

# Theorising Affect, Rethinking Methods and (Re)Envisioning the Social

edited by Matthew Bakko and Sibille Merz



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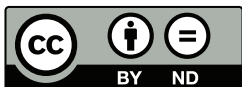
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# Towards an Affective Turn in Social Science Research? Theorising Affect, Rethinking Methods and (Re)Envisioning the Social

Matthew Bakko and Sibille Merz

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The proliferation and impact of theories of affect in the humanities can hardly be understated. Affect has reignited and augmented writings on the body, the everyday, relationality, cognition, and emotion in relation to, but also attempting to go beyond the dominant epistemological parameters of the linguistic turn. It has transformed scholarship on subject-object dichotomies, ontology, psychoanalysis, (post)structuralism, and the relationship between the social sciences and the biosciences, particularly the neurosciences. However, even with clear connections and relevance to the political, ethical, and cultural dimensions of everyday social life, the theorisation of affect has made slower progress as a node of analysis within the social sciences. This is not due to a lack of interest, rather, affect presents multiple, and especially methodological challenges for social scientists. Many of these difficulties in working with affect, which has provided for such a rich discourse in other areas of inquiry, relate to the differential meanings scholars have attached to it, many of which cannot easily be mapped onto existing concepts or forms of knowledge. The multiplicity of understandings of what affect is or can be is highlighted by the different ways the contributors to this special edition have utilised it: as potential, as practice, as technology, as emotion, as feeling, as labour, as relationality, as bodily intensive force, and as below, above, or alongside structure and power. These numerous conceptualisations of affect emerge through a Deleuzian process of territorialisation and deterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987): affect, even as a concept, holds within and without it, the potential to



be other than it is right now. Affect ebbs and flows, turns in and out on itself, and finds new meanings, applications, and potentials through its scholarly use. Great effort is put into conceptually wrangling with the phenomenon, and, apt to affect, this wrangling is always already productively in-process. The theorisation of affect as multiplicitous, ontological potential that is, at least somewhat, separate from the social, is what has made it so appealing to many scholars searching for ways to challenge the seemingly determinate theorising of the social found in much post-modern scholarship. It is in this Deleuzian vein, a vein that has gained particular traction in influencing scholarship on affect, that affect becomes a force of social *indeterminacy* that offers the opportunity for us to look at what is, imagine what could be instead, and grasp that this ‘instead’ is always already happening.

However, the apparent freedom, outsideness, otherness, excess or ‘autonomy’ from the social (Massumi, 2002) is a common thread that runs through many theories and conceptualisations of affect, and is also precisely what makes it particularly complex for social scientists, including those in this special edition, to productively utilise it for their own work. If part of affect is always already something else, something outside of what currently is, how do we study the what-is-not-yet, especially empirically? What can affect offer the social sciences when affect, and the world it brings about, escapes representation and consciousness? In other words, given that affect is often framed as a phenomenon that, at least partially, escapes perceptions, knowledge, reason, and language, how can it be made a focus of empirical research efforts? Isn’t affect precisely that which, *per definition*, cannot be captured through existing modes of knowledge production and representation? The question of the virtuality of affect is an undercurrent of tension that flows throughout the writings of this special edition.

In this context, the work of scholars such as Clare Hemmings (2005), who questions the distance of affect from the social postulated by Deleuzian scholarship, is especially instructive, including for many of the contributors to this edition. Hemmings’s interrogation of two of the powerhouses of affect theory scholarship, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and, particularly, Brian Massumi and his Deleuzian theorising, questions their interpretations of post-structuralist writing as socially deterministic, with affect as the path towards freedom from dominant, determining power structures. Her intervention helps us to understand the relation of affect to the social as one where not only the emergent world is shaped by affect, but in turn



the social world mediates affect. Hemmings (2005) leaves us with the provocation that ‘affect might in fact be valuable precisely to the extent it is not autonomous’ (Hemmings, 2005, 565). It is in this space of this ‘might’ that social science and its scholars must do their labour.

The scholars in this special edition do the labour of leaning into this theoretical tension between affect and the social in productively distinct ways. Sitting in this messy tension is not always easy for those trained in fields that often rely upon clearer, more positivist notions of what is knowable, and, especially, how. All of them, however, engage with this perceived tension and attempt to reconcile it for the purposes of advancing social research. The emerging scholars here grapple with the possibilities that affect brings about, prompting us to rethink our methods by challenging both affect theory and the (inter)disciplinary standpoints from which the authors write. How has affect been theorised in the social sciences so far? How can different theories and understandings of affect be applied, appropriated, and challenged by social science scholarship? What are the methodological implications of grappling with affect theories for the social sciences, especially as a disparate body of theories? How and in what ways does this grappling, the very process of it, assist us in (re)envisioning the social? These questions form the spirit of this special edition, which seeks to illuminate the multiple ways in which different theories of affect have informed social science scholars and early career researchers in their own methodological approaches. In this vein, it also seeks to contribute to wider shifts in the social sciences which illustrate the need to develop methodologies capable of grasping the social and cultural worlds as mobile, creative, messy, sensory or affective, open-ended and changing, and can account for the ‘performativity of the method’ (Coleman and Ringrose 2013, 1).

The first paper, *Affect and Sociology: Reflection and Exploration through a Study of Media and Gender in Urban China*, by Eva Cheuk Yin Li, considers the potential for sociological applications of affect, particularly for the purposes of empirical research. Initially grounding her understanding of operationalised affect through Margaret Wetherell’s (2012) ‘affective practices’ presented as ‘embodied meaning-making’, Li uses this foundation to make the analytical move of (re)reading sociological traditions, such as the sociology of emotion and symbolic interactionism, for their engagement with emotion, feeling, the corporeal, the body, and the emergent. This move allows Li to place her own sociological research on *zhongxing*

sensibility in China and Hong Kong within a reclaimed affective history of sociology. Through her explication of the gender and sexual dimensions of *zhongxing* sensibility, affect, then, is signified as a useful supplement for existing sociological methods in exploring less determined and static phenomena in the relational social world.

The tension in and potential of the relationship between affect and the social sciences in the first article is engaged with for the purposes of advancing social movement theory in the following article, *The Emergent Political: Affective Social Transformation in Two-Spirit, Queer and Trans People of Colour Media*, by Anabel Khoo. Khoo explores the everyday lived experiences of social justice movement making, processes brimming with relational affective potential, as a means of moving beyond the hegemonic neoliberal discourses that work to forge sedimented boundaries and outcome-based imperatives of what a movement should be, and do. She thereby opens up a discussion about different ways of attending to connections between political thought and action such as ‘pre-conscious embodied reactions, memory or lack thereof, emotional attachment and spiritual practices’ and challenges us to be attentive to the finer attunements of social transformation. By examining two-spirit, queer and trans people of color (2-QTPOC) media making, Khoo argues that theoretically and methodologically, an affective lens allows for the conceptualisation of social movements as assemblages, which constantly transcend the boundaries of time, space and discipline. Through negotiating and reimagining the past in the present in order to forge new futures, 2-QTPOC media artists use their lived experiences to assist in reorienting the way we think about and do social movements as emergent processes of *movement*. Khoo concludes that an attention to the affective dimensions of the social emphasises the potentialities of the social world and resists the consolidation of meaning and identity, which are so commonly taken as the basis of social justice movements, and highlights the affective registers of connection and attachment.

The affective queer temporalities explored in Khoo’s text form a common thread with the next article in this special edition, *DISTILLED: Queering Identity, Affect and Community*, by Slavco Dimitrov. Here, the author seeks to utilise affect in relation to subjectivity, the body, and queerness in order to dislodge the depoliticised logic of hegemonic identity politics. However, as he asserts, much theorising on affect is not up to this task when subjectivity is placed in determinate

opposition to indeterminate affect. With the assistance of John Protevi (2009) and his work on political and ecological affect, the author calls for and utilises a ‘bio-social dynamic’ that helps us engage with subjectivity as an emergent, embodied affective property in relation to a broader ecological field of assemblages. Dimitrov draws on the work of Macedonian artist Velimir Zernovski to explore related issues of vulnerability and shame, rethinking subjectivity and community from a generative place not necessarily tied to identity, but in productive tension with identities’ histories and potential futures. Through Zernovski’s work, queering subjectivity and community becomes an affective act, illuminating the emergent potentialities of opening ourselves to each other. This affective horizon is certainly not yet reality (and perhaps never will be), but its consideration offers hope of altering queer politics today.

The next two articles share a concern for the affective dimensions of post-Fordist forms of labour, particularly in relation to structures of power. Trina Joyce Sajo’s *Cybersex as Affective Production: Notes for a Framework* shows how power, manifested in governmental, technological, and economic structures in the Philippines, produces cybersex as a form of labour centrally involving the production and circulation of affects. As Sajo argues, cybersex highlights politically crucial intersections between capitalism, racism, and sexism, and, on an affective level, involves real bodies that are produced by and productive of emotions, vulnerabilities, and actions within this broader system of power relations. Affect helps us attend to the experiences as well as the risks and agential potentials of affective bodies in the environment of the cybersex industry. Affect and its circulation, then, is a form of value in excess of, but implicit to, cybersex, and the author asserts it must be taken into account in any critical analysis of capitalist control and exploitation.

An attention to affective labour, especially when viewed through the cybersex industry, begins to resonate with a history of feminist concerns with emotional, care, and reproductive labour. A feminist reading of affective labour is directly taken up in Svenja Bromberg’s *Vacillations of Affect. How to reclaim ‘affect’ for a feminist-materialist critique of capitalist social relations?* The author purports that affective labour is necessarily a gendered form of labour, with deep effects on women’s lives and solidarities. As such, theorisations of affective labour require a more systematic interrogation of the concept’s embeddedness in different

existing power structures and systems of oppression to allow for the possibility of political thinking and resistance autonomous from the capital relation. Affect here becomes an analytical tool for expanding our understanding of relational subjectivity in late capitalism and think (historical) materialism through the very materiality of the body.

The final contribution to this special edition is Sabiha Allouche's *Western Media as 'Technology of Affect': The Affective Making of the 'Angry Arab Man'*. More directly than the previous contributions, this text works firmly within a Deleuzian framework and attempts to 'de-colonise affect theory' through the disclosure of the affective dimensions of media narratives about and representations of the Middle East, operating, ultimately, as technologies of affect. The author shows how Western media constructs and territorialises the affect-stereotype of the Angry Arab Man as the emotive Other, drawing on postcolonial theory and the Deleuzian concepts of refrain and de-/reterritorialisation. The affect-stereotype as refrain, here, temporarily consolidates the configuration of the Arab Man through the capture of its affective excess. However, as Allouche goes on to argue, we should not take for granted the pre-conscious nature of affect, but conceive of emotions as spaces of resistance and counter activity. Drawing on the work of Lila Abu-Lughod and bell hooks, she highlights the politically charged nature of affective and emotional states, and their potential for challenging existing representations and formal politics.

Finally, this special edition includes two book reviews and one conference proceeding review. Whitney Stark reviews *Depression: A Public Feeling* by Ann Cvetkovich (2012), offering a nuanced critical race and post-colonial reading of the author's politicised engagement with depression. Katie Wetzel reviews Mel Y. Chen's (2012) *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* and highlights the theoretically eclectic ways Chen analyses animacy, and how affect is utilised to critique the limitations of animate language. Finally, Nayeli Urquiza Haas and Arturo Sánchez García give a detailed account of scholarly engagements with vulnerability that occurred during the 2013 PECANS Interdisciplinary Workshop for Postgraduates and Early Career Academics in the Area of Law, Gender and Sexuality. In a truly affective reading of vulnerability, the writers discuss the multiple ways in which the 'vulnerable subject is always encountering and being encountered, moving towards and being moved by others'.

A common theme develops through these essays that is at once political, as it is ethical. For affect to be in relation to the social means that affect and power-laden systems of oppression work above, below, and upon each other. With this in mind, it is difficult to think of social scientists *not* engaging with affect in terms of the feminist, postcolonial, queer, critical race, and Marxist theories that so greatly inform our understandings of the social. The potential of affect theory for forming new bodies, relationalities, movements, communities, and worlds makes it a suitable companion to the study of power in the social, political, and cultural worlds. Affect, then, can be ‘a starting place from which we can develop methods that have an awareness of the politics of aesthetics: methods that respond with sensitivity to aesthetic influences on human emotions and understand how they change bodily capacities’ (Hickey-Moody 2013, 79). What does it mean to (re)imagine the social through theorising affect? Are we creating affective methodologies here? What are the unexpected consequences, in the present and multiplicitous future, of bringing affect and the social closer together? The authors in this special issue have provided some preliminary answers to these questions, but as it is with affect, its impacts (many, not one) on social science are still full of possibility. However, let’s not forget what is also conversely true: the social sciences hold transformative potential to make productive impingements on affect theory, as the authors represented here have contributed to show.

The – intensely affective – process of editing this special issue has been as much a challenging as it has been a rewarding process, and it certainly has inspired us to develop further our own thinking about and practicing of (affective) social research methodologies. However, we are by no means solely responsible for the final version of this issue and would like to express our gratitude to many who have immensely supported our work over the last months. First, we would like to thank all the authors for sharing their thoughts, ideas and fascinating research projects with us and for patiently going through multiple rounds of revisions and editing. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers who have voluntarily shared their time and expertise to provide feedback to the authors and to make this issue a success. Most importantly, however, we would like to express our gratitude to the GJSS team, especially the former editors-in-chief Alexa Asthelan and Rosemary Deller who provided much needed support in the early stages of the editorial process, the current editors-in-chief Remi Salisbury and Arpita Das for

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# Affect and Sociology: Reflection and Exploration through a Study of Media and Gender in Urban China

Eva Cheuk Yin Li

**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to explore how affect can be registered to the interests of sociological research. It investigates how affect can be operationalised in empirical studies through a review of existing sociological literature, and illustrates the arguments made with ongoing research on *zhongxing* (neutral sex and/or gender) sensibility in urban China. I illustrate how social sciences literature attempts to operationalise affect and how sociological literature in the sociology of emotion and the sociology of the body has addressed the corporeal and the emerging. This paper concludes that affect may provide an additional lens to sociological research, but, when appreciating the insights of affect, we should not abandon the established concepts and paradigms of sociology as a discipline.

**KEYWORDS:** Affect, Feeling, Symbolic Interactionism, Zhongxing, Neutral Sex/Gender, Chinese Popular Culture

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## Introduction: Coming Across Affect

This paper, drawing on part of my doctoral project that studies the reception of *zhongxing* (neutral gender and/or sex) stardom and the reception and practice of *zhongxing* sensibility in urban China, aims to explore how and to what extent affect is related to sociological research. I first introduce my research by explaining the background, terminology and research questions. Then, I expand upon



critiques of existing writings on affect. The work of social psychologist Margaret Wetherell (2012) serves as a toolkit to register affect to the interests of empirical research and I elaborate on her approach to operationalise affect as embodied meaning-making. Recognising the insights of writings on affect in the humanities, I then take a step back to review how sociological literature has responded to the concern of the corporeal, the body, and the emerging. Finally, I illustrate how affect may offer an alternative reading of my interview findings.

In post-millennial East Asian Chinese popular culture across mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, *zhongxing* has emerged as a media phenomenon due to the success and stardom of female stars such as Chris Lee<sup>1</sup>, Bibi Zhou in mainland China, Denise Ho in Hong Kong, and Ella, MISSTER, and Jing Chang in Taiwan. Although theatrical gender ambiguity and androgynous representations are not uncommon in Chinese history (Chou 2004), the representation of androgynous women has been revived, popularised, and contested. In urban China, the fever of the 2005 reality show and singing contest *Super Girl* has circulated the term ‘*zhongxing*’ to a new height. Chris Lee, champion of the contest in 2005, together with other popular contestants such as Bibi Zhou and Liu Xin in subsequent years, are said to have the style of *zhongxing*, androgyny, female masculinity, or ‘T’.<sup>2</sup> Young girls were said to be imitating *zhongxing* by dressing up and performing in non-normative manners. Public visibility of non-normative gender and sexuality has increased as a result.

*Zhongxing*<sup>3</sup> literally means ‘neutral sex and/or gender’ and is commonly translated as androgyny in English. Androgyny and *zhongxing* are not the same though (Li, forthcoming). In the Chinese expression, *Zhongxing* connotes ‘not man and not woman’ while the English expression of androgyny refers to *both* man and woman. In its usage in Chinese, *zhongxing* is a vernacular term, while androgyny is less frequently used and mostly appears in academic discussions. More intriguingly,



Figure 1: Chris Lee in Chengdu, China, November 2013 (Courtesy of Sina Weibo user Wangyi)



*zhongxing* is neither an identity label equivalent to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and so on, nor an established social category. There exist both straight and non-straight girls self-describing as *zhongxing*. It has to be noted that female *zhongxing* and male *zhongxing* are asymmetrical as male *zhongxing* is more related to derogatory terms. Nonetheless, the popularity of female celebrities has provided several templates of *zhongxing* and served as nodal points of *zhongxing* sensibility.<sup>4</sup> *Zhongxing*, in the context of post-millennial East Asian Chinese societies mainly refers to, but is not limited to, a particular fashion style, non-normative sexualities, female masculinity, being modern, being independent and authentic, and so on. *Zhongxing* has become a contested space of gender performativity and negotiation of selfhood.

My research aims to understand the emergence of *zhongxing* as a post-millennial media phenomenon and as a contested space of negotiating gender and selfhood. It interrogates the cultural politics of *zhongxing*: how is *zhongxing* being negotiated and consumed in post-millennial Chinese societies? What are the practices of *zhongxing*? And in what ways is *zhongxing* used to resist normative identities including, but not limited to, youth, gender, consumer-citizen, and modern self? My methods include content analysis of newspapers, textual analysis of popular culture texts and fans' writings, and in-depth interviews with fans of *zhongxing* stars<sup>5</sup>, which are triangulated. I will explain and justify my methodology in the section 'Researching *Zhongxing* Sensibility in Urban China'. Intersecting the field of audience reception studies and gender studies, my study aims to explore how *zhongxing* is received and practised, negotiated, and used. Affect, in my research, is used as the practice of embodied meaning-making and serves as an additional lens to analyse the affective experiences of my informants.

As *zhongxing* constitutes a sensibility (Li, forthcoming), there exist both ideological and emotional dimensions of it. Why do *zhongxing* celebrities such as Chris Lee attract millions of followers in mainland China, why do some of the young girls choose to be *zhongxing*? Why do girls identify as *zhongxing*, and what has *zhongxing* celebrity triggered or helped them to articulate about their own gender and life stories? How can we elicit and unpack affective experiences and memory, such as being impressed by a *zhongxing* star on screen and such encounters triggering responses like crying and trembling? Affect, here, seems to offer at least some preliminary explanations.

However, when looking at how affect has been described in the humanities, it seems that empirical research of affect is not encouraged. While I cannot provide a thorough overview of theories of affect or bridge sociological and philosophical research due to the limited scope of this paper (for such an endeavour see, for example, Gregg and Seigworth 2010 or Wetherell 2012), I pose the question of what lessons affect might be able to offer sociological research, how to research affect methodologically and empirically, and what sociology has been offering on the subject of affect already.

## Critiques of Affect

What is affect? Is it a concept, a theory, a methodology, or a paradigm? Affect has been defined differently, and even contradictorily. More importantly, it is seldom defined clearly, as remarked by feminist theorist Clare Hemmings (2005, 551). Some discussions of affect, such as that of Brian Massumi (2002) and Nigel Thrift (2004), are grounded in Deleuzian theories to conceive affect as force and intensity (Massumi 2002), while other work such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) and Daniel Smail's (2009) draw from the 'basic emotions paradigm' (Tomkins, 2008) to conceptualise affect as free flow. According to Hemmings (2005), some theorisations of affect claim to go beyond signification to theorise a new ontology outside culture and the social; resolves the deadlock or dead end of current poststructuralist theory; offers affective freedom as the alternative to social determinism; and brings the body and embodiment back to social and cultural theory. Ruth Leys (2011, 443) argues that many writings of affect share the premise that affect is independent of signification and meaning. The scholarship on affect has also made a clear distinction between affect and emotion. For example, Massumi (2002, 61) argues that an emotion or feeling is a recognised and identified affect that has been named and interpreted, thereby equating emotion with feeling. Emotion is therefore 'a contamination of empirical space by affect' (ibid.).

Side-lining my argument with scholars who are sceptical of this 'magic' of affect, I here follow the critique offered by Hemmings (2005) and Leys (2011). Both of them have provided a critical analysis of the existing theorisations of affect in the humanities without totally rejecting its use. Hemmings (2005) closely examines the work of Massumi (2002) and Sedgwick (2003) and affirms that they have

overstated the limitations of post-structuralism in order to argue that affect is an alternative to cultural theory. Leys (2011, 435) concluded that the fascination of affect in the humanities and social sciences is mainly due to problems in existing theories, which have overemphasised reason and meaning while neglecting the role of corporeal-affective dispositions in their understanding of human agency and social reality. Both Leys (2011, 452–8) and social psychologist Margaret Wetherell (2012, 56–8) have illustrated how Massumi and like-minded theorists have only partially interpreted the neuro-scientific research conducted by Benjamin Libet (1985). In brief, Libet's research describes how participants were asked to flex their fingers at a moment that they chose and to report when they were first aware of their decision of doing so. Research results seemed to suggest that participants were conscious of their action only half a second later than their brain activity measured (Leys 2011, 453). Affect is thus argued to be autonomous: 'Bodies do their own thing. Language is, actually, almost beside the point now' (Wetherell 2012:58). However, Leys has discussed the flaws in Libet's experiment, such as informants being told to comply and perform according to researchers' expectations, and being asked to practice the action of flexing fingers beforehand (Leys 2011, 455)<sup>6</sup>. The experiment has been selectively read to conclude that the mind is a 'purely disembodied consciousness' and intention or willingness comes 'too late' in performing an action (Leys 2011, 456–7; Wetherell 2012, 56–6).

However, writings of affect do not only cause problems for empirical research due to their vague definitions, but also due to their idealisation of the mind as disembodied consciousness, and the irrelevance of discourse. As Wetherell (2012, 75–76) has argued,

[...] many of us are interested in developing more dynamic, sensual and lively accounts of social life. Yet we are asked to do this with no concept of discourse [...], with overly simple distinctions between representation and non-representation, and so on [...] Without this sense of discourse as practice, and as a core part of affective assemblages, work on affect as excess remains stuck with nowhere to go except further away from the empirical which theorists seem to prize but seem unable to engage with in any useful way.

Furthermore, critiques of affect are not only voiced from the social sciences, but

also from within the humanities. Witnessing various efforts at muddling constructively with the definition of and differentiation between affect, emotion, and feeling, Ann Cvetkovich (2012, 5) argues that the commonality of these three terms being points of departure to the texture of everyday life should be emphasised:

I tend to use affect in a generic sense, rather than in the more specific Deleuzian sense, as a category that encompasses affect, emotion, and feeling, and that includes impulses, desires, and feelings that get historically constructed in a range of ways [...] – but with a wary recognition that this is like trying to talk about sex before sexuality. I also like to use feeling as a generic term that does some of the same work: naming the undifferentiated “stuff” of feeling; spanning the distinctions between emotion and affect central to some theories; acknowledging the somatic or sensory nature of feelings as experiences that aren’t just cognitive concepts or constructions.

Preferring ‘feeling’ for its ‘ambiguity between feelings as embodied sensations and feelings as psychic or cognitive experiences’ (ibid, 4), Cvetkovich’s approach is seen as both eclectic and pragmatic because the abstract ontological distinction between affect, emotion, and feeling does not help in translating affect to fieldwork research: how does an ethnographer observe affect? How does a researcher ask informants to articulate something said to exist before consciousness and beyond signification? Therefore, Cvetkovich’s approach can be regarded as an attempt to engage affect into empirical research by bypassing the dichotomy between affect and emotion/feeling, as well as the philosophical debate about the relation of mind and body. This move is particularly helpful to operationalise affect as a useful conceptual tool to study the emerging and less-well-articulated dimensions of social life.

## Wetherell’s Toolkit Approach: Operationalising Affect as Practice

Wetherell’s (2012) *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*, an extensive inter-disciplinary literature review, is one of the most recent and substantial interventions into affect studies within the social sciences. As a social

psychologist, Wetherell is sceptical of the humanities' reading of sociobiological experiments and the conceptualisation of affect as free and/or autonomous. Nonetheless, she also sees affect as helpful in expanding the scope of social research by bringing embodiment, moments of feeling, the dramatic and the everyday back into social analysis. Her work can be read as a toolkit for registering affect to the interests of empirical research. Wetherell (2012, 4; 90) argues that affect and emotions can be understood as embodied meaning-making, which is largely constituted by discursive actions, reflexive representations, and verbal articulation. In order to make affect fruitful for empirical research, Wetherell (2012, 24) operationalises it as affective practice, which serves as the most coherent unit of analysis.

Practice is a concept which social sciences are mostly familiar with. In its simplest definition, practice refers to the nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki 1996, 2), implying embodied and interpretative features. According to Wetherell (2012, 22), a practice approach for affect 'focuses on processes of developmental sedimentation, routines of emotional regulation, relational patterns and 'settling'. It highlights the interconnected nature of social life and is defined as the 'figuration where body possibilities and routines become recruited or entangled together with meaning making and with other social and material figurations' (ibid., 19), and as an organic complex where bits of the body, feelings, interaction patterns, social relations, interpretative repertoires, personal histories and ways of life are relationally assembled and ordered (ibid., 13–4, 19–20). In this way, the mind and the corporeal are connected and affective practices become relatively, if not entirely, observable for fieldwork research.

## Affective Practice and Practice Theory

Although Wetherell suggests developing and conceptualising affect as affective practice, she does not go further into articulating a practice approach by engaging with practice theory in the social sciences. Devoting most of her efforts to compare and seek compatibility between writings of affect in the humanities and social sciences literatures, Wetherell (2012) leaves an explicit development of the practice approach to her readers. Therefore, the following section introduces the practice approach and how it potentially informs the study of affect as embodied meaning-making.

The concept of practice has appeared in diverse disciplines. Therefore, as philosopher Theodore R. Schatzki (2001, 2) notes, no unified practice approach exists. Sociologist Alan Warde (2005, 135–6) further argues that most theories of practice tend to be abstract and not readily applicable for empirical analyses; they tend to be idealised in assuming an implausible level of shared meaning and effective consensus of understandings, and are inadequate to account for social processes of the creation, reproduction and transformation of practice. Chronologically, there are two waves of contemporary scholarly references to practices (Postill 2010, 6). The first wave includes theorists in the twentieth century who have laid the foundations of practice theory such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Giddens. The second wave consists of scholars testing and extending the foundations of the first generation such as Theodore R. Schatzki, Andreas Reckwitz, and Alan Warde. In addition to the two waves of literature on practice identified by John Postill (2010, 6), the emergence of a third wave of work provides more clues for empirical research as they aim at deriving highly specific and contextualised approaches to practice. Examples here include *Theorising Media and Practice* edited by Birgit Bräuchler and Postill, centring on media anthropology and media sociology, and *Practicing Culture* edited by Craig Calhoun and Richard Sennett (2007), devoted to bridging the analytical disjuncture of cultural studies and sociology of culture (Hall 2009, 193). Essays in these volumes demonstrate different degrees of adaptation of practice theory concerning the compatibility of the social ontology of practice theory and the specific practice theorists that they follow.

Wetherell's proposal of theorising affect as practice is a step forward in the direction of operationalising affect for empirical research as she brings the corporeal body back into the realm of signification and interpretation and hence places both meaning and body at the centre of analysis. From the contemporary intervention of theories of practice, practice is a conceptual tool that shares a concern with affect over the body and the everyday. Yet, there are further issues to be taken into consideration especially if we understand practice as a specific analytical tool instead of a descriptive term, common to research in anthropology and cultural studies (Warde 2005, 150). How does the notion of affective practice make sense and make use of the existing literature on the theory of practice? And, if practice refers to 'doing and saying,' which implies embodiment, are not all practices affective?

What is the relation between affect and the ideal type of practice (Reckwitz 2002)?

Further work on developing affective practice as an analytical tool is needed as it is indeed highly context-specific, the three directions proposed by Wetherell (2012, 11–17) to study affect serve as a useful guide to conduct a multi-layered analysis of lived experiences. Wetherell suggests three lines of inquiry into analyses of affect by studying the directions of flowing activity; patterns, habits and assemblages; and power, value and capital. What she refers to as the flow of affective practice delineates how feelings circulate and recur; flowing activity therefore points to the articulation of affect in broader social contexts. This process will be particularly important for the emerging and ambiguous dimension of the social, for example, an emerging feeling of sexual minorities being ‘normal’ as a result of a multitude of factors, including cultural citizenship through popular culture. Secondly, the study of patterns highlights how possible sedimentation, routinisation, and even institutionalisation of emerging feelings take place. Thirdly, an attention to the interconnectedness and intersection of personal histories and social processes enshrines how power interweaves and operates in social life.

## Re-Discovering the Discipline of Sociology

Affect has puzzled many of us in the social sciences for its vague definition and radical freedom. However, if affect is understood as feeling, a vernacular term that refers to the ambiguity of embodied sensation and cognitive processes, downplaying its pre-consciousness and emphasising the experience of the corporeal body, we actually find relevant works in sociology which have existed even before the emergence of the affective turn. The lessons that affect offers are not as new to sociology as many contend. For instance, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has argued that the key sociological concept of socialisation treats the ‘body as “memory jogger” [...] by the evocative power of bodily mimesis, a universe of ready-made feelings and experiences’ (Bourdieu 1984, 474 cited in Wetherell 2012, 106). The corporeal, the bodily, and feeling bounded by context and institutional arrangements have played an important part in sociological imagination, although they have largely remained hidden from view (Shilling 1993, 8–11). Such relative neglect of the body has limited sociology as a discipline to acknowledge the fact that ‘humans have bodies which allow them not only to see, listen and think, but to feel (physically

and emotionally), smell and act' (Shilling 1993, 19–20). Therefore, I argue that some of the forgotten insights in the discipline of sociology have to be revived. In the following, I focus on the sociology of emotion, symbolic interactionism and the sociology of the body.

## Sociology of Emotion

The sociology of emotion is devoted to the empirical study of feeling and emotion by articulating the links between cultural ideas, structural arrangements and feelings. It is characterised by a number of competing research agendas and debates, for instance, positivistic versus anti-positivistic, quantitative versus qualitative approaches, prediction versus description and so on (Kemper 1990; Turner 2009). These debates precisely reveal the tensions and complex relations between the corporeal and the social. I shall illustrate characteristics and issues of this scholarship with Arlie Russell Hochschild's feminist studies of emotional labour (1983, 1990), which are interpretative, ethnographic, symbolic interactionist and social constructionist in orientation. The interactionist approach regards physiological corporeal reactions as part of the emotional complex and as being largely subject to social management (Kemper 1990, 20). This is to acknowledge the interplay between and significance of feeling and social settings. Drawing from Darwin's biological approach (which Hochschild called the 'organismic model'), from Freudian signal analysis, and Erving Goffman's interactionist model (Hochschild 1983, 211–232), Hochschild's utmost concern is how social structure and institutions control and discipline how we personally control and manage 'feeling'.

