

FEMINISMS



A PUBLICATION OF L'INTERNATIONALE BOOKS

FEMINISMS

COVER CREDIT

An American University student addresses the crowd at a protest against Breitbart writer Milo Yiannopoulos on April 22.

Photo: Alejandro Alvarez.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of women's rights have sprung up in movements across the globe in the past few years, exacerbated by increasing social, environmental, technological and political polarities. In the past two years, we saw groundswells start across the globe; from the women's marches in the US, to the referendum to vote on abortion rights in Ireland (women won!), and the *Ni Una Menos* [Not one less] movement in Argentina, in which women demanded the right for safe and legal abortions that are free of charge—the legislation passed only recently. We have seen successes, but we have also seen regressive attitudes towards women being enacted in both public and private spaces; Men's Rights Activists, incels, and outright trumping of women's rights and online abuse all over the world. It is with these urgencies in mind that we ask women to respond to topics that relate to the current state of being a woman in the world today.

Feminisms is the sixth in a series of online publications published by L'Internationale Online. This publication examines how women, or those who identify as female have been addressing not only

inequalities—in reproductive rights, sexual rights, and in the right to equal pay—but also how plural feminisms have been and are being consistently rethought. In the art museum context, it's important to note that it simply isn't enough to just tick boxes for how many female employees are engaged by the museum, but also to think about the role of different feminisms and how they can be truly engaged within the art sphere—how feminism can change the way institutions operate to become more caring and hospitable to their publics. This year, we've all seen the departures of high-profile female staff Helen Molesworth, Laura Raicovich and María Inés Rodríguez, which brought into question the sexism rife within our very own industry, but sexism and patriarchal thinking doesn't stop there. It's in the way that we present ourselves as artistic institutions, how we talk to people inside and outside the institution, and in the mechanisms of language and art itself that can shape how we rethink relationships to feminism.

Feminism has shifted a lot since the first wave incited women around the world demanded equal



political rights as men, which in many countries, is still not in operation. The second and third waves have not really passed yet. We are now in a much more complicated time—through globalisation, through Capitalism, through [soft] Imperialisms, and through environmental and social catastrophes set off by the aforementioned. In 2018, we need to take into account the different situations—not only the big picture but on our own local communities—that women are placed in and how they are responding. Most of all, we need to follow through on the listening, to create actions that take into account these multiplicities.

It is evident that women face challenges in all spheres: in the home environment, in the work environment, in public space, in digital (public or private) space, and in the very institutions that have so proudly progressed. In the year 2017-2018 alone, we have experienced the rise of the #MeToo movement, originating in the United States but spreading across industry sectors and countries across the globe, the rise of men's rights activists and incels in all corners of the world—particularly online, we've seen rates of domestic and non-domestic violence against women and female-identifying people grow, and debates within feminist dialogues spark public debate. Patriarchal thinking continues to be exacerbated under neoliberalism in that it roots ideas

around Feminism in material equality rather than a demarcated, complex movement against oppression of any kind.

But we've also seen strong feminist movements that operate to dismantle hierarchies within feminism. As María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop notes in the first essay in this publication, as she charts the ground swells of women's movements across Europe and around the world: "...the key to our resistance lies in not having simplified our ecosystems, in having been able to walk, step by step, the unfinished road of our own construction, contrasting, re-reading and overcoming our different identities, and tirelessly disputing the collective narrative and imaginary". It can be argued that instead of being in a post-feminist world, that the waves have simply been dismantled—they have crashed on the shore to be reborn in the form of an intersectional feminism that, as Palop describes, "re-reads" sociopolitical imaginaries.

In Ewa Majewska's *The Weak internationalism? Women's Protests in Poland and Internationally, Art and Law*, the author posits that the frame of contemporary feminism has been shaped—rather like the structuralist narrative—by the patriarchy. To escape this, the mobilisation of women in public space could be a strategy to engage others not only on a class level, but through an empathy that triumphs



weakness. She states, channeling Walter Benjamin, that “... the only universalism we should be preoccupied with, is the universalism of the weak”, citing the commons as a place where all voices can be heard, but also as an representation of all that is on the ground and ordinary.

Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez’s *Practice Intersectionality* moves from vulnerabilities to addressing the way that power (economic, social, political) has been co-opted into feminist rhetoric, and how, through the lens of intersectionality, we can review our ways of working beyond the tag-line. Both within and beyond feminism. She states that self-reflexivity, and long-term affirmative actions are two of the strategies that can help European institutions—and Eurocentric culture at large—overcome an indisputable bind to racialised, and sexualised power.

The *Ni una menos* [Not one less] movement in Argentina is observed by María Pia López in *Feminist Street: From 3 June To 8 March*. López explains the ways in which small actions can grow into a “hydra of a thousand heads”. The way in which the movement has grown has effectively allowed women to express disdain at the growing femicide in South America, but also account the many microaggressions that are prevalent, and give agency to women based on their own experiences. Again, here a common vulnerability

comes to bind women together while recognising their different experiences through lenses of gender, class, race, age, and sexual identity.

We are reframing and should continually reframe feminisms. In *Defiance of Amphibians: Neology as an Act of Alienation*, Turkish visual researcher and curator, Sarp Özer addresses the ways in which language can play a role in perceptions of feminism. In early 2018, Özer, along with a group of people at Istanbul’s AVTO (an independent centre for research and practice) translated, or rather—reinterpreted Laboria Cuboniks’ *Xenofeminist Manifesto* (XF Manifesto) into Turkish. The original manifesto looks to a universalism that denies manifestations of a cis-, straight, white, and male world. The collective’s aims were to “reconfigure the semiotic disposition in Turkish, by subverting words and translations deriving from the XF manifesto, while simultaneously revoking the linguistic restrictions to widely engage with the latent feminist discourse” all contextualised within a cyber- or techno-frame. Özer also cleverly examines the ways in which [non-binary] gender has been represented, and relates it to the ways in which chemicals are changing our natural environment and the ways species exist within it.

Slovene writer, philosopher and critic, Mojca Kumerdej looks at the changing nature of feminism



in relation to the environment, in her article, *Inner Edges and Borders of Culture*. She does this specifically through the work of artists Maja Smrekar and Simona Semenič. What role can feminism play in reconsidering our relationship with nature, and how can this play out in a popular media that is competing for clicks in a rising nationalistic environment where Internet audiences are encouraged to hype “shame”? In February of this year, both Smrekar and Semenič were attacked on social media for their “desecration of national symbols” and the “denigration of the [symbol of the] Slovenian family”. Kumerdej argues for a reevaluation of empathy with both women and the environment – “while nature is collecting all of humanity’s debts, the majority of the population is unable to collect the debts of the privileged minority”.

In her contribution, the Spanish ecofeminist Yayo Herrero talks about the success of the last 8th of March women’s general strike, and strike of care, in Spain. “Enough is enough” she says. It’s time to act against the social and economic model of hetero-patriarchal capitalism that does not recognise the material foundation upon which is built. The protest was focused on the injustices surrounding the unequal distribution of goods underlying what is unsustainable and unfair in the hetero-patriarchal

capitalist model, and protesters revolted against all areas of social reproduction. In the feminist economy, work does not just imply employment. The demonstration was built over a year, in meetings and assemblies, in cities and rural areas across the country—organising debates, group readings and lectures. It was not only an act of claiming better salaries and work conditions, it was a mobilisation that attempted to change ideas, behaviours and attitudes in order to build new modes of living that are more connected to the environment, and more aware of the interdependence of human life.

Looking at the way that language can manifest itself through the Internet and further onto the street, Brussels-based communication scientist, Fatma Arikoglu examines the ways that from the extreme Left and the extreme Right (both often operating through faceless social media accounts, in the political arena and in public space), nobody questions the accomplishments of previous waves of feminism, thus allowing it to be co-opted into political agendas, undermining the potential for it to affect actual change. Arikoglu argues that the only way to move beyond this bind is to instigate structural reform through the systems that oppress—in gender terms, and in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, economic background, age and ability.



Irish artist, Sarah Browne tackles the Irish Repeal the Eighth movement, and explores the intergenerational work being done by artists and activists. Browne argues that the issues being extrapolated may seem to tackle the reproductive rights attached to women's bodies, but they also address the rights to reproduce knowledge through generations. Quoting Sara Ahmed, Browne notes that citation or referencing of those who have come before us, is necessary in order to acknowledge the women that have paved the way. This act in itself allows us to build upon the histories of feminist activism, and not repeat the same struggles. It is the responsibility of all feminists—and art institutions, for that matter—to preserve these knowledges so that future feminists and feminisms can self-educate. She states that feminism “demands a re-distribution of power, which involves an attention to reworking our intellectual traditions, to creating an emancipatory approach to the history of knowledge and ideas”.

Likewise paying tribute to the feminisms that have come before them, The Otolith Group's Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun, in conversation with Van Abbemuseum's chief curator, Annie Fletcher, discuss the impact of science fiction writer Octavia Butler on the ways that different feminisms have developed. They discuss the concept of a joyful alienation—not

necessarily from the patriarchal world (to do so would be to concede to the patriarchy), but in new worlds that use the power of imaginaries.

These new imaginaries are the responsibility of all publics, and especially of those who have the power to allow agency to women and to softer ways of thinking. We need to rethink the ways we express feminism across genders, across institutions and across communities. We're at a pivotal moment in the history of not only women's rights, but in the way that our world can operate on different social and political levels. As individuals, we need to act against a culture that speaks in patriarchal terms, against a culture that insists on puritanical definitions of gender, race, religion, and against a culture that insists on binary thinking. Women are still fighting, and unless we have conversations about the rich ways in which women can contribute to the world, we're bound to repetition.

Feminisms play a crucial role in what L'Internationale does—not only as a way to live and work with women, but as a framework for continually re-assessing the institution's position for its publics. What is prevalent in this publication is a need to ask how we deal with emotion—not only as individuals, but as institutions and within bureaucracies. We hope that this publication can serve to raise discussions and to develop institutional practices that take



into account our different publics, through a feminist lens. As bell hooks writes, “The soul of our politics is the commitment to ending domination.” (2014, p.103).

—*Sarah Werkmeister, May 2018*

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A NEW FEMINIST WAVE?

MARÍA EUGENIA RODRÍGUEZ PALOP

A phantom is making her way across Europe. We call her comrade. The fluttering of a butterfly's wings is making itself felt all over the world, multiplying like an echo.

I.

13 February 2011: *Se non ora quando?* (If not now, when?). Italian cities hosted a mass mobilisation of women fighting for recognition and dignity, and against their reification as sexual trading counters.

21 January 2017: Women's March. The largest mobilisation in the United States since the Vietnam War started in Washington and spawned a full-blown sisterhood of almost 700 sister marches around the world. The aim of this March was to remember the Million Woman March held in Philadelphia in 1997, in which hundreds of thousands of African-American women took part. Today, it centres on Women's March Global, sparking a huge wave of feminist protests.

3 June 2015: *Ni una menos* (Not One Less). Women mobilised, occupying eighty Argentinian cities to protest against gender violence and femicide. In 1995, Mexican Susana Chávez had used the slogan "Not One Woman Less, Not One More Woman Killed" to protest against the cases of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Chávez was, herself, a victim of femicide in 2011. Her slogan was proposed by Argentine Vanina Escales for the reading marathon of 26 March 2015, and ultimately provided the name of the protest of 3 June that same year. The movement continued to gain momentum and has been repeated in subsequent years: 3 June 2016 *#Vivasnosqueremos* (We Want Us All Alive) and 3 June 2017 *Basta de violencia machista y complicidad estatal* (Stop Male Violence against Women and State Complicity). Today, it continues to spread relentlessly outwards across other Latin American countries such as Chile, Uruguay, Peru and Mexico.

8 March 2017: the upsurge of feminism in Spain. *Ni una menos, nos queremos vivas* (Not One Less, We Want Us Alive) and *Ni un paso atrás* (Not One Step



Backwards) are the Spanish translation of a worldwide alliance. Since that 8 March, the women behind the Feminist Assembly met on the eighth of every month to generate conditions that were set this year to spark an unprecedented demonstration this year, 2018: #HaciaLaHuelgaFeminista (Towards a Feminist Strike), “If women stop, the world stops”, “We’re stopping to change everything”, “Together we are more”. Women who are united, combative and rebellious are not just a mass or a sum of women.

II.

In Spain, women face more unemployment, part-time work, a hefty pay gap (despite higher qualifications), more impoverished retirement and greater employment discrimination, and undertake unpaid care work that our production system is incapable of paying for. Women face a lack of parity on governing bodies and are underrepresented in positions of responsibility and management. Their sexual and reproductive rights have decreased and are now in danger of regressing due partly to the appeal on the grounds of unconstitutionality, lodged by Spain’s Popular Party (PP), against the existing Abortion Act, presented before a sympathetic magistrate. Women are the victims of physical, sexual and economic violence,

as cruel as it is unrelenting, which our very limited Gender Violence Act has not managed to curb.

In recent years, this Act has come up against savage cutbacks, obstructions to women’s legal aid, underfunded and unequal legal counsel depending on the victim’s residency, and a lack of training and specialisation of judicial staff, a Dantesque probative system that forces women not only to prove that they have been assaulted, but that the attack is the product of repeated sexist domination. In Spain, the issue has never been the false claims purported by popular male chauvinist myth; the fact is that these incidents are underreported, reports are increasingly withdrawn, and, when they are filed, neither the victims nor their children receive sufficient protection.

The Gender Violence Act has been the most strongly resisted act in Spain in the legal sphere, and has been powerless to prevent nearly 1,000 women being murdered since 2002-2003, or 1.4 million women and girls being the victims of sexual violence. The cases of Diana Quer, Nagore Lafagge and the *La Manada* (“The pack”) gang-rape trial further show that this resistance is shared by much of society—the sectors that shift the responsibility from men to women, blames women for what happens to them, and casts doubt on the credibility of their statements. Regrettably, despite the Istanbul Convention, the



State Pact against Gender-Based Violence, approved only a few months ago in Congress, addresses neither victims' rights nor reparation. But in Spain, and in the rest of the world, women refuse to be silenced.

#MeToo, like other movements before it, has exploded the complicit silence of concealment that had descended on sexual assault and rape culture, generating an implacable wave of digital sorority. Mobilisations in places as widespread as Chile, Poland and Turkey highlight the pandemic scope of violence against women. In 2014, in the EU alone, thirteen million women were victims of physical violence and 3.7 million of sexual violence (one in twenty women said she had been raped before the age of fifteen).

III.

The emergence of global feminism in response to all the male violence against women (physical, psychological, sexual, social, cultural and/or symbolic) that is constantly used in an attempt to suppress us is also women's response to policy choices that colonise institutions with aggressive, discriminatory approaches in which sexism and misogyny have a major role: Trump and his verbal attacks, Macri, Erdogan, Putin's Russia. While worldwide

mobilisation surfaced in 2008 against cutbacks and austerity, the impoverishment, precarization and dispossession to which this ideology led, and the absence of an institutional response to contain it, the last few years definitely belong to women.

Feminism has undermined the meritocratic fallacies fuelling countless conservative and neoliberal governments, it has spoken out against the dismantling of social policies, the open disdain for affirmative action, and the unequivocal public-private divide; against the exclusive protection of the hetero-patriarchal family, the preservation of culture at its most reactionary, and alliances with the Church and established power; as well as against the protection of elites and racialized classism, all bearing the indelible marks of political proposals that either deny the existence of patriarchal structures of domination or find no fault with them.

IV.

