away by the Spanish colonists of the eighteenth century. Just a few years after the 1848 revolutions were breaking out in Europe, California became an American state. We stop at beaches, and at restaurants along the coast. We eat a chowder made from clams and fried fish and Annie talks to me about her life as a porn actress, her experience as an activist fighting for sex workers' rights, her transformation into an artist, her work in collaboration with Beth Stephens.

We arrive in San Francisco: the streets undulate like the backs of seals turned to the ocean, the stately modernist and Victorian houses mingle with others reminiscent of garages, barns and ranches. We pass through the Castro and see Harvey Milk's house. This city is the city of the 'Summer of Love', the Compton riots, the place where gender dissidence became a political movement, the place people said had the most sex workers and gender activists per square foot. Annie Sprinkle tells me that San Francisco is 'the clitoris of America', the tiniest and most powerful organ in the country: 121 ultra-electrified square kilometres from which the silicon networks that connect the world emanate. Once there was gold fever; now it's cybernetic fever. Sex and technology. Sun and dollars. Activism and neoliberalism. Innovation and control. Google, Adobe, Cisco, eBay, Facebook, Tesla, Twitter... 121 square kilometres that concentrate one-third of the risk-capital of the United States.

It is 8 March, but what with our wanderings and conversations, we don't reach San Francisco in time to take part in the demonstration. We're both wearing the pink scarf, but we confess to each other that we've never really liked this Women's Day. We've never been good candidates for this casting. She, sex worker. Me, long-time radical lesbian, and now trans. What meaning can it have to celebrate a Women's Day in a binary system of gender oppression? Might as well celebrate a Slaves' Day during the plantation regime: parade with chains and irons. This year, though, something seems to have changed: the call for a

general and international strike of women marks the beginning of a process of gender and sexual insurrection. Not celebration, but disobedience. Not commemoration, but revolt.

As upstanding punk feminists, Annie and I decide to celebrate this day by going to buy dildos. In the clitoris-city, you can find the best makers of sexual and masturbatory technologies. We enter one of the historic stores in the Mission District: founded by the therapist and sex-educator Joani Blank, the company was the first to devote itself exclusively to female and lesbian pleasure. Later on it was sold to women who worked there, and then finally bought by the daughter of a Californian porn tycoon. Even so, many activists and famous sex-educators from the city, like Carol Queen, continue to work there.

Outside the shop, demonstrators denounce the killing, by the police, of Amilcar Perez, a 20-year-old Guatemalan immigrant. Inside, we are welcomed by Jukie Sunshine, whom I remember seeing on top of the Seven Sisters hill, in a photo by Del LaGrace Volcano. Entering Good Vibrations with Annie Sprinkle is like entering a football museum with Lionel Messi. All the sex-toys seem to vibrate as she walks by.

We discover the new models of prosthetic dildos, realistic in silicon, phthalate-free and hypoallergenic. I consult Annie: she prefers the 'caramel' colour to the 'vanilla', she says: 'It will be as if you've been sunbathing naked in California.' When we try the sex-toys out, the only question that Annie asks is, 'Can it massage my neck too?' To our perplexed looks, Annie explains, 'Post-menopause, sexuality is post-genital.'

She finally opts for an ecosexual accessory: a pair of cat ears that can be attached to the hair like a pin. At the cash register, Jukie reminds us that 'all the sex-toys are guaranteed for life against all risks,' although she doesn't include damage caused by 'ex-girlfriends or dogs'. Annie gifts me a 'clitoris pump' as a souvenir, she says, of Silicon Valley.

Leaving the shop, we stroll down Clarion Alley, a street whose walls are covered with paintings and graffiti, like an open-air protest museum: 'Blacks are murdered with Impunity'; 'Evict Google'; 'Put Your Guns Down'. On one of them, someone has replaced the stars on the American flag with death-heads, and the stripes with names, written in black and white, of people murdered by the police. Sixty-seven 'legal' assassinations of Latino migrants since the

beginning of the year. The last name is that of Amilcar Perez, but there are also SAMUELDUBOCE MIRIAMCAREYBRENDONGLENNANTONIO ZAMBRANOJESSICAHERNANDEZ... written in capital letters, without commas or periods, as if death had transformed all these names into one single name. 'Rise in Power Brothers and Sisters.' To the right of the flag, next to a 3D R.I.P. sign, a bear shits a rainbow.

San Francisco, 25 March 2017

## THE STATELESS EXHIBITION

Spring is not a season for austerity, as the Greek artist Lena Platonos sang in the 1980s. Despite the decisions of the European Troika, despite the collapse of democratic institutions, the return of the fascist aesthetic and the ongoing transformation of refugee camps into concentration camps, spring is returning to Athens, and it is decidedly not a season for austerity. The sun is not resigning itself to public budget cuts. The birds know nothing about the rise in interest rates, the closing of libraries and public museums, the hundreds of artworks locked up in basements that will no longer be shown to visitors, the inability of public health services to procure even minimal care for people with chronic illnesses or HIV-positive individuals, the lack of medical or educational services for migrants... Neither the April sun nor the birds on Mount Lycabettus want to hear about the debt. In these conditions, what does organizing an exhibition in Athens that till now has always taken place in Kassel, Germany, signify? Persisting in believing that spring is not a season for austerity and that the sun shines for everyone. Or perhaps, giving in to the new climate change conditions and accepting, as Jean-François Lyotard said, that even the sun is growing old.

The first documenta, organized in Kassel in 1955 by Arnold Bode, had the goal of giving access to artworks by avant-garde artists who had been banned by the Nazi regime. Bode wanted to reconfigure European public culture, on a continent devastated by war. The fourteenth iteration is unfurling with the same feeling of urgency. We are in a context of economic and political war. A war of the ruling classes against subaltern bodies, of global capitalism against life, of national governments against migrants and countless minorities. The 2008 sub-prime crisis served to justify a political and moral restructuring of global capitalism as never before since the 1930s. Greece has transformed into a politically dense signifier, synthesizing all forms of exclusion produced by the new financial hegemony: restriction of democratic rights, criminalization of poverty, rejection of migration, pathologizing all forms of dissidence.

That is why the research that preceded the exhibition took place mostly in Athens. For months, hundreds of artists, writers and intellectuals who are taking part in documenta 14 came here. That is also why the exhibition is opening this

Saturday in Athens, and then in just eight weeks, on 10 June, in Kassel. During the investigative process in Athens, it was crucial to experience the democratic failure represented by the oxi [no] referendum on 5 July 2015. When the Greek government refused to accept the citizens' decision, the Parliament seemed like an institution in ruins, empty, incapable of representing the people. At the same time, Syntagma Square and the streets of Athens filled for days with voices and bodies. Parliament was the street. Whence the idea was born for the public programme of documenta 14: 'The Parliament of Bodies'. In September 2016, we opened a space for debate in Eleftherias Park where artists, critics, activists, students, dancers, neighbours, authors... met to think about reconstructing the public sphere in a context of democracy (not market economy) in crisis. One of the difficulties (and beauties) of organizing this exhibition in Athens was the decision of its artistic director, Adam Szymczyk, to collaborate almost exclusively with public institutions. In wartime, the interlocutor could not be the establishment, or galleries, or the art market. On the contrary, the exhibition represents itself as a public service, an antidote to economic, political and moral austerity.

During an international exhibition like documenta, everyone asks to see the list of artists and their nationalities, the proportion of Greeks to Germans, men to women. But who can say he is a citizen of a nation today? It's the very status of the 'document' and its process of legitimization that are in question. While the geopolitical map is fissuring, we are entering an era when name and citizenship have stopped being ordinary conditions and have instead become privileges, when sex and gender have stopped being obvious designations and have been transformed into stigmata or manifestos. Some of the artists and curators in this exhibition have lost a name at some point or have acquired another in order to change their conditions for survival. Others have changed their citizenship status several times, or are still waiting for asylum to be granted (or refused). What should they be called, then, how should they be counted? As Syrians, Afghans, Ugandans, Canadians, Germans, or as simple numbers on a waiting list? Are the hundreds of Greek artists who emigrate to seek better conditions of life in Berlin Greek or German? And it's the same when it's a question of statistics of equality of the sexes. In what category should trans and intersex people be counted? Undocumented.

documenta 14 is taking place on an epistemological and political base that is cracking. The economic and political sacrifice to which Greece has been submitted to by the European Union since 2008 is only the prologue to a wider



process of destruction of democracy, which is now extending to all of Europe. Since we began to prepare this documenta in 2014, we have been witnesses to this advancing demolition that is now impregnating all cultural institutions: rejection of refugees and migrants, military conflict in the Ukraine, increasing nationalism of European countries, the neo-fascist trend in Hungary, Poland, Turkey... The rise to power of Trump. Brexit... The planet is initiating a 'counter-reform' seeking to re-establish male white supremacy and to undo the democratic conquests that workers' movements, anti-colonial, indigenous and feminist and queer movements had managed to achieve during the last two centuries. An unprecedented mode of neoliberal-nationalism is drawing new borders and building new walls. In these conditions, the exhibition, with its various ways of constructing a public space of visibility and utterance, must become a platform for cultural activism. A nomadic process of collective cooperation, without identity or nationality. Athens in drag as Kassel. Kassel transitioning into Athens. Conditions of life without identity papers and without land, with successive moves, migrations, translation, all force us to go beyond the ethnocentric narration of modern Western history and open new forms of democratic actions. documenta is transitioning. Inspired by methodologies of experimental, anti-colonial, transfeminist, queer pedagogy that call into question the conditions in which political subjects make themselves visible, this exhibition declares itself as stateless in a twofold way: questioning the bond with the homeland, but also with the colonial and patriarchal genealogy that constructed the museum in the West – and that today wants to destroy Europe.

