UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI
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Eva Vrtačič

Uprizarjanje teorije skozi filozofijo, umetnost in telo dr. Shannon Bell

Performing Theory through Philosophy, Art, and the Body of Dr. Shannon Bell

Doktorska disertacija

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“Of all the works I ever wrote, this is the weakest in reasoning, and the most devoid of number and harmony. With whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not easily learned.” (Rousseau 2001, 336)

Zahvala

Hvala družini za podporo,
prijateljicam in prijateljem za razumevanje,
kolegom ter kolegicam za vzpodbudo.

V besedilo se na vsaki strani vpisuje neskončno velik, a neulovljiv dolg nenehnemu dialogu s Karmen.

V ljubeč spomin mami Lenči, ki je v meni prva prepoznala in negovala vedoželjnost, občutek za besedo in ljubezen do knjige.

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my friends for their sympathy, and colleagues for the encouragement.

Every page of this text is inscribed by the immense, yet utterly unapproachable debt to my infinite dialogue with Karmen.

In loving memory of mama Lenča, who first recognised and nurtured my curiosity, a feeling for language, and love for books.

In honour of Barbara, her human goodness and her academic stance.

Izjava o avtorstvu

Povzetek

Doktorska disertacija *Uprizarjanje teorije skozi filozofijo, umetnost in telo dr. Shannon Bell* se uprizarjanja teorije loteva preko študije primera profesorice na Oddelku za politične vede Univerze York v Torontu, performerke, politične aktivistke in avtorice. Bell poučuje postsodobno teorijo, kiberpolitiko, postidentitetne politike, estetiko in politiko, nasilno filozofijo in hitri feminizem. Njeno obsežno bibliografijo, še posebej delo *Fast Feminism* (2010), na katerega se največ opiramo, se zdi najbolj smiselno študirati v navezavi na njeno biografijo, saj med njima ni jasne meje. Nasploh je teza, da je teorijo mogoče razumeti le v kontekstu avtorjeve biografije, še posebej prikladna, vsaj odkar je postmodernizem razglasil konec velikih zgodb. Bell se o principih teoretiziranja izreka podobno, saj se drži načela, da ne piše o ničemer, česar ni dejansko storila oz. izkusila.

Ideja je torej vedno locirana v dejanju, kar hitri feminizem, koncept, s katerim Bell ubesedi lastno epistemologijo, opredeljuje kot globoko utelešen koncept. Telesna dejanja so za Bell vedno utelešenja filozofije, natančneje, filozofski dogodki, v katerih učinkovito sovpadejo umetnost, akademija in aktivizem. Bell kot ključne poteze potencialnega manifesta hitrega feminizma navaja principe, kot so: hitra kritika, telo kot osnova teoretskega dela, pisanje teorije kot umetnosti, proizvajanje umetnosti kot teorije, nasilje nad originalnim besedilom ... S temi definicijami se jasno izrisiuje diskurzivna skladnost med performativno umetnostjo in performativno filozofijo. Nenazadnje je obema omenjenima kontekstoma mogoče pripisati skupne ključne besede: telo, performativnost, spol, seksualnost, nasilje, politika, dogodek itd. Hitri feminizem se kaže kot praksa na presečiščih metateorije, pornografije in politike, performativna umetnost pa tudi ni daleč od te definicije. Če k temu pridodamo še foucaultovsko estetizacijo življenja, življenje kot umetniško delo, se hitro izkaže, da sta performativna filozofija in performativna umetnost tesno povezani polji. Da bi lahko raziskali njuna presečišča in preplete, se moramo najprej osredotočiti na raziskavo postpostmodernih ostankov koncepta telesa, nato pa preiskati še postpostmoderni preostanek subjekta. Ob tem se kot tema, ki ji ne moremo ubežati, jasno pokaže še po definiciji utelešeni koncept performativnosti.

Lotevamo se torej dveh tem , ki smo ju v sodobni teoriji prepoznali kot ključni za obravnavo multidisciplinarnega fenomena Bell, teorije subjekta in telesa. Da bi učinkovito pokazali na skladnost med poljema performativnega teoretiziranja in performansa in demonstrirali konstrukcijo domen telesa in subjekta znotraj nedavnih teoretskih tokov, si moramo pobliže ogledati zlasti sodobno teoretsko misel, pa tudi vznik trans- oz. posthumanističnega telesa.

Analogijo tistemu, kar je gledališka znanost poimenovala *performativni obrat* in časovno umestila v 60. leta prejšnjega stoletja, bomo poiskali tudi v teoriji. Četudi je izvirni performativni obrat najbolj radikalno redefiniral umetnost, sta humanistika in družbena teorija sledili zgledu in fokus raziskovanja premaknili s tekstualnih na performativne poteze kulture. To je očitno v naših ključnih temah,

temah, ki sta v novejši teoretski zgodovini dvignili daleč največ prahu, torej v problematikah subjekta in telesa. V besedilu se sistematično lotevamo modelov subjektivnosti in utelešenja tako v kontekstu teorije kot prakse, preučujemo pa jih zlasti v kontekstu postmodernizma in postpostmodernizma oz. sodobne teorije ter dominantosti koncepta (zlasti tehnološke) hitrosti. Teoretske preostanke sodobnih koncepcij telesa in subjekta mislimo s pomočjo Bell kot koncepta, ki je dober za misliti. Ko študijo primera izrabljamo za pisanje metateorije, subvertiramo običajne principe te metodološke izbire in se distanciramo od pragmatične rabe teorije, ki naj služi za razlago izbranega primera. V disertaciji to logiko obrnemo in se študije primera poslužimo zato, da bi lažje mislili teorijo.

Ključni teoretski temi disertacije sta torej koncepta telesa in subjekta v svojih sodobnih inkarnacijah oz. njunia genealogiji. Vsaki od teh dveh monumentalnih tem v besedilu resda posvečamo obsežno ločeno poglavje, vendar dokončnih sodb in resnic o njiju nalašč ne izrekamo. Besedilo puščamo odprto, osredotočamo pa se na arbitrarno izbrana poglavja sodobne zahodnjaške misli, ki jih zlasti v prvem delu besedila preverjamo s konceptom in telesom Bell, da bi tudi na ta način performativno pokazali, da je mogoče vsako telo zamejiti in interpretirati bodisi kot kartezijansko, foucaultovsko, fenomenološko, psihoanalitsko ali katero koli drugo telo, nobenega od njih pa ni mogoče celovito ali vsaj zadovoljivo pojasniti s katero koli od teh paradigem.

Da bi uprizorili študijo primera Bell, njene teorije, telesa, performativne filozofije in umetnosti, se v besedilu osredotočamo na sodobne koncepcije človeškega telesa in subjekta. Ob tem se igramo z metodologijo, ki jo Haraway poimenuje po otroški igri *cat's cradle*, kjer s podajanjem elastike med igralci nastajajo vedno novi, čedalje kompleksnejši vzorci. Tako nezamejen in odprt metodološki princip, ki predpostavlja epistemološko nivelizacijo vseh virov ne glede na to, ali so bibliografski ali pač biografski, nas pripelje do hipoteze, da je tisto, kar ostaja subjektu od postmodernizma dalje, pravzaprav analogno tistemu, kar ostaja telesu. Teorije in koncepti subjekta in telesa so namreč tisto preostalo privilegirano mesto, kjer je še mogoče naleteti na izkustva sublimnega, kjer kolapsirajo Lacanovi trije logični časi, kjer je mogoče uprizarjati lastno prezenco in srečati *das Unheimliche*, če se le ne pustimo ujeti v dualistični determinizem kartezijanskega tipa. Da bi to hipotezo tudi performativno razgrnili, se zatekamo k širokemu polju študij uprizarjanja, zlasti tistih, ki se ukvarjajo z žanrom performansa. Ko kažemo na diskurzivno skladnost med performativno teorijo in performativno umetnostjo, razgaljamo eno in drugo kot fundamentalno utelešeni aktivnosti. Da bi uprizorili svojo lastno teorijo, si sposodimo telo Bell, filozofske performerke in performativne filozofinje, ki ga uporabimo kot koncept.

Na kratko, v disertaciji se lotevamo nemogoče naloge. Da bi locirali njeno fenomenološko bistvo, ki je v postmodernem teoretiziranju vedno vnaprej izključeno, poskušamo performativnost zagrabiti performativno. Pravzaprav skušamo poiskati metodologijo, s katero bi lahko nivelizirali raznolike diskurze telesa in/ali subjekta, ne

da bi jih ob tem reducirali enega na drugega, kljub temu pa uspeli zaobiti oz. ubežati dualističnemu razumevanju. Konceptov ne predstavljamo, niti jih ne primerjamo med sabo, pač pa zgolj kažemo na njihov (vedno negativen) skupni imenovalec, specifično razpoko, praznino, ničnost, ki jo različne paradigme različno poimenujejo.

Tudi naš lasten podvig se torej izkaže kot teoretsko in performativno početje. Hkrati gre za razgrnitev kulturnega in epistemološkega obrata od tekstualnosti k performativnosti ter za študijo točno določenega telesa/subjekta/umetnosti/teorije. Na ta način lahko tudi naše besedilo umestimo v žanr, ki ga Bell poimenuje performativno pisanje. Tudi pisanje je fundamentalno utelešeno početje oz. praksa in tako kot to počne knjiga *Fast Feminism*, tudi naše pisanje subverzira in redefinira tipično pisanje teorije, saj pisanju dopušča odprtost, svobodo, mešanje slogov in vsebin ipd. Tudi mi v ospredje postavljamo zlorabo originala, igramo se z idejo remiksa, niveliziramo različne kontekste ... S tem ko sledimo metodološkim napotkom Bell, pa, ironično, neogibno najbolj zlorabimo prav njo.

Ključne besede: telo, subjekt, performativnost, uprizarjanje teorije, *jouissance.*

Abstract

The doctoral dissertation *Performing theory through philosophy, art, and the body of Dr. Shannon Bell* performs its own theory by employing the method of case study of Shannon Bell, a professor at the Department of Political Science, York University, Toronto, a performer, political activist, and author. Bell teaches post-contemporary theory, cyberpolitics, post-identity politics, aesthetics and politics, violent philosophy, and fast feminism. Her bibliography, especially her latest book *Fast Feminism* (2010), which is perhaps most important in the context of our debate, appears best to study in terms of Bell's biography, as there is no clear border between the two. The idea that theory can only be interpreted in the context of its author's biography appears especially useful ever since post-modernism claimed the death of grand narratives. Bell understands theorising in an analogous manner as she insists on only writing about what she has done and/or experienced herself.

The idea is thus always located in the act, which makes Bell's fast feminism a profoundly embodied concept. For Bell, body actions are always embodiments of philosophy or, to be more precise, philosophical events, in which art, academy, and activism coincide. According to Bell, the key points of a potential fast feminism manifesto would necessarily include the following principles: immediate critique of the world, understanding the body as the basis of theoretical work, writing theory as art, doing art as theory, doing theory from unusual points of departure, doing violence to the original text … With these points, a clear discursive resemblance between performance art and (what Bell labels as) performance philosophy emerges, and common

keywords can be ascribed to both fields: the body, gender, sexuality, violence, politics, the event, etc. Fast feminism is an embodied practice at the crossroads of meta-theory, pornography, and politics – and performance art has been accused of residing at similar intersections as well. Should we add to this a Foucauldian aesthetisation of living, understanding life as a work of art, performance philosophy and performance art appear as fields with a lot in common. In order to be able to research their intersections, we must focus on studying the (post-)post-modern remainders of the body, as well as research the (post-)post-modern sediments of the subject. With that, a third crucial concept necessarily emerges with the notion of performativity.

In the dissertation, we are therefore researching two immense fields of study, theory of the subject and theory of the body; they are the topics, which we have recognised as crucial for tackling the multidisciplinary phenomenon Bell. To demonstrate the Western course of thought leading to the construction of the body and the subject, we must look closely at (post-)contemporary and recent theory. Revealing how theory is still mostly grounded in Cartesian *cogito*, we also encounter and identify some subversive deviations from this rule.

Thus, we set out to find an analogy in theory to what theatre studies call *the performative turn* and attribute to performance art in the 1960s. Although the original performative turn most radically redefined performance art, humanities and social sciences followed its example by shifting the focus of their research from textual to performative attributes of culture. As we research our main themes, the theories of the body and those of the subject, this shift appears evident. In the dissertation, we systematically tackle the models of subjectivity and embodiment both in the terms of theory and practice. We study these models in the context of (post-)post-modernism, which is the context of contemporary theory, marked with the conception of (technological) speed. Bell proves to be a very useful concept, which it is good to think the theoretical remainders of contemporary theorisations of the body and the subject with. As the case study is (ab)used for writing theory, we consciously subvert the principles of this methodology and distance ourselves from the pragmatic use of theory, which is too often interpreted merely a means of explanation of a given example. This dissertation is founded on an original use of the method of case study, as the case study is employed as a screen, which our theoretical endeavour is projected onto.

The key theoretical themes of the dissertation are thus the concepts of the body and the subject in their contemporary variations and/or their genealogies. Although each of the main themes is discussed in a separate chapter, we do not provide any final verdicts or truths. The text is marked with openness. As we focus on arbitrarily chosen chapters from recent Western thought, we often employ them on Bell – to performatively show that although every body can be delimited and/or interpreted as belonging to a vast array of conflicting theorisations, it is not possible to wholly, or at least sufficiently portray

any body within a single paradigm, much less with an eclectic combination of them.

To be able to perform the case study of Bell; her theory, body, performance philosophy, and art, we focus on recent conceptions of the body and of the subject. We study these conceptions by utilising Haraway's method *cat's cradle*, named after the game in which players create increasingly complex patterns by passing around an elastic thread. This open-ended methodological principle, which presupposes the epistemological equality of every source, be it bibliographic or biographic, brings us to the idea that what is left of the subject since post-modernism is analogous to what is left to the body. Conceptions of the subject and notions of the body appear to be the last privileged spot, where it is still possible to experience the sublime, where Lacan's three logical times collapse into a single moment, where it is possible to present oneself as present, and encounter *das Unheimliche*. All of this is possible, provided that we do not get entangled within a dualistic determinism of the Cartesian kind.

By pointing at a discursive resemblance between performance theory and performance art, we reveal them both as fundamentally embodied activities. To be able to perform our own theory, we employ Bell, the performance philosopher and the philosophical performer, as a theoretical concept.

In short, this dissertation tackles an impossible task. In order to locate the always already excluded phenomenological core of performativity, we attempt to take performativity performatively. In fact, we are attempting to find a methodology, with which it would be possible to bring together various discourses of the body and/or the subject without reducing one to another and/or succumbing to the traps of the dualist paradigm. Laying out several different theorisations of body and the subject, we do not attempt to explain or compare them; we are merely pointing at their (always negative) common denominator, at a specific crack, void, emptiness, nothingness, which is given different names within different theoretical traditions.

Our own endeavour thus turns out to be as much theoretical as it is performative. It is at the same time a presentation of the cultural and epistemological turn from textuality to performativity and a study of a specific body/subject/art/theory. In this sense, the dissertation can be situated within the genre that Bell calls *performance-writing*. Writing, too is a fundamentally embodied activity and/or practice – and like the book *Fast Feminism*, our writing, too subverts and redefines typical theoretical writing, as it leaves things open, free, allows for mixing of styles and contents, etc. The fast feminist principle of doing violence to the original text is central to our undertaking, while we play with the idea of the remix, and unify conflicting contexts. However, by complying with Bell's own methodological standards, we cannot but abuse her as well.

Keywords: the body, the subject, performativity, performing theory, *jouissance*.

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1. Introduction – Shannon Bell

"Part of doing high risk philosophy is that you accept outcomes that you don't want, couldn't foresee, didn't calculate." (Bell 2005, June 18)

Shannon Bell is a professor, a performer, an activist, and a writer. She is Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director at the Political Science Department of York University in Toronto, Canada. She teaches modern and post-contemporary theory, cyberpolitics, post-identity politics, aesthetics and politics, violent philosophy, and fast feminism. (Bell 2010a) Bell has (co-)authored several books: *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (1994), *Whore Carnival* (1995), *Bad Attitude/s on Trial* (1997), *New Socialisms* (2004), and *Fast Feminism* (2010a). Her bibliography is most effectively interpreted together with her biography, as there is no clear distinction between the two. In actuality, while attempting to study Bell's life and work, we are faced with the fact that (any) theory can only be read through the author's biography (Šterk 2003), which, in clear contrast to most modernist theorists and artists (but definitely not post-modern theorists and artists), is also the fundamental premise of Bell's own work.

Bell is a fast feminist (FF), "a post-gender provocateur, not so much a gender terrorist as a gender risk-taker going the distance with her body. FF's philosophy is lived. Actions count. One resists with one's body." (Ibid., 11) Bell was one of the first feminists to publicly perform and write about female ejaculation, and she does not shy away from writing or, better, producing performative texts about drag-kinging, child pornography, s/m sex, sex organ tissue engineering,

“humachine” seduction, her mother’s death or even her father’s sexual advances.[1] (Ibid., 19–20)

Bell’s latest book, *Fast Feminism*, (2010a) draws from diverse theoretical traditions in defining its subject and depicts twenty years of Bell’s “performance philosophy (1989–2009).” (Ibid., 19) The operational definition of performance philosophy for Bell is as follows: “Performance philosophy is defined by enactment: active enfolding with, or performative being with. A performance philosopher will not theoretically engage what s/he has not enacted or enacted with.” (Ibid., 187–188) According to the author’s own admission, it draws from feminist and queer theory and is substantially dependent upon Virilio’s (2006) ideas of speed and accident. Moreover, the concept of fast feminism “is a contribution of FF’s body to philosophy. It is a pragmatic gesture in which ‘the idea is always in the act.’” (Bell 2010a, 173)

Therefore, FF is an embodied concept. This is attributable to the fact that it is rooted in the notion of performativity. Bell’s FF puts her subject and her object, herself, and her body firmly into the context of philosophy: “Her sexual feats are embodiments of philosophy: they are philosophical events.” (Ibid., 11) However, FF is also undoubtedly feminist; she is in constant exchange with radical post-feminisms, queer theory and post-structuralism. It is “fluid feminism which holds no distinction between academia and activism, the female phallus and male phallus, living and writing, philosophy and pornography.” (Ibid., 16)

Bell (Ibid., 174) outlines the key points of a potential fast feminism manifesto:

1) Critique the world quickly.
2) Interrupt intellectual scholarship.
3) Position the body as the basis of intellectual work.

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[1] “FF felt her father's tongue in her mouth, and gagged on the erotic vomit at the back of her throat. /.../ On his deathbed, FF's father kept repeating, 'I don't know how a father could sexually touch his daughter. I don't understand it.'” (2010a, 144)

4) Write theory as art.
5) Do art as theory.
6) Do theory from non-obvious points of departure.
7) Do violence to the original text.

With these definitions, a discursive resemblance between performance art and performance philosophy, FF's main activity as outlined by Bell, immediately becomes evident. Performativity, the body, gender, sexuality, violence, politics, event, etc. are common keywords to both concepts. "Fast feminism is a philo-porno-political practice," (Ibid.) it is "a work of speed philosophy, pornography and politics" (Ibid., 12), an embodied, sexualised, gendered, and political philosophy – and we have not encountered many definitions of performance art that convincingly explore (m)any additional crucial aspects of its essence other than (meta)theory, the body, and political engagement. Add to this a Foucauldian aesthetisation of living, living a life as a work of art (1997a), and the following thesis emerges: contemporary philosophy and performance art are closely related. To research their discursive resemblance and entanglements, one must first study the remainders of the body, but also the residues of the subject. It is rather inevitable that the embodied concept of performativity demand our focused attention as well.

Our attempt to point at "philo-porno-political" (Bell 2010a, 12) likeness between the two, performance art and performance theory, will thus explore the two sites that we have identified in contemporary theory as crucial to the multidisciplinary project called Shannon Bell: philosophy (meta-theory) of the subject and that of the body. In an effort to demonstrate how these domains have been constructed in recent theoretical currents, we will look at contemporary philosophical thought and the conception of the (trans-/post-)human body.

Moreover, we will attempt to locate the traces of what performance studies have chosen to call *the performative turn* (Fischer-Lichte 2008) in the context of philosophy. The performative turn in the 1960s most radically affected art, the humanities, and social sciences- This is especially evident in the two topics that could

perhaps be described as the most explored in the second half of the 20th century[2] – the subject and the body. We will systematically scrutinise models of subjectivity and embodiment, both in theory and practice, and methodically examine them in the contexts of post-post-modernity and its overwhelming (technological and other) speed(s). Identifying what is left of the body, and surveying selected theorisations of subjectivity in the post- days of today's philosophy, we will, at the same time, look at these through the bio- and bibliography of the original FF, Shannon Bell.

The two main areas of our interest are therefore philosophy of the subject since postmodernism, and the body since post-modernism. We will dedicate a separate chapter to each of these enormous topics, but rather than doing (or rather trying to do and inevitably failing) encyclopaedic and historical (in)justice to concepts and theories, it is our intention to only focus on select episodes from contemporary Western thought – only to show, with the help of Shannon Bell's body, that it is possible to interpret and theorise any given Western body within different theoretical traditions, for example, as a Cartesian, Foucauldian, phenomenological, psychoanalytical, etc. body. Every one of such theoretical representations can provide us with a seemingly satisfactory insight. However, if it is possible to interpret the same body even within conflicting theoretical traditions, the

[2] It should come as no surprise that it is precisely in the same chronological period that one of the most important theorists of cyberculture, Manuel Castells (2010b, 372), places the dawn of the information age and network society: "A new world is taking shape in this end of millennium. It originated in historical coincidence, around the late 1960s and mid-1970s." Castells bases his assumptions on sociological analysis, in which he sees the "new culture, the culture of real virtuality" (Ibid.) as emanating from three distinct and autonomous processes: "the information technology revolution; the economic crisis of both capitalism and statism, and their subsequent restructuring; and the blooming of cultural social movements, such as libertarianism, human rights, feminism, and environmentalism." (Ibid.) Castells' real virtuality stands for culture, shaped by the media, especially "micro-media of 'narrowcasting', the many-to-many communications of the Internet, and the flattening of distinctions between producers and consumers of media content." (Bell 2001, 77)

significance of each such theorisation can be questioned. It turns out that by adopting a certain point of view, we necessarily exclude every other possible point of view. Moreover, different particular insights cannot be summarized into an all-encompassing representation of wholeness. In our own attempt of grasping a certain concrete body within different theoretical articulations, the goal is not to represent the totality of possible aspects and interpretations, but to show that no matter which theory we choose, there is always something that eludes explanation. Different theoretical approaches to the Western body have little in common in terms of contents, but structurally, there is a lack/surplus, inscribed in the epistemological foundations of contemporary theory, a lack within the Cartesian legacy expressed with the "/" of body/mind dualism. This site of lack in unapproachable by language, however, to rephrase Durkheim's famous proclamation, the hole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Thus, we will attempt to articulate Bell's persona through the analysis of assorted theoretical interpretations of the body, not in order to describe, define, or explain it in its imaginary totality, but to point at the heterogeneous, complex, and contradictory expressions of the phenomenon Shannon Bell and to observe the interplay of contemporary conceptions of the body and that of the subject on that very phenomenon. Bell's body reflects the dynamics and the complexities of the ambiguous status of the contemporary Western body, marked by emerging (digital) technologies in post-industrial societies. As we use Bell's concrete body to perform a taxonomic system of contemporary (theoretical) bodies, we are tackling the status of the body as it has been established in the 20th and 21st centuries – the body of post-modernism and all of its derivations, which is importantly defined by the heritage of modernism, even Cartesianism. It is the body, put forward by performance art and omitted by theory (which has clearly favoured the subject), marked with dualism in general, and especially dependent on the (existence of) sex/gender binary organisation.

As we concentrate on contemporary concepts of the human body and thought, which we will employ to *perform* the case study of Shannon Bell, her philosophy, body, and her performance philosophy/art, we shall, by playing a theoretical game of cat's cradle,[3] (Haraway 1994, 1997) attempt to establish that what is left of subjectivity since post-modernism is the same as what is left of the body since post-modernism. Theory of subjectivity and especially the concept of the body are the privileged spots where one can still locate the unique ability to shock, where the sublime[4] bodily feelings of awe and terror can still be produced, where Lacan's three logical times (2006b) collapse, where it is possible to present oneself as present (Fischer-Lichte 2008), to perform one's very presence (Ibid.), and encounter *das Unheimliche* (1919).

In order to demonstrate this, to perform this theoretical endeavour, one cannot ignore yet another overwhelming field of study: that of performance art. In this dissertation, we will attempt to point at a discursive resemblance between post- theory and performance art. We understand both theory and (especially) performance art as highly embodied activities. To perform our own theory, we will employ the body of Shannon Bell (who is a theorist and performer, both a philosophical performer and a performance philosopher) as a concept that (it) is "good to think" (with). (Lévi-Strauss 1962)

In brief, we are undertaking an impossible task: to take performativity performatively – to locate its literal core, which is always already denied in post-modern thinking. In fact, we are trying to find a methodology with which to level various discourses of the body and/or the subject without reducing them one to another, but still surpassing

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[3] See chapter 2.2.

[4] Throughout the text, we will employ *the sublime* following two philosophical traditions, which understand it differently; in terms of different (post-)post-modern bodies, we will speak of the biopolitical sublime as outlined by Giblett (2008) but, more importantly, in terms of the main thesis of this text, the sublime will be understood analogously to the Kantian tradition and its psychoanalytical adaptations. (Kant 2007; Zupančič 2000)

the Cartesian dualism. We are neither representing, nor translating the concepts, or comparing them one to another. Instead, we are merely attempting to point at the common denominator, which is a particular void, named differently within different perspectives.

Hence, our own effort is both performative and philosophical. It is equally a presentation of the cultural and epistemological turn from textuality to performativity (which very dramatically accompanied the turn of the millennium, but the focus on performativity has become convention since) and a depiction of a certain radical body/art/theory. Our own endeavour can be situated within "the performance-writing genre." (Bell 2010a, 14) Writing is a highly embodied activity; "writing is doing; it is embedded in praxis." (Ibid.) Bell's *Fast Feminism* (Ibid.), and, consequently, our own text, too, profoundly redefine the process of writing theory, as they put forward "a new technology of writing, writing as morphing, which remixes and blends materials from different contexts. It does violence to the original contexts in the process." (Ibid., 16) Undeniably, violence will also be done to Shannon Bell herself: as we use her philo-porno-political pursuits to perform theory, we will necessarily also abuse them.

The dissertation begins by re-reading and critically analysing several of the most central theorisations of the body, especially those that arose in the 20th and in the 21st centuries. In a voluminous chapter on the genealogy of the body, we will not attempt to isolate and (re-)appropriate different theories and concepts, but, rather, what they might have in common.

This pursuit of a common denominator does not attempt to deny the implications of the post-modern break with wholeness, universalism, and comprehensiveness. On the contrary: informed by the linguistic proclamation that meaning is formed in the context of difference and is by definition negative and arbitrary (de Saussure 1998), as well as under the undeniable influence of the epistemological difficulties of contemporary humanities and social sciences, one of the central themes of the dissertation, running subtly

throughout the whole text, is the endeavour to perform diverse *little narratives* of the particular.

Writing from a highly subjective and specific position inevitably denies wholeness and unity to any theoretical undertaking, and, consequently, the shared quality of often opposing theoretical work is the fact that it always points at a certain gap within theory itself, from which everything spurs. The gap, sometimes theorised as *surplus*, at others as *lack*, is perhaps the one and only *real* metanarrative, which eludes us at the very moment that it is approached by language.

The first substantial chapter of the dissertation, chapter 3: *What is left of the body in the post-modern age?,* is focused on different theoretical explanations of the concept of the body and it concludes with a brief analysis, interpretation, and contextualisation of Shannon Bell's own body. Thus, the first part of the dissertation equips the reader with an appropriate (which is necessarily arbitrary and subjective) context, within which they are advised to tackle the rest of the text. It provides the theories and concepts that support the stage on which it might be possible to *perform theory.*

The contemporary Western fascination with the body, characteristic of philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, and even of popular culture, goes to prove that the body is, first and foremost, a strikingly Western invention, imprinted with modernity and *bourgeois* ideology. The same can be said for the post-modern denial of the body; the ever more popular claim that the body is obsolete. However, a cry like this, if anything, verifies the opposite: the body is more important than ever. In fact, every time theory renounces the importance of the body and corporeality (or its mere existence), the body is multiplied. The multiplicities of the body might not be immediately visible; they are indeed obscured from view and repressed within; however, this is yet another testimony to the centrality of the body.

Throughout the dissertation, the body is perceived as the privileged spot, where it is possible to conduct philosophical investigations and perform theory. As the body is deconstructed,

omitted, neglected, and ultimately repressed within the constitutive gap of any given theory, the subject is established as its counterpart. We claim that this dualist epistemology is still very much indebted to Descartes, despite the fact that it is almost universally founded on the critique of the Cartesian *cogito.* Since Descartes, the concept of subjectivity has been developed, critiqued, redefined, and rejected time and time again, but it can be argued that this has left a more defining mark on the concept of the body than on that of the subject.

After being dragged through the often conflicting discursive realities of subjectivity, the body has changed. Every scientific paradigm that chooses to tackle the body in fact ultimately produces a new body. This inevitably occurs in our thesis as well, in which we are not theorizing the same body as our predecessors, nor do we limit ourselves to any singular *body of theory.* With the help of Shannon Bell's body, we will demonstrate that it is possible to confront any given body within any given theoretical context. As we will employ these different conceptualisations of the body to grasp particular aspects of Bell's body (and, by doing so, we will inevitably neglect the rest), our approach finds solace and legitimisation in Feyerabend's (1993) understanding of *incommensurability.* Bell's body can, should, and, well, will be, theorised as every one of the bodies which we will encounter in the thesis, but, at the same time, it will not be theorised exclusively as any one of them in their (imaginary) entirety.

With the decline of interest in the body, emphasis has been placed on the subject. Subjectivity is seen as imperative, necessary, and most essentially defining the individual. Accordingly, the second vast chapter of this thesis, chapter 4: *What is left of the subject after post-modernism?*, will be dedicated to the subjects of the bodies, outlined in the first part. The approach to researching subjectivity will be genealogical and by definition particular, partial, and incomplete. In an attempt to find subjectivities, corresponding to the bodies, featured in chapter 3, our genealogy will begin by laying out the most important contexts, as well as the decisive factors, which most fatally influenced the contemporary views on the subject and subjectivity. As a

distinctively subjective theory of the subject, psychoanalysis will be critiqued, yet returned to in an attempt to point at possibilities of bodily revolt and subversion.

Our brief genealogy of subjectivity not only begins late, it also ends prematurely – with the performative turn in theory, which is marked by a forceful entrance of the Other. The choice of limiting our debate with Cartesian thought on one side and (post-)feminist interventions in psychoanalysis on the other, is as arbitrary a decision, as it is convenient.

Traditionally, theories (and truths) have been produced by the privileged, and it is fair to say that theory is still predominantly both *male*stream (West 1999, 257) and colonial. The beginnings of our debate, condensed in Descartes' theorisations of the body/mind dynamics, represent an epitome of this point. Nevertheless, contemporary theory is much more aware that not only do the contexts of theories matter, but also that the contents of theories are substantially dependent on who articulates them. Post-colonial and gender studies were the first to give the Other a voice – and theories *on* the Other have since merged with those coming *from* the Other. In addition, gender studies were the first to provide a context within which it has since become possible for the Other to also occupy the body. Therefore, the gendered Other's entrance into theory is a fundamentally performative gesture. As women started writing about women and womanhood as such, all of a sudden, it appeared they were discussing very different things from their masculine predecessors. This observation may be simple, but it is crucial, as it represents the possible reach of our dissertation, which avoids the futile attempt to take into account all the aspects of the contemporary exponentiation of subjectivity.

Chapter 4 thus concludes by pointing at the particular moment in theory, when the dualist organisation of the body/mind problem was first challenged not only by the minds, but by concrete bodies as well. Symptomatically perhaps, at approximately the same time, *malestream* theory gave up the body completely, turned away from it,

and began to dedicate its (whole and universal) attention almost exclusively to subjectivity, intermingling it more and more with the concept of consciousness, which is studied as a specific feature of the body that can, at least theoretically, be detached from the body and relocated somewhere else.

After the chapters on the remainders of the body and the subject, the concluding chapter of the dissertation attempts to bring the threads of thought that traverse the text together. The key epistemological issues of our performance philosophy, as well as the ontological implications for the body/subject dualism are conceptualised within the context of the performative turn. The performative turn in the humanities and social sciences is interpreted as defined by the entrance of an embodied theory of the body. Butler's (1997) notion of *excitable speech*, although interpreted as a return to psychoanalysis, actually performs the fact that this very return to psychoanalysis fundamentally undermines its epistemological foundations and re-establishes it as a (subversive) practice. Butler achieves this by interpreting theorising as a profoundly embodied activity with the goal to "speak impossibly." (Ibid., 139)

Finally, the (performing) body, the (performed) subject, and our own theoretical performance are exercised in a somewhat political gesture. At the very moment of symbolisation, which is a prerequisite for any articulation and/or theorisation, our sense of self (or anything else, for that matter) is already so fundamentally colonised (by language, philosophy, ideology …) that it is detached from any potential of a *real* phenomenological experience (of ourselves or anything else).

This detachment is increasingly marked by the all-encompassing principle of speed. It does not matter whether the rule of speed is interpreted as acceleration towards the uncatchable surplus, or away from the inevitable lack, since what we describe metaphorically as the unspeakable, uncanny, sublime, the very site of lack/surplus, becomes inapproachable the very moment we attempt to catch it, capture it, grasp it. As Badiou (2004, 51) informs us,

philosophy must thus “propose a retardation process.” This is a lesson already acknowledged by sci-fi cinema of the 1980s and 1990s. Just as the cult movie *Cube* (1997) teaches us, the solution is not ahead or before us, and is not approachable by moving in any direction in search of it – the answer *lies* in staying where we are. A similar lesson is put forward by the movie *WarGames* (1983), which demonstrates that “the only winning move is not to play.” As we interpret deceleration as a strategy of resistance, our dissertation will conveniently *stop* at the very point, which bursts with potential for subversion.

2. Methodology

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."
(Shakespeare)

By re-reading and critically analysing several of the most important social theories, especially those that arose in the 20th and in the 21st centuries, we intend to isolate and (re-)appropriate the concepts that are good to think in terms of the body, subjectivity, and performativity. With these theories and concepts, a stage, on which it might be possible to *perform theory*, is bound to emerge. We will study, analyse, interpret and contextualise the body, theory, and the performance art of Shannon Bell, a self-proclaimed fast feminist and professor of political science, who reads and writes philosophy in action and does so by the principle of what she calls "performance philosophy." (Bell 2004, July 26)

This dissertation is located in the context of the "post-Kuhnian world" (van Maanen 1988, 44); it is intensely multidisciplinary in terms of theory, whereas our methodology is acutely *undisciplined*. We are well aware of the fact that different methodologies establish different patterns, which lead to different results, but this stance "against method," named "incommensurability" and attributed to the so-called "epistemological anarchist" position, has already been legitimised and well-established as (one of) the threshold(s) between modernity and post-modernity. (Feyerabend 1993) We are most grateful to Feyerabend's post-modern defence of anarcho-theorising, which, although vastly critiqued, has still gained more than enough prominence to be legitimately employed in theoretical endeavours.

Forthrightly, an undertaking like our own simply cannot provide any final answers or complete/whole theorisations. By definition, it poses more questions than it can answer. However, it is precisely in this inaccessible fluidity that one can still find potential for original theory. With the concept of theory we no longer have in mind grand narratives, schools of thought, and schematic interpretations of social

and human singularities. Instead, our own thought finds enormous potential in (autobiographic) particularities, which do not claim to be anything but what they actually perform.

Therefore, methodological imagination and contextual originality of this dissertation must be looked for within the rather subversive approach to the binary opposition between theory and (empirical) practice (as well as to binary oppositions in general). Our interpretation of (doing) contemporary philosophy, which exhibits clear discursive resemblances with performance art, inevitably foregrounds the problem of the body. Nonetheless, it would be short-sighted to recognise this text as yet another (impossible) philosophy of the (elusive) body. Should one insist in defining it, let us call it “theory of practice.” (Bourdieu 1977) Hence, we are doing embodied philosophy, performance philosophy, which from a certain angle also sometimes takes on the name of performance art.

2.1 Participant observation and case study

An important quality of this dissertation lies in adding the method of case study to theoretical concepts and schemes. The case study of Bell's performance philosophy utilises diverse and wide-ranging material: Bell's writings, her artistic, political and/or sexual performances, her employment of the body, etc. A lot of information has been obtained through personal communication with Bell; I interviewed her curiously in Toronto (2012) and Ljubljana (2010b), where I engaged in participant observation as well. I also spent substantial amounts of time with Bell on different occasions all around Slovenia, as well as in Linz, Austria, where we met regularly during *Ars Electronica,* and in New York, U. S. A.

Participant observation is one of the most important qualitative research methods in the humanities and social sciences. The foundations for the method of participant observation in sociology were laid by Weber (1978), who argued that the human affairs could only be approached by the method called "emphatic understanding". However, we find it most useful for our own endeavour when the methodology is "reformulated in hermeneutic terms as a dialectic between experience and interpretation." (van Maanen 1988, 93)

> It seems that the premise that social sciences should methodologically refer to grasping possibilities 'from within', 'from the locals' point of view', relates to the general epistemological viewpoint that firmly distinguishes the humanities and social sciences from the natural sciences. The argument for this viewpoint is as follows: a definition of social behaviour, conduct, action involves the presumption that these actions are, from the actors' point of view, sensible, and bear certain *meaning*, or, more precisely, an array of meanings for them and for those affected. This meaning emerges from a tightly woven net, specific for any given culture. It is therefore impossible to analyse social action if we are unable to conceive of it in a symbolic frame, essential for them to have meaning. (Močnik in Šterk 1992, 332)

In anthropological terms, empathy represents the ability to participate in the Other. (Strathern 1980, 177) However, the Other is not a homogeneous unity; it only appears as such to the external (ideological) gaze. Ever since Lévi-Strauss' (1992) miserable experience with his own attempt of participant observation, however, it has become utterly clear that the Other as a whole is always already an ideological projection. In fact, the mere notions of wholeness and totality are omens of ideology.