Feminism, universalized over the past decade has, moreover, revolved around the centrality of the female body, a ravished battleground assaulted by capitalist and patriarchal barbarism, but also the final frontier in the conformation/destruction of women's identities and the vindication for their rights. It is this





Photo: Cecilia Barriga

centrality of the body that has led some feminists to enhance the experience of unfinishedness, finitude and fragility; of living submerged in an interweaving of concrete relationships that render our co- and eco-dependency visible.

Among other things, this feminism reclaims care as a civic virtue and a public duty of civility, placing feminist practices, and women’s experience and learning in the forefront.

The ethics of care conceives of autonomy not as immunity or self-sufficiency, the product of strictly subjective and solipsistic psychological experiences, but as the result of relational synergies in a permanent state of regeneration, reflection, revision and dialogue. Differentiation is seen not as separation or fragmentation, but as a particular way for women to be connected with each other. Autonomy is, then, synonymous with a capacity for distinction, to create and transform the conditions of existence and one’s own life in a common world. Care is perceived both materially and immaterially, leading to talk of the politics of affects. Of course, we are not referring here to care relations generated in inequality; care must be regarded as a lever for social change. And although many people have linked this discourse with the transcendence of maternity—sometimes in a normative sense—the connection should not necessarily

be seen as a reactionary code. The relevance of the “mother” as a political subject has been articulated through from constructivist, materialist and deconstructivist viewpoints among others, sparking a long debate which, fortunately, is ongoing.

The fact is that if today the north is unaware of the major care crisis consuming it, it’s because this social responsibility falls upon a contingent of migrant women, women who take care of our children, our dependents, our elderly, leaving their own to the care of other women. Women who cover for the absence of institutions and men’s irresponsible behaviour, nurturing our bonds while men weaken theirs. Women who generate an affective and emotional surplus value that we cannot even calculate. These precarized, exploited, invisible women re-victimised time and again, live by connecting two territorially discontinuous spaces, one here and one there, weaving material networks and cultivating an imaginary of remote affection. It is thanks to them that we can get a paid job with better conditions, have children, bring them up, educate them, achieve work-life conciliation, set up a world where dependency is not a disabling stigma, and even enjoy a clean, tidy, peaceful home. Thanks to them, we can buy the time stolen from us by a predatory patriarchal system, at a low or affordable cost.



The care crisis we suffer from in the north is cushioned by the endemic crises in the south, by a contingent of women who struggle to get here and find it difficult to settle and acquire legal status, and who are treated as infra-citizens, as second-class women. This transfer of care from the hands of one group of women to another is structured by social class, ethnicity and race, thereby generating inter-gender inequality, reinforcing the passive role of the male, and strengthening the capitalist and misogynistic system that brings all of us down.

V.

The same violence that dispossesses us of our relationships, that fragments, divides and dissociates us, even from ourselves, also eradicates our territories and the natural resources to which we owe our subsistence. The civilisation collapse now affecting us, apparent in climate change, the end of biodiversity, animal torture, the food crisis, land grabbing, among other things, also highlights the devastating effects of male values associated with unbridled growth, selfishness as a rational assumption, individualism, narcissism, competitiveness as a driving force of “well-being”, “progress”, and the linear view of time. Every day, all around the world, women stand up to

the pillaging of the commons, defending the reproduction of life, with all the material and immaterial ties on which the very possibility of existing depends.

VI.

Ultimately, by caring, we accept our radical vulnerability and the normalcy of dependency, and attempt to remove its negative stigma and see it as a necessary, universal characteristic of human relations. This is why, in this construct, needs cannot be taken apart from relational assets, or from the binding debts we have with others. This epistemology, based on experience and the situated knowledges we have drawn from it, has been an indisputable source of change, for it understands that the only coherent way of making general theoretical proposals is by being aware that we really are situated in some specific place. In fact, as has been said on numerous occasions, it is the expert discourse that has contributed to women’s subjugation, removing the means they had within their grasp to channel their protests.

VII.

The rights that women vindicate and their resistance to systematic violence are strongly rooted in



relational experience and in a construct that calls more for concrete, collective experience than for the abstraction and formality that characterise legal androcentrism and the classical discourse of rights. As women, we have understood that the struggle to access power and wealth on an equal footing cannot be dissociated from our difference, or from an emancipatory horizon where our place is in the plural. This discourse anchored in subjectivity has enabled us to subvert dominant cultural codes, situating us more comfortably in a post-hegemonic universe than one with rigid ideologies and grand narratives. If there is one thing feminism has made clear it is that it is not macro-narratives that motivate, mobilise and socialise.

VIII.

The feminist revolution currently under way marks the start of a long night for many, but our strength lies in having responded to the simplifying, homogenising exclusion of *unipower* with increasing doses of complexity and intersectionality; in knowing that we are different and feeling comfortable sharing a common horizon of social and cultural transformation, and a change in sensibility. We have managed to construct our own polyphonic cultural narrative

and an archaeology of the commons, accepting the contradictions and the contingency with this contextual and engrained thinking, so well represented by the name “bell hooks”, to successfully conjugate relational reality and the challenges to the canon of semantic hegemony.

The key to our resistance lies in not having simplified our ecosystems, in having been able to walk, step by step, the unfinished road of our own construction, contrasting, re-reading and overcoming our different identities, and tirelessly disputing the collective narrative and imaginary. Facing one, we are many. As long as feminism cannot be discussed in the singular, victory is ours.

IX. Unfinished

We shall overcome, because every garden bears the murmur of the forest.

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**THE WEAK
INTERNATIONALISM?
WOMEN'S PROTESTS
IN POLAND AND
INTERNATIONALLY, ART
AND LAW**

EWA MAJEWSKA



Aleka Polis, *Rosa Rotes*, Galeria BWA, Wałbrzych, 2016. Photo: Zuza Ziółkowska/Hercberg.

“Order prevails in Warsaw!”

“Order prevails in Paris!”

“Order prevails in Berlin!”

Every half-century that is what the bulletins from the guardians of “order” proclaim from one center of the world-historic struggle to the next. And the jubilant “victors” fail to notice that any “order” that needs to be regularly maintained through bloody slaughter heads inexorably toward its historic destiny; its own demise.

Rosa Luxemburg, *Order Prevails in Berlin*, 1919.

In her Letter to the Congress of Polish Culture, held in the Palace of Culture in Warsaw in October 2016, prof. Maria Janion, theorist of culture and literature, expressed her critique of the heroic messianism which continues to shape the vision of subjectivity and political agency in Poland. Her claim, based on decades of research in literature and history, undermines the patriarchal rule of victimhood and bravery, demanding its dismissal and replacement by an agency rooted in life and sustainability.

Janion’s letter was written only days after the Women’s Strike of the 3rd October 2016 – a day when some 150,000 women in 50 cities, towns and villages in Poland demanded their rights in demonstrations, strikes and online. They also enacted this strike by simply wearing black, expressing the need for freedom and the recognition of women as political subjects. In Poland, the access to abortion is very limited, pregnancies can be terminated when resulting from rape, in cases of foetal malfunction or when the health of the woman is in serious danger. The politicians of the conservative government elected in 2015 have



presented several versions of law, further restricting access to abortion and contraceptives, resulting in such a strong wave of protests, that it can legitimately be called a women’s revolution. Similarly to the independent workers union “Solidarność” from 1980, the women’s “Black Protests”, as they were called after the colour of the clothes worn to express resistance to patriarchal rule, inspired further movements and mobilisations in other parts of the globe. The protests of women held in South Korea, Argentina, Mexico and Italy already in October and November 2016, were directly inspired by the demonstrations and strikes in Poland. Later, the International Women’s Strike was invented, uniting women from 40 countries in their fight against patriarchal structures and misogyny. The protests against president Trump’s sexist declarations and politics, against domestic violence in Latin America and South Europe, against the restrictions of reproductive rights in Nicaragua, Poland, Ireland, South Korea, countries in North Africa and Middle East, were all expressed in unison on the 8 March 2017, in the International Women’s Strike.

This mobilisation of women internationally is an important sign that shifts the forms and strategies of politics. Once again we realised, that the rights of women, and perhaps also all oppressed groups, need to be defended, enacted and maintained as



international. Regardless of the local specificity of the forms of oppression that women are subjected to, it is always based on the assumption, that reproductive labour, still predominantly perceived as a woman’s task, can be subsumed, perceived and judged as secondary to the creative, productive and value creating production, still mostly seen as masculine. While opposing the “Gender Wars” in Europe, the sexual harassment in the US or domestic violence in South America, we all express one problem: the dismissive, dehumanising, patronising and exploitative patterns of today’s capitalism, fuelled by remnants of religious and cultural myths concerning the “feminine mystique” in all brands and forms.

1. R. Deutsche, “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy”, in: *Social Text*, No. 33 (1992), pp. 34-53.

2. See: R. Deutsche, *op. cit.*, W. Benjamin, *Theses on History*, in: W. Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Random House, 1968 and B. Groys, *Weak Universalism*, in: *e-flux*, 15/2010.

3. W. Benjamin, *Theses on History*, *op. cit.*

In her visionary essay “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy”, Rosalyn Deutsche criticised the “authoritarian populism” of neoliberal politicians such as Thatcher, challenging the exclusion of homeless people in public space and demanding a public art which undermined the contemporary restrictions of democracy, instead of supporting them by solely enacting its decorative function¹. Public art was therefore defined as

one bringing politics into public debate, not as one, eradicating it. Deutsche critically addressed the popular theories of neoliberalism, for ignoring the political functions of feminist art, which – although at times financially successful, usually challenged the normative framework of representation, thus allowing marginalised subjects their space, agency and recognition.

In current discussions on political theory and practice, often entering debates on art production and activism, the problem of fascism is often perceived as one of scale – we need a better resistance, a wider struggle, a more universal set of strategies. This sometimes leads to a widespread condemnation

of strategies based on the recognition of differences, a resignation from feminist/decolonial practices in order to build and/or preserve universalism. Following Deutsche, but also Boris Groys and Walter Benjamin, I would like to argue, that the only universalism we should be preoccupied with, is the universalism of the weak². Its other versions and forms are not only defenceless in confrontation with the radical right, but also require tools and measures endangering our ability to build effective collective action.

The Weak Messianism

This rather strong claim is built in several observations I would like to unfold here. The first concerns the oppressed and intergenerational pacts for solidarity. In Benjamin’s *Theses on History*, this is perhaps the most fascinating suggestion: that generations are connected by a bond – by an “inter-generational pact”³. Living in Warsaw, I can sense the accuracy of these words. Walking on the remnants of the Jewish Ghetto practically every day, I cannot not wonder what my obligations are. I believe that Berlin has a similar situation. We can’t not wonder how to not to repeat fascism – how not to make an empty



declaration by claiming “never again”, but also, as a practical rule of organising our actions in a pact with the past and future generations.

Benjamin wrote: “Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that”⁴. The pavements of Warsaw and Berlin are embroidered with information on the Jewish people who lived, were imprisoned or killed in various locations in both towns. These are a lively reminder not just of the victims of the past fascist regimes, but also of the obligations we have for the present and the future. Living in both cities in recent years, I was immersed in the variety of solidarity practices, affective labour and political/ intellectual work that felt like building bridges. These practices were extending a web across the divisions of racism, geopolitics and patriarchy. Both cities now feel like my homes and across the border, as Gloria Anzaldúa wrote, it crossed me rather than I crossed it. A certain historical materialist practice of building a home in homelessness was created, involving the contemporary, but also the past and the future generations in solidarity.

Derrida was right, when he argued, that Benjamin’s “weak messianism” is not a declaration

of mysticism, but a form of materialism. Deconstruction, incidentally presented itself as the best translation of “perestroika”.
4. *Ibid.*
5. I. Lorey, “Becoming Common: Precarization as Political Constituting”, in: *e-flux*, 17/2010.

The peaceful transition of the USSR into a capitalist country, announced by the Russian leader, Mikhail Gorbachev in mid 1980s, is today found guilty of the widespread of Neoliberal Capitalism and all of the exploitative measures it employs and fuels in the global economy. What goes unseen in all of these easy accusations however, is the deep political presence of differences, announced silently on every level of today’s systematic daily practices of enforced precarisation. As Isabel Lorey rightly claimed, precarity was a necessary element in the making of the European Subject. It always needed a series of its “others” to be marginalized, exploited and pushed beyond the scenes⁵. The obscenity of today’s claims of the supposed novelty of precarity, as though there was none throughout history – when people were forced to survive social insecurity, injustice and oppression – should be condemned, and there is no other way to do it, then the weak messianistic claim of a pact between generations, recognition of similarities in exploitation, and communities in resistance – community based in difference.



Weapons of the Weak

The weak messianism leads to the weak universality of the claims, but before that, practices of resistance were and are used globally by the subaltern. In *Weapons of the Weak*, James Scott rightly argues for a recognition of the ordinary political agency based in persistence, commonality and simplicity⁶. In his analysis of the peasant protests (I use Scott's vocabulary) in South-East Asia, Scott acknowledges not only the massive participation of the illiterate, often homeless people in the political resistance, but also the effective nature of their struggle. Based on his research in ten countries of the region, Scott claims that the peasants strategies were unheroic and genuinely collective, conducted by those without any forms of cultural or economic privilege. His claims consist not solely in a fascination with peaceful, common political agency. It is also a form of protest that renders visibility to the massive, popular and effective political agency otherwise absent in political narratives on resistance. In this, Scott realised what Jacques

Rancière once called “a new division of the sensible”, somehow against the strong claim of Gayatri Spivak from 1988, that “the subaltern cannot speak”. Although

6. J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press, 1985.



Spivak changed her formulation in 1999, and explained in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, that she seeks to understand the conditions of impossibility of the subaltern's subjectivity and not to further block its visibility, her claim is still misunderstood as one preventing the subaltern from appearing.

The recent women's protests – in Poland and internationally, brought to visibility the subjects that have long been forgotten in the general assumption that their issues and rights “have already been granted”. By whom? On what ground? The International Women's Strike and the #metoo campaign clearly show the incompleteness of the fight

for women's rights, and evidence a set of blindspots and inconsistencies in the map of the supposedly egalitarian societies. These declarations, enunciations and revelations cannot be relegated to the "women's issues" box of matters supposedly irrelevant from the perspective of some self-proclaimed General Subject.

Institutions of the Common

In their writing about the common, Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt and Judith Revel emphasise how it crosses the public/ private alternative, opening space for sharing rather, than possessing⁷.

The common, as with the air we breathe and the culture we all create, cannot be governed in separation, as in the form of the state or private property. The common alludes the General Intellect, the collective nature of the making of the world in its every dimension. The common, however, also depicts the everyday and the ordinary. It references the plebeian, marginalised and oppressed; those supposedly and practically deprived of cultural capital and place in history. Therefore, it is not solely in its form of propriety, but also in the subjective qualities and

formats of political agency, that the common indirectly reclaims the weak. Negri and Hardt reference the times of monsters, after Gramsci, as those where transformation occurs, making new forms of subjectivity and politics appear. Their lack of clear contour and their form – always in the making – reminds us of monsters, as those poorly shaped and therefore somewhat scary.

The times of transformation however can bring about not just monsters, but also new forms of organisation, due to the new form of property. In his article *Occupy the Theater, Molecularize the Museum!* Gerald Raunig makes a case for the transversal transformation of the public property, the state-run, oldest theatre in Rome, into an institution of the Commons⁸. In his analysis of the occupation of the *Theatro Valle* in Rome, between 2011-2014, Raunig offers a multilayered analysis of the elements of such transformation, beginning with the threat of privatisation – the theatre was supposed to be destroyed and replaced by a shopping mall. The workers of the theater, together with the public and social activists, decided to occupy it, defending it from privatisation, but also

7. See: A. Negri and M. Hardt, *The Commonwealth*, MIT, 2009 and A. Negri and J. Revel, "The Common in Rewolt", in: *UniNomade*, 2012.