Athens, 7 April 2017

## I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE

The memories of my last trip to California rise up with the intensity of fiction, as if they were from a novel by Kathy Acker. Their colours are brighter than the colours of Kassel's reality. The smell of the sea, the gleaming coats of the seals, the shouts of demonstrators in the streets... present themselves to my mind with the consistency that belongs only to that which comes from literary narration. In this novel, a certain Donald Trump had won the democratic elections in a country called the United States of America. He had promised to build a wall along the entire length of the Mexican border. He had increased the country's military budget by 54 billion dollars. He had declared that 'torture was necessary to extract the truth from these fucking terrorists'. He had publicly stated that 'the most important thing in a woman was to have a nice little ass'.

In this novel, to feel united in the face of what was happening, Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens organized a dinner for their friends, in their house in San Francisco. The dinner was a ritual during which each participant had been invited to give something, and to take something back. The Mexican-American artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña had written a poem which began, 'I would like to live as if Donaldo Trompazo did not exist. I would like to live as if Donaldo Trompazo had not won the election. As if Donaldo Trompazo were not president today.' No one managed to laugh, or to make the slightest comment. It was night, the silence of the living room let you hear the birdsong outside as if someone had recorded it in high fidelity and were playing this track with the help of a prosthesis implanted directly into the Hersch cerebral convolutions, in areas 41 and 42 of the Brodmann map, on the primary auditory cortex. The birds sing and Guillermo's voice becomes a blade chiselling a sculpture composed of air and sound vibrations. 'I would like to walk to Tijuana as if Donaldo Trompazo did not exist. I do not want to say his name, because I would like to live as if Donaldo Trompazo did not exist.'

I don't know anymore if I'm dreaming, or if I'm remembering. The image of Guillermo's body appears before me, as if it were the Indigenous Virgin of the Border. The songs of the birds are confused with the shouts of children playing in a concrete park you can see from the windows of the Fridericianum. The work

rhythm required by putting together and organizing the documenta 14 exhibition, the fact of staying in the museum for twenty-four hours, preparing artists' works... makes it harder for me to distinguish reality from fiction. My own life is crumbling away, as if it were a story I read long ago that I am now unable to remember precisely. A story in which I myself had another face, another voice, another name. Our shared story is crumbling away. Another is appearing, that someone could have written in 1933 or 1854 or 1804 or 1497. I haven't been back to Paris in months. All my things have remained in the last house I lived in. The woman who lives there still writes to me to say that she has just brought some things belonging to me down to the basement. She says, 'It's terribly cold. I've seen again the things we lived with. We were so happy.' And I reply, lying: 'I remember every minute we spent together.' But I don't remember anymore. I can only imagine.

Politics is a fictional text in a book which is our own body. Politics is a fictional text, but it's written with blood as ink, collectively. In this fictional text, anything is possible: a wall separating the United States from Mexico; the complete closing of borders to anyone with a passport from Arabic-speaking countries; the privatization of public health; the criminalization of homosexuality and abortion; the condemnation to death of anyone with HIV; institutionalization of anyone physically or psychically different... History teaches us that the most absurd, most brutal thing has always been politically conceivable: it was possible in ancient Greece to build a democratic system (which we still admire today) that excluded women, children, slaves and foreigners; it was possible to exterminate the native populations of the Atlantic islands and the American continent; it was possible to construct the economic system of the plantation in which the white 15 per cent of the population subjected 85 per cent of the population captured in Africa to slavery; it was possible to settle in Algeria and call idiotic the population that was born there; it was possible to expel the Palestinians from their own homes; it was possible to say to women that if they did not give birth they did not exist; it was possible to build a wall in the middle of Berlin to divide the West from the East, the good from the bad; it was possible to convince people that sex is the work of the devil. I remember, or am I still imagining, Guillermo's voice, 'I would like to live as if Marine Lapeine<sup>11</sup> did not exist.'

New York, 28 April 2017

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11 A reference to Marine Le Pen, currently head of the ultra-right Rassemblement National party in France, formerly known as the Front National. 'La peine' can mean suffering or pain.

## OUR BISON

During the nineteenth century, over 40 million bison were killed in North America. These sublime, imposing herbivores were sacrificed neither for their meat nor for their skins. Their flesh rotted in the sun and only their ground-up bones were used as fertilizer for the new colonized lands. The bison massacre was thought up by the federal government, then carried out by the army and by thousands of anonymous colonists – anyone who owned a rifle – as a way to displace the native peoples by starving them to death, since their food and way of life depended entirely on the ritual buffalo hunt. Colonel Sheridan applied an old rule from the art of war: ‘Destroying the enemy’s resources is the most effective, certain way to finish him off.’ By 1890 there remained only 750 bison, who found refuge in Yellowstone Park – which allowed the race to survive till today. In 1890, the native populations had been almost completely exterminated or enclosed in federally controlled reservations. No doubt to symbolically atone the sin of the genocide and compensate for a debt that can’t be repaid, a little while ago, President Obama made the bison the national mammal of the United States.

The indirect war strategy applied by Sheridan could shed light today on the policies for managing transsexuality in many European countries. While some countries, like Spain, voted for laws that made access to a change of sexual identity easier, making trans people the new ‘national mammal’ of progressive social politics, the concrete practices of producing trans subjectivity deployed institutionally continue to threaten our lives.

For months, users of Testex Prolongatum 250 mg, a compound with a base of testosterone cypionate conceived and commercialized by Desma Laboratories, have been subjected to an almost total restriction of the supply of this treatment. Rumour has it that Desma wants to change the name or the formula of their preparation, which would allow them to change its price. While the injectable intramuscular dose of Testex Prolongatum 250 mg (which is enough to cover the testosterone supplement for fourteen days) costs 4.42 euros, out of which the user pays 0.50 euros, the alternative Testogel 50 mg (30 doses, to be applied daily) costs 52.98 euros, for which national health insurance pays almost 50

euros.

We are caught in intersecting logics that are seemingly opposite, but actually complementary, of control over dissident sexual subjectivity. The State recognizes us as 'transsexual' provided we are portrayed as psycho-pathological invalids to whom a treatment must be administered. The pharmaceutical industry, for its part, needs a psycho-pathological diagnosis only in order to transform us into profitable consumers.

Neither of the two parties, however, is interested in our free access to testosterone. The State would rather have us under its control: pathologized, dependent, submissive. For the pharmaceutical industry, we are profitable enough as consumers of Testex 250 mg, but it would prefer to make the more costly Testagel become our sole access to testosterone. The State brands us and binds us, forcing us to live in the confined zone of 'illness' while the pharmaceutical industry takes control of the 'remedy' – our buffalo – for commercial gain.

Any trans man knows that the interruption of the regular administration of treatment sets off hormonal changes, setting off a cascade of unbearable secondary effects – mood changes, sweats, trembling hands, migraines, return of menstrual blood. I go into any pharmacy and, like an unemployed person looking for a job or a refugee asking for asylum, I ask for the drug, and I always receive the same answer: the laboratories aren't distributing it, and national health insurance can do nothing about it. So I stop being a citizen, a teacher, and I become a junkie looking for his 250 mg of testosterone: I am a buyer of low-price gold, a seeker of gemstones on sale, a contraband organ buyer.

Making a body, bearing a name, having a legal and social identity, is a material process: it requires access to an ensemble of socio-political prostheses (birth certificates, medical protocols, hormones, operations, marriage contracts, identity papers). Preventing or limiting access to these prostheses is equivalent, in fact, to making impossible the existence of a social and political form of life.