Another consequence of the abandonment of the idea of wholeness in theoretical endeavours is the abolition of linear thinking, which was so cherished by the Enlightenment and so critiqued by Feyerabend. (1993) The methodological consequence of the post-modern break with metanarratives must be located in narration, imprinted with particularity – narration that we too are adopting in this text. Virilio (1991, 45) argues that

> There was less to know in preceding centuries, and you'll notice that, paradoxically, knowledge then aimed at certainty and totality. The more knowledge grew the greater the unknown grew, we might conclude; or rather, the more information flashes by the more aware we are of its incomplete fragmentary nature.

It seems that after the post-modern reflexive turn, interpretative methodology only remains possible within extremely particularised contexts, when both the subject and the object are relieved of the illusions of wholeness, linearity, quantification, and universality. On the level of the general, however,

> The mathematisation of thinking, therefore all modern science and technics, is nothing but a strategy of coming to the bottom of things, whereas this bottom cannot be anything but 'metaphysical'. /…/ throughout the modern age, numeric thinking has penetrated deeper into things, but instead of reaching the bottom of things, it has dissolved them into free-floating mists. /…/ Numeric thinking explained itself by explaining things and there is nothing left – except for nothingness itself – that we should explain. What we label here as 'post-modern' is precisely the final victory of the Enlightenment. (Flusser 2000, 69)

With post-modernism, humanities and social sciences, already marked with cynical scepticism towards them, have therefore become completely impotent and utterly powerless in scientific terms. The consequences of this epistemological shift can be (and they normally are) interpreted as a sign of limitation. However, understanding them as denoting subversive and revolutionary potential and practice is just as thinkable. In fact,

> at the very moment when philosophical /…/ thought reaches the things, concerning the (epochal) cultural turn, it abandons its strict codification and linguistic precision, it turns towards forming, for lack of a better term, a new language, it allows for sites, which provoke an almost religious premonition and expectation. /…/ We are witnessing a true implosion of traditional concepts, which must now redefine themselves with nomadic uncertainty at the intersections of nature, culture and smart technologies. (Strehovec 2000, 200)

It almost looks as if our enterprise were the fourth in line of the "impossible professions" (Freud 1937, 5042), "in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results." (Ibid.) The method of participant observation has liberated itself of the modern scientific restraints; it "is evocative in addition to being factual and truthful." (van Maanen 1988, 34) In stark contrast to what has traditionally been postulated as *sine qua non* for objective research, "increasing intimacy and participation" (Ibid., 40) have become accepted trends at least within the anthropological discipline. We have become "notorious analytic bricoleurs, sniffing out and shifting through current theory for leads as to how fieldwork materials might be conceptualised." (Ibid. 66)

In our manuscript, personal, subjective, interpretative, and ethnographic sources represent another original and unique contribution to the study. We propose epistemological nivelisation of all data, whatever the source. By acquiring the privilege of personal communication with the *object* of our case study, we part with the illusion of objectivity on the level of the performative as well. At the same time, we are given a precious opportunity to include and

interpret Bell's own autobiographical narratives and contextualise them in her bio- and bibliography. Our own autobiographical and subjective position, normally ignored, disregarded, and discounted, will be embraced and celebrated. The result of such nivelisation will hopefully be a text that will be able to claim both: scientific credibility and literary value, thereby contributing to the established body of theory and to the art of performance.

However, the extensive case study is not discussed in a separate chapter of this dissertation, as one might expect. This formal (as well as conceptual) decision allows us to genuinely perform different (and often contradictory) theoretical concepts and ideas immediately as we capture them on paper. More importantly, they are all performed on the same object, in order to demonstrate that in the post- era, anything can be and/or become anything else, and nothing can be explained in its wholeness. There is always a nameless, shadowy, and sometimes ghastly remainder, which is identified by most theoretical paradigms, but named differently in each one.

Throughout the text, our attempt is to reveal this very surplus/lack, point at it, and to demonstrate that it is intensely bound with the concepts of the body and performativity. The body appears to be the privileged spot where it is still – or perhaps again – possible to conduct philosophical investigations. As the concept of subjectivity has been developed, critiqued, redefined, even rejected time and time again, always in relation to the body, we cannot expect to still be dealing with the same body. On the contrary, the body is subjected to perpetual change. We are not theorising the same body as our predecessors: "technology redesigns the human at the same time as the human designs technology." (Bell 2010a, 175)

We will demonstrate that it is possible for the body of Shannon Bell to be theorised and interpreted as a Cartesian, Foucauldian, phenomenological, psychoanalytical, etc. body. Captured in the concept of "incommensurability" (Feyerabend 1993) is the approach by which we will, for example, employ every one of these historical conceptualisations to grasp a single aspect of Bell's body and neglect

the rest. Her body can and should be theorised as every one of the bodies we shall encounter in the following chapters, but not exclusively as any one of them in its (non-existent) entirety.

Our hope is that writing our case study and theory in an intermingled manner allows the body to interact with concepts in order to perform what cannot be theorised. This methodological approach, abstracted, might also prove useful in other studies of contemporary performative phenomena. It is the sociological notion of “reification” (Berger, Luckmann 1966), crossbred with post-modern attitudes, subversions, destabilisations, sabotages, and rebellions.[5]

[5] One such subversion, observable in our own text, is to deem metanarratives hermeneutically specific, constrained by particular (Western) theory.

2.2 Cat's cradle

The game cat's cradle is played by at least two people, who attempt to create different figures and patterns, using their fingers and a string, which they pass back and forth. The game provides a good methodological metaphor for any contemporary theoretical undertaking and our own text is no exception. This methodological metaphor was first offered by Haraway (1994, 1997) as a way of thinking about science studies. By definition, cat's cradle is not an isolated activity; it is not particularly exciting if played solo. Also, it is a very embodied activity. The point of the game is to pass the string around and create different increasingly complex patterns. The game is "relational, attentive and embodied." (Bell 2007, 127) Cat's cradle is not a competitive game, as there is no winner: "the goal is more interesting and open-ended than that," (Haraway 1997, 268) exclaims the author.

This emphasis on open-endedness also represents a very accurate portrayal of our own interpretation as to what the ambition of theory might be. We find the demands for certainty, pragmatism, and especially predictability fundamentally ideological, and the emphasis on usefulness as well as applicability profoundly restrictive. We sadly observe the moments of unpredictability, randomness, magic, and fascination dissolve in scientific undertakings. They are deemed unscientific, intuitive, and irrational; they are interpreted as unworthy. There is no place for marvel and quirk anymore, curiosity has been killed and it is up to the cat's cradle to revive it.

In these respects, our own ambition is to participate in this game with other theorists as well as with Shannon Bell herself. We intend to look for uncovered meanings and novel points of view while placing the emphasis on the very process of writing, living, and performing theory rather than on potential pragmatic conclusions. The latter, despite proclaiming a certain degree of wholeness and objectivity, are always founded on partial, incomplete and highly

subjective insights into any problematics. In theory, it is perhaps time to finally embrace the particularity of both – the subject and object of investigation.[6]

Haraway understands cat's cradle as a way of working, as well as thinking about science and scientific work. She encourages scientists to draw from feminist, and cultural studies, and vice versa and also urges teachers to use this "methodology with a small 'm'." (Haraway in Bell 2007, 127) Cat's cradle is "local and global,

[6] Inspired by Lyotard's (1984) concept of *petits récits*, conceptualised as an opposition to *metanarratives*, we should now be thinking in terms of *récits autobiographiques.* The little autobiographic narratives are particular theorisations of the particular, which demonstrate that contemporary theory is in fact performance; one performs the concepts, ideas, research questions and theories.

Lyotard (Ibid.) speaks of *grand narratives* in an attempt to describe the all-encompassing theories of epic proportions that have traditionally supported cultural and societal structures of knowledge and produced *truth*. Typically, metanarratives go beyond explaining and rationalizing the institutions of knowledge, power, religion, etc., they also tend to encourage the idea of linear progress and development on the one side and that of change and revolution on the other. In this aspect, metanarratives are fundamentally ideological; they either justify or criticise the existing social order. The "postmodern condition," (Ibid.) characteristic of the West, spurs scepticism towards metanarratives and disintegrates them into little narratives. Lyotard proposes the following definition of post-modernism: post-modernism is "incredulity towards metanarratives." (Ibid., xxiv) Nearly thirty-five years after the publication of the first edition of *The Postmodern Condition* (in French, under the title *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*), metanarratives indeed seem a matter of the past. If post-modernism claimed the end of metanarratives, allowing only for particularities (little narratives), then contemporary theory can only be singular, one's own, emanating from one's personal history. Therefore, we are left with *récits autobiographiques*. In terms of generality, in metanarratives both the subject (author/theorist) and object (of research) are generalised and universal, whereas in post-modern little narratives the object has become particular, specific, local, etc., but the subject still hangs on to some degree of comprehensiveness and wholeness, guarding the fantastic position of generality. In post-modernism, the subject still defends the position of a "metasubject" (Ibid.), but in contemporary autobiographic narratives, we are clearly dealing with the particularity of both, the subject and the object – or better yet, the distinction between them is blurred and deemed unimportant.

distributed and knotted together." (Haraway 1997, 268) In her work, Haraway (ibid.) attempts to knot together "the varying threads of science studies, antiracist feminist theory, and cultural studies."

To attempt to knot together such particular and sometimes opposing threads in this debate as well would be too ambitious, if not impossible. However, social studies and humanities are increasingly aware of various contradictory contexts that determine the outcomes of their particular undertakings. After the intervention of post-modernism, they are defined by and dependent on trans-, and multidisciplinary approaches, interchanges, discussions, negotiations, etc. To be a contemporary scholar means to give up the refuge of isolation. It means to be part of various patterns of cat's cradles, in constant interchange with others, continuously politically aware, and plugged in. In the digital era, we are managed by social networks; knowledge has never been more accessible and information never shared as extensively. Knowledge has never been as non-institutionalised within the academia as it is nowadays, which is definitely one of the flipsides of the incredulity towards whole theories.

Of course, there are enormous issues in the production of knowledge; especially in terms of language, "digital divide" (Norris 2001), and the practically impossible task of filtering out trash (and spam), but equipped with critical and analytical thinking, the contemporary theorist can find many willing hands onto which they can pass the string, or which they can accept it from, playing a perpetual game of cat's cradle.

This text draws from several theoretical threads and traditions in an effort to perform theory. Performance, just like Haraway's cat's cradle, is an embodied activity without a winner and with no defined goal. It is playful, relational, open, and political. It poses more questions than it could possibly answer and is not fearful of uncertainty and particularity. It avoids grand narratives, and conceptions of wholeness, where many still find shelter from anxiety. It is not unconditionally faithful; it takes what it likes and discards what is redundant or awkward. To cut a long story short, we "take things

where /…/ [we] find them and /…/ [we] hope nobody minds.” (Lacan 2002, 10) Most importantly, this endeavour pursues pleasure both in text and thinking. This is precisely our aspiration as well.

3. What is left of the body in the post-modern age?

"Always in motion is the future." (Yoda, Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back)

The body is a Western invention. Increasingly, it is also a Western obsession. As such, it is marked with cultural difference, class-consciousness, gender, history, etc. (Giblett 2008, Bourdieu 1984, Lukacs 1971, Althusser 1971, Foucault 1990) Some of the bodies researched in the following chapters are in binary opposition to each other. For example, this is true for the grotesque and the *bourgeois* body if examined through the perspective of class, just like the feminine monstrous body stands in opposition to the fascist body in the context of gender.

Contemporary fascination with the body in philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, popular culture, and elsewhere is strikingly Western, particular, and very in line with the "claim that 'the body' is, with a high degree of lexical redundancy, a modern, western, bourgeois invention." (Giblett 2008, 157) The same goes for its post-modern denial, the belief that became fashionable towards the end of the 20th century – the conviction that the body is obsolete. (Kunst 2004, 11; see also Bell 2010a, 18) This is definitely not the case – in fact, every time the flesh gets repressed, the body is multiplied. The multiplicities of the body might not be immediately visible or put in the foreground, but the body is perhaps even more central than ever, especially in attempts to transcend it and/or subordinate it, which, inevitably, tend to fail miserably.

The philosophical emphasis on the centrality of the body, as a starting point for everything, can be traced back at least to Nietzsche (1967), who mocked the Cartesian 'I': "'there is thinking, therefore there is something that thinks': this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation." (Ibid., 484) To be able to get an 'I' who thinks, one

first needs an ‘I’ to do the thinking – as is the case with most other ‘whole’ theories, Descartes’ argument is nothing but a tautology; in its attempt to “establish a foundation [it] presupposes that which it is trying to establish.” (Giblett 2008, 4) However, as goes for any tautology, this one, too can be interpreted as performative, because the Cartesian ‘I’ in turn creates the reality in which it is supposedly imbedded, founded, or anchored.

The Cartesian way of thinking therefore presupposes the subject, who is “unequivocally white, able-bodied, heterosexual and male,” (Holliday, Hassard 2001, 4) but Nietzsche recognises the subject as “invented and projected behind what there is.” (1967, 481) According to Nietzsche, it is the body that tricks us – it is the body that invents and projects the subject into the background: “Rather than the grammatical fiction that wherever there is a deed there is a doer who is the subject, wherever there is a deed there is a doer who is a body.” (Giblett 2008, 4) It turns out this is precisely the position shared by theoretical perspectives as different amongst themselves as, for example, Merleau-Ponty’s (2005) and Butler’s (1999a; 1997) are.

For Nietzsche, the body is a visual category and therefore belongs to the realm of the aesthetics: “the body, the thing, the ‘whole’ constructed by the eye, awaken the distinction between a deed and a doer; the doer, the cause of the deed, conceived even more subtly, finally left behind the ‘subject’.” (1967, 547) The only way to perceive the body as whole is to observe it visually. We establish our relationships with other bodies firstly and primarily through seeing; the other senses (hearing, smelling, touching, tasting), if at all, join in later and presuppose a certain degree of physical proximity. Interestingly, our relation to our own body in terms of senses is reversed: we cannot escape tasting and touching it, but we can never see it in its entirety: “It is in this discrepancy between seeing other bodies, not wholly seeing our own body and having our body seen by others, this play of gazes between ourselves and others, that the body is constituted primarily as a visual phenomenon.” (Giblett 2008, 4)

3.1 What is the body?

The body is a starting point in contemporary social and cultural theory. But, again, "what is the body?" (Deleuze 2002, 39) "We do not define it by saying that it is a field of forces, a nutrient medium fought over by a plurality of forces. For in fact there is no 'medium', no field of forces or battle." (ibid.) We have seen before that for Nietzsche, there is no subject preceding subject, but for Deleuze the body has no substance either. The body is a "*contested* terrain, both theoretically and in representation." (Holliday and Hassard 2001, 7) It is understood as the "relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body / …/. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship." (Deleuze 2002, 40)[7] This Deleuzian move towards the body as an empty entity transcends Nietzsche's critique of the Cartesian *cogito* and reveals its logic as rather Cartesian as well: "the body cannot simply be reinstated in the position vacated by a dethroned subject. /…/ 'I am body therefore I am'." (Giblett 2008, 5) Furthermore, such a position would do nothing but reinstate the outside 'I', acting prior to the body, and it would, again, merely reproduce the Cartesian logic in its presupposition of a thinking substance. (Ibid.)

Deleuze (2002) argues instead that biological, chemical, political, and other forces, and especially the relationships (clashes) between them represent the actual makeup of the body. The body is not singular, consistent, and identical with itself, it is not a battlefield preceding the battle – instead, it is constituted, brought into existence every time a battle arises. The body is not understood as pre-existing the clashes that manifest on its surfaces, it is not understood as a Cartesian (da Vincian, even) machine or a Spenserian functional

[7] It is in this very definition that it becomes apparent how Foucault was just as indebted to Deleuze as he was to Nietzsche.

organism, it is instead identified as “a political struggle, an anarchist collectivity.” (Giblett 2008, 7)

The problem arises, as Virilio (2006, 154) reminds us, with the case of a non-metaphorical battlefield, when the war no longer needs a battlefield: “war now rests entirely on the deregulation of time and space. / … / If in ancient conventional warfare we could still talk about army manoeuvers in the fields, in the current state of affairs, if this manoeuver still exists, it no longer needs a ‘field’.” Furthermore, the loss of space leads to domination of time. (Ibid., 157) The body accelerates. In some philosophical interpretations it speeds towards death,[8] in others away from it.[9] “All that counts is the speed of the moving body and the undetectability of its path.” (Ibid., 151) As Virilio (1991, 43) illustrates in another text, “’You don’t have bodies, you are bodies!’ was the cry once of Wilhelm Reich; to this, power and its techniques now respond: ‘You have no speed, you are speed!’”

Shannon Bell’s body is constantly on the move: walking, running, flying, sky-diving, swimming, rowing: “This morning I rowed back from Asi Ghat at the far end; rowing the Ganges is the coolest activity in the whole world: rowing eternity – steering away from the far shore.” (Bell 2004, May 23) Rowing the Ganges can perhaps be interpreted as insistence on the right to and freedom of “the open seas” (Virilio 2006) in the context of territory, rowing the ground like a land-dwelling pirate.

The body is caught up in the deed-doer dialectic – in order to do things, we need something to do them with, but we also need something to do them to. The body acts and is acted upon; “the body is both doer and done to.” (Giblett 2008, 7) Foucault (1977b) claims that the body bears the stigmata of the past; lived experiences are inscribed into it. But the body also generates “desires, failings and errors. These elements may join in a body where they achieve a

[8] “Speed is a cause of death for which we’re not only responsible but of which we are also the creators and inventors.” (Virilio 1991, 102)

[9] For example, in transhumanism. See chapter 3.16.

sudden expression, but as often, their encounter is an engagement in which they efface each other, where the body becomes the pretext of their insurmountable conflict." (148) Past experiences are written on our bodies, scars are testimonies to history; our bodies are branded – either to "indicate subjection or ownership." (Giblett 2008, 7) We sport the scars and brands that establish and display gender, class, religion, nationality, etc. The body is subdued to several different regimes: "broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances." (Foucault 1977b, 153)

The body is not exclusively a playground of social strata; similarly, it bears marks and wounds that are inflicted upon us as subjects, the wounds that harm our minds. Having said that, Freud's (1895) notion of the symptom can be of use in an attempt at explanation. According to Freud, the patient's symptoms (his/her psychopathology) are manifested in the realm of corporeality; they are body events. The event can be understood as a rupture in being. Moreover, it is a "rupture which opens up truths." (Badiou 2005, xii)

However, with the introduction of *the event*, we are back to the deed-doer dialectic: "What is done is an event. / …/ an occurrence happening at a determinable point in time and space." (Giblett 2008, 8) As Foucault puts it: "The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration." (1977b, 148) The contemporary desire for the revival of subjectivity represents a turn away from the body. In fact, according to Kroker and Kroker (2001b, 20) the body might no longer exist.[10]

[10] We do not quite share this view, already expressed in the Foucauldian prophecy that the body would descend "into the empty site of a dissociated ego." (Kroker, Kroker 2001c, 20) As we attempt to prove time and time again throughout the text, contemporary corporeality might be repressed but that does not make it disappear.
It is also worth noting that Kroker and Kroker (Ibid., 21–22) in fact divide this dilemma into two questions; firstly, they wonder whether the *natural* body still exists

To study events, one needs “effective” history, which is defined by Foucault (1977b, 154) as introducing discontinuity into our very being; “it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. ‘Effective’ history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature.” Moreover, effective history deals with events

> in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event /…/ is /…/ the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked ‘other’. /…/ The forces operating in history /…/ always appear through the singular randomness of events. (Ibid., 154–155)

In Foucault’s view, the body is actually a rather passive concept, it is inscribed. However, the body is active as well; it also inscribes – it *performs* actions: “The body is both the inscribed surface of events and the traced depth of actions. The body performs and is performed upon; the body performs actions, and events are performed upon it.” (Giblett 2008, 9) The body is both active and passive at the same time; it engages in events, but it is also engaged in them, it performs, but it is also performed upon.

The relationship between the self and the body is ambiguous. The events performed by and upon the body, are not pure body events; they are events, marked by language. In consequence, the self is dissociated from the body (despite the self’s insistence on the contrary): “the self is a volume in perpetual integration, integrating

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in the post-modern condition and secondly, whether the *discursive* body still exists or whether it has disappeared “into Bataille’s general economy of excess” (Ibid., 22) The interpretation articulated throughout this writing is that the natural body could not disappear as it never really existed purely biologically – the distinction between natural and discursive body is as ideological and artificial as the distinction between sex and gender. Just like gender, the discursive body is brought forward and played with theoretically and practically in an attempt to defend the status quo and the untouchable prestige of the most rudimentary natural laws, which in fact always turn out to be cultural, even ideological.

everything around it into a substantial unity." (Ibid., 9) As Foucault claims, the body is exactly the opposite – a volume in perpetual disintegration. As such, it is a historical entity; and the history of the body is a rather short story, because before the birth of the body, Foucault reminds us (1977a), there was just flesh.[11] The history of the body is thus "a history of ways of inhabiting the world." (Kuriyama 1999, 237)

We should therefore attempt to compose a Foucauldian genealogy of the body. Foucault (1977b) defines genealogy as the rejection of the pursuit of origin as well as the denial of any linear course of events. According to Foucault, the duty of any genealogy is in fact "to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes." (146) Genealogy as a concept is already tied to the concept of the body, as genealogy is essentially embodied:

> descent attaches itself to the body. /…/ It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets, in the debilitated and prostrate body of those whose ancestors committed errors. /…/ The body maintains, in life as in death, through its strength or weakness, the sanction of every truth and error. (Ibid., 147)

The body is therefore placed in the domain of the origin. "Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted with history and the process of history's destruction of the body." (Ibid.) When we research the body and attempt to create its genealogy, we will inevitably learn more about its theoretical and cultural contexts than the concrete body itself. It is quite impossible to produce an all-encompassing reading and writing of the body or a grand theory of the body. Researching the discourses of the body,

[11] The flesh is still *before* the body, but in a more ontological sense – as Butler (1999b, 343) explains, the flesh is subject to "the performative invocation of a non-historical before."

however, one “can show how these interfere with or even contradict accepted theoretical positions on the body.” (Holliday, Hassard 2001, 7)

Giblett (2008, 10) gives an example of a Foucauldian genealogy of the body: the Chinese cultural shift from “the Taoist body” to “the Maoist body.” (Ibid.) This shift, which followed the Chinese opening to the West, began to replace the body of traditional Chinese medicine and philosophy with a more fascist [12] figure, stressing the importance of physical education, fitness, and nationalism. The well-known analogy between the body and nationalism became apparent, “so that the act of individuals strengthening their bodies was linked to the salvation of the nation.” (Ibid.)

It should be noted here how Shannon Bell’s body stands for all of the above at the same time – she is sporting a post-modern *fusion* body; a truly globalised entity that captures sinkholes and sunrises in the Judean desert, eats sushi in Toronto, gets tattooed in Ljubljana, brands itself, puts itself on display, sexualises and politicises itself … yet wherever in the world it is, it quickly finds the place it feels most at home at – the gym. [13] The gym, called home also by Lasch’s

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[12] We shall explore the fascist body in more detail later. At this point, however, it should be stressed that, as Virilio (2006, 55) reminds us, “*spartakiades* and gymnastic celebrations are always given a place of honor in the Eastern bloc countries” as well. “The crowd’s dynamism becomes a kaleidoscopic decoration, voluntarily forming slogans or gigantic portraits of the Party leaders, allowing the revolutionary militant to become for an instant a part of Mao’s or Stalin’s body.” (Ibid.)

[13] “Any gym anywhere is probably the only place I would call home. I love an old gym with the sweat of existence and equipment that has endured time; love a high-tech gym, love a skipping rope, love a queer gym; all endless possibilities for creation or re-creation. It just takes time and anyone can become gorgeous.” (Bell 2005, June 11) This is an ultimately Cartesian understanding of the body, which can be disciplined and is controllable by the willing spirit. As it is apparent in fitness and health regimes, “individuals are made accountable for their own well-being through exercising, dieting, eating the ‘right’ food and taking regular health checks.”

pathological narcissus (1991) and chauvinistic body culture, is no longer limited to the production of strong, shaped bodies that consequently shape the nation as such. Displaying a big yellow tattooed Star of David on her chest, a tattoo of the *Fast Feminism* book cover on one shoulder, and branded[14] letters FF on the other, Bell runs uphill on a treadmill; a petite, older woman, dressed as a teenager and strong as the archetypal man, subverting conventions and politicizing her activity, affirming her stigmata.

(Holliday, Hassard 2001, 5) Submitting to these cultural regimes of the body gives rise to the production of standardised bodies. The latter are interpreted as *normal bodies*, which are diametrically opposed to the *natural body*. This is the case despite the ideological *endoxa* that the normal and the natural are in fact identical. It should not surprise us that it is the very concept of discipline, which in fact equates the natural and the normal body in the West. (Ibid.) However, Bell's body is not a stereotypical middle-class female body, marked with physical weakness, coded as controlled by patriarchy and imperialism, kept docile and vulnerable – quite the contrary. (Ibid., 9–10)

[14] "Branding is about body healing, the marking-whole of the body in time." (Bell 2010a, 189)

3.2 Body narratives

The body as a site of/for inscription does not only exhibit markers of social stratification and psychopathology, but also presents itself as a surface for the stigma of disease and mortality. Goffman (1963) explains that the Greeks

> originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was a slave, a criminal, or a traitor – a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places." (Ibid., 11)

Stigma is interpreted as an obvious sign on the surface of the body, which stands for an invisible problem, buried somewhere deep inside and utterly inaccessible to us.

This is the standard terminology and discourse of modern Western medicine – the surface of the body "is read as the manifestation of the depths," (Giblett 2008, 11) biological or moral. The stigma therefore stands for more than just physical or medical conditions, it is also presented as representative of our metaphysical condition – according to the stigmata we bear, we are assessed as (im)moral. "Stigma bridges the mind-body gap with a one-way route from the sign on the surface of the body to the depths of the mind, or spirit." (Ibid., 12) The moral and medical scars are written and rewritten on our bodies; they overlap, coincide, supplement each other, and eventually become one.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful examples of this apparent unity was the moral/medical panic in the 1980s concerning AIDS. The characteristic skin marks on (predominantly) gay men were interpreted as proof of both, disease and perversion.[15] AIDS, like anorexia, may

[15] In an attempt to transcend any distinction between heterosexuals and homosexuals, between addicts and nonusers, etc., O'Neill (2001, 181) speaks not of "'persons with AIDS' (PWA) but rather of a 'society with AIDS' (SWA)". The society with AIDS is no longer sure of itself – it "stands as a sick image of itself, exhausted

be a post-modern disease, but it is most often theorised and interpreted in a distinctively modernist manner: “the signifier and the signified have been fused together at the site of the body.” (Probyn 2001, 203)

The first discipline that contested modern Western medicine, interpreting it as yet another expression of the dominant ideology and mores was perhaps medical anthropology. On the conceptual level, a difference between *disease* and *illness* was introduced. (Kleinman 1988) Disease is understood as a clinical condition, judged from outside and diagnosed by a figure of authority and *objectivity*. Illness, on the other hand, is defined as a feeling of not being healthy; it is fundamentally subjective and belongs to the patient (as opposed to the disease, which is essentially a diagnosis based on measurable symptoms). The difference between disease and illness has been introduced in order to hint at a post-colonial understanding of *sickness*, which advocates for “illness narratives”. According to Kleinman (Ibid.), the notion of disease represents abnormalities in the structure or function of one organ or systems of organs. Illness, on the other hand, denotes the subjective interpretation of the experience of one’s body condition; it denotes “a subjectively lived experience of a corporal

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by its own mythology of auto-immunity, apparently forsaken by its medical arts and terrorized by its lack of charity towards its own members.” (Ibid., 182) With AIDS, there comes the fear that our own technoculture has turned against us, a fear which is “nowhere greater than where our lovemaking threatens to kill us.” (Ibid.) Anyone who has watched contemporary pornography knows very well that bodily fluids are no longer taboo in the West (as long as they are tested HIV-free, drug-free, etc.). In social anthropology, taboo is defined as prohibited, feared and respected for symbolic and cultural reasons (as opposed to it being a *real* threat). (Šterk 1998) The abject fluids of the wetware used to present an imaginary and symbolic danger to the individual, but now they pose a (corpo)real threat and endanger our bodies instead. With AIDS, body fluids become a medium, transmitting disastrous news and deadly infections. (Kroker, Kroker 2001b, 14) According to Virilio (1991), sex no longer exists – and fear has replaced it. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that the effect traditionally ascribed to erotic and pornographic films is nowadays ascribed more to horror and slasher films. (Ibid., 78–79)

unrest." (Šterk 2010, 599) Lastly, sickness stands for an explanatory model, "it is a process of labelling symptoms themselves, as well as expressing its significance for the individual and the group to which it belongs." (Ibid.) It is important to add that although the conception of illness narratives may be post-colonial, and they surely do have emancipatory potential, when one is really sick, Middlebrook (In Giblett 2008, 37) argues, they nevertheless cannot write about it.[16]

The same post-colonial attitude that characterises the concept of illness narratives can also be translated to body stigmata; "The stigma can be reworked or rewritten by the stigmatised in writing their own story." (Giblett 2008, 12) It appears as the mission of Shannon Bell is precisely that; her position is complementary with the notion of refusing to conceal one's stigma. Instead, one should own it and affirm it, one should speak rather than be spoken for (Ibid.): "I never write about anything I haven't done." (Bell 2010a, 11)[17] Yet, Giblett (2008, 12) warns us, "post-colonialism is an empty cry of impotence if it does not follow decolonisation of the colonised territory of the body and the

[16] Illness narratives are narratives of "the ill, not of the really sick." (Giblett 2008, 37) The same goes for any post-colonial narrative practice – the truly marginalised cannot write/speak about their status, they have no access to publishers, computers, maybe they are not even literate. Illness narratives as our metaphor for any post-colonial reaffirmation of one's stigma are closely linked to the genres of (auto)biography and medical writing. They are Freud's "patographies" (1916), except they are not Freud's in terms of authorship; rather, they belong to their author; the subject and object of their own analysis. In 1910, Freud complained that "readers today find all pathography unpalatable," (Ibid., 2299) but until today, what Freud deemed as pathological has become mainstream – and the definition of pathography has changed accordingly: Hawkins (In Giblett 2008, 38) explains that for Freud pathography "refers to a biographical study that focuses on the way pathological elements in a person's life can illuminate other facets of that life."

[17] Bell explains that she has three principles of action that she sticks to; "(1) theory must be grounded in action otherwise it is dead; (2) 'we are to the degree that we risk ourselves';" (2010a, 22) and (3) never writing about anything she has not done is the last principle. Bell also discloses, in the safety of third-person narration, that "sometimes FF did actions just so she could write about them." (Ibid.)

seizing of power over one's own body." Shannon Bell goes one step further and does just that, resisting with her body.

Bell has been performing sexual, political and artistic transgressions for decades. She has been involved in everything from female ejaculation workshops,[18] nearly nude lectures filled with s/m imagery and *SlutWalk* marches, to bioart projects and shooting, writing, and performing theory. More importantly, Bell has a habit of writing about everything she does. She writes her own narrative and aestheticises her life from the distance of a writer: "The mere act of writing already presupposes a certain detachment from the self; and the objectification of one's own experience." (Lasch 1991, 17)

Bell's theoretical books, especially the last one, *Fast Feminism* (2010a), are unmistakably autobiographic and straightforward, but perhaps her least censored thoughts are still to be found online – on her *LiveJournal* [19] blog, from which we will quote extensively throughout this dissertation. There is a peculiarity about publishing online, especially when it comes to autobiographic and self-descriptive material that we should be aware of in light of the forthcoming debate. Turkle (1999, 643) argues that "in cyberspace /…/ one's body can be represented by one's own textual description. /…/ The fact that self-presentation is written in text means that there is time to reflect upon and edit one's 'composition'."

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[18] Almost a decade ago, Bell complained: "Ejaculating hasn't been near as much fun since FE became regular with 2 million and counting Google entries, and numerous FE porn sites." (2005, December 27) However, the situation was radically different in the 1980s. In 1989 Bell starred in the first film on female ejaculation, titled *Nice Girls Don't Do It.* It was "a thirteen-minute pastiche of knowledge, porn and instruction, in black and white," (Bell 2010a, 33) At that time, Bell did not anticipate "the appropriation of female ejaculation into dominant heterophallic discourses reinforcing a male-centered, heteronormative model of human sexuality." (Ibid., 58) As female ejaculating has been appropriated by pornography, "in all this knowledge-production female ejaculation has lost some of its power." (Ibid.)

[19] Bell's blog at LiveJournal can be found at fastbodies.livejournal.com.

Of course, it is completely another question whether the bodily stigma is really obsolete after having been translated into the cyberspace by digital technologies. It appears as if the stigma, too has been multiplied to the level where it has taken over the whole body. However, the body has repeatedly been deemed obsolete within the emerging cyber contexts. In this respect, stigma is a sign, merged with the thing (flesh), and as such it stands for the (whole) body. Stigma is what is left of the body since post-modernism. In the following chapter, we shall see what is left of the flesh.

3.3 Techniques of the body, slips of the body

Mauss defines techniques of the body as "the ways in which, from society and society men know how to use their bodies." (1973, 70)[20] He studies the differences in body techniques between cultures, but also notes the differences in ways people use their bodies within cultures, differences that are gender and age specific. (Ibid., 76) There are cultural variations to some rather universal techniques of the body, such as walking, sleeping, eating, etc. These represent what Brownell (In Giblett 2008, 14) calls "body culture". In a particularly expressive paragraph, she defines body culture as:

> Everything that people do with their bodies (Mauss's 'body techniques') and the elements of culture that shape their doing. Body culture is a broad term that includes daily practices of health, hygiene, fitness, beauty, dress and decoration, as well as gestures, postures, manners, ways of speaking and eating, and so on. It also includes the way there practices are trained into the body, the way the body is publicly displayed, and the lifestyle that is expressed in that display. Body culture reflects the internalisation and incorporation of culture. Body culture is embodied culture. (Ibid.)

Inevitably, a certain dialectical relation between the body and culture emerges – each shapes the other and is shaped by the other in return. Mauss (1973) notes how changes in the most basic of techniques of the body (such as swimming) take place over generations. Like culture, these techniques are acquired and as such they require education: "What takes place is a prestigious imitation. /…/ The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving his [individual's] body." (Ibid., 73) Let us

[20] It is perhaps symptomatic that the term "men" is used in theorizing *culturally* specific corporeal techniques – as if it was implied that women, on the other hand, use their bodies in *natural* ways.

consider one of these basic techniques in a bit more detail, namely walking.

Bipedalism or its expression in the form of walking is a distinctively human activity. It is a consequence of evolution and can be said to belong to the natural order. However, if the human ability to walk can be, to some extent at least, attributed to biological evolution, particular ways of walking are characteristically culturally specific. We walk in acquired ways; "there is perhaps no 'natural way' for the adult." (Ibid., 74) According to Flusser (2000, 109) walking is indeed socially constructed; it is "an art that every child has to be taught, and as such it is pretending." There is no such thing as natural way of walking. In fact, whenever we do "attempt to act naturally, we do no become animals, but, rather, beasts." (Ibid.)[21]

Mauss (1973) speaks of techniques of the body (like walking) similarly to how contemporary theory understands language – biology is an essential prerequisite, but in order to start using language, one needs to be taught how to do so, one must be educated, spoken to, etc. When an individual enters the Symbolic Order, marked with language, culture takes over and impulses get repressed. Freud (1915b) argues that the repressed always returns. According to him, "the essence of the process of repression lies, not in putting an end to, in annihilating, the idea which represents an instinct, but in preventing it from becoming conscious." (Ibid., 2991)

One of the most interesting recurrences of the repressed is what he calls "slip of the tongue" or "lapsus linguae." (Freud 1917; see also Freud 1933) These occurrences, marked by an error in thought or, more observably, in speech, are manifestations of repressed unconscious material, such as a wish, conflict, etc. When the unconscious interferes with our behaviour, strange things happen. As one inside joke goes: *we say one thing and mean our mother*. On a

[21] Moreover, "We have to painfully learn upright posture in our youth, as it is artificial: an artificial gesture that we have to enact amidst cultural objects. It enables us to walk on two feet, an acrobatic achievement." (Flusser 2000, 113)

more serious note, we also misread, mishear, misremember, etc. It is precisely in these mis-happenings, in what is omitted, that one should look for valuable interpretative material, rather than in the conscious, disciplined, and structured speech. Žižek (2009) reminds us that the only successful act is in fact a failed one, and this is why psychoanalysis likes to explore failures and marginal events, such as dreams, which are interpreted as very significant manifestations of the unconscious. (Freud 1913b)

In terms of body techniques, it might be possible to locate an analogous gap in walking. The question that demands our attention is: why does the body invoke the flesh by having us slip, lose our balance, trip, stumble, fall, etc.? Is there a source beyond walking just like there is beyond speech that governs our conduct? We would like to suggest that the answer to this question is: yes. Accordingly, Flusser (2000, 113) understands slips in walking as symptomatic of far more than just our biological condition: “The trouble with walking and standing up is not merely corporeal, but also existential: we are here somewhat faultily.”[22]

The body of Shannon Bell, again, proves to be an extremely good example of a concept which is practical to think the (post-)post-modern Western body with. She is a strong believer in body education. She has taken courses in every imaginable body technique, from sex to swimming: “I am a process grrl, more into training than the event. Wondering what a philosophy of training rather than a philosophy of the event would be?” (Bell 2005, August 1) She trains her body, reflects upon this practice, writes about it and, yet, her body rebels. Perhaps it is precisely because she pays so much attention to her

[22] As we shall see later (to be precise, in chapter 5.3 *The Performative Turn*), bodily events and gestures have also been studied in a psychoanalytical context, most markedly so after the body forcefully entered the impenetrable realm of the patriarchal psychoanalytical school. The entrance was both literal and metaphorical – psychoanalysis first provided us with a convincing conception of the body when Butler (1999a) theorised a gender-specific, i.e. female body. Her undertaking is both theoretical and performative in its own right.

body that whatever might be repressed destabilises her body techniques and causes her to slip more than usual. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy and intriguing how these *slips of the body* coincide with errors in language. For example, when she describes one such mishap in a blog passage, titled *Body got in the Way* (2004, May 24a), she also makes a spelling mistake – unsurprisingly, she misspells the most central expression in her description:

> Walking through the market, a few steps behind Balu – keep bugging him about the positioning, but always seems to end up that I am a few feet behind – I missteped [*sic!*] and wiped out flat – nothing serious but sprained my left foot which I ignored for a few hours, but as a philosopher of the gait I was pretty aware of the possible meaning. (Ibid.)[23]

After the injury, it is time for more experimental body education according to the circumstances and possibilities. She reports in a blog post from the very same day that she "worked out a fabulous new walk: limp left leg, swing right hip; vulnerable sexual." (Bell 2004, May 24b) The next day, she is still extraordinarily aware of her body: "I was conscious of two things: how I must try very hard not to slip and that gee, trailing after a humpy guy through the lanes of the old city is quite delightful." (Bell 2004, May 25)

In India, where she is *shooting theory*, body slips never cease. In the middle of a boat ride on the Ganges, Bell decides to get some exercise: "using the two side seats, hand palms facing backwards on one, feet on the other, I was able to do some mean tricep pushups. Just reaching thirty when there was a loud bone crack across my

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[23] This accident happened in India, where techniques of the body are different from what Bell's body is used to, and so is treatment for injuries. Bell enjoys these novel practices with all of her body:

> The doctor, with real intense eyes, came shortly, told me to sit on a stone ledge on the Ganges, felt my foot, put pressure on it first with his hand and then stepped on my foot while pulling hard against my leg, cracked foot and leg, and cracked all my toes; I loved it - loved the pain that turned to laughter as it exited. Announced that I was in love - well, I was screaming, crying and laughing. The special effects have a certain similarity. (Bell 2004, May 24a)

heart. At first I thought that I might actually be dead – feeling nothing but awareness." (Bell 2004, July 26) Regaining composure, she explains to the concerned friends: "no, it doesn't hurt much /…/ I'm just terrified of getting old." (Ibid.)