8. G. Raunig, "Occupy the Theater, Molecularize the Museum!", in: F. Malzacher (ed), *Truth is Concrete. A Handbook for Artistic Strategies in Real*, Sternberg Press, 2014.



reorganising it in ways suiting the collective property model, following the idea of the common, rather than any of the restrictive formats of property. Raunig claims, that the institution of the commons cannot merely limit itself to the making and arranging art for the public, it should be run by all its members, invented anew also by the legal form it takes, therefore becoming a common good.

Towards subaltern counter-publics

The institutions of the common express cooperative organisation and proprietary, leading to another production-centered form of agency – counter-publics. Coined by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, the notion of counter-publics was invented in opposition to the liberal, bourgeois model of public sphere, built in the monumental monograph by Jurgen Habermas, *Structural transformation of the Public Sphere*⁹. Explicitly excluding plebeian forms of the public sphere as “historically insignificant”, Habermas established a perspective on political agency, which excludes practically any subject who is not a white, privileged, Western man. Everything that has been said until now in this essay, contradicts

such exclusion. Kluge and Negt discussed the forms of political agency of the proletarians. Nancy Fraser on the other hand discussed the feminist counter-publics, opposing the weak public sphere, which she understood as artificial, alienated and only formally pluralistic, to favour the strong genuine public sphere, using the example of a feminist counterpublic.

Fraser’s idea of subaltern counter-publics is fascinating as a fruitful contradiction which combines the expressive, vocalised public with the concept of the subaltern, which – in Gramsci’s formulation, but also in that of Spivak – points to the expected muteness of the excluded classes. I believe, that a correction is nevertheless necessary, and it is not simply about the adjectives. Instead of further excluding, weakness should be claimed as the quality of all the oppressed and marginalised. It is in our weakness, not in our strength that we all meet as oppressed groups. It is also in the weak, non-heroic formats, that we recently gained power. It is therefore the weakness, not the strength that should be investigated as a possible beginning of universalising our struggles.

9. See: A. Kluge and O. Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience. Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, przeł. P. Labanyi et al, London and New York, Verso, 2016 and J. Habermas, *Structural transformation of the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, 1989.



Weak Resistance

Until recently, Antigone (daughter of Oedipus) was solely perceived in opposition not just to Creon (ruler of Thebes), symbolising the patriarchal rule, but also to Ismene – her vulnerable, caring sister. In her recent book, *Antigone Interrupted*, Bonnie Honig presented a reading of *Antigone* as the story of a sisterly, anti-patriarchal pact, based on mutual support and exchange between the two different sisters¹⁰. The key feature of this interpretation of this archetypical tale is the resignation from separation – Antigone has always been discussed in separation, as an exception in the controversy between the tradition and the state, preoccupied with the death, yet here she is seen as a part of a family, and an element of a larger resistance to patriarchy. In her reading of Antigone, Honig opposes the patriarchal rite of binary opposition imposed on women, who are always supposed to be either/or – either victims or aggressors, mothers or whores, public or private personae. Here, Antigone is not solely connected with others – mainly her sister, but also demonstrates a larger, complex set of characteristics, rendering her character closer to the actual women engaging with politics.

The recent women's protests in Poland were the first massive feminist protests, involving hundreds

of thousands of women, in big and small towns, villages, women of different social backgrounds, activists and those who had never participated in political actions

before. The formula: massive demonstrations, but also the colour of clothes – black – and several types of internet action, made participation in the protests possible also for those who had never been to feminist demonstrations before. In April 2016, new social media groups were opened for women who wanted to protest the law proposal allowing a complete ban on abortion, announced by the Polish Parliament days earlier. Some 100,000 women joined one of these groups, *Dziewuchy-Dziewuchom* (Gals for Gals) overnight, more joined later¹¹.

In September 2016 the Black Protest took place on social media, where women and those supporting us were invited to send their pictures wearing black and signed “I support the #blackprotest”. That night, some 150,000 pictures were uploaded on this fan-page, making everyone understand that something big was happening. Some women in Poland faced problems at work or in schools for participating in this online protest, but in most cases the charges were dropped. A group of teachers from Zabrze, a town in Silesia, faced a disciplinary committee, but they were

10. B. Honig, *Antigone Interrupted*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

11. www.facebook.com/groups/114342355632125/members/



not punished. On the contrary – the committee fully acknowledged their constitutional right to express political opinion.

The call to the Women’s Strike was first announced by Krystyna Janda, the famous actress known from the Oscar awarded Andrzej Wajda’s films, such as *The Man of Steel*. Women around the country and abroad started to organise into groups and actions for the 3rd of October, while the liberal media published articles about the Women’s Strike in Iceland in 1975. Women declared that they wouldn’t go to work and/ or that they wouldn’t do housework, affective labour or other forms of reproductive labour. Some men supported us, providing child care and other forms of labour. Some 150,000 women took it out to the streets in some 50 cities and towns in Poland and some more cities abroad. A similar protest took place on the 23 March 2018, after another proposal to legally banning abortion completely. The government stepped back, both in 2016 and now. It is now clear that there is no way the abortion law can be changed.

The recent women’s protests in Poland have shown to what extent we still need to build trans- versal, multilayered, all-encompassing feminisms, instead of exclusive, metropolitan groups only declar- atively opened to all. In the artist strategies, we need

a similar universality and similar avant-garde; after years of ironic subversions, we need to widen the scope of our practice, and perhaps learn from the early avant-gardes in Russia, employing geometry, factory materials and montage in effort to politicise art instead of aestheticising politics. This weak uni- versalism, as Boris Groys rightly summarised – these efforts of early avant-gardes, was later continued by Joseph Beuys, who declared that everyone is an artist, and now – in various inclusive, participatory project in recent years.

In the time of rising feminist waves of protest and in a time of growing fascism, our thinking, experienc- ing and resistance need more weakness. More com- mon grounds and more formats allowing us all to join. We need to take it all.

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PRACTICE INTERSECTIONALITY¹

NATAŠA PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ



“Show Me Your Archive And I Will Tell You Who Is In Power” 2017.
Installation image of Saddie Choua, “Am I The Only One Who Is Like
Me?”, 2017. Courtesy KIOSK, Ghent. Photo: Tom Callemin.

“Explaining phenomena like racism and sexism – how they are reproduced, how they keep being reproduced – is not something we can do simply by learning a new language. It is not a difficulty that can be resolved by familiarity or repetition; in fact, familiarity and repetition are the source of difficulty; they are what need to be explained.”

(Ahmed 2017)

In the late capitalist societies of the Global North, there exists many cultural recuperations of the legacy of the empowering Second Wave feminism and their struggle for the liberation of all women. Establishing legal background for women’s rights to abortion, their equal economic status, fighting against the detention of female political prisoners, and demanding equal participation in the political sphere are some of the battlefields that have been recuperated by phenomena such as corporate feminism. Corporate and/ or state feminism is present in many organisations, companies and on the level of entire countries. Its aim is to assure equality without any structural changes, which is one example of the depoliticisation of the legacy of the Second Wave.

Femonationalism, on the other hand, is a term that Sara R. Farris proposes for the recent political recuperations and exploitation of feminist themes by ultra-right wing politicians, by neoliberals and also several prominent feminist intellectuals in the

1. The title is taken from a lecture given by feminist cultural theorician Gloria Wekker at Kaaitheter, Brussels, March 2018.



2. In the field of contemporary art, the informal group We Are Not Surprised was formed and published a letter in autumn 2017 with more than 7000 signatures by professionals from all over the world, asserting the sexual violence experienced on various levels in contemporary art professions and practices. This letter enabled the formation of many individual working groups in various cities, as well as actions and legal support for victims of harassment. See: www.not-surprised.org/home/.

assault survivor and activist, in 2006.³ Furthermore, as Crystal Feimster puts it, “the #MeToo movement is using some of the same strategies that Black women activists used to mobilize during the anti-lynching movement, which was really an anti-rape campaign for [those] activists”.⁴

Could the method of intersectionality be incorporated as a way of living and looking at the world in daily practices and systems, and not only as theoretical discourses? ‘Intersectionality’ was coined in 1989 by

stigmatisation of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality across Europe (Farris 2017). More recent recuperation occurred with the #MeToo movement, concerning sexual harassment and violence against women, especially throughout the various spheres of popular culture, but also in the arts.² After the movement spread more widely following the public disgrace of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, information surfaced that the movement had taken over the name introduced by Tarana Burke, an African-American sexual

Kimberlé Crenshaw, professor and theoretician of Black feminism, as the “view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity” (Crenshaw 1989). Today she considers that “intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects”.⁵

This worldview, if we could call it that, had been put forth in the manifesto-pamphlet of a group of feminist activists coming from the African continent and united as the Coordination des femmes noires, in 1978 in Paris: “[Wherever it may be, in France, South Africa, the West Indies...] where we are colonised or put in ghettos, we, Black women, declare that we struggle against all forms of racism, of structural segregations that guarantees murder,

3. Garcia, S.E. 2017, “The Woman Who Created the #MeToo Long Before Hashtags”, *The New York Times*, 20 October, viewed 5 May 2018, www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/us/me-too-movement-tarana-burke.html.

4. Lee, S. 2018, “#MeToo Won’t Succeed If We Don’t Listen to Black Women”, *Healthline*, 22 February, viewed 5 May 2018, www.healthline.com/health/black-women-metoo-anti-rape-movement#3.

5. “Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later”, 8 June 2017, www.law.columbia.edu/pt-br/news/2017/06/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality.





"Show Me Your Archive And I Will Tell You Who Is In Power" 2017.
Installation image of Amandine Gay, "Ouvrir La Voix", 2017.
Courtesy KIOSK, Ghent. Photo: Tom Callemin.

6. Coordination des femmes noires, July 1978, author's translation. For more information, see: [MWASI](#).

7. An excerpt from the documentary film by Françoise Dasques, *La Conférence des femmes – Nairobi* (1985), can be viewed [here](#).

against imperialism, patriarchal power, and all practices of torture of our bodies and our thoughts”.⁶

In the documentary film by Françoise Dasques, *La Conférence des femmes – Nairobi* (1985), Angela Davis talks at the seminal Non Governmental Organizations Forum in Nairobi in 1985, attended

by women from NGOs all over the world, about how she defines feminism:

It is a question that could absorb hours and hours of discussion, as we know. As a matter of fact, many women are debating over that very question here at the Forum. In order to truly be an activist in a fight for women's equality, we have to recognise that the women are oppressed as women, but we are also oppressed because of our racial and national background, we are also oppressed because of our class background... I think we should join hands across races and across classes, but the specificity of our specific oppression must be recognised and acknowledged.⁷

In this exceptional one-hour-long documentary commissioned by the Centre audiovisuel Simone

de Beauvoir in Paris⁸, we can observe the intense polemics orchestrated by the international NGOs, alongside the official UN Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, concerning the Palestinian struggle, female genital mutilation, contrasting viewpoints on the significations of veiling a woman's body in Iran, and listening to the speakers of transnational alliances of the LGBTQI communities. These topics were all debated exclusively by women – across races, classes and different sexualities.

Returning to France, it became clear to me some months ago, that some women's thinking in the sphere of culture are far from the thinking within this historical revolutionary moment. A lot of reactions have been published after the opinion column that stated that “men should be free to hit on women” which was co-signed by around one hundred women from the fields of cinema, contemporary art and literature (Catherine Millet and Catherine Deneuve being the ones most frequently quoted). In a response called *Can Feminists Speak?*⁹, intellectuals criticised what they considered to be the manipulation of the notion of liberty and technique of delegitimation of

8. www.centre-simone-de-beauvoir.com/.

9. “Can Feminists Speak”, translation of a letter published in French on 11 February 2018, viewed 3 May 2018, lesfeministespeuventellesparler.wordpress.com/cant-feminists-speak/.



minorities, typically encountered when disqualifying the actions of racialised groups. Art critics Elisabeth Lebovici and Giovanna Zapperi published another response, drawing attention to the dangers of conflating human rights, artistic freedom and freedom understood by the (French White) women who wrote the column (Lebovici & Zapperi 2018).

Many progressive institutions of contemporary art in the Northern and Southern hemispheres with programmes against racism, sexism and homo- and transphobia are struggling to operate structurally. One of them was the Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea in Vitoria-Gasteiz, that was run by Xabier Arakistain between 2008 and 2011. In 2005 Arakistain launched *Manifiesto Arco 2005* demanding that public administrations adopt practical measures to implement equality between the sexes in the field of art. The public institution, the Centro Cultural Montehermoso, was restructured into a pioneering institution for the development and application of feminist policies in the fields of contemporary art. Following the anthropologist Mary Douglas' call to change institutions, and specifically applying the feminist reinterpretation of history of art through Linda Nochlin's seminal text "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" as well as Griselda Pollock's writings¹⁰, Arakistain turned

Montehermoso into the first centre for contemporary art, culture, and thought to apply the references to art and culture as defined under the equality laws of the Basque Autonomous Community. How could other institutions of contemporary art in the Global North get inspired by intersectional feminist methods?

Self-reflexivity, as a method of questioning who are the public(s) or constituencies which an institution of art is addressing, seems to be extremely apt. How one formulates an address to various communities, on what premises and in what terms in an economy of exchange, these questions can allow an institution to revisit its "broadcasting" channels and the discourses used to present their projects.

Long-term affirmative actions on all levels of the institutional infrastructure – those less and those more exposed to visibility – should be applied. As the documentary film director and sociologist Amandine Gay and author of the 2017 film *Ouvrir la Voix*, a documentary about the self-representation and self-empowerment of Afro-descendent women living in

10. Arakistain particularly quotes Pollock to point out that "recognizing the hierarchies of power which rule the relationships between the sexes, lending visibility to the mechanisms on which male hegemony is founded, untangling the process of social construction of sexual difference and examining the role played by representation in that articulation of difference" (Pollock 1988).





"Show Me Your Archive And I Will Tell You Who Is In Power" 2017, installation image. Courtesy KIOSK, Ghent. Photo: Tom Callemin.

11. The notion of coloniality of power is used by Anibal Quijano, and is, as quoted by Françoise Vergès, “a category that includes relations between the dominating and the dominated, sexism and patriarchy... in relations between public and private and above all between the civil society and political institutions” (Vergès 2017, p. 21).

12. “The construction of capitalism was enabled by puncture from the African societies during several centuries, which was organised in an industrial manner. The invisible source of this puncture was nothing else than the belly of the African women, whose children were captured to be deported... [Later in beginning of the nineteenth century in the United States, the industry of reproduction of the enslaved bodies manages to impose itself on all the territory

France and Belgium, mentions: “[Following Frantz Fanon, or Aimé Césaire] one has to be able to have a dialogue about the fact that dehumanisation of the oppressed is comprised of dehumanisation of the oppressor... if men and women question one’s own privileges... on one’s own scale, then the situation will change...”.

Above all, to practice intersectionality these examples propose that one acknowledges that a majority of all art institutions in the Global North are result of a process of coloniality of power¹¹ and racial capitalism, which, as we know well, has been accumulating wealth through the mechanisms of racialisation and dispossession as a result of the centuries-long slave trade and above all, through the “bellies of African women”.¹²

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against the politics of the import of the slaves.] The work of the women slaves-reproducers became essential for expansion and enrichment of the United States... The belly of women slaves was a capital; their bodies served as machines and constituted thus an essential element of the global circuit of products, such as cotton or sugar” (Vergès 2017, p. 98).