They say that during the era of colonization of America, when the majority of Native Americans were killed or sequestered in reservations, Sheridan proposed a final deal: the federal government would give each Native American a bottle of whisky in exchange for a bison tongue. And so the last bisons were killed. At the voting booths, at institutions and at the market, citizens are nowadays simple

reservation bodies of a captive, consuming population. In line to vote, in line to get a salary and pay the bills, in line to get the dose... it is impossible to continue to simulate a relationship of friendship either with the institutions we call democratic – which exterminate our bison – or with the market – which deals with their tongues.

It is necessary to invent sovereign forms of life faced with the double helix of the patriarchal State and the liberal market. It is necessary to create cooperatives of politicized users, cooperatives that would allow us to win sovereignty to confront pathologizing institutions as well as the pharmaceutical industry and its ambitions for genocidal profit. Cooperatives of politicized users are summoned to be sites where not only are substances produced and distributed, but also knowledge: sites for self-diagnosis, for autonomous, ecological and durable production, for fair distribution. We will abandon the submissive waiting lists. We will not make one more bison fall. We will leap onto the last horse that remains to us and we will gallop away.

London, 17 May 2017

## INTERSEXICIDE

The legal battle being waged by Gaëtan Schmitt, who is asking to be recognized as ‘neutral sex’, as well as the distribution of the documentary *Ni fille ni garçon* [Neither Girl nor Boy], which follows the trajectory of Vincent Guillot and other activists, are highlighting the claims of intersex movements in French public discourse. If we can think of the 1960s as the moment when new feminist and homosexual movements emerged, we can say about the new millennium that it is characterized by the increasing visibility of trans and intersex struggles. The possibility of configuring a second transfeminist sexual revolution is emerging. It does not take the form of identity politics but is constructed through alliances established between multiple somato-political minorities confronting the norm.

Our history of sexuality is as astounding as a science fiction story. After the Second World War, Western medicine, endowed with new technologies that allowed it to access differences in living beings that till then had been invisible (morphological, hormonal or chromosomal differences), was confronted with an uncomfortable reality: there exist bodies at birth that cannot be characterized as female or male – small penises, unformed testicles, absence of uterus, chromosomal variations going beyond XX/XY... babies who call into question the logic of the binary. There then followed what in Thomas Kuhn’s terminology we could call an epistemological paradigm crisis of sexual difference. It would have been possible to change the cognitive framework of sexual assignation, to open the ‘human’ category up to any form of genital or chromosomal existence. The opposite is what occurred. The genitally different body was declared ‘monstrous’, ‘unviable’, ‘handicapped’; it was subjected to an array of surgical and hormonal procedures seeking to reproduce dominant masculine or feminine genital morphology.

The macabre protagonists of this story (John Money and Andrea Prader, among others) are neither nuclear physicists nor soldiers. They are paediatricians. Starting back in the 1950s, the use of the ‘Prader scale’ (a visual method allowing the measurement of what they call ‘abnormal virility of genital parts’ in babies, by studying the size and shape of the organs) became widespread, along with the ‘Money protocol’ (which indicates the steps to follow to lead an intersex



baby toward one of the binary poles, male or female). Genital mutilation of babies regarded as intersex became a hospital routine. While various religions practice rituals of genital marking or mutilation (clitoridectomy, circumcision...) which the so-called 'civilized' West regards as barbaric, these same rational discourses accept as necessary the practice of violent scientific rituals of genital mutilation. This porno-gore science fiction from the 50s is today our shared anatomical archaeology.

Male-female genital difference is actually an arbitrary, historically over-evaluated aesthetic (an ensemble of shapes judged in relation to a value scale) according to which the human has only two possibilities: penetrating penis, penetrated vagina. We are subjected to porno-scientific kitsch: the standardization of the form of the human body according to hetero-centric aesthetic criteria. Outside of this binary aesthetic, any body is regarded as pathological, and consequently becomes the object of a normalization described as 'therapeutic'.

The binary sex-gender regime is to the human body what the map is to territory: a political framework that defines organs, functions and uses – a cognitive framework that establishes the borders separating the normal from the pathological. Just as African countries were invented by colonial agreements drawn up by the empires of the nineteenth century, the form and function of our so-called 'sexual' organs are the result of agreements drawn up between the North American scientific community of the Cold War era in order to maintain the privileges of the patriarchy and the social organization of heterosexual reproduction.

The contemporary intersex movement denounces the way Prader confuses, for example, non-usual (unusual, really? one baby out of 2,000, according to Prader, one out of 800 according to more recent studies) genital shapes with pathological shapes, imposing by force a process of surgical and hormonal normalization that violates the right of a body to its morphological integrity. Genital mutilation should be regarded as a crime, whether the discourse that legitimizes and authorizes it is religious or scientific. A body endowed with a macro-clitoris and a uterus has the right to be recognized as a viable human body, without it being necessary to reconstruct it in order to make it coincide with the binary genital aesthetic. A body without a penis and with a non-penetrable orifice can have a genital and sexual existence without the imposition of normative heterosexuality. Other sexual aesthetics are possible and deserve to be politically viable – what's

more, some trans people intentionally choose the intersex aesthetic (men without a penis, women with a penis, etc.).

It is the binary sex-gender system that is sick. Not the bodies that are called intersex. The price of your sexual normality is our intersexicide. The only cure we need is a change of paradigm. That said, as history has taught us, knowing that the paradigm of sex and gender difference is the guarantee of maintaining all patriarchal and heterosexual privileges, this change will not be possible without a political revolution.

Transfeminism could be defined as a revolutionary movement, which, stemming from the alliance of historic anti-patriarchal struggles of feminism and recent struggles for de-medicalizing and de-pathologizing trans and intersex movements and of morphological and neurological diversity (crip-queer movements), includes the abolition of the binary sex-gender system, and its institutional and administrative inscriptions (from sex-assigning in utero or at the time of birth) as a condition of possibility for a profound political transformation, which will lead to the recognition of the irreducible multiplicity of the living being and respect for its physical integrity.

Athens, 2 June 2017

## THE SOUTH DOES NOT EXIST

During thirteen consecutive iterations, documenta inevitably took place in the city of Kassel. By choosing to open the exhibit in the city of Athens, documenta 14 has upset this sequence. But should this shift be interpreted as a movement towards the South, towards southern Europe or else towards the global South?

Let's say it straight up. As the anti-colonialist critics Aníbal Quijano, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Walter D. Mignolo teach us, the South does not exist. The South is a political fiction constructed by colonial prejudice. The South is an invention of modern colonial cartography: the combined effects of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the growth of industrial capitalism, still in quest of new territories to use for the extraction of raw material. The direct consequence of the invention of the South was the construction of a modern Western fiction of the North. The North doesn't exist either. In this game of political fiction, however, Greece occupies a singular position.

Beginning in the Renaissance, Greece was 'cut off' from its geographical and historical reality in order to be able to become the mythical foundation of the Western North. To make this operation possible, it was necessary to erase Greece's connections with the Ottoman Empire, along with all traces of historical relationships of Hellenic culture with the Mediterranean and Africa. The 'whitening' of Greek history with the aim of making it the origin of Aryan Christian civilization played a decisive role in the formation of modern German identity through the projects of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich August Wolf, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Starting in the eighteenth century, imperial economies and Christian narratives of white supremacy displaced the centres of knowledge and value from Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean towards the north of Europe (Holland, France, Germany and England), by inventing not just the South but also the East. During the Cold War, the West would be endowed with new political signifiers: the map would be again fragmented. Paradoxically, since the second wave of decolonialization (India, Algeria, Nigeria...), the fall of the Berlin Wall and the

global expansion of financial capitalism, the differences between North and South have multiplied instead of disappearing. The 2008 crisis amplified the differences in treatment by constructing a new southern Europe for the so-called PIGS – Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain.

The South is not a place, but rather the effect of the relationships between power, knowledge and space. Colonial modernity is inventing a geography and a chronology: the South is primitive and past. The North is progress and future. The South is the result of a racial and sexual system of social classification, a binary epistemology that opposes high and low, mind and body, head and feet, rationality and emotion, theory and practice. The South is a sexualized, racialized myth. In Western epistemology, the South is an animal, feminine, infantile, a fag. The South is potentially sick, weak, stupid, incapable, lazy, poor. The South is always represented as lacking sovereignty, lacking knowledge and wealth, and consequently, by nature indebted to the North. At the same time, the South is the place where capitalist extraction is taking place: the place where the North captures energy, meaning, enjoyment and added value. The South is the skin and the uterus. Oil and coffee. Meat and gold.