A couple of days later, another accident: "Tripped and fell last night going by the Burning Ghat - no resprain, just a slight fetching limp that took my mind off the punched in the chest feeling from two days before." (Bell 2004, July 28) It happens so much it has become obvious: "darn, I keep getting hurt in Varanasi," (Ibid.) and with a peculiar sense of humour, Bell offers an explanation; her accidents are "sort of fast immediate retribution for messing with S(he)va; the god of destruction [sic!] with a mean sense of humor and a sharp bite." (Ibid.) To take her mind off her accidents, she has her nose pierced. It hurts a little bit, but it is over too quickly: "Piercing is fast; my interest is in the process more than the result except for the Marilyn: the result requires tedious maintenance [sic!]. Wanted to be pierced in the holy city, want to see if I can make it without an infection." (Ibid.)

A year later, she informs us of several new unfortunate body events, which she attributes to anger: "Three more accidents: dumped a hot macchiato on my clit, bang my head two times really hard on the car door: - wow, dyslexia has really come back - who knew it was linked with anger." (Bell 2005, June 15) Apparently still angry, Bell has trouble unlocking the front door to her loft: "phone the super people I am renting from; figure out I am turning the key the wrong way – been here a month and a half." (Ibid.)

In a particularly revealing explanation, behind the sarcasm, we can find some solid grounds for a psychoanalytical reading of the body accidents: "Well, well, well, well; it has been a long time since I have been this clumsy. Forgot what it was like. Can't say that I miss it, but it is like an old friend. One has to make friends with their demons because they will check in from time to time." (Ibid.) Here, Bell acknowledges what we have suspected from the beginning; this bodily clumsiness did not emerge all of a sudden – rather, it re-emerged.

From this perspective, her obsessive training, educating, disciplining, and playing with the body can be interpreted as a consequence rather than the source of her sporadic clumsiness. This causal relationship between her compulsive body education and slips of the body is also apparent in her own descriptions: “Wiped out harder than I have ever wiped out leaving the gym this morn /…/. Went down really hard with this fabulous crack sound of left knee and right hand. First thought: man, I have messed up scuba diving for tomorrow.” (Bell 2005, July 3) She reacts with anger, which surprises her: “Two gym staff race out to see if I am okay – tell them I am just really angry – odd – don't usually get mad when I wipe out.” (Ibid.)

The reason for anger seems somewhat apparent; the following day, she might not be able to do something she is looking forward to. However, she finds it odd that she feels irritated, which seems rather revealing in itself. Bell fights slips of the body with body discipline and training, repressing the pulsations of the flesh and the language of the unconscious in an attempt to exhibit a sublimated body of steel, muscle and control; a body, which has lost all connection to the “demons” of the past: “Twenty-four years of going to the gym four, five, or more times a week, I reshaped everything including the smile; did the ankles, the face, but not the eyes: these evolve in interaction with others.” (Bell 2005, June 11)

To her orderly and regimented body Bell attributes a special wakefulness, which, according to her, has developed over the years of practice: “25 years of body experience has a certain awareness and skill /…/. That and a real joy in physical activity.” (Bell 2005, August 26) She explains this special awareness as an attempt to “bodily see/feel a city. /…/ Somatically See.” (Ibid.) She also provides the reader with an illustrative example of riding a bicycle through the city of Berlin: “Everytime I bike by the East/West Gallery - Wall into the city center eyes produce body fluid. No thought.” (Ibid.) However, every time she travels abroad and experiences the heightened body awareness that she reports of in the previous passage, slips of the

body arise as well; accidents, unpredicted body events, uncontrollable events:

> Just had the strangest bike injury sort of humanly or posthumanly possible - speared my left leg with a hook on the bike and saw the suspended skin which I had to unhook and gee reminded me of Stelarc's early performances and the skin landscape and how I always wanted to feel a hook through the skin. The hook was kind of big. It didn't hurt as it stopped just beneath the skin and pulled the skin out. (Ibid.)

After the accident, Bell's own body feels foreign to herself; she reports it reminds her "of another body." (Ibid.)

Bell treats her body in a very ascetic manner. However, this has not always been the case. She is open about the fact that she used to drink excessively,[24] smoke cigarettes[25] and engage in other behaviour that is perceived as risky, unhealthy, or immoral in the West. (Bell 2010b) According to her own words, she stopped engaging in risky behaviour, in this case smoking, when that seemed the only sensible thing to do: "Smoking stopped for me as I had intended when I became fully aware that I have used all the excess time allotted for one life-time." (Bell 2005, December 27)

Without the unhealthy habits that bid for time, one has no reason to stop, pause and rest anymore. In the conquest of speed, training and discipline entirely occupy one's body and the pleasure in doing nothing becomes a guilty pleasure. "I will miss sitting with extremely interesting & fascinating people smoking a cigarette and chatting. Without smoking, my ability to sit anywhere with anyone for any time, is lessened. But this is okay." (Ibid.)

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[24] "I can still taste every kind of alcohol I drank and can equally taste the every alcohol I puked. Funny what stays in body memory." (Bell 2005, September 7)

[25] As anyone who has ever been a true smoker, she proposes an original interpretation of smoking cigarettes: "One doesn't negotiate with time. Lighting a cigarette, you can buy some time. That is what smoking is about – a bid for time. It is a paradox – lighting a cigarette and smoking it gives you time in the moment and takes away time in the long term." (Bell 2005, December 27)

In her experimental attitude towards body mastery, Bell will enthusiastically attempt anything that requires control, skill, and self-restraint. She produces visible bodily results and trains her body in new techniques. The harder it is, the more attractive it looks, the more she is afraid, the more she is determined to do it. In her blog, she recounts her difficulties with swimming: “OK, swimming is the most difficult thing I have done; right up there with sex, PhD, driving.” (Bell 2005, July 27) Bell is afraid of swimming and at the same time fascinated by it. In an attempt to get these apprehensive feelings under control, she decides to take lessons. Before attending one, she goes to the pool, filled with anxiety: “This morn 6am: a moment of paralyzing fear coming from who knows where - the Y pool in Brandon is a dream pool: few people which means space to move.”[26] (Bell 2005, September 21) She makes an effort towards an explanation: “Probably MetaFear operating before I was enough in my body to be the swimmer and/or the water.” (Ibid.) Concluding that now she is enough in her body to be a swimmer, she persists: “Kept going and metafear passed: swam 20 or more laps after the lesson. Treaded water just fine for 3mins and realized hey sometimes I am scared on a bike and/or fall off and well it doesn't mean I can't ride.” (Ibid.)

Bell’s body is a body of speed, always-on-the-move, always practicing, permanently aware of its muscles, moving through time and space in black clothes, and on a light diet. She finds no pleasure in resting; she takes short and efficient naps, works during coffee-breaks at Starbucks, and manages her time effectively and strictly.

Aware of the cultural differences, a dissimilar work ethic, and my distinctively more relaxed attitude to life and work, coupled with the characteristically European pursuit of enjoyment, expressed beautifully

[26] We should note here that Brandon, at the time, was the hometown of Bell's mother, who has since passed away. “Brandon is kind of the end of the world in the middle of the Canadian prairies.” (Bell 2005, July 25) Shannon Bell was born in another small town with a male name – Alexander, Manitoba.

in the French motto *joie de vivre,*[27] it can still be argued that Bell's speed is always impossible to catch up with. Here, speed can be interpreted as "literally the end of bourgeois culture, the reaction against exoticism and the lyricism of the voyage." (Virilio 1991, 101–102) Bell perceives tiredness as failure, sleeping as a waste of time, idleness as a definite sign of aging. Lasch writes: "in a society that dreads old age and death, aging holds a special terror for those who fear dependence and whose self-esteem requires the admiration usually reserved for youth, beauty, celebrity, or charm." (1991, 41) The same attitude is particularly clear in Bell's description of tackling a very liminal technique of the body, namely yoga:

> Yoga is the most painful thing I have ever done; I am doing between seven and nine classes a week – broke an eye vessel, yesterday at an Iyengar class the body hurt so much that the eyes were spontaneously tearing – only one other thing ever hurt this much. When Aghori Gambrey cracked me on the side of the head exactly two years ago – it was a Yoga blessing – until today it really felt like the flesh of my body was being flayed from the bones; Yoga is death alive, a cannibalization of the body from inside if you enter it through the aghori lineage and bingo my body solidity changed: the flesh came away from the bones a bit and solidified in a way it never has before. The pain of Yoga done from the inside does what one could only hope sadomasochism might have done. Cut any of the new age

[27] The pursuit of pleasure is a tricky business, especially when it is not rooted in tradition. This is so because "pleasure, once it is defined as an end in itself, takes on the qualities of work." (Lasch 1991, 65) Pleasure cannot be measured – as it is quantified and assessed by standards of achievement, it dissolves. The same goes for sexual performance: "the insistence that sexual satisfaction depends on proper 'technique,' and the widespread belief that it can be 'achieved' only after coordinated effort, practice, and study all testify to the invasion of play by the rhetoric of achievement." (Ibid.) Furthermore, this transformation of play into performance is founded on "a deeper determination to manipulate the feelings of others to your own advantage. /…/ sociability can now function as an extension of work by other means." (Ibid.) By attempting to manage and control all situations that express potential for spontaneity, "present-oriented hedonism" (Ibid., 66) is exposed as "a fraud; the pursuit of pleasure disguises a struggle for power." (Ibid.)

> philosophy go for the ancient practice and whoa boy nothing has ever been that consistently intense, no love, no skydive, nothing ever. I am not in love with Yoga, rather I have a strong respect for what the physical process does with the body/mind. (Bell 2006, July 23.)

For Mauss (1973), body techniques such as walking are seen as dependent upon certain human-specific capabilities, but also as distinctively shaped by cultural training. In this perspective, which we coupled with the psychoanalytic repertoire of interpretations, the body is seen as caught up in the subject-object dialectic – It is doing something, but, at the same time, we do things with it. We do things to and with our bodies.

The body is seen as a tool, "man's first and most natural instrument. /…/ technical object, and at the same time technical means." (Mauss 1973, 75) Again, we are confronted with a Cartesian understanding of the body-mind dualism:[28] the body is a machine led by the mind.[29] Or as Descartes (in Rozemond 2006, 52) argues; the human body is "a machine, which, having been made by God, is incomparably better ordered, and contains within itself more admirable motions than any of those that can be invented by men." Understood as a machine, the body has become an inorganic entity, constituted by capitalist economic relations that replace nature with the capitalist system, and tear the body from the realm of nature. Lyotard (1993) teaches us that "the body of capital" (Ibid., 90) is anything but an organic body.

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[28] It is precisely in this body/mind split that one can trace the origin of the later virtual body, which is still dependent upon that very dualism. Descartes laid the foundations "for modern construction of the body, simulation and virtualization of the body /…/ it is characteristic of early modernity and perhaps today it is being replaced by 'the spectral body' of cyberspaces." (Kunst 2004, 33) However, we shall demonstrate later that philosophical doctrines, refusing to give up Cartesian dualism, such as transhumanism, still endure and prosper.

[29] When the mind forgets to lead, we stumble. The stumbling body is either a means of worship or a tool for scientific examination – we bow in order to show our respect or to look at things more closely. (Flusser 2000)

3.4 The inorganic body machine

Western popular culture and media are replete with representations of human bodies as machines. The brain is sometimes seen as a computer, nerves compared to telegraph wires, eyes associated with lenses, and the heart is perceived as a pump. However, to be able to produce these analogies, humankind first had to produce the computer, telegraph wires, lenses and pumps. This rather obvious notion goes to prove that the view of the human body as machine is historically specific; such metaphors can only emerge after the invention of communication technologies. This is not to say that the view of the body as machine is as new as computers, on the contrary, there is a long tradition of comparing the body to inorganic matter and/or seeing it as a micro system within a larger cosmos. A quick look into anthropological records shows us, however, that this interpretation is not only historically, but also culturally specific. The traditional Chinese Taoist body was perceived as land, whereas indigenous Australians see it the other way around – the land is understood as body.[30] (Giblett 2008, 20)

Sociologically speaking, perceiving the body as earth, and vice versa is pre-modern, whereas modernity means equating the body to the machine. Giblett (Ibid.) traces the Western transition from the pre-modern to the modern view of the body to the time of da Vinci, who figured the body as both, machine and earth. Although he did not specifically mention the metaphor of the machine, it is implied in the notion of the body being an assortment of parts (anatomy), which is stimulated by nerves, in order to move and function (physiology). Or in da Vinci's own words:

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[30] Perhaps this is a suitable occasion to state another obvious fact: our debate is located firmly in the Western philosophical tradition and its concepts. However, it is precisely in the anthropological background that we seek the sources of our own original contributions. The strategy employed is that of reading philosophy through anthropology and with a distinctively cross-cultural *attitude*.

> While man has within himself bones as a stay and framework for the flesh, the world has stones which are supports of earth. While man has within him a pool of blood wherein the lungs as he breathes expand and contract, so the body of the earth has its ocean, which also rises and falls every six hours with the breathing of the world; as from the said pool of blood proceed the veins which spread their branches through the human body, so the ocean fills the body of the earth with an infinite number of veins of water … In this body of the earth are lacking, however, the nerves, and these are absent because nerves are made for the purpose of movement; and as the world is perpetually stable, and no movement takes place here, nerves are not necessary. But in all other things man and the earth are very much alike. (In Giblett 2008, 20)

The body-machine does not need to be treated by medicine; rather, it needs to be serviced. The doctor is nothing but a mechanic. Da Vinci's view is still predominant: "medicine is the restoration of discordant elements; sickness is the discord of the elements *infused into* the living body." (Ibid., 23, emphasis mine) Sickness is always understood as coming from outside: viruses, bacteria, injuries, poisons, and even eating habits, lack of fitness, unhealthy habits, etc. are seen as its most common causes. Illness is a foreign aggressor.[31]

One out of seven smokers will die of lung cancer, one can hear on television, and cannot help but wonder how many non-smokers will also die from the same disease, as, clearly, the statistic is meaningless without this bit of information. Also, in light of such empirical evidence, one might wonder why cigarettes are widely available, even why smoking is not prohibited. It appears as if one of the key ideological imperatives nowadays has become that of good health, which is understood both as physiological and mental, one

[31] Using militaristic terminology for the causes of maladies (as well as externalizing them) reminds us of the fact that there is also a discursive resemblance between medicine and the military. The medical body and the militaristic body are reliant on technology, they are both body-machines that are constantly under attack, they need service and repair, and, sometimes, they get destroyed. (Lakoff 1991)

presupposing the other. One might also get the impression that everything that elicits pleasure[32] has become unmistakably unhealthy, located firmly in the realm of danger. The individual's choice in the West has been reduced to, so it appears, dying healthy or living unhealthy.

If da Vinci sees the body as both, the earth and the machine, a little more than a century later, the culprit of many ideas that by now have become common-sense truisms, Descartes chooses to forget about earth and advocates for the machine instead. In fact, he disconnects the body from the earth. The man-machine metaphor is explicit in his writing, when he describes the "body as a machine" (Descartes 1637, 42), composed of "bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins." (Ibid.) Descartes formulated what we now call mind/body dualism, but he also advocated for a body/earth dualism, since he saw no analogy between land and machine.

As we shall see later, it is impossible to simply repress (the earth and/or the body) without dire consequences. Freud (1915a) insists that the repressed always returns. It comes back to haunt us "in monstrous form, either in the grotesque and monstrous body and body of the earth, or in the monumental and fascist body and body of the earth." (Giblett 2008, 24)

However, the consequences of representing the human body as machine in terms of anatomy and physiology are not as crucial to our undertaking as are the consequences of doing so in the realms of society and politics. According to Foucault (1977a, 136) the body as machine is first and foremost a political metaphor:

> The great book of Man-the-Machine was written simultaneously on two registers: the anatomico-metaphysical register, of which Descartes wrote the first pages and which the physicians and philosophers continued, and the technico-political register, which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and by empirical and

[32] To succumb to pleasure is to resist speed, whilst bidding for time – a point to be recalled in the final chapter of this dissertation.

calculated methods relating to the army, the school and the hospital, for controlling and regulating the operations of the body.

With body politics, the human body entered a “machinery of power /…/ A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’, was being born.” (Ibid., 138) The body is now regulated in terms of behaviour, gestures, techniques, etc. of discipline. It is seen as the latest frontier to be crossed after the earth has been conquered, and interpreted as wilderness to be colonised and exploited.

Becoming the site and target of power, the body is subdued to colonial and imperialist politics. (Giblett 2008, 25–26) As such, it becomes the object of power, whereas discipline dissociates the power itself from the body: “on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.” (Foucault 1977a, 138)

Foucault (Ibid.) develops his argument towards the conclusion that discipline and power cause the body and the machine to become one, they are no longer separated. The body *becomes* machine and society becomes a “machine society” of “machine men” (Ibid., 242, 243) This happens as power is introduced “over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles.” (Ibid., 153) This power fastens the body and the object to one another, producing and constituting “a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex.” (Ibid.)

However, Giblett (2008, 26) draws our attention to the fact that the body can only become an object of power after it has become an object in the first place. He goes on to say that in order to become an object, one first needs to stop being a subject; one becomes a subject *and* object, according to Foucault (2004), the subject and object of power and knowledge. Again, Giblett (2008) explains, in order to be able to become an object of knowledge, the object must first be deadened. Also, distance needs to be “instituted between seeing and saying, words and things.” (Ibid., 26) In short, the subject first needs to be put into the realm of discourse. According to Foucault (2005, 141),

before the 17th century signs were “part of things themselves, whereas in the 17th century they became modes of representation.” As Foucault (2003) demonstrates in the context of modern medicine, disease has become discourse (just as nature has become natural history and sex has become sexuality) – this is to say, “the depths of the body were transformed into surface.” (Giblett 2008, 27)

This development is comforting to the human eye precisely because it is constructed *for* the human eye – the two-dimensional bodily space is a “construct of the gaze.” (Ibid.) The same goes for nature; it is fabricated in an identical way, in the same two-dimensional frozen moment in which land becomes landscape. The body is perceived as a visual phenomenon, a collection of surfaces, and Foucault notes that “the whole dimension of analysis is deployed only at the level of an aesthetics” (2003, 149)

The body (according to Foucault, this goes for the body of the patient, but let us generalise this notion to any body, because every Western body is first and foremost a body of biopolitics and medicine) is the surface onto which the text (of the disease or any other stigma) is written. It appears as if the gaze, predominant in areas from natural history to the clinic, is the chosen classificatory criterion for both natural and human beings; the truth is now “wholly given to the gaze.” (Ibid., 111) Even as the gaze penetrates the petrifying depths of the body at the end of the 18th century and doctors begin to map the inside of the body as well, the body-machine metaphor still holds. The autopsy enables insight “into the depths, and truth, of the disease.” (Giblett 2008, 29) Irreverent of whether the body is dead or alive, the truth is within the body – and, as Porter argues, “violation of the body would be the revelation of its truth.” (Ibid.)

The emphasis is now “placed on the inside/outside boundary, /…/ the threat comes no longer from outside but from within.” (Kristeva 1982, 114) For Foucault, disease is “an autopsy in the darkness of the body, dissection alive” (2003, 161) and the modern Western (medical) body is neither dead nor alive – it is “a kind of animated corpse, a functioning mechanism.” (Leder in Giblett 2008, 29) On the body map,

depth is introduced – but only in death. “The map kills. It is both a powerful instrument of knowledge and equally a powerful force of destruction.” (Giblett 2008, 29.)

Let us now return to the body-machine with a clear verdict: to picture the body as machine is to picture it dead. The exploratory nature of autopsy finds mappable terrains underneath the skin, but this new land (to be conquered) turns out to be dead, it is a wasteland. Death becomes embodied in the living bodies and becomes their inevitable truth. (Ibid., 30) This is the key substance of the modern Western paradigm, according to which death is what gives meaning to life: “that which hides and envelops, the curtain of night over truth is, paradoxically, life; and death, on the contrary, opens up to the light of day the black coffer of the body.” (Foucault 2003, 204)

If health is “the silence of organs” (Bichat in Giblett 2008, 31), disease is their “revolt” (Ibid.) – and the doctor occupies the privileged position of authority that the revolution addresses its demands to. It is no coincidence that the same goes for public health as well as for the, let us put it this way, health of the public.[33]

Doctors are engaged in culturally specific semiotics of diagnosis (Kleinman 1988, 16), within a specific grammar, which is legitimated as natural. Yet again, the anthropological perspective proves useful: we can categorically claim that we are in the realm of culture, when the legitimisation for a certain taboo, prohibition or directive is nature or the *natural order of things*. In other words, nature is socially constructed. (Eder 1996) In this sense, nature is merely the projection of culture and not the other way around: “nature is a self-confirming and narcissistic projection: what is cultural is projected on to natural and made natural, not cultural, in order to legitimate what is cultural by

[33] Here, of course, health is a metaphor; and biopolitics is politics. To be healthy within the dominant ideology means to be healthy in accordance with the Cartesian dual logic: both your body and your mind need to be silent. The silence of citizens means good health for economy and power elites, whereas their revolt in the form of revolution threatens to harm or it even kills the patient, which turns out to be capitalism itself.

making it appear natural." (Giblett 2008, 31) As Šterk (2010, 591) elaborates: "every natural fact needs symbolic representation not only in order to be recognised as having cultural existence, but primarily in order to be defined as 'natural'." For example, the Spencerian organic analogy (organicism) thus seems a very *natural* way of reducing the body to a working machine.

3.5 From analogue to digital machines

As the body becomes a machine, its substance turns out to be nothing but text written on the surface of the body in order to be read and studied. This text hints at hidden depths of the body, which manifest themselves on its surface – through symptoms and signs. The modern body is frozen in time and dimension, it is two-dimensional, its depths only hinted at, and accessible exclusively in death. As communication technologies develop, so does the body-machine. It is becoming less and less analogue – first it becomes "the body-electric" (Giblett 2008, 33), then the "body-electronic, the cyborg" (Ibid.) and finally "with the development of ultrasound, the body-machine becomes the digital body." (Ibid.)

The digital body is mapped digitally, in terms of code and mathematical science. Most famously, the *Human Genome Project* attempts to transcribe "the life and depths of the human body into the dead matter and surface of code. Life is reduced to code." (Ibid.) With the endeavour to represent the body with code, the digital body becomes a "medium of communication /…/ where the discourse of communication and media is used to figure and control biological and social processes." (Ibid.) Van Dijck (Ibid., 34) attributes the idea that the body can be coded in a sequence of four letters, "in a finite collection of information / …/ [to] the epistemological view that computer language /…/ is an unambiguous representation of physical reality."

This represents a shift from the body-machine to the body-text, a text that can only be read by advanced communication technology and skilled experts, it is a shift towards the hypermodern body, towards "a bearer of codes, a set of messages to be encoded and decoded by digital technologies, a cyborg." (Ibid.) "The translation of the world into a problem of coding" (Haraway 1985, 83) is a product of communication sciences and biology. But can this translation be done without reducing the world to sequences of numbers and calculations?

Any attempt to describe the world and the body in terms of digital data and binary oppositions effectively kills them. We “murder to decode and encode.”[34] (Giblett 2008, 144) The body becomes dead, almost inorganic matter.

This is evident in the case of *Body Worlds*, the famous exhibition of plastinated bodies by Gunther von Hagens, which “is really about /…/ the clear dead beauty of the clean dead body.” (Bell 2010a, 24) Von Hagens’ artefacts are in fact dead human bodies – corpses, processed in such a manner that they are strictly reduced to the sense of sight: there are no ‘unpleasant’ smells, no sounds, no touching; there is just the penetrating gaze. The human body is once again placed firmly into the context of aesthetics; it is understood as an exclusively visual category. It is placed within the realm of aesthetics both by being put on display as well as by becoming substantialised by the gaze.

The body is not in a state of decay during this permanent autopsy [35] of the exhibition. Instead, it is solid and immune to decomposition. It is distanced from death and in consequence from life as well – it is the representation of a hard, strong, almost fascist entity, where otherwise soft tissues, such as muscles or skin, are made hard, firm and durable. The specimens are frozen in time and space, presented in dynamic, lively poses, reminiscent of those of fine art models. They are body-machines on display.

Shannon Bell recaps her experience of *Body Worlds* as follows: “I touched the skin – it feels like animal hide. I photographed it, especially one of the feet, actually photographed a few feet – since I had a press pass, I could touch and photograph. And, since I feign a foot fetish – enacted it – most fetishes are feigned.” (2004, May 20)

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[34] Giblett (2008, 145) also claims that to encode and decode means to “reduce communication to the transportation of messages.”

[35] Autopsy, or *autopsia* in ancient Greek, according to Sawday (2002, 35) stands for “literally, seeing for oneself.”

The plastinated bodies, exhibited by von Hagens, present us with a concrete body-machine, which appears more familiar than the abstract, futuristic, DNA-coded digital body of contemporary science. Muscles, tissues, and bones exposed, the body is presented as a collection of parts that work synchronously, forming an organic whole; an organism. This view of the body demands a specific relationship towards one's body: the body needs to be taken care of, managed, trained, and exercised. In fact, the common belief is that its specific parts need specific exercise. It is also important to note that "with exercise the body is not only treated like a machine but it is also disconnected from the mind and the earth." (Giblett 2008, 35) Foucault, too, understands exercise as a product of the mind/body split. (1977a, 161, 162)

By exercising the body, we go through pain and pleasure. The body is broken in order to be strengthened. The body is subjected to suffering in order to be able to perform better. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the sporting body-machine, which "embodies the paradox of modernity: speed, power and prowess combined with pain, suffering and breakdown. The sporting body is the body in extremis," (Giblett 2008, 125) it is a body built on (self-inflicted) pain. (Ibid.) Punishing the body in order to decontaminate the soul (mind, reason,[36] self, etc.), this Christian practice *par excellence*, may no longer be the main penal practice of the authorities (Foucault 1977a), but it is still very much alive. This is due to a brilliant ideological twist, still dependent on the Cartesian logic: while the mind has become the site of domination and ideology, it is now the mind that punishes and subdues the body, which, in consequence, has re-emerged as the site of power. Sport and fitness are a "secular religion. /…/ The alternative to fitness is damnation, not unhealthiness. Fitness is moralised in

[36] Within this dualist logic, with "the coming of democratic power, we see a perversion of primitive transmigration: the soul, by becoming individual, has become Reason, in other words the seat of a prescriptive role of our actions, our movements, even the totality of our destinies." (Virilio 2006, 107)

Christian terms as salvation." (Giblett 2008, 126) Pain is the means of accomplishing redemption, *the triumph of the will*, "pain is the purifier." (Ibid.) Sporting pain, however, is not the same as the pain of being physically tortured by another person, albeit in a sexual context. Shannon Bell describes her date with a professional dominatrix as follows:

> My legs are just a bit too wide apart, arms just a bit too high over my head. She starts with a small soft whip. There is a moment just before the whip lands on my flesh, as I see her coming towards me… I would have paid way more just for that image.
>
> The whip lands. 'Shit, it hurts; it doesn't ignite fire, just hurts.' She warms me up. I love the equipment and I love her, but the pain I am not so fond of. (2010a, 146)

Yet, both the sporting body-machine and the sexual body-machine are established on the premise of pain. In pain, the surfaces of these bodies get arranged "to catch the light and so to be objects for the gaze of spectators." (Giblett 2008, 129) The spectacular punishment of the body may not be back to the public squares, which used to host executions and torture, but it is most certainly returning to haunt us in the visual media. Sports are televised, they exist for the gaze (and for the stopwatch), and contemporary gladiators justify their pain with *success*.[37] The smooth surface of the body is marked with speed, it survives for the stopwatch; "speed in sport is part of the militarisation of civilian life that characterizes hypermodernity." (Ibid., 132) The sporting body craves speed, which establishes the subject – although merely a potentiality, it is a potentiality of escaping death.

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[37] There was a graphic example of this during the 2010 Olympics, when a Slovene athlete Petra Majdič finished the cross-country skiing race with a broken rib piercing her lungs due to an accident during practice, but still managed to win the bronze medal. In the eyes of the public this was true heroism. The bronze medal was seen as worth much more than the potential gold; it turned gold and quite literally so: while another Slovene skier, Tina Maze, brought home two silver medals from the same Olympics, it was Majdič who received a golden state medal for her sporting achievement.

Training the body-machine represses death. Repetition, a key mechanism in the process of repression (Freud 1915a), is part of sport in a very literal manner. To repeat, we should be reminded, is the opposite of overcoming. (Lyotard 1999, 143) Sport is "a transfiguration or sublimation of death. /…/ [It] represents a veritable *ideological apparatus of death*." (Brohm in Giblett 2008, 134)

Any progress has become dromocratic,[38] the population divided between the hopeful and the despairing. The hopeful "are allowed the hope that they will reach, in the future, someday, the speed that they are accumulating, which will give them access to the possible – that is, to the project, the decision, the infinite: *speed is the hope of the West*," (Virilio 2006, 70) whereas the despairing populations are "blocked by the inferiority of their technological vehicles, living and subsisting in a finite world." (Ibid.) Speed is a sign of movement, which, in turn, denotes health. In the West, stopping is rarely voluntary – one is made to stop, the body is forced to halt, and stillness is interpreted as a consequence of an external intervention. The body of speed is perpetually on the move, its speed dissolving the clashes amongst its internal forces. If the body is forced to stop, these forces, and the conflicts that they produce can no longer remain contained within the body. The body, when compelled into stillness, becomes dis-eased.

[38] According to Virilio (2006), dromocracy stands for power of velocity.

3.6 Back to the battlefield

We have already researched how Foucault sees the body as the product of fighting forces, which establishes it as a battlefield – retroactively, almost. Additionally, we have explored the modern medical view of the body-as-(an increasingly digital)-machine.

Disease is a meta-metaphor; it means dis-ease and it is recognised as a representation of disturbance in the corporeal equilibrium, which is by definition external, coming from the outside of the body. It should not strike us as a surprise that military metaphors also thrive in the context of the medical body-machine; sickness is an enemy, “a foreign invader.” (Stibbe in Giblett 2008, 47) There is an obvious discursive resemblance between medicine and the military, between the medical and the militaristic bodies, between medical and militaristic *operations*, technologies, and language. Radiation is a weapon, and so is the scalpel. Cancer is the enemy and the doctors are the heroes that might conquer it; the patient no more than a potential survivor or a victim. (Giblett 2008.) Hence, medical language is replete with military metaphors. (Lakoff 1991) The understanding of the body as a battlefield is constructed in medicinal language, but it is also a construct of biopolitics, (Foucault 2003) especially since the vulgarisation of the term politics itself, which has come to mean *a struggle for power.*

What seems most significant about this dynamics is the fact that in medicine (and elsewhere, too) the enemy really might come from the outside, but it always inhabits the *inside* – it is always an enemy within, “the enemy is us.” (Giblett 2008, 50) Medical science (again, understood as a metaphor for any biopolitical authority) presents itself as our ally in battle, but, more often than not, we become collateral damage. The body is violated, it is tortured, brutalised. In the unlikely event of survival, it is *saved* by the doctor-*hero* and forever imprinted with scars, marked by stigmata, which bear witness to what transpired.

Following Virilio, (2002) understanding the body as a field rather than a battlefield, it can be seen as living being rather than dead matter and consequently it can become one's most loyal ally. In this case, scars turn into signs of a "rite of passage" (van Gennep 1960); they become the evidence of having been put into a distinctively liminal place and having managed to return to society relatively unharmed.

3.7 The grotesque body

In anthropology, liminality stands for a specific time and place, best described as *in-between*. It stands for a state when one is no longer invested with their previous sense of subjectivity, but not yet adorned by the new, forthcoming self. A liminal place is any place that is neither internal nor external, any in-between activity, anything that transpires at the threshold. Liminality is by definition a fleeting status, a transitory condition, something so intensely ambivalent that it cannot be tolerated for very long.

Bakhtin's (1984) grotesque body is stuck at the threshold: it is a body engaged in sex, giving birth, producing excrements, eating, living, and dying. It is a body of the medieval "popular sphere of the marketplace" (Ibid., 9), standing in opposition to the body of the official sphere of the court and the church. The marketplace "is a place where interactions primarily take place, including barter but also social and symbolic exchange. The carnival in the marketplace is an occasion on which inversions take place and subversions can take place." (Giblett 2008, 57) The marketplace is not necessarily a fixed material space, it is not limited to any specific place, and it is "symbolic of all unofficial, popular places both earthly and bodily." (Ibid.)

Bell's home neighbourhood [39] is a fair representation of a contemporary version of Bakhtin's (1984) marketplace and carnival – and it cannot be a coincidence that what the very performance

[39] Standing on the rooftop of Bell's apartment, I can smell grease (there is a Chinese restaurant downstairs) and faeces (the free-roaming racoons of Toronto claim the roof as their own). The air is heavy and humid. I'm looking down at busy, smelly, visceral Chinatown – I could be looking at any Chinatown anywhere in the world. However, the garbled sounds from below are mixed with those from behind, coming from Kensington market, the alternative, queer area of town, where organic food stalls and fish markets mix with the hippest bars and artsy restaurants, where heroin addicts, Caribbean hairdressers and state of the art hipsters all share the streets, meals, drugs and concert experiences. It is a physical place, of course, but it is also symbolic.

philosopher under our scrutiny in this text calls home is precisely the fluid frontier between Chinatown and Kensington market; “the centre of all that is unofficial.” (Ibid., 154–155) It is the unofficial places that shelter the grotesque, “a dangerous swamp of monstrosity. /…/ the grotesque body of the popular sphere opposes the monumental body of the official sphere.” (Giblett 2008, 57-58)

The grotesque body is ambiguous, it is threatening, its logic is artistic and it “ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences /…/ and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body’s limited space or into the body’s depths.” (Bakhtin 1984, 317–318) The grotesque body is interested in cavities – both those of the body and those of the earth. The marketplace is the area of the lower stratum, “the zone of the genital organs,” (Ibid., 147) a “quaking zone /…/ where the earth and the body tremble, where solid and liquid mix and where the inside and the outside meet and mingle.” (Giblett 2008, 58) Bakhtin’s grotesque body transcends the Cartesian dualism: it “does not live like K in his castle, an alienated mind in a body. /…/ the grotesque body is a homely holist.” (Ibid.) The grotesque body lives at the threshold; it is soaked in bodily fluids, open to the environment, and it is not as disconnected from the earth as the *bourgeois* body is.

The *bourgeois* body is private, self-contained, and well-behaved; it is “a site for public regulation” (Ibid., 60) When the body is disconnected from earth, it turns out to be split “between the upper and lower stratum. The upper is valued in positive terms and the lower in negative ones, rather than both the upper and lower being both positive and negative.” (Ibid., 61) The grotesque body is interpreted in purely negative terms; it is uncanny and monstrous, opposing the neo-classical *bourgeois* body. In fact, the *bourgeois* body “is everything that the grotesque body is not.” (Holliday, Thompson 2001, 121) “The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world.” (Bakhtin 1984, 26) The marketplace is not about order and

stability, and the grotesque body of the marketplace eagerly abandons realms of the beautiful and smooth, crossing “the rugged terrain of the sublime” (Giblett 2008, 61) it finds home in “the low lying swamps and marshes.” (Ibid.)

Given the binary opposition between the *bourgeois* and the grotesque body, it is rather indisputable that Bell’s body feels most at home in the nether lands of the grotesque, both in terms of symbolic spaces[40] and physical places.[41] The *bourgeois* body is continually suppressed and the more distance there appears to be between the mind and the body, the more this distance is read as an unambiguous sign of rationality and good judgement. “Suppression (pushing downwards) and distancing (lifting upwards) are the characteristic trajectories of sublimation whether it be in the aesthetics of the sublime landscape or of the sublime body. Sublimation /…/ ‘presupposes repudiation (negation) of the body’.” (Ibid., 62)

Sublimation, however, is far more than just the repression of the body; it is “an entire cultural production of meaning” (Ibid.) and domination. Sublimation is the method through which the *bourgeoisie* is posited as dominant in a society. Thus, the *bourgeoisie* obtains its “hegemony in the semiotic and symbolic realm over other classes, the body, and the earth.” (Ibid.) On the level of the urban city layout, however, “the grotesque lower earthly stratum of the swamps [is sublimated] into the monumental upper earthly strata of skyscrapers,” (Ibid., 99) sometimes quite literally so.[42]

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[40] With her public appearances, sexual and political acts, workshops on female ejaculation, etc., Bell subverts the existing relations of power and definitions of normalcy, challenges dominant morality and presents the unrepresentable.