**FEMINIST STREET:
FROM 3 JUNE
TO 8 MARCH**

MARÍA PIA LÓPEZ

“We agree to live,
and to live is to fight.”

Rallying cry for the meeting of Women in Struggle,
Chiapas, 2018

“Here no one is left out”: this is what Nora Cortiñas said in front of hundreds of thousands of demonstrators on 8 March 2018 in Argentina. A movement, a political decision, an ethical position, condensed into a single phrase. No one is left out. 2017 began with a mass women’s march against the conservative offensive spearheaded by Donald Trump. On 8 March that year, movements in fifty-five countries culminated in the first international women’s strike. The year before an army of women captured Raqqa, the capital of Syria, from ISIS. At the same time, the woman president of Brazil was removed from office by a coup d’état. In Mexico, Neozapatism turned their autonomist tradition to focus on an electoral campaign headed by Marichuy, a woman doctor of traditional medicine from the Nahua people.

Part of Brazil’s extensive land mass was marched upon by black women. In Argentina, a mass, diverse, working-class feminism continued to pour out into the streets, with a highlight on 3 June 2015, when it marched under the slogan *Ni una menos* [Not one less]. This is an international and multilingual human tide. Invented and transformed. A hydra of a thousand heads, a new political factor, a threatening force, a puzzle to be solved, a commitment that keeps us up at night.

The term “woman” is not a piece of biological information. It is a political statement: it is a term we use to refer to a group of lives beyond the historical construction of the woman gender, including lesbians, transvestites, transsexuals. The movement uses this classification, which exists within the social and discursive order to make its practical and theoretical critique. The political deconstruction of our bodies is, at the same time, a construction of politics on our bodies. The subject of contemporary feminism begins with the affirmation of gender, but at the same time it questions the fixity of genders and regulated



behavioural patterns. It spans from strategic essentialism to the recognition of the creation of any available identity within the social fabric. There are different rebellions within the feminist rebellion. It is not only that rebellion which seeks to break the glass ceiling and be free to compete as equals. There are other uprisings at play, egalitarian and unorthodox, that consider feminism as a type of contemporary communism, committed to a new brotherhood, to life in a working class tenement, to a disjointed make-up of existence.

I want to emphasise what *Ni una menos* brings to the table, in terms of mobilisation and organisation as a political experience. Summed up in a single phrase that becomes a password, a common code, with multiple meanings, a tool for different political constructions, an area of controversy. It is a movement that does not have (women) bosses, leaders, or owners. Nor does it have a single or legitimate interpretation. I remember how two girls once used this motto. One, in school, could not stop crying. During an interview with a social worker, it stemmed that she could not speak, until she said: what *Ni una menos* says is what happened to me. The phrase described a situation of sexual abuse at home. An 8 year old girl asks her grandmother about a lesbian couple. She questions if their relationship, previously carried out behind

closed doors, is now in public because of the existence of the *Ni una menos* movement, that defends all women's rights.

The movement emerges as a mass, collective cry against violence against women – in the context of rising femicide rates, but also of a misinterpretation of different types of violence – and articulates a series of demands that are more and more broad and radical. It states that all lives matter and every body counts. They count because they should be cared for, protected, watched over, and in the sense that their stories should be told. Justice for those lives is also a narrative; they should be removed from the discursive machines of machismo. The initial and fundamental affirmation of the movement is that no life is disposable. *Ni una menos* discusses violence that comes from areas of exception where there is no legal protection and, at the same time, emphasises the specificity of violence against women, transsexuals, and transvestites. The feminist complaint could be functional: to take care of our lives, no matter how. But if permanent attention is not paid to the specificity of violence against women, one would think that gender inequality is a question of secondary importance, neither relevant nor essential.

Contemporary social struggles resolve matters regarding the right to live. When bodies are exploited





to death, when there is no access to water, when populations are displaced due to advancing agricultural limits, when health services have a purely commercial interest, when in some neighbourhoods institutions are nothing more than an armed gang solving problems with bullets, when working class neighbourhoods become ghettos, when resources are poured into lands that turn into deserts, the right to live is at play. Could one ever think about the increase in femicide violence without the context in which empathy is suppressed in favour of suffering on a daily basis?

Thousands and thousands of us took to the streets to sympathise for women who have died. We saw ourselves in a common fragility. Recognising that we are vulnerable enables us to stand strong together and avoid the safe capture of vulnerability. The right supports a separate and independent individual, subject to all types of threats. Living in fragility drives us towards protective technologies – medical, security – or paves the way for revenge and practices of punishment: “they should pay for what they have done”. The discourse on security is the way to deal with our fragility in a reactive, individualistic, and fearful way. We look to create another way, that links the singularity of every life and desire as the underlying layer of the common, political experience. Struggle and

desire are experiences of dispossession, which reveal the extent to which our relationships form us, and, as Judith Butler says, “we are dispossessed by them” (2004). The collective duel takes grief as a public matter and connects it to the question of what type of community is possible? Some kind of ecstasy, of coming out of oneself, a breaking of the individualising privatisation, is inherent in mobilisation. *Ni una menos* hatches their politics beginning at sentient corporality, the experience of fragility, and the impulsiveness of desire.

On 19 October 2016, after a brutal murder¹, we carried out the first national women’s strike. We said: if our lives do not matter, produce without us. From there, the women’s movement was followed by the organisation of international strikes on 8 March 2017, and 2018. In 2018, the mobilisation was greater and had its own distinctive identity. It was festive, inter-generational, performative, and artistic. It took the motives of a people’s carnival and dramatised the festival as people constructing themselves. It celebrated its own dawn.

1. On 16 October, Lucía Pérez, a sixteen year old girl, was murdered. Two men were arrested. According to the press reports, she died of pain – a vagal reflex – in a gang rape. As the trial went on, this version was discarded, but the family believed that the current investigation theories were not correct.



The international women's strike brings a rebellious attitude to the forefront. It shakes up an agenda of vindications and emerges as a collective experience, a catharsis, and an organisational process, a privileged moment to amass political subjectivity. The women's strike has this attitude because the idea of work it acknowledges and seeks to interrupt, is not one-dimensional. It rejects the reduction of salaried jobs and refers to all productive labour, the creative effort, as creating a fabric of community bonds. It demands the recognition of all the productive and reproductive work that we do.

The strike affects the very foundation of social order: it is against the idea of domesticity and gender roles that sentence women to housework and is also against the subjugation to poorly paid jobs, under the umbrella of freedom that being salaried allows. It addresses the invisible ceilings in professional careers and also postulates the notion of equality that makes these hierarchies tremble. It is against employee management with an agenda of labour demands, against the government that criminalises protests, against machistas at home and in bed. It is present in sentimental relations, politics, family, work, art, science. In the strike itself. It is disobedience running through all aspects of life as a desire for interruption and foundation. It reveals a normally

invisible link: the accumulation of wealth is not only what comes out of the workplace, it also takes in the surplus produced by community know-how and jobs of domestic reproduction. Upon naming all types of work, the strike shows a collective production of wealth that is privatised, which their (women) creators are deprived of.

Every mobilisation inherits, acknowledges, and invents. The women's movement constructs forms of intervention, political statements, and its own dramatics. Every fold through which it runs goes further in depth concerning what is understood as violence and establishes different forms of autonomy. We are that powerful dawn, amazed and excited.

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DEFIANCE OF
AMPHIBIANS:
NEOLOGY AS AN ACT OF
ALIENATION

SARP ÖZER

1. “Number of Words in the English Language”, *Global Language Monitor*, viewed 25 April 2018.

New words—authored or anonymous—emerge at times when it is not possible to address a certain phenomenon with the lexical representations available in a given language. Linguistic efficiency or representational capacity thus depend on time and practice, as lexicology does not operate on the basis of trial and error. A new word in English is generated every ninety eight minutes or 14.7 words per day.¹ However, most of them are never integrated into widespread use due to lack of accord over their meanings, which can only be reached upon elaboration. Neology or wordsmithing enable languages to expand their representational capacity into the present and the future.

In *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation*, the collective Laboria Cuboniks seeks to “articulate a technologically minded counter hegemonic gender politics fit for an era of globality, complexity, and alienation” (Avanessian & Hester 2015). Their text, otherwise known as the XF Manifesto (Laboria Cuboniks 2015), describes xenofeminism via three

compound words: *techno-materialist*, *anti-naturalist* and *gender-abolitionist*. These seemingly vague and even idiosyncratic terms go through subjective elaboration and reveal themselves to be relevant and practical concepts for thinking about feminism in the light of current techno-political circumstances. Moreover, their disambiguation helps build a vocabulary of emancipatory politics that is appropriate for each and every subjective gendered reality without prioritising one over the other.

Today, nature is willingly “enhanced” in favour of corporate interests. Buttressed by theological institutions that craft pseudo-ethical concerns deeming essentialism unquestionable, such enhancements are never granted to the subversive universal framework that Laboria Cuboniks envision. Critical of the perception of nature as immutable, the international feminist group refuses to consider “the natural” as a given, fixed and sacrosanct attribution amongst living beings. Without situating anti-naturalism in opposition to the biological, the XF Manifesto frames nature as a space for political contestation. It also



2. In the United States, no legal action has yet been taken because the indicated risks on humans were very limited.

calls for the widespread emancipation of anything which has been deemed “unnatural”, cast out of normative society or subjected to discrimination by the so-

called law of nature and dominant gender binary in favour of patriarchy. The xenofeminist rationality also asserts that nature needs to *be changed* if it is *unjust*. For such subversive tasks to fulfil their emancipatory potential, xeno-revolutionaries should consider humans, cyborgs and non-human animals akin.

Promising biological studies with revolutionary goals are often hypocritically denounced by creating public controversy around them or undermining them through budget cuts. Thus, one might consider the fact that a number of pesticides are either well tolerated or have escaped the attention of policy-makers and public influencers as there are significant findings on the gender-bending effects of herbicides. For example, Atrazine affects various life forms that inhabit contaminated aquatic environments, particularly that of amphibians like frogs, causing infertility and hermaphroditism, and moreover threatening their reproductive capabilities—their “sexuate diversity”, as Laboria Cuboniks calls it.² With regards the case of the Atrazine-induced amphibian African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*), humans need to come

to terms with their non-human kin in an act of collective survivalism and unselfish cohabitation. If not, inter-species extinction on Earth and impending environmental cataclysm become unavoidable.

Male amphibians that develop female bodies under Atrazine fit into Laboria Cuboniks’ discussion on “gender abolitionism” as they argue for the construction of “a society where traits currently assembled under the rubric of gender, no longer furnish a grid for the asymmetric operation of power” (Laboria Cuboniks 2015, Chapter 0x0E). Arguing for the proliferation of genders, rather than the undoing of differences to become identical or uniform, the collective declares: “Let a hundred sexes bloom!” Their objective is neither impairing the world’s reproductive ability, nor is it reducing its sexuate diversity. So, what needs to be revoked is not gender itself (or its infinite possibilities) but the unjust systemic conditions that classify gender into categories. And the only way to do that is to erase the hard-coded, gender-based traits and their cultural markers from society. Inciting inequality and harbouring injustices, growing oppressive tendencies explicitly manifest themselves over the Internet. Driven by white supremacy and misogyny, racism and genderphobia are able to shapeshift between online and material forms and influence one another.





Fritz Lang's Maschinenmensch with emoji frog. Image courtesy the author.

3. See [Anti-Defamation League](#), viewed 19 May 2018.

As the XF Manifesto also claims that technology is neither neutral nor inherently progressive now that the cyber-utopian days of the 1990s are over, while critically unpacking the notion of “techno-materialism”. Declared as a hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League, the cartoon character Pepe the Frog is subject to constant online exploitation.³ The infamous amphibian that once had a neutral image recently became the foremost meme used to disseminate hate speech by the resentful, the betas and various other forms of trolls currently reigning over the Internet. As demonstrated in several cases such as the #Gamergate controversy, (Parkin 2014), the 4-8chan culture and the alt-right or incels are the most commonly known examples amongst other underexposed web-based communities with oppressive tendencies. They exploit anonymity and accelerated forms of communication supported by technological mediation. “Just as the invention of the stock market was also the invention of the crash, Xenofeminism knows that technological innovation must equally anticipate its systemic condition responsively” (Laboria Cuboniks 2015, Chapter 0x08). In such a context, the primary objective of technological innovation should therefore be auxiliary to identify, scrutinise and, most importantly, counter-attack such threats.

The impact of networked feminism and the technology-driven acceleration in cyberfeminism can be likened to that of a tsunami in scale. In order to break through, a slow subsumption must be directed to overflow into what the preceding three waves of feminism had crushed. Even though the XF Manifesto does not incentivise infliction of direct damage in search of rapid overthrow, it explicitly targets the elimination of the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. To overpower such deep-rooted adversaries will not be as simple as following a ready-made programme with grassroots revolutionary ideas, or using technological processes. Language, as the source code we have, needs to be reprogrammed to engender a Promethean subjectivity fit for the task. The manifesto proposes the construction of such a language with high level programming which requires a strong abstraction from the computer’s instruction set architecture. Parallels can be drawn between such labour and LISP, “the programmable programming language” that allows systemic changes to the operation of a computer programme, via small adjustments to the actual code—analogue to neology—to reduce limitations on the expressivity set by language. “Not only can you program in Lisp (that makes it a programming language) but you can program the language itself” (Foderaro 1991).



4. The modern times scapegoat that is accused of all kinds of atrocities caused by the human species.

The aforementioned context suggests the foundation of an anonymous, accessible, inclusive and utilitarian language, which enables a universal attunement to an emancipatory form of gender politics, and that an egalitarian feminist sensibility is exigently needed. Its absence requires a thorough but indefinite formulation in continuum, if it is to operate as an interspecific framework capable of fostering extensive social change for all of the alien kin. The methodology for building such a language that can potentially generate “a better semiotic parasite” is uncertain. To start with, it might be necessary to reconfigure human desires to tranquillise the so-called irrational.⁴ In the best case, we move towards the inception of a Promethean era of freedom and justice. In the worst case, it will become a thaumaturgical task to save humans from further self humiliation and prevent inter-specific environmental catastrophe. Considering the technological advancements available to us, emancipation is something that should not be given up so easily, handed over to disciplinary state power or mourned over. Instead, it should be demanded unselfishly and equally for everyone and everything.

If a new world is to be built, it ought to be constructed word by word. Alienation of semantics

through premeditated ambiguation of existing words with cultural markers could be considered a viable intervention to a lexicon that could potentially activate widespread action. “To learn without desire is to unlearn how to desire”, as Raoul Vaneigem remarks (1995). Resetting the meaning of words and re-deploying them back into flux could be a practical inception towards engendering a subjective reality for the world-building cause. According to Laboria Cuboniks, alienation is “an impetus to generate new worlds”. It does not mean estrangement of the working class from their labour through derogatory, automated minute tasks, assigned under debilitating employments, but rather, it is a generative and productive force to reevaluate the conception of what is human. As the collective puts it, “new knowledge, new phenomena or concepts that make an appearance in the world, can change the way we understand ourselves and our position within it” (Reed 2017). Therefore, this form of estrangement could serve to cultivate emancipation by processing newly-acquired knowledge as an ontological update for what is human as a generic category within species.