At the other extremity of this binary epistemology, the North appears as human, masculine, adult, hetero-sexual, white. The North always presents itself as healthier, stronger, more intelligent, cleaner, more productive, wealthier. The North is the soul and the phallus. Sperm and currency. Machine and software. It's the place of memory and profit. The North is the museum, the archive, the bank.

The North-South division dominates any other form of spatialization. Every society designates a South, a place where extraction will be organized and where rubbish will be dumped. The South is the mine and the cesspool. Heart and anus. The South is also the place feared by the North as reserve of revolutionary power, and that's why it's there that control and vigilance are intensified. The South is the terrain of war and prison, the place of the bomb and nuclear waste.

Athens is not the South. Kassel is not the North. Everything has a South. Language has a South. Music has a South. The body has a South. You yourself, you have a South. Turn your head. Hack the vertical axis. Consume the map.

Athens, 23 June 2017

## TWEETY BIRD HAS A MEETING WITH HISTORY

It is clear that someday (no one knows precisely when), Catalonia, which this Sunday is organizing a referendum on its independence, will have a meeting with History. What is already less clear is whether History, with a capital H if you please, will be present at the meeting, and if it comes, how it will turn out... Unlike what one might imagine, History is not the result of a precisely articulated political rationality, but rather the sudden product of a comic series of political errors. In his book *China in Ten Words*, the writer Yu Hua describes the Chinese revolution as if it were a comic-gore B-movie: a violent, chaotic process fed by burning enthusiasms and stupid decisions, real but fallen heroes and bogus heroes raised to the rank of spiritual leaders, ridiculous slogans repeated ad nauseam and stupidities transformed into institutions. For example, as famine was devouring millions of lives, the government was singing the glory of the nation, inventing data from whole cloth, decreeing for example that China was the greatest worldwide producer of rice and even sweet potatoes. Yu Hua writes: 'The Great Leap Forward of 1958 began, in a sense, as a comedy – a romantic and absurd comedy. Fakery, exaggeration, and bombast were the order of the day.'

We could follow the heroic deeds of Catalonia's meeting with History as told by the anti-independentist newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo*, as well as Spanish and French TV. The Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia was approved on 7 September 2017, without the necessary consensus, using a 'single reading' strategy, by rapid voice vote and without any preliminary announcement. Newspapers forgot to say that the independent parties evidently learned the methods of abuse of power from the popular party. *Junts pel Sí* and *PUC*<sup>12</sup> joyfully invent the figure of the 'legal illegal'. Mariano Rajoy,<sup>13</sup> for his part, is setting himself up as the saviour of national unity; he is criminalizing all processes of Catalan autonomous politics, and he is inventing – rubbing his hands, thinking of future electoral benefits – the figure of the 'legal illegal': fourteen people were arrested and detained, accused of being involved in the referendum; they are political and cultural representatives of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* and computer technicians. Any public action in favour of the referendum is forbidden in all cities in Spain; the national police conduct

searches of the PUC headquarters and seize documents considered illegal propaganda; the National Guard confiscates all books, posters and documents in favour of the referendum, closes internet sites and monitors voting booths as if they were Molotov cocktails about to be set ablaze. Only under Franco and in the Basque regions after Franco's death have we seen such an escalation of restricting civil and political liberties in the peninsula. To complete the burlesque aspect of this meeting with History, the government is renting, to house the thousands of National Police transferred to Catalonia who will be deployed on 1 October in order to prevent the vote, a cruise ship called Moby Dada, moored in the Barcelona harbour, the sides of which are decorated with a huge painting showing Sylvester and Tweety Bird. Warner Bros., the company that owns the canary's image, is worried about the association between police repression and the little yellow bird... and demands that Sylvester and Tweety be veiled... Too late. The image has become viral, 'Free Tweety' has become a trending topic, and [www.Piolin.cat](http://www.Piolin.cat)<sup>14</sup> is the name of the site on which 'legal illegal' voters can go to find the address of their voting centre. For his part, Carles Puigdemont<sup>15</sup>, great defender of the right to decide, keeps offering us tragi-comic contradictory thoughts that might remind Yu Hua of his own History: during a televised interview, when he is asked why he voted against the Kurdish or sub-Saharan self-determination referendums, Puigdemont, who suddenly forgot he had voted against them, quickly replied that he was opposed to the Kurdish referendum because it hadn't been convoked 'by a government setting the referendum in motion'. Just as in China they never saw so many huge sweet potatoes growing as in 1960...

For Javier Pérez Royo, a Sevillian professor specializing in the Constitution, the centralism of the Constitutional Tribunal led Catalonia into an impasse. Developed in 1978, just after the final years of Francoism, the Spanish Constitution was based on a territorial pact by which Catalonia was integrated into the Spanish State. On the other hand, the government recognized Catalonia's autonomy, so that decisions voted by the Catalan parliament and ratified by Catalans could not be challenged. The breach that led to the present situation was opened in 2006, when the Spanish constitutional tribunal challenged the Catalan 'Estatut', breaking the pact of '78 and leaving Catalonia out of the picture. There then began a shift that opened the door to the braggarts of History. Without a doubt this twofold process of restriction of rights and of insurrection is making it both possible and foreseeable to call into question the post-Franco Constitution, generating for the first time a context favourable to the rewriting of a new post-monarchist and republican, independent, federalist or

confederalist social pact.

In this way, splendid History has a meeting with Catalan politicians and the rest of the Spanish government, citizens are encountering micro-history, and initiating a process of democratic re-foundation that could be extended to all of the Spanish State.

These days, in Catalonia, what is surprising is the citizens' cooperation with the organization of a process of peaceful insurrection. Opposing the law courts and the police station, thousands of people are gathering to speak and sing. A wave of metallic noises resounds through the streets at ten o'clock every night. In all cities 'casserolades' are being organized (people bang on casseroles – pots – from their windows, or on tables, at outdoor cafés) to protest against the detention of the fourteen political prisoners. Leaning on the balcony of a building in the Gothic quarter, I'm getting a lesson in democratic culture given by a neighbour to a tourist. When the tourists sitting on the first-floor terrace complain that the noise from the demonstrations is disturbing them, the third-floor neighbour replies: 'If the rights of the people who live here don't interest you, what are you doing here? You should go find a pot in your kitchen and join us.'

It's in these dialogues on the margins of History, in this meeting with micro-history, that hope lies: the Catalan referendum could become a referendum on the entire Spanish territory, the opportunity to think about the rewriting of the Constitution and the foundation of a new Republic, which would be truly post-Francoist

Barcelona, 30 September 2017

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[12 Junts pel Sí and PUC \(Popular Unity Candidacy\): pro-Catalan Independence parties.](#)

[13 Mariano Rajoy: Spain's Prime Minister from 2011-2018, a member of the right-wing Partido Popular \(Popular Party\).](#)

14 Piolin: Tweety Bird in Spanish.

15 Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó was President of the Government of Catalonia from January 2016 to October 2017.



## MY PEOPLE ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE ILL-BORN

After spending last week in Barcelona, I go to Hydra, a little Greek island protected from traffic and real estate development, just two hours by boat from Athens. A kind of retro-paradise for the Athenian moneyed classes: an insular extension of the Kolonáki neighbourhood. Modern suitcases with wheels, made for city travel, become stupid boxes impossible to move along the island's cobblestone streets. Mules loaded with colourful packages that climb up to the village by taking narrow, almost vertical paths or stone staircases – these beasts are metaphors for the condition of life in the third millennium. Our bodies are like these mules: prehistoric, silent muscles, transporting a technological, sophisticated future on our backs. But without the mules, there's no progress, the economy doesn't move forward.

The house I'm staying in is a stone's throw from the one where Leonard Cohen lived. His house is anonymous, but the street bears his name: Odos Leonard Cohen. I thought that going to Hydra would be like inserting a cleaning CD into my brain. I wasn't thinking it would be a holiday. I was thinking about emptying the archive, discharging memory. I was thinking of erasing. Resetting. But nothing is erased, nothing is reset. Even machines can't be reset. Whoever says 'erase' speaks a lie. As Derrida explained when commenting on Freud, memory is a mystic writing pad on which what has already been written appears again and again. Passing the bar over the slate to erase what has just been written, the surface seems ready to receive another layer of writing, but beneath this surface there exists another layer, a dense, illegible space, full of indelible traces. Similarly, awareness can return with a huge rubber, but nothing is erased. Where does pain go when it seems to have made itself forgotten? Where does love go when it seems to have been forgotten?