[41] Travelling around the world, Bell engages in phenomenology of filming deserts, sinkholes, caves, glaciers, and similarly liminal physical spaces, applying theoretical concepts to her practice, and vice versa. It could be said that she is on a permanent philosophical adventure in the nether lands.

[42] Many modern cities (for example: Perth) were built on drained marshes and swamps. (Giblett 2008, 99) In the light of the forthcoming debate it is perhaps worth noting that Perth is one of the world's central cities in terms of post-modern art,

One of the main characteristics of the grotesque body, according to Bakhtin (1984, 35) is that it is not sublime; it "does not obey the aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime." It is "anti-aesthetic," (Giblett 2008, 63) "uncanny," (Freud 1919) excluded from "the system of aesthetics." (Bakhtin 1984, 45) As opposed to the sublime, which is ruled by terror, the grotesque is ruled by horror. Everything that is sublime is "conquered by laugher," (Ibid., 91) thus becoming grotesque. "The grotesque (and the monstrous) overcomes and disarms the monumental and terror through the power of laugher." (Giblett 2008, 63)

With Shannon Bell's body, at times clearly enjoying the grotesque and at times maintaining its façade impenetrable, we are once again located at the threshold. We are clearly not dealing with a *bourgeois* body, but it is a privileged body nonetheless, with access to the domains of power, authority, and exclusivity. It gets to sleep in upscale hotel rooms, it works out in state of the art gyms, it teaches at university. Bell is a member of the new digital *bourgeoisie*. However, every time her body appears *bourgeois*, this impression can be interpreted as an attempt of subversion, masquerade, and impersonation. Even so, when her body does grotesque, it merges with "other bodies and the world" (Ibid., 62–63) on some level, but, again, not all the way and not with every (other) body.

In Bourdieu's (1984) terminology, Bell's social, cultural and, most importantly, economic capital go to prove that her taste (as well as her body) has not been constructed exclusively at the contemporary marketplace after all. At this point, the question arises, whether Bell's privileged status even allows her to be subversive at all. Any Foucauldian philosopher would most certainly argue against such a possibility; according to them, "those who benefit from a given

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techno- and bioart, performance art, and as such not unknown to Shannon Bell: "Three favourite cities in the world: Perth, Berlin & New York. They each have that raw energy close to the surface of awareness that Arthur Schopenhauer wrote about." (Bell 2005, December 27)

system of governmentality" (Ostrander 2001, 174) will never be the source of new experiences. "Rather, new heterogeneous practices are always thrown up from below, from the plebs." (Ibid.) This new *bourgeoisie* is not to be confused with "white-collar" workers. In fact, this emerging class is characteristically "'no collar' – casual in attire and attitude, but deadly serious about /…/ work. /…/ restless as the flows of the financial markets, yet /…/ still concentrated in major metropolitan centres, where they carve out cosmopolitan lifestyles through their consumption practices." (Bell 2007, 65) According to Castells (2010a, 447), a global network of elite enclaves is the habitat of this new *bourgeoisie* – international hotels, VIP lounges, mobile access to informational networks, etc. The new elite, the digital *bourgeoisie*, also has a distinctive, yet much standardised way of life. According to Castells, this lifestyle

> transcends the cultural borders of all societies: the regular use of SPA installations (even when traveling), and the practice of jogging; the mandatory diet of grilled salmon and green salad, with udon and sashimi providing a Japanese functional equivalent; the "pale chamois" wall color intended to create the cozy atmosphere of the inner space; the ubiquitous laptop computer, and Internet access. (Ibid.)

However, there *is* life beyond the network society. Moreover, there is still thriving life offline – there are switched-off lifestyles, trapped behind great firewalls, locked on the other side of the "digital divide." (Norris 2001) There are masses of invisible, disconnected people, whose survival is more dependent on earth than on the virtual flows of capital. The unplugged body of the digital and geographical periphery is perhaps the new site of the grotesque and freedom, which both rely on the concept of physical space (as opposed to the contemporary fascination with abstract time, specifically, its focus on *now*). It should not come as a surprise that Shannon Bell regularly logs off, travelling to remote areas and leaving all the digital chic behind to undergo purely phenomenological experiences with indigenous grotesque bodies of the world. However, never ceasing to shoot

philosophical concepts with her high definition device, she is doing post-colonial anthropology at best – and, as it is rather usual with Western anthropologists, a bit of tourism on the side.[43] It seems as if the authenticity of the *bourgeoisie*, due to multiplied alienation from the context of one's own (mediated) culture, is to be sought for only within another (seemingly non-mediated) culture. In short, the authenticity of the *bourgeoisie* can only be found in the Other.

[43] To be honest, this is precisely what I did during short fieldwork in Toronto in 2012.

3.8 The sublime and beautiful

19th-century writer William Hazlitt understands the smooth and the beautiful body in opposition to what he calls “the gusto of the muscular (or sublime) body.” (In Giblett 2008, 63) He speaks of Michelangelo’s monumental bodies as powerful, demanding attention, hijacking the gaze. Their “limbs convey an idea of muscular strength, or moral grandeur, and even of intellectual dignity: they are firm, commanding, broad, and massy, capable of executing with ease the determined purposes of the will. / … / expressing energy of will.” (Giblett 2008, 67) It is this very conception of the sublime body that represents the avant-garde of the fascist body. It turns out that “Michelangelo is the stylistic father of Mussolini.” (Ibid.) This understanding of the sublime (and sublimated) body stands in direct opposition to the grotesque, slimy body, and yet, it is neither sufficient nor appropriate to describe it as beautiful.

The sublime as described and positioned above is useful in terms of politicizing the body. Giblett (Ibid.) excludes the sublime from the realm of aesthetics and contrasts it with Freud’s (1919) notion of the uncanny. Excluding the sublime from aesthetics necessitates its inclusion somewhere else, for example, in the context of biopolitics, where it can then be contrasted with the uncanny (Giblett 2008), whereas the interpretation that we are more in favour of, builds on Kant’s (2007) opposition between notions of the beautiful and the sublime. If the former firmly rests in the context of aesthetics, the latter tends to irritate us in a different manner.

However, merely because we would prefer to keep the sublime outside of (modernist) aesthetics, we do not necessarily have to place it in the context of biopolitics. We can at least as effectively employ it in the field of ethics. In such a case, beautiful is attractive to the eye, it is “pleasurable, comforting, blandly ‘nice’ or even cute” (Šterk 2012, 170) and it satisfies our mores. Beautiful is a moral term, whereas the sublime fixates the gaze, terrifies the subject and demands the

abandonment of the vulgar version of ethics, morality. (Ibid.) Abandoning morality, we now find ourselves firmly in the realm of ethics. In this context, the concepts that Giblett (2008) presents as opposing, the sublime and the uncanny, indeed prove to be complementary. Moreover, conceptualised in this manner, the sublime essentially reveals itself as rather anti-aesthetic.

The sublime is associated with “negative pleasure” (Zupančič 2000, 149–150) as it is comprised of two distinguishable moments: “The first is the moment of anxiety and discomfiting fascination in the face of something incomparably larger and more powerful than oneself. This is an anxiety from which a subject can escape only by transforming it into the second moment, into the feeling of the sublime itself.” (Šterk 2012, 170) Described like this, the idea of the sublime is analogous to what psychoanalysis has termed the uncanny. With the introduction of the conception of (uncompromising) desire, the uncanny can also be placed in the same register as “Lacan’s fantasy.” (Ibid., 173) All these concepts are “inexplicable in terms of speech.” (Ibid.) In short, what they have in common is that they are beyond speech.

Thus, the unrepresentable sublime operates on the level of the event: “Theory stops when reality outstrips it in terms of horror, beauty and possibility at the event level, when all the words of the world cannot grasp the event.” (Bell 2010a, 180) When this occurs, Lacan’s (2006b) three logical times collapse and “the instant of the glance, the time for comprehending, and the time of concluding” (Ibid., 167) collide “into a single moment. All that we need here is an instant of the glance; there is no need for time for understanding, nor is there any use for the moment of concluding, for it has always already been implied in the moment of looking. A single glance explains everything.” (Šterk 2012, 173) I

In the context of our text, Šterk’s postulation of the sublime as the collapse of Lacan’s modalities of logical time proves to be especially valuable, as it presupposes that representation in language is no longer of any use. In this respect, perhaps the following is one of

the most crucial points of this text; by definition, there is no such thing as an event that can always be univocally described. The event cannot be represented, as it is always beyond language. According to Artaud, De Bolle (2010, 25) explains, “it is necessary to ‘break’ language in order to be able to touch life.” The event does not belong to the orders of representation, metaphor, the Symbolic, etc. As our body still reacts to the sublime, the consolation in metaphor proves unsatisfactory: “to feel one’s hair standing on end, to have one’s heart in one’s mouth, to have a lump in one’s throat, to grow pale, to make one’s flesh crawl.” (Ibid., 176) Evidently, the unspeakable is curved into the flesh: “the eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh.” (Deleuze 1990, 161) Thus, the event should be positioned within the context of the performative – a concept which is always already embodied and is forever invoking the Real, which, again, is one of the names for the sublime.

3.9 The body without organs

The sublime body is sublimated. It is without odour, “without coarse laughter, without organs, separate from the Court and the Church on the one hand and the market square, alehouse, street and fairground on the other – this was the great labour of *bourgeois* culture.” (Stallybrass and White in Giblett 2008, 69) As the grotesque marketplace becomes the market, the grotesque body becomes the sublimated body. It is separate from the earth, and in opposition to the common body of the marketplace, it is the body “*on* the market, the commodified body.” (Giblett 2008, 69.)

On the surface of “the body without organs of desire,” (Guattari 2006, 44) one can trace the sublimated and the sublime. The grotesque, the monstrous, and the repressed returns from the depths of the body and is inscribed into its surface. The body without organs is a “*tabula rasa*” (Guattari 1984, 51), a clean, virgin surface onto which the law inscribes the law. (Giblett 2008, 69) It is “a sign that is indifferent to substance, a sign that doesn't give a shit about discursive chains and traverses, trans-verses, structures to constitute a plane of subjective consistency for itself.” (Guattari 2006, 45) Inscription is the location of a desiring process and as there is only “being-for-death” (Ibid., 91), inscription is no more than “letters-for-death.” (Ibid.)

The body without organs is a pure surface and a texture. It is the remainder of the body when it is stripped of its organs; it is what Patton (Ibid.) calls a “scene of the theatre of cruelty.” In this theatre of cruelty, one can watch the “play of desire and pleasure.” (Ibid.) It is the body without organs that gives rise to desire: “there is desire as soon as there is a machine or a ‘Body without Organs’.” (Deleuze 2006, 108) But this organless body does not only produce desire, it is also the medium of desire; it is through the body without organs that one desires in the first place. Desire is de-individuated by the organless body. (Guattari 1984, 80) As such, desire is a “superficial productive phenomenon of the body /…/ produced by the plays of capitalism

across the surface of the body / …/ It is not a manifestation of the depths of the body, of its living substance." (Giblett 2008, 70) "The BwO is what remains when you take everything away," (Deleuze, Guattari 2005, 151) and everything is – the phantasy. This interpretation points at the crucial difference between psycho- and schizoanalysis; psychoanalysis "translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real, because it botches the BwO." (Ibid.)

In the permanent oscillation between emptiness and fullness, the body without organs lives at the threshold, "in the liminal, twilight zone between life and death." (Ibid.)[44] It is not an empty body robbed of organs, it is a body that opposes the notion of *organism* – it is

> opposed less to organs as such than to the organization of the organs insofar as it composes an organism. The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization. Lice hopping on the beach. Skin colonies. The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities. (Deleuze, Guattari 2005, 3)

The body is interpreted as emancipated in the realm of the undead, it is no longer reduced to the reductionist, instrumentalist view of the body – organicism.[45] "The body without organs is everything, and outside of it, there is nothing." (De Bolle 2010, 26) The body without organs is an infinite and radical affirmation of the schizophrenic body, a figure of living death, and a celebration of madness of sorts. Deleuze (Deleuze, Parnet 2002, 40) explains: "We are trying to extract from madness the life which it contains, while

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[44] Once again, life proves most lively in the liminal zone between life and death. For example, Žižek (1992) argues that the undead paradoxically represent ultimate life: "as of death, the death-stench it spreads, is a mask sheltering a life far more 'alive' than our ordinary daily life. The place of the 'living dead' is not somewhere between the dead and the living: precisely as dead, they are in a way 'more alive than life itself,' having access to the life substance prior to its symbolic mortification." (116)

[45] In ancient Greece, *organa* "were tools /.../– instruments with specific uses. And they presupposed a *user*." (Kuriyama 1999, 264)

hating the lunatics who constantly kill life, turn it against itself.” The body without organs is a site of great potential and Deleuze and Guattari (2005, 151) encourage the readers to discover it for themselves: "Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it. It's a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It is where everything is played out." Furthermore, psychoanalysis brings us to the threshold of the body without organs, yet it advises us against crossing the border.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, however, “where psychoanalysis says, ‘Stop, find your self again,’ we should say instead, ‘Let's go further still, we haven't found our BwO yet, we haven't sufficiently dismantled our self.’” (Ibid.) We are urged to participate in reality in a non-mediated manner, characteristic of schizophrenia; “the schizophrenic is closest to the beating heart of reality, to an intense point identical with the production of the real,” (Deleuze, Guattari 2000, 87) which, interestingly, Reich (Ibid., 88) equates with experiencing the biology of the body.

Giblett (2008) argues that Deleuze and Guattari confuse the body without organs with what we have already labelled as the pre-modern body, the body of the earth. To them, the body is not a machine, but a tree; it is the pre-capitalist body, the body “before it had organs, before it was organized.” (Ibid., 71) Interpreting the body as a tree is representative of the traditional Chinese understanding of the “Taoist body”. However, the European (philosophy of the) body is not similarly *rooted* in earth, instead our philosophical predecessors, the Greeks, were far more interested in animals than in plants. This is where it is possible to locate the origin of the heightened attention to musculature. (Ibid.)

As mentioned above, the consumerist (post-)capitalist body may be a living body, but it is a dead living body, “inscribed by law and wracked by desire on a torture machine.” (Ibid., 72) For Brown, it consumes other bodies and produces “the dead life of the body.” (Ibid.) The latter is a definition of excrement. For Freud, (1908) the paradigmatic example of excrement is money. Money is dead matter,

whereas excrement is dead living matter, which goes to prove that the body is deadened by money, which perhaps stands as the purest representation of capitalism. (Giblett 2008, 72)

For Deleuze and Guattari (2000, 113), sublimation is related to anality and dependent upon the "projection of the human body into things." (Brown in Giblett 2008, 72) As such, sublimation is mortification, "a sequestration of the life of the body into dead things," (Ibid.) commodities. Sublimation does not come easy, though, "it doesn't just happen, as if by some miracle, anymore. *You have to work at it.*" (Guattari 2006, 32) Commodities are saturated with life[46]

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[46] When commodities are saturated with life, we find ourselves in the sphere of fetishism. The function of the fetish, according to Freud (1927) is to represent a "token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it." (4536) He argues that the fetish also represents the non-existent penis of the mother that the child used to believe in: "the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and /…/ does not want to give up." (Ibid., 4535) Freud's conception of fetishism is valuable in this context because it establishes sexually charged relationships between subjects and objects and goes beyond the classical anthropological explanations of totemism, which first suggested that inanimate objects are sometimes inhabited by spiritual powers. Marx (1887) speaks of fetishism of commodities, very "queer" (Ibid., 46) things with an almost magical quality. Marx borrows the conception of fetishism from anthropology, keeping in mind Freud's (1927) discovery that the relationship between mundane objects and people can also be rather secular (in Freud's theory, sexual). With the introduction of money, argues Marx (1887), products are separated from the hands that built them and they transcend their use-value, becoming commodities – the value is no longer in the effort of production, but is now seen as residing in the objects themselves. A thing, "as soon as it steps forth as a commodity, /…/ is changed into something transcended." (Ibid., 46) Marx (Ibid., 46–47) argues that

> a commodity is /…/ a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour, appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.

A social relation between capitalists and labourers thus assumes "the fantastic form of a relation between things." (Ibid., 47)

and life “becomes associated with the dead life of matter made into dead commodities.” (Giblett 2008, 72) Brown argues that sublimation kills the body; it drains it of life, what were once murky depths, thriving with (grotesque) life of the body, has now become “the dead surface of private property just as the depths of the swamp.” (Ibid.)

The body without organs is not a productive capitalist body,[47] but, rather, it is the consuming body of capitalism, it is “unproductive”, produced as “antiproduction”. (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 11, 15) It is a body of anarchy and chaos, “the deterritorialized socius, the wilderness where the decoded flows run free, the end of the world, the apocalypse,” (Ibid., 176) not completely unlike the feminine monstrous body of the earth.

[47] According to Guattari (2006, 168), “the capitalist ideal is the pure machine, /.../ capable of reproducing itself machinically.”

3.10 The feminine monstrous body

The grotesque body of the lower strata and the marketplace transcends gender; it is a matter of social class rather than gender. However, according to Giblett (2008, 74–89) there is also a distinctively feminine monstrous body, representing the flipside of the sublime masculine body, "a feminine body that lurks within the masculinist body as the repressed that returns. It is either a masculinist projection within to be abhorred and feared or it is a feminist construction of the goddess within to be revalued and respected." (Ibid., 74) In the context of discourse, the feminine body is overwhelmed by nature; it is out of control and messy, it needs to be controlled and disciplined; whereas the masculine body is seen as in control, neat and needing no intervention.

These discourses are not material per se, but they do have material, corporeal effects. (Holliday, Hassard 2001, 6) The feminine monstrous body is abject and terrifying to the masculinist mind as well as to its own binary opposition, the sublime and monumental masculine body. These bodies are "locked in cultural and political contention." (Ibid.)[48]

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[48] Kristeva (1982) argues that the abject and the sublime belong to the same order (to the same subject and speech), as they both transgress the notion of the symptom:

> The *symptom*: a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer that the listening devices of the unconscious do not hear, for its strayed subject is huddled outside the paths of desire. *Sublimation*, on the contrary, is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal. In the-symptom, the abject permeates me, I become abject. Through sublimation, I keep it under control. /…/ For the sublime has no object either. /…/ The 'sublime' object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. /…/ [the] sublime is a *something added* that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both *here*, as dejects, and *there*, as others and sparkling. A divergence, an impossible bounding. Everything missed, joy – fascination. (11–12)

The sublimated body is unable to exist without the perverse (monstrous) body that challenges Law – they are "obviously inseparable."[49] (Kristeva 1982, 124) In fact, the grotesque others have become an "integral part of *bourgeois* (unconscious) subjectivity – the others against whom this class defined itself." (Holliday, Hassard 2001, 10) This other, as is usual in binary oppositions, is feared and foreign, it is an object of disgust, but it is also an object of fascination and desire at the same time. (Ibid.)

The distinction between the fascist sublimated masculine body and the grotesque and the monstrous body can be found precisely in the premises of the law and discipline. The disciplined body is "a body connected intimately with the [Cartesian] mind; it is the mind that overcomes the body's potential excesses," (Ibid., 9) whereas the grotesque and the monstrous bodies are outlaw; they are "associated with the weak mind, with those whose inferior status has historically justified /…/ their exploitation and incarceration." (Ibid.)

Speaking of the abject, Kristeva (Ibid., 70) claims "that the attempt to establish a male, phallic power is vigorously threatened by the no less virulent power of the other sex, which is oppressed /…/. That other sex, the feminine, becomes synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed." She defines the abject as something that is excluded and forbidden, yet something "from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us." (Ibid., 4) Therefore, abjection "is above all ambiguity." (Ibid., 9)

The abject is at the threshold of the Symbolic Order – it is located outside of it, yet it also establishes it. The abject marks a "primal repression," (Ibid.) which precedes the conscious/unconscious opposition. It represents the border between human and animal and is located at the place of separation between culture and nature. On the

[49] Kristeva (Ibid., 125) goes on to note that an important insight of Christianity "is to have gathered in a single move perversion and beauty as the lining and the cloth of one and the same economy."

individual level, abjection marks the separation of the self from the (m)other. It is "the mediating category between subject and object that makes both possible /…/ neither subject nor object, but that out of which both spring and that to which both return." (Giblett 2008, 75)

Following the same binary logic as in the case of the opposition between the feminine monstrous body and the masculine monumental body, it is the subject that establishes the object and vice versa. There is no subject or object without the "subject/object distinction. The abject is the '/' that separates and mediates both subject and object, and makes both possible." (Ibid.) The abject is always in the domain of the liminal, it is at the threshold, it perpetually crosses the border and threatens it; that is what makes it monstrous.

The abject is strongly associated with the eruption of the Real into everyday life. The function of the monstrous is to "bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability." (Ibid., 76) To the mind, abjection, a "source of evil and mingled with sin," (Kristeva 1982, 127) is the "requisite for a reconciliation /…/ between the flesh and the law." (Ibid., 127–128) However, although the abject cannot be associated with desire like Lacan's concept *petit a* (2006a), it is very closely linked with fear and *jouissance*: "One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it [on en jouit]. Violently and painfully. A passion."[50] (Kristeva 1982, 9)

The ultimate example of abjection in the context of the body is perhaps that of female ejaculation, which, according to Bell (2010a, 39) "isn't about comfort /…/ it's raw, it's rough and it's going right to the limit. /…/ it is a body's right." Bell (Ibid., 42) informs us that in producing "postpornography" her position is "a Sadean woman." As such, she at the same time occupies "the position of desiring subject

[50] Again, we seem to be approaching the unspeakable. We are quickly reminded that we should be passing over in silence (Wittgenstein 2002, 39), perhaps because "it is /…/ impossible to represent in language anything that 'contradicts logic'." (Ibid., 7) However, the concepts like the *abject*, *sublime*, *uncanny*, etc. are first and foremost embodied – the body performs them independently of language; in silence, so to speak. (Šterk 2012; see also Šterk, Vrtačič 2012)

and freeze[s] the object of desire outside the realm of hegemonic desire." (Ibid.) When the female body ejaculates, we are confronted with "the postmodern female body *par excellence*: it engages in non-gender-specific body action, makes the ontological categories of woman and man obsolete, and allows female and male bio-body difference to blur into body sameness." (Ibid., 43)

Interpreting gender as obsolete is a consequence of viewing the body as obsolete in the first place. Bell in fact elaborates on that very point as well: "If 'the body is obsolete' as Stelarc has been stating and proving since the early 1970s, then gender, the dominant body signifier, is also obsolete." (2010a, 18) Gender is seen as performance without any original sex, (Ibid., 19) but there is also "no essential self and /…/ the no-self knows no gender." (Ibid., 45)

The monstrous feminine body reeks. It transgresses and devalues the prominence of the gaze and its sublime masculine body. Its mission is to "undo the privileging of sight and to return the body to an intimate connection with the body of the mother, and the body of earth, with both the lower bodily and earthly strata." (Giblett 2008, 77) The area of the body, most persuasively associated with other senses than sight, is the genital area, especially the female genitalia – it is the area of ambivalence, liquids, and smells. It is prominent in both the grotesque body and the monstrous body; it is the "(un)homely place par excellence." (Ibid., 78) Unsurprisingly, it is also the very area that Shannon Bell reclaims over and over again – in her texts, bioart projects, [51] in performance philosophy events, [52] and in sexual

[51] Bell was the artist-in-residence at Symbiotica, Dept. of Anatomy and Human Biology, University of Western Australia, Perth, where she was working on a tissue-engineered project *Two Phalluses and Big Toe*. Subsequently, Bell showed her artwork at two international exhibitions, *Break 2.3: New Species* in Ljubljana (2005) and *Repositioning the Coordinates* in Columbus, Ohio. (Bell 2012) The bioart project implements "Heidegger's approach to art as a means of 'revealing' new entities to 'unconceal' truth. It functions as a comment on Lacan's claim that 'no one can be the phallus' by showing that the phallus can be (alive) with no 'one'. It biotechnically realizes Bataille's 'Big Toe' as a site of waste and dirtiness and the organ which

performances – whether they are artistic, political, educational or simply – sexual.[53]

Just like the feminine, the Jew stands for abjection itself as well. To exhibit a Star of David on one's chest as does Shannon Bell[54] is to welcome abjection in an act of subversion. Kristeva (1982) argues that the

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marks us as human." (2010a: 183) Bell finds potential for political engagement in bioart:

> as a strategy of engagement, [it] can be an immediate and effective pragmatic-philosophical and political engagement of the concepts at the core of Western humanism and post-humanism: the continuum of life and death, self, other, identity, the body, relations with other living and technological systems, ethics and responsibility. *Two Phalluses and Big Toe* engages with the most primary sex characteristic that marks us human and designs us as male and female. (Ibid., 189)

[52] One such example was the world premiere of *Fast Feminism* (2010), an event that transpired in a small LGBTQ café in Ljubljana, Café Open. Bell was wearing (only) a black fishnet mini dress and sporting a black strap-on as she read various excerpts from the book. Behind her, there was a looping video projection of raw ethnographic footage, which we had shot the previous day.

[53] Interestingly, Bell herself summarises her pursuits as follows: "past lives – whore philosopher; present – performance philosopher; future – not very curious – guessing philosopher." (2004, July 26) Bell indicates the shift towards "not very curious" philosophy in *Fast Feminism*, when she labels her work as "speed theory, [which] is a form of 'theoretical art' or 'artistic theory,' a *techne* that comes out of the very condition that it addresses." (2010a, 15) Kroker (Ibid.) calls post-post-modernism "the age of the bored eye: the eye which flits from situation to situation, from scene to scene, from image to image," whereas lasting interest now belongs to the order of nostalgia. (Ibid.)

[54] Bell got this tattoo in Berlin, "as a mark of courage, the will to endure and love of existence. /…/ I wanted my bodyscape not just to explode the commonplace perceptions of the aging female body, but also to redeploy through material ownership the subject position, advanced by the May '68 movement in France: 'We are all German Jews.'" (2010a, 21–22) On her blog, she adds: "The tattoo is a body memorial and a marker reminder of time; in my particularity, a time for serious endeavor. As I lay on Yaam Beach for a few minutes en route to return my bike to Fat Tires, I thought about how much I really wanted to wear the star of david on my skin until the cremation fire reduces all to ash." (Bell 2005, September 10)

> Jew becomes the feminine exalted to the point of mastery, the impaired master, the ambivalent, the border where exact limits between same and other, subject and object, and even beyond these, between inside and outside, and disappearing – hence an Object of fear and fascination. *Abjection itself*. He is abject: dirty, rotten. And I who identify with him, who desire to share with him a brotherly, mortal embrace in which I lose my own limits, I find myself reduced to the same abjection. (187)

The abject is not merely an object of fear and disgust, as Kristeva points out in the quoted passage; it is also fascinating and desirable. “It is as though it draws the subject in order to repel it.” (Longhurst 2001, 83)

When we are at the threshold of the feminine and abjection, we are provided with a very audacious insight into “the ‘drive foundations’ of fascism.” (Kristeva 1982, 155) Abjection, according to Kristeva (Ibid.) is “the economy, one of horror and suffering in their libidinal surplus-value, which has been tapped, rationalized, and made operative by Nazism and Fascism.” Moreover, “neither theoretical reason nor frivolous art, stirred by epiphenomena of desire and pleasure, has been able to touch that economy.” (Ibid.)

3.11 The fascist body

The body-machine as described by Foucault and outlined in the previous chapters of this text is not confined to medicine, it also functions politically. As elaborated above, the body-machine is the fascist ideal. It is the militaristic body of the perfect soldier, the political body of a strong ruler, the aesthetic body working out in the gym. Exercise promotes and articulates "physique free of excess and a spirit tempered by strenuous effort." (Kuriyama 1999, 227) The body-machine is the body of mainstream aesthetics and ideology. Are we witnesses to the rebirth of fascism?

Virilio (2006, 134–145) claims that "since fascism never died, it doesn't need to be reborn."[55] Fascism is most alive and well in the context of body management and discipline. The body "is the vehicle and vector by which fascism sends its message to us in the present and ensures its survival." (Giblett 2008, 90) The fascist body-machine is constituted "as the communication and transportation technology." (Ibid., 91) The ideal fascist body is a battle-ready machine, because fascism is, argues Mangan (Ibid.) "inseparable from militarism" and is embodied in "the formalized muscular male body … honed by hard exercise." (Ibid.). The fascist body is, explains Hoberman (Ibid.) ruled by "the cult of hardness." Taking all of this into account, it is no wonder that Mosse (Ibid.) regards sculpting as the fascist art form *par excellence*, and fascist sculptures as "brutal in their monumentality."

[55] Virilio (2006, 135) further elaborates this point: "Fascism is alive because total war, then total peace, have engaged the headquarters of the great national bodies (the armies, the forces of production) in a new spatial and temporal process, and the historical universe in a Kantian world. The problem is no longer one of a historiality in (chronological) time or (geographic) space, but in *what* space-time?" Virilio (Ibid.) reviews the physical concept of history, concluding that "pure history /… / is only the translation of a pure strategic advance over terrain. Its power is to precede and be final, and the historian is but a *captain in the war of time*."

The cold[56] metallic masculine body is at the opposite end of the political, social, and aesthetic continuum than the grotesque and the monstrous body. Its surface is impenetrable and reflective; it functions as a barrier, it is the armour which serves to "protect and maintain the ego against incursions." (Ibid.) This is a sublimated body, transforming the grotesque and monstrous depths below into the shiny monumental heights above. Western cultures prefer the hard over the soft, muscle is superior to fat, erection over impotence, wealth over poverty, power over weakness. (Ibid., 91–92) However, everything that is favoured and desired proves to be a feature of minority, marginality and liminal time: most bodies are not very muscular and fit, the penis spends most of the time hanging down rather than in an erect, upright position, wealth and power belong to the 1%, etc. "The hard muscular body is a particularly western fetish," (Ibid., 92) the difference between firm and soft bodies the "divide between rulers and slaves." (Kuriyama 1999, 141)

The fascist fixation on firmness not only defines a certain body-ideal, but it also gives rise to a particular sense of self:

> the rise of the preoccupation with muscles /…/ is inextricably intertwined with the emergence of a particular conception of personhood. Specifically, in tracing the crystallization of the concept of muscle, we are also, and not coincidentally, tracing the crystallization of a sense of an autonomous will. Interest in the muscularity of the body was inseparable from a preoccupation with the agency of the self. (Ibid., 144)

Both the mind and the body become separated from the earth, they are hardened, they become phallic. Muscles are seen as "instruments of an autonomous will, the will to power; muscles are agents of the self." (Giblett 2008, 92) Muscles are interpreted as organs of intentional activity that "allow us to choose what we do, and when, and how; and this choice marks the divide between voluntary actions and involuntary processes. Muscles, in short, identify us as genuine

[56] "Living people are warm, corpses are cold," Kuriyama (1999, 230) reminds us.

agents." (Kuriyama 1999, 144) In the context of the body, muscles represent the privileged site of biopolitics, supporting the ideology of autonomy, free will and uninhibited choice.

Fascism elaborated this relationship towards muscular masculinity by politically polarising gender, which developed two distinct bodies: "the soft, fluid, and ultimately liquid female body which is a quintessentially negative 'Other' lurking inside the male body … [and] the hard, organised, phallic body devoid of all internal viscera which finds its apotheosis /…/ in the machine." (Ibid., 92–93) Kuriyama (1999, 142) describes the difference with the help of an expressive metaphor: "males are fiery and dry, females are moist and cold." It is also worth noting that, as de Certeau (In Giblett 2008, 93) argues, the central characteristic of the machine is not only the fact that it is gendered, but also that it is gendered as distinctively male.

Shannon Bell's body transgresses the fascist body dualism. It is hard, muscular, athletic, but it is also a feminine body, an older feminine body to be precise.[57] Her corporeality is determinedly "split between the monumental upper bodily /…/ stratum and the grotesque lower bodily /…/ stratum." (Giblett 2008, 99) Her body is positioned at

[57] The aspect of age is not unimportant for Bell either, for she is very well aware that she is "no novice fast feminist." (2010a, 21) When she does workshops, demonstrations and performances, she puts on display "an *older*, small, muscular femme body; a body that is not supposed to be seen, nor up until now to be sexual and sexualized. The obscenity is in the showing, the obscene seduction is presenting a hypersexual older powerhouse femmly /…/ body." (Ibid.) Furthermore, Bell argues that in relation to time, we are all equal: "It doesn't matter how many years one has worked out, or how long and how hard each time, time will get you." (Ibid.) One cannot help but wonder: why is it politically incorrect to "queer the old female body"? (Ibid.) Why is it inconceivable for the dominant (moral) majority "to fuck with the signs of aging while presenting them"? (Ibid.) It appears as if the "age spots, knee wrinkles and sagging upper-arm undercarriage," (Ibid.) are seen as hostile, threatening and malicious signs of aging and femininity. When we see them engage in philo-porno-political actions, we are in fact observing the terrifying return of the repressed bodies and subjects, we are faced with forbidden *jouissance*, illicit political action, and prohibited theorizing.

the threshold, taking from both spheres, yet subverting the very dualist organisation of the world by never committing to any of the fictional sides.

3.12 The indigenous urban body: the prostitute body

"The prostitute is an indigenous inhabitant of the new emerging metropolis," (Kunst 2004, 146) marked with modernisation and technology. The modern prostitute is located at the threshold; it is marked with the difference between nature and culture. It is the location "of the obsessive mixture of the artificial and the natural, it is the commodification of desire and the excess of pleasure: at the same time, it is the body of pleasure, which is liberated from the organic body, and it is a commodity, which is debauched by its excessive nature." (Ibid.) The prostitute body is fundamentally liminal; a mixture of commodification and serial production on the one hand, and of pleasure, fluidity and desire on the other. The modern prostitute is not in the business of "pleasure, as one might think, but rather of what dominates pleasure: expressions of shame, uncertainty, fear, desire for absolute pleasure, etc." (Ibid., 149) It is precisely with prostitutes "that we are presented with a wild, obscene and threatening femininity." (Kristeva 1982, 167)

The post-modern prostitute "not only radically challenges our (in)sight, but also directly addresses and twists the contemporary 'post-visibility' of the female body." (Kunst 2004, 153) The modern prostitute represents the continuous feeling of loss, characteristic of modernity, but its post-modern descendant emphasises the "autonomous power of the Other's gaze, which is radical, transgressive, it is no longer a loss, but /…/ it is not a win either." (Ibid.) Think of Annie Sprinkle or Shannon Bell herself doing a female ejaculation workshop with a speculum inside her vagina. She is looking at the spectators, who are looking at what she calls her female phallus. The post-modern prostitute is in the business of the gaze, (returning) the gaze (even if we do not look) is the trick of her trade. This point should be recalled whilst reading the final chapter of the dissertation as the same goes for performance art, which is analogous

to post-modern prostitution, both in the sense that it is populated with bodies at the threshold: the bodies full of openings, covered in fluids, exposed sexual organs, etc. (Kunst 2004, 157), as well as in the sense that the spectator is (sometimes quite unwillingly) interpellated into being an active subject. Such interpellation is generally established through the gaze and bodily presence.

Bell (1994, 137–184) dedicates a whole chapter of her book *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body* to the genre of *Prostitute Performances*. In it, she establishes the post-modern aesthetic "as a site for the intervention of little narratives" (Ibid., 137) and considers performance art "an excellent medium for the presentation of small, individualized life stories." (Ibid.) Bell presents performance art pieces by six "prostitute performance artists" from the U. S. A. and Canada, in order to produce "a genealogy of 'the prostitute,' narrated by prostitutes" (Ibid.), a decolonisation of the prostitute body. She describes concrete performance pieces, autobiographic narratives, which allow the prostitute performance artists to reclaim their stigma not unlike the patients who write illness narratives of their own medical conditions.[58] Bell calls this potential "the possibility for reversal." (Ibid., 14) She describes reverse discourse as "the discourse of the subjugated subject of the hegemonic discourse; in it the meaning and power of the dominant discourse are to some extent challenged." (Ibid.)

The principles of performance art are indeed reminiscent of those, characteristic of illness narratives, except that the latter belong to the textual, whereas the former have been shaped by the performative turn away from the textual. Bell (Ibid., 138) too describes performance art in terms of decolonisation and empowerment: "Performance is one of the most effective means for those who have been constructed by others as objects of desire and undesirable

[58] The genre of performance art is by definition highly autobiographic, perhaps doubly so in the cases of female artists; "women's performance art is mostly about personal experience: 'real-life' presence of the artist, actor, author." (Bell 1994, 137)

objects to enter into discourse and create an immediate subject position from which to address the social." Prostitutes, who used to be reduced to the realm of "carnivalesque transgression" (Ibid.), can now completely "reconstitute themselves /…/ as living embodiments of resistance, remapping, redefining, and reclaiming the deviant body, the body of the sexual outsider and social outcast." (Ibid.) Within the hegemonic order, women's performance art is doubly deconstructive, as it is, Forte (Ibid., 140) argues, "the discourse of the objectified other," or, as Bell (Ibid.) puts it, "it challenges the dominant representational system and it posits woman as speaking subject." Furthermore, performance art points at the ambivalent "space of absence within the dominant discourse which becomes presence." (Ibid.) It should come as no surprise that the deeply personal genre of performance art, when engaged with by women, is coupled with celebrating female sexuality: "the personal and autobiographical for women is inextricably linked with female sexuality." (Forte in Bell 1994, 141)

Prostitute performance art challenges the "classical body /…/ a 'closed,' 'finished,' 'sleek,' statuesque, 'static' body" (Ibid.) by performing with and on the carnivalesque body, a spectacle, which is an "open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change." (Russo in Bell 1994, 141) Prostitutes occupy the position of "the carnival other" (Ibid.) within dominant discourses, but performing with their "pornographic body, prostitute performance artists displace, transcode, and overwrite this representation." (In Bell 1994, 141.) Prostitute performance art thus represents a perfect example of Foucauldian aesthetics of life and resistance (1997a), ideas to which we shall briefly return in chapter 4.4.2. It is about "the refusal to fit into predetermined categorizations; prostitutes use their bodies as sites of resistance." (Bell 1994, 142) As they do so, they occupy an empowered position and reclaim their voice, subverting the popular belief and proving "that they are neither stupid nor victims." (Ibid., 143)

In addition to their own bodies, prostitutes have also reclaimed the language used to describe them: “I prefer the word ‘whore’ /…/ I want to reclaim it.” (St. James in Bell 1994, 108) The carnivalesque whore, repressed and sublimated into the politically correct prostitute, has also reclaimed her name. Furthermore, as every woman who transgresses the norm and engages in taboo behaviour is labelled a whore, whores themselves have empowered women to name their price and become “a speaking subject.” (Bell 1994, 91) Feindel (in Bell 1994, 91) describes this subversion in more detail:

> The prostitute is paid money for her body currency; moreover, she has gained access into the symbolic order of the economy. . . . She is also not silent. By bartering and naming her price she is breaking the ‘silent’ exchange of women. By naming it and defining it and consciously bringing into light what has traditionally been repressed she is no longer a passive participant in the exchange.