Challenging the timeliness of the current Turkish lexicon in the field of gender studies within the purview of cyberfeminism, the recent collective endeavour to translate the XF Manifesto into Turkish can



5. The seven-week long programme, including public meetings as well as reading and working groups, took place at Istanbul-based art space AVTO in January 2018.

be seen as an inspiring attempt to alienate one's own native language from an archaic framework of meanings and their oppressive memory.⁵ This exercise certainly went beyond a mechanical act of

translation, allowing an open-ended process with multiple perspectives on the manifesto. Contributors from different political spheres and generations confronted their subjective notions of gendered realities within the material and virtual world, while negotiating words from the text's earlier translations and their meanings. Striving to think like lispers, the objective of this collective effort was to reconfigure the semi-otic disposition in Turkish, by subverting words and translations deriving from the XF manifesto, while simultaneously revoking linguistic restrictions to widely engage with the latent feminist discourse. In this era of growing complexity, the human is inherently capable of learning but not so much of unlearning what is set to be fixed, permanent or given. The act of unlearning could only be practiced via Promethean knowledge that calls for “not less but more alienation” (Laboria Cuboniks 2015, Chapter 0x01).

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INNER EDGES AND BORDERS OF CULTURE

MOJCA KUMERDEJ



According to Sigmund Freud, in his *Civilization and its Discontents*, the civilization that distinguishes our lives from those of our animal ancestors and serves two purposes – to protect man from nature and to adjust his mutual relations – does not make us feel comfortable. The entry into and becoming through culture and the discontent embodied in it is also examined in the work of Slovenian intermedia artist Maja Smrekar. Smrekar focuses on the latest geological era, the Anthropocene, in which the human race subjects the environment to global exploitation of natural and human resources. The artist, who won the Golden Nica award at the Ars Electronica festival in the category of hybrid art in 2017, stages posthumous dystopias inhabited by hybrid biological and biotechnological species and by extension opens up reflection on an expression of society based on a more balanced coexistence of human beings with the ecosystem. In her work she draws on Western mythology, technological practices past and present, gender theory and biopolitics; her treatments and audacity absorb the viewer in a broad field of

though-provoking associations, but by the same token can also serve to trigger unreflective repulsion.

The complex four-part series *K-9_topology* was carried out between 2014 and 2017 in cooperation with scientists and technologists and was produced by Kapelica Gallery and the BioTehna laboratory of the Kersnikova Institute in Ljubljana, the foremost Slovenian and internationally established centre for intermedia art. In the series, she employs a topological method to address the physical, relational and signifying space on the margins of which culture and nature, personal and collective memory, and different temporalities are intertwined. As the author explains, the title derives from the code used for professional police dogs: the letter K and the number 9 are homophones and, when said together, constitute syllables to produce *canine* (dog).

K-9 Topology, a series of four autonomous projects, was exhibited at Ars Electronica on a wooden construction otherwise used for training show dogs. In her first project *Ecce canis (Behold the Dog)* in 2014, she addressed the historical domestication and





Maja Smrekar, K-9_topology: HYBRID FAMILY, 2016. Photo: Manuel Vason.

transformation of the wolf to the dog and the mutual adaptation of human and dog, which includes a genetic dimension. In their coexistence with human beings, dogs acquired the ability to metabolise carbohydrates and starch, while humans lost their acute sense of smell and instead evolved with a sharper sense of sight and hearing. The author symbolised the emotional tie developed between dogs and humankind over the course of their coexistence with the sense of smell, in which her own serotonin hormone was combined with the serotonin of her dog Byron. Alongside the equipment she used to conduct the laboratory part of the project, she placed a huge horn lined with wolf skins at a depth at which visitors could smell the human-dog alliance.

In the Jacana Wildlife Studio in France in 2014, she prepared and then performed *I Chase Nature and Culture Chases Me* – a reference to Joseph Beuys's 1974 performance with a coyote entitled *I Like America and America Likes Me* – in the Bandits-Mages cultural centre in Bourges, as part of the Rencontres festival. Here she lay on the floor with her naked body covered in grease and starch licked by two dogs and a wolf from the pack with which she established contact in Jacana, while a poetic sound narrative played intertwining her memories from childhood – of dogs with whom she lived, of the *koline* (pig slaughter) she

witnessed, and more – with statements by artists and theoreticians on the relationship between humankind and nature.

In the third part of the series, *Hybrid Family*, carried out between autumn 2015 and February 2016, she focused on the instrumentalisation of the female body and breastfeeding and the historical transformation of the concept of family. While consuming galactogenic liquids and foods rich in iron, she stimulated her body with breast pumps for months, thus boosting the production of oxytocin and consequently prolactin, which triggered the production and secretion of colostrum. Hunting for meaning, the hunter became prey of her own culture and, in her own words, pregnant with meaning. She transformed herself into the Other within eight weeks, thus becoming the mOther. She enlarged her hybrid family with a new pup Ada, named after Ada Lovelace, mathematician and pioneer of programming and an illegitimate daughter of the poet Byron. In February 2015, in cooperation with the Freies Museum in Berlin, she opened the temporary home of her hybrid family in her Berlin apartment to the audience-public, who witnessed her breastfeeding Ada.

With the title of the last project in the series – *ARTE_mis* – the artist referred to the very concept of art and Greek mythology, in which Artemis, the



goddess of hunting, is depicted with dogs, while ART is also an acronym for ‘assisted reproductive technology’. In the BioTehna laboratory working together with a professional team, she used regular biotechnological procedures to join the cells of two carnivores: all DNA was extracted from the author’s ovarian cells and a somatic cell from the dog Ada (taken from her saliva) was then inserted in it. Even before the hybrid cell developed into a blastocyst, it was frozen in liquid nitrogen on the third day and then displayed under the microscope. Next to the big construction was a smaller one displaying a book with the visual materials from the creative process of the *K-9_topology* series, together with photographs from the artist’s childhood. The book without text acts like a kind of margin where the intimate and the social are intertwined; if we adopt a fictitious view in the distant future, a book of images without text can be understood as a memorial album of the genesis and evolution of a (perhaps already extinct) species.

The history of art does not consist of fluid transitions, but of problems and revolts initiated by artistic gestures that change the field of art when they are inscribed in it. Artists often find themselves in a paradoxical situation. Alongside the Golden Nica, Maja Smrekar received the highest Slovenian award for culture, the Prešeren Fund Award, while experiencing

a pogrom in the pre-election atmosphere of Austria in 2017 and Slovenia in 2018, initiated in both cases by right-wing populist factions. When Maja Smrekar and playwright Simona Semenič were declared Prešeren Fund laureates in February, social media and some right-wing press circulated their photographs, taken out of context, and accompanied by threats and comments about their desecration of national symbols and the denigration of the Slovenian family with their “disgusting”, “degenerative art”. The first photograph shows Maja Smrekar breastfeeding Ada, while the other, a photo from ten years previous, shows a heavily pregnant Simona Semenič holding scissors and standing wrapped in a cut Slovenian flag from which her naked pregnant stomach protrudes. Both photographs are about performing the ‘extimacy’ on the border between nature and culture, between the internal and the external. To paraphrase Mladen Dolar (1994), the broken cultural barrier between the external and the internal gives rise to disgust as a defence mechanism against the *Unheimliche* – disgust that is both fascinating and repulsive at the same time, and thus supposedly morally deplorable. By breastfeeding a dog pup, Maja Smrekar questioned the concept of the traditional family, while Simona Semenič, an artist pushed to the existential margin, a mother and a precarious worker, cut into the Slovenian national





Maja Smrekar, *K-9_topology: ECCE CANIS*,
2014. Photo: Borut Peterlin.

Maja Smrekar, *K-9_topology: ECCE CANIS*,
2014. Photo: Miha Fras.



body by cutting a hole in the Slovenian flag from which her and her child's lives protrude.

The concept of culture should also implicitly include the culture of difference, both difference between different cultures and difference within a single culture. While breastfeeding among different animal species is a common phenomenon in certain non-Western cultures, it is now considered disgusting in the West. Western culture, however, includes the myth of Romulus and Remus who were raised on wolf's milk, and, as late as in the nineteenth century, goats were used for nursing human babies whose mothers were infected by syphilis, while women were recommended to breastfeed dog pups to boost their breastfeeding capacity from the eight month of pregnancy onward. While the broader Slovenian cultural scene supported the two artists when they were publicly lynched at the time of the Prešeren Award ceremony, the international intermedia circles were silent in the face of the attacks on Smrekar during the Ars Electronica festival, which instead continued to support the project.

By rejecting cynicism and showing empathy toward the other, regardless of whether this other is a human being, animal, hybrid or environment, Smrekar poses a question related to the future of humankind, starting with the question of the extent to which it

will be human at all: will there be hybrids between human and other biological species, possibly biotechnological hybrids; and if so, will these creatures enjoy the same rights as humans? Will human and hybrid beings be granted the rights and dignity that the West has until recently taken for granted but are now increasingly under threat? The contemporary global neoliberal economy is often presented as a neutral, even evolutionary phenomenon that is, paradoxically, bound to nature by the brutal mechanism of survival of the fittest, strongest predators. But while nature is collecting all of humanity's debts, the majority of the population is unable to collect the debts of the privileged minority, even though the right to an individual's freedom is inscribed in our cultural foundations as a precondition of justice. And it is precisely this demand for justice that is one of the key drivers of social revolt and thus of culture. In the case of Maja Smrekar, is both the drive and the issue of the artwork.

Translated from Slovene by Polona Glavan.

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Photo: Miha Fras.



THE EIGHT
OF MARCH WHEN
WOMEN SAID
“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH”

YAYO HERRERO

On 8 March 2018, millions of women, called upon by the feminist movement, took to the streets of cities and towns all over Spain. Many of us had additionally supported the strike called for by labour unions. It was one of those days of catharsis that we will never forget, one of those moments in which politics, bodies, and the Earth united, acquiring an unstoppable, positive, indescribable force.

The strike and the demonstration had been in planning mode since last year. March 8 committees were created in cities, neighbourhoods, and towns. In these committees many women shared their discontent at the injustices and violence that capitalist hetero-patriarchy imposes upon them in the daily lives of not only women, but upon everyone, including the rest of the world.

The success of the feminist strike and demonstration had a lot to do with the care put into the extremely long planning process. The openness, flexibility, and freshness of the process helped bring together domestic workers, retirees, students, the underpaid employees, lesbians, transsexuals, migrants,

ecologists, and anyone fighting for adequate housing and against energy poverty, etc. The information blackout by women journalists brought to the public eye what they wanted to show concerning communication media: the enormous vacuum that is created when women are not present. Numerous artistic demonstrations—songs, performances, installations, posters, theatre, etc.—multiplied the repertoire of language and messages in order to reach the most sophisticated stages of cities and invisible corners of marginalised towns and neighbourhoods.

The mobilisation challenged a social and economic model that has declared war on life, that does not recognise the relational and material foundation upon which it is built, and which violently suppresses those it forcefully designates as supporters of life.

Dominant culture does not recognise that the human race is held up by bodies that are vulnerable and finite, bodies that must be cared for throughout their entire existence, and more intensely in certain times of their life cycle. Every human being, individually, can't survive if it does not receive attention that



guarantees that they meet all of their basic needs. In patriarchal societies, the ones who for the most part carry out these tasks are women, not because they are the only ones capable of doing it, but because the sexual division of work imposes them to be performed through different mechanisms: socialisation, notions of duty or sacrifice linked to love or simply out of fear.

But additionally, human life is inserted in a natural environment, one to which it belongs and with which it interacts to obtain what is necessary to maintain conditions of existence. This natural environment has physical limits and imposes constrictions that collide head-on with the expansive dynamic of capitalism.

No human being can live without interacting with nature or without being cared for. Nevertheless, Western society has been constructed on a dangerous fantasy: that human beings, thanks to their ability to reason and learn, can live without organisation, limits of nature, and needs stemming from having a body.

Only certain individuals—mostly men—can live as if they floated above their bodies and above nature—and they do it thanks to the fact that spaces hidden from economics and politics, other people, lands, and species, take responsibility for supporting life. They are a minority, but politics and economics have organised themselves as if this were universal.

The arguments that justified the mobilisation on March 8 fully took on the cultural and material roots of the crisis of civilisation we live in, the invisibility of eco- and inter-dependence. The feminist strike presented itself as a new form of social protest that called upon every dimension that forms part of social reproduction.

The feminist movement extended the labour and student strike to rural areas, habitually invisible and neglected, situating their centrality and the injustice in their distribution, as well as to the sphere of consumption, that along with production and the obsession for growth, underpins an unsustainable and unfair model. For women, a strike is not general if it does not include all areas that support social reproduction.

The women’s strike also made it necessary to reflect and redefine the role of men within it and went beyond the proposals of some labour unions that only allowed for a shut-down of two hours, despite the protests of their women workers.

It will not be easy to manage the success of a mobilisation that attempts to change ideas, behaviours, and attitudes that strongly condition the life of women, and at the same time, achieve normative and legislative changes, resources, and structures to make those changes.



The strength of the mobilisation has to be reflected in the fortitude of the feminist agenda. The proposal of this agenda speaks of a different life for women—for people—a fair, socially, and economically sustainable one. It is a proposal for significant change that clashes, plain and simply, with the patriarchal, anti-ecologist, colonial, and unfair politics that comes from a neoliberal capitalist model. Conflict is unavoidable.

That is why, since the day after March 8, the feminist movement has returned to meetings, conscious of its strength and also of the difficulty of the challenge it faces, and the obstacles and resistance it will encounter.

Undoubtedly, debate, the continuance of mainstreaming and diversity—with all the difficulty that it brings with it are the pillars to lean on. The political and emotional bonds that have been created amongst hundreds of women of all ages who for months and months have constructed the mobilisation is a warranty for its continuity.

We must thank the intelligence, sensibility, and tireless work of all the women who have been building day by day what, without a doubt for me, is the strongest, most vigorous, and international social movement of the times in which we live. Without a doubt, the way it formulates policy and builds the

movement is a beacon that illuminates other collectives that have experienced so much difficulty in trying to do the same.





WHY EQUALITY IS OF
CRITICAL IMPORTANCE
TO RE-POLITICISE
FEMINISM IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

FATMA ARIKOGLU



An American University student addresses the crowd at a protest against Breitbart writer Milo Yiannopoulos on April 22.

Photo: Alejandro Alvarez.

Feminism does not exist. There are at least a dozen different feminisms. Even the right and radical right wing has appropriated feminism. Within this appropriation, the feminism could become a-political. The thought that feminism is something of the left and the right. This article argues that it is crucial to understand the inherent political nature of feminism and how intersectional feminism necessarily is or at least should be connected to the principle of equality, justice and equal rights.

Feminisms and Politics

Feminism has reshaped societies around the world. Since its beginning, feminism was meant as a social movement having political tasks and achievements. In the slipstream of the events of May 1968 and their cultural, political and social consequences, feminism in general and feminism with certain specific goals of the different waves have become hegemonic. At

least now, in the general discourse, old conservative ideas that women should only take care of children and the household have disappeared. It is – again in theory – accepted that women should not only be able to join the labour market, but also get the same wage for the same job. In Europe, nobody in the mainstream seems to question the right of women to vote or to have their voices heard in public debates.