Hochschild (1983, 220; 1990, 118) defines emotion as a special sense in humans for its orientation towards action and cognition, while feeling is a diffuse or mild emotion. Hochschild (1983, 233–43) has provided a list of existing defined emotions which is helpful, but not exhaustive to study emerging feelings in articulation. There are several problems in this scholarship. The first concerns the usefulness of differentiating emotion and feeling. The second relates to how the list of emotions identified and studied as produced leaves ambiguous and unnamed feelings outside the emotional categories defined by psychologists, and hence out of the scope of analysis. For instance, in the study of 'queer feeling', shame is often unrecognised and unacknowledged (Munt 2008, 5). Similarly, queers feeling dis-



comfort in heterosexual public culture (Ahmed 2004, 144–167) is not regarded as an emotional category. Nonetheless, an important insight offered by this scholarship is how social structure and cultural trajectories discipline and shape how we make sense of what we feel, and how social agents respond to and take up such space of feeling.

## Symbolic Interactionism and the Sociology of the Body

The creative and imaginative arguments proposed by post-structural and post-modern theorists are attractive to scholars studying gender and sexuality. However, sociologist Ken Plummer (2003, 520) suggests that they are of limited relevance since sociologists ground their research in the obdurate empirical world for contextual and situated knowledge. Following this vein, I insist that meaning still matters and affect is not as free-floating as claimed by affect theorists.

Symbolic interactionism shares certain similar interests with those of affect theory. Some of the emphasis of writings put forward in the humanities, such as the texture of everyday life and the interest in the temporal, are not new to this branch of sociology. The recent interest in affect persuasively reminds us that the elements of social life are not always well-defined but amorphous and ambiguous. In this section, I demonstrate that social theory has been engaging with some of the issues that affect addresses. I then consider Ken Plummer's (2003) notes about sexuality studies to illustrate that it is possible to adopt the symbolic interactionist framework to study affect in social research.

Symbolic interactionism rejects totalising and grand theories of the social and commits to the understanding and unfolding power and texture of everyday life (Denzin 1992, 20–23). It studies patterns and routines of interaction, but also epiphanic feeling and temporal experience, and tries to locate these situations within social structures (ibid, 26–7). There are three general premises that are central to this branch of sociological thought (Blumer 1969, 2): human actions are based on meanings available for them; meanings are obtained and derived from social interactions with others including objects; and meanings are processed as an interpretative process to help social actors evaluating and making sense of things that they encounter. As a branch of microsociology, symbolic interactionism highlights individual accountability and agency as well as addresses everyday

structural, cultural, and material conditions that people experience and reproduce (Fields, Copp, and Kleinman 2006, 157).

The 'pre-conscious' and 'pre-interpretative' is considered to be part of an on-going action which human beings reflectively evaluate and interpret at the symbolic level. Herbert Blumer (1969, 8) elaborates on George Herbert Mead's ([1934]1972) 'conversation of gestures' and 'use of significant symbols', using the example of a boxer who, when unreflectively or 'automatically' raising his hand to resist an attack, triggers a 'non-symbolic interaction', a form of unconscious communication. However, when the boxer reads the next attack as a trap and responds accordingly, his reaction constitutes a symbolic interaction. More importantly, the boxer may evaluate his own gesture after the game and interpret why he acted in certain ways and not others. This example shows that sociology does indeed approach the embodied pre-conscious but maps the body onto a wider web of social meanings and practices, rather than understanding it as an abstract concept beyond recognition.

Blumer's boxer analogy is useful to illustrate that unreflective temporal action is part of a larger action that we interpret in interaction with others. However, we are not sure if every boxer is aware of the unreflective acts in the fight. Does the boxer in Blumer's example actually internalise these unreflective acts? In other words, is his body trained in specific ways to embody such actions before he interprets? We may attribute the presumably unconscious actions to what Wetherell (2012, 129) calls the affective hinterland: affect rests on 'a large unarticulated hinterland of possible semiotic connections and meaning trajectories' where individuals refer to and draw resources from language and sign systems, cultural and historical repertoires and personal histories. The so-called unconscious, unfelt, and unformulated should therefore be regarded as the 'possible meanings and significances [which] exceed and proliferate what can be grasped and articulated in any particular moment' (ibid.).

The example of the boxer can also be seen as a response to the critique that there is a lack of a theory of the body in contemporary social theory. In developing a framework from symbolic interactionism to study the body, Dennis Waskul and Phillip Vannini (2006, 2) emphasise that the complex and layered experience of the body and embodiment lie not only at the level of human subjective experience, but also in 'interaction, social organisation, institutional arrangements, cultural

processes, society, and history.’ Refining the interactionist framework, we may then better make sense of the ‘contagion’ of affect. Inter-subjectivity is the result of shared emotional experiences in a particular social milieu, instead of mysterious movements such as affects ‘sticking’ and ‘sliding’ on objects (Ahmed 2004).

As an advocate of symbolic interactionism in sociological research on sexuality, Plummer (2003, 525) considers seriously the challenge of post-structuralist positions in sexuality research and seeks a sociological approach to tackle it. He draws our attention to new efforts by bringing the body back to social research, for example, the development of the ‘sociology of bodies’ (Shilling 1993) that recognises the importance of embodiment and subjectivity. The sociology of the body argues that the body has increasingly become a central site where a modern person’s sense of self, identity and subjectivity are constituted (ibid, 1–3). This suggestion parallels Wetherell’s (2012) understanding of affect as embodied meaning-making by emphasising the centrality of the body in social processes. Thinking about bodies, Plummer (2005, 526) observed that the discussion has been more tilted to the representation of the body instead of the corporeality and materiality of bodies.

‘Radically free’ affect presents a puzzle to social research because it is said to constitute a drive, force, or intensity, which seem untranslatable as they are hardly or even impossibly observable. Even harder is operationalising this understanding of affect for empirical research. If we consider affect as an embodied experience, an emerging dimension of social life, a feeling that is emerging and not yet fully articulated, affect indeed reminds us of the irregularity, complexity, and even messiness of the empirical world that we are living in (Plummer 2005, 524). Plummer (ibid.) contends that symbolic interactionism does tackle the complexity of everyday life by refusing the false dichotomy of the biological and the social which interact, rather than contradict each other. Addressing the emerging and the messiness of social life, Plummer (2005, 524–525) highlights that

Of course, symbolic interactionism has always properly highlighted the fluidity, emergence and processual aspects of social life. Their analytic focus is always on becoming and emergence and change. But interactionism has never said that there are no stable patterns of routine interactions or that selves do not become routinised, lodged, committed and stabilised. Indeed, process and pat-

tern commingle and the task of interactionists is to chart this stable process. Thus the precarious everyday flux of life is open to constant stabilising and essentialising.

By considering embodied experiences in social analysis, we come to better understand the operations of power, how people produce and reproduce themselves and social arrangements, and how they resist and negotiate inequality (Fields et al. 2006, 175). Without abandoning the importance of meaning and interaction and taking the insights of the symbolic interactionist framework, the sociology of emotion and the sociology of the body on board, affective experience, emotions, and feelings are indeed social and multifaceted.

## Researching *Zhongxing* Sensibility in Urban China

The aforementioned discussion has illustrated how affect is related to the interest of sociological research and how sociology has been addressing corporeal experience, as well as emerging and less sedimented phenomena in society. This offers an insight into how I approach my interview data with the additional lens on embodied experience and less verbally articulable feelings.

Plummer (2003, 524) has well reminded us that the empirical world is ‘messier’ than our imagination, but that constant sedimentation takes place. While acknowledging the contributions of poststructural and postmodern queer writings, Plummer (2003, 525) is critical of utopian views of free-floating and fluid identities and desires since ‘sexualities and genders tend to be organised very deeply indeed’ and gender ‘seems to have a very deep structure’. In the empirical world, we may not find many people living in such fluid desires and identities, and gender and sexuality are still powerful organising principles in many ways (ibid.). This position relates my study of *zhongxing* back to the empirical world. In spite of the ambiguity of its meaning, there are some features that are more sedimented, structured and institutionalised: the most observable forms as embodiment, alternative ways to do gender, and the relevance to female masculinity.

It may be relatively straightforward to study the representation of *zhongxing* by conducting textual analysis on the texts of popular *zhongxing* female stars. However, studying the reception, consumption, and appropriation, in other words, the

lived experiences of *zhongxing*, is more complicated. In my previous research that studied the fan community of queer singer Denise Ho in Hong Kong (Li 2011, 2012), I followed an approach enshrined by the ethnographic turn in audience studies, and the three waves of fandom studies that focus on power, hierarchy, resistance, incorporation, and capital (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2007). However, besides meaning-making and signification, mediated experience and negotiation of identities also involve emotional dimensions and feelings. Furthermore, audiences' personal history and diverse trajectories matter in shaping their consumption and appropriation of text as Virginia Nightingale (1996, 148) summarised:

Just as people as audiences cannot be separated from personal, social and cultural continuity, so texts cannot be isolated from their broader cultural significance, or from the history of that significance. The audience-text relation is a chimera, which can only ever be apprehended partially. [...] Audience is a shifty concept.

While it is possible to investigate this topic in a more 'conventional' way by interviewing audiences about their interpretation of star texts, affect provides an entry point into approaching the process of contestation and negotiation involving *zhongxing* sensibilities. The strength of affect as feeling to social research, as discussed above, is that it refashions our understanding of the emerging by explicitly registering embodied experience and the corporeal body to social analysis. What does *zhongxing* sensibility project for modern Chinese women? How do we articulate these feelings and desires? What are these feelings and desires about? To transgress, normalise, resist, escape power, or something else? If affect is embodied meaning-making as argued by Wetherell (2012), what if meaning exists under constant negotiation and articulation? Are we able to articulate ambiguity through signification and interpretation? Furthermore, what is the potentiality of such ambiguity? What does this ambiguity and a less-sedimented dimension of *zhongxing* tell us about the transformation of gender and sexual contours and the broader social structure?

Due to the ambiguous definition of *zhongxing* and the fact that *zhongxing* is not a sexual or gender identity or practice, the result of recruiting voluntary informants who are 'self-identified *zhongxing* women' through a mass LGBT mailing

list in Shanghai<sup>8</sup>, my site of fieldwork in urban China, has not been satisfactory. I received two responses and interviewed only one voluntary participant. Considering female *zhongxing* stars as the nodal point of *zhongxing* sensibility which attract audiences with potential desires and resonances, I thus approached the fan community of Chris Lee, the most renowned and controversial *zhongxing* celebrity in contemporary mainland China as identified through content analysis of newspapers from 2000 to 2010. During 2013 and 2014, I have been to Shanghai twice to conduct in-depth interviews with 32 self-identified Chris Lee fans.<sup>9</sup>

Interview questions included the informant's subjective experience of being a fan, their interpretation of Chris Lee's *zhongxing* body and representation, and their own embodied experience of *zhongxing*. Most of them articulated what a female *zhongxing* body is like, for example girls wearing trousers instead of dresses and behaving 'less girly'. Nonetheless, there are also ambiguities arising from some of the interviews with some informants finding it difficult, for example, to account for their passion and fandom. Some of them expressed that 'Chris Lee's appearance on screen is comforting even at the first glance' and 'I have been into this type of not-too-girly person for long since I was small'.

I tried to find out how *zhongxing* sensibility is felt, from the non-verbal side of interview data such as my informants' gestures, facial expressions, tones of speaking alongside the story-telling of their everyday life. My informants are fans of the most hotly debated<sup>10</sup> female *zhongxing* star in (mainland) Chinese popular culture, but their fandom experiences in everyday contexts are not merely limited to intimate text-audience relations. They consume and live with certain feelings and desires. When unpacking informants' mediated experience of receiving and consuming star texts, I found the affective dimensions of *zhongxing* sensibility, i.e. 'feeling': their bodily responses, the feeling of having company, what they seek to become through popular culture, their desires and anxieties, and how these experiences serve as resources for them to negotiate and become self-reliant and individualistic female subjects in post-socialist China (Zhang and Ong 2008).

To illustrate these complexities, I here narrate Xiao Hui's story. Xiao Hui is a 19-year-old girl from Chengdu in the Sichuan province. Her parents are peasants and she moved to Shanghai to work as an office clerk after graduating from high school. She had short hair and wore a pair of glasses with a black frame, and was cheerful and excited in sharing her experiences of being a fan throughout the in-

interview. Before I started asking her a single question, she eloquently told me how adorable Chris Lee was. At one point, I interrupted and asked if she could recall the first time that she encountered Chris Lee.

I was in junior high school at that time. I still remember how I felt when I first saw her (Chris Lee) in television. It was the quarter final of the (Super Girl) singing contest. For unknown reasons, I cried when I saw her performing on stage. I don't know why ... Perhaps it's because I finally saw somebody like me on screen. I mean ... I've always been like this and finally I saw somebody like me on TV and receiving applause from others too.

I asked her if she could further elaborate what she meant by 'people like me', she paused and then went on slowly,

I don't know if I am normal or not, but I've always been different from other girls in school. I like having short hair. I am sportive and I hate studying. I am not a girly girl. And it's Chris Lee who made me feel that I am not alone.

Despite its textual ambivalence, *zhongxing* has been associated with female masculinity, specific ways of styling bodies such as having short hair and dressing in loose clothes, and so on (Li forthcoming). It is obvious that Xiao Hui became a fan of Chris Lee not entirely because of what Chris Lee sang in the singing contest, but because of her gender representation and the applause she received. Xiao Hui has engaged in these bodily practices for years and the stardom of Chris Lee gave her resonance and even comfort. However, when it comes to the discussion and naming of these bodily practices, she hesitated:

Me: 'So do you feel comfortable when people say you are like Chris Lee? Are you being called *zhongxing* sometimes?'

Xiao Hui: 'To be frank I think Chris Lee is not *zhongxing*, she's actually very feminine ... Personally I feel comfortable with being *zhongxing*. Senior colleagues, those middle age aunties in my office said I am *zhongxing*. I don't think *zhongxing* is abnormal ... It is not really about homosexuality.<sup>11</sup> But people attack Chris Lee by saying she's *zhongxing*. To me, being *zhongxing* is not something to be

particularly proud of. It's just the way I am. But if you say I am *zhongxing*, I am fine. At least it's not something more negative.'

Xiao Hui's struggle with *zhongxing* is worth noting. She felt comfortable with being *zhongxing* as long as it is not explicitly named. She struggled with people attacking Chris Lee as *zhongxing* by implying *zhongxing* to be 'abnormal' and due to the homosexual undertone, but she tried to feel comfortable to be *zhongxing* in her own skin, since it is the least offensive term she could find to describe her non-normative way of doing gender. This is what I argue constitutes the affective dimension of doing gender. To Xiao Hui, being *zhongxing* does not only mean specific ways of dressing up, but also the feeling of one's body located in social space and negotiating one's gender performativity. Xiao Hui's affective practice of bodily stylisation and the uneasiness invoked by *zhongxing* help to further understand the negotiation of heteronormativity and gender performativity in post-socialist Chinese society, where the state, market, and tradition intensely shape the ideology of gender and sexuality.

## Conclusion

When I first came across affect in my research on the lived experience of *zhongxing* sensibility in urban China, I did not find the line of reasoning often practiced by theorists of affect in the humanities particularly useful for my own work. However, after deeper engagement with the trajectory of affect theory, and despite the persistence of problems, or even flaws, in existing writings on affect, affect certainly has the potential to bring the corporeal, embodied, texture, feeling, and the emerging back to the realm of social and empirical research as suggested (Hemmings 2005; Leys 2011; Wetherell 2012). This paper did not aim to bridge sociology and the humanities in studying affect. Instead, it presents an attempt to explore how affect is registered to the interests of sociological research, illustrated by research intersecting media audience and gender and sexuality.

As Wetherell (2012, 56) argues, researchers engaging in empirical research need an eclectic approach that investigates how discursive formations or 'big discourse' are intertwined with the 'patterning of everyday, dynamic and immediate discursive practice'. Without discarding the relevance of affect for sociological



research, I argue that there have been relevant concerns within sociology even before the affective turn. In particular, symbolic interactionism as an established sociological framework that defies grand theory and generalisation has emphasised a commitment to the texture and interconnectedness of everyday life. Building upon Ken Plummer's position (2003) and the sociology of body, I have here offered a preliminary analysis of my research findings.

Reiterating the significance of discourse and meaning-making in the empirical world, affect benefits social research of the emerging and the ambiguous and brings the corporeal body back into the centre of analysis. Corporeal bodies are where power is incarnated and where personal trajectories encounter social history. When appreciating the insights offered by writings of affect, however, we should not abandon the established concepts and paradigms of our discipline.

## Acknowledgments

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Chris Lee, aka Li Yuchun, was crowned champion of the competition by receiving more than 3.5 million SMS votes, which is regarded as unprecedented in the mainland Chinese entertainment industry.
- <sup>2</sup> For the emergence of this group of *zhongxing* stars and the articulation of *zhongxing* in East Asian Chinese popular culture see Li (forthcoming). For the term 'T-style singers' see the discussion of lesbian culture in urban China in Kam (2014).
- <sup>3</sup> *Zhong* literally means 'in-betweenness' and *xing* literally means sex and/or gender. *Zhongxing* together can refer to 'neutral', in the sense of a neuter, and also 'neutral sex and/or gender'.
- <sup>4</sup> For the conceptualisation of *zhongxing* sensibility, see Li (forthcoming). Drawing on Wu Cuncun (2004, 6), Lawrence Grossberg (1992, 72–3) and Rosalind Gill (2007, 148–9), Li argues that 'the media articulations and configurations of *zhongxing* that are largely influenced by the emergence of the post-millennial queer stardom and the related media discourses' which serves as a lens to 'explore the symbols, practices, feelings and other emerging features of *zhongxing* that arise from transnational queer stardom in Chinese popular culture in the recent decade'.

- <sup>5</sup> In my project, I have chosen Chris Lee from mainland China and Denise Ho from Hong Kong as the main case studies.
- <sup>6</sup> Leys has provided further references for the technical and conceptual problems in Lib-ert's experiment (Leys 2011, 455 n38).
- <sup>7</sup> Reckwitz (2002, 256) stresses the centrality of practice in social life and regards individu-als as 'the unique crossing point of practices, of bodily-mental routine'. To further estab-lish practice theory as a theoretical 'ideal type', Reckwitz differentiates it from other cul-tural theories in eight dimensions: location of the social, body, mind, things, knowledge (know-how), discourse, structure/process, and the agent.
- <sup>8</sup> Shanghai is the most populated and wealthiest city in China (National Bureau of Statis-tics of China 2013).
- <sup>9</sup> I have interviewed 32 self-identified Chris Lee fans (29 female and 3 male) in Shanghai be-tween 2013 and 2014. They were recruited through snowball sampling. Their age ranged from 19 to 46 and occupation ranged from student, office clerk, professional, housewife, to worker in a smartphone subcontractor company. 7 of them are local Shanghainese and the rest came from 15 other provinces in China. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, transcribed to Chinese and then translated into English.
- <sup>10</sup> According to my informants and various newspapers, Chris Lee has been under heavy attack due to her androgynous gender representation on screen and her unfeminine vo-cal quality. There used to be large group of anti-fan and haters (known as *yu hei*) and the nickname *Chun Ge* (Brother Chun) is considered an ultra-offensive term to Chris Lee and her fans.
- <sup>11</sup> It should be noted that in the course of the interview, I avoided using terms about same-sex desires such as lesbian, *lala*, and homosexuality unless my informants themselves used them, as homosexuality is considered a taboo for most people in China.

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# The Emergent Political: Affective Social Transformation in Two-Spirit, Queer and Trans People of Colour Media

Anabel Khoo

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*Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine.  
It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it  
can speak the language of your thoughts and desires.*

Avery Gordon

Attending to the affective dimensions of social phenomena can foster new social justice-oriented perspectives and practices that intentionally harness power affectively, rather than only building static structures of opposition that can serve to limit the breadth and depth of social justice organising. The word ‘attending’, is apt in this consideration, because it is not that affects necessarily need to be ‘discovered’ to be brought into being; power, as it circulates affectively, is always already there. However, just as power works affectively, political potentialities also form and proliferate. Theorising social justice movements affectively means attending to the details of lived experience as they manifest in the complex webs that connect political thought to action. Whether it be pre-conscious embodied reactions, memory or lack thereof, emotional attachment and spiritual practices, these happenings and their qualities are part of an environment of co-constitute relationships from which movements emerge, fall apart or continue to gradually evolve.

Theorising political potential through this paradigm allows for the consideration of organising methods that can adapt and thrive beyond neoliberal outcome-based imperatives and strict notions of ‘successful’, or ‘strong’ movements. If we consider our current era as a ‘state of exception’, a term brought forth by Carl



Schmitt and expanded on by Giorgio Agamben, wherein a state of emergency becomes permanent and is based on the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good as 'part of a wider range in governance in which the rule of law is routinely displaced by the state of exception, or emergency, and people are increasingly subject to extra-judicial state violence' (Bull, 2004), then building community and movements toward deep transformative social change cannot rely on standards of productivity and guaranteed outcomes. Rather, social transformation requires a finer attunement to the parts *between* and *within* each of us; the complexities and contradictions that characterise the relationality so fundamental to growing practices of resistance and survival that are: anti-racist, decolonial, non-patriarchal, queer, and non-able-bodied.

My research focuses on two-spirit, queer and trans people of colour (2-QTPOC) media making as a process of movement building. In doing this work, I find it not only useful, but necessary to theorise affectively in order to affirm the generative quality that 2-QTPOC media can hold. 2-QTPOC media can constitute sites and processes that reckon with the tensions ever-present in political resistance by attending to the tensions between representation and embodiment, ideology and lived experience, direct action and dreams.

Theorising through affect helps to conceptualise social justice movement building as an 'assemblage', because 'in its debt to ontology and its espousal of what cannot be known, seen, or heard, or has yet to be known, seen, or heard, [assemblage] allows for becoming beyond or without being' (Puar, 2007, 216). An affective lens facilitates the emergence of the new – not as a turning away from the past or present, but as a recapitulation of history/knowledge/experience formed *with* these paradoxes, rather than *despite* them. Furthermore, bringing an affective focus into the realm of the social sciences is less about valuing the relevance of one academic discipline over another than it is about a broader paradigm shift beyond disciplinarity. Embracing such an epistemological paradigm also requires a recognition that the attention to intensity and the metaphysical that contemporary theorists categorised in the 'affective turn' references conjures practices and thought that have always been present in the cosmologies, knowledges and rituals of indigenous and people of colour. 'Affect theory', as a field of intellectual enquiry can exist as such, but should also be practiced in a way that resists the reification of a 'new' or separate discipline, and instead be considered as an approach

that can be enacted in different ways. Therefore, I choose to honour the legacy and ongoing work of two-spirit, queer and trans people of colour (2-QTPOC), by writing, as a queer woman of colour, about 2-QTPOC who organise and produce creative work through affective methods.

The 2-QTPOC media makers I highlight all work through both the explicitly political and everyday experiences to create and express assemblages that redefine what is possible for social justice-oriented efforts. By attending to both what haunts and lingers from the past, and to what potential futures emanate on the horizon of our imaginations, these artists and organisers engage in creative processes that also shape political strategy and possibility. Approaching 2-QTPOC media from within an affective paradigm leads to questions that reach for answers beyond what media *should be*, towards what it is that media *do*. Within the process of performance or media making, how do 2-QTPOC artists attend to haunting as it is embedded in ritual and memory? How can 2-QTPOC media reveal and create potentialities of ‘queer futurity’ and a queer political imagination?

## Haunting: Survival and Shapeshifting at the Crossroads

In her book, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery Gordon describes ‘haunting’ as ‘a paradigmatic way in which life is more complicated than those of us who study it have usually granted’ that is ‘neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis,’ but a “constituent element of modern social life’ (Gordon, 1997, 7). The concept of ghostliness and haunting that Gordon grapples with is about the attachments that linger, whether we are conscious of them or not, that get lost in the shadows of personal trauma, social relations and political moments, and remain almost not there, but often manifest at different affective registers of bodily or psychic experience that are not necessarily linear, rational or intentional. These ghosts overcrowd the gap between structures that are the subtraction of attachment and the longings and the haunting of something we cannot let go of. It is this in between realm that often goes overlooked or ignored in intentional engagements with political organising. Haunting brings up epistemological and ontological questions, such as: What escapes consolidation and containment? What defies consciousness but nevertheless compels?



In the media-based projects, *Mobile Homecoming* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Julia Wallace and the *Unknown Artist* series by TextaQueen, these queer of colour artist/activists practice social justice-oriented mediation by drawing from and rearticulating hidden histories, lived experiences and healing rituals that haunt cultures and representations of queer of colour political resistance.

*Mobile Homecoming*, an intergenerational and ‘experiential’ archiving project that tours queer of colour communities across the United States, is described by Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Julia Wallace, two young, queer women of colour, as a spiritual journey that honours the ‘trans and cis-gendered women, trans men and genderqueer black people [who] grew their own bravery and created community’ (Gumbs and Wallace, 2012). Ann Cvetkovich writes, in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, about the complexity of institutional memory, archives, public feelings, everyday trauma, and ephemera from queer social movement. Cvetkovich invites her readers to explore ‘how trauma can be a foundation for creating counterpublic spheres rather than evacuating them’ (Cvetkovich, 2003,15). By visiting and living with these elders, Gumbs and Wallace collect their stories through interviews, video and visual art, based on an ethic of community accountability that creates a different kind of ‘counterpublic sphere’, where simple gestures of care, like listening to a new friend and taking out the garbage, are radical acts of survival that acknowledge the suffering that comes with living on as a queer person of colour, while upholding the strategies that have developed from experiences with oppression. Therefore, *Mobile Homecoming* is more than an effort to gather data to commemorate histories long gone, but rather it is an enacted commitment to affirming and nurturing the affective dynamics that are always shaping movement building (What happens between the meetings and rallies? What happens after the revolution?) to reinvigorate the invaluable tools and ‘modes of survival’, that these queer black elders embody: ‘social support organizing’, ‘artistic creativity’, ‘spiritual transformation’, and ‘revolutionary interpersonal relationships’ (Gumbs and Wallace, 2012). Looking at *Mobile Homecoming* through an affective lens shows us that movement building is and must be more than just what we can cognitively comprehend, but also that there is always work to do to recognise and call upon the often invisible, yet present legacies of the past that not only persist in coherent political organising structures and narratives, but also in the complex ways *we live through* these movements.

Part of the affective power of mediation is that it can harness the intensities of oppression and violence by reassembling memories and histories into imaginative storytelling that produce representations and narratives, as well as events from which lines of flight generate. TextaQueen, an Australia-based, immigrant, queer artist of colour whose main medium consists of felt-tip markers, seeks to 'boldly re-interpret the tradition of the salon nude, [exploring] politics of sex, gender and identity in tangent with ideas of self-image and inter-personal relationships' (TextaQueen, 2013). TextaQueen's *Unknown Artist* series combines reinterpretations of ancestral mythology and religious symbolism that display the co-constitutive relationships between fact and fiction, personal experience and institutionalised history. In one of TextaQueen's self-portraits, *Call of the Crocotta*, the artist is presented as half human, half crocotta, the mythical dog-wolf of India or Ethiopia, most closely resembling the contemporary hyena that is said to possess abilities to switch genders, imitate human speech and shapeshift. While the portrait is a two-dimensional image, it acts as a still of an ongoing moment that pulsates at a threshold before the codification of potentiality fully takes form, where the metaphysical 'cluster', at a place where 'the imagination fills with movement, upheaval, and contradiction: the crossroads, the railroad track, and the cemetery' (Alexander, 2005, 303). TextaQueen's work draws attention to how the process of assembling one's own myths and origins relies on affective experience, memory and imagination that are thus necessarily overflowing with ghosts among abstract conceptions of space-time, attachment, power, desire and identity as well as material forms such as bodily pain, identification documents, archival footage, and ephemera.

## Queer Futurity: Worlding through the Situation

Another way 2-QTPOC media can be appreciated through affective theorising is to view 2-QTPOC media practices as forms of 'worlding' towards a 'queer futurity' (Muñoz, 2009) where queerness is 'not an identity or an anti-identity' but develops as assemblages 'that are unknown or not cogently knowable, that are in the midst of becoming, that do not immediately and visibly signal themselves as insurgent, oppositional, or transcendent' (Puar, 2007, 204). 2-QTPOC media can be thought of as a process of transformation, as 'something distinct from resistance' (Gordon, 1997, 202).

Founded in 2006, *Mangos With Chili: the floating cabaret of queer, trans and two spirit people of color bliss, dreams, sweat, sweets & nightmares*, is a 'North American touring, Bay Area-based arts incubator committed to showcasing high quality performance of life saving importance by queer and trans artists of color [...] including dance, theater, vaudeville, hip-hop, circus arts, music, spoken word and film' (Mangos With Chili, 2013). *Mangos* offers more than entertainment for its audiences, rather it aims to foster a space for 2-QTPOC community to share space and support one another, expanding the possibilities of performance and show spaces. As a scholar who focuses on queer of colour performance, Muñoz upholds the potential of performance as a form of critical and powerful world making:

To 'read' the performative [...] is implicitly to critique the epistemological. Performativity and utopia both call into question what is epistemologically there and signal a highly ephemeral ontological field that can be characterized as a [doing in futurity]. Thus, a manifesto is a call to a doing in and for the future. The utopian impulse to be gleaned from the poem is a call for 'doing' that is a becoming; the becoming of and for 'future generations' (Muñoz, 2009, 26).

Examining performance and the personal narratives of 2-QTPOC artists as an enactment of queer futurity allows for complex political potential to fully thrive as it is, where it is, without necessitating a guaranteed, measurable, contained future. However, the openness of theorising affectively does not necessarily come at the expense of identity, subjectivity and material realities that need attention. Instead, it entails expanding the scope, depth and texture of theory to fully encompass the intricacies and contingencies of social phenomena. In this vein, writer and prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore challenges us to reimagine different ways of movement building that do not get stuck in purely oppositional forms of political mobilisation: '[t]he point here is not that "agency" is an unimportant concept but rather [...] that it is too often used as if it designated an exclusive attribute of oppressed people in their struggle against an opponent called "structure". Such a dichotomy doesn't stand up to how the world actually works. Structures are both the residue of agency and animated by agential capacities' (Gilmore 2008, 39–40).

For example, the theory, poetry and performance of Quo-Li Driskill featured in *Mangos With Chili* interrogates the complexities of ongoing settler colonialism from

a two-spirit approach. Because critical race and queer of colour critique have been called out for basing their theories on static notions of what constitutes ‘the State’, and ‘nation’ that necessitate the disappearance of indigeneity (Smith, 2011), theorising affectively must remain conscious and committed to a decolonised future. Critiques of oppression might consider 2-QTPOC media as an ‘emerging event’, wherein the political is ‘[registered], lingers and forms attachments’ in different ways (Berlant, 2011, 4). For example, Lauren Berlant brings forth the concept of ‘the situation’ as ‘a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life. It is a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence of something in the present that may become an event’ (Berlant, 2011, 4–5).