I go down to the Kamini harbour, to the old tavern with scuffed red and yellow walls, where the fishermen gather, and I hear the song 'Documenta'. Nothing is erased, we write on what has already been written: the fierce sun, the voice of Sotiría Béliou, the exact number of times you have to turn right and left to find the house, the wet bougainvillea, the sleeping or starving cats. The inhabitants speak to me first in Greek, at which point I form two short sentences. At the

third, they realize I can no longer follow the conversation. Then they ask me 'Where do you come from, friend?' I answer 'From Barcelona' and I try not to think too much. Today for the first time, the question that follows this statement is not 'Barça or Real Madrid?' (the Greeks love soccer), but rather 'Catalan or Spanish?' and I reply 'Neither one'. 'Po-po-po,' they say. Which in Greek means something like 'what a mess'.

I realize, these days, as I follow the developments of the conflict between Catalan independentists and Spanish unionists from the other side of the Mediterranean, that I am suffering from an inability to see what both sides call 'nation'. I do not see the nation. I do not feel it. I do not perceive it. I am insensitive to the modalities of emotion aroused by 'fatherland'. Fatherland, father, patriarchy. I have abdicated from these things. I don't understand what they're both referring to when they talk about 'their history', 'their language', 'their land'. Spain. Catalonia. Nothing vibrates in me. Nothing resounds. On the contrary, I've always heard the word 'Spain' with mistrust and fear.

The nation is recognized as State – norm, violence, map, border. This is what is at stake with the existing nation-state-Spain confronted with the nonexistent nation-state-Catalonia this Sunday, 1 October: force, limit and negation. The nation-state is, in this sense, the limit that prevents the realization of democracy. A Constitution that legitimizes and protects this exercise of violence is not a democratic guarantee. It is, on the contrary, exactly the expression of the very limit of a possibility of democracy yet to come.

I do not understand my body, or my political existence, as forming part of the Spanish nation. I do not understand identity, or independence. I do not understand my political existence except in accordance with other living bodies in a relationship of both otherness and interdependence. My people is that of the mules. Of the ill-born. Of the stateless. The people who interest me are the non-peoples, the ones still being invented, the non-political communities whose sovereignty exceeds the limits of power. The silent bodies of the world who do not qualify even as a people. Those who bear the future on their backs and to whom no one concedes the legitimacy of the political subjects. The only status I understand is that of strangeness. To live wherever you were not born. To speak a language that is not your own and to make it vibrate with another accent, to make your words be grammatically correct, but phonetically deviant.

The process of expropriation and disidentification, not the nation, is what

retroactively characterizes these landscapes that are my own, and that others might regard as national. I feel perfectly foreign when I return to where I was born – it's not my land, and when I speak I know that's not my language. How to talk of 'nation' when some of us have been refused the right to be born? How to speak of a land when we have been placed outside of what should have been our house? How to speak of a mother tongue when no one wanted to listen to what we had to say? Since the medical powers diagnosed me as gender-dysphoric on the pretext that I didn't identify with the gender assigned to me at birth, I claim today to be nation-dysphoric.

I do not understand identity politics except as the hyperbolic instrument through which subjects whose political existence was denied assert themselves and make themselves visible in the public domain. I do not understand identity politics except as the antechamber of a process of disidentification that calls into question the nation-state as a coherent and homogenous political community.

And I don't say that in order to avoid taking a position in a conflict. My sympathy goes towards rupture, transformation, mutation, so that the reality of what till now could not be expressed politically or legally can exist. Towards the ontology of the impossible. And in any case, towards a republican future for the Iberian peninsula. For this desire for rupture (this obstinacy that I have to erase in order to write again, in order to question the trace that remains), Paul Beatriz, political subject (of political fiction), newborn, voted for the first time on Sunday 1 October for the referendum (of political fiction). Those who think that Paul does not exist are the same ones who think that we did not vote. But we exist, and we vote.

Hydra, 13 October 2017

## DEMOCRATS AGAINST DEMOCRACY

I travel from Barcelona to Oslo to get to Trondheim, in Norway. I am invited to a conference on the future of European cultural institutions. The meeting is taking place on a ship sailing along the Norwegian coast, from the rim of the Arctic circle to the fjords of Bergen. Between discussions I discreetly go outside to smoke, or to read, enjoying the sun. Lying in a hammock under a blanket, I contemplate the endless surface, smooth and dark, of the sea. The vegetation and the imposing rock mountains loom with a power that seems to be immeasurable compared to the smallness of my existence. The Kantian experience of the sublime might perhaps have seized hold of me if my phone didn't sabotage everything – the sublime is no longer conceivable in the age of digital communication.

From Barcelona, the news about the situation in Catalonia keeps flowing in. Contradictory messages follow one another. At 12.50 p.m., they say that Carles Puigdemont, with the mediation of Iñigo Urkullu, president of the autonomous Basque region, will agree, under pressure from the central Spanish government, to dissolve the Catalan Parliament and to call autonomous elections. He apparently made this decision in order to get the leaders of civil independentist associations out of prison, and to prevent the application of Article 155 that involves the removal from office and imprisonment of political representatives of the Catalan government. But two hours later, having learned that the Popular Party will apply Article 155 regardless of his decision, Puigdemont changes his mind. That's why you are now reading the fourth version of this article, which I have been trying to write since early this afternoon...

Rajoy's government, with the complicity of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), is getting ready to apply Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, supposedly 'in defence of the respect of the legality and democratic rights of all Spaniards, especially of all Catalans'. This is a historic turning point. We in Europe are witnessing the emergence of a new form of authoritarian, repressive 'democracy' that uses the law – the most violent interpretation of the law – to enact reactionary reforms. These 'democratic' reforms involve the deployment of national police against citizens, the privation of freedom, the imprisonment of

members of civil society because of their ideas, the confiscation of both printed and digital documents, the dissolution of Parliament, the control of the media... Did someone mention democracy?

As Gabriel Jaraba has explained, the Catalan crisis is ‘a European experience whose strategic mission consists of establishing how much citizens and institutions will tolerate an authoritarian democracy’. If I hadn’t been living these past few years in Athens, it might have escaped me that the two essential experiences of large-scale ‘democratic repression’ took place in Greece in 2015. The first consisted of the total suppression of the Greek people’s democratic sovereignty after the oxi [no] referendum. The second was the militarization of Greek coasts to hold back any form of migration, and the transformation of some strategic islands into open-air prisons.

Along with the extension of broad reforms of the labour market, cuts in retirement funds, the privatization of public services, and the militarized management of immigration, the main collateral effect of these successive ‘democratic’ coups d’état in Greece was the destruction of the Left. Since 2015, Syriza has been a dead party. The European Union’s decisions served to ruin the political legitimacy of the Left, thereby opening the way to far-right populists. Putting Article 155 into play and suspending the Catalan Parliament constitutes a new stage in this process of destroying the democracy that began in Greece.

The complexity of the Catalan situation lies in the fact that the independence project joins two distinct ways of imagining the future Republic that are not so much remote as irreconcilable. The Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCAT) is a sovereigntist right-wing party bearing the stigmata of its history of the corruption that has been practised for decades by the Pujol family. It represents the class of landowners and liberal professionals, as well as the Catalan industrial lower and middle class. The ‘process’ to which the sovereigntists of the PDeCAT refer would lead to a State dominated by national Catalan bourgeoisie, and therefore to a policy of neoliberal cuts. The political position of the PDeCAT could be described as a corrupt sovereign liberalism – and in this sense, ironically, it is the party that’s most similar, in its values and functioning, to the Spanish party of the central government, the Popular Party.

Confronting PDeCAT, the PUC (Popular Unity Candidacy), the anti-capitalist leftist party, constitutes the utopian, revolutionary engine of independentism. If Switzerland represents its dreams of a national model of the PDeCAT, for the

PUC the model would be Rojava, the region of Syrian Kurdistan. The PUC speaks for a model of ‘decentralized confederalism’, based on ideas from the Catalan anarchist tradition that led to social revolution in Spain in 1936, reread in light of the more recent works of the American Murray Bookchin and the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. The favourite governmental techniques of this model of direct democracy are the organization of popular assemblies to make decisions, fixing quotas of the participation of women within various organisms, and the extension of social ecology and cooperative economy to all of Catalonia – something that already exists in many rural regions. The hegemonic media organs that spread the ideas of the independentist process (Òmnium, ANC and TV3) are genealogically linked to bourgeois conservatism and are not revolutionary. That is why it is impossible to understand the independence movement at work in Catalonia without the utopian political imagination and the forms of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance the PUC are practising, along with pacifist Catalan organizations inspired by Xirinacs and to which adhere (without being tinged with independentism) the Catalan grass-roots group ‘En Comú’, and the Catalan branch of the leftist party Podemos. The sudden action of the Spanish government has galvanized these disparate forces and is pushing them, paradoxically, to make a unanimous declaration of an independent republic.