This original interpretation of naming one’s price as an example of emancipatory action can be found Shannon Bell’s own book on the subject of prostitutes. In this light, it is of extreme interest that Bell herself, who actively engages in performance art, analogous to the prostitute performance art she describes, who celebrates her own sexuality, experiments with her body, and participates in what is seen as radical sexual practice by the dominant ideology, draws the line at what we have already mentioned as the paradigmatic example of excrement in psychoanalysis, money (Freud 1908):

> After having 7 thesis proposals turned down - I hit on whores. And bingo - all opposition dissipated - nobody seem to know anything about whores, no one was an expert; in fact, two people exited my committee, due to their ignorance in the whore area. One wonderful untenured drop dead gorgeous woman didn't, against all their advice about it wreaking her career. It didn't. I had an advisor younger and better looking than me. I love her to pieces for hanging in there. The diss was book; the book changed the discourse on prostitution. At the International Whores Conference I was sitting at a table with the most well known international madams, s/m doms, famous call girls (they all had books); yeah, whores write. The conference performance

evening was named after my second book Whore Carnival. Sitting there among friends, these three grad students came over and wanted my autograph; we all cracked up. Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body opened a space in scholarship for a whole new breed of intellectual; intellectual and whore often go together. I have never worked as a whore, not because I couldn't, not because I disagree; simply I don't charge. I took a vow a long time ago that I would never charge and I never have. I've paid. I was working on a piece on clients. Round about 2000, I decided that I would not write on prostitution ever again; I had accomplished what I wanted. (Bell 2005, June 15)

3.13 Virilio's kinetic body, the body of speed (and street)

In the first lines of *Speed and Politics* (2006, 30), Virilio wonders whether the asphalt can be a political territory: "Is the bourgeois State and its power the sreet, or *in* the street? Are its potential force and expanse in the places of intense circulation, on the path of rapid transportation?" It was already apparent for Goebbles (Ibid.) that "the ideal militant is the political combatant in the Brown Army as a *movement*." Governance is nothing more than giving masses a rhythm by which to move. This can be done "through vulgar stimulation, a polemical symphony, transmitted far and wide, from one to the other, polyphonic and multicolored like the road signals and traffic directions meant to accelerate the telescoping, the shock of the accident." (Ibid., 30–31) Urban disorder in the form of street protests strives for just that.

Goebbles (Ibid., 31) knew very well how to control the masses: "Propaganda must be made directly by words and images, not by writing." In order for the people to follow, they should not be given any time for reflection; the mass should not be allowed to slow down, because that would destroy its "dynamic efficiency." (Ibid.) Virilio goes on to argue in an important passage that we are inclined to forget that the city is above all a dwelling place of humans,

> "penetrated by channels of rapid communication (river, road, coastline, railway). It seems we've forgotten that the street is only a road passing through an agglomeration, whereas every day laws on the 'speed limit' within the city walls remind us of the continuity of displacement of movement, that only the speed laws modulate. The city is but a stopover, a point on the synoptic path of a trajectory, the ancient military glacis, ridge road, frontier or riverbank, where the spectator's glance and the vehicle's speed of displacement were instrumentally linked. /…/ there is only *habitable circulation.*" (Ibid.)

The city's "rhetoric" (de Certeau 1999) is enticing. It lures the passer-by with "its riches, its unheard-of technical facilities, its universities and museums, its stores and permanent holidays, its comforts, its knowledge and its security." (Virilio 2006, 32–33) So many processes of migration ultimately come to an end in the city that it is easy to mistake the urban for a place of cultural exchange, whereas in Virilio's (Ibid., 33) view it is nothing but a highway exchanger. Street facades, windows, and similar surfaces are surfaces of advertising. This is characteristic of "the bourgeois dwelling," (Ibid.) which facilitates possibilities for commerce and information. Dutch prostitutes, who represent indigenous urban dwellers as theorised above, have been taking advantage of the *bourgeois* architecture in this sense for a long time. The street hosts a moving spectacle.

> Therefore, the State's political power
>
> "*is the polis, the police, in other words highway surveillance,* insofar as, since the dawn of the bourgeois revolution, the political discourse has been no more than a series of /… / repetitions of the old communal poliorcetics, confusing social order with the control of traffic (of people, of goods), and revolution, revolt, with traffic jams, illegal parking, multiple crashes, collisions." (Ibid., 39)

Revolution is movement, marching, but movement is not necessarily a revolution, one can just as easily be *mobilised* into war: "Politics is only a gear shift, and revolution only its overdrive: war as '*continuation* of politics by other means' would be instead a police *pursuit* at greater speed, with other vehicles." (Ibid., 43) Hitler knew how to stop riots: as soon as he took power, he offered the proletariat sport and transport: "to empty the streets, it's enough to promise everyone the highway." (Ibid., 49)

The proletariat's battle for leisure time is a battle for paid vacation, which means travel and movement. The French revolution was a revolt against the "*constraint to immobility,*" (Ibid., 53) and "the conquest of the freedom to come and go." (Ibid.) Today, however, we *have* to come and go, the freedom of mobility has become an "*obligation to mobility* /…/ *dictatorship of movement*." (Ibid.)

Interestingly enough, Bell (2005, December 27) is always in movement: “I eat breakfast as I drive to the gym and as I am showering & dressing from working out; lunch is usually en route to somewhere unless I am meeting friends; dinner while I work again /…/ Prefer to read while I eat.”[59] Baudrillard (2001, 36) theorised that when bodies gain sufficient speed, they become *liberated*. “Beyond this gravitational effect which maintains bodies in an orbit of signification, /…/ all the signifying lose themselves in space.” When facts, traits, political meanings, cultural symbols, economic realities, etc., fill with kinetic energy, they are propelled into a hyperspace, where they drop every meaning. The post-modern break with metanarratives and grand theories can also be interpreted as a consequence of speed, where everything is atomised and facts no longer make sense in sequences. This is why it is now possible to theorise the same, using conflicting concepts, which are manipulated within incompatible philosophical traditions. With fragmented, passing judgements that are immediately diffused, theory has become more about performance than pretending to describe and explain *reality*. Describing his concept of simulation, Baudrillard (2001, 36–37) speaks of a new inability to reflect:

> I can only push hypotheses to their limits, snatch them from their critical zones of reference, take them beyond a point of no-return. I also take theory into the hyper-space of simulation – in which it loses all objective validity, but perhaps it gains in coherence, that is, in a real affinity with the system which surrounds us.

In a sincere post-modern manner, we suspect that what really happened is not simply that theory lost “all objective validity.” Rather, it merely renounced the impossible and deeply ideological demand for it. What changed most dramatically is our own ambition. We used to demand the illusion of objectivity in order to pursue great things and glory, but that is not the case anymore: “we no longer pursue glory, but

[59] Rousseau (2001, 255) tackles reading and eating in Confessions very similarly: “I always wish to read while eating; it seems a substitute for society, and I dispatch alternately a page and a morsel; ‘tis indeed, as if my book dined with me.”

identity; not the exaltation of play, but the verification of existence." (Ibid., 43–44) However, this is, as we shall soon see, a tricky business in its own right.

3.14 The textual body

The Western view of the body as machine is prominent in medicine, and elsewhere. The body is much more than just the "surface of inscription for disease and mortality." (Giblett 2008, 11) The body-machine metaphor is also powerful in the contexts of politics and aesthetics. Just as the medical body-machine is subject to repair, the political body-machine is subject to regulation and discipline. Foucault claims that the body is "directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." (Foucault 1977a, 25) The meaning is written on the body and the body also creates meanings "by writing both on itself and on other surfaces." (Giblett 2008, 108) Writing and being written on is an exercise of power. (Ibid.)

In these power exercises, "truth" emerges; "inscription is the *modus operandi* for truth. /…/ [It] is produced, revealed and disseminated in and by inscription. It is just a matter of whether it is the mind or body that is being inscribed." (Giblett 2008, 109) There is no truth without inscription or before inscription, as inscription produces truth. Inscription thus precedes signification. "The soul is the prison of the body," claims Foucault, (1977a, 30) it "is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy." (Ibid.) The body is seen as pure, it is the soul that contaminates it. The body needs to be freed and granted autonomy. This view is opposed to the old (but perhaps still dominant) belief, according to which it is in fact the other way around – the body is regarded as the prison of the soul. (Giblett 2008, 109)

The emergence of the break between these two antagonistic definitions is beautifully demonstrated by Foucault (1977a) in his description of the Western penal turn from the body to the mind. It should be noted, however, that both versions of this dialectic presuppose Cartesian reasoning and assume a radical body/mind dualism – the only difference being that a shift has occurred in

establishing what is dominating (from the body to the soul) and what is dominated (from the soul to the body). Within the dualist Cartesian logic, it is merely a question of privilege, (Giblett 2008, 109) when it is in fact the adequacy of such antagonisms that should be interrogated and radically reconceptualised.

Modern technology is dedicated to freeing the body from the prison of the soul. It attempts to do so "by using instruments that write on the mind. Technology is directed against the mind rather than the body." (Giblett 2008, 110) The modern prison, although it also incarcerates the body, "is a machine for altering minds," (Foucault 1977a, 125) inscribing the inmates' minds. Accordingly, in western societies, the mind has become "the primary target of power." (Giblett 2008, 110) The site of power is "a play of representations and signs circulating discreetly but necessarily and evidently in the minds of all." (Foucault 1977a, 101) The body comes second; it is controlled indirectly – through the regulation of the mind. Far more effective than "the ritual anatomy of torture and execution" (Ibid., 102) is "the submission of bodies through the control of ideas." (Ibid.) The mind is now seen as "a surface of inscription for power over the body." (Giblett 2008, 111)

In this process of inscription of signs, semiology turns out to be the tool of choice. Until the 17th century, according to Foucault (2005, 141), signs were "part of things themselves, whereas in the seventeenth century they became modes of representation." Nowadays, sign and thing are distinct. The technologist that writes on the body is separate from that very body (even if it is their own body). This "gap between things and words, between bodies and signs, produces representation no longer tied to the thing itself, including the body." (Giblett 2008, 111) Semiology, in the process of inscribing the body therefore constructs representations of the body, which are clearly separated from the body itself.

Such depiction of semiology is far from de Saussure's conceptualisation (1998), as semiology has now become "a technology for the production of meaning in society, including 'the

general recipe' for the exercise of the power of the mind over the body." (Giblett 2008, 111) Semiology is perhaps the most prominent of the "technologies of the self," (Foucault 1997b, 225) which "permit individuals to effect, by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform them- selves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." (Ibid.) To study the genealogy of subjectivity in the West, according to Foucault (Ibid.), necessitates investigation into these technologies.

The body, however, is more than just an empty surface, ready to be inscribed. It is also active in the process of inscription; it "writes back." (Giblett 2008, 113) Grosz (Ibid., 114) argues that the body is a creative "'whiteness' that constitutes the writing surface as resistant to the imposition of any or all patterned arrangements." The post-colonial body resits, it writes back furiously and it bombards us with rejoinders. In the same way that power is initially inscribed into the body, resistance is situated in the body as well, as "every resistance to power is written by the subject in his or her own body." (Ibid.) The law tattoos and marks the body, but every resistance to the law re-marks it, "even plays the body, the body plays." (Ibid.) In these affirmations of body inscriptions, one can locate the grotesque and the monstrous body, which in their sheer existence, being, and presence pose a threat to, resist and subvert the official body.

The body is more than the site of power/knowledge; more importantly, it is also the location, where resistance materializes. "One resists with one's body." (Bell 2010a, 11; see also Eagleton 2005) In the course of revolt, the body is active, but this might also be a sign of impotence and "disempowerment in which the body is the only surface left to mark, the only means of expression left." (Giblett 2008, 114) Although such a pessimistic interpretation does not necessarily do justice to contemporary practices of revolt or at least it does not explain them fully, one should still remain aware of this aspect of politicizing the body.

However, when re-marking the body belongs to the realm of the grotesque, the monstrous, and the carnivalesque, it can also be subversive and empowering. As it is perhaps most obvious in performance art, body resistance can be self-torture or self-mutilation, which the subject chooses "rather than be tortured bodily or mentally by others in inscription." (Ibid., 115) Acts of re-inscription oscillate between empowerment and disempowerment; they are acts of either a tactic or a strategy.[60] (Ibid.)

The inscription of the body happens in the context of communication technologies. As the body is the "inscribed surface of events," (Foucault 1977b, 148) communication technologies take the inscription further: they "inscribe the events of the body onto the surface of a recording device and project them on to a screen." (Giblett 2008, 118) As such, communication technologies mark "the surface of the body of the earth." (Ibid.)

In particular, devices that play on and with the gaze (a camera, for example, or a gun) constantly produce events. The camera and the gun 'shoot' and 'kill' their objects. "By shooting and killing animals, or events, the camera and the gun constitute their wielder as living on the logic that 'I kill therefore I am (living)'. The gun and camera constitute the object of the shot as dead and the subject of the shooter as the living. They mediate between them. They are communication technologies." (Ibid., 118–119) The view that the camera is a prosthesis for the eye no longer holds; now, the body has become a prosthesis for the camera (and the gun), its only purpose has become transportation of objects.

Shannon Bell shoots theory in the urban wilderness, she shoots concepts in the desert, and she shoots herself when lecturing or promoting a new book. As part of ethnographic research for this thesis, we shot her, too. We filmed her during her visit to Ljubljana in

[60] The main difference being that strategy means a hierarchic relationship between a subject and an object, whereas tactic is a subject-subject relationship. (Gibblet 2008, 115.)

the summer 2010. The occasion was the debut book launch of her most important work in the context of this debate, *Fast Feminism*. (2010a) We filmed Bell when she was eating, walking around, performing, lecturing, swimming, and even when she was asleep. We recorded her daily routines, captured a sexual performance or two, videoed her bodily events. We shot her almost constantly in the span of three days.

Going through the footage years later, what resonates most, are the *slips*; the unintended, accidental shots of the techniques of the body. Needless to say, the sleeping body has a certain presence to it that the consciously performing body might not possess. Shooting/looking constitutes the shooter as alive. "By creating otherness, the self is created – no other, no self. /…/ The dead other constitutes the living self." (Giblett 2008, 119) The camera is a device "for shortening the distance between the machine and its target," (Ibid., 120) but it also keeps the shooter and the target separate, distant from each other. As such, the camera (like the gun) "is a metaphysical weapon of defence against the prenatural wilderness." (Ibid.)

Another device for shortening the distance [61] between the machine and its target is the car.[62] The car is interesting, because it represents a mobile extension of the private sphere. Furthermore, the car "privatises the public sphere of the road." (Ibid., 122) The "barbarous" (Virilio 2006, 51) American car stands for the progress towards the American dream, but "at the same time, this great automobile body has been emasculated, its road holding is defective and its powerful motor is bridled. /… / we are talking about acts of

[61] The reduction of distance has significant effects; it "has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space. / … / Territory has lost its significance in favor of the projectile." (Virilio 2006, 149)

[62] Again, it is Virilio (2006, 153) who explicates that the both the aforementioned gun and the car belong to the same discursive order: "In fact, without the violence of speed, that of weapons would not be so fearsome."

government /…/ of the political control of the highway." (Ibid.) The voyager is a voyeur, rediscovering "the comportment of the votary of the giant screen." (Virilio 1991, 65)

When driving, Shannon Bell is situated at the threshold yet again. She drives a convertible jeep[63] around Toronto, opening up the mobile private space, she squats on the public road, and she merges public and private spaces. Every time she turns on the engine of her black muscle car, it appears as if she is knowingly subverting the implications of her actions. She is in control of a machine which poses a threat to its surroundings, but a ride with her around downtown feels like an art intervention. The muscle car is coupled with a muscled woman, wearing a revealing black dress and shades. From the perspective of ecology, Bell drives an environmental disaster. However, a passenger in the car is not merely a spectator of this performance; instead, they are interpellated as witnesses to the transformation of both, the body and the machine, which merge into one in the most sublime manner:

> The car driver's mastery of time and space reproduces the aesthetics of the sublime that inflicts terror on the countryside and other living beings. The driver is connected to the car and becomes a cyborg, a cybernetic organism, a single machine. /…/ The machine is not merely writing (on) /…/ [her] body and mind but becomes /…/ [her] body and mind. The machine is us. (Giblett 2008, 124)

On her blog, Bell describes an event when such fusion took place:

> Driving into Perth on Sunday for a brief moment I saw a sky configuration that I have only seen once before: the Indian Ocean was silver grey; the almost matching silver grey sky was touching it, separated by a brilliant yellow gold band. I noted the time: 13,40.

[63] "I arrive precisely five minutes to midnight and park my black manual TJ Jeep in front of the dungeon. It looks good in front of the dungeon." (Bell 2010a, 146) It is of interest here how Virilio (1991, 68) interprets the connection between the car and desire: "at least the headlights and parking lights seem already a means of primary emission, a sort of formulation of desire and of a new presence that drivers are happy to abuse."

> Kept driving because in the presence of great beauty, drive. Driving for me is not about speed, not about getting where you are going; it is about shifting gears. (Bell 2005: June 17)

Yet, disturbances quickly colonise this virtual blessed union as well; the repressed returns. Bell's relationship with the car is not nearly as picture-perfect as one is led to believe; in fact, it is rather ambiguous. One evening in her hometown of Toronto, she cannot remember where she parked it a couple of hours earlier. Searching for the car on foot, I tease her that she lost her car and she gets infuriated. Her rage is instant, unstoppable and far beyond what the majority of people would gauge as a sensible or justifiable reaction.

3.15 The cyborg

In the fascist body-machine, as well as in the sporting body-machine and in the medical body-machine, *machine* is used as a metaphor. The body is understood *as* machine. The cyborg, however, is the body *and* machine merged together, transcending the artificial dichotomy. The cyborg is an embodiment of Turkle's (1997) thesis that the boundary between humans and machines is becoming increasingly vague. For Haraway, (1985, 65) the cyborg is "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction." The legendary *Manifesto for Cyborgs* (Ibid.) was written "to try to think through how to do critique, remember war and its offspring, keep ecofeminism and technoscience joined in the flesh, and generally honor possibilities that escape unkind origins." (Haraway 2004, 3) *A Manifesto for Cyborgs* was also, interestingly, the first text that Haraway wrote, using a computer (Bell 2007, 97) – as such the *Manifesto* is a work of both human and machine. As she was writing it, Haraway performed her own theory in a very literal manner.

For Giblett (2008, 140), cybernetics is an extension of Foucault's (1994, 201–222) governmentality, which is defined as a threefold phenomenon that leads to modern governmentalisation of state. By governmentality Foucault means "all the ways and means by which the lives of populations are policed by state apparatuses." (Giblett 2008, 140) As for cybernetics; it can be extended "to apply to the functioning of the body self-regulated by communication technologies." (Ibid.) It also applies to the performance of the body as controlled by transnational corporations,[64] and can be "considered as an extension of the internalisation of the panoptic principle of self-

[64] Giblett (2008, 140) also reminds us that nowadays, transnational corporations appear to be replacing the State as the dominant institution.

surveillance /…/ through the use of communication technologies." (Ibid., 140–141)

But as Haraway is keen to remind us, (1985) the cyborg is as much a product of science, as it is a product of science fiction. The latter needs no proof, but should we look for it, all we need to do is take a look at popular culture. However, in the realm of science, Haraway (Ibid., 66) directs our attention to medicine, which is "full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine."[65] The cyborg is also a prominent creature in the military; "war is a cyborg orgy, coded by C^3I, command-control-communication-intelligence." (Giblett 2008, 141) However, the prime aspect of the machine is not always hardware, as the cyborg is in fact much more a matter of software and coding. The cyborg is also a matter of wetware and coding; in fact, it is mostly about bringing software and wetware together. (Ibid.)

Being a creature of science and science fiction, the cyborg stands at the opposition between nature and culture. The binary opposition between the two is very much a product of capitalist modernity. As it is generally the case with binary oppositions, hierarchy is introduced; in this case, culture is privileged over nature. (Balsamo 2000a, 215, 217) Capitalism, still governed by Cartesian logic, "ascribed the body to nature and the mind to culture." (Giblett 2008, 141) Understanding the body (as well as nature) as machine is consistent with this logic and goes hand in hand with privileging the mind (as well as culture) over the body (and nature). The cyborg transcends the capitalist opposition between nature and culture. It does not destruct or decolonise the opposition, rather, it "hybridises the two." (Ibid., 142)

Haraway (2003) does not reproduce the Cartesian body/mind (and, consequently, nature/culture) dualism in her thought;[66] instead,

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[65] For example, heart-rate monitors, pacemakers, etc.

[66] But she does demonstrate how dualism represents a way of knowing in Western thinking. Binary logic leaves no room for *in-between*, *at the threshold*, and *betwixt-and-between*. Everything needs to be collected, named, classified, and hierarchised.

she speaks of *naturecultures*. This term is used as an attempt to demonstrate that nature and culture cannot be clearly separated. For Haraway, nature is "one of culture's most startling and non-innocent products." (1991, 109) The relationship between nature and culture, however, is dual – as much as nature is a product (or a projection) of culture, culture is also influenced by nature – it is a product of the human species, which is ultimately also a biological organism. For Haraway, separating nature and culture is an act of ideology. The questions we should be investigating are not *what are the limits of nature or culture?; what is nature and what is culture?; where is the dividing line between the two?,* etc., but rather, *who names certain things as nature and others as culture?; who benefits from naming certain things as nature and others as culture?*, etc. (Ibid.) In her more recent works, when she speaks of companion species, for example, Haraway (2003) explores the naturecultures of coevolution of, for example, humans and dogs.[67]

The cyborg, this hybrid between the human and the machine, is no longer a transgressive, liminal creature; it has become the norm. Traditionally, in terms of gender, the distinction between nature and culture has been clear-cut: nature, the body, and the machine are female, whereas culture, the mind, and the machinist are male. The cyborg can be both or either. (Giblett 2008, 142) At the same time, cyborgs seem familiar and unknown, they "fascinate us by

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Haraway (2003) claims that technoscience helps to blur the clear distinctions between binary oppositions and undermines the simplicity, causing intriguing disturbances, which cyborgs epitomise: "they are irreducible back to one thing or another; instead of either / or, they are neither / both." (Bell 2007, 108)

[67] In her idea of "companion species," Haraway (2003) demonstrates that she has "gone to the dogs." Dogs are not metaphors, they are – dogs, because "they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with." (5) Dogs and humans form naturecultures, they develop in co-evolution, they are "otherness-in-connection." (Ibid., 44) However, no matter how much we anthropomorphise them, dogs are still … dogs. They are not us. They are neither nature nor culture, they are something else; they are all sorts of entities.

technologically refashioning human difference /…/ because they are not like us, and yet just like us."[68] (Balsamo 2000b, 150, 155) We are fascinated by how machines can reproduce human conduct and simultaneously terrified by how they increasingly resemble humans in every aspect. The machines are trespassing; they are stepping over the threshold, breaking the barrier. As they stand at the human/machine divide, they stand in the way of establishing a clear border between the two. (Giblett 2008, 142)

Haraway (1985, 66) asserts that we do not have the choice whether to be cyborgs or not; whether we like it or not, "we are cyborgs already." We are dependent on and enhanced by machines, especially communication technologies. (Giblett 2008, 143) The machine is no longer external to the body, instead, it is merged with the body in a hybrid, the "machine is us." (Haraway 1985, 99) Haraway (Ibid., 68) also maintains that the cyborg is a child of war, "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism."

It is precisely the attributed illegitimacy of the cyborg that allows us to think it in terms of irony and resistance. Haraway sees the cyborg as illegitimate because it does not obey "its father's rules, and can be put to different dreamwork." (Bell 2007, 100) The cyborg, if we think it differently, with some irony, can challenge its own origin. If we

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[68] This choice of words is reminiscent of Freud's explanation of the uncanny, "*unheimlich*" (1919): "the word 'heimlich' is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different; on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight." (3679) *Unheimlich,* Freud reports (Ibid.) is normally only used as the opposite of the first meaning of *heimlich*, however, "*Heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich.*" (Ibid.) The fact that the linguistic usage of the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich* has joined the opposites together and that *das Heimliche* has been extended into its contrary, *das Unheimliche*, should not catch us by surprise: "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression." (Ibid., 3691)

think the cyborg in this way, its very existence can challenge several basic boundaries and binary oppositions, which we think our world with, such as human/animal, organism/machine, and physical/non-physical. (Ibid., 101)

Giblett, (2008, 143–144) however, claims that the cyborg is a perfectly legitimate and loved child of militarism and patriarchal capitalism "as they are married and as they gave birth to modern machines and bodies in industry and war /…/ militarism and patriarchal capitalism were married and gave birth to war-machines and to the soldier from their very beginnings. The cyborg is the youngest offspring of this marriage." Additionally, the cyborg is more than merely a hybrid of machine and organism, it is also a hybrid of soldier and civilian; "it embodies or empanels the colonisation of the civilian by the soldier." (Ibid., 144) The cyborg is a specimen born out of the militarisation of civilian life. Genealogically, it "can be traced at least back to fascism that aestheticized civilian life with military style." (Ibid.)

After persuasively arguing for the legitimacy of the cyborg as the offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, Giblett (Ibid.) finds grounds for irony and resistance elsewhere: "in the grotesque and the monstrous, in recoupling the cyborg with /…/ the symbiont."[69] Haraway (1985, 82) claims that the cyborg is "the self feminists must code", but Giblett (2008, 145) intervenes, claiming that "to code the body and the self is to make it communicable semiotically and transportable virtually." The body has become no more and no less than a link in the informational chain, merely a part of the network. As such, the cyborg self is still a descendant of militarism and capitalism, "rather than a self and a body that cannot be reduced to a code /…/ a playful, grotesque, monstrous body resists all attempts to encode and decode it." (Ibid.)

[69] Etymologically, the cyborg is a cybernetic organism. However, the organic part is as ignored, supervised, and repressed as possible. With the symbiont, on the other hand, emphasis is on organism. (Haraway 1995)

But as the communication sciences and biotechnologies transform the world into code, claims Haraway, (1991, 163) they produce “fresh sources of power”, which need to be countered with new sources of enquiry and political action. In this respect, Haraway demonstrates a Foucauldian approach to the cyborg (and to feminisim). This attitude is apparent in the following segment:

> There are several consequences to taking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; *they* do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they. (Haraway 1991, 180)

Haraway (1985, 82) argues that the cyborg gives rise to “a kind of disassembled and reassembled, post-modern collective and personal self.” She describes this *bricolage* in optimistic terms, whereas some of her prominent critics see the cyborg quite differently, Levidow and Robins (in Giblett 2008, 147), for example, express their concern that “through a paranoid rationality, expressed in the machine-like self, we combine an omnipotent phantasy of self-control with fear and aggression directed against the emotional and bodily limitations of mere mortals.” Furthermore, they claim that “through regression to a phantasy of infantile omnipotence,” (Levidow and Robins in Giblett 2008, 147) humans reject their dependence on (human) nature and on the “‘bloody mess’ of organic nature.” (Ibid.) Moreover, the two authors also claim that in a “sublimatory compensatory control,” the cyborg self “transcends human limitations” as it escapes the body and its corporeal limits into the realm of the sublime. (Ibid.)

Once more, we are duty-bound to note at this point that, in this context, the sublime is not understood quite in the sense that we are used to within the continental philosophical tradition, as well as in that of theoretical psychoanalysis. (Kant 2007; see also Zupančič 2000) In Giblett's interpretation, the sublime is an aesthetic category, linked to fascism, and to the concept of body-machine. The way that he, following Levidow and Robins, (Ibid.) understands the cyborg, essentially corresponds to what Haraway (1995, xi) identifies as "the Terminators / … / the jelled-metal, shape-shifting, cyber-enhanced warriors fighting in the stripped terrain landscapes and extraterrestrial landscapes of a terrible future." The difference between the Terminator and the cyborg, however, is not qualitative; it is merely a difference in degree, and, perhaps, gender.

If for Haraway (1985, 101) the cyborg is "the bad girl or good bitch of social feminism, the cyberfeminist," then for Giblett (2008, 147) "the Terminator is the bad boy of postmodern culture." Haraway (1995, xv) continues that the Terminator is "the sign of the beast on the face of post-modern culture / … / the self sufficient, self-generated Tool in all of its infinite but self-identical variations." The machine has thus achieved singularity, it is not merely "the machine-body but the fascist machine-tool-body that manufactures machines." (Giblett 2008, 148)

Still, Haraway insists that the cyborg should be reimagined away from patriarchal militarism, her point being that, certainly, the cyborg is here, it is us, and there is nothing we can do about it, but it is still possible to go beyond mere acceptance of this fact on the grounds of technoscience and militarism. For Haraway, it is not enough to adopt an anti-technology position – instead, we should work "*with* and *against* science and technology." (Bell 2007, 108) In such endeavours, the cyborg can be helpful, as Haraway (1991, 181) elucidates in yet another illustrious segment of writing:

> Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to

> strike fear into the circuits of the super-savers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

This cyborg feminism is reminiscent of the principles of deconstruction; especially in its denial of binary oppositions, but also in the fact that its political power is situated in the deployment of cyborg imagery and pleasure in machine skill. (Bell 2007, 108) Haraway's cyborg is not a militaristic Hollywood figure (Terminator), but a polychromatic girl, "a bad girl. /…/ Maybe she is not so much bad as she is a shape-changer, whose dislocations are never free. She is a girl who's trying not to become Woman." (Haraway in Bell 2007, 108) The cyborg can be ironic when it is transformed into something politically strong and feminist. Schneider (In Bell 2007, 109) sums up this subversive potential beautifully: "Multiplicities. Heterodoxies. Monstrosities. Improbable but promising couplings made by choice and based on assumed short-term common ends as well as means. These are the marks of Haraway's cyborg as a figure to think and live with."[70]

As mentioned above, Haraway argues that we do not get to choose whether we want to be cyborgs or not, because we already are cyborgs, but we still have a choice, whether we want to become Terminators. In the manner of cultural relativism, let us emphasise yet again at this point that a claim like this can only hold in Western contexts, for the vast majority of people who inhabit the earth are anything but cyborgs: they might even not have access to electricity, much less to Western medicine or the internet. However, they do not have much choice in the matter of whether they want to *become* cyborgs or not. Techno-colonialism goes hand in hand with capitalist logic and "humanist" Western endeavours towards "democratisation".

[70] It should be noted that the cyborg has indeed become a tool to think with and Haraway claims no ownership of the concept. Cyborgology (Bell 2007), the great diversity of cyborg readings and writings, has turned out to be a productive theoretical province since the mid-eighties.

Furthermore, this rationale is very much in line with biomedical paradigms of human existence, the body, life, etc.

In the first sections of chapter 3: *What is left of the body in the post-modern age?*, we have pointed out that the body is a distinctively visual category. We perceive other bodies first and foremost as objects of the gaze. Other senses are – if at all – involved later, when the bodies get closer together. We have also noted the ambiguity of our own body as an object of the gaze, because we can never see it in its entirety, but others notice and observe it primarily by looking/seeing/watching it. In the contemporary hypermodern society, this paradox is literally taken to another level – we can now take pictures of both "the whole earth /…/ from outer space and the foetus /…/ in inner space" (Giblett 2008, 146) and these photographs end up standing for the sign itself: "the image or symbol is transformed into the body and blood of the foetus and the earth." (Ibid.)

Hence, we are once again faced with the (pre-modern) coalescence of words and things. The pre-modern sign *is* the thing, the modern sign *represents* the thing, and the hypermodern "sign becomes the thing itself." (Haraway 2000, 225) Haraway (Ibid.) describes this event as "ordinary magico-secular transubstantiation". The hypermodern sign becomes the thing, when the thing itself is not a perfect object of the gaze, it is either too big or too small to be seen, it is hidden, obscured from view, etc. Such is the case with our own body – it is hidden from our view and therefore, a sign takes its place.

Virilio (2000, 11) claims that our bodies "are no longer the ultimate matter, our skin the final frontier, our consciences the training ground for a world turned on its head. The new limits are now to be found *beyond*, in otherwise transcendent realms." Weakness inhabits the inside of the body; "the body is no longer only replaced by outside forces (industrial robots, mediators, interfaces), it is also transformed within, the weakness also reaches desire, will and thought of the body." (Kunst 2004, 12) The body is no longer where life can be found; but it is still where death dwells. The body is now yet another border to be breached, and death is the ultimate and final limit to be crossed.

3.16 The obsolete body of transhumanism

At this point, let us introduce a contemporary techno-philosophical post-human doctrine, called transhumanism. Transhumanism can be described as a transcendence and/or rationalisation of a very post-modern impression that the body is (becoming) obsolete. Paradoxically, one of its most characteristic features is striving toward the enhancement of the human condition. The better we manage the body, the more careful and cautious we are about it, the less we are reminded of its mortality. When we are enhancing its abilities, improving it, and medically adjusting it, the body itself is disappearing. We are obsessed with this disappearing body.

However, it is not just the body that is disappearing; the same goes for biology and nature. (Kunst 2004, 11) Furthermore, the idea that the body is obsolete is not even a novel one; the body has traditionally been denied cognitive dimensions, it has been disciplined, punished, transcended, etc. (Ibid., 68) The optimistic desire to transcend the body, "the old desire to escape the body as a route to ultimate freedom and peace" (Bhattacharyya 2001, 36) goes hand in hand with this tradition.

The more we develop and elaborate the artificial, and the more the border between the natural and the artificial disappears, the more we seem to interpret the body as unimportant and weak. However, it is precisely with the dissolution of borders that the body becomes visible, articulated, and present (accordingly, the problem of representing it becomes apparent). (Kunst 2004, 174) Cyberspace and virtual experience do not make the body obsolete and liberate the mind at the same time, as transhumanism would fancy in its genuinely Cartesian presupposition that the body must be repressed so that the mind can be fully engaged. Instead, cyber experience is embodied and the cyber body is hyper-stimulated. (Ibid., 182)

Furthermore, the computer is an evocative object, which in fact re-establishes the old boundaries. (Turkle 1999) In this respect, the

transhumanist perception of technology and especially of the cyberspace obeys a blatantly Cartesian logic, re-establishing the body/mind dualism and clear frontiers between nature and culture, the natural and the artificial, etc.

The perverted transhumanist interpretation and reaffirmation of the body/mind split includes a clear hierarchical relationship between the two, wherein the mind appears to be superior and the body strives to become obsolete. Not only is the body repressed in transhumanism, the same goes for the centuries of theorizing, politicizing, and subverting the body, as well as for the thousands of books, which critique Cartesian dualism and its consequences.

The ultimate transhumanist desire is to eventually completely abandon the body, and upload the mind to a supercomputer – it is "the dream of 'leaving the meat behind' and living as pure bits and bytes in cyberspace." (Bell 2001, 168) This version of a future utopia can only be conceived in a theoretical context that performs the Cartesian body/mind split. To be able to think a virtual mind, no longer bound to the mortal body, one must first embrace Descartes' (1996, 107) point of view: "it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it."

This particular point, however, cannot be made in isolation – it always already presupposes a rather inconvenient existence, namely that of a superior being/force (in Descartes' view, god). In the Western and globalised "technoscapes,"[71] (Appadurai 1997) it seems rather

[71] In his analysis of contemporary social processes, Appadurai (1997, 1999) critiques the binary organisation of the world and dismisses oppositions, such as local/global, urban/rural, etc. Instead, he speaks of flows – or "scapes" as he puts it – of constantly mutating content: "ethnoscapes," "mediascapes," "technoscapes," "finanscapes," and "ideoscapes." (Ibid.) His views on globalisation support the ever-mutating flows of otherness and subvert the distinctions between centres and peripheries (or colonies), producing, in fact, a utopia of "celebratory globalism." (1999) Appadurai (Ibid., 222) defines technoscape as "the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both

apparent that there is no singular deity anymore, but there are novel modes of spirituality, which worship technology, design, lifestyle, individuality, fitness and health, freedom of expression, etc. This new theology is expressed, condensed and materialised in high-tech gadgets and gizmos, social networks, and other expressions of the virtual, and especially in our attitude towards them. Through worshipping our own image as it is mediated and facilitated through *Facebook* or through possessing a *Macbook Pro*, we actually pray to the religion of technology and science.

Another perspective on the problem of the body in cyberspace can be found in a theoretical approach, influenced by the concepts of psychoanalysis, which are employed on the level of society in order to understand contemporary processes. This is the very perspective through which one can (and we shall, very briefly) effectively critique transhumanism for being anything but humane. According to the declaration of the transhumanist movement, the main goals of humanity, as identified in the first paragraph of the declaration, are "overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth." (Baily et al. 1998) The transhumanist declaration advocates universal access to (bio)technology, moral attitude towards potential risks and inequalities, respect of autonomy, solidarity with "people around the globe" (Ibid.) as well as responsibility towards future generations. Lastly, the declaration favours "allowing individuals wide personal choice over how they enable their lives. This includes use of techniques that may be developed to assist memory, concentration, and mental energy; life extension therapies; reproductive choice technologies; cryonics procedures." (Ibid.)