In *Stomp Dance: Two-spirit Gathering. A Giveaway Poem*, Driskill describes the ‘situation’ of two-spirit people where political realities are disrupted and new worlds are able to manifest:

[S]ome say we can’t do these things. But I recall the story of water spider and how she carried that hot coal on her back anyway. [...] This is the work of our two-spirit people. We are part of a story that does not end in the destruction of the Earth. When we dance, manifest destiny shakes [...] We are an emergence of fire and turtle shells. We are the ones the world can no longer shake. (2013)

Therefore, Two-Spirit erotics haunt territorial configurations and imaginings of settler futurity as a queerness we may feel as ‘the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality’, as ‘a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present’ (Muñoz, 2009, 1).

## Theorising Movements through the Incommensurable

Affective methods can remain open to potentialities while holding incommensurable parts, resisting an ultimate consolidation of meaning and path towards a guaranteed liberated future as systems of neoliberal capitalism, heteronormativity and colonialism continue to thrive metaphysically and through bodily experience. Because systemic oppression functions through material conditions, but

through power that is simultaneously ephemeral and embodied, movements must shift to enact transformation at these levels. By exploiting the affective registers of connection and attachment, these systems have succeeded in creating a kind of oppression that fosters a reactionary and oppositional politics. The historical and ongoing material, psychic and metaphysical violations have generated a desperation for the consolidation of identity that was stolen or made to feel dispossessed from. Therefore, there is a need to affirm what political resistance and organising is (not what it should be) instead of defining itself on what it is not, which tends to build movements that are invested in a dichotomous negation of something rather than the creation and redefinition of something new. I am not arguing for a simple return to a former (and often idealised) notion of race politics, feminism, or modernist socialist leadership, but to evolve our politics that can equally honour (different than centering) material reality, that queer of colour scholarship for example claims is missing from otherwise whitewashed queer politics/theory, but honours it within an understanding of complexity. This work is also not meant to say such an approach is easy but to instead to recognise that it is difficult work and to figure out why. It is in the contradictions that something novel emerges, whether we want to reckon with it or not, as people continue to be moved by their lived experiences, relations to their environment and others.

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# DISTILLED: Queering Identity, Shame and Community

Slavco Dimitrov

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What I have written here was forced by the exigency of our ‘dark times’, the necessity of thinking our political horizons starting from anew. This passion is imposed by the emergency of thinking/enacting community otherwise, in a different manner from what our long history has left as a salient imprint on our present. This stance of the Western metaphysical tradition of thinking community is in a most paradigmatic manner currently reflected in the direction and destiny of the European Community/EU and the intensified revival of nationalisms, not only in Europe and the Balkans, where most of the countries face the ‘irretrievable’ consequences of the communitarian/communist imaginary, but all around the globe in a time when supranational tendencies of the Empire are allegedly declaring them as part of our not so distant past. A hazy reflection, yet not less dangerous, of this tendency is present also in the gender and sexual non-normative communities on various places on the globe, the Balkans in particular, for my interest, in their identitarian claims and in their involvement in the normative legislative models imposed by the international community, and their hegemonic statist and sovereignty models.

Risking to be de-realised as utopian and as surmounting the major political and social emergences of our times, this text comes out from a stance that revolts against this hegemony over time, over the right to determine the tempo, the rhythm, the speed, the direction and the model of time, and the appropriateness of critique in regard to allegedly timely needs. Nothing seems more important, in times like ours, than to strive towards *untimely critique* (Brown 2005); cultural and political critique that strikes right in the heart of our times, preventing violent closure and permitting thinking differently and, consequently, opening future towards alternative possibilities not anticipated by the linear and teleological flow of history.



## Queer Affectivity: Beyond Identitarian Depoliticisation and Communal Immanentism

Wendy Brown (2006) deploys the notion of depoliticisation in criticising the implications that discourses of tolerance, identity politics, and neo-liberal and neo-conservative rationalities have on the critical and political engagement and participation of modern and contemporary subjects. To be more precise, as Brown points out, depoliticisation ‘eschews power and history in the representation of the subject. When these two constitutive sources of social relations and political conflict are elided, an ontological naturalness or essentialism almost inevitably takes up residence in our understanding and explanations’ (Brown 2006, 15). While constructing difference as a negative term and its constitutive outside, thus excluding it, the hegemonic whole incorporates this difference while still maintaining the clear cut, or the delimitation between itself and this other. The difference is first constituted, then excluded, and further, incorporated yet sustained as difference on a hierarchised scale. Therefore, Brown argues that in reifying politically produced differences, identity claims ‘reinscribe the marginalization of the already marginal’, exactly by the means of “opposing their differences to be natural’ (ibid, 45).

While liberal discourse converts political identity into essentialised private interests, its companion partners, capitalism and disciplinary power, ‘convert interest into normativized social identity manageable by regulatory practices’ (ibid, 59). By installing classificatory schemes, disciplinary technologies regulate subjects by producing social positions out of empirically defined, observable, normalised and nominated social behaviours and attitudes. The subject reiterates its division among the social and economic inequalities and individualism in the civic order on the one side, and as member of the universal ‘we’ of abstract equality entitled by the State and legal discourse, on the other side. Brown finds the most flagrant point of intersection of these liberal tendencies in the tickling of resentment, which is to say the Nietzschean spirit of hatred and revenge, the spirit of despair. The failure of juxtaposing individual liberty and social egalitarianism, as well as the claims for recrimination on behalf of the subordinated in the context of inflicted social and political injury, according to Brown, leads solely towards the multiplication of resentment, and consequently, imagining and practicing free-



doms captured in the narrow frames of legalism as a negative reaction on the limitations already imposed within the hegemonic order of inequality.

The historically inflicted injury becomes fundamental for identity as ineffable and repressed trauma infusing the permanent repetition of the traumatic event. Therein the injured identity in the continuation of the revenge trajectory and the claiming of autonomy and natural difference folds new layers of bandage over the open wound and incurable injury. It is not by coincidence that Brown uses the syntagm of 'wounded attachments' (Brown 1995) with the aim of comprehending the political logic of identitarian discourses applied in the legalistic processes of recrimination and equality claims, a logic perpetuating our blindness for the transformative potentials of collective political inventiveness and striving for freedom. It is, actually, a rationale turning the capacity for freedom inwards against itself, equalising it with revenge and reaction to the obstacle in a concrete political regime, holding on to and replicating the position of a victim and, finally, granting the State the role of the absolute, dematerialised and invulnerable protector.

This political strategy, I claim, supports the hegemonic mode in which community communicates, which is to say sublates finitude and suffering. Erecting as protected and safe the boundedness and perfection of the community, the state desire overcomes suffering and death, and keeps at safe distance the phantasmatic continuity and self-fulfilment. When there is no death, when there is no social and bodily suffering, there is still the taking place of social death – making, wherein atrocity is privatised, distanced, erased, forgotten and made foreign, while community necessitates itself towards its promised unity and survival. The manipulation of affects and emotional empathy is the core gesture for creation of what Lauren Berlant (1999) has called 'national sentimentality' as the sentiment of overcoming differences, antagonism, unequal distribution and inequality across various social strata, and maintaining the hegemony of the national identity form. As Berlant argues, in this model the 'nation is peopled by suffering citizens and noncitizens whose structural exclusion from the utopian (...) dreamscape exposes the state's claim of legitimacy and virtue to an acid wash of truth telling that makes hegemonic disavowal virtually impossible, at certain points of political intensity' (Berlant 1999, 53). The eradication of pain becomes thus the core political technology of those in power deployed in order to bring the nation back

to its phantasmatic unity, bringing back belief in the redemptive notions of the law and universal citizenry and, consequently, the national utopia. Restoring thus the safe and healthy unified body politic, the nation promises freedom, measured by the extent to which one feels happiness and pleasure, as the achievement of legal cures against the allegedly localisable sources of pain, and henceforth veils its constitutive and continuous acts of exclusion perpetuating suffering, structural violence and insidious everyday forms of trauma.

As a way of critiquing of these hegemonic political tendencies, in this paper I try to rethink the figural status of queerness in hegemonic political spaces by the means of its constitutive experiences and relations with bodily, emotional and affective discourses and practices. The corporeal experiences and histories of queerness will be explored as the symptomatic disclosure and actualisation of the very impossibility of what Lee Edelman (2004) has called the politics of *re-productive futurism*. Thus, I argue that the repoliticisation of the intersections of queerness, corporeality, affects and politics is necessary for demystifying the void that makes impossible the timeless grounding of society, and for disclosing the perpetual failure of politics to fully realise its promises of securing a universal principle, a substance and a ground of the political order and society immune to revision and contestation.

This stance is found as radically necessary in the context of contemporary identity politics, past communist communal experiences in South Eastern Europe, supranational unification of the European community and the revival of 'old' nationalisms as they all structurally overlap in sustaining the 'totalitarian' and 'immanentist' concept of community (Nancy 2000). This constellation imposes the exigency of rethinking the constitutive relation between a body's finitude as its singular and contingent spacings, relations and exposure, and the political abyss and, thus, consequently opening community towards the necessary futurity of democracy-to-come. I propose setting queerness' figural and historical engagement in practices of bodily movements, intervals, passings and transitions, affective and emotional politics and experiences of exposure, shame and vulnerability as the ground for the actualisation and creation of new vocabularies and concepts that open possibilities for re-imagining different political worlds, re-thinking the being-in-common and community and re-making political claims and struggles beyond identitarian and normativising models.

## A Note on the Methodology of Affect

The background methodological framework through which I approach the problems elaborated above is set in the vast field of discourses of the last two decades theorising the body and, what Patricia Clough has described as ‘the affective turn’ (Clough 2008), particularly interested in the involvement of the body, affects and emotions in everyday practices of resistance and recoding, but also the processes and movements of undoing and shattering the significations’ grids organising and structuring cultures and political worlds. Special importance for my argument have the investigations in bodily movements, intervals, passings and transitions, or, what Brian Massumi (2002, 5) has called the ‘ontological difference into the heart of the body’ and its non-coincidence with itself, as well as affects’ and emotions’ constitutive relationality, and bodies’ radical potential for modification and vulnerability.

From this perspective, bodily affects are conceived as intensities opening access to the virtual field of differentiation and the multiplicities through which a body passes and gets transformed in a plurality of situations. Affect here marks the very change whose degree can vary in accordance with the concrete situation and the traces in a bodily memory passing the threshold in the situation, the change that is always taking place in the instant of relation and encounter of bodies. I embrace this analytical framework to the extent to which it does justice and provides an account of affect as being the

persistent proof of a body’s never-less-than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations ... At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between ‘bodies’ (bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect) (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1–2).

However, I find this suggestion to be heavily problematic, at the same time, in its persistent insistence on the indeterminacy of affect, thus depriving the analytical

endeavor of investigating the complex webs and vectors of power apparatuses and their regulatory, organising and disciplinary interventions and inscriptions over, on, in and around the materialities of bodies through a variety of emotional and affective scripts (anger, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, disgust, hate, shame, anxiety etc.), as well as the mechanisms by which power apparatuses orchestrate a differential distribution of different affects among different populations (middle-classes, queers, women, racial and ethnic minorities, youth). On the other side, consequently, it eludes the possibility of scrutinising the different emotional complexes and the different nuances these specific, yet dynamic affective scripts bring to the ways bodies orient towards, connect with, situate within and materialise social worlds, as well as the multiple and dynamic forms through which the intersections of power relations and different emotional scripts increase or decrease bodies' capacities to act, be acted upon, and enter into new transformative and creative assemblages and relations. The reluctance and fear of engaging with the specific categorisable emotional scripts, seems to be thinly grounded.<sup>1</sup>

Silvan Tomkins (1995), for example, argues that affect scripts compose co-assemblages with different mechanisms and among themselves that are highly flexible and indeterminate, and hinge on an indeterminate fit or mismatch and inexactness and play (Sedgwick 2003; Tomkins 1995). This account of affect acknowledges the prevalent automatic triggering of affective intensities and movements, although it does not exclude the semantic, cognitive, discursive or cultural components implicitly inscribed in a variety of representations and mental images that stick certain affects below the level of consciousness, on the one hand, while emphasising the relational and chiasmic character of the affective in-betweenness reflecting the different ways in which the world affects, moves, disrupts and comes to matter to our bodies, in the double sense of the word (have significance and takes, congeals into materiality, meaning how it takes shape and materialises), on the other.

What we need, thus, is a more productive framework for analyses that take into consideration the bio-social dynamic as the field where the emergence of a body form takes place. This dynamic can be elaborated in more details when we put in play the notion of emergence as the 'diachronic construction of functional structures in complex systems that achieve a synchronic focus of systematic behavior as they constrain the behavior of individual components' (Protevi 2010, 8).

The concept of emergence helps us to think subjectivity, while not completely dispensing with it, above, alongside and below its embodied affectivity (ibid.). This situating of subjectivity across the multiple in-formations of its bodily affectivity leads us into considering the concrete assemblages and surrounding social milieu into which a body enters, the automatic and sub-personal events and processes (neurological, physiological, psychological etc.), and its wider social and institutional fields.

## A Turn Towards Arts

For the purpose of making my argument clear, I focus on three works by the Macedonian artist Velimir Zernovski<sup>2</sup>, representing a trans-medial triptych and a queer text that makes a remarkable effort to think community, recognition, belonging, identification and affect, and yet, not to get enclosed in the pitfalls of exclusory identitarian logics, stripped of its political histories and fetishised as being abstracted from the complex affective and relational interweaving constitutive of any identity. The three works reflect Zernovski's continuous endeavour to question, explore and contest identity, while at the same time doing justice to the irreplaceable injuries that queer identity has suffered and that make it possible in the first place. In his works, Zernovski explores the (im)possibility of a narrative, of telling a story of oneself, and yet, thoughtfully evading confessing a truth that the biopolitical regulatory apparatus so eagerly demands. Even more precisely, his works makes us dwell on the question of how one can confess the truth of one's self and one's feelings, and make of that confession an enactment of critique. Critique of such a kind exposes and demystifies the very ground of a political rationality that makes one's subjectivity possible only by subjugation, and thus shatters even the foundations from which one can speak, in one's own voice, in one's own name, as a self-identified subject.

Complementing the problem of the account one could give of oneself, as a founding account of one's identity, Velimir Zernovski complicates, or rather situates the plot of identity against a wider horizon. He embeds the story of the individual in his writing of the history of unequal power relations that have negatively effectuated the appearance of a 'spoiled' identity and a community (if one could say the queer community). This writing, to be more precise, could be better

qualified as a pastiche, a flat rhizomatic plane connecting multiple images, representations, voices, figures, enunciations and narratives, rather than an organised, structured and linear historiography. It is a history, a genealogy of injury that is not able to, even more correctly, that refuses to identify that very same injured community, nor even to imagine all the possible locations from which it could (have) emerge(ed). Zernovski tries to investigate the virtualities that could make possible the relation of oneself with a history that simultaneously constitutes oneself, while at the same instant making that very same dialectic of self-constitution with/through the other impossible. The political history Zernovski touches upon is ephemeral, marked by a multiplicity of contradictions, fragmentations, disidentifications, irreparable violence, disguises, refusals of belonging and aporias of such a kind, which make the historical referent hardly graspable and hazily affordable for reciprocating and returning the look of recognition one strives for.

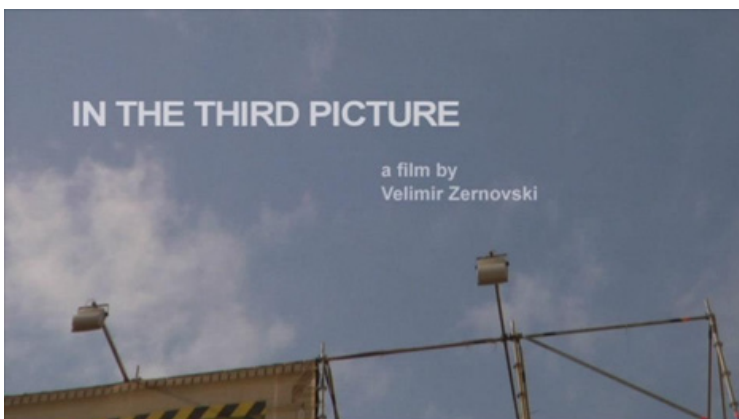
The co-determination of the queer singular body and the ephemeral queer community these bodies constitute is mediated in Zernovski's work through the experience of injury and shame. The figuration of these injurious experiences provides Zernovski with the opportunity to address critically not only the identitarian logic such injuries could effectuate (identity constituted by the very same stroke of an injurious interpellation or the multiple fields of heteronormative discourses and violence), but also the hesitating liminality such injury introduces. Namely, the injury in his work becomes the occasion for critically engaging both with assimilation (coerced compliance with the norm as the means for receiving recognition in a heteronormative society), on one side, and the possibility for identity transformation and radical political action potentiated by creatively re-performing the shaming experiences and setting them in different and creative assemblages that could modify and revolutionise affect's histories. Most striking in these projects is their genuine strategies for bypassing the de-politicising, privatising and conferring logic of sentimentality, a logic so many artists and activists embrace. Zernovski makes it possible for us to imagine ways of looking back to one's past, as being always already a community's past, without being able to identify neither a shared set of identity-defining essence, nor what could come next as a foreseen future, yet making space for a utopian hope beyond any recognisable horizon of the future to come.

The video 'In the Third Picture'<sup>3</sup> tackles the problem of identity most 'authentically', namely the impossibility to authenticate identity and the deconstruction of the self-reflecting subject imposed by the question addressed to oneself always by the other as what makes possible the doing and undoing of one's identity, and as the necessary condition for rethinking ethics and the relation with the other. The video 'The Walk'<sup>4</sup> engages critically with the violence heteronormativity executes upon non-normative genders and sexual bodies as the means for the performative preservation of the limits of its exclusionary and coercive universe, and the allegedly universal, unmarked and disembodied subject of heteronormativity. The installation 'The Distilled'<sup>5</sup> extends the problems opened in 'The Walk' and situates them in the field of lived queer experiences. Shame becomes the central axis around which the queer embodiment oscillates most strongly, and becomes the occasion for Zernovski to explore a whole range of problems, including: identity, assimilation and passing, silence, injury, the embodied inscriptions of heteronormative violence, the undifferentiated enfolding of political structures and 'personal' feelings, relationality, political resistance and community.

## Deconstructing the Truth of the Confessional Subject

In 'In the Third Picture,' Zernovski radicalises the question of identity most saliently. This radicalisation arrives from *the question* itself, offering a critique of the present rationality by shattering the grounds of what seems to be the most intimate and inner core – identity. The ontological question the narrator poses,

the question of what is supposedly one's uttermost being, of 'Who I am,' remains to linger on its irresolvable limits. The seductive promising the video makes of finding and telling the truth recurs infinitely where it starts in the very beginning: at the question itself. The act of confes-



Cover frame of the video 'In the Third Picture'

sion in Zernovski's video tends to memorise the truth that is revealed by the medium of speech (already under the graphic law) and deprives itself in the very instance from its self-presence, exposing itself simultaneously to the dangerous supplement of writing and the risky future marked by the laws of dissemination (Derrida 2004). The self-presence of the confessional subject is thus deconstituted at the very moment of its constitution in language and moving images. Once the confessional subject announces itself by the fact of saying 'I' and attempting to synthesise the never present moments of the past and the non-present moments of the future's alterity, which is out of the possibility of anticipation, it scatters itself in the dangerous chains of signification and networks of signs/signifiers, relations, differentiations, deferrals, repetition, supplements of supplements, and surrogates of surrogates. What the confessing subject is trying to present, in the fullness of its presence and the strength of its intention, is already inscribed in the graphic structures of différance (Derrida 1982) and is estranged from itself.

The narrator, supposedly the author's voice, is scattered in cross-references. One image evokes another. The next summons reminiscences of references from art history, then it opens itself onto the movement introduced by the remake and inscription of Gus Van Sant's 'Elephant'



Frame from the video 'In the Third Picture'

dispersed in the seemingly never ending flow of Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' piano, and returns back to the very beginning of asking, questioning, contesting.

The meaning of Zernovski's confessional act is not given in the moment of its performance. It is always already divided in itself by the moments that precede it and the moments that follow it, which are nothing more but traces of a present that will have never been fully present. As a moment it is related to each of these terms, and consequently each of these terms is divided by the other. What this strategy prevents is the annunciation of truth as the ultimate and eternal truth, the Law, the Norm, and the absolute secret that is underlying every action of the



subject. It is the truth that in the core of its possibility finds its own impossibility and instability, the permanent provocation of quaking.

Truth requires these structures of replacement and supplements in order to present itself (Derrida 2004) but at the instance of giving itself in the field of visibility, in the space of audibility it gives itself away in the chain of supplementary. The cut of supplementary significations leads to vertigo, not only the vertigo we are immersed in that distorts the logic of static perspective of the shooting camera, which in the final scene of the video transforms itself into a liquid, non-human framing, shifting perspectives and embracing multiplicity of points that connect the single human figure in the flux of its environment, movements and sensations. The vertigo is even more strongly felt by the static spectator whose scopophilia is never to be satisfied in the video. There is a dizzily substitution of signifiers all of which are supposed to grasp the answer of the question posed by the confessor. Each signifier, each image, each voice, each cadre melts into another to the point of unrecognizability. Velimir Zernovski, the author, set in a quest for the truth of himself is substituted by a narrator with a female voice, and a female body appearing in the first scene standing on a bridge, lingering on a threshold carried away by the water flow beneath and the blow of the wind that heralds memories and reminiscences. The autobiographical 'I' then gets to be supplemented by another female figure, doubled, or even multiplied in the inter-space of who knows whatever text. Zernovski's strategy accomplishes its apex at the moment when the speaking subject deprives him/her/itself of the very condition that make his/her/its speaking possible, erasing his/her/its name, a name whose meaning he/she/it has always found strange, hard to penetrate. Up until one day, when the name was completely erased, letter after letter, by a friend, by someone else, by the other.

The question of writing oneself is doomed by the question of the other by the means of the necessary condition that governs every writing (including the autobiographical or the confessional). Conditioned by the differential law of writing, giv-



Frame from the video 'In the Third Picture'

ing an account of oneself is set in an unpredictable and non-anticipated chain of repetitions and iterations, whereby the 'autos' of writing is distancing itself from itself once it has been inscribed and sent to the other. Self-accounting is thus written for or pronounced to a destination that can never be predicted and ensured in advance, the destination of auto-writing, the scripting of oneself by another, the gift of finitude and the gift of death (Derrida 2007; Derrida 1985). Writing always invites the other, it is the necessity. Derrida described this logic of the autobiographical writing as otobiography, the necessity autobiography is marked with, since without the other's ear hearing me and re-inscribing me and giving me meaning, my existence is just a void abstraction in the isolated and solipsistic circle of the impossible self-interpretation. Haunting the words, the confessional subject becomes haunted and deprived of its property by the play opened by writing. The constituting signature twists into the gift of death, as the death of the authentic, originary subject of the author and introduces the beginning of life (of the text) beyond the author's control and intention. But the other always has a metonymic structure inscribed in itself. It is, to be more precise, the logic of homonymy preventing the one to whom one is addressing oneself to stay the one, the same. The other is always one and the other at the same time. The other as the one always *remains*. We cannot invite the one without the risk of the other turning up.



Frame from the video 'In the Third Picture'

## The Micro-Bodily Politics of Heteronormativity

'The Walk' exposes the political vectors and embodied conditions of subjectivation and violence. The video presents the struggle and agony of a dancing body in movement caught in the visibly not represented web of shaming and violence. The traces and indications of violence can be read on two levels. The first level, which serves as the anchoring point, and thus communicates the referent with the recipient, is the voice of the feminist and queer scholar Judith Butler narrating

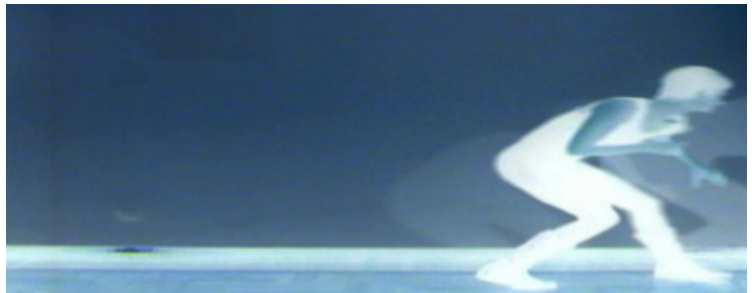
the story of an 'eradicated possibility of a gender non-normative body ever walking again'. The second layer of indication of violence is inscribed in the very body of the performer in the video, a body hard to be easily recognised through the grids of the bi-party system of sexual and gender division. What the video stages is a sexually ambiguous body drawing movements in lines imperceptible through the optics of the hegemonic systems of (gender) significations, a body flooded by intensities and sensations, yearning for relational and transformative extensions. The joyous and self-transfiguring movements of this 'monstrous' dancing body are insidiously interrupted by molecular and microscopic convulsions and withdrawals, accompanied by distorted musical rhythm, hence indicating the panoptical and normative interventions of the shaming and coercive gaze. The body itself becomes the site of struggle of forces, of vectors of power and resistance, all of which are inscribed in the miniscule, but unbearably intense and hesitating micro-motions. Zernovski manages, ingeniously, to capture the micropolitics of bio-power whose operations target the body as its ultimate site of regulation, discipline and violence.



'The Walk' - Video image

Zernovski's capacity to evade the sentimental logic of a privatising and identitarian discourse of liberal politics seems to be even more important in this context. As much as he succeeds to elude the presumption of an already existing identity prior to the act of violence and power relations, he also redirects our attention from the search of easily identifiable culprit, and inscribes the violent operation of heteronormative bio-power throughout diffuse bodily sites and flows. Engraving the coercive acts of power on the skin of a singular body does not serve the purpose of providing us with the comfort of sentimentality whereby we could lament and sympathise with an individual victim, nor does it, either, distract our attention, and thus to exempt the responsibility of the agent of violence. The phenomenology of

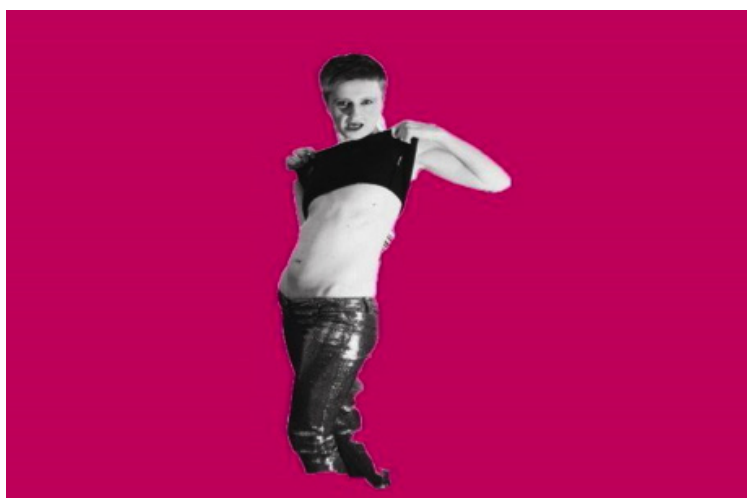
oppression in the video is dense to such an extent, traumatically engraved and deposited in the comportment of the non-heteronormative body with such a force, which makes the heroic act of the revolutionary consciousness raising and overthrowing of a supposedly repressive power, but a metaphysical nostalgia. The compulsions and contractions of the struggling body summons the exigency of our radical rethinking of a different, embodied topology of power whose vectors rely on a systematic history of exclusion, as much as on a synchronous multiplication of locations of power throughout diverse discursive and institutional settings – from the authoritarian voice of science and political institutions to the normative gaze and the corrective violence of the street and the bedroom.



'The Walk' - Video image

While listening to the voice of Judith Butler as a narrative with a linear syntax whereby the victim and perpetrator are clearly identified (a young 'feminised' boy and a group of boys from the town where he lives), we are confronted with the vulnerability of the human body, intensified through the staging of the sexually non-normative body, being the undeniable witness of the perverse apparatus of the insidious and all-encompassing inscriptions and coercions of the norm.

However, although presenting a body that cannot be grasped within the gender binary system of heteronormativity, Zernovski's work opens a wider field of thinking and resistance that displaces the focus from the here-and-now towards the open horizon of political violence: a history shared across diverse locations, exclusions lived by different bodies, and a future where the utopian democratic hope can be made possible only through a collective endeavour.



'The Walk' – video image

## Shame: Exposure, Vulnerability and Affective Performativity

The installation 'The Distilled' represents the central piece in this queer triptych. Its centrality is the result of its being the point of intersection of the multiple problems tackled by Zernovski in his works, and whose density culminates in the complexity of this installation. There is the horror of an abject word carrying the weight of this installation – SHAME. The most shaming of all affects, the emotion that haunts the contemporary mainstream gay and feminist movements as the spectre of the past supposedly to have been overcome, a spectre shattering the grounds of their present shouts of normalising pride.

As I will try to demonstrate, shame is probably the most ambivalent of all affects. The most depoliticising, isolating and disgraceful affect, whereby one withdraws ones interest, joyous interaction and desiring production in the social field when the disciplining gaze of the other imposes the norm, and one shelters oneself in the self-derogating walls of solitude, on the one hand, and the affect whose visceral implosion turns one into a self-conscious body, brings one into social being baring the marks of shame-induced identity, on the other hand. Viscerally overflowing the individual undergoing it, shame is what deprives one from all social and political entitlements, since it always comes from a significant other occupying the place of the norm performing its institution in the act of shaming, of enacting the threat/the break to/of the social bond. Shame therefore breaks the circle of

reciprocating gazes of recognition, smile and communication, interrupts the interest that drives one body towards relations of unanticipated transformative potential, and enforces the law of silence and conformism.

Furthermore, shame carries the mark and the force of dis-titling. It is what must never be avowed, must re-



'The Distilled' – Image from the installation in the Academy of Arts – Skopje

main unsaid, with no name, no title, since it breaks the ultimate imperative of modern man (and the contemporary proud self-identified gay) – individualism, self-sufficiency and in-dependency, since it clearly exposes one’s vulnerability to the other, and our social co-dependency, our desire for recognition. ‘Shame on you’ stands as a reminder of my failure to embody the idealised norm and to align to the collective emotional attunement, and commands me to withdraw my bodily interest for certain doings, touches, relations, pleasures, desires, looks, words, comportments, behaviours and joys. ‘Shame on you’ commands me to forget its violent command and to dis-title my interest in order to preserve my entitlements of human recognition and intelligibility. ‘Shame on you’ makes assimilation to hegemonic and normative sociality the condition of my entitlement to sociality. In order for sociality to secure its privilege of unknowing, silence is what I must agree upon, what I must forget. What the politics of shaming dis-titles is, simultaneously, the history, the event of its violence and its exploitation of my radical exposure to and dependency on the world of others. Disguising the genealogy of its normative forces, shame dis-titles both its performative and negative fabrication, and its silencing of movements, extensions, relations as the interrupted and fixed truth of my absorbed self.