The only question, today, is how long France and Germany will be able to support the coup d’état that the Spanish central government means to carry through in Catalonia.

Trondheim, 27 October 2017

## MOVING BODIES

There are people who use their bodies as if they were disposable plastic bags. Others carry their bodies as if they were Ming dynasty porcelain. There are people who are not treated as citizens because their legs cannot walk. There are people who live to transform their bodies into that of Pamela Anderson. Others who live to make their bodies into that of Jean-Claude Van Damme. And others who have two chihuahuas named Pamela and Jean-Claude. Some carry their bodies as if they were a common coat of skin. And others as if they were a transparent suit. There are some who get dressed in order to be naked and others who undress in order to remain hidden. There are people who earn their living by swaying their hips. Others who don't even know they have hips. There are those who use their bodies as they would a public square. And those who treat them as if they were a private parking lot. There are those who understand their bodies as a savings account. And others as if they were a river. Some people are locked up in their bodies as if they were in Alcatraz. Others understand liberty only as something the body can pull off. Some people wave their hair to the rhythm of an electric guitar. Others experience electric shocks rising directly from their central nervous system. Some people will never let themselves leave the repertoire of acquired gestures. Others get paid to throw off this repertoire, but only within the realm of art. There are bodies that are used socially as sources of pleasure, value or knowledge for others. And others absorb pleasure, value and knowledge. There are bodies who are not regarded as citizens because of the colour of their skin. There are those who walk on a mechanical rubber ribbon to keep in shape. While others walk 600 kilometres on foot to escape war. There are some who do not own their own bodies. And others who believe that the bodies of animals belong to them. That the bodies of children belong to them. That the bodies of women belong to them. That the bodies of proletarians belong to them. That non-white bodies belong to them. Some think that they are the owners of their bodies the way they own their apartment. Among them, some spend their time doing renovations and interior design. And others take care of their apartment as if it were a nature reserve. There are people who believe they own their bodies the way the cowboy owns his horse. They mount it, force it to a gallop, stroke it or beat it, give it food and drink, let it rest so they can use it again the next day. They don't speak to their bodies, just as some people don't

speak to their horses. They are surprised when they realize that when their mount dies, they are unable to continue all alone. Various bodily services can be bought with money. Others are regarded as inalienable. Some people feel that their bodies are completely empty. Others imagine their body as a cupboard full of organs. There are people who view them as advanced technology. Others as a prehistoric tool. For some, the sexual organs are organic and inseparable from their own body. For others, they are multiple, inorganic, and can change shape and size. Some people make their bodies function solely on glucose, whether it's in the form of alcohol or rapid sugar. Some people send tobacco mixed with poison directly into their lungs. There are some who make their bodies function without sugar, or salt, or alcohol, or tobacco, or gluten, or lactose, or GMOs, or cholesterol. There are people who treat their bodies as if they were their slaves. And others as if they were their sovereign. Some people are not regarded as citizens because they prefer to live in keeping with the social conventions of femininity whereas their bodily anatomy identifies them as masculine. There are bodies who do everything quickly but never have time for anything. And those who do things slowly, who are even capable of not doing anything at all. Some bodies are not regarded as citizens because their eyes can't see. There are those who take the penises of others in their hands until they ejaculate. And those who put their fingers in others' mouths to put white paste in the cavities of their teeth. The former are called illegal workers. The latter qualified professionals. There are bodies who are not regarded as citizens because they prefer to obtain sexual pleasure with bodies whose sexual organs have shapes similar to their own. There are people who calm their nervous systems by taking tranquillizers. Others meditate. Some people drag their living bodies as if they were corpses. Some bodies are hetero but masturbate only while watching gay porn. Some bodies are not regarded as citizens because they possess one chromosome more or one chromosome less. There are those who love their bodies more than anything else. And those who feel unspeakable shame about their bodies. There are those who experience their bodies as if they were a time-bomb they're unable to defuse. And those who take pleasure in their bodies as if they were a melting ice cream. Some people wear implanted mechanisms thanks to which their hearts can beat. Others bear in their chests a heart that belonged to someone else. There are others still who bear, inside themselves, for a time, another body in the process of growing. So, can one speak of a human body as if it were a single body?

Zurich, 10 November 2017



## CELEBRATIONS

Any celebratory event requiring increased sociability sets off a certain anxiety in me, and my own birthday occupies a particularly critical position on the shameful scale of phobias. The idea that people in my more or less close entourage, as well as people I haven't heard from in ages, congratulate me on that day, in a more or less expansive way, has always greatly displeased me. This phenomenon got worse since chance had it that the date of my birthday coincides with a tragic day in 2001 (commemorated worldwide, since then) – I presume I don't need to point out what that date is, the reader's associative memory having already done the work. That's why, these past few years, I've tried to hide this date from my colleagues and close friends, and have pretended, using not very convincing strategies, to be completely disconnected from the increasingly unavoidable chain of communication networks around me.

It is possible that celebrations displease us (for I am not alone in this) because the time of commemoration obscures the becoming-time of the event. Becomings, say Deleuze and Guattari, do not have the same temporality as history. History is celebrated. Becoming is lived. Which explains why usually celebrations do not coincide with moments of life in which one actually reaches a plateau. Celebrations serve to remind us of what we would otherwise forget and to forget what we should remember. Hegemonic political chronology imposes an order of memory celebrating social rites that have received endorsement and recognition on the part of the collectivity. For centuries, for example, the church regarded celebratory birth rites as pagan celebrations: children's souls were born stained, and the first date to be celebrated was that of baptism. We had to wait until the celebration of Christ's birth was institutionalized for Christians to begin to celebrate the day of their own birth.

Since the nineteenth century, in the West, it is conventional to celebrate birth, marriage, death. The order of these celebrations constitutes and defines a taxonomy of events carefully distinguishing what we should remember from what does not deserve memory. The memorable from the insignificant. The rhythm of commemoration converts the individual time of life into a normal time: we are born, we grow up, go to school, marry... and die – and this last

event has the exclusive advantage that, as the proverb obviously invented by someone who suffered from celebration-phobia says, ‘At least, when you die, you don’t have to celebrate your own funeral.’

It may seem naive to state that you do not begin to live the day you’re born. The atoms that form our bodies were not created when we were conceived, but rather not long after the birth of the universe, about fifteen thousand million years ago. The institutions that allow us to exist by recognizing us (or not) as human were not invented the day of our birth: they are the product of a long process of historical negotiation going back a few thousand years. Can we celebrate the Big Bang? Who ventures to celebrate the rise of the human species? On an infinitely more modest scale of time, one doesn’t start loving on the day of one’s wedding – quite the contrary. A child who was not born could be our sole heir. The most important loves of our lives are not, cannot be, celebrated. People can die long before (days, months, years) death is certified or the burial occurs. Sometimes, death cannot be certified, or the body is never found and cannot be buried. In those cases, there is literally nothing to celebrate. No anniversary. No commemoration. Erased from the social rites that deserve recognition, this birth, this love, this death... disappear from history.

This week, I celebrated without any kind of external ritual and without needing to hide the date – since no one, or almost no one, knew – what could be understood as a second birth. It was the first anniversary of the day when the incarnation of the political fiction ‘Paul’ was legally and administratively recognized. The day when, as law demands, my new birth certificate was published in the local paper of the city where I was born. It’s the second time an official social collectivity opened its rituals of registering the human and allowed me to be written down as citizen, changing the name and sex that had been attributed to me the day – that famous day I’m now expected to celebrate – of my first birth. The date of this second inscription that escapes the rank of celebrations exists today in a secret place, under the certified date – visible and able to be celebrated – of the official birthday. This date, or rather the long and complicated process contained and represented by this date, is properly speaking uncelebrateable, and in this sense, absolutely unforgettable.

The most beautiful commemorations are those celebrated by invisible revolutions, the transformations without beginning-date or expiry date. Who celebrates the grass when it grows? The sky changing colour? Who celebrates reading a book? Learning a new gesture? Who celebrates the last instant of

happiness before a sudden death? We have to forget birthdays. We have to forget landmarks and let relics fall. To celebrate all our other possible births.