In summary, the transhumanist movement advocates for the sort of the human condition, which is also favoured by the interests of global capital: productive and healthy for as long as it is humanly possible. The transhumanist declaration does not speak of human

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mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries."

rights but of “individual rights,” (Ibid.) it promotes the ideology of (free) choice of possible biotechnological upgrades and procedures, which practically translates to individual duty and responsibility of being as productive, dynamic, and fit as possible.

There is no place for free time, enjoyment, or the common good in the transhumanist declaration. Mind-altering drugs and technologies are allowed, even promoted, as long as they work towards what is defined as clarity of mind, which, again, denotes hyperproductivity. On the other hand, any potential experimentation with drugs and technologies, which modify the mind in unorthodox ways, is not as encouraged. It is rather inconceivable for the transhumanist mind to resort to substances and machineries, which are not seen as rational, constructive, and pursuing “positive” goals in our society.

The transhumanist declaration believes and supports the ideology of choice, which is, alongside the endeavours towards longevity and denial of aging, a common point of transhumanism and pathological narcissism, as theorised by Lasch. (1991) He explains that

> the denial of age in America culminates in the prolongevity movement, which hopes to abolish old age altogether. But the dread of age originates not in a ‘cult of youth’ but in a cult of the self. Not only in its narcissistic indifference to future generations but in its grandiose vision of a technological utopia without old age, the prolongevity movement exemplifies the fantasy of ‘absolute, sadistic power’ which /…/ so deeply colors the narcissistic outlook. Pathological in its psychological origins and inspiration, superstitious in its faith in medical deliverance, the prolongevity movement expresses in characteristic form the anxieties of a culture that believes it has no future. (Ibid., 217)

According to Lasch, (Ibid.) an irrational fear of death, manifested as the absolute denial of the idea of the mortal self, represents one of the constitutive elements of pathological narcissism, the dominant form of subjectivity in post-industrial society. This trait can also be found in normal narcissism; according to Freud (1914b), primary narcissism

prevents one's ability to think one's own death. There is no death in the unconscious. In a similar manner, death is oddly absent in the context of the transhumanist utopia, called cyberspace. In this sense, cyberspace can be interpreted as a metaphor for the unconscious. (Vrtačič 2010)

Despite the popular belief that there is a clear distinction between virtual and physical reality, Westerners have started to demonstrate their very existence, their live presence – online. Even though the virtual/physical distinction still somewhat favours the reality of the physical, the ultimate proof of one's death has become the failure of the digital, rather than that of the physiological function. "If you are not online, you are probably dead. /…/ Furthermore, if you *Google* yourself and get no results, you most likely never existed at all." (Ibid., 213) Death is starting to mean getting disconnected. To fully appreciate the online experience, one must repress the body until it gives in: "cut off from the real body, we construct a substitute body: ourselves online. We treat it as if it were our actual self, our real life. Over time, it does indeed become our life." (Ullman in Boler 2007, 159)

Biology must be disciplined and overpowered, which reveals ideological constructs such as the maternal or survival "instincts" for what they really are: in a notorious 2005 case of Korean gamers, a baby died as his parents forgot about him because they were so immersed in the game *World of Warcraft*. The same year, a 28-year-old player, nicknamed Snowly, collapsed and died of multiple organ failure after 160 hours of uninterrupted playing. In the latter case, Snowly's fellow gamers organised a funeral in *Second life* in his honour; there were "virtual bodies mourning the loss of a physical body that failed to endure the virtual strain." (Vrtačič 2010, 213) Balsamo (in Boler 2007, 159) explains that within the lived experience of virtual reality "this conceptual denial of the body is accomplished through the material repression of the physical body. The phenomenological experience of cyberspace depends upon and in fact requires the wilful repression of the material body."

The transhumanist utopia of uploading consciousness to the computer represents the next logical step. However, let us be reminded that the ultimate narcissistic fantasy, as we have seen above, is also that of immortality. It appears that the narcissistic and the transhumanist agendas coincide completely – in the potential of digital immortality through the uploading of consciousness onto a super-computer. (Harris 2001, 134) In this aspect, the body has become excess weight, a burden, merely a carrier of viruses.[72] Furthermore, is the notion of uploading one's consciousness into the virtual not a fair depiction of Hegel's interpretation of madness – "a withdrawal from the actual world, the closing of the soul into itself." (Žižek 2013, 9)

Narcissistic ideology of free choice and the irrational fears of aging and death manifest in the transhumanist ideal of disciplining, improving and prolonging the life of the physical body in order for it to survive long enough for technology to be able to effectively transcend it, and repress it into the depths of no return. Transhumanism does not attempt to conceal its intimate link with social evolutionism, enlightened humanism, rationalism, classical liberalism, etc.[73] However, as transhumanism revokes the Cartesian subject, fundamentally imprinted with body/mind dualism, in order to advocate

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[72] As biotechnology and medicine advance, computer viruses are becoming a more serious threat to humanity than the ones that attack human organisms, which is also an illustrative fact and an important factor in attempting to predict the future of humanity.

[73] This is exactly the premise on which Shannon Bell founds her own critique of transhumanism:

> Altruism, mutualism, humanism are the soft and slimy virtues that underpin liberal capitalism. Humanism has always been integrated into discourses of exploitation: colonialism, imperialism, neoimperialism, democracy, and of course, American democratization.
>
> One of the serious flaws in Transhumanism is the importation of liberal-human values to the biotechno enhancement of the human. Post-humanism has a much stronger critical edge attempting to develop through enactment new understandings of the self and other, essence, consciousness, intelligence, reason, agency, intimacy, life, embodiment, identity and the body. (Bell in Zaretsky 2005)

a high-tech version of the chauvinistic and colonial discourses of capital and power, one can quickly voice reservations towards the claims of universality and humanism. Attention should be drawn to concepts like the “digital divide,” (Norris 2001) which, with transhumanism, might turn into that of the “genetic divide.” (McKibben 2003) It appears as if the transhumanist movement, moving towards goals which are very particular in terms of time and place (yet presented as universal, democratic, intended for the well-being of everyone) fully embodies the culture of narcissism and its typical dealings with contemporary anxieties. (Lasch 1991) The last mischievous proof of this point is the fact that the theorists and supporters of the transhumanist movement are statistically very male and very mid-aged. In short, they give the impression of being at a certain point in life when the attributes of masculinity and power begin to elude men and remind them of their impermanence and mortality).

All of our concerns combined, we are convinced that the transhumanist celebration of the outdated dichotomy is symptomatic (of narcissism and ethnocentrism at least) rather than humanist. We share the view, which may only be only expressed in the form of a quote in a manuscript like our own: “transhumanists are just about the last group of people that I’d like to see live forever.” (Fukuyama in Bostrom 2004)

In conclusion to this part, let us also note how transhumanism has implications that deny the subject its political function and philosophy. When enhancement of the body becomes the key human interest, it turns our intention away from “the socio-economic, the cultural, the mediated-through-language,” (Bhattacharyya 2001, 37) and the body, its biological limits (mortality), takes centre stage. “However society is organised and resources allocated, we will all grow old and die eventually and the journey to that point will entail discomforts which cannot be cured through social reform.” (Ibid.) By refusing to politicise their everyday life, transhumanists turn all their narcissistic attentions to a hyper capitalist version of technological determinism, and in an almost perverted twist choose to name their

endeavour humanism. In an ultimate triumph of narcissism, in his own eyes, man is able to transform his fear of imminent mortality into a political and humanist struggle for equal access to technological and medical body enhancement and, ultimately, immortality. An inevitable consequence, of course, is profound insensitivity towards other people, as well as the individual's own social, economic, and political circumstances. In this respect, transhumanism is reminiscent of Christianity – the promise of a better future always already presupposes a bad present, as well as passivation of one's own desires.

With transhumanism, we are approaching "the inversion of ideology," (Wilson in Featherstone 2001, 55) where "people are turned against the reality principle and reflection, and instead urged to refer to the objectivity of technology. Or in other words, what is uncanny and alien. In the uncanny society /…/ the aim is never to live but to know from an objective distance." (Ibid.)

The transhumanist depoliticisation of social life and the human body could perchance find its opposite in the contemporary version of the grotesque body – the modified body, which is the subject of the following chapter.

3.17 The modified body

Body modification reclaims the sensuous body and it "spectacularizes corporeality at a time when bodies are increasingly seen to be 'disappearing'." (Bell 2001, 170) This new experiencing of the body involves both pleasure and pain and it posits itself "against the numbing effects of a pacifying media culture and against either the state's or consumer culture's control over pleasure (and pain) giving." (Ibid.) Body modification is ornamental and postulates the body as an object of the gaze, an object, which demands attention. The modified body can thus be seen as a possible stage of resistance and transgression. However, it faces the same dangerous prospect as any other body resistance; resisting with one's body might be merely an illustration of the circumstance that the body is the only tool of struggle left to the individuals who utilise it. As the modified body is most often found on the margins of society, our concern might be suitable in this context.

Body modification can also be seen as a specific answer to the increasing influence of technology on the body. Tattooing and piercing can "signal a playful, subversive re-appropriation of technology," (Ibid.) and bring back the metaphor of the cyborg, especially with the "incorporation of technology into or onto the body, in order to augment it." (Ibid.) The modified body stands against the loss of "connection to our bodies, sensory deprivation, alienation and political impotence" (Ibid., 171) of the transhumanist ideal.

The distinction between the modified body and the transhumanist body is analogous to the distinction between aesthetic manipulations of the body on the one hand, and functional alterations on the other. The latter attempt to enhance the body's capabilities while the former struggle to re-experience the body. (Ibid. 172) Which of these two possibilities of body manipulation is generally seen as more rational, sensible, and desirable, is rather obvious. At least since

cyberpunk[74] the "subjects of aesthetic cyborg enhancements do not … elicit a great deal of observation and commentary when compared to those individuals that have absorbed the hardware of information systems and biotechnology in cool fits of individualized, customized technophilia." (Tomas in Bell 2001, 172) The goal has become to "'jack in' to cyberspace /…/ – jacking in, therefore, as the moment /…/ of becoming pure data, bits and bytes," (Ibid.) the challenge to "leave the 'meat' behind." (Ibid., 173)

Leaving the meat behind stands for "identity play," (Ibid.) for narcissistic self-reinvention, freedom from corporeal limitations, "perhaps /…/ as the flipside to anchoring the post-modern self through modification, this represents the liberation of the self from the body." (Ibid.) However, such Cartesian liberation of the self from the body in the form of the phenomenological experience of cyberspace presupposes wilful repression of the physical body, as Balsamo (2002) reminds us. It is open to question whether such repression is in fact possible[75] but even if we might think it is, we should be reminded of the most basic Freudian assumption – the repressed always returns. (1915a) Perhaps this setting is appropriate for theorising the crossovers between "the dream of the body's disappearance in a post-human liberation from the meat" (Bell 2001, 176) and the impulse, or "the desire to recapture and re-experience the body in the face of its threatened erasure." (Ibid.) Such crossovers can be observed in aesthetic cyberpunk bodies, techno-shamanism, techno-bodies, and, of course, in performance and body art.

For Shannon Bell (2010a) philosophy is an embodied practice and her long-term theoretical and practical interest, the female phallus, is seen as "blurring and erasing sexual difference." (71) Bell argues

[74] Cyberpunk is a literary genre that became prominent in the 1980s with authors like William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and Neal Stephenson. In cinema, its most famous example is *Blade Runner*, released in 1982. Cyberpunk is a genre of low life and high tech and it explores the impacts of digital technologies and virtual reality, populated by cyborgs, artificial life and machines. (Bell 2007, 4)

[75] See the two cases of gaming-related deaths in the previous chapter.

that the owners of the female phallus are cyborgs: “if the prosthetic cock is strapped on, then the categorical distinction of human and technological instrument is blurred. The female phallus, like the cyborg, is /…/ a philosophical doing that can’t get it up when contained in language games that it outgrew long ago.” (Ibid., 72)

The crucial question that arises from theorising various technological interventions into the body is whether there remains a consistency in the very concept of the body. The genealogy of the body does not begin with human history; for a long time, there was no body – there was just flesh. The key issue can be summarised into the question of how culture produces subjects from raw material.[76] But then again; should the anthropologically informed question not really be: what has happened to the original raw material after a multitude of cultural interventions that it has endured? Social theory and humanities are now well aware of the fact that culture physically inscribes itself back into the body. As this transpires, are we still discussing the same flesh, the same raw material, and the same biological species? We suspect that the impending response to this dilemma is: no, not really.

[76] This is an issue that demands a whole separate chapter (see chapter 4).

3.18 The body of psychoanalysis

Although Freud's psychoanalysis is very vague when it comes to the body, there is a very revealing section in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913b), which points to something that we have, throughout this text, termed the repression of the body. Freud, in accordance with theories of that time, classified the stimuli for dreaming into four categories: external sensory stimuli, internal (subjective) sensory excitation, internal organic somatic stimuli, and physical sources of stimulation. In respect to the problem of the body, the third category appears of particular concern to us, as it refers to "a source of dreams more copious than any we have so far considered, one indeed which seems as though it could never run dry." (Ibid., 547) Although Freud compares his interpretation of this category of stimuli with the prevailing medical interpretations of dreams, he still elaborates on it in a somewhat mysterious manner:

> If it is established that the interior of the body when it is in a diseased state becomes a source of stimuli for dreams, and if we admit that during sleep the mind, being diverted from the external world, is able to pay more attention to the interior of the body, then it seems plausible to suppose that the internal organs do not need to be diseased before they can cause excitations to reach the sleeping mind – excitations which are somehow turned into dream-images. (Ibid.)

Freud gives concrete examples of correlations between certain diseased states of the body, and particular content of dreams:

> Thus the dreams of those suffering from diseases of the heart are usually short and come to a terrifying end at the moment of waking; their content almost always includes a situation involving a horrible death. Sufferers from diseases of the lungs dream of suffocation, crowding and fleeing, and are remarkably subject to the familiar nightmare. /…/ In the case of digestive disorders dreams contain ideas connected with enjoyment of food or disgust. Finally, the influence of sexual excitement on the content of dreams can be

> adequately appreciated by everyone from his own experience and provides the theory that dreams are instigated by organic stimuli with its most powerful support. (Ibid., 546)

Moreover; Freud, quoting Burdach, (1913b, 559) soon makes another meaningful observation, which alludes to corporeality and promises a privileged entry to the realm of the flesh by a willing repression of the self: “Sleep signifies an end of the authority of the self. Hence falling asleep brings a certain degree of passivity along with it. . . . The images that accompany sleep can occur only on condition that the authority of the self is reduced.”

In line with Freud’s premises that consider the flesh as a result of the abandonment of consciousness, Žižek (2001) introduces the contemporary Lacanian body when he discusses the virtual repression of the body. In his interpretation, he also draws heavily on Heidegger (1962), to whom we shall return later.

> However, the ultimate lesson of cyberspace is an even more radical one: not only do we lose our immediate material body, but we learn that there never was such a body – our bodily self-experience was always–already that of an imaginary constituted entity. Towards the end of his life, Heidegger conceded that, for philosophy, ‘the body phenomenon is the most difficult problem’: ‘The bodily (das Leibliche) in the human is not something animalistic. The manner of understanding that accompanies it is something that metaphysics up till now has not touched on.’ One is tempted to risk the hypothesis that it is precisely the psychoanalytic theory which was the first to touch on this key question: is not the Freudian eroticized body, sustained by libido, organized around erogenous zones, precisely the non-animalistic, nonbiological body? Is not THIS (and not the animalistic) body the proper object of psychoanalysis? (Žižek 2001, 55)

Therefore, the flesh is something always already gone; before the intervention of the Symbolic (language), we do not sense it and we do not genuinely experience it. After entering the Symbolic Order, it becomes a structured impulse, labelled with an appropriate cultural

definition, which, again, is no longer biology. In short, we essentialise the sense of flesh by making linguistic sense of it.

The body of psychoanalysis is a body of absence, existing in biological fragments; it is "a void (desire) waiting to be filled, a body-without-organs attending the phallic punctuations of signification, a gap subtending the marking operations of power." (Levin 2001, 100) This body is consistent with Foucault's inscribed surface of events as theorised above. The psyche is merely a representation, "a kind of generalized sign economy which only touches on the physical body at points where it is socially coded, certain primarily genderal '*points de caption*' …" (Ibid.) The body is seen as a "libidinal *tabula rasa*" (Ibid., 114), onto which taboos, rules and repressions are imposed by society.

In the "hermeneutics of life as lack, castration, and death" (Ibid.), the psychoanalytic body is not only impotent, empty and passive; it is also fundamentally marked by gender (difference). It is a gendered body, specifically a female body. Psychoanalysis is caught up in the ideological structure of binary oppositions such as nature/culture, female/male (gendered/general), and body/mind. The body in psychoanalysis is always female[77] (and, in turn, hysterical), belonging to the order of nature; there is no such thing as a male body; therefore, in *malestream* psychoanalysis, there is no body as such; there is no generalised body – just a void.

One cannot but wonder whether this lack of a proper theorisation of the body in psychoanalysis is symptomatic. However, there still are lessons to be learned about the body as conceptualised from the psychoanalytic perspective. For example, the problem of the threshold between the inside and outside of the body represents a

[77] Butler (1999b, 344) draws our attention to a similar problem in most feminisms, which tend to see women as a stable representational category. The subject of feminism is seen as universal and unified and as such – exclusive. Following a Foucauldian interpretation, feminism, just like any other discourse, in fact produces subjects, which it merely claims to represent. (Ibid., 342)

characteristic psychoanalytical contribution to the meta-trouble with the body. Indeed, the blurring of this threshold is fundamental to understanding the psychoanalytical perspective on inner and outer reality. In psychoanalysis, all we have are character types of either neurotic or psychotic variety. To simplify, hysteria is the prototype for a psychical condition, where external reality is inscribed in the body, whilst paranoia, on the other hand, is the prototype for the condition in which the inner life is inscribed as if belonging to external reality. Even such basic Freudian concepts as superego cannot be understood without reference to the blurred threshold between inner and outer reality. Namely, superego is, etiologically speaking, nothing but a reaction formation, an introjection of outer authority into the realm of our psyche. (Freud 1923)

The question of liminality is crucial to our own theorising as well, but we are not comforted by the psychoanalytic answer – the psyche cannot simply be imprinted on the body "through the plugs and ducts of some libidinal machinery of discharge." (Ibid., 108) In fact, the psyche is the body's private image of itself, the body imagines itself. (Ibid., 112) The most exact definition of the psyche was offered by the very first psychoanalytic patient ever, the infamous Anna O., who labelled it "my private theatre," (Freud 1895, 22) a private theatre of the repressed carnivalesque flesh. It appears as if "various pleasures in European carnival have become transformed into the morbid symptoms of private terror." (Stallybrass, White 1999, 384)

Thinking with the body of Shannon Bell, it is impossible to continue to "participate so blindly in the Lacanian cosmos of ontological lack." (Ibid., 107) Theory should return to the "real body," surpassed by "discursive bodies" (Kaite 2001, 165), because one cannot escape being a body. The body cannot be "deferred, lost in a chain of reference, or divided into signifier and signified. Neither *difference*, nor indeterminacy, nor the ideological constitution of the subject, nor the social or linguistic construction of reality, can succeed in disguising the biological status of our existence." (Ibid., 108) This argument might give the impression of being a distinctively

phenomenological (and therefore useless in the psychoanalytical discourse) observation, however, as Levin (Ibid.) informs us, it is not really necessary to be "a body without organs in order to undo the order of representation." The body is a being, it is a symbol, and it is "an immediate image of itself." (Ibid.) Levin provides us with an inspiring and innovative definition of psychoanalysis that we have kept in mind while discussing the idea of slips of the body. According to him, psychoanalysis is not about "the paradoxes of linguistic communication or the aporias of reconstruction, but the question of how people live through the situation of being a neotenous body, the strategies of being in a world of bodies and things, and their various consequences."[78] (Ibid., 109) Shannon Bell's own attitude is hardly at odds with such critiques of psychoanalysis: "Heartbreak is so neat, tidy and quick; psychoanalysis is a waste of time, schizoanalysis is a method now passé; the speed of clean steel entering the flesh fixes what language, 'the talking cure,' never could." (2010a, 23) To use one infamous Freud's joking remark metaphorically: psychoanalysis is a good thing for normal people, and Shannon Bell most certainly does not fit this criterion.

[78] Here, the neotenous body stands for the pre-language and pre-Oedipal stage, during which the flesh (as opposed to the body of symbolisation) is as assertive and forceful as ever.

3.19 The fusion body of Shannon Bell

Despite the multitude of bodies we have played with so far, our intention in the previous chapters was anything but the development of a whole and “objective” classificatory system of the (post-)post-modern body. Some of the bodies described and defined above do have common points and analogous characteristics, and some belong to opposite ends of the spectre (according to various criteria, such as class, gender, access to technology, etc.); however, they do not function as a whole.

Rather than a system of different bodies that collectively represent a totality of (Western) bodies, these bodies form a post-modern *bricolage* of events, especially when an event is defined as proof of existence. (Baudrillard 2001, 44) The bodies described belong to different orders, they are constructed within different realities, and they are commonly defined perhaps only by a typical post-modern trait: they are not fixed entities. The history of the modern body is first and foremost a history of difference, whereas the contemporary body is good to think in terms of disappearing borders, globalisation, and post-modern fusion. (Kunst 2004, 135–136) With deconstruction, however, the meaning is no longer in the difference; therefore, the body must be conceptualised beyond a classificatory system of binary oppositions. Any given body can be any of the bodies portrayed above (and a multitude of others as well) at any time, even at the same time. Bodies no longer produce commodities; truthfully, it is now the other way around: “commodities produce bodies: bodies for aerobics, bodies for sports cars, bodies for vacations, bodies for Pepsi, for Coke, and /…/ bodies for fashion, – total bodies, a total look.” (Faurschou 2001, 82) The body has become a fetishised capitalist object of glamour, fascination and attraction. (Ibid., 84, 85) Furthermore, in this post-condition, we are encouraged to desire to desire, enjoy to enjoy, and have fear of fear; “we have arrived at the point where we expect our intelligibility to come from what was for many centuries thought of as

madness; the plenitude of our body from what was long considered its stigma and likened to a wound; our identity from what was perceived as an obscure and nameless urge." (Ostrander 2001, 179)

What is going to happen to the body? In the future, it is speculated that "human species will move either in the direction of an intensification of bodily performativity or towards the ultimate flight from the body cage." (Terranova in Bell 2001, 168) Even though it appears as if adopting one way already excludes the other, Shannon Bell somehow manages to embody both of these endeavours at the same time and even within the same body – sporting tattoos and a six pack, branding her flesh and eating raw, piercing her skin and doing endless reps at the gym. One cannot but wonder: is this liberation or liberation from liberation itself?

As it has become customary, Bell manages her body intensely in order to prove her unique existence. The body is now a fusion body of passing occurrences and without history. It is trained to withstand speed, disciplined to repress itself, and celebrated to politicise pleasure. Shannon Bell clarifies this position with a rather unanticipated reference: "The tradition of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations – a living composite of philosophy, action, and eating habits – minus the warfare strategies; this is the way to live/write." (2004, May 23) We have already seen that this particular fusion body is a bit of everything; pigtails, eastern and continental philosophy, fascist body regimes in the gym, *bourgeois* diet, black clothes, the promise of kinky sex, etc.
We should not be surprised to find that Bell's body is dreadfully compatible with the descriptions of a capitalist ideal. For Edgley and Brissett (in Holliday, Thompson 2001, 125) the perfect working body

> is slender, fit and glowing. It does not smoke. If it drinks, it does so in moderation. It carefully regulates its diet in terms of calories, carbohydrates, fats, salts and sugars. It exercises regularly and intensely. It showers (not bathes) frequently. It engages only in safe sex. It sleeps regular hours. It has the correct amount of body fat. … It has flexibility. … It has proper muscle strength. … It has appropriate aerobic capacity.

This all appears true for the body of Shannon Bell. However, upon closer inspection, this judgement only appears true because Bell's body is properly disciplined. Actually, it is so dependent on discipline that it needs to be reminded to go to sleep, have a siesta or unwind – but also not to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco. Bell's public working body and her private body of the workout can be observed through contemporary coalescence of free time and work, private and public space, etc. – she "*works* in public space and *works out* in private. /…/ This is a highly isolated and individualised body, disconnected from all others, perfectly self-contained, and above all, fit enough to cope. /…/ There is no 'private' in which to relax or escape the routine: work in the office and work on the body are collapsed into one continuous timetable of self-discipline." (Ibid.)

The body is a screen onto which all sorts of "pulsating signs" (Kroker, Kroker 2001c, 27) are projected. It is caught in the context of an economy of excess, panic and hyper-subjectivity. It is constituted as a battlefield, where a war rages between the hegemonic discourse of inscription and the revolutionary forces of the o-/re-pressed. Yet, the body is not only a means and a site of resistance, it also resits itself. It resists against what Kroker and Kroker (2001b) call *body invaders* – "from the fashion scene and panic viruses to the proliferating signs of consumer culture," (Ibid., 28) against ideology, against the Symbolic Order. Or, more precisely, it is the flesh that resists.

As we have already seen, for Foucault flesh preceded the body. For him, the genealogy of the body begins with repression of the flesh. But one of Freud's (1915a) most basic postulations is that the repressed always returns to haunt us and cause disturbances. In this sense it is perhaps symptomatic that the impotent body of psychoanalysis is also founded on this very repression of the flesh.[79]

[79] Freud's notion of repression discloses "the psychosomatic origins of the ontotheological split between 'mind' and 'body'," (Levin 2001, 113) but the concept of defence is interpreted as a primarily horizontal split, which reproduces the Cartesian

The psychoanalytic body is by definition female, which is eternally hysterical.[80] There is no such thing as a male or a non-gendered body in psychoanalysis (as there is no female subject). There is no flesh. But there most certainly are almost mystical theoretical gaps in Freudian theory, which hint precisely at the return of the repressed flesh, for example, the anti-pain-avoiding and anti-pleasure-seeking death drive – Freud's name "for an uncanny *excess* of life, for an 'undead' urge which persist beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death." (Žižek 2006, 62)

The question worth pondering on appears to be: is there such a thing as the unconscious in the context of the body? Levin (2001, 115) strongly believes so: "there is something about the body, /…/ which is indestructible so long as it remains biologically viable. In other words, there *is* a kind of 'animal substance'."[81] If that is indeed the case, how does this *animal substance* manifest?

Why do we sometimes fall over, trip and stumble for no apparent reason? In the following chapter, we will briefly explore an intriguing possibility, condensed in the following question: is the body

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mind/body dualism. For Freud, the nconscious stands exactly where we have located the body: between the given body (the flesh) and the external world.

[80] "You'd be hysterical too if social inscription cut into your sex organ, patrialized it and left a remainder as the operative organ." (Bell 2010a, 72) Moreover, hysteria can be seen as a site of resistance: "the hysteric, marking incomplete oedipalization, is a figure of resistance. The hysteric resists through her body." (Ibid., 73) Bell (Ibid., 74) labels as "posthysteric" anyone, who "resists through a public and private refusal to accept the female body as it has been constructed." (Ibid.)

[81] In post-modern theory "the body, the unconscious, the infantile, the grotesque, the aesthetic – or whatever we choose to call it" (Levin 2001, 116) has become irrelevant due to academic supremacy of rationalism and technological determinism. Nevertheless, as such, the body has in fact become all the more relevant and attention-grabbing, because by becoming marginal, it has been given a radical and subversive potential.

merely an interface between the flesh and the world, namely between drives and signifiers?[82]

[82] Here, signifier is understood as “the formal starting point of rationalist thought, /.../ the discrete manipulable segment which makes analysis, abstraction, and substitution possible.” (Levin 2001, 103) In this conception, the signifier has ontological status.

3.20 The body of the subject

We have already defined the body as fluid, unstable, marked with its own threshold. It is culturally, historically, and politically specific, gendered, marked with class, age, technology, etc. The body is peculiarly problematic – the Cartesian interpretation still dominates the popular view, but the body is no longer being punished for the mind's sins. (Foucault 1977a) It appears as if the body sometimes demonstrates and, at times, even performs its emancipatory potential, especially at the borders of its conflicting conceptions. The body is constructed and reconstructed every day, its 'successful' management is the last grand project of the mind/body dualism, but the flip side to this is that the body is also the last site of freedom and revolution. The mind is polluted with the restrictive Cartesian logic and as such perhaps represents the real target of biopolitics; the real site of power, control and discipline.

The body of Shannon Bell is a perfect example of this revolutionary potential. However, this possibility of bodily revolt is not loudest in Bell's body's philo-porno-political performances,[83] but rather in its Maussian (1973) body techniques, which upon careful scrutiny[84] expose an opening, instability, a flux. There is a threshold at the threshold itself, and it causes corpo-real body events when crossed. When the body *chooses* to represent itself, when it becomes distinctively *performative*, no matter what, when the body decides to disobey, we arrive at the site, which we conceptualise as the flipside to the Freudian slip of the tongue – *as a slip of the body*. A slip of the body is an uncanny event, a manifestation of the existence of the repressed; it is its brutal and sometimes rather clumsy and embarrassing return.

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[83] These are projects of the mind since, as stated by Bell, "*Fast Feminism* /…/ prefers sex when it's crossbred with politics and philosophy." (2010a, 17)

[84] We have already attempted this undertaking in chapter 3.3, taking the body of Shannon Bell as a concept to think with.

The techniques of the body can be theorized in terms of what Foucault (1980) labels as discourses which present themselves as sciences, but still remain engaged in networks of powers. Discipline serves as a representative model here – it is “a subtle discourse involving the technology of bodies and the formation of subjects (that is, of the subjugated). Discipline is an unconscious ideology.” (Ostrander 2001, 175) Discipline produces subjects and subjects cultivate discipline; discipline “operates a continuous totalization.” (Ibid.) In concert with subjectivity, desire springs. Psychoanalysis, which is the philosophy of desire, might neglect the body precisely because subjectivity and desire arise together. There can be no philosophy of desire after the subject is dispersed: “desire liberated from the subject is a ‘quid pro quo’ that can flourish perhaps in a mythological version of madness. Desire springs up together with the subject of which it constitutes the other face.” (Ibid., 176) The body is more than language; it is “irreducible. Its sufferings and enjoyments are not simply a matter of signs but rather of nerves and muscles,” (Ibid.) therefore it cannot possibly be reduced to language.

The body is anything but a stable and whole entity. It is marked by instability, variability, even unpredictability. In contemporary philosophy, this is a consequence of the notion that the subject, too, is weak and unstable. (Kunst 2004, 13) The subject, its shortcomings, problems, challenges, inconsistencies, its split, and its mere (non)existence, appear to be the key theme of contemporary theory. Thus, any attempt to identify and extract the residues of theory after post-modernism, is almost obliged to concentrate on the subject. This is also precisely our undertaking in the following chapter. As for the slips of the body, we shall find ourselves in close vicinity of that concept again when we discuss Butler’s (1997) performative intervention into psychoanalysis.

4. What is left of the subject after post-modernism?

"The future has already happened, it just isn't very well distributed." (Gibson in Bell 2007, 131)

The contemporary subject is overwhelmed by speed and (body) events, the purpose of the latter being, as we have already seen, the verification of one's existence. The event is a site where one's actuality can be performed. Hand in hand with what we have labelled *the fusion body* goes a "not-self" (Emberley 2001, 47), marked by desperate pursuits of original subjectivity and personal aesthetics and colonised by fashion and style.[85] In the post- age of disillusions, our sense of self is the most fortified domain as well as the most explored philosophical topic since (post-)modernism. It craves and demands uniqueness, authenticity, non-inhibition, and artistic freedom to manipulate our body as well as our fellow subjects.

The body is, as we have seen, interpreted as a predominantly visual category – either it is a screen onto which our symptoms and desires are projected, a surface inscribed by language and events, or it can be a tool in the never-ceasing project of self-(re)invention. But how has this come to be? Why do we root our self in what we think we *like, want* and*, feel*? We have already attempted to demonstrate that the repression of flesh represents a flipside to this dominance of subjectivity. However, in a brief genealogy of the subject, let us investigate how that very dominance came to be and what, if anything, is still left of it today.

Our genealogical research of subjectivity is, of course, incomplete. It begins by laying out the crucial backgrounds, which

[85] In terms of fashion, Faurschou (2001, 79) demonstrates how "disappearance of the subject is implicit in the very principles of an expanding fashion culture" and argues that the subject surely might be on the way out, but at least it is "going out in style." (Ibid.)

most fatally influenced the contemporary view of the subject. As a distinctively subjective theory of the subject, psychoanalysis is critiqued, yet returned to in an attempt to point at possibilities of revolt and subversion. This genealogy of subjectivity ends with what could be theorised as the performative turn within psychoanalysis, an event, marked by a forceful entrance of the Other. Traditionally, everything used to be theorised by the privileged, including Otherness; in fact, theory is still predominantly both *malestream* and colonial; however, it has become evident in the humanities and social sciences that the content of a given theory is substantially dependent on who articulates it. As post-colonial and gender studies began to emerge, the Other was finally given a voice. Especially in gender studies, the Other also – and that seems crucial to us – occupied the body. Thus, the entrance of the gendered Other into theory was utterly performative – women started to write about the problems of women and about womanhood as such. This is why our genealogy of subjectivity intends to end prematurely and not take into account all the aspects of the contemporary exponentiation of subjectivity. In the light of the argument that we intend to develop, we will merely point at this particular moment in theory, in which the dualist understanding of the body/mind dynamics was first challenged not only by the minds, but by concrete bodies as well. At the same time, *malestream* theory finally gave up the body completely and began to dedicate its attention exclusively to subjectivity, which, interestingly, is nowadays becoming more and more merged with the concept of consciousness and researched as a specific feature of the body, which can, at least theoretically, be detached from the body and relocated somewhere else.

This is also the course of theory which most prominently accompanies Shannon Bell's most recent pursuits, heavily influenced by celebrating Virilio's notion of speed, (2006) as well as by the conviction that the body has become obsolete. However, as we have already shown (most convincingly perhaps in chapter 3.16), the ideology behind contemporary variations of technological determinism

is still that of the enlightened progress, only it has since crossbred with capitalism and neoliberalism. The slips of Bell's perfectly disciplined, rational, and productive body facilitate a context for us in which post-gender psychoanalysis can perhaps operate – and, also, a context where Virilio's own reservations towards speed (Ibid.) can be employed effectively as an affirmation of another of his concepts, i.e. that of the accident. (Virilio, Lotringer 2005)

Furthermore, although Deleuze's and Lacan's concepts most often exclude each other and make psycho- and schizoanalysis ultimately incompatible (Hallward 2010), the return to psychoanalysis after the interventions of gender trouble and schizoanalysis could prove fruitful. As a final point, the key problem of speed should be translated from *whether we are rushing towards death or away from it* to the question of *why we are in such a hurry in the first place*. Perhaps slowing down is the strategy of choice in an attempt to reconcile the body/mind binary split, which we cannot seem to be able to rework and always end up multiplying instead. Perchance the forces, which, caught up in a relentless battle, constitute the body as a battlefield, are only contained within the body precisely because the body is constantly on the move. What happens if the "body-subject" (Merleau-Ponty 2005) is late for the battle – does the same battle still unfold; or, better, yet, does a battle unfold at all?

4.1 Genealogy of the subject

Etymologically, the subject is always linked to something outside of it – “to be subject means to be 'placed (or even thrown) under'. One is always subject *to* or *of* something.” (Mansfield 2000, 3) According to Mansfield (Ibid.), the word subject already “proposes that the self is not a separate and isolated entity.” Instead, the subject always “operates at the intersection of general truths and shared principles.” (Ibid.) What we ought to delve into, yet again, is not a history of the subject. It is not a metaphysical investigation of the subject. Our ultimate goal is anything but to reveal the subject in its wholeness and finality or to discover the truth behind the subject. As goes for many things in life, here too the journey itself is the goal. We aim to investigate different approaches to the subject within their cultural and historical contexts, lay out the antagonisms, inconsistencies, paradoxes and battles in the theories of the subject, not to explain the subject as such, but, rather, to demonstrate why this debate has come to be so prominent in the humanities and social sciences and how the almost notorious status of the subject has affected contemporary theory, art and quotidian life itself.

This is, as the title of the chapter suggests, another journey through a given history of theories, inspired at least partly by Foucault’s (1977b) interpretation of Nietzsche’s idea of genealogy. (2007) A brief, yet important part of that journey, however, lies in the domain of (theoretical) psychoanalysis, the key school of thought that attempts to do what we endeavour to avoid, which is to “explain the truth of the subject.” (Mansfield 2000, 9) That ambition makes psychoanalysis a *subjective* theory of the subject, which is due to the fact that one of the main assumptions which psychoanalysis rests upon is that its “object of analysis is quantifiable and knowable – in short, a real thing, with a fixed structure, operating in knowable and predictable patterns.” (Ibid.) This assumption can be found very much alive and well in most modern Western theorisations of subjectivity.

Several anti-subjective theories of the subject, such as those from the authors influenced by Nietzsche, arise from a different vantage point, according to which subjectivity is not an existing thing; rather, it has been invented. It has been invented by the dominant forces, systems of social organisation and ideology in order to manage us. (Ibid., 10) Foucault understands the subject as trapped into an illusion of stability and fixed selfhood, which can be understood by science and corrected, managed and disciplined by institutions. (Ibid.) This is the premise which psychoanalysis has been critiqued from, and also which debates on gender and queer theory in the 20th century flourished from.

This distinction between psychoanalytic (subjective) and Foucauldian (anti-subjective) approaches to the subject, already established by Mansfield (2000), provides us with a useful schema on how to attempt a genealogy of the subject.[86] Both subjective and anti-subjective theorisations of the subject have one important thing in common: they both separate their subject from the free and autonomous subject of the Enlightenment, that is, they see the subject as *constructed* – and they both owe this to Heidegger. (Ibid., 11) Therefore, the genealogy of subjectivity, as presented here, begins with theories, which established the enlightened view on subjectivity; that of Descartes, Rousseau, and Kant, which are followed by Heidegger's contribution to the topic, and the psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity. The chapter on the origins of modern subjectivity is followed by a draft of the anti-subjective orientation towards the problem of subjectivity, which leads us to the Foucauldian aesthetics of resistance. The intervention of the actual resistance, however, comes with the question of gender. By presenting Irigaray's,

[86] It must be noted here, however, that psychoanalysis can be studied as a school of thought, founded on Freud's work. Despite the inner battles, departures from and returns to Freud, mixed with personal drama of the theorists involved, it is a field of its own. The other part of the schema, the Foucauldian, anti-subjective approaches to the subject, is nothing of the sort and far from being coherent enough to be mistaken for a school of thought.