And yet, there seems to be some exceeding danger that clings to normative sociality, that shame carries in itself, hence its ambivalence as an affect. What potentialities does shame open? What democratic, ethical and subversive virtualities might this being deprived of a title, of recognition, of obliging and conforming entitlement bring? It is this question that Velimir Zernovski tries to investigate, in a manner that conjures interconnected plateaus: (dis)identification, affect, ethics and politics.

Following the most recent debates in queer theory and queer activism, Zernovski in ‘Distilled’ stages queerness as socially tied to those whose identity sense-making has been centred and tuned around the experience of shame and, consequently, to the practices of performativity as strategies ‘for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma’ (Sedgwick 2003). Following Silvan Tomkins and Michael Franz Basch, Sedgwick traces the affect of shame as originary involved in the constitution of one’s sense of distinction and identity. Shame, unlike guilt, is focused on what one is rather than on what one does. It concerns the being of the one

blushing and averting his/her eyes and the meaning ascribed, which in a dialectical turn becomes the basis for one's self-consciousness and identification. Shame in Sedgwick's account is ambiguously tied to a primary narcissism that, as much as it differentiates one, simultaneously throws one into the gravitational field of the other and thus undoes the self-sufficient narcissistic formations of the ego. Sedgwick in several occasions in the line of her argumentation throughout 'Touching Feeling' emphasizes that this self-positioning in the relation of shame is not to be conceived as an attachment to securely provided essences, but rather as 'the place where the question of identity arises most originally and most relationally', and further unfolds the transformational capacities that can be derived from the double structure of performativity – self-absorption and theatricality- and consequently made available for the 'work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transformation, affective and symbolic loading and deformation (...) all too potent for the work of purgation and deontological closure' (ibid, 63).

This inevitable identity-constituting-shattering experience of shame for Zernovski becomes the occasion for further questioning the ethical and political re-configurations it can enact. Zernovski's endeavour is accompanied by his refusal to fetishise the emotion of shame as the burden of the individual, and consequently, a refusal to reinforce the political strategy of social division between individual heroes and weak personalities, disguising the histories of inequality as being the source of unequal distribution of emotions across the social field. This de-privatisation of the emotional burden is achieved, in Zernovski, most illustratively by his re-appropriation of a language that has a history which precedes one's own constitution, an imagery which evokes multiple references and opens semantic multiplicity that is hard to be grasped through the effort of individual intentionality and meaning-giving. Identity is dispersed on a plane of plural simulacrum and images. Hence, the childish masks of Micky Mouse that resonate simultaneously with the commodity culture and hyper-reality of the American Dream, the fantasy of careless childish innocence and a world not yet touched by the brutality of political violence and antagonisms, the mask we used in our childhood in order to celebrate the joy of being someone else, the striving for freedom embedded in the movement the cartoon exports from still images, but also the masks that provides one with legitimate and recognisable identity and status. One's self-positioning is thus disseminated in a vast field of already available texts and sites of identifica-

tion, to such an extent that self-absorption becomes impossible to be sustained and is permanently cross-cut by the discourses of the others.

Therefore, we can remark that this technique of intertextual pastiche provides Zernovski with the opportunity to illustrate a general, yet highly specific problem. This functional 'stealing' of the other's imagery serves him not only to illustrate a genealogy of a feeling and identity, but also to subvert those images that have also participated in a history of violence. Namely, the monumental and sculptural figurations of bravery, manhood, and nationalism become the occasion for exposing the nationalistic violence of masculinism, and at the same time the occasion for resignification, whereby the strong masculine body is made vulnerable and disrupted by a feminine figure holding a doll and surrounded by the queer pink chromatics. The socially generated experience of abjection of queer subjectivity is mediated by the background vocal of Marilyn Monroe, incessantly singing 'Non, no, no, no, no, NO!', a camp figure that embodies abjection, disgrace, misfortune, sentimentality, backward feeling, grace and glamour simultaneously, but also emphasising the interdiction imposed by shame, the hostage of silence, and the life-long project of queers in struggling with the significant 'no' of sociality. The collective history of exclusion and symbolic violence is amplified with references to the author's personal and family genealogies indexed by the old frames of family portraits, evoking the ambiguous movement towards and away from the burning pains of the 'family table', and yet making of it a collective and shared queer experience.

Sedgwick (2003) traces these potentials for identity-play as generated by the double movement of absorption and identity enclosure, and theatricality as the opening towards the outside,



Photo from the 'Distilled' installation



the audience, which introduces a gap in the felicity of the performative act and produces possibilities for disidentification and transformation. Yet I claim that Sedgwick, although she mentions the relational basis undoing the circuit of identification, remains caught in the logic of identity even when mapping the transformational capacities and de-essentialising tendencies. The relation preceding and the interruption of this relation remain eluded in the end. It is not to claim that Sedgwick overlooks this question in her book. She quotes Tomkins and Basch exactly on those points where they emphasise the relational violence and inequality shame introduces. Yet she shifts her focus on identity problems that, although dispersed on the resignificatory axis as potential, still remain caught in the dominant logic of meaning, sense and signification overshadowing the question of relationality.

Following Basch, she argues that shame enters the scene at the very moment when the circulatory exchange of gazes and recognitions is ruptured by the non-favourable reaction of the caregiver towards the child's gaze or action. The response of the child triggered by this break of mutuality 'represents the failure or absence of the smile or contact, a reaction to the loss of feedback from the others, indicating social isolation and signaling the need for relief from this condition' (Basch in Sedgwick 2003, 36). Or further, citing Tomkins, shame 'operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhabits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest and joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which partially reduces interest (...) will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration and self-exposure' (Tomkins in Sedgwick 2003, 39).

What seems pretty clear in both of the above descriptions of the causes and activators of shame, is set to a second-order importance in Sedgwick's further argumentation. If shame represents the interruption, the reduction, the deprivation from, the absence of, and social isolation of joy, contact, interest, self-exposure and further exploration, caused by the normalising gaze of shame, it remains unclear why the priority Sedgwick gives to spoiled identity in queer performativity is made at the expense of the originary relationality and movement of circulation with no guaranteed points of stop/rest and temporary identifications. If it is clear that the violence enacted is the violence enacted over the possibility for relationality, it is highly problematic to take a stance based on the spoiled identity ascribed

on me by the other as the means of interrupting the self-exposure and exploration in movement. As Berlant (1999) claims,

if the pain is the juncture of you and the stereotype that represents you, you know that you are hurt not because of your relation to history, but because of someone else's relation to it, a type of someone whose privilege or comfort depends on the pain that diminishes you, locks you into identity, covers you with shame, and sentences you to a hell of constant potential exposure to the banality of derision (Berlant 1999, 72).

It remains unclear why one should enact a performative resistance based on the 'painful identification' rather than on the painful emptying of the relation enacted by the work of a gaze silently telling us what is the proper way of relating and setting our body in movement.

Following this note on Sedgwick's work on shame, we can conclude that shame is the triggering of affect caused by the projection of the forthcoming negative consequences for the body acting, such as humiliation, violence, social exclusion, feelings of inappropriateness and becoming a social outcast, a general transformation/negation of one's relational capacity into the abyss of intransitivity, and consequently the formation of culturally acceptable emotional patterns and schemata of responses that restrict the bodily capacities for touch and change. In this model, what I am claiming is that identity becomes the mystification of a more urgent political question, and this is the question of the social relation. What shame exposes is the exploitation and violation of our ineluctable exposure to the others and the erasure of the possibilities for entering into singular relational encounters. The identity formed is the negative effect of this primary operation of violence, institution and sustaining of the hegemonic political order and communal model. Although following Tomkins, when arguing that shame produces 'bodily knowledges' and 'can turn one inside out-or outside in', Kosofsky Sedgwick remains holding the distinction of the system that gets effectuated by this coercive processes of materialisation of the bodily surfaces.

Unlike Sedgwick, Elspeth Probyn in *Blush* reads Tomkins by bringing the relational dynamic into focus, and emphasises the importance of the social relation in the activating logic of shame. For shame to inflict the blush on our faces,

something has to matter to us. For blush to matter and materialise the contours of one's body, thus raising the painful awareness of the heaviness of one's presence, of one's body, there is the concern, the mattering of something prior to it. The blush on the face is the indicator of our interest, care and concern for something or someone. Before the blush of shame gets a hold on me, I hold something or someone as important to me, as necessary for my social and corporeal existence. The interruption of interest and joy that shame brings to the fore is the interruption of the 'desire for connection', which 'at a basic level, it has to do with our longing for communication, touch, lines of entanglement, and reciprocity' (Probyn 2005, x). The conceptual value Probyn excavates in her reading of Tomkins' scripts on shame is inextricably related to the human fragility revealed in shaming experiences. This fragility is revealed to the extent to which the look of the other forces us to withdraw and remain intelligible and loved in the eyes of the other, and thus discloses the yearning for connections and belonging. But on the other side, it reveals our fragility<sup>6</sup> when shamed we are put out of place, when our bodies are exposed as less than human, deprived of sociality and belonging. Shame indicates a prior double connection, a connection to the world expressed in the interest and joy interrupted, not fully, by the affect of shame, and a connection to the others, indicated in the cause of shame being the external (or internalised) gaze of the other. And these connections come to be intensified and made important by shame differently in different contexts. Namely, either it is the already established flow of connection and interaction with someone that causes feelings of joy and interest for its maintenance when shame comes to break and turn inside this communicative exposure, while revealing our interest for maintaining and continuing this connection, thus indicating our interest in the relation we might not have been aware of. Or, shame comes upon one from another while one is being engaged in an interested relation to the world or with other bodies, and amplifies, simultaneously, the importance of those relations with some bodies and world materialities, an amplification executed in the very same act of breaking this relational material world, as well as the importance of the other from whom the shaming gaze or words come.

Thomas J. Scheff, one of the most prominent sociologists of shame and emotions, claims that the social tie and bond with others, and its maintenance and threat upon it, are the fundamental source of human motivation, interaction, self-

presentation, monitoring on one's actions and the emotions emerging in it. Pride and shame are the most prominent human emotions, according to Scheff, that testify for the importance and the meaning of the social bond, being the 'intense and automatic bodily signs of the state of one's bonds with others' (Scheff 1990).

In Giorgio Agamben's analyses (1999) of the Nazi camp and the Muselmann as the living dead and the limit figure of humanity, shame indicates the limit, narrowness, abstraction and insufficiency of what is defined to be human, and forces us to rethink the question of universal belonging to humanity beyond identitarian matrices. Shame exposes what goes beyond the limit of the humanly intelligible as what defies dignity and self-respect as definitional parameters for legal recognitions of the human. It moves us towards what is considered as the inhuman in humanity, a domain of ultimate intimacy in which we are left absolutely with ourselves without any possibility of organising a distance. The sentiment of shame consigns us to the impassible abyss of our being subject, the ineluctable lingering on the threshold of being subjected and being a sovereign. This could go in line with what Sedgwick calls the 'painful identification' that includes within one gesture of the ultimate exposure and passivity of one in the face of the other, and the subjectification and identity-sense making arising from this relation of passivity. If in shame we bear witness to the subject it is only to the extent that what is witnessed is its permanent desubjectification and exposition in its passivity. Flush is what betrays every subject without fully destroying it. But what is left is no man with content, but on the contrary the destruction of all content in the inescapable exposure of passivity. A subject is only inasmuch as it is the consciousness of itself as desubjectified. The indistinction of the human and the inhuman is the grey zone undoing any imagined substance of a subjectivity, the zone from where any ethical imperative should be made beyond the concepts of dignity and self-respect. The grey contact of the zones is the firing mobilising shame as the most proper 'emotional tonality of subjectivity' (Agamben 1999, 110).

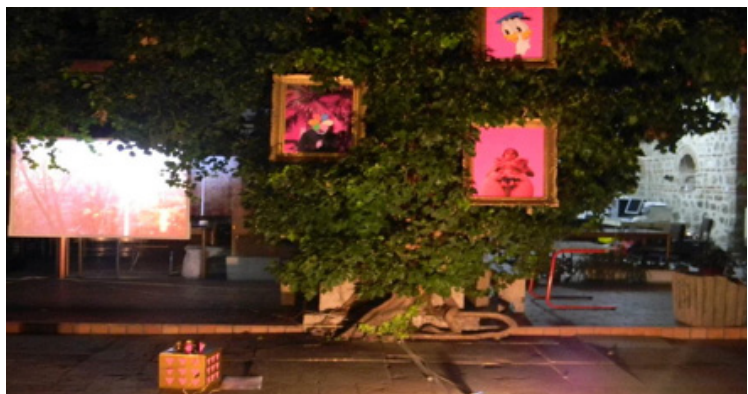


Photo from the 'Distilled' Installation, Academy of Arts, Skopje

It is precisely from this exposure that shame marks, as being the sign of our constitutive relationality with others that Zernovski tries to imagine the possibility of community and resistance. It is this ethical stance that opens the possibility for us to say 'we'. The 'we' of a queer community generates spaces of marginalisation as sites of sociability organized around the sharing of social abjection and shame. Nothing expresses this movement better in Zernovski's work than the over-visible repetition of the pink triangle as the marker of queer stigma in the Nazi camps. It warns us not to forget a history of violence and extinction. It connects any individual queer lived experience and shame with a history that is shared. And still, Zernovski overturns the danger of instantiating a wounded attachment as the inevitable identity-bounding condition imposed by the force of nationalistic and heteronormative exclusion. The pink triangle becomes the occasion for resignification, and thus for opening the injury towards creative reappropriations and for reclaiming one's abjected and despised condition.

These shared spaces and world-making projects centred on the commonality of refusal, Michael Warner writes, 'are the true salons des refuses, where the most heterogeneous people are brought into great intimacy by their common experience of being despised and rejected in a world of norms that they now recognize as false morality' (Warner 2000, 34). What queers recognize in each other is not the trace of a shared identity or essence that is supposed to get unfolded in the processes of socialisation and political organisation, but the common experience of exposure and being-in-relation, the double edged experience of vulnerability and transformativity intersecting through the body, following from our bodily life as what puts us all outside, beside ourselves. Or even more importantly, as Paul Gilroy claims, shame and other feelings and experiences of humiliation, loss of dignity, pain, disease, etc.



Photo from the 'Distilled' Installation, Academy of Arts, Skopje

mark the 'predicament of fundamentally fragile, corporeal existence ... (that) can all contribute to an abstract sense of human similarity powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularity appear suddenly trivial' (Gilroy 2000, 17).

And yet, there is another meaning oscillating in the queer existence, written in its name, and set on the margins of its history. Queer signifies the reverse of the conditions of suffering and shame, the critical reevaluations of the negative prerogatives ascribed with discourses and practices of homophobia and violence, and the political reappropriation of these hegemonic discursive fields for the purposes of struggle, resistance and radical resignification and reinstitution of normative horizons. The structural position queers occupy in the current organisation of knowledge and power deprives them from the privileged modes of relational systems, and forces queers to find out, to innovate new modes of meetings, forming relationships, intensifying bodily zones, involving surprising ruptures of pleasure, organising encounters in lines that are still not sterilised in the power relations they imply and roles and models that characterise conventional heterosexual and gender relations. Velimir Zernovski forces us to rethink the political possibilities that can be derived from the specificities of queer experiences, not only in terms of the recognition of the relational vulnerability and exposure as the means for instituting community beyond identity, but, even more importantly, to re-perform the shaming elements of experience as the means for enacting a different distribution of the sensible, instituting queer fields of visibility and sayability, for generating new modes of relations, and figuring different and non-normative zones of eroticism, sexuality and desire.

Aligning with Butler, I claim that Zernovski reimagines community starting exactly from this place where we are all undone by each other and where we share loss and vulnerability as that which deprives us of the possibility of complete comprehension, rendering us unable to finalise mourning and to restore neither ourselves nor the relation lost that sustains us in fundamental ways beyond any foundational politics on the horizon. Hence, imagining community 'affirms relationality not only as a descriptive or historical fact of our formation, but also as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence (...) that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another' (Butler 2004, 27). However, extending Butler's perspective, what Zernovski forces us to think is also an excessive moment of corporeality as the not-yet-realised tendency towards a futurity that can be transformational and monstrous. If what needs to be sustained as the core condition for our urgent rethinking of community is relationality itself as the

ongoing dimension of our existence, vulnerability and loss would not be sufficient grounds for extending our normative horizons. A normative horizon would have to extend its limits of recognisability, and this extension can only be done by reconsidering the ruptures of a political order and public spaces indexed by the inverted, perverse and anomalous bodies, for which queer eroticism figures as the political unconscious. These ruptures of the political ground represent not only the already existing symptomatic spots in community's failure of its immanent self-reproduction, but also the not-yet-present future to come as the capacity of the singular plural unfolding of bodies-in-common. The overemphasis of bodies' vulnerability bears the threat of reintroducing the overprotective and immunitary biopolitical mechanisms that can prevent the virtual in-formations of a community-of-bodies that can sometimes appear to be threatening the security of trembling bodies.

Politics of shame distribute affects unevenly among populations, decreasing the capacities for relationality of queer bodies and securing the illusion of invulnerability and self-sufficient standing of the privileged heteronormative bodies. The heteronormative distribution of the sensible, to use Rancière's terms, represents the exploitation of our shared materiality and thus vulnerability, and exemplify the biopolitical deployment of power *over* life. However, our affective capacities, as much as they restrict the potential openings of our bodies towards the world and curb the differential configuration of our bodies in not-yet-foreseen assemblages, with the same force they also open the horizons of our 'encounter-prone bodies' (Bennett 2010, 21) towards monstrous becomings. This double bind testifies to the relatedness, in-betweenness and co-dependency of our bodies inscribed in the very capacity to affect and be affected, to act and be acted upon. This second position derived from the double bind of our shared corporeal conditions demands the struggle for and engagement with politics *of* life, politics that create and foster conditions for different assemblages of bodies as the only imaginable horizon for transformation and being, bodily being, only, as becoming-in-relation. Affectivity exposes our relational dependency and vulnerability, the always virtual potential to be affected, to be impinged by the outside in such a way that makes us aware of our desires for connection by depriving us, by decreasing our capacities for creativity, transformation and assembling with heterogeneous bits of world materialities, thoughts, ideas, representations, other bodies, objects, body parts etc. At the same instant, affectivity as the disclosure of our being-in-the-world and our

thrownness in the world (to use Heidegger's words), our receptivity for the rush of impressions and sensations is a reminder of our virtual powers for becoming, for entering and opening ourselves to encounters with the 'outside' that increase our capacities to act and affect and be affected in ways otherwise than our habitual and regulated modes of being. If the broken material worlds we experience with negative and passive affects makes us feel as self – present by the gesture of being cut off from interested connecting and relationality, to feel oneself as diminishing and disappearing in the burning of the skin and blush of our heavily over present awareness of ourselves, affectivity in this double bind makes it further possible for us to becoming imperceptible, nomadic and become – otherwise, to empty the self and open our bodies towards becomings and transformations in the encounters and chance events with the world. Or as Rosi Braidotti so beautifully argues:

In those moments of floating awareness when rational control releases its hold, 'Life' rushes on towards the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with exceptional vigour. This onrush of data, information, affectivity, is the relational bond that simultaneously propels the self out of the black hole of its atomized isolation and disperses it into a myriad of bits and pieces of data imprinting or impressions. It also, however, confirms the singularity of that particular entity which both receives and recomposes itself around the rush of data and affects (Braidotti 2006, 145).

Engaging with the specificity of the lived queer experiences, Zernovski discloses the recognition of the ontological priority of the relation with the other, the other sensed in the impossibility of being touched as s/he is always being somewhere else, but yet struggles to find strategies that make identification with the other possible, although one can/should never identify him/her.

Zernovski opens the horizon for reimagining community that can start exactly from this place where we are all undone by each other and where we share loss and vulnerability as that which deprives us of the possibility of complete comprehension, rendering us unable to finalise mourning and to restore, neither ourselves nor the relation lost that sustains us in fundamental ways beyond any foundational politics on the horizon. Hence, imagining community, as Judith Butler argues, 'affirms relationality not only as a descriptive or historical fact of our formation,



but also as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence (...) that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another' (Butler 2004, 27).

But finally, the ethical priority inscribed in the question of the political is supplemented by Zernovski's subtle appeal to pull the trigger, to explode our shame and social failures as the means for disrupting the boring, homogenising and coercive attunement to social life, and shifting our 'monstrous' bodies from the place assigned to them and change the assigned place's destination.



Frame from the video *In the Third Picture*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The different affective scripts identified by neuroscientists, psychologists and cognitive scientists, although incompatible and conflicting in many regards, especially in terms of fixing or finalizing the list of evolutionary inherited affective programmes (Prinz 2004, Griffiths 1997, Panksepp 1998, Damasio 2012, LeDoux 1996, Tomkins 1995, Nathanson 1992, Sapolsky 2004), create a picture whereby affect is shaded by multiple, interactive, recursive and dynamic components set in complex feedback loop relations. Even those accounts in neurosciences that hold to the body-brain structures of affect scripts (interchangeably naming them as affects or emotions, some of which differentiate the bodily-brain organization of emotions from their conscious auto-affection as feelings (see Damasio 2012 for example), consider the indeterminacy of degrees, intensities, com-

plexities, thresholds, patterns and basins of attraction, bifurcation and nonlinearity as defining features and conditions of the emotions as emerging structures (Freeman 2000) As Izard et al. claim (2000), in the frames of developmental emotions theory, there is a salient contingency of different emotions, emotion patterns and the affective-cognitive structures among individuals, but also at individuals in different time spans.

- <sup>2</sup> *Zernovski Velimir* (b.1981, Skopje, Macedonia). Graduated at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University – Skopje. Currently, he is postgraduate student at the Department of Cultural Studies at “Euro-Balkan” Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Skopje. He realized solo exhibitions in Macedonia and abroad: New York (2010, 2012), Paris (2011), Vienna (2009, 2011), Freiburg (2009), Skopje (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012); he took part in group exhibitions in Slovenia, Kosovo, Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Macedonia, Turkey and USA. He curated and co-curated several projects and exhibitions and participated in many international projects and collaborations. From 2008 Zernovski is co-founder and president of FRIK Cultural Initiatives development Formation, organization which is working on motivation of socially engaged art production and society democratization, beyond prejudices and stereotypes. Through the media of drawings, videos, installations, object installations in public space, writing and publishing artist books he is exploring notions of identity, urbanity and popular culture as well as sexuality and gender identity. <https://www.facebook.com/zernovskivelimir>; <http://www.cee-art.com/macedonia/zernovski-velimir.html>; [velimir\\_zernovski@yahoo.com](mailto:velimir_zernovski@yahoo.com)
- <sup>3</sup> “In The Third picture” film (HD), duration 15 min. Production 2010, Vienna
- <sup>4</sup> “The Walk” video + sound, duration 6 min. Production 2009, Skopje. Awarded on Biennial of young artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Macedonia
- <sup>5</sup> “The Distilled” space installation / video/sound/objects/photography/drawings. Production 2013, Skopje. Awarded with DENES award for young visual artist, Center for Contemporary Arts, Skopje, Macedonia
- <sup>6</sup> Deploying the Levinasian apparatus of thinking ethics, otherness and vulnerability and passivity, Douglas Crimp, also approaches shame through a similar position in his analyses of Warhol’s movies with Mario Banana. See Crimp, Douglas. *Our Kinds of Movies*.

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# Mapping the Affective Production of Cybersex: Notes for a Framework

Trina Joyce Sajo

**ABSTRACT:** In this piece I sketch out a framework for examining Filipino cybersex using perspectives on affect. I discuss theories of affect that are most relevant to my project. Second, I trace intersecting discourses that mediate the phenomenon. I then outline the contours of this framework. In the concluding section, I reflect on the meaning and value of approaching cybersex as affective production.

**KEYWORDS:** Filipino, cybersex, affect, labour, production

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*What have you learned from cybersex?  
— Many things ... spelling ...  
You mean your boyfriend teaches you to spell?  
— It's like this: when I look at what he types on screen, my thoughts  
work faster ... faster when I type. That's what I like about cyber-  
sex, even if you say I waste money, it's almost like learning some-  
thing in school. I learn English much more than 'yes', 'no', 'ok'.<sup>1</sup>*

This essay offers a tentative framework for examining Filipino cybersex. It places theories of affect alongside interview data collected on cybersex labour. Cybersex is argued as involving the production and circulation of affects developing within intersecting material, historical and discursive formations. Integral to building this framework is an examination of how modes of control and governance, such as information technology policy and legal regulations specifically criminalising cyber-



sex, intervene in circuits of affect. The nature and dynamics of affect, how they get produced and circulated through different sites of corporeality, governance, monitoring and prohibition will be explored.

In the following sections, I discuss iterations of affect that are relevant to my project. I explain why I choose to work with affect to study cybersex. This is followed by a discussion of how cybersex could be theorised in terms of affective production. Next, I present a working framework for studying the affective production of cybersex. I conclude the essay by noting the significance of analysing cybersex as affective production.

## Variations of Affect

My project is largely informed by Patricia Clough's (2007, 2010) study of 'affect itself' and the Autonomist Marxist perspective on affective labour (Hardt 1999, 2007; Negri 1999; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004). These different but related streams of thinking draw on Baruch Spinoza's philosophy of ethics, which defines affect as 'the capacity to affect and to be affected' (Clough 2007, 2). This is the logic that compels states of potentiality (Massumi 2002, Clough 2007, 2010), or the moment that precedes emotions and rational thought, towards movement and action. In this perspective, affect is not limited to emotions, but also its capacities and consequences beyond reason or conscious thought (Clough 2007, 2010).

Clough integrates affective production into the global circuits of digital capitalism. Initially borrowing from thermodynamics and information theory, Clough's approach construes the individual as an organism whose affective capacities not only enable conscious or determined behaviour. The organism as an open system is also exposed, effected, and responsive to contingency. In this perspective, affect serves as reservoir of potential matter/energy for actions both determined and unintended, and as forms of intensities (Massumi 2002; Clough 2007, 2010). Clough also contends that the potential of affect and self-organisation cannot be realised without exposure to increasing information, complexity and turbulence. This exposure to, or even the propensity of affect towards indeterminacy allows for political possibilities, or individual capacities for self-organisation or autopoiesis.

Digitisation complicates affect in that it 'inserts a technical framing into the present, expanding bodily affectivity' (Clough 2010, 212). This means that 'the digi-

tal acts as a technological intensification or expansion of the non-lived, nonlinear complexity, or indetermination of bodily affectivity' (ibid). The notion of digitisation makes cybersex medium specific, and thus requires a careful examination of how the digital space actively intervenes in the exchange, distribution and circulation of sexed up images and texts, as well as, to borrow from Susanna Paasonen (2011), its carnal excesses.

Important, too, is the relationship of affect to financialisation, which marks Clough's (2007, 2010) distancing from Brian Massumi's more hopeful prospects for affect's potential. Clough is well aware of the coupling of digitisation and financialisation and the constraints against affective freedom. The merging of digitisation and finance into digital capitalism—a term denoting the latest stage of capitalism whereby the illusion of wealth materialises and overruns all aspects of economic life through networked exchanges of fiat currency and immaterial assets, such as information—is reinforced by the reliance on affects for the (re)production and maintenance of surplus values (Betancourt 2010). Clough (2010) argues that as forms of biopolitics and the surveillance of populations for new markets are intensified, affects are at risk of being fully subjected to processes of control and commodification.

Affect's potential for the subversion of capitalism is discussed and debated quite extensively in works drawing on Autonomist Marxist perspectives.<sup>2</sup> Following the Autonomist view, affective labour is a type of 'immaterial labour,' a term characterising forms of linguistic, communicative and knowledge work that generate surplus values under post-industrial, neoliberal capitalism (Hardt and Negri 2000). Neoliberal capitalism, characterised by new economic arrangements engineered by the growth and expansion of financial systems and information and technologies, marks a shift from manufacturing and industry to service-oriented jobs such as financial services, day care or health care work. These jobs share one or more features: continuous exchange of information and knowledge; physically intangible outputs; organic, 'autopoietic' modes of cooperation; and most importantly, the importance of human contact, social relations and networks (Hardt 1999, Hardt and Negri 2000).

Affect assimilates cognitive elements as well as modulates other people's affects. Hardt and Negri make a fine distinction between affects and emotions, however, arguing that, 'Unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects

refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking' (2004, 108). With this illustration of affect, the authors arrive at a simple definition of affective labour: 'Affective labor, then, is labor that produces or manipulates affects ...' (ibid).

Affective labour is not entirely new, but in the post-industrial, neoliberal economy, affect is integral to, if not *the* product being (re)produced, exchanged and circulated. The centrality of affective labour is made more visible in the context of the digital economy, with development and growth of telecommuting (Huws 2003) and call centre work (Mirchandani 2012), as well as what came to be conceived as 'free labour' (Terranova 2000) or the provision of online content. Affective modalities of feeling, sensation and emotions, but also creativity and visceral exchanges running through digital networks coincide with changes in structures and conditions of work (i.e., feminised, flexible, and modal). What Hardt and Negri seemed to miss regarding affect's prominence under the current regime is captured by Clough's (2010, 221) interpretation:

(T)he connection of affect and capital is not merely a matter of a service economy's increasing demand for affective labor or media's modulation of the circuit from affect to emotion. Rather, pre-individual affective capacities have been made central to the passage from formal subsumption to the real subsumption of 'life itself' into capital, as the accumulation of capital has shifted to the domain of affect.

## Why Affect?

What draws me to these two approaches is how they confront questions of power—especially the power of capital—to intervene in the production process. More importantly, affect brings an ethical dimension to the various forms of productivity—economic, technological, and immaterial. These ethical concerns are political as well as aesthetic in nature. But Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's contribution outweighs other approaches on matters of ethics. Indeed, following Melissa Seigworth and Gregory J. Gregg's (2010) typology, Hardt and Negri's theory of affective labour would be one of the approaches that fittingly illuminate 'politically



engaged work', since it acknowledges that 'repetitious practices of power can simultaneously provide a body ... with predicaments and potentials for realising a world that subsists within and exceeds the horizons and boundaries of the norm' (ibid, 7). In Hardt and Negri's view practices of affective labour not only shore up fundamental questions about the human condition and social relations, but also suggest that these practices may hold, or at least open prospects for a political takedown of the post-industrial, capitalist system.

## Why Cybersex?

In Philippine culture, cybersex is popularly known to be an illegal, underground activity that bears similarities to brothel prostitution (McGeown 2011) and in some cases, call centre work (Cordova 2011). Reports of cybersex in mainstream media feature adult (web)cam models, or ACMs, composed of youth and young adults working for cyber-pimps and cyber-madames that operate so-called cybersex dens. These so-called dens are anomalous businesses covertly operating in residential homes or behind legitimate store fronts. ACMs perform on webcams in commercial adult sites on the Internet to attract foreign male customers (Mathews 2010).