Athens, 24 November 2017

## I DON'T WANT A PRESIDENT

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I don't want to vote for a politician who consents to stand for elections that claim to be democratic while other politicians are sleeping in prison for their ideas. I don't want to vote in a democracy where the theatre calls itself 'elections' and the actors 'free citizens'. I don't want to vote for a politician for whom no rally is dedicated to freeing political prisoners. I don't want to vote for someone who in his campaign does not speak of the urgency of closing the prisons. All prisons. I don't want to vote for someone who in his campaign does not talk about the urgency of closing the Migrant Detention Centres. All the Migrant Detention Centres. I don't want to vote for someone who believes that the prisons of Cuba are necessary, that the prisons of Venezuela are necessary. I don't want to vote for someone who has said that the Republic would not pay traitors. I don't want to vote for someone who takes advantage of the fact that his comrades are in prison so he can be named first on the electoral ballot. I don't want to vote for someone who campaigns for other politicians to be imprisoned because of their ideas. I don't want to vote for someone who excluded a name from the list because he refused to accept the unacceptable. I don't want to vote for someone who criticized Catalan nationalism while promoting Spanish nationalism. I don't want to vote for someone who criticized Spanish nationalism while promoting Catalan nationalism. I don't want to vote in a democracy where some votes are worth more than others. I don't want to vote for someone who, in his campaigns, never spoke of the rights of people with chronic illnesses. I don't want to vote for someone who never spoke of the rights of people with AIDS, cancer, hepatitis, chronic fatigue, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, or kidney failure. I don't want to vote for someone who has never said that he too has been sick. I don't want to vote for someone who will never acknowledge that he suffers from depression, anxiety, compulsion or phobia. I don't want to vote for someone who will never acknowledge that he suffers from premature ejaculation or impotence. I don't want to vote for someone who condemns the taking and trafficking of drugs, but who does a line from time to time. I don't want to vote for someone who campaigns against homosexuals, but who is homosexual. I don't want to vote for someone who campaigns against prostitution, but who goes to whores. I

don't want to vote for someone for whom parity of salaries between women and men is not a priority. I don't want to vote for someone for whom the citizen does not exist except as bearer of a vote. I don't want to vote for someone who wants to limit adolescents' access to abortion. I don't want to vote for someone who minimizes the damage caused by the colonization of America and who will never talk about the enslavement or genocide of native peoples. I don't want to vote for someone who defends the self-determination of peoples, but not that of Palestinians or Kurds. I don't want to vote for a politician incapable of self-criticism. I don't want to vote for a politician who thinks that a trans person is mentally ill. I don't want to vote for a politician who thinks that people with schizophrenia are better off locked up in a psychiatric hospital. I don't want to vote for a politician who will never include in his programme a law making public institutions accessible to anyone with functional diversity. All public institutions. I don't want to vote for someone who thinks old age exists only as a variable in the cost of pensions. I don't want to vote for someone who offers Roosevelt's New Deal as an example of his politics, as if we needed more production and more consumerism. I don't want to vote for a candidate who wants to criminalize individuals because they speak a language. I don't want to vote for someone who will never talk about animal rights – because they're for eating, not voting. I don't want to vote for someone who will never talk about ecology. I don't want to vote for someone for whom the city is a territory of tourist monoculture. I don't want to vote for a candidate for whom a girl who drinks and kisses a boy cannot later complain of being raped. I don't want to vote for a candidate who doesn't talk about public transport because he never takes the metro. I don't want to vote for a candidate who never talks about increasing the number of public day care centres because he has a nanny at home. I don't want to vote for a candidate who will never talk about legalizing migrants, even though he has a South American cleaner. I don't want to vote for a candidate who will never talk about collectivizing water or energy. I don't want to vote for a candidate who stopped talking about the right to decent housing. I don't want to vote for someone for whom the military budget must be higher than the budget for culture or education. I don't want to vote for someone who talks about democracy and doesn't call for the right to vote for thousands of foreigners who live and work in Catalonia. I don't want to vote for someone who claims to be left-leaning but doesn't demand the right to vote for the thousands of foreigners who live and work in Catalonia. I don't want to vote in an election where a foreigner (neither Catalan nor Spanish) without identity papers cannot be elected president. I don't want to vote in an election where a trans person without identity papers cannot be a candidate for the presidential election. I don't

want to vote at an election where a cleaning lady cannot be elected president. I don't want to vote in elections where a homeless person cannot be elected president.

Barcelona, 15 December 2017

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[16 On 21 December 2017, Catalans were called to vote by the central Spanish government.](#)

## THE SON

I go back to the city where I was born to be with my mother, who is recovering in the hospital for a few days after an operation. This city of Castile, where human bodies walk wrapped in the furs of animals who have never lived in this region, and where the windows of houses are decorated with Spanish flags, frightens me. I tell myself that the skin of foreigners will end up being made into coats. And that the skin of those who were born here will someday be changed into a national flag. We spend our days and nights in Room 314. The hospital was recently renovated, and yet my mother insists on the fact that this room reminds her of the one in which she gave birth to me. For me, precisely because it reminds me of nothing, this hospital room seems more welcoming than the family home, safer than the commercial streets, more festive than the church squares. In the morning, after the doctor has come by to check in, I go out for a coffee. In this hospital, situated in a deserted zone, there is no cafeteria. I walk along the Arlanza River to the closest bar, in a dazzling, radiant cold that Castilians call 'sun with fingernails'. I breathe in the frigid, perfectly clean air, a power washer targeting the anxiety hidden in my chest.

To be the trans son of a right-wing Spanish Catholic family is not an easy task. The Castilian sky is almost as clear as in Athens, but while in Greece it's a cobalt blue, here it's steel. Every morning, I go out and contemplate not returning. Deserting the family, the way you desert a war. But I don't do it. I go back and occupy the familiar visitor's chair that was assigned to me. What's the point of reason moving forward if the heart stays behind, said Baltasar Gracián. At the hospital, from noon to eight o'clock, the visits come one after another. This room is transformed into a public theatre on which my mother and I fight, not always successfully, to re-establish our roles. To introduce me, my mother says, This is Paul, my son. The answer is always the same: I thought you just had one daughter. Then my mother says, raising her eyes to the heavens and trying to imagine a way out of this rhetorical impasse: Yes, I just had one daughter, and now I have a son. One of the visitors deduces: Ah, he's your daughter's husband? I didn't know she got married, congratulations... Then my mother realizes she has made a strategical error and pulls back like someone who is trying as fast as she can to gather up the thread of a kite that has already

gone too high. She corrects: No, no, she's not married, she's my daughter... She falls silent for a minute while I stop looking at her, then continues: She's my daughter who now... is... my son. Her voice sketches a Brunelleschi dome rising to say 'daughter' and crashing down to say 'son'. It is not easy to be the mother of a trans child in a city where having a queer child is worse than having a dead child. Then the visitor's eyes turn every which way, before the visitor replies with a little sigh. Sometimes I smile: I feel like a comic actor in a sci-fi film – my life. Other times, I'm dumbfounded. There's no more talk of my mother's illness. Now the illness is me.

It is not easy to be the trans child of a Catholic family who learned that God chooses and he's never wrong. To decide anything different is to contradict God. My mother has denied the Church's doctrine. She says that a mother is more important than God. She continues to go to Mass on Sunday, of course: she goes to settle her accounts with the beyond, she says, and the Church doesn't have to be involved in that. She says this in a low voice – she knows she's blaspheming. It's not easy to be the mother of a trans child when you live in a community of neighbours who belong to Opus Dei. I feel indebted to her because I am not and cannot be a good son. As I elevate her legs to help the circulation I tell myself I am a better at-home aide than son. As I update her mobile phone apps, reorganize the screen and install new sounds, I tell myself that I am a better computer technician than son. As I gather her hair into a bun and give it volume in front, I tell myself that I am a better hairstylist than son. When I take photos to send to her friends who are over 80 and can no longer come see her, I tell myself that I am a better photographer than son. I am a better errand-boy than son. I am a better compiler of her favourite videos of Rocío Jurado on YouTube than son. I am a better reader of the local paper than son. I am a better ironer and folder of women's clothing than son. I am a better bathroom-cleaner than son. I am a better night nurse than son. I am a better airer-out of rooms than son. I am a better looker for lost keys in the bottom of her handbag than son. I am a better divider of pills than son. I am a better photocopier of documents for health insurance than son. And all these things – taking care of her, doing her hair, repairing computers and mobile phones, downloading videos, finding keys, making copies... calm me down, settle me, and put me at rest.