Butler's, and Kristeva's dialogues with psychoanalysis and other theorisations of subjectivity, we should be able to provide the context which we will later conceive the final chapter of this text through.

4.2 The origins

The unitary and individuated subject of the Enlightenment was raised to the level of the universal. In these universalisations, one can (and, in fact, many did) “locate the class, gender and imperial subtexts of Western epistemologies.” (Smith 1999, 105) Theorists like Nietzsche and Freud provided the first critical evaluations of the enlightened subject, which are, in fact, its early deconstructions. These authors have strongly influenced the later, post-modern notions of the subject, and deconstruction was established as one of the key philosophical principles of the second half of the 20th century.

In post-modern theories, the unitary subject has been replaced by a variety of unwhole subjects, all of them socially constructed, none of them unitary. For example, individuals are seen as interpellated as (free) subjects by ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 1971b), constructed by discourse (Foucault 1990), individuated, yet split, and constituted by a double blind (Lacan 1998a, 2006a), etc. Butler (1999a), appropriating Austin’s (1976) concept of the performative, talks of performativity and understands the subject as an effect of language.

Post-modernists, together with their contemporaries as well as their successors, have critiqued the unitary and individuated subject to such an extent that after uncovering layer after layer of social, economic, and political meanings inscribed in it, the bottom has perhaps been reached, revealing that there is nothing left – we are left with a void. There is no subject at the bottom of the subject; what constructed it in the first place were the ideological, social, political, sexual, economic, linguistic, and other implicit meanings. All that deconstruction of the subject actually does, is making these meanings explicit. It may even be said that the history of deconstructing the Western subject is really a history of ideological matrices, which were at a given time employed by theory in order to present itself (even to itself) as constructive; whole, un-split, denotative.

It is of great importance to note that with every further layer of the implicit meanings exposed and deconstructed, a new layer of cultural demands is presented to the body of the tormented empty subject, designed perhaps to conceal that very void. Ever since Descartes (1996), the body/mind dualism has proven useful despite the fact that in contemporary theory it has either been rejected or multiplied. In fact, “the entire modern philosophy can be conceived as the history of rejections of Cartesianism.” (Žižek 2013, 1)

Consequently, it appears as if Foucault’s (1977a) theory on disciplining and punishing, where the physical body used to be punished in order to destroy the symbolic body (subject), can be reversed: we now torture (and theorise) the subject, but wake up every day with a new and improved, upgraded and updated with the latest security improvements; healthy, fit, and cyborgial one. It seems as if the careful construction of the body attempts to conceal the lack of any substance within. A contemporary de(con)struction of the subject can in turn be interpreted as an excuse to keep clinging onto that very same, empty subject. By *correcting* and *improving* the body, the subject is kept alive and the flesh safely repressed.

4.2.1 The enlightened subject

The Enlightenment provided us with an image of subjectivity that remains very persistent in everyday thinking, popular culture, and even in social and cultural theory, where, if nothing else, this autonomous and individuated subject has become the common enemy and a shared vantage point of any serious analysis. The critique of this free subject provides a starting point for contemporary theorisations of subjectivity, wherein deconstructing of the subject has become somewhat of an obligation, as if proving thereof the objectivity of a theoretical endeavour.

The rejection of this enlightened subject, defined as self-assured, whole, and autonomous, is common ground for nearly all contemporary theory[87] – and indeed it is also precisely what most of the approaches to the subject, outlined in the forthcoming chapters, have in common. Many of the ideological underpinnings of enlightened thinking still inhabit present-day Western institutions, social structures, discourses, and political systems, representing a significant flipside to how the enlightened views on subjectivity are seen as almost contaminated in contemporary theory. Yet, it is precisely the Enlightenment that should be credited as the decisive moment in defining the modern era as "the era of the subject." (Mansfield 2000, 14) However, why did it suddenly seem essential to be able to define subjectivity and pinpoint the self? Why did we start questioning things that had appeared understandable, obvious, and even natural? Why did we begin to doubt and critique traditional modes and practices of selfhood? The traditional images of selfhood were faced with an identity crisis and continuous re-evaluation. At the dawn of modernity, "the self became an issue, a point of fundamental instability in the world." (Ibid.)

[87] For a typical example of an exception to this rule, see the chapter 3.16 on transhumanism.

4.2.1.1 Body/mind dualism

The famous philosophical formula *cogito ergo sum*, scrutinised, analysed and critiqued in detail over the centuries, represents the essence of modern Western thought, which strives to find objective truth by employing conscious processes, such as observation and logic. For Descartes, individuality cannot be taken for granted as incontestable – in fact, not even the mere existence of the individual could be taken for granted. According to Descartes, everything needs to be thrown into doubt and only what can be verified can be accepted. Descartes' reasons and intentions aside, his reflection on himself, in a way, counts as a definition of the self – or at least a proclamation of the self as the origin of all experience and knowledge, a somewhat revolutionary idea at the time. What must be emphasised, though, is that Descartes provides us with the image of "the self as defined by the rational faculties it can use to order the world." (Mansfield 2000, 15) Since the Enlightenment, the emphasis on the self and the belief that the self is best expressed by consciousness have also gone somewhat hand in hand. (Ibid., 14–15)

Descartes treats the human body as a container, a vehicle at best, which is controlled and operated by the mind.[88] In his view, the body is reduced to the task of providing food and shelter for the mind, which, after it is *plugged in*, immediately starts to function independently. In the *Meditations* (Descartes 1996, 74) he writes: "I do not doubt that the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant, and that it is immediately aware of its thoughts, even though it does not remember this afterwards because the impressions

[88] He does nevertheless admit: "Nature /…/ teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined, and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit." (Descartes 1996, 56) However, to him "these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain /…/ are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling of the mind with the body." (Ibid.)

of these thoughts do not remain in the memory." In his thinking, the mind is completely independent from the body. In an often quoted passage from *Discourse on the Method* (1637), he elaborates on that point:

> I could suppose that I had no body, and that there was no world nor any place in which I might be; but /…/ I could not /…/ suppose that I was not; and that, on the contrary, from the very circumstance that I thought to doubt of the truth of other things, it most clearly and certainly followed that I was. /…/ I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole existence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has need of no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that 'I', that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is." (26–27)

For Descartes, then, thinking is fundamentally incorporeal, mental activities are not embodied, and the mind is absolutely independent from the body. It is not a giant leap from here to attempt to interpret the mind as trapped in a mortal cage, striving to escape in the safe realm of immortality and pure thought – into the realm of the virtual. In this light, let us briefly return to the problem of transhumanism, which advocates a rather naïve adaptation of Cartesian ideas. It appears as if transhumanist thinkers (Kurzweil, Moravec, Bostrom, etc.), who are, interestingly, characteristically male and middle-aged, pursue comfort from their own mortality in biotechnological improvements of the human condition. They anticipate that this tactic will allow them to survive long enough to be able to become post-human and, consequently, practically immortal. They believe that they will achieve this with the help of technology, biotechnology, and biomedicine, which, they are convinced, will soon allow for vast *improvements*[89] to the human body.

[89] The entire transhumanist vocabulary is full of enlightened optimism, linear progress, and rationalism. It is as ethnocentric, arrogant, and self-righteous as if

The biotechnological advances perhaps represent the final conceivable grand narratives, which together form the new (somewhat secular) religion of the West. Humans are, according to transhumanist ideas, already on the way to new sorts of biodiversity, a development which – should their utopias realise – is also bound to bring new global inequalities. The transhumanist celebration of self-aware agency is merely a celebration of "first world, privileged-class eclecticism." (Hall 126) Future inequalities might no longer be defined as questions of access to the means of production, but may be founded instead on what theorists are already labelling "the genetic divide." (McKibben 2003) Critics of transhumanism argue that, humanist goals aside, we might end up splitting into two species – one with access to (bio)technology and medicine, and the other without it. The world is already divided into centres of power and capital on one side and peripheries of production on the other. We have already seen unprivileged people sell their organs to the rich Westerners, living their lives with incomplete bodies, which, again, is something that is not universally conceivable, but a possibility opened up by Descartes: "we cannot conceive of half of a mind, while we can always conceive of half of a body /…/ the decay of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind." (Descartes 1996, 9–10) Therefore, science fiction or not, one cannot but wonder whether we are on the way to a whole new level of colonialism, in which the dominant species wants to grow its spare parts in the poor regions of the world.[90]

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anthropology, feminist and post-colonial studies, and epistemological revolutions never transpired.

[90] It should be noted – and this is a very important point – that as every particular dualism is eventually overcome by theory (such as the body/mind opposition, male/female hierarchy, etc.), it appears as if the principle of binary organisation does not simply disappear. Instead, it gets multiplied and projected onto a larger screen. We should be more aware of the fact that by dissolution of distinctions between any two opposing groups within a given society, in consequence, the distinction between that society and the rest of the world becomes more fundamental. Thus, we should not strive for the abandonment of dualist

The mind/body dualism is most clearly demonstrated by Descartes in his two early works, *Meditations* (1996) and *Discourse on the Method* (1637). In the latter Descartes also attempts to prove the existence of god, which goes to confirm that the two ideas are closely intertwined. Should the body/mind dualism really work, not everybody would "run to the nearest monastery or nunnery" (Bracken 2002, 21), as some authors satirically suggest. However, should that be the case, what everybody might want to do is engage in prayer, even though nowadays the prayers could be addressed to a techno-god. However, let us be reminded that Jesus confronted his followers with the concept of resurrection, which presupposes no such dualism and in fact advocates for a very different interpretation of the body/mind problem. As the well-known account of the biblical story goes; after his body was killed, he did not return to Earth in the form of a pure mind, virtual, immaterial, and divine. On the contrary, his soul immortal or not, his was a fundamentally embodied endeavour, his mind utterly inseparable from the corporeal condition. His was the resurrection of the "body-subject." (Merleau-Ponty 2005)

In the present age of doubt and scepticism towards grand narratives, as well as towards binary oppositions, it is no wonder that Cartesian dualism has been critiqued so fiercely.[91] It appears as if

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thinking in order to be able to celebrate sameness and unity, quite the contrary; we should exceed dualisms by forever splitting them further, multiplying them on the domestic terrain, magnifying them infinitely or at least until they disperse not into oneness, unity, and coherence, but, rather, into celebrations of genuine diversities.

[91] Žižek introduces his book on the topic, *The Ticklish Subject* (2000) with the following rant about the Cartesian subject::

> A Spectre Is Haunting Western Academia …
>
> … the spectre of the Cartesian subject. All academic powers have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: the New Age obscurantist (who wants to supersede the 'Cartesian paradigm' towards a new holistic approach) and the postmodern deconstructionist (for whom the Cartesian subject is a discursive fiction, an effect of decentred textual mechanisms); the Habermasian theorist of communication (who insists on a shift from Cartesian monological subjectivity to discursive intersubjectivity) and the Heideggerian proponent of the thought of Being (who stresses the need to 'traverse' the horizon of modern subjectivity culminating in

such dualism can only be maintained in the context of metanarratives, especially religious ones. After all, Descartes (1996, 4) himself puts god and body/mind dualism into the same sentence: “I know that the only reason why many irreligious people are unwilling to believe that God exists and that the human mind is distinct from the body is the alleged fact that no one has hitherto been able to demonstrate these points.” Therefore, it should come as no surprise that a very primitive version of the Cartesian split can be located precisely in the sacred, biotechnological, and fundamentally determinist *upgrade* to the enlightened philosophy of subjectivity, called transhumanism.

4.2.1.2 The autonomous individuated subject

Rousseau’s crucial contribution to the topic of subjectivity can be found in his *Confessions* (1781). They are the celebration of values, which are very in line with contemporary narcissistic ideals: “uniqueness and autonomy, the absolute governing freedom, /…/ individual experience.” (Mansfield 2000, 16) Or, as Rousseau himself phrases in the introductory paragraphs to this immense volume:

> I mean to present my fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself. I know my heart, and have studied mankind; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature did wisely in breaking the mould with

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current ravaging nihilism); the cognitive scientist (who endeavours to prove empirically that there is no unique scene of the Self, just a pandemonium of competing forces) and the Deep Ecologist (who blames Cartesian mechanicist materialism for providing the philosophical foundation for the ruthless exploitation of nature); the critical post-Marxist (who insists that the illusory freedom of the bourgeois thinking subject is rooted in class division) and the feminist (who emphasizes that the allegedly sexless *cogito* is in fact a male patriarchal formation). Where is the academic orientation which has not been accused by its opponents of not yet properly disowning the Cartesian heritage? And which has not hurled back the branding reproach of Cartesian subjectivity against its more ‘radical’ critics, as well as its ‘reactionary’ adversaries? (Ibid., 1)

> which she formed me, can only be determined after having read this work. (2001, 9)

Rousseau's autobiographical account of himself differs from other similar endeavours because he attempts to provide us with a whole and fully unapologetic representation of himself, which is almost impenetrable. He does that "not necessarily to make any point or even to justify himself … but simply to present himself. To Rousseau, he as an individual is important and sufficient enough to justify hundreds of pages of painstaking exposition." (Mansfield 2000, 16) Key to understanding *Confessions* is that Rousseau does not attempt to justify his writing or locate it in a historical context; instead, he grounds his work in the feeling and in the living experience. Just being (not even being himself, Rousseau) is enough – his text is in fact about the *sufficiency* of individuality. Rousseau believes that humankind is born into a perfect world, which history and social life have debased. By pursuing the unnatural demands (imposed on us by class, religion, ambition, etc.) humans have diminished their natural potentials. (Ibid., 17) Thus, the romantic Rousseau calls for the liberation of true human nature:

> I confounded the pitiful lies of men; I dared to unveil their nature; to follow the progress of time, and the things by which it has been disfigured; and comparing the man of art with the natural man, to show them, in their pretended improvement, the real source of all their misery. My mind, elevated by these contemplations, ascended to the Divinity, and thence, seeing my fellow creatures follow in the blind track of their prejudices that of their errors and misfortunes, I cried out to them, in a feeble voice, which they could not hear: 'Madmen! know that all your evils proceed from yourselves!' (2001, 374)

Indisputably, Rousseau also practiced what he preached – in a rather post-modern manner, he actually performed his own theory. He liked to withdraw to nature and solitude, "wandering in the forest" (Ibid.) in order to contemplate and immerse himself in the very natural self he praised. We can trace many ideas about human individuality in Rousseau's writing that have since become truisms outside of

theoretical contexts, advocated by Catholicism and endorsed by the invention of infancy at the beginning of the 20th century, such as the notion of an individual being born good and uncorrupted and then entrapped and contaminated by society. Rousseau also provides us with numerous justifications for rejecting social pressures and celebrating our individuality, giving it uninhibited expression. (Ibid.; see also: Mansfield 2000, 18, Dent 2005, 24, Simpson 2007, 109) For Rousseau (in O'Hagan 1999, 10–11), "the fundamental principle of all morality /…/ is that man is a naturally good creature, who loves justice and order; that there is no original perversity in the human heart, and that the first movements of nature are always right." It is the society and its institutions that can potentially make the man "wicked" (Rousseau in O'Hagan 1999, 2), but there is nothing in human nature that is not inherently good. Rousseau believes that the enlightened era of reason is morally neutral and needs no virtue nor conscience, whereas a less harmonious environment cannot assure human survival without the two. (O'Hagan 1999. 11)

Rousseau's belief stands in direct opposition to the understanding of society's role in the formation of an individual in most modern and later theories, most characteristically of course to Freudian psychoanalysis, which advocates for exactly the opposite. According to psychoanalysis, the animalistic and the natural must be controlled and disciplined, in order for an individual to be able to lead a productive life. (Freud 1961) Freud, too, takes a Cartesian stance towards subjectivity. By objectifying it, he aims "to gain a disengaged understanding of it, and, in consequence, to liberate us from its obsessions, terrors, compulsions." (Taylor in Hall, 60) In psychoanalytical interpretation, we are born absorbed in needs and desires, profoundly narcissistic, and must be contained by society. Desire can be pursued only if one also understands and respects a

wider perspective, in which the struggle for any particular good should come secondary to and restricted by the pursuit of common good.[92]

As Rousseau calls for liberation from all the relations that inhibit our goodness, exclaiming that "if we want to be good, let us remove the relations which prevent us from being so" (Rousseau in O'Hagan 1999, 12), psychoanalysis teaches us that it is precisely the necessity of relations with others, which might ultimately compel us at least to be decent. In psychoanalysis, there is no goodness without consciousness and virtue, but one is most definitely not born with either of them. Rather, they are acquired in the process of socialisation. We are born egocentric and destructive and it is the society that moulds us into social creatures, which mostly obey the laws and respect the prohibitions. For Rousseau (in Kennedy 2012, 69) nature is good, and society is bad, whereas children and women belong to nature and men to society. Thus, women "do evil impelled by men, and good on their own initiative." Rousseau (in O'Hagan, 56) is especially generous towards children, as he argues that "the capriciousness of children is never the work of nature but of bad discipline." In his view of children, Rousseau could not be further away from Freud, who once remarked that if the child had the power to do so, he would destroy the world. (Šterk 2007, 114)

[92] Consequently, Freudian psychoanalysis proves incapable of politicising subjectivity "because to the extent that it implies agency, it is fundamentally a theory of agency in the pursuit of social normalisation rather than one of agency in the urgent contestation of any unjust social values. The agency offered by Freudian theory is, most often, that of fostering and finding less anguished or conflicted conformity." (Hall 2004, 62)

4.2.1.3 The self-conscious self

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, (1998) Kant presents us with a play on Descartes' idea, which emphasises the conscious as the crucial and utterly defining capability of the self. Kant argues that before we can perform actions, we must make at least some simple observations of the world around us: "there is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience." (Ibid., 136) The observations, as they enter our minds, become representations and inhabit our minds as images. According to Kant, every representation that we make of the world, is "grounded in the 'I' that perceives" (Mansfield 2000, 18) That is to say; before we perceive anything, we need something to do the perceiving with; there must be an 'I' to channel everything through. It is essential that "in my cognition all consciousness belong to one consciousness (of myself)." (Kant 1998, 237) Kant goes on to elaborate this point in more detail:

> The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness /…/ only because I can comprehend their manifold in a consciousness do I call them all together my representations; for otherwise I would have as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious. (Ibid., 247–248)

Therefore, according to Kant, every single relationship that we have with the world, must somehow cross an important threshold, namely that of the thinking 'I'. Furthermore, if we want to be in any contact with the world in the first place, we need a self that thinks to begin with. This is a self that thinks about itself and sees itself as a unity, a self that is – quite literally – self-conscious. (Mansfield 2000, 19) This *sine qua non* for any successful contact with the world according to Kant – the awareness of ourselves and a sense of unity of self – is not something that he attributes to a potential natural self-sufficiency (as we have seen Rousseau do), much less to a given self,

for example a religious soul that enters the world pre-established. (Ibid.)

Instead, Kant (1998, 258) locates this awareness in thought: "We cannot think of a line without drawing it in thought …" For him, if you want to think Rousseau's natural philosophy, you first need to think yourself. "The self, then, is the feeling of connection or consistency between all your perceptions, the collection point of your thoughts." (Mansfield 2000, 19) Kant argues that the mere possibility of our consciousness is fundamentally dependent on the existence of an external world of objects; "objects that are not only represented as spatially outside us but are also conceived to exist independently of our subjective representations of them." (Kant in Guyer, Wood 1998, 12) Essentially, this indicates that for Kant the subject and object (the self and the world) presuppose each other – one cannot exist without the other. (Rosenberg 2005, 59) However, the 'I' who thinks always remains external and it cannot coherently represent itself as a determination of anything else. (Ibid., 261) Kant (1998, 416) argues that "now in all our thinking the I is the subject, in which thoughts inhere only as determinations, and this I cannot be used as the determination of another thing. Thus everyone must necessarily regard Himself as a substance, but regard his thinking only as accidents of his existence and determinations of his state."

Even though they both emphasise the importance of consciousness and rational thought, Kant departs from Descartes in his view that "from considerations concerning the /…/ *representation* of the 'I' who thinks we cannot derive any prepositions regarding the *essence* or *ontological constitution* of the thinking self. That the self is *in concept* substance, simple, and persisting is entirely compatible with its being *in itself*." (Rosenberg 2005, 264) Consequently, it is impossible to presume that the thinking self in itself differs from material things (as they are in themselves). Here, Kant gets involved in the Cartesian mind/body dilemma by effectively rejecting it:

> the very same thing that is called a body in one relation would at the same time be a thinking being in another, whose thoughts, of course,

> we could not intuit, but only their signs in appearance. Thereby the expression that only souls /…/ think would be dropped; and instead it would be said, as usual, that human beings think. (1998, 421)

In this view, the body/mind dualism or as Kant (Ibid., 436) would put it "the community between soul and body" no longer presents a problem:

> now the question is no longer about the community of the soul with other known but different substances outside us, but merely about the conjunction of representations in inner sense with the modifications of our outer sensibility, and how these may be conjoined with one another according to constant laws, so that they are connected into one experience. (Ibid., 434)

In a nutshell, if Descartes discovered the importance of subjectivity for philosophical thought, Kant altered the Cartesian scheme by viewing self-consciousness "not as a relation in which a pre-existent object of a special kind becomes known to itself, but as the encompassing ground of the world of objects." (Gardner 1999, 104) Descartes attempted to isolate subjectivity from the external world of objects, but still observed it as belonging to that world, whereas Kant's self-consciousness is interpreted as excluded from the world of objects. (Ibid.) In this respect, Kant's understanding of the subjectivity of thought as "indispensable to objectivity" (Höffe 2010, 161) transcends the Cartesian body/mind dualism through "unity of subjectivity and objectivity." (Ibid.) Thus, Kant replaces the Cartesian organisation with "a fundamental monism" (Ibid., 256), which dismisses as groundless all theorisations of "life before or after our community with our organic body." (Wuerth 2010, 235)

4.2.2 The nature of being

As we have seen, Rousseau fulfilled Descartes' notion that the self is a sufficient starting-point for the analysis of the world, whereas Kant in turn fulfilled Descartes' equation between selfhood and consciousness. (Mansfield 2000, 19) However, Rousseau's and Kant's work, despite the fact that they both represent the same shift of emphasis to subjectivity, are not very complementary. Precisely the contradictions, which arose from comparing Rousseau's work to Kant's, provided fertile ground for later thinkers. For example, we are confronted with a contradiction between attempting to theorise individual experience as whole, as a totality, and the search for its truth and substance in consciousness. Rousseau, who understood the self as a totality, challenged Kant's and Descartes' views, which both clearly favour the conscious and the logical. However, the irrational, illogical, and sometimes unreasonable dimension of the self later came to be known as the unconscious – the mere choice of the term proving that the new concept represented a blunt challenge precisely to Kant and Descartes. (Ibid., 20) Nowadays, in the realms outside of theoretical psychoanalysis, the emphasis on human individuality somewhat persists. But the enlightened dreams of freedom and natural spontaneity have little to do with "compulsory individuality" (Ibid., 21), characteristic of the West, which obligates us to articulate, communicate, even advertise and sell our subjectivity. The contemporary understanding of individuality, though relying heavily on the enlightened thinkers, can be unravelled as some sort of a parody of the enlightened ideals. Foucault sees these ideas as deceiving us into believing that we (our selfhood) are our own most treasurable possession, when in fact the self's role is characteristically disciplinary. It is here "to imprison us in a set of practices and routines that are determined for, rather than by, us." (Ibid., 24)

This early notion of the *unconscious* as imagined by Heidegger (1962) is an illustration of his position of *systematic suspicion*, which

takes into consideration the likelihood that human beings may in fact not even be transparent to themselves. Heidegger realised that our self-consciousness may be influenced by our particular interests and that it is also conditioned by a wider historical context. That realisation made Heidegger question whether the 'I' of an intentional act can claim any self-understanding at all. In this context, one can understand Heidegger's obsession with the problem of *everydayness* as an effective entrance point to studying the nature of being, as well as his objective to uncover the basic structures that motivate any pre-understanding. (Frede 1993, 53–55)

Heidegger's attitude towards Descartes is problematic;[93] he is especially troubled by Descartes' idea of an essentially free individual. For Heidegger, individuals are not self-contained and disconnected from the historical world. In an attempt to de-structure the history of metaphysics, he questions the traditional concept of man as rational animal, or in Descartes' terms, *ego cogito*. Heidegger wrote extensively on the topic of subjectivity in *Being and Time* (1962). In this volume, he argues that from Descartes onwards, human existence is seen as depending on the self-aware subject, which is at the same time believed to be "the most fundamental form of experience – indeed, the very ground of the possibility of experience." (Mansfield 2000, 22) What Heidegger recognised, though, was that the enlightened thinkers had not tackled an even more basic question – that is, the very nature of our being. (Aho 2009, 9–11) Thus, an inquiry into human existence is necessary:

> In the course of this history certain distinctive domains of Being have come into view and have served as the primary guides for subsequent problematics: the *ego cogito* of Descartes, the subject, the 'I', reason, spirit, person. But these all remain uninterrogated as to their Being and its structure, in accordance with the thoroughgoing

[93] For a brief, yet thorough review of Heidegger's critique of Cartesian philosophy, see Mulhall (2005, 39–46).

> way in which the question of Being has been neglected. (Heidegger 1962, 44)

According to Heidegger, subjectivity used to be defined by reason, human spirit or perception in the past. What these different subjectivities all had in common was that each of them depended on a chosen feature of human experience. Each of these choices was artificial, selective, and arbitrary. Therefore, Heidegger's mission was to define the human place in the world in the context of the most elementary aspect of life, which is Being itself. (Mansfield 2000, 22–23) According to Heidegger (1962, 49), "the task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief." The most fundamental aspect of life, then, is the mere fact that we *are* and any further definition of subjectivity only comes after that recognition. For Heidegger, the unique variety of (human) being is *Dasein*, *being-there:*

> Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term '*Dasein'*. (Ibid., 27)

Heidegger's understanding of subjectivity, as described by the term *Dasein*, does not rest on the earlier premise that what defines humans is their separation from the (natural) world. Quite the opposite holds true, actually, for *Dasein* is most fundamentally constituted by the fact that it is both in the world and belongs to it at the same time. (Mansfield 2000, 23) Heidegger's legacy can be traced in later theorisations of subjectivity. Mansfield (2000) summarises the three ways in which Heidegger most dramatically influenced later debates. Firstly, after Heidegger, the subject is no longer seen as a "naturally occurring thing" (Ibid., 23) but, rather, as a "philosophical category" (Ibid.), which is historically specific and will inevitably be replaced by other models in the future. Secondly, it was Heidegger who really

established Descartes as the pioneer of subjectivity and made him the author, to whom every theoretician of subjectivity must return (if nothing else, in order to ground his/her own work in discrediting his interpretation of subjectivity) by proclaiming that "in the course of this history certain distinctive domains of Being have come into view and have served as the primary guides for subsequent problematics: the *ego cogito* of Descartes, the subject, the 'I', reason, spirit, person." (Heidegger 1962, 44) And thirdly, since Heidegger, the idea of the separation of the self and the world has been seen as inadequate. (Mansfield 2000, 23)

Heidegger's phenomenological [94] approach to the issue of subjectivity, however, bafflingly lacks a convincing theorisation of the body. Actually, he completely overlooks the role of perception in the ways we make sense of the world. By neglecting the body, Heidegger's theory provided fertile ground for an embodied critique – which perhaps most convincingly came from Merlau-Ponty (2005), who laid the foundations for contemporary phenomenology. One of his English-speaking disciples, Krell (in Aho 2009, 1–2), formulates the problem of the body in Heidegger as follows:

> Did Heidegger simply fail to see the arm of the everyday body rising in order to hammer the shingles onto the roof, did he overlook the quotidian gaze directed toward the ticking watch that overtakes both

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[94] One can locate the basic phenomenological premise in Heidegger's belief that meaning cannot be deciphered in empirical observation of psychological processes in the mind. This idea outlines the foundation for his later "allegiance to Husserlian phenomenology." (Frede 1993, 46) In *Being and Time* Heidegger understands phenomenology as a method, not subject matter:

> the term 'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'To the things themselves!' It is opposed to all free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated; it is opposed to those pseudo-questions which parade themselves as 'problems', often for generations at a time. (1962, 49–63)

Such a definition indeed appears principled, but, as Mulhall (2005, 23) alerts us, would anyone really declare themselves as a researcher of pseudo-questions?!

> sun and moon, did he miss the body poised daily in its brazen car, a car equipped with a turn signal fabricated by and for the hand and eye of man, did he neglect the human being capable day-in and day-out of moving its body and setting itself in motion? If so, what conclusion must we draw?

Aho's answer to Krell's question is that the corporeal body does not really play a crucial role in Heidegger's theories. According to Aho, Heidegger does not dismiss the phenomenological importance of the body; rather, an investigation of the body is not really vital in the context of his fundamental ontology. (Ibid., 4) Heidegger does however give some comments on the concept of the body elsewhere, namely in his 1936-1937 lectures on Nietzsche (in Aho 2009, 14):

> We do not 'have' a body in the way we carry a knife in a sheath. Neither is the body a natural body that merely accompanies us and which we can establish, expressly or not, as being also 'at hand.' We do not 'have' a body; rather, we 'are' bodily. . . . Our being embodied is essentially other than merely being encumbered with an organism. Most of what we know from the natural sciences about the body and the way it embodies are specifications based on the established misinterpretation of the body as a mere natural body.

Although the question of ontology remains Heidegger's most significant contribution to philosophy, there are also other aspects of his work that we should briefly touch on. In the context of our debate, Heidegger's theorisations of art and technology cannot be overlooked.

4.2.2.1 Art

Heidegger (in Dreyfus 1993, 297) defines art as anything that performs the interpretative function of "truth setting itself to work". He gives an example of a Greek temple which is a manifestation of everyday practices of a people living in a moral space that governs their actions. Similarly, a medieval cathedral provides an opportunity to be good or bad, a saint or a sinner, within the dimension of salvation or damnation. Whatever their choice, the individual always knows

where they stand and what is expected of them. According to Heidegger, every new artefact changes the understanding of what it is to be in a particular culture, and then different things emerge: heroes, slaves, and gods in ancient Greece, saints and sinners in the Middle Ages, etc. There must always be a cultural paradigm[95] wherein the dispersed practices are unified into coherent possibilities for action so that individuals can relate to each other in that given context.

When works of art perform this function, according to Heidegger, they are no longer mere representations; rather, they truly generate shared meanings. The shared paradigm cannot be rationalised, only imitated; and it operates in the background. However, at a time of a scientific revolution, as Kuhn (1970) later showed, it is precisely the paradigm that is put into the spotlight and questioned. Correspondingly, Heidegger claims that a working artwork is of such importance to society that individuals attempt to make everybody abide by it in every aspect of their lives – and just like a scientific paradigm, the artwork resists such rationalisations as well. It is impossible to rationalise a paradigm (Althusserian ideology), because the thing that serves as an exemplar does not represent a given fundamental value system. In fact, there is no such system, only shared practices – and that is the very reason why we need an exemplar in the first place. According to Heidegger, the artwork solicits culture to make it manifest, articulate, and coherent; he names that the *world* aspect of the artwork. On the other hand, the artwork's rebellion against such totalisation is called the *earth.* Both world and earth are essential for the artwork to function. (Dreyfus 1993, 297–301)

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[95] In his understanding of the concept of paradigm, Kuhn (1970), known for his *paradigmatic* theorisation of the concept, is rather Heideggerian:

> That scientists do not usually ask or debate what makes a particular problem or solution legitimate tempts us to suppose that, at least intuitively, they know the answer. But it may only indicate that neither the question nor the answer is felt to be relevant to their research. Paradigms may be prior to, more binding, and more complete than any set of rules for research that could be unequivocally abstracted from them. (Ibid., 46)

4.2.2.2 Technology

Nevertheless, not every cultural paradigm creates a significant difference in Heidegger's view of the cultural dynamics; some are rather nihilistic. These paradigms in fact merely disguise the conflict between *earth* and *world,* and work towards reassuring the human need for order and control. In this light, the existing paradigms that legitimise what is supposedly good and desirable within any given culture are simply illustrations of flexibility and efficiency, which are not directed towards a greater gold but they exist merely for their own sake. Heidegger demonstrates this point on the case of a hydroelectric plant on the Rhine, but nowadays the contemporary Western attraction towards technological advances perhaps serves as a better example. As consumers, we are fascinated by how computers are constantly getting faster and more efficient on the one hand and more affordable on the other, yet, we utterly fail to recognise what we could possibly do with such computer power. Paradigms like this conceal the fact that in order to grasp being, certain openness and a sense of mystery are mandatory. (Dreyfus 1993, 301–302)

Here, again, a Kuhnian (1970) perspective proves useful. Just like modern science is established as a problem-solving activity by the ruling scientific paradigms, the technological paradigm supports technological understanding of being as attempting to bring everything that is in conflict with it or cannot be effectively utilised under our control and organisation as a resource. In comparison to that of the Greek temple, the technological paradigm is a totalizing one, as it strives to make everything controllable and usable. Accordingly, the technological artwork is totalizing as well; and as such, it opens up space for the earth's rebellion to total articulation and domination. This is what Kuhn (Ibid.) calls anomalies – deviant individuals who should be *reformed* as well as natural elements that we cannot fully grasp and should therefore be *researched*. Heidegger recognises that marginal practices are endangered by attempts of normalisation and although

cultures universally search for some order in nature, as well as regulate their members with systems of norms, Western cultures are particularly obsessed with attempts of ascribing all that to the register of a single cosmological system, namely “science”, which strives towards making the social and natural orders total. Heidegger places his hope for resistance against the modern nihilism in the aforementioned marginal practices. He is not opposed to technology, but he wants to uncover different possible interpretations and uses of it. Instead of embracing the compulsion to advance, improve, and develop technology, or ineffectively rebelling against it, we should unambiguously open ourselves to the essence of technology and discover sudden potential for freedom. (Dreyfus 1993, 302–304)

Eventually, Heidegger arrives to the conclusion that even focusing on the supposed downsides of technology, such as loss and destruction (of nature, for example) is still in its core a technological activity: “all attempts to reckon existing reality … in terms of decline and loss, in terms of fate, catastrophe, and destruction, are merely technological behaviour.” (Ibid., 304) He goes on to claim that “the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology … The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control.” (Ibid.) This, however, does not appear to be a very productive approach to the problem: “no single man, no group of men, /…/ no commission of prominent statesmen, scientists, and technicians, no conference of leaders of commerce and industry, can brake or direct the progress of history in the atomic age.” (Ibid.) Concluding that such an attitude towards technology is not particularly effective, Heidegger relocates the core of the issue. According to him, the greatest danger to humanity is not the potential technological demolition of nature and society, but the human distress that is triggered by the technological interpretation of being; the real problem is thus a “technological mode of relating to entities around us.” (Žižek 2000, 12) Heidegger argues that the real threat is that “the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so

captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practised *as the only way* of thinking." (Dreyfus 1993, 305) Therefore, "what threatens man in his very nature is … that man, by peaceful release, transformation, storage, and channelling of the energies of the physical nature, could render the human condition … tolerable for everybody and happy in all respects."[96] (Ibid.) This threat should not be approached as a problem (that can be solved by its appropriation within the technological paradigm) but rather as an ontological condition that should initiate a different understanding of being. (Ibid., 304–311)

[96] Heidegger's critique of the humanist endeavour, expressed in his reservation towards a potential culture of universal prosperity, could also be used as an effective basis for another critical evaluation of transhumanism, but such an undertaking exceeds the promises of this text.

4.2.3 Subjective theorisations of subjectivity

It is already possible to locate some distrust towards 18th-century rationalists who interpreted "the conscious mind as the defining attribute of the human relationship with the world" (Mansfield 2000, 26) in some prominent 19th-century literary works. In novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* we are not faced with a presentation of contained conscious minds. Instead, we are confronted with the return of the repressed; these texts are full of irrational urges, impulses, and desires. Any attempt to maintain a rational attitude towards the world, to discipline, control, and subvert these urges, proves powerless in the context of the fascinating dark side and, eventually, gives way to it. The rational conscious mind no longer manages to master the dark, uncertain, irrational impulses and meets them with a mixture of horror and fascination. Freud gave this new upsetting perspective on selfhood theoretical form and context. According to Mansfield (Ibid.), Freud must be approached with two main questions in mind; *what is the unconscious*? and *where does it come from*? We plan to tackle the first dilemma for the most part through Freud's ideas on the nature of dreams. The answer to the second question can be located through and with Freud's concept of *the Oedipus complex.* As we shall see, the psychoanalytic subject has a comprehensible substance (and/or insistence) as well as an analysable structure (and/or pattern). The Freudian one is also clearly separate from any other subjects. However, the processes from which Freud derives his theory of subjectivity are perceived as universal to the humankind. (Ibid., 36)

4.2.3.1 The unconscious

It is in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913b) that Freud scientifically confronts the existence of a secondary (in actuality, it is

primary[97]) mental domain, which has an innate and strange logic to it. He argues that this other realm is pushing images into the conscious mind. In dreams, Freud finds not only a reality of the mind that is hidden from conscious thoughts, but also one that is completely different, even contrasting to the conscious state of the mind. This uncharted territory is so foreign that it can only enter consciousness through images and symbols. (Mansfield 2000, 27) In an illustrative passage, Freud describes the reality of dreams as unreasonable, lunatic and intense:

> Dreams are disconnected, they accept the most violent contradictions without the least objection, they admit impossibilities, they disregard knowledge which carries great weight with us in the daytime, they reveal us as ethical and moral imbeciles. Anyone who when he was awake behaved in the sort of way that is shown in situations in dreams would be considered insane. Anyone who when he was awake talked in the sort of way that people talk in dreams or described the sort of thing that happens in dreams would give us the impression of being muddle-headed or feeble minded. (1913b, 562)

Provided that one knows enough about the individual dreamer, it is possible to decipher these symbols and the personal significance[98] they bear: "every dream reveals itself as a psychical structure which

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[97] Freud (1913b, 1038) argues that "the unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious." Actually, everything conscious has roots in the unconscious, and the other way around is not necessarily true: "the unconscious is the true psychical reality; *in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs*." (Ibid.)