Conversations with former cybersex labourers for a research project<sup>3</sup> revealed that there is more to cybersex than the images reflected in media. Labourers may purposefully enter into an enterprising activity, or may be misled and somewhat forced into the business. With respect to their reasons, performers are motivated not purely by the promise of money, but also by the desire to provide for one's needs and those of dependents. Besides quick cash or sustained financial support for one's relatives, cybersex may lead to meaningful, lasting relationships as well as opportunities for self-development through education. But for some who are forcibly led into cybersex—their experiences, in effect, fall into the normative and popular perception—it could leave painful life lessons. A woman I interviewed, barely out of her teens, had a traumatic experience, but managed to escape abusive labour conditions in the cybersex den where she was originally recruited.

From a critical view, the popular representation of cybersex could function like myth (Barthes 1970, Wilson 2001). A myth relegates to the margins or silences other ways cybersex is experienced and made meaningful by its participants, thereby

reducing the subjective value and the complexity of human experience. Indeed, media has effectively conveyed the message to the public that cybersex is a new moral scourge, and is anything but desirable in Philippine society. The one-dimensional representations of cybersex in the media, framed as a ‘thing’ that needs to be extirpated, instantly caught the attention of legislation and law enforcement. For instance, development and mobilisation of efforts to curb the growing threat that is cybersex began as early as 2004 in Olongapo City<sup>4</sup>, where my interviewees lived or worked. Initiatives to criminalise cybersex have been developing in national-level legislative chambers, coming to fruition when the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 formally took effect.

In contrast, my personal interviews animated cybersex through the reassembling of past experiences. The women articulated ‘carnal residues’ (Paasonen 2011) produced during periods of virtual intercourse, intense labouring, and most importantly the remembrance of kinship obligations and struggles. During the interviews their recollections were punctuated by ‘fluid’, visceral responses to those memories. Thus, cybersex, when informed by lived experience and tacit knowledge becomes not merely composed of intentional behaviours and practices. It produces emotions, body movements and excesses, risks, and chances over a period of time, in turn compelling responses, actions and movements from other entities in the social network. In other words, cybersex turns into something that involves the production and circulation of affects.

## The Production of Affects: Discourses and Interventions

In cybersex, the production of affects means multiple and sometimes contradictory affective tendencies, capacities or feeling states. From fleshy, corporeal embodiments affects move through different sites in cyberspace; in trans-local circuits of digital capital; in governance institutions particularly in ICT policy, legislation, law enforcement and advocacy; and in geographically situated places of labour. The same set of affects derived directly from cybersex practices are also subjected to the disciplinary gaze of local and national governments. In this regard, performers confront the risks that come with institutional surveillance and policing (for which the women I interviewed admitted no longer practicing or participating in cybersex).

As consumers of bandwidth, the cybersex performer and their affects are also being made productive for digital capitalism. This network of digital capital includes the local telecoms industry that provides fees-based Internet services and the Internet cafes that offer paid public access. The productivity of affects goes as far as enabling the transmittal of money (and with it, the transformation from virtual to physical currency) and its circulation in local, physical sites. This includes personal or shared spaces of habitation and work such as cybersex dens, rented houses/apartments, and family residences. Even as cybersex exists outside the borders of the legitimate ICT economy, it also appears that capitalist surplus value morphs into generative, affective values—that is, it transforms into modes of care and support for members of the household or dependents within the kinship network.

As cybersex moves through new communication technologies and circulates on to offline environments, the State has been gaining traction in efforts to control and manage it. Philippine legislation has been keen on penalising sexual exploitation facilitated by digital technologies. In four years, it has enacted laws on online child pornography, video voyeurism and, with the approval of the anti-cybercrime law, cybersex. Before the law was established cybersex operators and performers have been apprehended by way of existing national laws on human trafficking and child pornography (McGeown 2011). In 2010, the Anti-Cybersex Act was approved in Congress and subsequently in the Senate. These legislative efforts eventually led to the incorporation of cybersex under the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, which after public deliberations and judiciary assessment finally came in full swing in February 2014. The law attempts to formally govern cyberspace by monitoring and penalising different forms of internet crimes. Under the statute, cybersex, “the wilful engagement, maintenance, control, or operation, directly or indirectly, of any lascivious exhibition of sexual organs or sexual activity, with the aid of a computer system, for favour or consideration,” is classified as content-related offense (Republic Act 10175, 2012).

These anti-cybersex strategies in legislation and the criminal justice system coincide with State efforts to develop an information economy that would successfully lead the country’s socioeconomic growth and development. Through the ICT Roadmap (Commission for Information and Communications Technology, 2006) and the Philippine Digital Strategy (Information and Communications Tech-

nology Office, 2012) the Philippine government ensures that the country's information workforce is groomed to become the leading provider of cyber-services in the international market. To achieve this, initiatives such as computational skills and English language proficiency trainings are institutionalised and implemented via the education sector.

Cybersex, as one writer claims, is the dark residue of this vision of an information society, the success of which depends on the renowned communicative skills of the Filipino call centre worker (Cordova 2011). I build on this point and contend that cybersex and call centre work are two sides of the same coin. Both follow the logic of communicative and semiotic exchange, although, obviously, cybersex is more sexual and illicit. More importantly, the two forms of labour are molded by the same technological medium, economic order, and material history (Cruz and Sajo, forthcoming).

Other socio-historical, material discourses also run parallel to or even contribute to the emergence of cybersex: Prostitution, trafficking and the sex trade (Ofreneo and Ofreneo 1998, Truong 1999, Ralston and Keeble 2009), with links to feminist activism (WeDpro 2010) and the American military-industrial complex (Enloe 1990, Ralston and Keeble 2009, Lacsamana 2012), and neoliberal policies in support of labour flexibilisation and service-oriented export labour (Parreñas 2011, Rodriguez 2008, McGovern 2007, Bello et. al. 2004). These discourses intersect with ICT policy and legal discourses on certain nodal points. For instance, some civil society groups advocating for responsible, democratic use of ICTs also wage campaigns against ICT-enabled violence against women and children – an issue that resonates with the national government's crackdown on cybercrimes, including cybersex. WeDpro, a feminist collective of several grassroots organisations involving women, Amerasians, and LGBTQs in the Philippines condemns cybersex, in any shape or form as exploitative and oppressive. The organisation's position is that cybersex is a newly emerged form of gender violence (Torres-Cortes 2012, Bulawan, 2012). Although legislation and law enforcement are unlikely to adopt strong radical feminist views, they appear to be feminist allies based on a common belief that cybersex is morally offensive (especially to women and children, in WeDpro's case) and thus should be controlled, if not eliminated. Generally speaking, these intersecting discourses enhance, manage, control, redirect or cease the circulation of affects through institutional provisions, mandates, mechanisms and

strategies that involve or are enacted by institutions and representatives of the state and civil society.

Before concluding this section, a note on the use of the term ‘productivity’ is warranted. The main reference here is Leopoldina Fortunati’s (1995) Marxist feminist articulation of productivity in reproductive work, in which she examines housework and prostitution as representative forms. At the real (as opposed to the formal) level, reproductive work is productive in that ‘(a) it produces surplus-value even if not in terms of exchange value; (b) despite being posited by capital as a natural force of social labor it is non-directly wages work; (c) it is work that produces a commodity, labour-power’ (ibid, 102).<sup>5</sup> This is merely provisional, however. Indeed, theories of affect and affective labour complicate this quite rigid notion of productivity since they recognise that the body’s virtuality or mediatedness, its precariousness and in-betweenness, its capacity to move and be moved—produce forms of resistance to capitalism’s capture, control and appropriation (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004).

## Notes for a Conceptual Framework<sup>6</sup>

Conducting an empirical investigation of cybersex provided the opportunity to re-consider the concept and theory that started this project in the first place. Research, after all does not usually proceed in strict linear fashion; cultural and personal histories are too complex to simply corroborate or refute theoretical claims. In closely looking at cybersex my strategy was to allow the collected data to reflexively inform the theoretical perspective. The creative process enabled possibilities for a more concrete application of affective labour in the study of cybersex.

An outline for analysing cybersex from the perspective of affect, and specifically affective production is hereby proposed. First, cybersex should be understood in the context of a new economy engendered by neoliberal policies (McGovern 2007); in particular, an economy that privileges the creation of a Philippine information society and capitalises on outsourced IT service work. This economy, arguably enough produces affective value (Betancourt 2010).<sup>7</sup>

Second, there is a need to underscore the dynamic role of information technology in cybersex. Cybersex’s ICT network introduces complexities that produce, modulate and circulate affects. This approach, then, emphasises the transforma-

tive role of ICTs in mediating people's sexual practices, which may lead to favourable and unpleasant outcomes. Additionally, such framing should acknowledge that technology, or rather its use, can never be neutral. The internet itself carries political and cultural caches that equally influence the circulation of affects.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the creation of values over and beyond financial and other commercial gains needs to be acknowledged and carefully pieced out in any analysis. As I learned from interviews with former cybersex performers, cybersex is characterised as a mode of human interaction that manipulates bodily, mental and feeling states often for financial exchange. This exchange, however, further opens up segments of capitalist and non-capitalist value creation.

Governance, control and surveillance are critical intervening factors in the production and circulation of cybersex. These apparatuses could be instruments of control and exploitation, as in the case of performers whose affective labours are subjected to oppressive labour demands in cybersex den operations. These could also be subtle and indirect strategies of surveillance, such as the elimination of private rooms or cubicles in internet cafes as part of the city's collective drive to control cybersex in the community (Gulanes-Perez, 2012).

Finally, cybersex's affective production ultimately provides knowledge not only of relations between bodies, sexuality and technologies, but more importantly, ethical concerns stemming from 'repetitious practices of power' especially foisted on subaltern bodies (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 7) in digital capitalism's local/global nexus. This is why in studying cybersex, the discourses of human trafficking and forced prostitution (Hughes 2002, Jeffreys 2009)<sup>9</sup> cannot be completely ignored. A framework for analysing cybersex should have the potential to illuminate structural iniquities that permeate the intersections of ICTs and sexualised labour, how these materially operate and create tensions and constraints in everyday relations (between clients/porn users and cyberpimps, between cyberpimps and cybersex worker, etc.), and what governance, advocacy, and policy measures are appropriate but also empathetic—that is, cognisant of the welfare and well-being of subjects/agents performing the affective labours of cybersex.

## Concluding Remarks

Constructing cybersex as affective production offers a renewed perception of cybersex; that is, as sexual activity that (re)produces certain forms of value, perhaps

even alternative processes of valorisation (Allesandrini 2012). It allows possibilities of conceiving cybersex as contributing to individual households and to the local or community-based economy. At the same time, it feeds the wider digital economy dominated by large IT companies by contributing to the profitability of the traffic of sexual content and exchange in cyberspace. What I am suggesting here is that forms of value are being created as cybersex circulates in offline and online networks. These values do not necessarily fall in the realm of exchange values; nor are these values, as the epigraph above indicates, always deleterious in their effects. Importantly, performers make sense of and ultimately create value out of the experience for themselves and for their kinship networks, regardless of whether the outcome of their cybersex experiences did more harm than good.

The affective labourer is central to these value chains; in this case, the cybersex provider.<sup>10</sup> Affect accords some level of agency on the affective labourer, even while the labourer is moved to act or behave in certain ways by pre-conscious or pre-rational energies, or subjected to technologically mediated environments. Affect creates both opportunities as well as threats that the labourer learns to modulate and negotiate even when certain situations are beyond control. In some kind of twisted logic, the affective labourer could potentially achieve autonomy from forms of capitalist political and economic control only when affects are de-territorialised and circulated away from the subject. ‘The value of labour’, as Negri teaches us, ‘resides in affect, that is, in living labour that is made autonomous in the capital relation, and expresses—through all the pores of singular and collective bodies—its power of self-valorisation’ (1999, 79-80).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> “Anita.” Interview by author, translated and edited from Filipino. Digital audio-recording. Olongapo City, Philippines, August 2, 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> Autonomism is a school of thought as well as a social movement with a history than can be traced back in the 1950s. Autonomists, most of whom were students and intellectuals who joined the cause of blue-collar industrial workers, adopted principles based on workerist struggles and combined these with a revisionist account of Marxism. Central to Autonomist thought are Karl Marx’s propositions in *The Grundrisse* on the relationship of technology and labour. The movement’s main line of argument rests on the potential and value of socially necessary labour for the subversion of capitalism. For a comprehensive historical account see Wright (2002) and Dyer-Witthford (1999).
- <sup>3</sup> SIRCA-funded research project, “Cybersex and the Anti-Development State: Labor Poli-

tics and Life Histories.” SIRCA stands for Strengthening Information Society Research Capacity Alliance, a research program of the International Research Development Center, Canada and the Singapore Internet Research Center. The program is on its second cycle year; hence, SIRCA II. The principal investigator is Elinor May Cruz, University Research Associate, University of the Philippines-Diliman. The project consisted of interviews of cybersex participants as well as key informants (sometimes referred to as stakeholders) representing the government, legislation, academe and civil society, and secondary data analysis. Research sites were chosen based on the publicised prevalence of cybersex in the area. I conducted my case study in Olongapo City, while Ms. Cruz conducted hers in Angeles City.

- <sup>4</sup> Olongapo City, Philippines, northeast of the capital Metro Manila, is a tourist town and was a site of a U.S. military facility prior to its closure in 1991, as a result of the non-renewal of the Military Bases Agreement of 1947. In 1999, the Visiting Forces Agreement between the Philippines and the U.S. was signed, allowing use of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority in Olongapo as naval station in aid of military deployments in the Asia Pacific.
- <sup>5</sup> To be clear, I am not equating cybersex with prostitution. I provisionally use Fortunati’s definition since it is foundational to the Autonomist school of thought where affective labour is extensively theorised and debated.
- <sup>6</sup> Some of these points were tentatively proposed in Cruz and Sajo (forthcoming, 2015), “Cybersex as affective labour: Critical interrogations of the Philippine ICT framework and the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012.”
- <sup>7</sup> Betancourt suggests that affective labour fundamentally supports fiat money-based capitalism. Applying his argument, by managing their affects, the affective labourer (for example, the call centre agent selling credit cards or troubleshooting computer problems) ensures that citizen-consumers are distracted by pleasurable pursuits and fantasies of wealth and economic security. Affective labour, in this regard, enables the continuous subjectivation of consumers to fictitious capital (real estate, stocks, derivative assets, etc.) and ultimately debt.
- <sup>8</sup> Rodriguez and Gonzalez (2003), for instance, assert that the Internet is a geopolitical tool of American imperialism, which in turn engender the circulation of racial desires or fantasies. Representations of Filipino bodies in cyberspace embody such cultural logic.
- <sup>9</sup> Hughes’ (2002, 2003) work consistently explores the facilitative capacity of ICTs in sexually-related crimes against women and minors. Meanwhile, Jeffreys (2009) links online pornography to the global sex trade, arguing that as the sex trade develops at a global scale we see greater outsourcing of “risk” and “subordination”, as evinced by Internet rape sites that utilise and exploit women and children from developing countries.
- <sup>10</sup> I refer to cybersex performers alternatively as cybersex providers here. Gleaning from the narratives of the women I interviewed, as well as accounts of working ACMs from Paul Mathew’s (2010) study, it appears that the brunt of affective labour resides on the Filipino cybersex performer. Cybersex participants perform sexual acts as well as provide attention, care, presence and other affective gestures (Cruz and Sajo 2013).



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# Vacillations of Affect: How to Reclaim 'Affect' for a Feminist-Materialist Critique of Capitalist Social Relations?

Svenja Bromberg

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I elaborate on the value of the notion of affect and the related concept of affective labour for a feminist-materialist critique. The core argument is that an affective conception of the relationship between subject and structure would allow for a constructive intervention into the definition of 'materialism' that builds the ground for any critical social theory, but remains unfinished in the Marxist tradition. For that purpose, it will however be necessary to develop the concept of affect beyond the common, decidedly a-political interpretations that are part of the New Materialist Feminism, as well as beyond the overly emphatic connotations that the post-Workerist tradition has attached to it with regards to its immeasurable characteristic that might allow for the creation a non-capitalist future from within our present.

**KEYWORDS:** Affective labour, materialist feminism, subjectivity, measure, Post-Marxism

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*'We want money, but capitalism knows, what's better for us: Love!  
Therefore I think: Love must be colder than capital.'*<sup>1</sup>

René Pollesch, 2009

The relationship between gender and capital is complex – and yet, it lies at the heart of any attempt to contribute to a materialist, emancipatory social theory today, which is committed to understanding the ways in which social relations are



exploitative, oppressive and cause pain and suffering to some more than others, whilst not losing sight of the question of what it might mean to overturn them. Looking back at the 1970s, second-wave materialist feminism attempted to think this link primarily through a critique of classical Marxist concepts, exposing their inability to account for the problem of patriarchy and the persisting sexual division of labour. The *Wages for Housework* campaign, for example, tried to counter this deficiency by putting on display the unpaid, invisible work of women in the home and as part of a family, which despite not paying for it, capitalism fundamentally relied on for the reproduction of its core resource: labour power.<sup>2</sup> Without wanting to either reduce materialist feminism to this specific theoretical moment, nor question the influence and importance of it for feminist activism and critique, past and present, we are today in a situation where we have to revisit and update the theoretical tools and reference points for a powerful feminist-materialist critique. Such an endeavour is bound up with the most fundamental question this critique can possibly face, namely what we are to understand by 'materialism' today after its Marxist grounds have been systematically deconstructed or at least rendered equivocal since the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Into this definitional vacuum entered a 'new materialist feminism' (see for example Alaimo and Hekman 2008) born out of a critique of second- and third-wave feminism and their continuation of the binary between biological essentialism and social constructionism. This strand started from a specific interest in the materiality of the body and was influenced by Deleuzian theory, actor-network theory, as well as quantum physics. For its proponents, materialism takes on a much more literal meaning than it ever had for Marxism, where it worked first and foremost as that which avoids and counters the pitfalls of idealism (Balibar 1994, 91). New materialist feminism becomes attached to the aim of accounting for 'matter' as itself endowed with agency, which the previous, human-centred approaches to feminism ignored. It thereby does not so much respond directly to any previous definition of materialism, but instead reworks the one-sidedly discursive turn in feminist theory. Focused on the materiality of the female body and its interrelatedness, it challenges biologically deterministic ideas and thereby opens up a perspective in which 'the female body is no longer a stable ground defined by clear-cut reproductive capacities' (Chanter 2000, 266).

This paper aims to contribute to this contestation of how to think 'materiality' and contends that it is only by cutting across the dividing lines of the two material-

isms that we might be able to meet the need to complexify our categories in which we think 'social relationality' in accordance with contemporary capitalist reality. While there are many possible angles on this problem, of which certainly no single one will be exhaustive, the notion of 'affect' imposes itself as a valuable entry point that is, however, in need of conceptual clarification. Its different theoretical mobilisations, as an ontological concept and as an adjective for labour (affective labour) allow us to analyse the politico-analytical claims that are tied to a certain definition of affective materiality and its relevance for re-materialising feminist critique.

## The Concept of Affect in the Spinozist-Deleuzian Tradition

The notion of affect, especially as employed in Deleuzian feminist theory (see Colebrook and Buchanan 2000) provides first and foremost a theoretical tool for thinking subject formation differently (see Hemmings 2005, 550) – without making the subject with a specific identity the starting or end point of any argument or line of thought. Instead it traces the formation of subjectivity in its movement beyond or beside itself through constant processes of subjectification and resistance (see Sedgwick and Frank 2003, 8).

There is no denying, or deferring, affects. They are what make up life, and art ... Affects are ... the stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, even parallel to signification. But what can one say about affects? Indeed, what needs to be said about them? ... You cannot read affects, you can only experience them. (O'Sullivan 2001, 126; cited in Hemmings 2005, 548–549)

Affect is therefore something that a subject experiences, in which she is beyond knowledge and signification. For Brian Massumi, one of the leading thinkers of affect in a Spinozist-Deleuzian legacy, affect is the experiencing of changing intensity.

AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one ex-

periential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affectio) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies). (Massumi 2004, xiv)

In contrast to Arlie Hochschild's notion of a woman's 'managed heart', in which emotions and feelings are enacted or suppressed, a concept I will turn to further below, affect for Massumi works essentially against the line between head and heart, as completely non-linear, un-assimilable and un-directible, following no logic or order that is discernible from the subject's standpoint (see Massumi 2002, 25–27). Affect is therefore different from the personal and socially embedded emotions and feelings, which are intensities that are 'owned and recognized' (Massumi 2002, 28). At the same time, affect is the very condition for interaction as it opens up the body's vitality, whereas emotions aim at closure and at capturing the free-floating affects. In the same sense, Eric Shouse claims: 'you cannot invest in affect, only in the hope of being moved' (Shouse 2005).

In her auto-ethnographic analysis of the affective labour done by a waitress, Emma Dowling (2012), whilst acknowledging the important insights of Hochschild's analysis, supports the possibility and productivity of such a differentiation between emotion and affect in relation to the ways the waitress produces the 'dining experience'. For Dowling, it is not the management of emotions, but rather 'affective reconnaissance – instantaneous production and response –' (Dowling 2012, 111) that defines the work as a waitress.

I'm not simply on display. I create in you not just a state of mind, I create a feeling in your body, invoking or suppressing my own feelings in order to do so. What I produce is affect and that is the value of my work. Crucially, I can't do this on my own. I need you to be part of this process. I use my capacity to affect and your capacity to be affected, and vice versa too. You're not just on the receiving end ... we're in this together: adrift in the negotiation of our desires only to be hauled back by the complex power relations unfolding as we play, we are locked in a relationship ... (Dowling 2012, 110)



Thus, being attentive to the affective component within affective labour relationships means, firstly, to grasp the way that ‘forces of subjectivity [are] laced through with structural causality’ creating a messy mix of ‘attachment, self-continuity and the reproduction of life’ within a specific *material* scene of the present (Berlant 2011, 15; see also Steyerl 2010) that cannot be adequately captured by any form of dualism (structure – agency or subject – object), even a dialectical one. The scene in which affect is put to work is at the same time singular and relational (see Read 2013), there is no guarantee for a successful completion of the job and yet, the only way to succeed is through a momentary alignment of desires: ‘we’re in this together’. In Dowling’s example of the waitress, the product of her labour can no longer be described by the four forms of alienation – namely alienation from yourself, your co-workers, the product of your labour and society as a whole – that Karl Marx had identified in the 1844 Manuscripts under the concept of the ‘objectification’ of labour leading to the loss of the object (see Marx 1975, pp.322). Producing the dining experience demands investing labour time not only into an object that is external and thus, alien, to the worker’s needs and desires. Instead, desires are projected, maybe attached to an alien scene, in a non-unilateral way in which moments of estrangement are intertwined with a more positive attachment or attunement. As the opposite of a rational genesis, the affective genesis ‘cannot be projected from the labourer onto the “product”, – in this case the dining experience – but it only works if all parties are equally affected by their shared object of desire.’ (Balibar 1998, 110) ‘Affects ... do not require a subject as their addressee’ (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 13), and yet they constantly subject everyone who finds herself in an affective relationship or encounter to their energies.

## The Cruelty of Affect

In her critique of the overemphatic usage of the concept of affect, Lisa Blackman argues that ‘the complex processes of subject-constitution [...] induce both *becoming* and *becoming-stuck*’ (Blackman 2008, 47) and therefore importantly points to the ‘other’ side of affect, which Massumi, amongst others, seems to strategically under-emphasise. In order to draw attention to this second dimension of any affective encounter, in which the ‘hope of being moved’ (Shouse 2005) might

just as well turn into an unavoidable vulnerability, we need to interrogate more closely the specific relationship of bodies within space. Here, I ground my inquiry on Teresa Brennan's argument on the transmission of affect, in which she argues against a subject's self-containment: a subject is always open to the other's energies that are socially invoked and can have physical and biological effects, e.g. when entering a room. Affects are contagious (Brennan 2004, 68) and at the same time, they have the enormous power of 'the unexpected that throws us off balance, that unsettles us into becoming someone other than who we currently are' (Hemmings 2005, 549). Such an effect becomes extremely precarious in combination with an argument made by Clare Hemmings, which she develops on the basis of Sara Ahmed's examination of how Frantz Fanon sees his body through the fearful eyes of the white boy. Fanon describes his body as trembling of fear, which the boy however misrecognizes as 'shivering with rage'. Following Ahmed, the boy develops his fear of the black man based on misrecognition, because past histories stick to the present in the form of racial stereotypes. In her analysis of the effects of affect on subjectivities, Hemmings develops the claim that there is a similar 'heteronormative regulation' (Hemmings 2005, 560) of affect within space that works 'along racially defined lines' (Ahmed 2000) and, as I want to add here, also along lines defined by class and gender. This implies that affect is not as random, unpredictable and autonomous as Massumi likes to think, but that there is an 'affective trajectory' (Hemmings 2005, 564) to be taken into account that is actually able to shape not only the meaning of the social for the individual and her ability to act in the world, but also the perception that the individual has of her self.

Going down a similar path, Lauren Berlant (2011) identifies within our affective attachments no potential to develop a transgressive force, but an extremely violent promise, norm or fantasy of the 'good life'. This promise becomes violent precisely in circumstances where the conditions of possibility of its realisation are compromised, or plainly non-existent within our present; rather than helping us to go beyond the confines of the unequal and exploitative relationships we find ourselves in, our affective attachments are maintained in light of the illusion of a better future to come. Berlant calls this form of affective relationship 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011, 24), emphasising not the Marxian idea of the past weighing 'like a nightmare on the brains of the living' (Marx 1975b), but instead the 'weight

of the present' (Ashbery cited in Berlant 2011, 29) that needs to be equally taken into account in order to understand our contemporary condition.

It can provide a way to assess the disciplines of normativity in relation to the disorganized and disorganizing processes of labour, longing, memory, fantasy, grief, acting out, and sheer psychic creativity through which people constantly (consciously, unconsciously, dynamically) renegotiate the terms of reciprocity that contour their historical situation. (Berlant 2011, 53)

Thus, Berlant provides us with an entry point into understanding affective relationships as a very material aspect of our existence helping us to grasp our political impasses from the vantage point of a messy and yet 'shared historical time' (Berlant 2011, 15). However, we have not yet clarified how we might be able to conceptualise this present and its specific structures and processes that decide over whether and for whom a good life can be attained or not. The question is therefore not only how affect works ontologically, but, as the preceding discussion has brought to light, how is it 'put to work' within our late capitalist society and its corresponding subjectivities? How is affect made productive and for whom?

## Post-Fordism, Biopolitics & Affective Labour

The notion of *affective labour* is a rather recent conceptual invention that gained attention and importance especially through its prominent place in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's delineation of 'Empire' and its sites of potential resistance for the working class or the multitude (Hardt and Negri 2004; 2000). The discussion around the concept that finds its main ground in the work of the Italian post-Workerist Marxist tradition around Negri and Hardt, as well as around Paolo Virno and Maurizio Lazzarato, is built on two combined lines of thought (Diefenbach 2011).

The first line of thought starts from the Marxist debate around capital and its utilisation of the human labour force (see Marx 1976, 283). Following Katja Diefenbach, there are two tendencies in the early and late Marx that are maintained and merged in post-Workerism, which is the ontological idea of 'labour as self-generation' or 'creative vitality' taken from the Paris Manuscripts, combined with the 'historical-critical theses [...] on the socialisation of production' (Diefenbach

2011). But whereas the late Marx began his critique of the capitalist accumulation of wealth or the 'creation of value for value' (Fortunati 1995, 7) from the command of capital, especially in its generalised form, money, (see Negri 1991), Italian Workerism and post-Workerism take labour and its antagonistic position to capital as their starting point.

The only *use value*, therefore, which can form the opposite pole to capital is *labour (to be exact, value-creating, productive labour)*. (Marx, Grundrisse, cited in Negri 1991, 63; emphasis in original)

This reconceptualisation implies – against an orthodox value-theoretical interpretation of an economic law that ahistorically prefigures the relationality of capital and labour from the point of view of capital – that capital's power depends on and is thus limited by its relationship with labour as living labour from which it needs to extract surplus value in order to valorise itself (see Negri 1991, 58).

The specificity of the *post-Workerist* perspective is furthermore determined by an understanding of late-capitalist society as a post-Fordist society, which differs from a Fordist society in the forms of valorisation of capital, and thus the nature of work and the position of the working class vis-à-vis capital. Theorists like Lazzarato, Negri and Hardt describe the transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist society as a transition in the nature of productive labour towards 'intellectual, immaterial, and communicative labour' starting in the 1970s (Hardt and Negri 2000, 29). Immaterial labour is characterised by the intangibility of its products and, more specifically, through producing 'first and foremost a social relation' (Lazzarato 1996, 142) – something that can only be co-created between worker and client and that potentially lasts far beyond the moment of its consumption. This mode of production as 'enriched to the level of complexity of human interaction' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293) and immanently dependent on cooperation is supposed to create social networks and communities. '[T]he "raw material[s]" of immaterial labor is subjectivity as well as the "ideological" environment in which this subjectivity lives and reproduces' (Lazzarato 1996, 142), including language, communication and knowledge. Immaterial labour can then also be understood as capitalism's striving 'to find an unmediated way of establishing command over subjectivity itself', which explains a link between immaterial labour and 'precariousness, hyperex-

ploitation, mobility, and hierarchy' (Lazzarato 1996, 134–135). This development is also often referred to as the 'feminisation of work' as working conditions that have traditionally been associated with women's work are generalised throughout the post-Fordist economy (see Endnotes 2013).

For Hardt, Negri, and others, this implies that the classical Marxist theory of value, which argues that capital relies on the objective measurability of the value of labour through the invested, socially-necessary labour time, needs to be revised. In these newly emerging 'spaces of self-valorization' (Negri 2008, 21), capital becomes 'incapable of understanding the creative energy of labour' (Negri 2008, 20) and therefore can no longer account for and extract all the surplus value that is produced in the economy. What they therefore find in the post-Fordist forms of immaterial labour is an *immanent communist element*.

Because there is no value without exploitation. Communism is thus the destruction at the same time of the law of value, of value itself, of its capitalist or socialist variants. Communism is the destruction of exploitation and the emancipation of living labour. *Of non-labour*. That and it is enough. Simply. (Negri 1999, 83)

This new theory of value needs to be understood as closely linked to the Foucauldian argument that a new form of power entered the realm of the social in the nineteenth century called biopower. Foucault describes biopower as the moment when life itself in its abstractness, as 'bios', becomes the object of state control, and contrasts it to the still persisting earlier forms of control such as disciplinary control, in which life remained 'outside the contract' between the sovereign and the people (Foucault et al. 2003, 241). In parallel, Negri sees the new forms of labour as biopoliticised. This means that there is no more inside or outside of labour power from capitalist command, no more possibility of distinguishing between use and exchange value, or work and leisure: every act of economic production is at the same time a production of the social, which means in reversal that everything becomes productive (see Negri 1999, 80); using Marx's terminology, Negri calls this movement 'real subsumption'<sup>4</sup>.