One seems to easily forget that all these “normalities” relating to “the better position of women” are only normalities that exist as result of feminists fighting fierce political battles. These rights were not just given, but enforced. Being a feminist was always accompanied by a deeply political position. Feminism was a political battle embedded in a broader idea of creating a just society. It is no coincidence that feminism was, for a very long time, connected to socialism and to a lesser extent political liberalism. Feminism and the idea that men and women are equal and thus should enjoy equal rights were always at odds with the conservative view of the world. Feminism from a conservative viewpoint was always understood as an



attack on the “natural order” of things. Even more, it was read as an attack on the idea of the family as the cornerstone of the nation.

Appropriation and Redefinition of Feminism

That changed in the last decades of the twentieth century. Being an anti-feminist or advocating that a woman’s place is at home taking care of the children was politically sensitive to say the least. Even conservatives now embrace and claim progressive values (Oudenampsen 2018). Most mainstream and even (extreme) right-wing politicians have no problem in labelling themselves as feminists, or at the very least praising the historic legacy of feminism. This embracement is solely a metapolitical strategy (Maly 2018): the acceptance of feminism comes with a redefinition of that feminism so that it furthers a classic conservative agenda. New Right embeds

that feminism in a conservative political project. If we analyse this “feministic” position in detail, we see three things happening:

1. Arikoglu, F. 2017, “Feminisme in het vizier: over antifeminisme, racisme en mannenrechten”, *diggit magazine*, 27 March, viewed 21 April 2018.

1. Feminism is being redefined. It is not connected to a battle for equality of women and all genders anymore. The whole structural dimension disappears. Feminism is then understood as a “differential feminism” (de Benoist & Champetier 2000). This type of “feminism” celebrates the differences between men and women, differences that are at their core biologically defined. For differential feminists, questioning gender (and other forms of) inequality is not an issue, quite the contrary: men and women need to respect the “natural order” of the position of the sexes.
2. Feminism in the conservative/ New Right discourse never equals an ongoing political battle to create a more equal society; it presupposes that equality is already realised. Feminism is thus understood as an anachronism: the battle is over. We have created a feminist utopia. Feminism is de-politicised.¹ Feminism in this particular meaning functions as a celebration of the status quo. Being a feminist is nothing more than a celebration of “who we are”. “We”, “our culture” as the civilised part of the world. The “Other” and “their non-Western culture” as dangerous for the self-imagined gender equality in the West.



3. Feminism in this account has become a functional diacritic to differentiate “us” from “them”. The idea is that their ethnicities and nations have distinct cultures and that we should preserve these cultures. Differential feminism is connected to that other highly influential idea of ethno-differentialism. We are only feminists in our battle to preserve what we have. And what we have is threatened by “unenlightened migrants” trying to enter our society. “Feminism” in this account serves a national, anti-migration and even racist agenda.

Over the last decade in many countries, the feminist accomplishments and this New Right appropriation were so profound that today, even among feminists, there is no consensus on what priorities feminists should have. The so-called “silent majority” understands the success of the feminist battle as the full accomplishment of the goals the first and second wave of feminists had set for themselves. In contemporary society, people seem to think women and men have equal rights and we have feminism to thank for that. Feminism in this thinking has become something of the past. Something that has shaped who “we” are, that has shaped our society in the Western world.

This proliferation of feminism shows three things: (1) that feminism in its current and historical form is hegemonic. Positioning oneself as a feminist – or at least a defender of the equality of women and men – is necessary to enter the mainstream. (2) That feminism is what one calls an empty signifier. That many different ideologies give meaning to the concept and this creates a de-politicisation of feminism. (3) As a result of the success of previous feminist waves and the metapolitical battle of the New Right (Maly 2018), classic progressive political feminism has a hard time to position itself.

The Antifeminist Threat and The Need to Re-Politicise Feminism

From the extreme left to the extreme right, no political actor questions the accomplishments of feminism. Their evaluation and their strategies to deal with that radical feminist success are of course very different. The New Right and conservative political actors embraced feminism to redefine it. This battle was very successful as it aligned with the dominant



societal shift towards a neoliberal and nationalist consensus. This redefinition not only resulted in the de-politicisation of mainstream feminism, creating a status quo; it also opened the gates for a more radical and explicit antifeminism.

If we zoom in on the so-called Alt-Right – the radical fractions of the movement behind Donald Trump, or have a look at radical identitarian movements in Europe like Generation Identity, or online niches like the so-called “manosphere”, we see the explicit re-emergence of the conservative ideology and biological binary conception of men and women and their “ideal roles” in society. Milo Yiannopoulos is selling the book *Dangerous* (Yiannopoulos 2017) with a campaign that explicitly furthers the idea that “Feminism is cancer”.

In this discourse, female-identifying people and more specifically “malicious” so-called “third wave” radical feminists need to be told that their “women’s liberation triumphs” resulted in the marginalisation of men and the interpretation of “masculinity”. This discourse has created beta-males who are oppressed by women. With the antifeminism of Yiannopoulos, the widespread misogynistic voice of the male supremacist manosphere now has a (controversial) representative in the mainstream. Compared to the male-identifying people in

this manosphere, Yiannopoulos is quite moderate. There, niche women are seen as cruel species, and inhuman advice like “killing a woman in self defense [sic] is more preferable than just injuring her. She can’t spin up a bunch of lies about the situation that everyone will believe just because she’s a woman” is circulating in these well-populated niches.² The construction of an enemy-image is used to justify exclusion/ discrimination and even murder. Nowadays, some of the sexist and racist core ideas of New Right and mainstream feminism are so normalised that an anti-inclusive movement is increasing.

As an answer to these developments, we need re-politicised inclusive feminism which occupies structures that depart from the principles of equality. Radical feminism can’t be individualist, or focus on the celebration of difference(s). After all, every feminist battle has a structural component. Therefore, we should realise that we can never reach radical feminist goals without fighting structural battles and redefining the structures of society. Radical feminism strives for equal access to sources of work, education, health care, work-life balance, safety, politics, political representation and advocates a fundamental economic redistribution (Fraser 2013):

2. Tomassi, R. 2018, “The Dangers of the Blue Pill”, viewed 21 April 2018.



it will not work without redefining our current society in general and the economic structure in which it operated. We need a society that works for the people – all the people – and not for profits (Davis 1983).

This structural battle for equality is undoubtedly the precondition to realise true equality and justice. This means that socially critical feminists should not only fight for proportional representation (in paid workplaces or in universities) and tackle down the binary division of “men” and “women”, together with all the people who don’t fit in these boxes – this radical feminism requires the fundamental redistribution of economic sources. It should fight for equality and justice. That in itself is an intersectional battle that recognises overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that all sexes/genders face, based not just on gender but on ethnicity, sexuality, economic background, age and ability.

In relation to asylum and migration intersectional feminisms, we should make alliances with other rights’ activists. Because of the rise of right-wing identitarian movements in Europe that (try to) make social inequality invisible and due to the attacks on inclusive feminism, more than ever we need intersectional feminism that is committed to the inclusion of all women and girls: migrant women, black women, refugee women, Muslim women, etc. This requires a

collective battle against structural oppression. This contains solidarity between all human rights activists and especially feminist activists who don’t necessarily share the same practices but fight for the same goals: equal rights, justice and democracy.

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FEMINISM, SURVIVAL AND THE ARTS IN IRELAND

SARAH BROWNE



Rachel Fallon, *Aprons of Power*, 2018. Apron wearers: Lynn-Marie Dennehy, Emma Finucane, Eleanor Phillips, Kim Gleeson, Nuala Clarke, Nicole Flanagan. Performance as part of the Artists' Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment, shown at EVA International 2018. Photo / courtesy: Darren Ryan.

At the time of writing, we are a month away from a referendum in Ireland on the Eighth Amendment to our Constitution, and it is difficult to imagine any conversation about art and feminism here that does not depart from the immediate urgency of this point.

This Eighth Amendment, Article 40.3.3^o, was introduced to the Constitution in 1983 and establishes the equal right to life of the “mother” and the “unborn”. In practice this means a constitutional ban on abortion (unless the mother’s life is at risk), but not only that: it means that any person who becomes pregnant enters a zone of exception that qualifies their right to bodily autonomy.¹

The holes in the practicability of this law have been painfully illustrated with a series of tragedies since it was introduced. These include Miss X, a teenage rape survivor who received an injunction from the State forbidding her to travel to the UK to access abortion; Savita Halappanvar, who died of sepsis after being refused a medical termination; Ms. Y, an asylum seeker who was pregnant as a result of rape and who was suicidal, was refused

a termination, forcibly fed and eventually delivered her baby by Cesaerean section; Miss P, a woman who was braindead, eighteen weeks pregnant and who was kept on life support against her family’s will until a court order was granted. In 2016, in the case of Amanda Mellet, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that Ireland’s abortion laws violated rights to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as well as the right to privacy in favour of the complainant. At the time of writing, it is a criminal offence to procure abortion in Ireland or help someone to do so. The criminal penalty is a prison sentence of up to fourteen years. The circumstance of the pregnancy (such as rape, incest or the development of a fatal foetal abnormality) is of no legal consequence.

1. The National Consent Policy notes that “because of the constitutional provisions on the right to life of the ‘unborn’, there is significant legal uncertainty regarding the extent of a pregnant woman’s right to refuse treatment in circumstances in which the refusal would put the life of a viable foetus at serious risk”. National Consent Advisory Group, 2016, *National Consent Policy*, Health Service Executive, Ireland, viewed 15 April 2018.



This makes Ireland a dangerous place to be born with a body that can become pregnant. It is a strange and sometimes unbearably hypocritical state to be born into: since 1992, when the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments were introduced, we have been granted the right to travel (for abortion) and the right to access information (about where to procure an abortion). However these “Irish solutions to Irish problems” cannot be accessed by all pregnant people: not everyone can afford to travel, and not everyone living here has the documented status that would allow them to do so, either. So the Eighth Amendment continues to exert a threat over people living in Ireland who can become pregnant, whether it is a wanted pregnancy or not. Abortion is also illegal in Northern Ireland, even though it was legalised in the rest of the UK in 1967. While the legal territories, legislative frameworks and political situations are different in the Republic and Northern Ireland, all of us on the island are in the same oppressive boat.

The Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC), a grassroots movement founded in 2012, has been organising a March for Choice every year in Dublin since then and has been a huge galvanising force for the campaign to secure reproductive rights for people living in Ireland today, through access to free, safe and legal abortion. ARC has continually aspired to be inclusive



Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment at the March for Choice, Dublin, September 2017. Photo: Natasha Waugh. Courtesy Artists' Campaign.



Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment at EVA International, Limerick, April 2018. Photo: Deirdre Power. Courtesy Artists' Campaign.

and representative of minority groups, including sex workers, the LGBTQI community, and those marginalised through poverty, disability or immigration status. In effect, this has meant each march has transformed the streets into an intersectional feminist academy. Every year it has increased in size. The individual placards continue to get more defiant, angry, and funny – it has been a huge moment of public solidarity, both for people deeply involved in the campaign and others who become activated through it. The number of groups marching also continues to grow: organisations like the National Women’s Council, trade unions and student organisations, political parties, left-wing groups and self-organised groups such as Termination For Medical Reasons (TFMR), Doctors for Choice, Lawyers for Choice and Midwives for Choice. Since 2015, there has also been an Artists’ Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment, marching alongside other workers.

The Abortion Rights Campaign builds on decades of work by feminist activists based in Ireland, many of whom campaigned against the introduction of the Eighth Amendment in 1983 and have been fighting for its repeal ever since. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to these women, some of whom I have met, learnt from, have become friends or been lucky to work with, as well as those whose contribution

remains anonymous or unknown. This gratitude is not only emotional, it is also intellectual and political: feminism produces this kind of kinship. Every year, we can see this kinship in solidarity marches organised around the world to coincide with the March for Choice and the performances of Speaking of IMELDA, the direct action group based in London. And it can be found in the many covert and sometimes illegal forms of support women have offered each other throughout the years. For instance, the Irish Women’s Abortion Support Group, based in London, who helped fundraise for Irish women to travel to access abortion in England in the 1970s (and met those women when they arrived off the boat, gave them a place to stay or brought them to clinics); people helping access abortion pills now; volunteer groups like needabortionireland.org offering kindness and practical help (Rossiter 2009). These networks of solidarity and support extend beyond the borders of the state, running on unquantifiable volumes of phone calls, stickers on the backs of toilet doors, volunteer labour and care.

The oppressive legal reality of the Eighth Amendment collapses together categories of “woman” with “mother” and exists within a national culture where the figure of the woman has traditionally been used as a personification of the state and



2. Research and campaign groups Justice for Magdalenes and Survivors of Symphysiotomy have advocated for survivors in separate dedicated campaigns. A formal state apology was issued to survivors of the Magdalene Laundries in 2013 and an ex gratia State Redress Scheme was established. In 2013, UNHCR found the symphysiotomy operations were torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. An ex gratia State Payment Scheme was established in 2014. See <http://jfmresearch.com> and <http://symphysiotomyireland.com>.

invoked as a symbol of political hope. In women’s lived experiences, maternity has been a particular focus of state control, in close collaboration with Catholic institutions: so-called “fallen women” were incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries up until 1996 when the last of these institutions closed; symphysiotomy, a surgical practice in which the pelvis is “unhinged” to permit unobstructed childbirth (instead of Caesarean section), was practiced in Ireland until 1984, often without the mother’s advance knowledge or consent.² The contrast here between woman/

mother as symbol and woman/mother as person is perverse, and has not been lost on artists of all art forms who are concerned with the labour of representation in our daily working lives.

Recent anthologies edited by Una Mullally and Kathy D’Arcy publish some of the urgent work that has been produced through and alongside the Repeal campaign movement by poets, writers, visual artists and journalists (Mullally 2018; D’Arcy 2018).

These books also contain some of the testimonials and acts of storytelling which have been so important in the campaign as a way of addressing the stigma surrounding abortion in Ireland. The intensity of this public disclosure, activating the personal as political, is one of the tools that some women have courageously chosen to use in order to advance the campaign over the years.

Irish exile and diaspora is the other side of this coin: Ireland has been simply unliveable for some women, sexual and gender minorities since the foundation of the state. This includes artists like Edna O’Brien, whom I remember learning about while I was growing up: in 1962 her novel *The Country Girls* was banned, burned and denounced from the pulpit. It is odd to remember and talk about these kinds of histories and how they manifest in the present within the symbolic economy of contemporary art. It feels dissonant to be met with looks of pity when you are talking at an opening in Stockholm and explaining through your privileged teeth why everyone “at home” on International Women’s Day in 2017 was on strike as part of the campaign – to demand the government set a date for the referendum. Ireland has changed since the 1960s but the legal anachronism is real; bodily autonomy is still not granted to people who are pregnant in Ireland, north or south.



The academy can be animated by feminist thinking and activist practice. Many years after first coming into contact with feminist ideas (and methods) when I studied at art college, I see this as the defining experience of value I can still draw from – in fact until recently I was lucky to work alongside one of my teachers from this time, Louise Walsh. These are the more implicit and sometimes unauthored registers of how feminism can be enacted in art and education: through ethical practices of teaching and learning, collaboration and research. Feminists know well the task of working with gaps and exclusions throughout history: working with the materials that are not there in the archive, as well as making the most out of what is. Scholarship and art production in Ireland, explicitly feminist and not, has been sharpened with these practices of suspicion and close attention to the invisible. Historian Mary McAuliffe, referring to her current research on same-sex relationships between women of the revolutionary period in Ireland explains: “The facts [about their relationships] comes through in diaries and memoirs and private correspondence about them – it isn’t in the public record... the histories of sexuality for all women are pretty hidden. But if you’re anything other than straight, it’s really difficult to find those histories” (McAuliffe quoted in McGrattan 2016).