Burgos, 12 January 2018



## LETTER FROM A TRANS MAN TO THE SEXUAL ANCIEN RÉGIME

Ladies, gentlemen, and others,

In the midst of the crossfire around the politics of sexual harassment, I would like to take the stand as smuggler between two worlds, the world 'of men' and the world 'of women' (these two worlds that could very well not exist but that some people try to keep separate by a kind of Berlin Wall of gender), I want to give you news from the position of 'found object' or rather 'lost subject' during the crossing.

I am not speaking here as a man who belongs to the dominant class, to whom the masculine gender was assigned at birth, and who was brought up as a member of the governing class, of those to whom the right is granted or rather from whom it is demanded (and this is an interesting analytical key) that they exercise masculine sovereignty. I am not speaking, either, as a woman, given the fact that I have voluntarily and intentionally abandoned this form of political and social embodiment. I am expressing myself here as a trans man. Thus I am not claiming, in any way, to represent any collective whatsoever. I am not speaking, nor can I speak, as heterosexual, or as homosexual, although I know and inhabit both positions, since when someone is trans, these categories become obsolete. I am speaking as a gender defector, a fugitive from sexuality, as a dissident (sometimes awkward, since I lack the pre-established codes) of the sex-gender binary regime. As a self-guinea pig of sexual politics who is carrying out the experiment – not yet thematized – of living on each side of the wall and who, by dint of crossing it daily, is beginning to be tired, ladies and gentlemen, of the recalcitrant rigidity of codes and desires that the heteropatriarchal regime imposes.

Let me tell you, from the other side of the wall, that the thing is much worse than my experience as a lesbian woman allowed me to imagine. Ever since I have been living as-if-I-were-a-man in the world of men (aware of embodying a political fiction), I have been able to verify that the dominant (masculine, heterosexual) class will not abandon its privileges just because we send out some tweets or let out a few cries. Ever since the upheavals of the sexual and anti-

colonial revolution of the past century, heteropatriarchs have embarked on a project of counter-reform – to which now the ‘feminine’ voices who wish to continue to be ‘importuned/disturbed’ are joining. This will be the thousand-year war – the longest of wars, knowing it affects the politics of reproduction and the processes through which a human body is constituted as a sovereign subject. In fact, this will be the most important of wars, because what is at stake is neither territory nor city but the body itself, pleasure, and life.

What characterizes the position of men in our techno-patriarchal and hetero-centric societies is that masculine sovereignty is defined by the legitimate use of techniques of violence (against women, against children, against non-white men and women, against animals, against the planet as a whole). We could say, reading Weber with Butler, that masculinity is to society what the State is to the nation: the holder and legitimate user of violence. This violence is expressed socially in the form of domination, economically in the form of privilege, sexually in the form of aggression and rape. On the contrary, within this political epistemology, feminine sovereignty is linked to the capacity of women to give birth. Women are sexually and socially subjugated. Only mothers are sovereign. Within this regime, masculinity is defined necro-politically (by men’s right to put to death) while femininity is defined bio-politically (by women’s obligation to give life). One could say of necro-bio-political heterosexuality that it is something like the idealized eroticization of the mating of Robocop and Alien, thinking that with a little luck, one of the two will find his footing...

Heterosexuality is not just, as Wittig demonstrates, a technology of government: it is also a politics of desire. The specificity of this libidinal regime is that it is embodied as a process of seduction and romantic dependence between apparently ‘free’ sexual agents. The positions of Robocop and Alien are not chosen individually, and are not conscious. Necro-bio-political heterosexuality is a government practice that is not imposed by those who govern (men) on the governed (women) but rather an epistemology fixing the definitions and respective positions of men and women via internal regulation. This government practice does not take the form of a law, but of an unwritten norm, a transaction of gestures and codes that have the effect of establishing in the practice of sexuality a division between what can and cannot be done. This form of sexual servitude rests on an aesthetic of seduction, a stylization of desire and a historically constructed and codified domination eroticizing the difference of power and perpetuating it. This politics of desire is what keeps the ancien sex-gender régime alive, despite all the legal processes of democratization and

empowerment of women. This necro-bio-political heterosexual regime is as degrading and destructive as bondage and slavery were in the time of the Enlightenment.

The process of denouncing violence and making it visible that we are currently experiencing is part of a sexual revolution, which is as unstoppable as it is slow and sinuous. Queer feminism made epistemological transformation the condition of possibility of social change. It called binary epistemology and the naturalization of genders into question by asserting that there is an irreducible multiplicity of sexes, genders and sexualities. We understand today that libidinal transformation is as important as epistemological transformation: we must modify desire. We must learn to desire sexual freedom.

For years, queer culture was a laboratory of invention for new aesthetics of dissident sexualities, confronting techniques of subjectivation and the desire of hegemonic necro-bio-political heterosexuality. Many of us long ago abandoned the aesthetic of Robocop-Alien sexuality. We learned from butch-femme cultures and BDSM, with Joan Nestle, Pat Califia and Gayle Rubin, with Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens, with Guillaume Dustan and Virginie Despentes, that sexuality is a political theatre in which desire, not anatomy, writes the script. It is possible, within the theatrical fiction of sexuality, to desire licking shoe soles, to want to be penetrated in every orifice, or to hunt your lover in a forest as if he were sexual prey. However, two differential elements separate queer aesthetics from that of the hetero-norm of the ancien régime: consent and the non-naturalization of sexual positions. The equivalence of bodies and the redistribution of power.

As a trans man, I disidentify with the dominant masculinity and its necro-bio-political definition. What is most urgent is not to defend what we are (men or women) but to reject it, to disidentify ourselves from the political coercion which forces us to desire the norm and reproduce it. Our political praxis is to disobey the norms of gender and sexuality. I was a lesbian for the majority of my life, then trans these last five years; I am as far from your aesthetic of heterosexuality as a Buddhist monk levitating in Lhasa is from a Carrefour supermarket. Your aesthetic of the sexual ancien régime does not make me come. It doesn't excite me to 'importune' anyone. It doesn't interest me to get out of my sexual misery by placing my hand on the ass of a woman on the metro. I feel no kind of desire for the erotic-sexual kitsch you propose: guys who take advantage of their position of power to get laid and touch asses. The

grotesque, wounding aesthetic of necro-political heterosexuality turns my stomach. An aesthetic that re-naturalizes sexual differences and situates men in the position of the aggressor and women in that of victim (painfully grateful or joyfully importuned).

If it is possible to assert that in queer and trans culture we fuck better and more, it's on the one hand because we have extracted sexuality from the realm of reproduction, and on the other, more importantly, because we have tried to free ourselves from the domination of gender. I am not saying that queer and transfeminist culture escapes all forms of violence. There is no sexuality without a shadowy side. But it is not necessary for shadow (inequality and violence) to prevail and determine all sexuality.

Representatives of the sexual ancien régime, get to grips with your shadowy side and have fun with it, and let us bury our dead. Enjoy your aesthetic of domination, but don't try to make your style a law. And let us fuck with our own politics of desire, without man or woman, without penis or vagina, without axe or gun.

Arles, 15 January 2018

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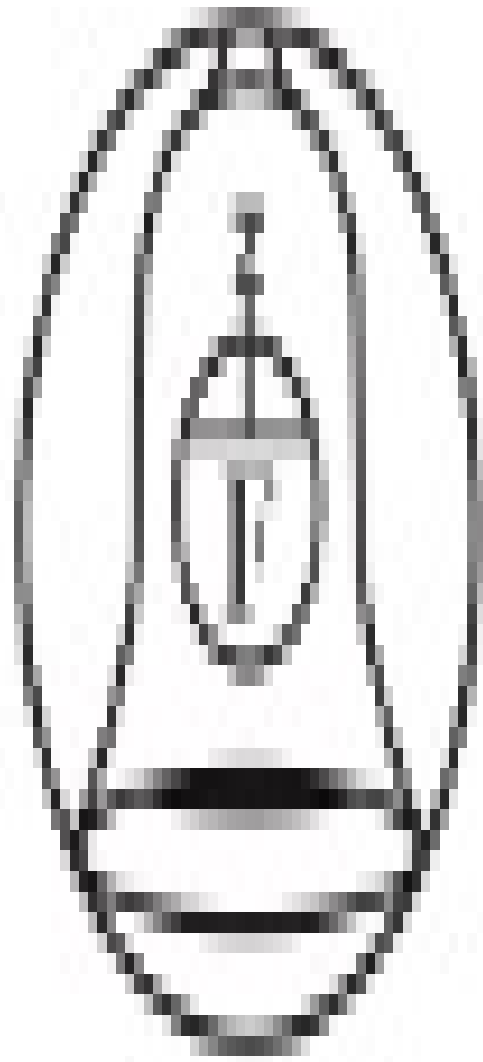
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