In this entanglement of life made for production and production producing life, the new labouring practices supposedly also lead to the emergence of com-

pletely new forms of becoming-human, of subjectivities. And at the same time that 'exploitation can no longer be localised and quantified' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 209), those new, and foremost *collective*, subjectivities build a power of resistance against capital, a new 'potentia' 'from below' (Negri 1999, 78): affect.

In this paradoxical way, *labour becomes affect, or better, labour finds its value in affect, if affect is defined as the 'power to act' (Spinoza)*. The paradox can thus be reformulated in these terms: The more the theory of value loses its reference to the subject (measure was this reference as a basis of mediation and command), the more the value of labour resides in affect, that is, in living labour that is made autonomous in the capital relation, and expresses – through all the pores of singular and collective bodies – its power of self-valorization. (Negri 1999, 79–80; Emphasis in original)

Here, we find ourselves entering into the second line of thought, by which the Italian post-Workerists, indebted to Spinoza and Deleuze, inquire into the specific meaning and force of affect within the new forms of post-Fordist labour. In general, *affective labour* in Hardt and Negri is defined as a sub-category of immaterial labour, in which they see 'a unique alignment between the ontological possibilities of our being [following Spinoza's ontological category] and the activities comprising our economic life ...' (Federici 2011, 64; my insertion). The specificity of affective labour is the 'creation and manipulation of affect' in order to create 'a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293), which is mostly achieved through virtual or actual human contact, mainly associated with kin work, care work, health services, the entertainment industry, and other kinds of services.<sup>5</sup> Beyond this characterization, affective labour remains, I would say, problematically underdeveloped within their writings.

What is new about affective labour that justifies its prominent discussion is not its mere existence in the labour market, as there have always been jobs that involved the production and manipulation of affects and emotions, but its newly acquired dominance as, according to Hardt, it produces the highest value for the current economic system (Hardt 1999, 97).

Following a Spinozist-Deleuzian legacy, for Hardt and Negri this production of affect that becomes the value of labour appears as a potentiality, a 'power to act'

(Negri 1999, 79) or 'potentia' beyond measure (see Anderson 2010), which limits capital to no more than a parasite that is trying, but not actually fully achieving to appropriate the creative forces of affective labour. This potentiality arises from affect's essential immeasurability, as always excessive and an 'expansive power' (Negri 1999, 77) that, in its limitlessness and autonomy is able to expose the very limits of the power of capital.

Against the backdrop of these, as well as Dowling's and others reflections on the nature of affective labour, we can conclude that a fundamental contribution of this debate that was very much initiated by Hardt and Negri is the re-affirmation that labour and life are much more intimately entangled than previous conceptions might have suggested. But rather than embracing too quickly the primacy of the production of social relations as a potential escape route from exploitation, we should try and subject Hardt and Negri's suggestions to the rigorous interrogation that they deserve. This means that we need to utilise the lens of affective labour in order to excavate the complex and constantly differing entanglements between the workings of capital and power within and on the labour process, on the worker's subjectivity and her social relations, which in a post-Fordist economy function on the basis of aligning strivings and desires that in past labour regimes might have been experienced as much more clear-cut, structural antagonisms.

## The Immeasurability Hypothesis

As Hardt and Negri have suggested, power that has become biopower needs to be understood in its direct relation to capital's struggle towards finding new, adequate forms of valorisation, which has one of its sites of struggle (and only one) in the field of affective labour. It is in this context that we need to re-assess their hypothesis that, whilst affective labour produces value for capital, it also always produces a form of excess, a form of life that remains outside of capital's reach and instead offers possibilities of the workers' self-valorisation, or 'commoning'. As Massimo de Angelis and David Harvie have shown, since the late 1970s, cognitive capitalism has, far from capitulating before the various forms of immaterial and affective value, started to race towards new and intensified forms of standardisation, quantification and surveillance of labour through what the authors call a

‘war over measure’ (De Angelis and Harvie 2009, 4), which results in an increasing commodification of the life sphere, including the sphere of social reproduction.

Through an interpretation of the Marxian category of ‘socially-necessary labour time’<sup>6</sup> as not only a past quantum of expended time in a factory, but as both ‘the result of past measuring processes and the present benchmark’ that workers are confronted with by management and other organisational surveillance mechanisms (De Angelis and Harvie 2009, 7), they show how the valorisation of affective and other immaterial values that are part of the labour process, but not necessarily directly visible or accountable for in the end product (see Dowling 2007, 128), can still be measured, commanded and transformed into value for capital.

In her study of the waitress as an affective labourer, Dowling shows in great detail how the affective part of her work is precisely prescribed, commanded, trained and evaluated by behavioural manuals, training sessions, different forms of assessment and importantly the wage relation itself that creates stimuli and performance-increasing hierarchies between the staff of the restaurant – even though the affective labour the waitress engages in remains ‘non attributive’ within the overall product (Dowling 2007, 121). Thus, Dowling helps us to grasp the force of capital, specifically in the context of a growing precarisation and immiseration of the work force more generally, that lies behind the various forms of mediation between affective relationships, subjectivities and power as immanent to the work process. The forms of mediation she describes succeed in overcoming the problems of immeasurability and instead focus on the perpetuation or intensified separation, isolation and inequalities between workers along gendered and racialised lines for the sake of economic value creation.<sup>7</sup>

Going back to Read’s work on a Spinozist critique of political economy, we can understand these new levels of indirect measure in a context of an increased sense of insecurity and precarity among workers as part of the fundamental structure of a post-Fordist or neoliberal affective composition of labour relations, which Read describes as ‘a regime of fear (tinged with hope)’ (Read 2013). Whilst an inquiry into specific affective labour processes, such as waitressing, then allows us to discern the ways in which this regime of fear and its war over measure is executed, it necessarily deconstructs the possibility of any simplistic assumptions about a primacy of self-valorisation as opposed to capitalist valorisation within affective labour environments in the sense Hardt and Negri suggest.



## Affective Labour as 'Women's Work' – Between Structure and Subject

Another important angle for the argument of this paper is to take into view the neglected element in Hardt and Negri's analysis, namely the fact that the female members of the work force are significantly over-represented in the sphere of affective labour compared to other non-affective occupations (Hochschild 2003, 171; see also Weeks 2004). Hardt and Negri and other theorists from the Italian autonomist or post-Workerist Marxist tradition only refer very marginally to the specific role of the female worker in affective labour occupations (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293; McRobbie 2010, 62). The most we know is that, whereas one facet of immaterial labour is importantly tied to informational services related to communication technologies, computing and analytical services more broadly, its other facet is affective labour, which, following Hardt, is best understood by feminist inquiries into 'women's work' (Hardt 1999, 95–96). It is therefore important to investigate what kind of jobs it implies, who the workers are and how its affective component plays out in the labour relation – something Hardt and Negri only peripherally engage in.

In parallel, there is a feminist critique of labour that is leery of the very notion of 'affective labour' and designates it as unhelpful or even damaging to the political struggles that they have been fighting around the question of work and capital's gendered structures of exploitation. For Silvia Federici (2011), Hardt and Negri's endeavour appears deeply problematic in the way in which they generalise affective labour as a condition of late-capitalist forms of work. Instead of emphasising the gendered dimension of affective labour, they engage in an 'un-gendering' discourse by emphasising 'the feminization of all work' (Federici 2011, 70), leaving once again the bulks of waged and unwaged reproductive work done by a majority of women all over the globe unproblematised, as if the feminist reconceptualisation of labour had not taken place. To underline, moreover, the implausibility of such a homogenisation in the forms and conditions of work on a global scale that Hardt and Negri envision based on Marx's concept of 'real subsumption', Federici emphasises the historical discontinuities that have been essential for the successful reproduction of capitalism, i.e. the fact that housework has never been industrialised (Federici 2011, 63; see also Federici 2012, 106).

Besides, the focus on affective labour blurs the lines of demarcation that feminists had established in order to achieve recognition of women's work specifically where it is unpaid or concentrated in reproductive rather than productive labour.<sup>8</sup> It follows that to introduce affective labour as a potentiality *because* it contains an element of non-labour within it does not sit easily with those lines of feminist critique, as it once again limits the focus on the paid work that women do – thereby moving backwards in the history of feminist struggle (see Federici 2011, Federici 2012, 97). Further, Hardt and Negri's emphasis on capital losing measure as its basis of mediation and command within affective labour contexts sounds less ground-breaking from those feminist viewpoints, aware that there have always existed different forms of domination for the waged and unwaged sphere, which has been precisely identified as part of capital's method of producing and reproducing the gender distinction (see Endnotes 2013). Thus, it remains to be seen if it will be possible to find a merit to the concept of affective labour that is indeed able to contribute something to existing feminist discourses around work.

What we need to bring together in this section is an understanding of the structural inequalities that women face in the labour market up to now, including their naturalised exclusion from it, which is tied to their responsibility to do unwaged work in the sphere of the home, and the effects that working in occupations that over-proportionally demand affective labour or 'labour in the bodily mode' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293) has. Such occupations include caring labour, kin work, nurturing and maternal activities – or, in other words, the work of the nannies, sex workers, maids and flight attendants of this world. All these occupations have a primary affective component and are widely argued to be closely related to the 'natural' responsibility of women, which, in turn obscures the fact that the labelling of this type of labour as 'the labour of love' is precisely an instrument to hide the gendering that is part of this structural form of oppression, making those activities into 'non-labour'. I will therefore, in a first step, look at Arlie Hochschild's 'The Managed Heart' (2003) and emotional and affective processes at work in the realm of an area of classical waged labour, namely the work of flight attendants. Then I will explore, following Hochschild & Barbara Ehrenreich (2002), Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2007) as well as Susanne Schultz (2006), the role of affective labour in the field of reproduction and house-

work on a global scale, whose waged dimension is a recent and ambiguous component (see Federici 2012, 102).

In this part of the analysis, I will allow for an intermingling of the usage of the terms feeling, emotion and affect even though it partly contradicts a clear distinction that can be made between emotion and affect, as I have shown earlier. However, I suggest that especially Hochschild's analysis that focuses on emotions rather than affect undoubtedly offers an important ground for understanding the workings on subjectivity that we find within fields of affective labour and shows how close the relation between an emotional and an affective dimension within these forms of work is without becoming interchangeable (see Dowling 2012, 115). Blurring those dividing lines is furthermore justified by the aim of this section to unpack what Angela Mitropoulos calls 'the indistinction between intimacy and economy' (Mitropoulos 2012, 106) means for the female labour force in terms of the interrelation of new forms of exploitation and the formation of subjectivities. That also means that my interest in understanding the effects of capital's valorisation processes needs a certain openness towards the subjective and a-subjective forms of intimacy that are put to work.

Hochschild's argument as to why affective labour is a form of work to which women are more strongly subjected than men, and which is therefore gendered, vehemently rejects any form of a naturalising discourse and is instead based on the fundamental fact that women have been made into 'a subordinate social stratum' of society (Hochschild 2003, 163). This reduction implies that women are driven into affective labour jobs through a lack of other resources than their feelings and specifically their ability to 'be nice' and 'manage their heart', which they have learned through a specific childhood training as well as through a weaker status shield caused by their general subordination. For Hochschild, emotion is 'a bodily orientation to an imaginary act' (Hochschild 2003, 28), a signal function that enables individuals to know about the world, similar to seeing and hearing. Based on her empirical research, Hochschild comes to understand feelings not as biological organismic reactions, but as the outcome of 'attending to inner sensation in a given way' (Hochschild 2003, 27), making the management of our feelings a substantial part of what is felt in the first place rather than a slight 'tainting'. Her investigation focuses on the question of what happens to a subject when she does not only use, and more specifically, *manage* her emotions in the private sphere,

but when these emotions become a resource for sale. Thus, her characterisation of what Hardt and Negri call 'labour in the bodily mode' focuses primarily on the right of the employer 'to exercise a degree of control over the emotional activities of employees' (Hochschild 2003, 147).

Hochschild elaborates on this point by means of the example of flight attendants and bill collectors, which she sees as two opposite poles within the general forms of emotional labour, 'the toe and the heel of capitalism' (Hochschild 2003, 16): the flight attendants whose smiles and care are supposed to enhance the customers' experience, and the bill collectors whose aim is to entice fear and anger in the customers so that they feel pressured to balance out their open accounts. Emotional labour for Hochschild means that a subject increasingly starts to sell feelings or emotions that she does not genuinely have, or that, even to the contrary, she has to enact through the suppression of completely different feelings. In order to manage their feelings, the workers use the instruments of 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' (Hochschild 2003, 33). Whereas surface acting refers merely to an act of pretending and appearing in a certain way to the outside world, deep acting demands from the worker not only to deceive the 'other', the client, but also to deceive herself about her emotions, and thus about 'her real self'. By means of creating inner feelings through objectifying them in the 'learning process', this process of deep acting literally creates a new self by supposing an 'as if' against the reality. According to Hochschild, everyone applies this technique to a certain extent within private lives and private social roles, but it becomes extremely precarious with regard to self-estrangement and identity confusion when it enters the economic sphere of the labour market, where it is sold under the command of the employer and therefore ultimately of capital (Hochschild 2003, 132).

Transposing our investigation onto the global level, we can further identify what Hochschild and Ehrenreich refer to as 'a global heart transplant'. In this development, 'love and care become the new gold' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, 22; 26), namely a resource that cannot only, as in the case of the flight attendants, be artificially created, but also 'displace[d] or redirect[ed]' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, 23). In the cases that Hochschild and Ehrenreich illustrate under the headline 'Global Woman', the globalised good is the 'women's traditional role' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, 13). Essentially, it is love that is redirected from

the global South to the global North, as for example, from a mother's own child towards a child that she cares for as a nannie in a Western household in which the need for reproductive work has problematically persisted despite the revolution in women's possibilities for waged employment. This redirection seems to be induced by what Federici describes as 'near-zero-reproduction' zones that capital has created in the global South, i.e. the separation of large populations from their means of subsistence whilst neither supplying wage-labour opportunities nor (state) support for social reproduction. Under the law of exchange value, the time a nannie spends with another woman's child is worth more than the time she spends with her own child, having no (exchange) value and preventing her from investing her demanded 'loving' abilities towards productive activity (see also Rose 1983, 83). It is in this context that Schultz develops her critique of Hardt and Negri's obvious neglect of the persisting gender, race and class inequalities in the contemporary reconfiguration of production and reproduction, in which she sees a continuation of the structure of unwaged work in the work of reproduction on an international level, which is not questioned by the blurred boundaries that differentiate productive from reproductive work in the first place (Schultz 2006). Following Hochschild, Federici goes as far as to argue that what we observe in this dynamic is a global and permanent reproduction crisis that lies at the heart of capitalism's functioning (Federici 2012, 104).<sup>9</sup>

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez's research (2007) gives us a more phenomenologically oriented perspective on the specific vulnerability of female migrant workers in affective labour occupations. In her study of migrants doing care and domestic work in European households,<sup>10</sup> Rodríguez identifies the moment of spatial closeness in which feelings of isolation and alienation of the worker, who very often does not speak the same language as the employer and does not belong to the same class, are confronted with an extreme relational intimacy within the space of the household as the centre of family life. Rodríguez notes a dissolution of boundaries between bodies and their affective binding-together through the work relationship, which then becomes more than that, namely a 'contribution to the production of life' (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2007, 16). She makes explicit that the spaces of affective labour as sites where not only economic, but also social relationships are produced and reproduced, create an extreme tension between affect, power and subjectivities.

Most notable here is not the fact that such a blurring of boundaries might be unlikely to happen outside of these spaces of affective labour, but that this blurring inside the household is taking place between the two subjects of employer and employee induced by the nature of the work, rather than willingly or consciously initiated by one of the individuals (see Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2007, 19). This means that, although what counts in order for the work task to be accomplished are affects, emotions and feelings in the abstract and not the individual that has these affects, emotions and feelings, there is always an encounter between bodies involved in which employer and employee (or flight attendant and passenger in Hochschild's example) 'articulate and negotiate their desires, needs and moments of identification and dis-identification' on an affective level (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2007, 21).

For Rodríguez, the household as one specific space of affective labour can be best described with Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia': a space 'by which we are drawn outside of ourselves' (Foucault 2000, 177). It points towards the ambiguity of the space that affective labour creates in which the potentiality of unexpected encounters that enable the renegotiation of power and subject relations go hand in hand with the fact that the latter usually starts from extremely unequal relations, putting one subject more at risk than another.

## Conclusion

My contention is here that Rodríguez does not go far enough with her critique and specifically that she falls behind the potential of the concept of affective labour for a feminist-materialist critique that I have tried to delineate by showing how it simultaneously operates on two, intertwined levels. Rodríguez emphasises the phenomenological aspect focusing on the problem of estrangement and alienation through emotional and affective impacts on or 'besides' the labourer's subjectivity. Her and Hochschild, taken in conjuncture with the earlier elaborations of affect's impact on subjectivities, have helped us to understand that to affect and to be affected or, in Hochschild's case, to endow emotions with exchange value necessarily involves that the worker, who is more likely female than male, puts herself at risk. The potential of transformation through affective attachments and relations always involves the possibility of getting hurt and of having

to cope with what Brennan calls ‘negative affects’ (Brennan 2004, 22). Another implication is the gendering potential of any affective encounter that hides behind what Hemmings identified as the heteronormativity of affect, which would then work precisely against any going beyond or besides of a subject and against Hardt and Negri’s vision of the emergence of new subjectivities. Instead, we would have to come to terms with the increasing reinforcement of existing lines of inequality on an affective level within the context of work. In Katie Weeks’ more general terms:

Gender is also produced and productive when personality is put to work. As Hochschild points out, personalities are gendered and that is part of their value to employers. (Weeks 2007, 9)

It is not only ‘the affective intensity associated with exploitation’ (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000, 14–15), but also the subjectivities of the workers in their becoming and their performativity within and against power that are constantly negotiated and contested within affective labour processes. If the very notion of affective labour does not encourage us to closely investigate these risks inherent in specific work spaces and interpersonal relationships – whose power effects the ‘affective turn’ importantly emphasised –, then it bears the danger of losing its theoretical and political meaning.

However, there is a second level of critique, which this paper has tried to excavate and which is key to making the notion of affective labour into a concept that is of use to a feminist-materialist approach. Taking Hardt and Negri’s developments as a *starting*, rather than an end point, affective labour allows for a structural analysis of the changing relation between capital and labour. We have seen how the production of life, of sociality and intimacy, is not merely a question of uncomfortably blurred boundaries or the worsening of a work-life balance against which we can demand more life and less working hours (Mitropoulos 2012, 174). This inquiry has foregrounded the heavily gendered character of affective labour, which includes paid and unpaid labour. Moreover, it has shown that the imposition of the need to work and to earn a wage allows capital to continue to create hierarchies, divisions and attachments within the work force that reproduces and reinforces the gender division of labour (see also Schneider 2013, 398).

Talking about 'affective' labour in this structural context now neatly allows for the integration of the first and second level, which challenges a purely structural account of 'the logic of gender' as for example Endnotes (2013) developed. Where they argue in their conclusion that 'the present moment allows us to see both our class-belonging and our gender-belonging as external constraints' (Endnotes 2013) that can be abolished, an approach via affective labour would not be as quick to affirm such an 'externality' of the gender-constraint. It will undoubtedly agree that there is nothing 'natural' to the gender category, and yet that does not mean that the subjects that have been formed in relation to it understand or experience it as a merely external constraint. In as far as there is no un-alienated form of life of which we could become conscious, there is also no straight-forward way of liberating our ways of existence and our 'selves' from the forces of subjectivation that infinitely expand within it, by treating it in a compartmentalised manner. Instead, the category of affect enables us to understand our shared material, ontological and epistemological investment in the capitalist present and might therefore be able to help us devise adequate political strategies for its contestation in search for a different life.

## Postscript: Affective Labour as Site of Struggle

But I want to shoot cold from the hip. And not supply with my life as value these endless reproductions of life. My identity as woman is really only a permanent production of disciplinary actions. [...] My revolt does not always need to become a self-sacrifice! Of course as a woman, that disgraces herself, I am the event. And your bad treatment is also the event. (Pollesch 2009, 179; 186)

If we can neither shoot cold from the hip as a character in René Pollesch's theatre play *Love is colder than capital* laments, nor rely on an ontological, subversive potential of the workings of affect in our labour relations, then how can a feminist-materialist politics be thought that takes the affective component within the capital – labour antagonism, which I argue remains intact even in the context of cognitive capitalism, into account? Angela Mitropolous suggests that maybe 'the oikos is haunted not by communism' (as Hardt and Negri make us believe), 'but by disaffection, a detachment from the oikonomic that signals attachments other-



wise and, for this reason, barely deciphered by conventional political analyses, but nevertheless distinctly uncanny' (Mitropoulos 2012, 175). Can we cause our affective compartments and conscious emotions to become even colder than capital has already rendered them? Pollesch's title of his play, *Love is colder than capital* is an adaptation of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film from 1969 entitled *Love is colder than death*. In both cases the description of love as 'colder' than capital / death can be understood as programmatic: Fassbinder and Pollesch portray love relations that are damaged by their social conditions (economic and political), filled with clichés that cause misery for the lovers and the suffocation of the relationships. And we learn from both works of art that these damaged love relations do in turn not exist besides capital or the police state or the political party, but on the inside of them and thus, need to be treated as such. However, Pollesch attaches a double meaning to the adjective 'cold', when he introduces the idea of 'shooting cold from the hip'. Here, cold stands in opposition to the *warm* love melodrama that the capitalist bourgeois society imposes on its subjects. Cold as the refusal not so much of not participating at all but of withdrawing the loving, emotional and affective capacities (as citizen-subject, loving wife or husband or affective labourer). 'But I want it cold' (Pollesch 2009, 187) could then be read as: if I have to participate at all, at least as a cold, passive object in which nothing is left to be loved or to love.

However, as Federici has shown in relation to reproductive work, the refusal of affective labour is not only complicated by an increasing dependency on the wage in times of a global crisis, austerity regimes and generalised privatisation of public services. In addition, affective labour, similar if not as exclusively as reproductive labour, has a double character as it not only reproduces labour power, but also life itself, the living individual that exists for the labour market as much as for the revolt against capital (Federici 2012, 99).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, an important part of the collective struggle against affective labour is a refusal of its modes and demands as Hochschild depicts in relation to the smile strike of the flight attendants (Hochschild 2003, 127). Especially with the fact that women make up the majority within affective labour jobs, they can make the world experience how the various services they deliver would feel without the mothering, caring and smiling worker who delivers them. And even though Federici is worried that the category of affective labour could veil this important contradiction and inhibit the formation of pos-

sible alliances over what can be refused between ‘mothers and children, teachers and students, nurses and patients’ (Federici 2012, 100), it seems to be precisely an exposition of the intersection between feminist, postcolonial and anti-capitalist struggles within specific affective labour contexts that could prevent this problem.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> René Pollesch is a German author and theatre director, whose play *Liebe ist kälter als das Kapital* [Love is colder than capital] was first performed in Stuttgart, Germany in 2007. All quotations from his play are my translations.
- <sup>2</sup> See the essays by Margaret Benson, Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Christine Delphy and others in (Hennessy and Ingraham 1997).
- <sup>3</sup> While one could refer to all kinds of attempts that turned against Marxism in the wake of the crisis of French Marxism in the aftermath of '68 and the end of the regime of so-called ‘actually existing socialism’, I am referring here specifically to the attempts of Althusser and some of his students, who took this crisis seriously as a crisis of Marx’s and Marxism’s concepts and thus, started to interrogate his work for its internal limits and contradictions. It is from this perspective that Étienne Balibar has elaborated the instability of the category of ‘materialism’ in Marx and its relapses into idealism through a specific definition of the proletariat as universal subject, the unity of praxis and the teleology of history at its inside. The central conclusion from these deconstructive efforts for this paper is that it will not be enough for a feminist-materialist critique to aim to include women’s work, paid or unpaid, into the labour-capital antagonism that Marx described. The question of what kind of subjects the capitalist social formation produces, how and to which end it produces them and with what kind of effects for the political struggle are just as central to a materialist approach to social theory.
- <sup>4</sup> See for a problematisation of Negri’s use of the concept of ‘real subsumption’ Andres Saenz de Sicilia’s talk entitled *Time & Subsumption*: <http://reificationofpersonsandpersonificationofthings.wordpress.com/2013/07/31/time-and-subsumption/>

- <sup>5</sup> The particular jobs usually summarized under the category of 'affective labour' will be discussed in the next section as there is an apparent relation between them and what is classically defined as women's work.
- <sup>6</sup> As I noted in a different context, the concept of 'socially necessary labour-time' lies at the core of Marx's value theory of labour, defined in *Capital Vol.1* as follows: 'Socially necessary labour-time is the labour-time required to produce any use-value under the condition of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society.' (Marx 1976, 129) Whereas there have been recent attempts to newly emphasise the crucial place of this concept in an understanding of Marx's theory (see e.g. Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)), there is also an implicit danger of confusing 'socially necessary labour-time' with the embodied substance of concrete labour, which De Angelis and Harvie are certainly in danger of, when they use the concept in order to short-circuit between new forms of governing concrete forms of labour within cognitive capitalism and what that means for the theory of value (see Michael Heinrich, *Die Wissenschaft Vom Wert: Die Marxsche Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie Zwischen Wissenschaftlicher Revolution Und Klassischer Tradition* (Westfälisches Dampfboot 2001, pp.199). An alternative way of understanding the 'war over measure' might be via Jacques Rancière's concept of 'police'. Then the role of measurement within the overall becoming-commodity of knowledge would be to control and steer a process of normalisation of commodity production for economic valorisation, without conflating those two moments into one, This is however a debate, which demands a more exclusive discussion beyond this paper.
- <sup>7</sup> Dowling points towards the importance not to disaggregate affective and immaterial labour from the often equally necessary material, physical labour for producing the final commodity such as a 'dining experience', which requires to then question hierarchies and inequalities between the different forms of labour going into the same product. (See Dowling 2007, 129)
- <sup>8</sup> For a feminist critique of the duality of value in Marx as neglecting or rather obscuring the exchange value of reproduction and housework as non-value through naturalization, see Fortunati 1995. For the contemporary debate and its relation to the earlier 70s Marxist-Feminist discourse, see also [http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/commoner\\_issue-15.pdf](http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/commoner_issue-15.pdf). It also needs to be borne in mind that the distinction between productive and reproductive labour is itself subjected to critique regarding its adequacy in the contemporary capitalist regime, where both forms become less and less distinguishable, not only from the post-Workerist perspective (Weeks 2011, 140), but also from a contemporary structuralist account as for example Endnotes develops it (Endnotes 2013).
- <sup>9</sup> See for a deepening of the debate around the global restructuring of reproductive labour as part of a specific phase within capital accumulation the writings and edited works by Mariarosa and Giovanna F. Dalla Costa (Costa and Costa 1995; Costa and Costa 1999).
- <sup>10</sup> Her fieldwork was conducted in households in Spain, Germany, Austria and the UK. (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 2)

- <sup>11</sup> See also a recent interview with Federici published on Mute: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/permanent-reproductive-crisis-interview-silvia-federici>

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# Western Media as ‘Technology of Affect’: The Affective Making of the *Angry Arab Man*

Sabiha Allouche

**ABSTRACT:** This paper works through the framework of affect theory in order to show how Western media and foreign policy contribute towards the intensification of the stereotype of the ‘Angry Arab Man’. It follows the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on affect in order to show how a ‘refrain’ or stereotype emerges. In addition to arguing that Western media acts as technology of affect, this paper shows the emotive component of the interplay between Western media, foreign policy, and their audiences. It challenges the autonomous and pre-cognitive aspects of affect, and draws on feminist and postcolonial scholars in an attempt to reinsert the ‘social’ into debates about affect theory.

**KEYWORDS:** Affect, technology, media, stereotype, Arab, emotions

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This paper is an attempt to answer Sneja Gunew’s call for ‘decolonizing affect theory’ (Gunew 2009, 27). It uses the rhetoric of the ‘*Angry Arab Man*’ to argue that Western media<sup>1</sup> acts as a ‘technology of affect’, an expression first coined by Derek Hook in 2005 and later reprised by Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas (2013). A technology of affect goes beyond psychological manipulation and involves affective components. Technology, in this paper, is an ‘expert system comprised of a discrete set of [...] applied knowledges and/or forms of specialist language, which is used by experts on deviant subjects [...] as means of achieving a productive output of sorts, a relation of greater mastery or control’ (Hook 2005, 9).

In this paper, Western media as affective technology arises as an extension of





hegemonic forms of Western ideals. Western media is understood in neo-colonial terms. Philip Altbach defines neo-colonialism as 'a planned policy of advanced nations to maintain their influence in developing countries' (Altbach 1971, 237). Moreover, Western media must be understood as a 'function that dominates public life' and recasts it 'from a locus of information and debate to a site of manipulation by corporate powers' (Kellner and Durham 2006, xix). Additionally, this neo-colonialism is situated within the current political economy of global capitalism which consists in 'multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit', producing as such 'ever-shifting waves of genderisation and sexualisation, racialisation and naturalisation of multiple 'others'' (Braidotti 2006, par. 4).

Previous studies have sought to expose the role of Western media in the propagation of stereotypes (Kamalipour 1995; Shaheen 2001; Aguayo 2009; Al-Malki et. al 2012). This paper exposes the role of Western media in the circulation of stereotypes by adopting affect theory as its theoretical framework. It will show how Western media and foreign policy actively contribute towards the intensification of the affect-stereotype of the '*Angry Arab Man*' and how emotions constitute a major component in the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences. Foreign policy, in this paper, is seen as co-constitutive of Western media. This is clearly shown in the examples provided, relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Egyptian uprising in 2011. Selectivity, reiteration, and lack of critical analysis come into play in both examples. Moreover, foreign policy must be understood in the frame of Arab anti-Americanism sentiments that stretch to include US allies, whose policies regarding the Middle East are seen as particularly hostile and intrusive since they upset 'intimate politics of identity and culture' (Lynch 2006, 198), both of which have become increasingly prevalent after 9/11.

The first part of the paper situates the main argument by drawing on the work of Edward Said (1978), Sherry Ortner (1974), and Franz Fanon [1986 (1952)] to show how the affect-stereotype of the highly emotive '*Angry Arab Man*' contributes to reducing the Middle East to the inferior Other. It borrows from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) to argue that the excess of the refrain of '*Angry Arab Man*' is captured by Western media and territorialized by biased assumptions. The aim of the second part of the paper is two-fold: it first draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to illustrate the affective component of the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences by providing examples

related to the second Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000 and to the recent uprisings in Egypt in 2011. It then argues that an excessively theoretical examination of affect runs the risk of obliterating the 'social', coinciding with Clare Hemmings' (2005) arguments, and calls for a grounding of affect in power structures. The third part of the paper proposes an ontological reading of the '*Angry Arab Man*' as a possible attempt to 'decolonize affect theory'. It draws on the work of Black feminist bell hooks (2006) and Karl Marx's (1990 [1867]) notion of 'commodity fetishism' to show the limits of an epistemological or a constructivist reading of emotions, in addition to highlighting the links between the role of emotions and political resistance.