Similarly, artist Emma Haugh claims, “Looking into archives is like looking into dry cracks, aggravating holes, frustrated orifices...

Looking into archives is all about looking at what isn’t there. A disparity variation worker, a reflective stop-gap heritage worker. An un-facting the facts worker”.³

These rigorous practices of attention and suspicion are animated within diverse disciplines. In 2016, journalists Ellen Coyne and Catherine Sanz uncovered a scandal concerning rogue crisis pregnancy

3. Emma Haugh contextualises her work *Poverty of Vision* (2017), viewed 15 April 2018.



Emma Haugh, *Poverty of Vision*, 2017. Performance, 39.30 minutes. Commissioned by the Irish Museum of Modern Art & National Irish Visual Artists Library as part of ROSC 50 / 1967 – 2017. Photo: Louis Haugh. Courtesy the artist.

counselling agencies with links to Catholic anti-abortion groups. Counsellors were lying to women seeking their services, making claims such as a causal link between abortion and breast cancer, and predicting a range of negative side-effects of abortion, including “frigidity, crying, sighing, constant swallowing, an intense interest in babies, helplessness, a preoccupation with death, loss of organs, seizures, future child abuse, a compulsion to end relationships, lower self-esteem, feeling dehumanized and exploited, a lack of confidence in decision-making, insomnia, nightmares, nervousness and guilt” (Coyne & Sanz 2016). Feminist activism arose in the theatre community, beginning online as #WakingTheFeminists. This movement drew attention to the gender bias in the 2016 programme of The Abbey Theatre (the national theatre) in Dublin in the year of commemorating the foundation of the state: only one of ten newly commissioned plays was authored by a woman, and only three had women as directors. #WakingTheFeminists explicitly addressed the theatre as an institution of symbolic representation and storytelling that is key to the national identity. Over a year’s activity, the campaign commissioned empirical research which revealed a “significant gender problem” in Irish theatre and led to major policy changes in many cultural organisations, as well as the wider discourse

(Donohue, O’Dowd, Dean, Murphy, Cawley & Harris 2017).

While the struggle to repeal the Eighth Amendment is concerned with reproductive bodies, the campaign is itself also a key agent enmeshed in the reproduction of feminist knowledge and tactics of resistance. As a grassroots campaign, it is incredibly creative and has developed its own vibrant visual culture. The banners made by Alice Maher, Rachel Fallon, Sarah Cullen, Breda Mayock and Áine Philips as part of the Artists’ Campaign are situated in this context.⁴ The jumpers of the Repeal Project, founded by Anna Cosgrave, have proved to be both an iconic statement of solidarity and a fundraiser for the Abortion Rights Campaign. There are also the many handmade signs, banners, jewellery pieces, badges and stickers produced by people who would not consider themselves artists at all – all this ephemera materialises a huge contribution to feminist activism. What will happen to this material when the campaign is over after the referendum on 25 May?

Sara Ahmed describes feminist practice in terms of a politics of citation, where citation acts as

4. The campaign is currently included in EVA International, Limerick, in the form of a procession as part of the opening events on 13 April 2018 and a presentation of the banners and campaign materials in the exhibition, including a curated film programme and an archive of spoken testimonies, originally developed for *A Day of Testimonies*, Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 26 August 2017. See also Godson 2017.



Ailbhe Smyth, founding director of the Women's Education, Resource and Research Centre (WERRC), University College Dublin (UCD) and convenor for the Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment. Photographed wearing Repeal Project jumper, conceived and designed by Anna Cosgrave: www.repeal.ie. Photo: Becks Butler. Courtesy Repeal Project.



a successful reproductive technology: “Citation is feminist memory. It is how we leave a trail of where we have been and who helped us along the way” (Ahmed 2015). Acknowledging and constructing genealogies of feminism through citational practices is also part of the work of producing more just forms of knowledge and intellectual work: Ahmed describes how citations are metaphorical “feminist bricks”, the material and practice to construct alternative dwellings. It is also important to consider the necessity of the actual bricks and mortar that construct feminist classrooms and libraries, especially in Ireland since the dismantling of equality infrastructure as part of austerity measures from 2009 onwards (Barry & Conroy 2014).

We have a deep tradition of feminist activism and scholarship here, a moving and embodied history.

However, we can't expect individual bodies alone to undertake the responsibility of being living encyclopaedias for each other, performing this kind of reproductive knowledge-work between generations. As Tina Kinsella has pointed out, older women alive now who survived symphysiotomy and Magdalene laundries, “will soon no longer be able to bear witness to their own past and yet their past continues to press upon us” (Kinsella 2016). The lessons learnt through the current, and previous, campaigns need to be preserved beyond individuals and the generational lifespan. It is a question of survival.

Spaces of feminist activism and collaboration offer us a place to hold “paradox, contradiction and difference... to challenge beliefs we might be ashamed to admit elsewhere”.⁵ Canonical structures are imperfect and exclusions, accidental or deliberate, persist: feminist classrooms and libraries aren't necessarily different. But the knowledge produced by this shifting “we”, this constantly changing coalition, needs a place to be cared for and accessed as resource, an institution of our own. Feminist work is ongoing, persistent and constant. It demands a redistribution of power, which involves an attention

5. Kinsella, T. 2018, Correspondence with the author, 17 April 2018.

FEMINISM, SURVIVAL AND THE ARTS IN IRELAND – SARAH BROWNE

Saoirse Wall, *Sticky Encounter*, 2016. HD video, 6 minutes. Exhibited at *Knowledge and Other Myths*, Platform, Belfast. Group exhibition co-curated by Saoirse Wall, Tara McKeon, Kerry Guinan, Avril Corroon, Eimear Walshe and Renée Helène Browne. Photo/ courtesy the artist.



Isobel Gloag, *The Woman with the Puppets*, oil on canvas, c.1915. Exhibited as part of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*, a solo exhibition by Jesse Jones at Dublin City Gallery Hugh Lane, that involved the collective curation of an all-female exhibition from the collection by a feminist collective initiated by Jones, establishing a “Feminist Parasite Institution”. Photo: Miriam O’Connor. Courtesy the artist.



Anne Tallentire, *From, in and with* (2014). Box with 24 plan-panels, birch ply, 394 × 394 × 680 mm, 24 c-type photographs 320 × 320 mm, 24 commissioned “100 word” texts printed in an accompanying publication by Alice Casey, Culturstruction, Grainne Hassett, Ruth Morrow, Jane Rendell and Ellen Rowley (women architects working in Ireland). Commissioned by the National Women’s Council as part of *Still, We Work*, curated by Val Connor. Installation view at Callan Workhouse Union. Photo: Brian Cregan.

to reworking our intellectual traditions, to creating an emancipatory approach to the history of knowledge and ideas. In the (collective) endurance sport *par excellence* of feminist labour and education, Ireland has a great many champions. Whatever the result outcome of the referendum in May, we need a Feminist Library to house, transmit and continually transform this knowledge.

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FEMINISM: POSSIBILITIES FOR KNOWING, DOING AND EXISTING

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE OTOLITH GROUP AND ANNIE FLETCHER

This conversation took place ahead of the exhibition, *Trade Markings*, at the Van Abbemuseum in 2018, of which Otolith Group were a part. A mid-career survey of The Otolith Group entitled *Xenogenesis* curated by Annie Fletcher is planned to open at the Van Abbemuseum in May 2019.

Annie Fletcher

You have mentioned that feminism is a generative force for you both in your work. How do you think about this discipline, about writings around feminism? Is your work essentially feminist work?

Kodwo Eshun

One way of bringing all of these concerns together is around a figure whose thinking I have returned to recently. A figure whose feminist thought condenses many of the obsessions I have: the science fiction novelist Octavia Estelle Butler.

When you read Octavia Butler’s feminist science fiction from the 1970s onwards, and then you read feminist theory from the 1980s onwards, you

realise that Butler’s novels have operated as a critical reference point for several generations of feminist theory. In 1987, Donna Haraway writes *A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s* which she subsequently revises as *A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* in 1991. She is concerned with the cyborgs envisioned by the feminist science fiction written by Americans such as Suzy McKee Charnas, Samuel R. Delany, Anne McCaffrey, Vonda McIntyre, Joanna Russ, James Tiptree Jr., John Varley and Octavia Butler. All of this work, in different ways, Haraway suggests, makes “very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body” (Haraway 1987, p. 34) and she devotes particular attention to the figure of Lilith Iyapo in Butler’s *Dawn*, 1988. Haraway describes Iyapo as a character that “mediates the transformation of humanity through genetic exchange with extra-terrestrial lovers/ rescuers/ destroyers/ genetic engineers who reform earth’s habitats after the nuclear holocaust





Octavia Butler. Image via openroadmedia.com

and coerce surviving humans into intimate fusion with them” (Haraway 1991, p. 179). She considers *Dawn* as a novel that works through its interrogation of “reproductive, linguistic, and nuclear politics in a mythic field structured by late twentieth-century race and gender”. *Dawn* is the first book in Butler’s *Xenogenesis Trilogy*, which continues with *Adulthood Rites*, 1988, and concludes with *Imago*, 1989. The idea of “xenogenesis”, a word invented by Butler, can be understood as the conjunction of the Greek prefix of *xenos* meaning strange or foreign or alien with the suffix *genesis* meaning origin or creation or generation. Thus, the term xenogenesis refers to alien creation or alien becoming or becoming alien. The imagination of the implications of alien becoming and becoming alien takes on epic dimensions. In these books, Butler elaborates a speculative anti-naturalism that prefigures the vehement anti-naturalism of the xenofeminist working group Laboria Cuboniks. In their manifesto *XF Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation* in 2015, Laboria Cuboniks conclude that “in the name of feminism ‘Nature’ shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever! If nature is unjust, change nature!”

From *Kindred* (1979) onwards, Octavia Butler is thinking through the implications of denaturalisation. Her books explore what happens to gender, sexuality

and personhood under conditions of enforced deontologisation. What Octavia Butler shows is that the human or humanity is a revisable project. Under conditions of denaturalisation, the nature of nature, gender, sexuality and kinship gives way. Characters find themselves navigating conditions in which the necessity of survival forces them up against and beyond the limits of what it means to be human. Butler's novels stage thought experiments revisited by feminist philosophers. I think that Butler's writing rethinks the condition of woman in the mode of science fiction. During the 1990s, Sadie Plant engages with Butler's work in order to think through the question of the encounter between computation, control and the figure of woman.

Annie Fletcher

That was a very generative moment, when Sadie Plant was working at the University of Warwick and heading up the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit or CCRU with Nick Land, in 1995-96, wasn't it?

Kodwo Eshun

Yes, it was. From the early 1990s through to the publication of *Zeroes and Ones* in 1998, in dialogue with allies such as the multimedia unit 0(rphan) d(rift>) and the Australian theory collective, VNS Matrix,

Plant is thinking through the relationship between women and machines as a question of computation and control. If computation takes control away from man, then computation might be said to operate according to its own ends which are not fully determined by man or by humans or even by capitalism. Computation's non-human logic of control supports women in so far as it allies itself with the figure of woman that is internally-located outside the idea of man that stands in for humanity enforced by Western philosophy (Plant 1998, p. 220). What Butler's fiction offers Plant is the opportunity to compare the gene trading imagined in the *Xenogenesis Trilogy* with the mutations of asexual replication and the role played by sexual reproduction for securing "the continuity of a species like Homo Sapiens". Plant's focus on replication and reproduction is continued, in different ways, by Luciana Parisi, along with Anna Greenspan and Suzanne Livingston, all of whom studied with Plant and played critical roles within the CCRU. Parisi uses eight quotations from *Dawn, Imago* and *Clay's Ark*, as epigraphs in her first book *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Bio-Technology and the Mutations of Desire* (Parisi 2004, pp. 59, 66, 72, 145-6, 155, 165, 185).



1. See Octavia Butler, MMGZ, BQF, *Constellation 8/∞*, released 11 January 2015, viewed 9 March 2018.

Annie Fletcher

I didn't realise they had been Sadie Plant's students. So they were thinkers in the CCRU at the University of Warwick, along with

figures such as Mark Fisher and Steve Goodman? Were you there too?

Kodwo Eshun

Yes, they were all at Warwick. I didn't study there but I was an ally and associate member of the CCRU. I wrote for their theory-zine *Abstract Culture*. I participated in the second of their Virtual Futures conferences at Warwick in 1996. I spoke at *syzygy*, the collaborative exhibition by CCRU and O(rphan) d(rift>) at Beaconsfield in South London in 1999. Beyond the 1990s, Parisi has maintained her interest in Butler's ideas. In a recent essay entitled *The Incomputable and Instrumental Possibility*, written with Antonia Majaca in 2016, Parisi returns to Butler's *Dawn* to rethink the idea of the instrument and instrumental reason. They consider that *Dawn*'s Lilith Iyapo personifies the figure of the Promethean woman who "reasons with the instrument and from the logic of the instrument" in order to acknowledge, politicise and transcend instrumentality.

The Black Quantum Futurists, or BQF, is a Philadelphia-based collective, founded by artists and

writers Rasheedah Phillips and Moor Mother. Over the last decade, BQF's electronic music performances, mixes, essays, fictions, video works and performances

constitute an expanded theory and practice for hacking the master clock of Western time. The BQF are developing methodologies of retrocausality and retrocurrence for a community-based chronopolitics that draws upon black radical traditions and African spiritual traditions.¹ In this context, Butler's work becomes a critical resource too: in *Kindred*, 1979, the novelist Dana Franklin is temporally abducted from her contemporary life in Los Angeles in 1976 back to the plantation of Baltimore, Maryland in 1815 where she is forced to rescue Rufus Weylin, her white ancestor, from near death over and over again.

The work of philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva thinks with Butler in ways that open new grounds for feminist thought. In her essay *Towards a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Towards the End of the World*, 2014, Ferreira da Silva analyses *Kindred*'s Dana, Anyanwu, the shape shifter in *Wild Seed*, 1980, and Lauren Oya Olamina, the teenage hyperempath in *Parable of the Sower*, 1993, as figures that guide our imagining of political existence for living in and through and after the end of the world. Dana's

2. For an analysis of *Kindred* in terms of debt and obligation, housing and property, see also Ferreira Da Silva & Chakravartty 2012.



traversality, enacted through her enforced movement across time and space, Anyanwu's transubstantiality, which takes the form of the capacity to change into any creature and Lauren's transversability or capacity to feel others' feelings, each exemplify what Ferreira da Silva calls movements made possible "because of the connections that precede time and space, but which operate in time and space". They announce a "speculation on a Feminist Poethics of Blackness" which aims to "emancipate the Category of Blackness from the scientific and historical ways of knowing that produced it in the first place" so as to "announce a whole range of possibilities for knowing, doing and existing" (Ferreira da Silva 2014, pp. 94, 93, 82, 81).²

Butler's feminist science fiction continually returns to exodus, survival, enforced hybridity, addiction, compulsion, symbiosis and asymmetries of belonging. Feminism is inseparable from a profound questioning in which fiction acts as a site for thinking of the limits of the human. The feminism that concerns me puts pressure on what the human is and allows for a speculation that takes on the forms of science fiction. The nexus where science fiction and feminist theory meet is a productive one when you unfold it across thirty years and then keep going. There are many key feminist novelists but it is Butler's work I return to over and over.

Annie Fletcher

Butler clearly has left an important legacy and her writing has clearly influenced generations of intellectual work. Thank you for outlining it so precisely. This trajectory and all of the attendant issues of Butler's feminist science fiction are, in a way, inspirations for your upcoming exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum. In fact you were thinking of calling it *Xenogenesis*.