## The 'Angry Arab Man' as the Weak Other in Western Media

In this paper, the concept of the '*Angry Arab Man*' is seen as a process of Othering that is reminiscent of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Although Said argues that the 'essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (in Al-'Azm 2010, 55), this line of thinking must be understood in relation to the neo-colonial context in which Western media was presented earlier.

Writing about the processes of Othering is also found among feminist theorists. A highly emotive state has long been equated with a weak and irrational, non-scientific and natural state (Lutz and White 1986). In her landmark essay, *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*, Sherry Ortner (1974) draws on the natural/cultural divide to show how women have been cast off from the predominantly male cultural project, in addition to being constructed as a lower sex. Ortner's work has been criticized for its presumed universality, and its limitations in accounting for specific male-nature associations such as the work of farmers, who do not necessarily see themselves as entirely separate from nature. Perhaps Ortner's work is not the first work that comes to mind when contemplating the refrain of the '*Angry Arab Man*'. However, it shows how the natural, the weak, and the inferior are posited against the cultural.

In a similar vein, Western media, through selected and repetitive imagery, constructs the Arab man as highly emotive, reducing him to a childish state – a

predominantly natural state that has yet to access the 'cultural realm'. Like all children, he is quick to express his anger when his demands are not met. He rarely takes initiatives and prefers being given directions. He is highly militarised and is incapable of making his point in a civil way. He prefers the use of force whenever Islam is criticized. He reiterates his hate for all things Western through the public burning of American and Israeli flags, in addition to mistreating women. Such behaviours were captured, diffused, and re-diffused in times of intense crisis, such as the second *Intifada* in 2000, a period of intensified violence between Palestinians and Israelis, or in the aftermath of the publication of cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammad in caricatured ways in 2005. Western media focuses on imageries of anger without paying enough importance to the historical build-up of anti-American sentiments in the region. Moreover, this approach results in the automatic conflation of "Arabness" with muslimhood, or the inclusion of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan into an Arabic-speaking Middle East.

When Western media omits the context within which the '*Angry Arab Man*' operates, the latter is constructed as inferior, and in opposition to a superior 'Western Man' who is in control of his emotions, adopts a rational-scientific approach, and is well versed in the 'cultural', including democracy, human rights, industrial advances, and social equality.

Seen from a postcolonial lens, the rhetoric of the '*Angry Arab Man*' is saturated with Eurocentric assumptions. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Franz Fanon [1986 (1952)] argues that the colonized has been excluded from the cultural project and can only reclaim his/her agency by de-historicizing him/herself from History as we know it: a memoir of events seen from the perspective of the strong at the expense of the hope and aspirations of the weak. In Fanon's words, '[one] must constantly remind [oneself] that the real '*leap*' consists of introducing invention in life ... and it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that [one] initiates [his/her] cycle of freedom' (Fanon [1986 (1952)], 229). When seen in the context of this paper, Fanon can be said to call for a de-territorialisation of History.

History is not a linear narrative of winners and losers. When read and applied hastily, History becomes secondary, leading to essentialist misinformation like the conflation of Arabs with Muslims, or the reduction of Arab women to permanently vulnerable beings. Essentialism and reductionism are two practices that facilitate the hegemony of Eurocentric constructions. Although the work of Fanon is mostly

concerned with racism as a system of oppression that operates both vertically and horizontally, the very deployment of racism reiterates racial stereotypes.

A stereotype is an affect because its very conception is based on the disruption of an existing atmosphere. It is reminiscent of a chorus, or a refrain, that is repeated. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a refrain is 'rhythm and melody that have been territorialized because they have become expressive and have become expressive because they are territorializing' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 317). The refrain of the *'Angry Arab Man'* is highly affective due to its territorializing nature. It is passed on from one territory to another, often through biased cultural productions, contributing as such to the automatic stereotyping of Arabs as terrorists, irrational, lusty, or obsessed with Allah.

An affect implies affecting others in as much as it implies being affected by others. Consequently, this paper posits the *'Angry Arab man'* as affect-stereotype because it is representative of a strange, exoticised, and marked body that disrupts Western hegemonic ideals of citizenship, secularism, or scientific progress. Seeing that Western media is used in this paper as a neo-colonial tool that works in conjunction with Western foreign policy, it could be argued that Western media acts as a technology of affect because it is capable of regulating the atmosphere of a hegemonic West. This *status quo* or existing atmosphere can be maintained by heightening the dangers that questionable bodies could produce. In this sense, the socio-political and historical richness of the Middle East becomes reduced to an organic state – that of an intensely angry, almost child-like man that is excessively out of control and therefore dangerous. Sara Ahmed (2014) has remarkably conceptualized the shift in such micro-atmospherics by stating that a 'stranger might be the one to whom we are not attuned' (Ahmed 2014, par. 17). Since the stranger-Other is constantly working towards being accepted, or having his image ratified, often through minute and exhausting processes of negotiation, diplomacy, resistance, and conformity, it is of little wonder, then, that a 'stranger', including the misrepresented Arab man becomes a 'moody figure' (Ahmed 2014, par. 20), fluctuating between different degrees of anger in times of crisis.

Whereas Said (1978) is criticized for his East/West binary, and Ortner (1974) for her male-cultural/female-natural divide, Fanon [1986 (1952)], too, often reduces his work to a West/Third World opposition. However, neither West nor Third World is absolute. Although this paper presents Western media in neo-colonial terms, this

neo-colonialism, however, must not be understood in opposition to Third World conceptualizations. The fight against capitalism, including the fights against the exploitation of resources, cultural reductionism, trade and neoliberal agreements, occurs at a grassroots level through the works of activists, NGOs, transnational alliances, and counter-cultural productions in most countries around the world. In addition to this, transnational alliances between Western citizens and Third World citizens have been taking place long before the advancement of neo-colonialism. In *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Leila Gandhi (2006) shows how affective communities built on friendship stood in the face of the British Empire during Victorian times. The work of Gandhi reflects the imprecision of a dichotomous analysis. She shows, in her accounts of several individuals and events, how a number of British subjects sacrificed the privileges of Empire and developed affinities with the oppressed. In the process, they blurred the rigid boundaries between West and non-West, colonizer and colonized.

Still, networks of affectivities do not operate in a straightforward way. Affect can only operate insofar as the power structures that surround it permit. In other words, although affect could incite change and mobilization, it is often bound to complex systems of power, which, in their turn, alter its capacity to affect. By stressing the anger of the Arab man, Western media constructs the West as self-composed, spreading sentiments of patriotism, pride, and well-being that are ultimately captured by its audience. Through the proliferation of the figure of the 'Angry Arab Man', Western media contributes to global systems of exclusion that are highly affective.

Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it could be argued that the stereotype of the 'Angry Arab Man' is an affect that is abundant with 'excess' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 106), which is captured by Western media and foreign policy, thus limiting its potential for de/re-territorialisation. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'excess' is what allows a territory to shift. If we consider the relationship between power and affect, excess constitutes the main ingredient for both social change and control. The question that arises is how can the affect-stereotype of the 'Angry Arab Man' be shifted? Or what obstacles impede the renewal of the image of the Arab man in Western media? The answer lies in the disassociation of affect from power and vice versa. Affect theory as method *could* answer such questions. At the same

time, it is important to identify the gaps of such method and show its limits. Those are the main concerns that are addressed in the part that follows.

## A Deleuzian Reading of the Stereotype

Brian Massumi (2002) defines affect as 'a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act' (Massumi 2002, xvi). When we act, we are 'actualizing our being affected' (Massumi 2002, 42). Once this potential is actualized, it becomes possible to create new spaces of potentials where others could be affected. Affect, then, is constantly happening since it is as much capable of reinforcing the body's potential to act, as it is capable of reducing it.

Massumi (2002) and other affect theorists, notably Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995), suggest that affect differs from post-structuralist analysis of the body because it includes in its examination those sensations that are not clearly located in a person but are somehow transmitted from one body to the next. For instance, when we resign ourselves to Michel Foucault's concept of bio-politics, we are resigning ourselves to pre-determined bodies that are constantly monitored and disciplined through what appears to be an inescapable labyrinth of power. This is not to say that Foucault did not discuss at length the possibilities of the body. On the contrary, in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1995 [1975]) insists on the malleability of the body to the extent it is rendered 'docile' in order to increase its productivity and decrease its resistance to political change. However, by insisting on the intertwinement of power and resistance, Foucault's concept of 'political agency' becomes too elusive at times. For Caldwell (2007), it breaks the links between the desire to act otherwise and the political and practical possibilities of making a difference (Caldwell, 2007).

In theory, an affective theoretical framework can re-link our 'desire to act otherwise' with the material possibilities of 'making a difference', and thus successfully envisaging social change. The novelty of affect theory is that it picks up on the spontaneous energies that emanate from bodies and spaces alike. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), social spaces and bodies are 'events' that are always 'becoming'. One's relationships with others, the TV programs one chooses

to watch, or the books one reads, are affective events that contribute to one's propensity to act. For Deleuze, time, or rather timing, constitutes a major component of the 'event': an event is a 'synthesis' of both the past and the future (*in* Badiou 2007, 40). In other words, an event is never now because one has yet to enact his/her being affected by the event. It is always becoming. For Deleuze, 'becoming is neither merely an attribute of, nor an intermediary between events, but a characteristic of the very production of events' (*in* Stagoll 2010, 25–27). The body, then, is in constant motion. This constant motion, or *becoming*, allows it to endlessly re-position itself in relation to power and create new systems of oppression and privilege that are not easily palpable in empirical observations. If the social is constantly becoming, the question that emerges, then, is *how does a region as vast and heterogeneous as the Middle East become reduced to the idea of an Angry Man?* Perhaps the answer lies with the highly problematic 'refrain' of the affect-stereotype of '*Angry Arab Man*'.

The refrain of the '*Angry Arab Man*' is multi-territorial seeing the links between Western media and foreign policy. Both Western media and foreign policy occupy the same territory seeing that the latter is capable of dictating its priorities by transmitting affective meanings whereby the use of force is legitimized in the name of the democratic ideals of the 'American Dream', as was and continues to be the case in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Such affective meanings are often accompanied by imageries, urban legends, and selective information about excessively Angry Arab men 'who do the world no good', and whose only obsession is to 'destroy America'. Still, it is important to note that such anti-American sentiments are only one of the 'different types of anti-Americanisms' (Katzenstein and Koehane 2006, 35) that exist, as Peter Katzenstein and Robert Koehane (2006) carefully remind us.

A stereotype occupies a territory of impressions that is maintained by a power structure that allows it to proliferate and to 'stick' to the point it operates as affect. Sticky attachments have been conceptualised by Sara Ahmed (2004) who argues that the repetition of certain words produce affect through reiteration (Ahmed 2004, 92). The repetitive depiction of the Arab man as angry and undiplomatic, and in extreme cases, as terrorist, carries 'traces of context' that prevents it from acquiring new meaning and value (Ahmed 2004, 92).

Although it is impersonal due to its abstract nature, the actualization of a ste-

reotype requires both organic and inorganic bodies (such as the media). Also, a stereotype is relational. When we contemplate a body in the Deleuzian sense, the body is constantly re-writing its ontology and renewing its discursive potential. A stereotype affects one's relationality with others and triggers negative attachments, such as racism or homophobia, which become increasingly enacted on the surface. A stereotype cannot be re-territorialized without it being de-territorialized first. The following examples draw on Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the recent uprising in Egypt to show how an affect-stereotype is de/territorialized.

Rhonda S. Zaharana (1995) examined the portrayal of Palestinians in *Time* news magazine over six decades. Basing her analysis on extracts and articles from *Time*, she found that Palestinians went from faceless victims of violence with the declaration of the Israeli state in 1948 to faces of violence during the decade of the 1980s, and to faces of peace in 1993 following the signing of the Oslo Accord in September that year. For Zaharana, these changing faces are the results of the US-Israeli special relationship, the absorption of the Palestinians under the 'Arab' label and the 'leaderlessness and voicelessness of the Palestinian refugees' (Zaharana 1995, 16). When Palestinians are absorbed under the 'Arab' label, their context is technically erased, and their anti-Zionist fight is left to the discrepancy of those who speak for Arabs 'as a whole' – often in the likes of Arab leaders who have and continue to bring forward the question of Palestine to the point of exhaustion, be it in their meetings, official statements, televised interviews and so on. This is particularly problematic seeing that Arab leaders operate as guarantors of the US' hegemony in the region. In a more recent work, Mervat Hatem notes how post-9/11 representations of Arabs as 'indiscriminate terrorists' served to classify them as antisocial, pathological, fanatical criminals whose motives and actions did not deserve historical or political analyses' (Hatem 2011, 12). The latest crackdowns on protesters in Egypt, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia only add to the stereotype of the Arab man as inherently angry, and incapable of a dialogical rationale. These examples reflect the difficulties of encountering lines of flight for ordinary Arab citizens.

Elsewhere, Greg Philo et al. (2003) analysed content from UK media following the 2000 Palestinian *Intifada*. They found that, despite the British public reacting sympathetically to the killing of Palestinians and the consequences of the conflict on their lives, the *Intifada* acquired the meaning of resistance, leaving major ques-



tions such as *Intifada* against what, or resistance to what or why unaccounted for. Consequently, what remains unexplored is the 'nature of the [Israeli] military occupation and the distorted relationships it produced between the occupiers and the subject population' (Philo et al. 2003, 141).

In a more recent example, Western media reduced the frustration of an angry Egyptian youth, and the complexity of Egypt's internal politics, to the question of whether the removal of Mohammed Morsi constituted a coup or not (Shalaan 2013; Tadros 2013; Trager 2013). Instead of focusing on the *reasons* behind the on-going uprising, despite the successful removal of Hosni Mubarak and the election a new president in the person of Mohammed Morsi, Western media focused mostly on the lack of democratic understanding of the lay Egyptian man. Khaled Shalaan remarks that such an instrumental reading of Egypt's uprising is 'pathetic' because it reflects how Western intellectuals continue to be 'wilfully entrapped' in an Orientalist worldview of the region (Shalaan 2013, par. 6).

Indeed, adopting an instrumental approach when conveying information related to the uprising of Egypt does not help in showing the localized nature of the relationship between the Egyptian nation-state and its citizens, for example, which clearly falls beyond T.H. Marshall's threefold definition of Social Citizenship: civil, political, and social rights (Somers 1994). Gender inequality, the extent of client-patron relationships, and informal networks (Singerman 1995, 2005) in Egypt are but a few examples that help illustrate unequal relationships between citizens and the nation-state. What counts as a revolution in a Western reading does not necessarily count as such in the Egyptian context, since the entire lexicon and practices of democracy of the Republic of Egypt (1952) are relatively fresh, and can thus be regarded as impermanent, or transitional. Perhaps a more engaging reading of the 'coup' would have been the conceivability of a 'radical democracy' where governments can be immediately challenged, regardless of the completion of their mandate.

Such examples illustrate how Western media, as technology of affect, shapes our understanding of particular events, affecting our emotional, mental, and bodily dimensions in the construction of events. By ignoring the wider political landscape in each of Palestine and Egypt, not only does Western media territorialize political priorities in conjunction with specific foreign policies, it also injects its audiences with feelings that contribute to the simultaneous construction of a

democratic West and a non-diplomatic *'Angry Arab Man'* who is unwilling to enter into dialogue. Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas used the expression 'technology of affect' in their study of 'whiteness as technology of affect' (Leonardo and Zembylas 2013, 151). In addition to the explanation given earlier, technology is understood in the Foucauldian sense in that it refers to any assemblage of knowledges, practices, techniques, and discourses used by human beings on others or on themselves to achieve particular ends (Leonardo and Zembylas 2013, 151).

A theory of affect allows us to take into consideration non-palpable sensations and energies that contribute to historically and socio-politically constructed beliefs, such as stereotypes. However, one of affect theory's most problematic aspects is the overtly theoretical discussion that often accompanies it to the point where the social is lost. In Clare Hemmings' words, affect is taken up as the 'hopeful alternative to social determinism in its positioning of the individual as possessing a degree of control over their future, rather than as raw material responding rather passively to cognitive or learned phenomena' (Hemmings 2005, 552).

Indeed, the abstract nature of affect runs the risk of obliterating social meaning, at times. Since affects, bodies, and spaces are 'becoming', wouldn't it be possible to posit the possibility of a social or a 'carnal condition' that is 'out of sync with its cultural apparatus [?]', as Elizabeth Povinelli recently remarked (in Disfruscia 2010, 89). The concept of the *'Angry Arab Man'* allows us to capture affects that are clearly out of sync with the apparatus of Western media.

Moreover, it is important to take into account the territories and bodies that contribute to the everyday politics of the ordinary Arab citizen. In order to capture affect, one has to identify the technologies that contribute to its proliferation. Western media, where the *'Angry Arab Man'* is concerned, is merely one of those technologies. By identifying the technologies through which affect is transmitted, it is possible to examine the latter empirically. An empirical examination of the technologies of affect approximates us to the more palpable aspects of affect. In this sense, the transformative potential of affect leads me to question the widely accepted definition of affect as autonomous, pre-social, and pre-cognitive, as argued by Massumi (2002).

Since the social combines notions of experience, judgment, rationality, and privilege, its affective registers are organized along such lines as well. How a stereotype affects us has largely to do with the prejudice that accompanies it. António

Demásio (in Forgas 2008) a neuroscientist who has examined affect at length, asserts that affect is an essential component of cognition and behaviour, and that 'social cognitive and affective processes share overlapping neural structures' (Forgas 2008, 95). This implies that affect is not entirely autonomous, and that cognitive processes are intimately involved in the generation of affective responses.

Additionally, the gap between affect and the apparatus of Western media entails that those excluded from politics – whose desire to act differently cannot overcome the materiality of their condition, *can* and *do* bypass the obstacles of their cultural apparatus. For instance, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, Arjun Appadurai (2006) shows how the act of exclusion leads to the creation of communities of sentiments. Appadurai does not use affect theory in his analysis, but he draws our attention to the potential of communities, to whom he refers as 'potential communities', to move from 'shared imagination to collective action' (Appadurai 2006, 8). Imaginary sentiments could be seen as affects: 'energies that derive from encounters, not always conceivable in language, but sensed bodily' (Rodríguez 2011, par. 9). Appadurai defines his communities as groups that imagine and feel things together and have the potential of 'moving from shared imagination to collective action' (Appadurai 2006, 8). Through the example of the Salman Rushdie affair, Appadurai proves that the transformation of everyday subjectivities through media and imagination is directly concerned with politics whenever individual interests are in conflict with those of the nation state (the opposing views on Rushdie's book of each of the religious authorities in Karachi and Pakistan's pro-USA government).

The work of Appadurai highlights the centrality of one's embeddedness in his/her wider social circle. Class, gender, ethnicity, and political interests are all factors that contribute to processes of affectivities. If the '*Angry Arab Man*' were to be conceptualized abstractly in the Deleuzian tradition of body-as-assemblage, it becomes clear that this assemblage is both limited and limiting. Authoritarian rule, lack of transparency, and heavily punished non-normative behaviours all contribute to rather opaque parts which, when assembled, diminish one's intensity to affect or be affected. A non-abstract alternative can be found in the feminists' intersectional approach where class, gender, sociability, connectivity and further factors intersect at once. Such an approach is more palpable and maintains that affect and power are co-constitutive of each other. Another alternative to unpack-

ing one's social embeddedness is to follow an approach of assemblage rather than an intersectional one. Such an approach is proper to Jasbir Puar (2007) who argues that although such factors do intersect, they can be separated and disassembled. Following Puar (2007), they constitute an assemblage in which the "interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency" (Puar 2007, 212) allows for the understanding of power beyond disciplinary models. Puar's theory of assemblage leaves plenty of room to examine the role of ontology, affect, and feelings in systems of power, which is the main argument posited in the following part of the paper.

On a last note, it is interesting to examine affect theory outside its European roots, in contexts where the relationships between State and citizens are unequal, or where democracy as a process is pronouncedly fractional. This is not to say that affect and power operate independently in Western contexts, or that Western contexts are homogenous. However, affect theory was born out of Western philosophy and cannot automatically be applied to other contexts. One way to 'decolonize affect', as this paper aims, is to examine emotions from a non-constructivist lens. Although emotions, including anger, can be traced genealogically and documented following their socio-political roots, it helps seeing them as a new form of knowledge that is not easily discarded for lack of substance or psychological 'blabbing', as it is often assumed.

## Emotion as Knowledge

So far, this paper has argued that Western media and foreign policy actively contribute towards the intensification of the affect-stereotype of the '*Angry Arab Man*' and that audiences' feelings constitute a major role in the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences. At the same time, it is important to examine the '*Angry Arab Man*' from a perspective that is capable of examining the detrimental impact of such stereotyped affective transmissions on everyday Arab citizens. An ontological reading of the emotion of anger is capable, at least theoretically, to remedy the misrepresentation of the '*Angry Arab Man*'.

In addition to questioning affect as autonomous and pre-cognitive, this paper calls for an ontological examination of emotions. Emotions are not necessarily social constructs in that they are produced, albeit spontaneously, in order to con-

form to a certain cultural model (Harre 1989), nor can they be classified following the degree of cognition involved (Griffiths 1997). By focusing on the affective content of experience, it is possible to open up spaces of resistance where emotions as social judgments are capable of persuading, and use their potential to persuade analytically. Such precedents exist in the work of Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) according to whom social domination works at the level of 'constructing, delimiting and giving meaning to personal emotions' (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). In the case of bell hooks (in Crawford 2002), emotion is used as the vehicle along which power structures are challenged.

There are several points to consider when examining the roles of emotions. For instance, one could argue for a universally shared lexicon of emotions. However, what differentiates one social context or social group from another is how this lexicon came to be. In other words, although some emotions may inhabit similar affective territories in the present time, they differ from one context to another in how they came to be: to accept that the joy exhumed by the Egyptian public following the resignation of Mubarak is equal to that expressed by European leftists who were 'vouching' for the uprising is an erroneous mode of thinking. Similarly, privileged and marginalized groups in a given society do not celebrate national events evenly. In his contribution to the work *Emotions in Asian Thought*, Robert Solomon (1995) stated 'it is not enough to empathize with people from a very different culture', rather 'one has to understand the society and not merely the emotion' (Solomon 1995, 267).

This leads me to argue that the affective content of emotions should not be read equally in asymmetrically positioned social groups, despite the uniformity in their display. Such assertion finds a place among previous epistemological studies of emotions where genealogy and historicity prevail. In this context, emotions are viewed not as a reflection of some inner psychic manifestation, but as manifestations that link one individual to his/her wider socio-political discourse.

Whether emotions can be empirically observed or not, or whether emotions constitute viable knowledge is not the main issue here. The point this paper is trying to make is to turn back time and embrace emotions as a proof of existence, a sort of embodied state that for too long has been dismissed as irrational, pseudo-scientific, or lacking. Perhaps we should emphasize the potential of emotion especially in cases where the political participation of most citizens is limited.

In a recent interview with *Jadaliyya* entitled *Franz Fanon and the Arab Uprisings: an Interview with Nigel Gibson*, Gibson remarked on the links between political participation and the politics of oil in the Middle East: 'the problem with MENA [the Middle East and North Africa] is the politics of oil. It means that the spaces for truly grassroots politics, involving those masses of people excluded from high politics, are very quickly closed down' (Munif 2005, par. 16). What Gibson is highlighting is the political reality for many citizens in the Middle East who often find themselves excluded from 'high politics'.

Furthermore, among 'those excluded from high politics' (Munif 2005, par. 16), there are activists, NGOs, minorities, and marginalized members of society who are constantly strategizing in complex affective systems: foreign funding, patron-client relationships, or hierarchal systems of kinship serve to illustrate such affective systems. Still, these power relations are not pervasive. More than often, one finds room for emancipation, self-fulfilment, and opportunities to re-draw them: 'strategic essentialism'<sup>2</sup>, 'bargaining with patriarchy'<sup>3</sup> (Kandiyoti 1988), 'quiet encroachment'<sup>4</sup> (Bayat 2002), and 'weapons of the weak'<sup>5</sup> (Scott 1985) are examples that illustrate how affect operates collectively, individually, and 'dividually'<sup>6</sup>. Such resistance is possible because of the changeability of territories, bodies, and power, be they organic, ideological, circumstantial, or material. It resonates with the concept of Nomadic theory by Rosi Braidotti (2006) where subjectivity is in flux, and normative discourses related to vulnerability and trauma, along with the established understanding of what counts as human, are entirely de-territorialized for the benefit of 'affirmative affectivities based on the transformation of negative into positive passions' (Braidotti 2006, par. 18.). It is in this sense of flux and affirmatively that emotions-as-resistance are presented in this paper, since it rekindles the links between the 'desire to act otherwise' and the political and practical possibilities of 'making a difference'.

It is possible, then, to convert emotions into spaces of resistance. Anger, in this case, becomes an embodied resistance. In her reading of bell hooks, Ilene Crawford (2002) shows how hooks 'talks back', through the activity of writing, in order to transform the emotional pain she experiences in her sexist and racist milieu into a rhetorical stance that seeks to transform the circumstances that led to her emotional pain (Crawford 2002, 685). What can be retained from Crawford's reading of hooks is the possibility of converting emotions into spaces of resistance. Whereas

anger allows hooks to create her own agency, the *'Angry Arab Man'* is often represented as reacting angrily. His reaction, though, is not empty-founded. It results from the pressure that comes with accepting Western hegemonic ideals without questioning them, to be more alike and less Other.

Where the *'Angry Arab Man'* is concerned, one can detect a commodification of public feelings, particularly in events that are emotionally charged, notably in the aftermath of 9/11. In *Das Kapital*, Karl Marx (in Williams 2005) famously defined commodity fetishism as 'a mysterious thing' in which 'the social character of men's labour appears to be stamped on the very products of that labour' (Williams 2005, 508). A commodity, then, is a social thing that exhumes social relations. Far from the price/value debate that followed Marx's definition, it could be argued that commodification, in this age and time, has come to symbolize success, a 'settled' life, and upward social mobility, seeing that abstract and impalpable economic values prevail over tangible ones.

The biased representation of the *'Angry Arab Man'* maintains the existing hegemony of Western power and their respective economies because it emphasizes the stability of Western societies in opposition to the 'problematic' Middle East. Ultimately, stability affects consumerism. The relationship between the affect-stereotype of the *'Angry Arab Man'* and Western audiences, in my opinion, illustrates the display of social characters from which all visible labour has been erased. I see it as a display of selected 'bits and pieces', so as not to disturb the politics of pleasure of its audience, since politics of pleasure affect consumerism and spending. In this sense, 'comical' gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes can all be seen as commodified for entertainment purposes and as 'not that much of a big deal'. Marx Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (in Calhoun 2012) brilliantly capture the relationship between entertainment and consumerism: 'the original affinity between business and entertainment reveals itself in the meaning of entertainment itself: as society's apologia. To be entertained means to be in agreement. At its root is powerlessness. It is indeed escape, but not, as it claims, escape from the bad reality but from the last thought of resisting that reality' (Calhoun 2012, 472).

Following Horkheimer and Adorno (in Calhoun 2012), TV news becomes a quick fix that relates events that support patriotic values of democracy and the 'good life'. In this sense, comical gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes can all be seen as commodified for entertainment purposes and as 'not that much of a big

deal'. For hooks (2006), mass cultural production in Western media is the 'contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference' (hooks 2006, 366). One could also add ethnic, religious, gender, and geographical differences to this. Such commodification of Otherness is 'so successful', according to hooks, because it is offered as a new delight that brings to the surface all the 'nasty fantasies about the Other', which is more satisfying than 'normal ways of doing and feeling' (hooks 2006, 366). Through a mix of Orientalism, exoticism, and consumerism, it becomes increasingly difficult for the audience to engage critically with what it is exposed to. In this sense, and borrowing from Sara Ahmed (2000), 'stranger fetishism' renders the '*Angry Arab man*' as an 'unliveable or unassimilable strange body [that] involves contingent and over-determined regimes of difference' (Ahmed 2000, 54).

The long-term effect of the commodification of Otherness-as-pleasure creates feelings of cynicism, despair and anger, or as I pointed earlier a 'moody figure'. In the case of the '*Angry Arab Man*', a fixed political reality can lead to a sense of hopelessness and disbelief in the idea of a brighter future. What appears to be a momentary crisis becomes ordinary and, despite an atmosphere of optimism that could be captured from mass mobilization, as was the case during the 'Arab Spring', everyday politics soon return to their *pre*-mass mobilization stance of cynicism and disbelief. It is no surprise that such a shift in atmospherics is regularly captured in processes of affectivities that operate within complex power relations, as is the case of the Middle East. It is plausible to argue then that a focus on emotions-as-experience and emotions as judgment help ground affect theory and approximate it to its social meaning.

## Concluding Notes

Working on the Middle East as a context far from the European roots of affect theory, this paper has responded to Sneja Gunew's call for 'decolonizing affect theory' (Gunew 2009: 27). It demonstrated how Western media, as 'technology of affect' is complicit in the reproduction of neo-colonial stereotypical representations through the recasting of the highly emotive '*Angry Arab Man*' as the weak and



inferior Other. The relationship between power and affect is complex and one cannot operate beyond the frames set by the other. Affect theory helps us understand how the conjunction of Western media and foreign policy dictate political priorities with global consequences by hijacking audiences' feelings and transmitting affective meanings from one territory to another. However, affect theory's utopian appeal often risks losing its social meaning. This paper attempted to remedy the issue by following an ontological reading of emotions as a space of resistance. It remains, above all, an invitation to further the debate on the links between emotions, corporate power, perception, immigration, and agency. By highlighting the centrality of emotions to processes of perception and legitimisation, this paper sought to embrace emotions as knowledge that is neither objective nor subjective; rather, they constitute a valid source of knowledge whenever human relations and social matters come into question.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The media sources on which this paper bases itself are global news networks (CNN, Fox, and BBC), Times magazine, in addition to the Washington post.
- <sup>2</sup> *Strategic essentialism* is an expression coined by post-colonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. It can be defined as the consolidation of members from different groups who, despite their internal differences, move towards a standardization of their cause for the purpose of gaining political ground.
- <sup>3</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti coined the expression 'bargaining with patriarchy'. It describes women's negotiation strategies within the constraints of their patriarchal context in order to maximize their benefits within their oppressive system.
- <sup>4</sup> In Assef Bayat's (2002) words, the notion of 'quiet encroachment' describes the 'silent, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in a quest for survival and improvement of their lives' (Bayat 2002, 19).
- <sup>5</sup> Scott (1985) provides a different approach for examining the links between domination and resistance by shedding light on less observable forms of non-cooperation that are deployed through the course of persistent servitude such as 'foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, [and] sabotage' (Scott 1985, 29)
- <sup>6</sup> In the Deleuzian tradition, bodies have become altered to the point where they have become 'dividual': a sort of a binary code were bodies are added to or subtracted from shifting sequences of knowledge (in Parr 2010, 56).