Kodwo Eshun

Yes. The question of xenogenesis can be understood as a kind of diagramme for the revision of the human. Octavia Butler's diagramme of xenogenesis requires a relation to ontogenesis or the becoming of being, and technogenesis or the becoming of technology. Her novels condense and elaborate these ideas in ways that can guide contemporary political imagination. These are ideas that we can work with and develop according to our own obsessions.

Anjalika Sagar

I think the idea of alienation depends on what you are alienating from. How is the human to be understood? The human is male domination as we understand it now. The idea of the human emerges from within that. We live in a time when women have to do emotional and empathetic labour. They have to do the social





The Otolith Group, *Communists Like Us*, 2009, (film still).
Image courtesy the artists.

labour of knitting relations and keeping things fine while men do very little of that. A lot of men do not do that kind of labour. So there is a sense that women bear the burden of the underworld. In terms of one's genesis as a human being, as a woman, as you get older, especially now that the sense of prominence of the male is being questioned, you begin to realise this depression that you had as you emerged as a young woman, that you live, and have lived with the labour of your own pain. You grow up with this depressing condition that you have taken for the world you live in. That means everything that male domination does: colonialism, pornography...

Annie Fletcher

Just violence generally.

Anjalika Sagar

Just violence generally. We can live in a post-patriarchal world. I think it is patriarchy that we have to alienate ourselves from. It is not just becoming alien—which means getting further and further into a shell, because women can never go into a shell. Feminism is a praxis, it is a definitive way of living and learning how to be. And that does not just mean men doing that work.

Annie Fletcher

Absolutely, it is a model for us all.

Anjalika Sagar

Men have to do that work. Why should women have to be enthusiastic all the time and be doing all kinds of labour? The sense of how we live in post-patriarchy is what is important. How can we combine and, create different forms of education to help people understand what feminism is? I think the point is to intersectionalise feminism with class and with technology and to queer the technology so that we can begin to think about what it is that we want to alienate ourselves from. What is a post-patriarchal world whereby we are still excited by each other and by ourselves and by the world? There has to be joy within this as well.

Annie Fletcher

I agree joy and space for complex emotional life should be core in an intersectional and lived feminist praxis! You spoke recently, when doing an introduction to your work, about how different the feminism you might have had in your life growing up in London was to the kind of praxis that might have been produced in white Britain for example. Could you tell us about the models that you grew up with?



Anjalika Sagar

In the West there is a sense that they are the most liberal and modern, that Western feminism was the most liberal, modern phenomenon, meaning that women take the pill, and wear mini skirts. That did not seem to make sense next to another ontological kind of space that I was encountering with Indian women. My grandmother wore saris, did not wear make up, but was extremely feminine and beautiful. She was a feminist. But her feminism was interlinked with nation-building praxis, so it was intersectional in another way: in India at that time that meant decolonising yourself from caste and from the British.

My mother was always raging about this idea of Western feminism because English women always seemed so apologetic, whereas Indian women, my grandmother and her friends, the women my mother had grown up with were extremely powerful women. The awareness that there is another ontological reality in terms of what feminism is, that there is another cultural reality which is somewhere else—complex, diverse and linked with decolonisation, with caste and with colonisation—meant a lot to me.

I did not understand what it meant then, but it certainly made me resist whatever the white phenomenon of feminism was. As I grew up, it was assumed I was coming from a culture that is negative

for women. India is seen as ‘arranged marriages’ and all of that. But still within Indian culture there is a sense that women are a lot more powerful than women are here, because their sexuality is not necessarily the first thing that they have to show in order to appear liberated. Sexuality was a kind of lubricant for Western feminism, and I do not think that necessarily needed to be at the forefront. Men have captured women’s sexuality in the West... Emancipation is about refusing to allow global capital and globalisation through social media culture to capture what sexuality is for women.

Annie Fletcher

If we look at the beginnings of *Otolith I, II* and *III*, a lot of the early work where you were actually looking at and relating to a narrative of particular women, whether speculative in the future, or aligned to major historical movements like the Non-Aligned Movement. Would you say that feminism drove a lot of the work, a lot of the thinking around the work as a kind of political emancipatory moment?

Anjalika Sagar

I think we assumed it. science fiction allowed us to stop belittling ourselves by arguing with the West. Let us exit and assume it. Because they are not going to



assume it for us. In the film series *Otolith I, II and III* we just assumed there is a figure, in the twenty-second century who is an exoanthropologist. Because why not?

Annie Fletcher

That is a beautiful way to look at it.

Anjalika Sagar

I think science fiction allows us to do that. To make certain kind of assumptions that we hope might become truth in different ways.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Fatma Arikoglu

Fatma Arikoglu (born in 1983) is a communications scientist. Since 2010, she is a staff member/researcher in a feminist non-profit organization in Brussels committed to the empowerment and emancipation of women and girls from ethnic minorities in Belgium. Beside doing ethnographic participatory action researches on topics such as asylum and migration, intimate (partner) relations, experiences of women of color on the labor market, in education etc, Fatma organizes trainings and workshops on intersectionality. She regularly publishes columns and educational articles on feminisms, racism and intersectionality for Diggmagazine.com and other alternative online media. With her work Fatma aims to introduce an intersectional perspective into various fields of civil society, including the women's movement, minority movements, education, labor market, social and welfare fields etc.

Sarah Browne

Sarah Browne is an artist based in Ireland concerned with non-verbal, bodily experiences of knowledge, labour and justice. This practice involves sculpture, writing, film, performance and public collaborative projects. Recent solo exhibitions include *Report to an Academy*, Marabouparken, Stockholm (2017), *Hand to Mouth* at CCA Derry–Londonderry & Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, and *The Invisible Limb*, basis, Frankfurt (both 2014). Selected group exhibitions include *On the Subject of the Ready-made* Daimler Contemporary, Berlin (2017); *All Men Become Sisters*, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz (2015); *The Peacock*, Grazer Kunstverein and *One Foot in the Real World*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (both 2013). In 2016 with Jesse Jones she made *In the Shadow of the State*, a transnational collaborative co-commission for Artangel and Create. This work investigated how female bodies are subjected to the 'touch' of the law, and involved close collaboration with women in the fields of law, music, material culture and midwifery. In 2009 Sarah Browne co-represented Ireland at the 53rd Venice Biennale with Gareth Kennedy and Kennedy Browne, their shared collaborative practice. Browne is currently artist in residence with University College Dublin College of Social Sciences and Law.



Annie Fletcher

Annie Fletcher is currently Chief Curator at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, and tutors at De Appel, the Dutch Art Institute and the Design Academy Eindhoven. She is currently working towards the first museum retrospective of “The Otolith Group: Xenogenesis” due 2019. Other recent project include “Trade Markings; Frontier Imaginaries Ed No.5” and the solo exhibition of Qiu Zhijie “Journeys without Arrivals” , the “Museum of Arte Util” with Tanja Bruguera, and a retrospective of Hito Steyerl. She curated “After the Future” as Eva International Biennial of Visual Art in 2012. Other projects include solo exhibitions or presentations with Sheela Gowda, David Maljkovic, Jo Baer, Jutta Koether, Deimantas Narkevicius, Minerva Cuevas, and the long term projects, Be(com)ing Dutch (2006-09) and Cork Caucus (2005) with Charles Esche. She was co-founder and co-director of the rolling curatorial platform “If I Can’t Dance, I Don’t Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution” with Frederique Bergholtz (2005-10). As a writer she has contributed to various magazines and publications.

Yayo Herrero

Yayo Herrero is an anthropologist, social educator and agricultural technical engineer; Director of FUHEM since 2012; founding partner of the Garúa S. Coop. Madrid. She was coordinator of the CCEIM of the Fundación General Universidad Complutense de Madrid between 2009–12. She is a leading researcher in the eco-feminist and eco-socialist field at a European level and has participated in numerous social initiatives on the promotion of human rights and social ecology, a field in which she has published more than twenty books and numerous articles. Member of the editorial boards of *Hegoa* and *Papeles*, she was also confederal coordinator of *Ecologistas en Acción* between 2005–14.



Mojca Kumerdej

Born in Slovenia, Mojca Kumerdej is an award-winning writer and philosopher. She also works as a freelance critic and journalist, covering art and science. In her novel *Krst nad Triglavom* (Baptism above Triglav) Kumerdej deals ironically with the Slovenian cultural and literary tradition. Her two collections of short prose, *Fragma* (Fragma; Beletrina, 2003) and *Temna snov* (Dark Matter; Beletrina, 2011) show us an utterly original world, one that derives from the inner edges of contemporary society. Her last novel *Kronosova žetev* (The Harvest of Chronos; Beletrina, 2016) is a picturesque portrait of the 16th century Renaissance in the region of what is today Slovenia, which is overheated by Counter-Reformation movements, political plots and witch trials. Her stories have been translated into a number of languages and been included in various Slovene and foreign anthologies. The novel *Kronosova žetev* has been translated into English (The Harvest of Chronos; Istros Books; 2016) and Serbian (Hronosova žetva; Geopoetika, 2017).

María Pia López

María Pia López is a writer and sociologist. She holds a PhD in Social Sciences. She teaches in Universidad de Buenos Aires and she was the editor of magazines *El ojo mocho* and *La escena contemporánea*. She is currently the director of the cultural center of Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento. Some of her essay books are: *Mutantes. Trazos sobre los cuerpos* (1997), *Hacia la vida intense* (2010), *Una historia de la sensibilidad vitalista* (2009), and *Yo ya no. Horacio González, el don de la amistad* (2016). She also published four novels: *No tengo tiempo* (2010), *Habla Clara* (2013), *Teatro de operaciones* (2013) and *Miss Once* (2015). Her last book is *Desierto y nación. Lenguas I* (2017) was co-written with Juan Dulzeide. She is a feminist activist and part of the collective Ni una menos.



Ewa Majewska

Ewa Majewska is a feminist philosopher of culture, she works as adiunkt professor at the Department of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw, Poland. She was a visiting fellow at the University of California, Berkeley (BBRG), a stipendiary fellow at the University of Orebro (Sweden), IWM (Vienna) and ICI Berlin. She is the author of three monographs, (*Tramwaj zwany uznaniem*, Warszawa 2016; *Sztuka jako pozór?*, Kraków, 2013; *Feminizm jako filozofia społeczna*, Warszawa 2009); co-editor of four volumes on neoliberalism, politics, gender and education; she published articles and essays in: *Signs, e-flux, Public Seminar, Nowa Krytyka, Praktyka Teoretyczna, Przegląd Filozoficzny, Przegląd Kulturoznawczy, Kultura Współczesna, Le Monde Diplomatique* (PL) and multiple collected volumes. Her main focus is weak resistance, counterpublics and critical affect studies.

The Otolith Group

The Otolith Group is an award-winning collaboration founded by the artists and theorists Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun in 2002. Their work spans moving-image, audio, performance, installation, and research engaging with the cultural and political legacies and potentialities of non-aligned movements, new media, black studies, Afrofuturism, and Indofuturism, and thinking speculatively with science fictions of the present. Their methodologies incorporate post-lens-based essayistic aesthetics that explore the temporal anomalies, anthropic inversions, and synthetic alienation of the post-human, the inhuman, the non-human, and the anti-human.

Expanding on the work of The Otolith Group is the public platform The Otolith Collective. The Otolith Collective has approached curation as an artistic practice of building intergenerational and cross-cultural platforms. Its practice spans programming, exhibition-making, artists' writing, workshops, publication, and teaching aimed at developing close readings of image and sound in contemporary society. The collective has been influential in critically engaging the work of Chris Marker, Harun Farocki, Anand Patwardhan, Etel Adnan, Black Audio Film



Sarp Özer

Collective, Sue Clayton, Mani Kaul, Peter Watkins, and Chimurenga in the UK, US, and Europe.

The works of The Otolith Group and Collective have been presented widely, most recently at the Berlinale 13th Forum Expanded; Khiasma, Paris; The Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; Sharjah Biennial 13; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and Haus Der Kulturen de Welt, Berlin.

Sarp Özer is a visual researcher and curator in the field of contemporary visual art. He is currently coordinating the programs of AVTO, an independent center for research and practice in Istanbul. He organized the counter authorial translation of *Xenofeminist Manifesto* written by Laboria Cuboniks to Turkish in 2018. He is a member of the Istanbul based After the Archive? initiative that investigates and organizes talks about archives which are under threat in Turkey and other places in the world. Özer worked formerly at SALT research. He lives and works in Istanbul.



Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez

Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez is an independent curator and writer. Among the projects and exhibitions she curated are Resilience. Triennial of Contemporary Art in Slovenia at Moderna galerija/Museum of Contemporary Art (Ljubljana), transmediale.08 at HKW (Berlin), Our House is a House that Moves at Living Art Museum (Reykjavik), Let's Talk about the Weather at the Sursock Museum (with Nora Razian and Ashkan Sepahvand, Beirut), and in France The Promises of the Past at the Centre Pompidou (with Christine Macel and Joanna Mytkowska), Tales of Empathy at Jeu de Paume, Société anonyme at Le Plateau/FRAC Ile-de-France (with Thomas Boutoux and François Piron) and On Becoming Earthlings. Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge #18 at Musée de l'Homme (with Alexander Klose, Council, Mobile Academy).

Between 2010 and 2012, she was co-director of Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers and co-founder of the network of art institutions Cluster.

She is a co-organizer of the seminar "Something You Should Know" at EHESS, Paris (with Elisabeth Lebovici and Patricia Falguières), and a member of the research group Travelling Féministe, at Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir. She is the managing

editor of the online platform L'Internationale Online, and was the chief editor of the Manifesta Journal between 2012 and 2014.



María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop

María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop is Chair of Philosophy of Law, Political Philosophy and Human Rights at the Universidad Carlos III, Madrid, she is currently the Deputy Director and Head of International Relations of the Human Rights Institute “Bartolomé de las Casas” at the Universidad Carlos III, where she also occupies the Unesco Chair “Violence and Human Rights: Government and Governance”, the “Antonio Beristain” Chair of Studies on Terrorism and its Victims, and the Feminist Studies Group. She is also co-director of the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation at the Universidad Externado, Colombia. She has co-authored several books, including the monographs *La nueva generación de derechos humanos. Origen y justificación* (Dykinson, Madrid, 2001—second edition revised and extended, 2010) and *Claves para entender los nuevos derechos humanos* (La Catarata, 2011).

Sarah Werkmeister

Sarah Werkmeister is a freelance writer, editor, researcher, broadcaster and curator based in Melbourne.

She has written extensively and is a regular contributor to *Art Asia Pacific*. She has worked with L’Internationale Online to develop publications, and co-edited a chapter on the 13th Istanbul Biennial in *I Can’t Work Like This: A reader on recent boycotts and contemporary art* (ed: Joanna Warsza, 2017). She has lectured in Critical and Theoretical Studies at the Victorian College of the Arts (University of Melbourne), tutored within BoVA CAIA at Griffith University, and worked in communications and engagement roles at Yirramboi Festival, Shepparton Art Museum, Public Art Melbourne, and Next Wave Festival. From 2008-2012 she co-directed Brisbane-based artist-run-initiative, The Wandering Room, and worked in community radio for over fifteen years.

She is currently undertaking her Masters of Art Curatorship at the University of Melbourne. Her research interest is in the transference of political, social and environmental urgency into the museum space, and the representation of nationhood in colonised countries such as Australia, through government art collections and government-owned museums.



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