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Cvetkovich, Ann. 2012.  
*Depression: A Public Feeling.*  
Durham: Duke University Press.

Book review by Whitney Stark

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Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling*, as the author describes, is part of a larger movement of Public Feelings projects, of which Cvetkovich has directly and indirectly been part. The author discusses Public Feelings work as part of the affective movement, but chooses the more open term of 'feelings' instead of 'affect'. By affect being part of 'feelings', it fits into a broader community of the physical, mental and emotional, acknowledging that affect may be enabled by both social and biological situatedness, which may prove an important alliance with the feminist new materialist movement. These projects work to discuss the sociopolitical, historically situated contextualisations of feelings-as-phenomena in order to work with them not (only) in medicalised understandings. While Cvetkovich acknowledges that medicalisation and pharmaceuticals may work for some, the author also recognises that they are embedded in industries and politics, and believes in nuanced and more multiple approaches. Cvetkovich discusses how medicalised models advocate correcting or healing feelings like depression, relying on an overly simplistic separation of good vs. bad feelings.

Cvetkovich understands depression as a standstill, as not being able to operate as expected whether in the academic job market, battling racism, or trying to succeed in everyday life as a migrant. Framing depression as this standstill is part of the general task of de-pathologisation. With the help of queer nihilisms, Cvetkovich argues that this rest, though it can be frustrating and deemed bad or not productive in capitalist terms of production, need not be understood as such. This book explores depression as the way that capitalism can make everyone, including those with many privileges, become politically paralysed; or, the system



has impossible standards and modes of operation that are not only frequently unattainable, but are also oppressive, and thus set up a model of compliance maintained through making people feel bad about themselves. While the analysis offered in this book may be narrow and the product of this creative book-as-archive has serious shortcomings, some of which I will address later, the author does discuss the important concept of political depression. This loosely means that political situations (such as the changing effects of activist strategies, the slowness of change, the insidious expansion of capitalism, co-option, the perpetuation of racism, classism, etc.) are also part of what enables what we understand today as depression. It aims to find new strategies for not only working *with* depression (that is, not devaluing it by calling it bad or unproductive), but also to recognise what gets labeled as depression as valuable toward creating new and transformative possibilities for anti-oppressive social change.

The book, constructed in two parts, is an effort to set up a personalised archive of depression (part of projects from her previous publication, *An Archive of Feelings*). The first part, 'The Depression Journals: A Memoir', is Cvetkovich's memoir writing used as research. This is done acknowledging and breaking down the bias of academic standards, paying homage to the 'personal is political' feminist uses of memoir, while also critiquing how the new wave of pharmaceutical pop memoir has been used to perpetuate the medicalisation of depression. This research methodology is used in what Cvetkovich understands as the creative strategy needed to interpret the kind of political depression which does not fit with and cannot be articulated by legitimised medical and academic methods, generally constructed with a Western, straight, able-bodied, white male as norm. Cvetkovich discusses her own affective and bodily experiences of depression while trying to succeed in publishing and academic worlds, as well as her father's experience with depression, the feeling that biological heredity was not an adequate descriptor, her own experience with anti-depressants, and routine activity as a way of moving out of depression. In this section, she discusses how her own depression is passed from her father, not necessarily genetically, but through the trials of migration, displacement and the unachievable goals of capitalist success.

The second part of the book, 'A Public Feelings Project: A Speculative Essay', has three chapters which connect the contemporary medicalised understanding of depression with differing experiences of what is understood as such.



In the first chapter, Cvetkovich discusses early Christian understandings of acedia, how it was secularised into ‘melancholy’, into psychoanalytical models and into the contemporary understanding of depression. This is done in an effort to counter the conception that depression has always been around yet not diagnosed. By bringing in this earlier Christian understanding of the contemporary diagnosis of depression, Cvetkovich hopes to debunk this myth and situate the diagnosis into a phenomenological understanding, acknowledging that even in its Western and Christian roots (though not explicitly named as such) ‘depression’ also has bodily, spiritual and social connections. It is here the author discusses how medicalisation has strong historical and contemporary ties with secularisation and masculinist efforts to feminise, personalise and thus delegitimise feelings. So, when attempting to nuance the capitalist medical industrial system, it is also important to tackle the ways in which differing forms of spirituality are implicated as illegitimate. Cvetkovich asks, quite importantly and in line with the diasporic and indigenous struggles she later mentions: What would happen if spirituality was taken seriously?

While the discussion of acedia and the secularisation of Christian spirituality is helpful and important, this chapter, in the larger project of a book which promises to discuss racist and colonial legacies, has its own set of implications. Cvetkovich fails to acknowledge that much of the oppressive secularisation of spirituality comes in colonisation, imperialism and the creation of ‘primitive’ vs. (Western) culture and witchcraft vs. (Western) science. Relying on discussions of Christianity’s acedia to invigorate spirituality is in line with new materialisms, affect and feminist embodiment, but the discussion of indigenous and diasporic spiritualisms seems to be anecdotally referenced or pushed to a section in the next chapter, which, quite frankly, is the ‘people of colour chapter’. The same unexplored mention also happens when she discusses the need to contextualise her own and other white references’ experience of home, settlement and displacement in racism. The second chapter of this section promises to discuss indigenous spiritualities and responses to genocide, colonialism and diaspora. Cvetkovich mostly lists an encyclopedia of several important concepts by people of colour, including Cornel West’s understanding of ‘black sadness’, David Eng and Shin Hee Han’s understanding of the productivity of racial melancholy, and critiques multicultural therapy models that aim at the inclusion of people of color into white-formed di-

agnostic and healing models. She discusses Saidiya Hartman's 'political depression' and Jacqui Alexander's 'radical self-possession' and the sacred, their less 'academic' methodologies and their intersectional analysis of depression in terms of dispossession. This is placed with historical and science fiction writers of color dealing with the absence of an archive on slavery, which forms a sort of depression or standstill that must be worked with in creative ways not privy to academic standards of legitimisation. These are invaluable works in setting up this archive of depression.

Cvetkovich then uses those ideas as a framework to discuss white writers whose work lacks a racial analysis. What I imagine Cvetkovich does not recognise is that in building her creative archive, she follows a pretty old structure: she sandwiches the work of people of colour with that of white people, employing them in order to justify the latter's work, which lacks racial analysis. In this section, the first chapter is about Christianity and the third is about the work of white craft artists and their reclamation of (white) 70s feminisms, not referencing any other sort of craft or textile art by people of colour or with less Western context. Even in this chapter, the work of people of color is used in order to have a closing discussion with and justify white work that has fairly intersectional, but not racialised analysis.

Cvetkovich says several times that legacies of racism and colonialism produce white folks' depression, however the discussion lacks a cohesive recognition. It seems more to be anecdotal and perhaps justifying. Much of the writing when discussing white folks' work excuses this by saying 'although' they ignore these factors, they still do something important that can be allied with anti-racist struggles, even if they aren't actually active allies, because race is still always implicated. While of course it is and it is important to make alliances between differing struggles, the way these strategies pan out is questionable. Something that exemplifies the insidious and underlying racism would be the discussion of Allyson Mitchell's 'Ladies Sasquatch', a fat feminist activist artwork with queer and erotic depiction referencing what has been considered monstrous (women, fat people, people of colour, differently abled people, etc.), on page 185 in which Cvetkovich states: 'their luscious asses are unapologetically big and ask to be touched'. Not only does this concentration and sexualisation of large 'asses' entail traces in eugenicist sciences and the exhibiting of Saartjie Baartman, but also victim blames that

those with 'large asses' (this legacy implicates mostly women of colour) are asking to be groped. This reiterates racist colonial legacies justifying bodily, ideological and social dominance over women of colour.

It is quite possible that this book review could be understood by Cvetkovich as the kind of paranoid rather than affirmative reading that Cvetkovich hopes to avoid. Perhaps this is also true, but would it be 'bad'? It seems, in this book, that a good deal of the affirmative reading strategy is used to de-politicise the implications of privileges. These bits can be used, but affirmative reading and building alliance does not mean that you have to gloss over those violent aspects because there is also good. The affective relation of this justification taints the inception of this archive and makes it less alternative than would be desired for the project of making less oppressive archives by utilising feelings as thematic, central and methodological practice. I am sure some reason why this turned out this way has to do with, as Cvetkovich and many of the writers referenced discuss, academic models are not adequate for radical, transformative, coalitional and creative projects. It is a political depression to try and do these projects within the standards of what allows 'legitimacy' (publishing houses, academia). The project to add alternatives to the archives and connections of what is called depression is incredibly important to the differing ways that medical complexes, capitalism, imperialism and other forms are embedded and racialised in our ways of life. And it is quite obvious that Cvetkovich is not attempting any sort of complete archive or that she feels such a thing is possible. But when working toward anti-oppression, it is also important to recognise the intersecting ways oppression works, even with the best and most radical intentions.



Chen, Mel Y. 2012. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Book review by Katie E. Wetzel

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The book jacket of Mel Y. Chen's *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* describes this work as 'the first [book] to bring the concept of animacy together with queer of color scholarship, critical animal studies, and disability studies', which I would suggest makes Chen's work a foundational contribution to a complex and multivalenced discourse over the division between 'life' and 'death', or that beyond humans and animals. While these two areas may possess somewhat different goals, such as human life improvement versus species conservation, Chen reveals their commonalities as part of an ongoing discourse between the sensual and the dialectical. She opens *Animacies* by discussing the boundary that illness exposes between 'life' and 'death' in her own experiences, in order to consider what it means to be *animate*. While she avoids defining animacy as a general term, her use of this term enters into a larger discourse that situates that animate and inanimate as semantic and grammatical principles that hierarchically structure and modify the value of a subject or object of interest. However, in this book Chen complicates how animacy works within this discourse by problematising the ways that disabilities, illness, and otherness impact distinctions of animacy. This serves as a helpful way of theorising animacy, because it incorporates affect by grounding theories of life and liveliness in the sensual and visceral while still acknowledging the limits and restrictions we reach in our use of language and text.

The three-part structure of this book into topical segments on words, animals, and metals reflects the tension Chen highlights between our use of language and the subjects/objects we hope to describe. The first section draws on linguistics to



define animacy as 'the quality of liveness, sentience, or humanness', which as a result fabricates a 'hierarchy of animacy' and possibly restricts an entity's ability to behave at a hierarchically different level. However, Chen also claims that while injurious speech can be objectifying, it still 'paradoxically rel[ies] on animacy' and thereby suggests that reanimation is possible (30). Her examples demonstrate how 'figurative substitution of a human with an animal figure' both removes human qualities and actively transforms the subject by sometimes empowering them, and sometimes lowering their position within an animacy hierarchy (44). Chen reaches this contentious conclusion by engaging with works from the socially and politically driven fields of disability studies, feminism, and postcolonialism. However, her union of these various fields to make her argument also suggests that these are the kinds of multifaceted gatherings that should happen in scholarly discourse.

Chen's consideration of animality through queered and racialised notions of animacy, as well as human and animal relationships, is informed by her reading of the queered and fictional characters in visual culture. Chen uses these strange blendings of human and non-human animals and intimacies to address concerns of 'transness' across animacy boundaries and to critique the 'apparently horrific intimacy' involved in debates surrounding intentional blendings via animal transplants in humans (126). While the material she critiques appears somewhat eclectic at times, it is helpful for considering the way that language and visual texts circulate to influence and form culture across national and social boundaries. After all, her movement across and through these boundaries when addressing issues such as biopolitics manifested through animal genitalia (as well as their absence), biotechnology, and animal sexuality and bestiality, help disrupt conventional understandings of animacy and liveliness in order to begin a conversation about 'queer-trans animality within a more porous understanding of animacy' (155).

The final section of the book considers the non-traditional animality of lead metal at the lower end of the animacy hierarchy, while simultaneously rethinking inanimacy through human vulnerability to inanimate particles. Chen begins this section by addressing the 'lead panic' in 2007 in the United States, as well as the racialised and classist implications of the anxiety that surrounded the outsourcing of toy production and upper-end toy sales. She suggests that the lead narrative is actually about labor, sometimes made invisible or criminalised, but often drawing

on fears of contamination and disablement, and thereby further racialising and queering the lead conversation. Given current public concerns with environmental threats, this discourse on labor and contamination ties that physical danger to language and knowledge production formed and reformed since the Nineteenth-century. This final section ties together Chen's diverse subjects of analysis and offers a unique meditation on how we think about and discuss life of the past and present.

Chen's sophisticated and vigorous inquiry into animacy not only contributes insight and complexity to the field of affect theory, but deftly engages it with other more overtly politicised fields of disability theory, critical race theory, postcolonialism, queer theory, feminism, and ecocriticism. This text is helpful for those interested in issues of animacy and affect, particularly as they pertain to the racialisation of animals (human and non-human), the affective hierarchy of language, as well as the queer porosity between animate and inanimate entities. While Chen recommends a "queered political state of the present", she also reminds readers that the point of this investigation is not necessarily to reach a conclusion about 'animacy's ultimate failure or success', but rather to engage with the questions and regulations that direct issues of animacy amidst familiar and strange bodies, and thereby 'seek out and affirm the wiliness within' (237).



# Encounters with Vulnerability: The victim, the fragile, the monster, the queer, the abject, the nomadic, the feminine, the shameful, and the rest ...

Conference Proceedings Review by Nayeli  
Urquiza Haas and Arturo Sánchez García

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*PECANS Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and  
early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexu-  
ality (Nov 22nd, 23rd 2013 at Newcastle University)*

The concept of vulnerability is receiving increasing attention in dialogues about the representation of the body in feminist theory, embodiment in phenomenology, in ideas of relationality in affect theories, and imaginaries of governance for law and rights, among others. There are synergies in those that might derive from a common interest in evoking the figure of wounding or ‘vulnus’ in Latin and the ethical and political possibilities it enables: the metaphor of the open body and the experience of pain that it references radical openness of embodied experiences (Turner 2006). As an ontological and political concept, the notion of vulnerability discloses the limits of humanist philosophies. Typically the anthropocentric idea of ‘human’ in – Western liberal politics – have produced a fiction of disembodied subjectivity that has imposed itself as the measure for everyone. The ‘vulnerable subject’ holds a hope for the reconciliation of embodied subjectivity in representation, regulation, and normalisation (Fineman 2008). In those terms, in this workshop we were urged to re-think and re-encounter the different forms of relating to ourselves and others. There are caveats in the powerful concept of vulnerability. One of them is an ubiquity (Murphy 2012) that enables a heuristic that reveals, among other things, the ambivalent potential in human and non-human



relations. The dialogues in this workshop tested the capacity of vulnerability to accommodate justice in an academic and political context where discursive iterations about risk and victims have been dangerously overexposed in the existential rhetoric of terrorism, global crime and viral epidemics. Whenever the deployment of vulnerability is only applied to ‘marginal’ subjectivities and exceptional situations, ideologies about the body as a naturally-given are reified, effacing the deeply political, exclusionary, and gendered and cultural affiliations.

In the workshop we talked about scenarios of persecution and political sacrifice of sex workers and drug users<sup>1</sup>, and of illegal young immigrants in Greece<sup>2</sup>. We encountered the bodies of old women<sup>3</sup> and people in situations of bare need<sup>4</sup>, bodies that are politically capitalised to represent the ‘other’ of the political subject. Whenever we tried to talk about vulnerable embodiment, the reductive images of the vulnerable ‘body’ kept leaking in. The implosion of the political, the biological and the national holds its authority over life and death, revealing the elusive directions that vulnerability discourses can be diverted into. In those terms, we cautiously tiptoed around vulnerability’s ethical provocation and potentialities. It opened a path through the promises, risks, violence, enclosures and openness of the theories of vulnerability and their interaction with gender, law and sexuality.

## Promises

The opening panel interrogated what vulnerability can promise to human rights and justice claims: what is it that the concept brings about that is supposed to improve or expand our ethico-political relations? Alice Margaria questioned the extent to which vulnerability addresses substantial issues in human rights. She likened Martha Fineman’s vulnerability thesis to the doctrine of positive obligations developed by the European Court of Human Rights inasmuch as it ‘advocates for the creation of responsive structures which empower the individual, thus actualizing autonomy’<sup>5</sup>. A vulnerability approach does not abandon autonomy as an important quality of human life, but it does not reduce it or privilege it over other qualities, as traditional liberal human rights theories do. Agents’ responsibility is not simply reduced to their individual choices, but judged within the wider framework of the state’s responsiveness.



The potential of vulnerability to make claims of justice may not lie in ethics alone, but in aesthetic expressions. Urszula Lisowska's reading of vulnerability through Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach restores the role of aesthetics in justice theories<sup>6</sup>. Imagination encourages the trans-positionality of the self. It offers cognitive images of the value of good when one abandons its own isolated position. The value of good does not stand on itself, but ought to be tempered by the recognition of the needs of the other (referring to Amartya Sen's work), guiding the content of the ethical attachments that the vulnerable subject is open to. While philosophy has focused on the force of ethics alone to push forward social justice demands, ethics must be moved first by aesthetical imagination.

## Vulnerability's Aporias: Between Violence and Care

Despite the promises of social and individual justice evoked by the vulnerability heuristic, its potential is limited by its own ambivalent nature. Reading vulnerability through the work of Adriana Cavarero (2009) and Ann V. Murphy (2012) among others, Tiffany Page<sup>7</sup> traced the role of negative states of being, like suffering, in the formation of subjectivity and how that alters traditional ethical premises. While Murphy argues that vulnerability is too ambiguous to elicit a substance for ethics, unable to provide the substance of someone else's state of vulnerability, Page reworked this problem through a non-fixed notion of the self that can find continuity within negativity.

A common premise – for example in empathy discourses – is that one's own vulnerability, an ontologically fixed quality, is what enables the self to move towards the other. After Descartes' mind and body dichotomy, chaos originates within the self, inaugurating the scepticism of the other's existence. But as some queer and feminist theories recognise, the self is an uncertain category constituted through constant social practice. If, as Levinas encourages us to think, ethics precedes ontology, an uncertain vulnerability is more likely to be the genesis of ethics. By acknowledging the self in a constant process of becoming with others, the shape of our ethical responsibilities might be relocated. It seems that there is always an infinite responsibility towards the other that is hard to deny, and while we are constantly hostage and inextricably bound to our ethical relations, we are simultaneously exposed to alterity, in our shared ontological vulnerability.

## Dis(encountering) Risk: Vulnerability and Governance

Vulnerability theories confront their limits in their inability to provide moral commands, fragmenting their normative appeal (Murphy 2012), and that is why they can be colonised too easily by neoliberal governance (among other frames) (Munro and Scoular 2012). Performing like a metaphor, the material properties of vulnerability can be assimilated and appropriated by ideologies and dogmas, and even reclaimed as if they contained redemptive qualities<sup>8</sup>. To represent some individuals or groups as ‘particularly vulnerable’ (a phrase commonly used in human rights legal instruments, as in the case of human trafficking<sup>9</sup>) is misleading because it departs from the paradigm of the invulnerable ‘man’. Operating through the frames of ‘protection’, people *experiencing* vulnerability become objectified by risk discourses, as it emerged in the workshop in the context of sex work and human trafficking<sup>10</sup>, young people’s migration<sup>11</sup>, crime<sup>12</sup>, people living with HIV-AIDS<sup>13</sup>, among other discourses. Those experiences were illustrated by Jamie Grace’s remark (reading through Zygmunt Bauman’s and Jane Fenton’s work): the sustained ontological anxiety about the others lends to their adiaphorisation (Bauman 1995)<sup>14</sup>, the production of the vulnerable as morally irrelevant, or at its best, morally neutral<sup>15</sup>.

Anxieties may be redoubled onto the vulnerable, figuring them as threatening subjects. The most threatening quality of these ‘monsters’ becomes the way they push the boundaries of the community’s sense of safety. Their embodied differences are feared because of the ‘excess’ of affect they elicit through embodiment, vitality, movement and inherent change. The vulnerable becomes an unstoppable embodiment of life (Shildrick 2002) that constantly reminds us of the change that occurs – outside and within – the fragile confines of a ‘body’ (both human or non-human). The instinct for survival favours the bounded body: to protect it from wounding, viruses, and the threatening environment. However, vulnerability is a constant feature of life, marked by the changes of time and experience. Age, illness, maternity, excess or lack of food, water, sexuality, touch, breathing, secretions, sweating, and the many endless embodied processes in a life-time keep the body as evidently porous, shifting and moved by others, a fragile organism that not only breathes in and out the oxygen in the atmosphere.

## Ethical Provocations in Corporeal Relatedness

The most striking encounter between vulnerability and affect theories happens in the desire for relationality: beyond closed-off bounded bodies, encounters happen in the 'space in between' subjects (and objects) in the impersonal intensity they generate (Anderson 2010, 165). In so far vulnerability is thought as a becoming, it constantly animates encounters between bodies, and at the same time encourages intensities of resistance. The recent protests in Gezi Park in Turkey evoked the vulnerability of a country's memory, and its hope performed in music and chants. For McLane Heckman<sup>16</sup> those were not only animated by individual bodies singing, but affected by a political collective trans-individuation. Interdependence was not merely a relation between individuals, but a 'coming together'. The celebration of the new social trans-individuated projects, where a group or collective 'comes together' joyfully, expands the boundaries of respectability through radical redefinitions of love (at one level, in a protest, at another level, maybe in the constellational experiences of polyamory<sup>17</sup>).

Now, we ought to be careful about how the beautiful image of 'coming together' can accommodate contradictory projects. In a (not-so-new) project of trans-individuation, the state appropriates the structure of the coming together only to reinforce the notion of respectability. Through this sleight of hand, it replaces reciprocal love and affect with loyalty towards the state, and rules of membership within the nation. The animated version of the state claims there to be a 'vulnerable state', we ought to be careful not to stretch the trope of vulnerability into powerful unanimated machines, as Emily Jones is warning us about<sup>18</sup>. The ontological position of the vulnerable collective subject is co-opted by the state vis-à-vis other states. But let us put aside the provocation of the state being likened with vulnerable subjects: the power of the vulnerable body, as we have tried to explain, generates indeed both anxiety and comfort; we are with others, and the others can also impinge on our possibilities for being. But the state cannot afford those possibilities. The state mimics vulnerability in order to amplify its own sovereign power and borders<sup>19</sup>. The vulnerable state, like any other institution, requires an entire different frame of justification for its relation with others.

## The 'B' Word

Speaking about, or on behalf of, the vulnerability of others must remain constantly vigilant to Foucault's 'biopower', the sovereign power over life (Dillon 2004). The production of knowledge about the other is more than the simple exercise of an observer, but part of a practice of power that does and undoes the others. That is the case of the biopolitical exercise that produces the interdependent relation between the politics of care, the *bodily need of the other*, and narratives of gender and culture. Tiina Vaittinen problematised the feminist debates on care and the vulnerable subject through Joan Tronto's analysis of 'the standpoint of the most vulnerable and most privileged receivers of care' (Ethics of Care 2009) as well as Giorgio Agamben's 'bare life'. In the face of the 'bare need' of the vulnerable body, sovereign power is altered, organising the moral relations that are simultaneously of care and violence, neutralising the political potential of the bare body. Highlighting the cultural attributions imposed on the notion of care, Marjo Lindroth and Heidi Sinevaara-Niskanen reflected upon the colonial production of indigeneity as a 'lovingly embrace of biopower', where the indigenous is a subject resilient to colonialism, and at the same time has a privileged position of care towards, for example, climate change. The vulnerable indigenous subjects are produced through the mediation of empathetic biopolitics, as the authors claimed<sup>20</sup>.

## All You Need is Law

Martha Albertson Fineman's article on the 'vulnerable subject' functioned as the most cited reference point for the articulations on vulnerability and law in the workshop. She troubles the investments on law, when liberal law has a limited framework for the complexity offered by the vulnerability heuristic. In liberal politics, the language of equality and non-discrimination is running out of steam. Fineman's work accepts the human condition as irremediably open and dependent, universal and particular. The epistemological barriers of the complexity of the human (and possible non-human) condition cannot be overcome as without distancing ourselves from the 'either-or' binaries of Modernity. The experiences of vulnerability outside the paradigms of the infantilised female subject<sup>21</sup> or of victims<sup>22</sup> remain unintelligible in law, and circulate only in drama triangles of co-

dependent and pre-given relations<sup>23</sup>. That is the fate of family law courts, unable to recognise the economic dependency between partners beyond the dependent woman, and therefore to respond to men living interdependently or same sex couples after the dissolution of partnerships<sup>24</sup>. In the same vein in criminal law, it is the victim who appropriates the long lasting vulnerability, making impossible even to imagine a meaningful forgiveness for the offender that our original notion of vulnerability might aspire to<sup>25</sup>.

## Vulnerable Academics

The interdisciplinary workshop fleshed out the connection between vulnerability and the affective states of care, hope, joy, and the representations that connect us to injury, suffering, illness, and death. In its radical openness, the vulnerable subject is always encountering and being encountered, moving towards and being moved by others. In that sense, the context where embodied selves move through cannot be reduced either to the rational mind moving the body or the body moving the mind, as dualistic epistemologies would argue. Instead, the embodied self is constantly relational, for better or worse.

Academics are not exempted from the implications of being vulnerable to others. Linnea Åshede pointed out the ethical difficulty of researching a subject who (literally) cannot answer back: can we ever avoid speaking for or down to the subjects of research? She noted the different modes of vulnerability that appeared in her own writing about the subject of desire and desirability in Roman mythological group scenes featuring Hermaphroditus<sup>26</sup>. The study of the concept of sexual difference in another culture urges the researcher's awareness of the power that knowledge production has in pathologising and normalising. Through an engagement with Donna Haraway and Sara Ahmed, she described her encounter with 'the cultural/sexual "other"' (the hermaphrodite) and the way her vulnerability provoked 'various strategies to consolidate said position by means of transferring the vulnerability "back" onto its perceived origin<sup>27</sup>. These encounters with alterity are disorienting. They radically change the self and therefore demand self-reflection, a cautionary one, since the encounter does not always happen with the consent of the subject/object actors that we study. The vulnerable scholar tends to respond by rejecting the perceived personal vulnerability through the possessive gaze of

knowledge and dissection of the subject/object of study, who is turned again into 'the vulnerable', open and forcibly transformed by the observer.

## Ubiquity

At the end, vulnerability did prove to be a ubiquitous concept. It holds a conceptual power that traverses and interpenetrates all kinds of disciplines and intellectual, geographical, and methodological projects. The PECANS encounter highlighted contemporary trajectories of vulnerability through different kinds of relations, matter, intensities, and non-human 'force fields' (Connolly 2013). Vulnerability proved to encompass not only the trauma or the suffering embedded to its etymology, as we suggested at the beginning, but it is now intimately related to broader experiences of 'affect'. Our dialogues of vulnerability are embodied in sensitivities that point beyond the 'vital forces [...] that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1). The potential of vulnerability lies in its density and breadth, its ubiquity promises creativity, justice, and vitality, and yet, it humbly accepts negativity. Vulnerability remains in a constant process of metamorphoses, and therefore it encourages a delicate balance between the intellectual, political and ethical choices we invest in.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Ntina Tzouvala, "HIV, Prostitution and the Law: Moments of Vulnerability, Moments of Resistance." (Paper presented at PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013).
- <sup>2</sup> Sofia Vlachou, "Youth through the *Symplegades* (Clashing Stones)." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> Hannah Bows, "Vulnerability, Older Women and Sexual Violence." (Paper presented at PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013).
- <sup>4</sup> Tiina Vaittinen, "The Power of the Vulnerable Body: A New Political Understanding of

- Care.” (Paper presented at PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013).
- <sup>5</sup> Alice Margaria, “Vulnerability and Human Rights: Is it a Framing or a Substantive Issue?” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>6</sup> Urszula Lisowska, “Vulnerability as a perceptual category: Martha Nussbaum’s capabilities approach from the perspective of political aesthetics.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>7</sup> Tiffany Page, “Exposed, Menacing and Forbidden: Vulnerability as a Violent Responsibility.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ali Jav, “Male Rape: The Unseen World of Male Rape.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>9</sup> Representation involves here both linguistic deployment of victims in human rights instruments, and the imaginaries that have been normalised in international campaigns of human trafficking, as Kelly Prince reminded us in her paper “It is Not our Job to Turn them into Victims!’ – The ‘Ideal Victim’, Universal Vulnerability, and Power Dynamics in the Human Trafficking Agenda.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>10</sup> Kelly Prince, “It is Not our Job to Turn them into Victims!’ – The ‘Ideal Victim’, Universal Vulnerability, and Power Dynamics in the Human Trafficking Agenda.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>11</sup> *Supra* iii.
  - <sup>12</sup> Jamie Grace, “The Voices of Adiaphorisation: Who Speaks with the Authority to Marginalise the ‘Risky’ along with the ‘Vulnerable?’” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>13</sup> Ntina Tzouvala, “HIV, Prostitution and the Law: Moments of Vulnerability, Moments of Resistance.” Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>14</sup> Zigmunt Bauman argued that ‘adiaphorization is achieved by excluding some categories of people from the realm of moral subjects, or through covering up the link between partial action and the ultimate effect of co-ordinated moves, or through enthroning pro-

- cedural discipline and personal loyalty in the role of the all-overriding criterion of moral performance.' See Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 149.
- <sup>15</sup> Jamie Grace, "The Voices of Adiaphorisation: Who Speaks with the Authority to Marginalise the 'Risky' along with the 'Vulnerable'?" Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>16</sup> McLane Heckman, "Bodies that Move: Performativity and Vulnerability in the Gezi Park Protests." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>17</sup> Deidre Ruane, "It's Not About The Sex: Polyamory's Troubled Relationship with the Mainstream." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>18</sup> Emily Jones, "Vulnerable subjectivity; Redefining Knowledge and the Law." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>19</sup> Ntina Tzouvala illustrated this same figure with the production of narratives of hygiene in Greece against the exposure of sex workers (supra ii), and Sofia Vlachou with the production of ideas of citizenship and its conditions for inclusion (supra iii).
  - <sup>20</sup> Marjo Lindroth & Heidi Sinevaara-Niskanen, "Imposing Vulnerability: The Biopolitics of Indigeneity." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>21</sup> Supra ix.
  - <sup>22</sup> That is the paradox of women sex offenders that Siobhan Weare exposed in "The Vulnerable Victimising the Vulnerable: Women as Co-Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse" Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>23</sup> David Hampson, "The Paradox of Vulnerability." Presentation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.
  - <sup>24</sup> Charlotte Bendall, "Ancillary Relief and the Construction of Vulnerability." (Paper presented at PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, Nov 22–23, 2013).
  - <sup>25</sup> Grace (supra xiii). There is potential in considering terms of acceptance and recognition in the space of therapy as a non judgmental – and yet institutionalized – encounter determined by open perception, as suggested by David Hampson (supra xxiv).
  - <sup>26</sup> Linnea Åshede, "Hermaphrodites, Satyrs, and Scholars – Who can be Vulnerable?" Pres-



entation, PECANS: Interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduates and early career academics in the area of law, gender and sexuality, Newcastle University, November 22–23, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

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