[98] According to Freud (1913b, 669) there are "no innocent dreams." The material for dreams can be found either in sexual factors (this is the repressed material for the majority of adult dreams, according to Freud (Ibid., 853)), infantile background, somatic sources, etc. For a contemporary reader, it is rather odd how Freud (Ibid., 700, 703) repeatedly claims that the belief that dreams have somatic sources is commonly accepted in society. It is fair to claim that since Freud, such an opinion is no longer dominant in society; in fact, quite the opposite is true. Freud (Ibid., 701) maintains that somatic explanations of dreams are not false, but, rather, inadequate.

has a meaning and which can be inserted at an assignable point in the mental activities of waking life." (Freud 1913b, 516) However, the interpretation of dreams is not straightforward, as the "connection /…/ between the content of a dream and reality /…/ requires /…/ to be looked for diligently, and in a whole quantity of cases it may long remain hidden." (Ibid., 525) In fact, Freud even goes as far as to understand the potential discovery of particular sources for dream details as a matter of mere chance. (Ibid., 529)

For Freud, dreams are the realm of the imagination, which, "liberated from the domination of reason and from any moderating control, leaps into a position of unlimited sovereignty." (1913b, 590) Dream-imagination is not merely a reproductive force (reproducing daily events), but it also has productive powers, taking these waking memories as the building blocks of "structures that bearing not the remotest resemblances to those of waking life." (Ibid.) Furthermore, dream-imagination shows a preference for the immoderate, exaggerated and monstrous, which it puts forward in the form of imagery rather than using conceptual speech. (Ibid.)

Interestingly, Freud (Ibid., 970–975) gives a brief description of the unconscious only towards the end of his volume on dreams, when, in the chapter on regression, he first introduces the three psychical systems: consciousness, the pre-conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious "has no access to consciousness *except via the preconscious,*" (Ibid., 974) but it is the unconscious, which Freud (Ibid.) recognises "as the starting point for dream-formation." He locates unconscious investments in dreams as well as in the hours of daylight: "the unconscious wishful impulses /…/ try to make themselves effective in daytime as well." (Ibid., 997) For example, they can be found in slips of the tongue (a concept so original to Freud that it has since become known as *Freudian slips*), jokes, hysterical symptoms, errors in memory and speech, forgetting of names, etc. (1913a, 2580) He understands these events and symptoms as direct, uncensored manifestations of the unconscious. It must also be noted that the aforementioned symptoms and occurrences are not limited to

his clinical practice and only attributed to his patients. On the contrary, everybody dreams and presents a variety of symptoms in their everyday life, and Freud understood that neurotic symptoms of their patients differ from everybody else's merely in degree, rather than quality. The intricate structures, which neurotic symptoms reveal, prove to be the universal characteristics of human psychology. "Neurotic patients were not marginal or idiosyncratic; they were the key to the truth of human subjectivity." (Mansfield 2000, 29)

Psychoanalysis is built on the premise of over-determination, as all mental material, and consequently, cultural, too, is over-determined. In the prism of psychoanalytic thinking, it is precisely the most trivial, banal, and quotidian behaviours and practices that are seen as revealing the varied and complicated psychology. Freud explains the dynamics of dream-work and the problem of dream-displacement[99] as follows:

> a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have a high psychical value of their intensity, and on the other hand, *by means of overdetermination*, creates from elements of low psychical value new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. (1913b, 779)

It is hardly surprising that the unconscious appears in everyday behaviours. The manifestations of the unconscious in everyday life are normally seen as trivial and insignificant, but in psychoanalysis they are seen as the expression of our innermost investments. (Mansfield 2000, 29) In his understanding of subjectivity, Freud goes beyond the simple ideas of subjectivity of passive "presences and absences, but [speaks] of potentially violent energies and conflicts" instead. (Ibid., 30) In this situation, undesirable feelings and experiences do not

[99] Dream-displacement is, alongside dream-condensation, the crucial governing factor "to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams." (Freud 1913b, 779) Freud (1915, 3009) explains that, generally speaking, "by the process of *displacement* one idea may surrender to another its whole quota of cathexis; by the process of *condensation* it may appropriate the whole cathexis of several other ideas."

simply slip from the conscious thinking. In reality, they are constantly attempting to escape the dark, inaccessible realm of the unconscious, battling the defence, which keeps them there, called *repression.* “The theory of repression /…/ asserts that /…/ repressed wishes still exist – though there is a simultaneous inhibition which holds them down.” (Freud 1913b, 714) Repression uses an enormous amount of psychological strength in order to keep the unconscious investments away from consciousness. This is made evident when the therapist encounters the patient’s resistance to an experience or explanation, immediately concluding that such resistance is a sign of approaching something that the subject cannot effectively cope with. (Mansfield 2000, 30) After all, Freud (1913b, 887) is very adamant about the fact “that no dream is prompted by motives other than egoistic ones.” The same goes for the other privileged sites of the unconscious. Freud argues that “it is by no means impossible for the product of unconscious activity to pierce into consciousness /…/ when we produce it in a patient we get the most unquestionable signs of what we call his *resistance* to it. So we learn that the unconscious idea is excluded from consciousness by living forces which oppose themselves to its reception.” (1913a, 2581) In fact, every psychical act emanates from the unconscious – the question whether it would remain such or force its way into consciousness is the question whether it is met with (enough) resistance or not. (Ibid.) The repressed is thus the unconscious, which is rejected by censorship while attempting to penetrate consciousness. (Freud 1915b, 2997)

According to Freud, then, the subject’s interior life is split between the conscious mind, where culturally integrated processes rule, and the impulses of the unconscious. The dynamics between the two can best be described as an eternal struggle, in which the conscious is trying to keep the unconscious impulses under control and safely in the domain of repression. Unconscious impulses, a lot like prisoners with nothing but time on their hands, always figure out ways to escape, and the repressed material is sooner or later expressed, be it in dreams, symptoms or Freudian slips. The term

unconscious designates more than just latent ideas, and stands especially for "ideas with a certain dynamic character, ideas keeping apart from consciousness in spite of their intensity and activity." (Freud 1913a, 2579) Dreams, argued Freud, are made-up by material, which is in its entirety "in some way or another derived from experience." (1913b, 525) They operate as a system of wish-fulfilment, over-determined by the all-encompassing mechanism that governs our conscious and unconscious existence, the pleasure principle. Dreams give the repressed material just enough space and time, just enough expression, so that "normal" life is not disrupted either by psychic or somatic impulses. Both are incorporated into dreams for the same reason: to safeguard sleep. Dreams are "psychical phenomena of complete validity – fulfilments of wishes; they can be inserted into the chain of intelligible waking mental acts; they are constructed by a highly complicated activity of the mind." (Ibid., 622) Freud argues that all dreams serve as wish-fulfilment, even the unpleasant ones. He claims that nightmares occur when the subject cannot process the repressed material.[100] When the wish-fulfilment function of dreams is not evident, when it is "unrecognizable, where it has been disguised, there must have existed some inclination to put up a defence against the wish; and owing to this defence the wish was unable to express itself except in a distorted shape." (Ibid., 638) Freud thus concludes that dreams are shaped by operation of two separate forces, one of which "constructs the wish which is expressed by the dream, while the other exercises a censorship upon the dream-wish and, by the use of that censorship, forcibly brings about a distortion in the expression of the wish." (Ibid., 639) Accordingly, he proposes the following formula

[100] Interestingly, nightmares ultimately wake a person up – an individual escapes from the unbearable vicinity of the unconscious material: "the unsophisticated waking judgement of someone who has just woken from sleep assumes that his dreams, even if they did not themselves come from another world, had at all events carried him off into another world." (Freud 1913b, 521)

of the dynamics of dreams: "*a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish.*" (Ibid., 653)

The internal logic of neurotic symptoms works similarly – everybody has them, but not every psychological apparatus is strong enough to be able to repress them adequately. Freud contested, once and for all, that the definition of normalcy is, again, much more a matter of degree than of qualitative differences in the psyche. Indeed, "neurotic patients are never far away from the 'normal'." (Mansfield 2000, 30) The key to understanding the difference between mental health and mental illness turns out to be (un)successful management of the repressed unconscious material.

4.2.3.2 The Oedipus complex

We have very briefly presented a condensed Freudian topography of the subject as emerging along the thresholds of consciousness and unconsciousness. However, Freud also theorised how the subject becomes what it ultimately is and how it gets its particular psychological configuration. The Freudian understanding of subjectivity presupposes that the subject is produced; pre-determined by nature and shaped by culture. It is a product of the dynamics of familial and social relations. Understanding subjectivity in this manner stands in clear opposition to previously theorised and favoured modes of subjectivity.

Another Freud's (1924, 4083–4091) central idea, which also prominently influenced later theorists under the name of *the Oedipus complex*, is his perception of gender relations and sexual identifications as crucial aspects in the construction of subjectivity. Freud understands the Oedipus complex as "the central phenomenon of the sexual period of early childhood." (Ibid., 4085) After that early period, the Oedipus complex is tackled by the defence mechanism of repression due to intense and painful disappointments. A child is born into an already defined and structured world, in which cultural

traditions and social imperatives are already in place. Despite the fluidity of the child's own pre-Oedipal gender identity[101] a peculiar interpretation of certain biological characteristics is already instituted in the society he/she is born into. Culture establishes a "natural" connection between behaviours, emotions and attitudes (of gender) on one side, and biological features (of sex) on the other. (Mansfield 2000, 31) Despite the fact that Freud's argument could very easily be used to make a case for the relativity of gender, he remained faithful to his time and its biopolitical organisation.[102] Freud's theorisation of subjectivity is thus first and foremost a theorisation of male subjectivity, a research on the development of masculinity: "a child's sexual development advances to a certain phase at which the genital organ has already taken the leading role. But this genital is the male one only, or, more correctly, the penis; the female genital has remained undiscovered." (Freud 1924, 4086) Another binary model emerges: as stated in the chapter on the body, the body of psychoanalysis is always already feminine, whereas the subject of psychoanalysis appears to always already be masculine. Consequently, the key psychoanalytical site of critique in the context of our debate is the fact that it establishes the body as always feminine from the position of the always masculine subject.

Freud's Oedipal theory is based on the continuous proximity of the boy and his mother during the earliest phases of development. Moreover, the separation from the mother's body during birth appears to acquire psychological significance much later. The boy finds himself in serene unity with the mother's body and reality, but this idyll is soon disrupted by the identification of the masculine principle, which is rooted in the boy's newfound interest in his own genitals. The boy

[101] To do him justice, Freud proposes that the initial stage of gender genesis is "original bisexuality," (1920, 3860) which, in a very benevolent reading, would presume that the masculine has no priority over the feminine.

[102] Indeed, in the forthcoming text we shall critique the sex/gender binary opposition from a contemporary psychoanalytical perspective, which can be genealogically traced and identified as a descendant of none other than Freud himself.

establishes a connection between the possession of the penis with the presence of his father, who at the same time embodies a progressively significant influence on the child's identity and a complicating influence in the child's harmonic relationship with his mother. Inevitably, the close relationship between the boy and his mother begins to collapse. (Mansfield 2000, 31–32)

Freud (1924, 4086) argues that the boy now becomes increasingly interested in his penis: "when the (male) child's interest turns to his genitals he betrays the fact by manipulating them frequently." He begins to view the penis as an important part of his emotional life. However, his preoccupation with his penis brings him negative attention and rejection from women who nourish him and now begin to impose punishments for his interest: "the adults do not approve of this behaviour. /…/ a threat is pronounced that this part of him which he values so highly will be taken away from him." (Ibid.) The ultimate threat is the potential intervention of the father's authority, which represents the promise of the ultimate sanction, castration.

Freud (Ibid., 4087) maintains that this threat of castration is what causes "the destruction of the child's phallic genital organization." The danger of castration becomes even more real and menacing after the child inevitably sees female genitalia for the first time. In fact, this is the moment when the child finally really starts believing that the threat is real: he "cannot help being convinced of the absence of a penis in a creature who is so like himself. With this, the loss of his own penis becomes imaginable, and the threat of castration takes its deferred effect." (Ibid.) The child now views the female body as already castrated and thus as a site of lack. The boy is now confronted with an important difference. He grasps that there are two kinds of people, who differ in a single imperative characteristic: their identity is based on and marked with the presence or the absence of penis. The boy also realises that the possession of penis might be temporary. He finds himself faced with two possible choices, which Freud (Ibid., 4088) calls active and passive. Selecting the first alternative, the boy can identify with the father, who has the penis, and he fantasises

about sexually possessing his mother, like his father. Or he can choose the second principle, which leads him to identification with the mother. He sees the mother as the one who has lost her penis and is the object of the father's sexuality, thus the second option pilots the fantasy of being the object of the father's sexual interest. Despite the appearance that the first choice leads safely into "normal" heterosexual organisation, both of these choices stay under the constant threat of castration: "both possible ways of obtaining sexual satisfaction from the Oedipus complex /…/ entailed the loss of his penis – the masculine one as a resulting punishment and the feminine one as a precondition." (Ibid.) Therefore, the male child will either be punished for his excessive interest in the penis if he chooses the active (masculine) path or he will follow the passive (feminine) path, which already pre-supposes castration. As this is situation cannot be tackled effectively, Oedipal material is repressed into the conscious: "a conflict is bound to arise between his narcissistic interest in that part of his body and the libidinal cathexis of his parental objects." (Ibid.)

For Freud, a man of his time, heterosexuality might be seen as desired, even of great importance: "in this conflict the first of these forces normally triumphs: the child's ego turns away from the Oedipus complex." (Ibid.) However, heterosexuality is not interpreted as fixed or dictated by nature. Freud sees it as a consequence of a dense series of unsettling events within the subject.[103] In fact, in psychoanalysis, the perception of even the most "normal", secure and conventional male is the perception of an ever eluding, by definition unstable masculine identity, onto which the subject desperately holds. The Oedipal drama is played out in adulthood as well, be it in the form of seeking parent substitutes, incessant conquest of the threat of castration (for

[103] According to Freud (1924, 4088) this turning away from the Oedipus complex happens as the object-cathexes are replaced by identifications. The father's authority, introjected into the ego, forms the nucleus of the superego. The Oedipal libidinal demands are desexualised and sublimated; "inhibited in their aim and changed into impulses of affection." (Ibid.)

example, by means of chauvinistic behaviour) or even performing these identifications and projections within one's own subjectivity. This last option becomes even more thought-provoking after Freud further develops his model of subjectivity and splits its conscious part into ego and superego, where the ego can be inhibited by disproportionate self-criticism. (Mansfield 2000, 32–33)

The outlined model of subjectivity is, as already mentioned, a model of masculine subjectivity. Freud's version of the Oedipus complex, as supposedly experienced by girls, represents one of the most infamous aspects of his thought, thoroughly reworked and critiqued by later authors. Freud (1924, 4090) maintains that the girl feels as if she is already castrated when she sees male genitals and compares them to her own: "when she makes a comparison with a playfellow of the other sex, she perceives that she has 'come off badly' and she feels this as a wrong done to her and as a ground for her inferiority." She perceives castration "as an accomplished fact" (Ibid.) instead of experiencing it as a potential threat.[104] Therefore, she is not paralysed by fear of future castration, but she nevertheless attempts to find a substitute for the penis she does not possess: "renunciation of the penis is not tolerated by the girl without some attempt at compensation." (Ibid.) She substitutes the non-existing penis with a baby, which she receives from her father in her fantasy; "she slips – along the line of a symbolic equation, one might say – from a penis to a baby." (Ibid.) As this wish is usually not granted, the girl abandons the Oedipus complex. It is this very process of substitution and replacement that ends up being repressed in the feminine unconscious. (Mansfield 2000, 33)

Freud (1924, 4090) was very aware of his inadequate understanding of femininity; the Oedipal story we have just summarised indeed has no further crucial aspects to it. It has been critiqued as being nothing more than just an improvisation on the more

[104] Bell (2010a, 73) interjects: "what if the little girl/boy looks up mommy's dress and sees a strap-on, or better yet, the protrusion of mommy's internal cock?"

sophisticated model of male subjectivity. Perhaps, Freud's avoidance of further research into the problem can be interpreted as symptomatic – just as the body is repressed in early psychoanalysis, so is female subjectivity. As one would have thought, when these two concepts do eventually enter the context of (theoretical) psychoanalysis in the second half of the 20th century, they do so forcefully and – together.[105]

The vulgar Freudian explanation of the female version of the Oedipus complex thus concludes: "woman does not have the phallus. She compensates by attempting to become the phallus, making the whole of her body into the erotic object of men's desire." (Bell 2010a, 68) Shannon Bell critiques this idea of penis envy by arguing that in fact, there is such a thing as female phallus: "the visibility of the internal erection repositions the top wall of the vagina, specifically the spongy erectile tissue and the glands and ducts surrounding the urethra, as a female phallus." (57) Moreover, "the female phantom cock haunting psychoanalysis" (Ibid.) turns out to be "an actual cock." (Ibid., 58)

According to Freud, subjectivity is constructed. However, the emphasis on biological differences, more precisely on the possession or absence of the penis, demonstrates that for Freud (and psychoanalysis in general), "Anatomy is Destiny." (1924, 4090; 1925a, 2346) Also, when Freud claims that the subject is constructed, he means constructed by specific family relations, specific social practices, and specific behaviours that are not only characteristic of Freud's own time, but also of his geography and class. Accounting for the straightforward fact that gender identities around the world and throughout history differ vastly from Freud's personal circumstances and cultural contexts, one may, and in fact many did, discredit his universal model and expose it as highly specific and rather useless in

[105] The embodied female arrival is a performative turn *par excellence*. It is theorised in chapter 5.1.

studying other cultures.[106] It was the performative intervention of female psychoanalytic thinkers that exposed Freud's findings as manifestations of a very specific Western structure of modern gender values and politics. (Mansfield 2000, 34)[107]

Freud himself saw his own work on the Oedipus complex as more than just an explanation of neurotic symptoms. He also used it to explain religion (1918, 1928, 1961), art, (1914a; 1916) and societal structures (1918). Therefore, Freud's work has predictably proven useful for textual analysis, straightforward as this may seem, treating the artwork as analogous to the dream. Freud (1913b) argues that the dream pacifies the unconscious eruptions by providing them with a provisional channel with the illusion of achievable satisfaction. Similarly, in an artwork, the artist (and his/her audience as well) recycles the most disturbing Oedipal obsessions,[108] and although the artist does not need to be aware of Freudian theory in order for his

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[106] Freud, however, saw the Oedipus complex as universal from the first time he mentioned it in a letter to Fliess in 1897. (Masson 1985)

[107] But it was the anthropologists who first showed that if we read Freud in more general terms, the Oedipus complex could indeed be found in non-Western societies as well. Its structure, purpose, and mechanisms are somewhat universal, and so are the issues that, for Freud, define and secure subjectivity: gender, sexuality, family relationships, etc. What varies from one culture to another are merely the specifics. According to Malinowski (2003), Trobriand islanders do not find themselves entrapped by the Oedipus complex, since they belong to a society with matrilineal kinship structure, whereby the father of an infant is functionally absent and cannot be a source of neither fear of castration nor a model for identification. Spiro, (1993) however, refutes the literal reading of Oedipus complex for cross-cultural use, turning Malinowski's evidence against himself and claiming the validity for Freudian approach on the basis of equivalence of familial patterns. He argues that in matrilineal societies, such as the Trobriand, the function of the threat of castration and identification for a male child is simply displaced onto the closest matrilineal male relative, in case of the Trobriand, the mother's brother. The avuncular uncle thus provides for a possibility of reification of all the (biological) father's functions. He becomes what Lacan names a father function – the name of the father.

[108] Lacan's later identification of the Oedipal drama with the acquisition of language made psychoanalytic textual analysis much more refined.

artwork to lay out psychoanalytic findings, Freud inspired numerous artists to actually start exploring their own unconsciousness through their art. The Surrealists evoked nightmares as examples of hidden truth, which challenged the quotidian daylight beliefs, numerous literary experiments arose as a direct consequence of writers encountering psychoanalysis (for example, automatic writing), film finally found a suitable idiom of expression, etc. (Mansfield 2000, 35–37)

4.3 Subjectivity as an effect of language

Lacan's work provides us with a bridge between Freud's and post-modern approaches to subjectivity. His crucial contribution to this debate is the claim that "*the unconscious is structured like a language*." (1998a, 20) Lacan challenges the perception that the sole aim of language and its existence is communication. Instead, he argues that language is "the very material of subjectivity." (Mansfield 2000, 39) Lacan reversed the common sense idea, according to which subjects precede language, claiming instead that language does not merely already exist in the world we are born into, but, furthermore, language itself is the world we are born into. Therefore, if we want to find a place in society, we need to locate ourselves in language (Ibid.), pin ourselves onto the chain of signifiers. "Before any experience, before any individual deduction, even before those collective experiences that may be related only to social needs are inscribed in it, something organises this field, inscribes its initial lines of force." (Lacan 1998a, 20)

Lacan's writing was heavily influenced by de Saussure's (1998) conception of linguistics. De Saussure understands language as "a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas," (Ibid., 10) and as "a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images." (Ibid., 15) Signs connect a sound-image with an abstract concept. De Saussure defines sign as the whole, whereas the signified stands for the concept and the signifier for sound-image. (Ibid., 67) De Saussure argues that the sign is founded on a couple of premises, which in fact constitute it. The first of the characteristics of the sign is that it is arbitrary; "the bond between the signifier and signified is arbitrary." (Ibid.) By describing the sign as arbitrary, de Saussure does not imply that the choice of the signifier is left to the speaker; on the contrary – he claims that the speaker has no control over the sign after it has been established. Therefore, by characterising the sign as arbitrary, de Saussure argues that the sign

is “unmotivated, i.e. arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified.” (Ibid., 69) If the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, that means it is founded exclusively on convention. Secondly, language as a system of arbitrary signs is based on the concept of difference. It is differences that carry signification; “the important thing in the word is not the sound alone but the phonic differences that make it possible to distinguish this word from all others.” (Ibid., 118) Therefore, signs are not established and/or rooted in an “objective” reality, but, rather, “in the conceptualisation of reality in the human mind.” (Mansfield 2000, 39) Instead of observing the arbitrary relationship between any given signifier/signified pair, it is necessary to study how a signifier connects with other signifiers in a system. In this sense, language is a system of differences and it operates on the principle of “the difference between one signifier and all others.” (Ibid., 40) It is in this sense that one should interpret de Saussure’s famous claim that “in language there are only differences.” (1998, 120) Furthermore, “in language there are only differences *without positive terms*.” (Ibid.)

In short, two crucial characteristics of language as system, as explained by de Saussure, and useful in our context, are *the difference between one signifier and all others* and *the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified*. In a (per)formative gesture, which he named “return to Freud,” Lacan (2006f) revised and updated the Freudian interpretative scheme and concepts, contextualising Freudian psychoanalysis in the then prominent “controversies about language and its importance” (Mansfield 2000, 40), in short, within the “linguistic turn.” (Rorty 1992)

One of Lacan’s (2006g) key concepts is that of the mirror stage.[109] As already explained above, Freud understood the boy-

[109] It is also worth noting that Lacan (2006g, 75) himself immediately recognises that the psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity is “at odds with any philosophy directly stemming from the *cogito*.” This opposition to the Cartesian *cogito*, however, is not universal in psychoanalytic theory. In fact, Lacan (1998a, 35) accuses Freud of

child's subjectivity mainly as the consequence of his physical engagement and relationship with his parents. The penis, at first the boy's own and later his father's, interferes with the boy's unmediated relationship with his mother. The penis is the point of distinction between what is perceived as male and what as female. The difference between genders generates hierarchy, where masculinity is interpreted as dominant. The child's subjectivity is formed as a consequence "of a complex and scary game, where the physical body's vulnerability interacts with the phantom body of the ideal gender types." (Mansfield 2000, 41) The game, however, marks the child with the remainder of the pre-Oedipal unpredictability, and it is forever haunted by frustration and a sense of lost security. Lacan (1998a, 2006) sees the development of subjectivity as the consequence of some external disturbance, which disrupts the ideal space of the pre-Oedipal subject. In his theory of signification, he pursues Freud's theorisations, contesting that subjectivity is governed by signs and images; the father *figure* and the phallic *symbol*. By introducing the concept of mirror stage, Lacan (2006g) identifies a critical stage for the development of subjectivity.[110]

Before entering the mirror stage, the child has no sense of individuality in terms of the body and no sense of itself as a separate entity. There is no limit to the child's body, no coordination of limbs and no subjectivity. In the mirror stage, the child begins to grasp that

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Cartesianism despite the fact that he also finds dissymmetry between the two: "Freud's method is Cartesian – in the sense that he sets out from the basis of subject of certainty." The dissymmetry between Freud and Descartes, according to Lacan (Ibid., 36) is not methodological, "it stems from the fact that the subject is 'at home' in this field of the unconscious." Furthermore, after an extensive discussion of Freud's and Descartes' subjectivity, Lacan (Ibid., 47) comes to the conclusion that "there is the subject, who, as I said just now, has been waiting there since Descartes. I dare to state as a truth that the Freudian field was possible only a certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject, in so far as modern science began only after Descartes made his inaugural step."

[110] Lacan (2006g, 75–76) claims that the mirror stage can begin as early as when the child is six months of age, and is significant until up to eighteen months of age.

there is an image of him, which is outside of himself (it is mirrored, virtual, represented). At this point, the subject encounters an image, which is a representation of totality; it is whole, unified, and it provides a substitute for the prevailing senses of disintegration, disconnection, and dissociation that have dominated so far. (Mansfield 2000, 41–42) Therefore, the mirror stage can be interpreted as identification, "namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes /…/ an image – an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase." (Lacan 2006g, 76)

Lacan (Ibid.) argues that in the mirror stage, the child for the first time sees himself [*sic!*] as a separate entity and recognises that there are also other (physically distinct) people and objects in the world. The child, at the same time, is separated from the outside world (from otherness) and for the first time he perceives himself as whole and complete. According to Lacan, the mirror image compensates for the human eye's physical inability to see the body as a whole[111] and serves as the basis for a cohesive sense of self. This experience, which enables the subject to "establish a relationship between an organism and its reality, /…/ between *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (Ibid., 78), is shaped and regulated by the image of itself as seen in the mirror. This also turns out to be the crucial point of observation of the Imaginary.[112] (Mansfield 2000, 42–44)

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[111] We have already drawn attention to the problem of the body as a visual category that can see everything but itself (in its totality) at the beginning of chapter 3.

[112] Lacan and Žižek understand human reality as composed of three different intertwined and intermingled registers: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. In the register of the Symbolic, we are dealing with the differential structure of language, the (seemingly pre-existing) order of the Other which organises our inner and outer experience and designates our social relations. In this register, human subjectivity is constructed via relations to and recognitions of the other subjects that belong to the same Other, which in turn not only provide us with some identity, but also retroactively, by subject's mutual recognition becomes what it (the Other) was always already supposed to represent – an ordered structure. The register of the Imaginary establishes itself through the inclusion of the gaze, be it either the mirror image or the phantasmatic image of a language as full, without lacks, or voids. In

Lacan (2006g) thus develops his argument further by claiming that the subject is the discourse and a consequence of the Other. This new self's sense of unity and oneness, "the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, /…/ in an exteriority in which /…/ this form is more constitutive than constituted." (Ibid., 76) As this newly gained sense of unity is exterior, emanating from the outside of the subject, it is also already disrupted – the subject perceives itself as whole, but this imaginary identity disrupts the very same feeling of autonomy. Subjectivity is established outside, within the context of images, which first provided the subject with a sense of separation. The mirror stage ends with "the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his [the subject's] entire mental development with its rigid structure." (Ibid., 78)

The subject is faced with the reality in which its sense of self is grounded outside of it, in an alien world; within a system that Lacan calls the Symbolic Order. "The mirror stage establishes the watershed between the imaginary and the symbolic." (Lacan 2006c, 54) Lacan (2006d, 40) also maintains that the Imaginary is determined by the Symbolic. The latter is structured as a system of signifiers and is marked by difference; each element is different from the others. The

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both cases, we are dealing with a deceptive universe of images of wholeness which support our existence. The mirror image provides us with the gaze that sutures us as subjects as if coherent realm of identities. On the other hand, the Imaginary *Other's view on the Other* provides the semblance of the Symbolic qua whole, as metalanguage, Lacanian language – the meaning plus *jouissance*. The moment when the Symbolic fails to provide for coherent and meaningful interpretation of reality (which means that our reality is actually structured as fiction, as a grimace of the Real), the Real emerges. The Real is in fact a denominator of the inherent point of the necessary failure of the Symbolic, its void, its lack. It is *jouissance* minus the meaning, which cannot be translated into language and can only be alluded to by the images of disharmony, chaos, excess. The Real is encountered in the remainder (*object a*) that cannot be organised in a meaningful Symbolic narration, a traumatic reminder that resists a process of symbolisation but which exclusion only provided for a possibility of symbolic process to take shape of a structured order of the Other.

signifier begins to symbolise the subject's mirror image of its own self, but this can only work as long as selfhood submits its meaning and definition to the very system of signification that the signifier belongs to. The system, which the subject is part of, thus precedes the subject and is external to it; it is a system that the subject shares with others and has no control over. Therefore, the subject's sense of self is provided by and consequently lost in an alien system of signs. (Mansfield 2000, 43–44) The third Lacanian order is the Real. It is all that which is not imaginary or symbolic. The Real is linked to both the Imaginary and the Symbolic, and yet, it is located outside of these two orders. Lacan (1998a, 45) puts it poetically: "*The gods belong to the field of real*," hinting at a domain, which is excluded from analysis as it does not belong to speech.[113]

Subjectivity is not spontaneous or reflex; it is not a logical consequence of biological human existence, as we like to think. According to Lacan, the subject arises in the exchange between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. As we have already mentioned, the Imaginary is determined by the Symbolic in the sense that language occupies the subject and its body. In a system of constant disconnection, the subject finds deceptive separation and a guise of wholeness, in its physical body. The body (the flesh) stands precisely at the threshold, where the Imaginary and the Symbolic interact; it is "the sort of inert outside that language cannot reach." (Mansfield 2000, 44) In Lacanian psychoanalysis, this is the realm of the Real, which represents the "unsignifiable asymptote of subjectivity," (Ibid.) in short, feminine subjectivity. For Lacan, the female too is bound to the realm of the Real, excluded from analysis, and put in the same register as god. Lacan's infamous cry that the woman is "*not whole*" (1998b, 7) states that femininity cannot be reduced to the Symbolic Order of the Other. While in the register of the Symbolic there exists a universal and whole signifier of (male) subjectivity – the phallic signifier – the equivalent of such common denominator does not exist in the context

[113] To put it with the words of Lévi-Strauss (1997), the Real is – the raw.

of femininity. Searching for an answer to the mystic “nature” of femininity, Lacan, too finds himself perplexed over the question of “what does a woman want.” (Freud in Jones 1953, 377) However, it is clear that the premises of psychoanalytical theorisation of subjectivity always already exclude the possibility of answering this enigmatic dilemma since psychoanalysis presupposes that subjectivity is gendered – and it is gendered as masculine. It is only to expect that the flipside to this structural blindness for feminine subjectivity is the impossibility to think (of) and deal with feminine *juissance*. The female desire is thus *abjected* as belonging to the realm of the Real.

The subject’s adult life is dominated by the demands of the efficient and authoritative Symbolic Order. In order to be able to function at all, the subject must submit to the logic of the Symbolic. This logic is grounded on the premise, which can be expressed in de Saussure’s (1998) vocabulary as follows: for every signifier, there exists a corresponding signified. In short, the subject must trust that language makes sense. However, the subject’s place in the Symbolic is predetermined by an imaginary identification; a belief that by entering the Symbolic the subject will be awarded with a sense of the misleading feeling of unity, experienced in the mirror-stage. Meanwhile, the subject is faced with the discovery that the mirror image does not belong to it; rather, it belongs to the gaze of the Other – and even if it does represent the self (like the word ‘I’, for example), it is a property of others as well. Thus the subject’s participation in the Symbolic Order is always a quest for the sense of self-identity that briefly appeared in the Imaginary, but has been lost since. The subject is not allowed to enter the Symbolic Order for free – it must leave its imaginary feeling of unity at the door. Subjectivity is thus a consequence of one fundamental lack within the subject (which is why Lacan presupposes the subject as already split and/or barred). The subject, in order to gain its immanence in the Symbolic Order, abandons the unmediated experience of his body.

Therefore, the subject is constituted by a lack, which places it in the realm of desire. The subject pursues demands in order to satisfy

desire, but only manages to do so momentarily, as desire is by definition insatiable. The human tragedy thus lies at the core of the subject's being – in the context of relentless desire, which always eludes satisfaction. (Lacan 1977) Moreover, there is an ironic twist to this tragedy, as the subject only feels desire because it has lost the imaginary sense of unity within the realm of the Symbolic – but at the same moment that the subject enters the Symbolic, it also enters an order, which is constituted by the fact that this desire cannot be fulfilled. (Mansfield 2000, 45–46)

Faced with the situation that desire can only be satisfied in the Imaginary, which the subject has already left behind, the subject is now defined by its relentless perseverance. In its quest for the image of wholeness that the Other used to offer, the subject mistakes passing objects for the Other. In Lacanian (1998a) terminology, this is the definition of an *objet petit a*, theorised as an opposition to the Other.[114] It represents an unsatisfactory and inefficient attempt to substitute the Other, which is in fact the ultimate signifier of the object of desire, promising to restore the lost equilibrium in the realm of subjectivity. Lacan thus understands the acquisition of a sense of self as determined by the Other, earned through relationships, structured by language, and essentialised by social interaction. Subjectivity in psychoanalysis, namely, is always already intersubjectivity: only by others' approvals *I become what I claim I am*. (Žižek 2007) Similarly, for Lacan, "*desire is always the desire of the Other*." (1998a, 38) Like the subject's sense of selfhood, language, too turns out to be an elusive system, caught up in the same dialectic as desire – language presents itself as a system, which can provide stable meaning, but the meaning continuously eludes the subject. In Derrida's (2007) terms, metalanguage does not exist.

As such, language is exposed as an insecure system, which simultaneously lures the subject with an offer of a stable identity and prevents it from acquiring it. Lacan argued that the key to

[114] Quite literally, *a* stands for *autre*, French for the other.

understanding the human tragedy is the illusion, which pretends to provide the subject with an imaginary singularity, while it actually entraps it in the common Symbolic Order with an incoherent structure of a *bricolage*. Freud understood the possession of penis as grounds for stable pursuit of identity and defined male subjectivity as ruled by the search of this certainty, constituted by yet another deception, wherein control of the penis seems at the same time available and unstable. (Freud 1925b) Lacan's scheme is analogous to Freud's, but there is an important difference – instead of anatomy, language has now become destiny. (Mansfield 2000, 46–48)

For Lacan, subjectivity is still marked by gender inequality, it still works with the equal threat of loss and incompletion, and it is still a pursuit of stability. But this drama does not unfold in the field of biology, it now occurs in the realm of language. Whereas Freud put the penis at the core of the system of gender order, for Lacan, there is no literal penis at the essence. However, for him, gender is marked by language – and the old hierarchy holds: "identity, order, meaning, reason and truth [are just as] firmly on the side of the masculine as they were in Freud." (Ibid., 48) Just as the Freudian subject desperately seeks control over his penis, the Lacanian subject seeks meaning in language and pursues the false promise of a stable identity. Freud put the father's penis at the root of social law, but for Lacan, what stands there is the signifier of the father, called *Name-of-the-Father.* This transcendental signifier does not stand for the actual father or for the imaginary father, but, rather, for the symbolic father: "the Name-of-the-father sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law." (Lacan 1998a, 34) Therefore, the Symbolic Order is once again clearly unmasked as a masculine domain. However, it is no longer governed by the penis, but by its symbol, *the phallus.* In this sense, Lacan generalised and intensified Freud's model of the construction of subjectivity. Despite the fact that language is seen as a crucial influence in the development of subjectivity, the family still supplies a lot of the imagery: the representative Other is of course the mother, whereas the law stands for the Name-of-the-father. There is

nothing spontaneous or original about subjectivity. It is only in the fantasies of returning to the Imaginary that the subject is seen as whole, whereas in the reality of the Symbolic Order the subject is completely detached from this image of totality. Despite the subject's never-ending attempts of recovery, the desire that haunts the subject always remains impossible to satisfy. (Mansfield 2000, 48–49)

4.4 Anti-subjective theories of the self

We will now direct our attention to the other pole of theoretical interpretations of the subject in order to explore the theories of the self, which can be labelled as anti-subjective. They emanate mainly from the work of Nietzsche and, later, Foucault. Despite the different philosophical traditions and their fierce oppositions, it is noteworthy how both psychoanalytic and Foucauldian analyses of (the definition of) subjectivity depart from the enlightened unitary and autonomous subject. Both of these approaches see the subject as a construct, which is not given in advance, but is formed through participation in a variety of relationships instead. However, in psychoanalysis, the dominant relationships that structure subjectivity are family relationships, which are defined in terms of gender and sexuality, whereas for Foucault, the core relationships are the relationships of power and subordination. Both theoretical traditions also agree on the importance of language, but differ in pinpointing the very aspect of language that affects the subject most systematically. For Lacan, that aspect is condensed in the concept of the signifier, while Foucault locates subjectivity in the discourses that define truth and knowledge within the contexts of what is seen as normal and abnormal behaviour. In the theorisations we are about to explore, subjectivity is not interpreted as individual or autonomous, nor is it fixed and stable. Autonomous subjectivity is seen as a hallucination, plotted by the structures of power, in order to control and manage the members of any given social group. (Mansfield 2000, 51–52)

4.4.1 Subjectivity as an effect of power

In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, (1971b) Althusser delves into the issue of the subject's place in the context of capitalism by investigating the means and ways by which capitalist society is reproduced. According to Althusser, (Ibid.) it is not merely the *repressive state apparatuses* such as police or the army that are entrusted with this responsibility. Althusser argues that the key forces in these processes are in fact *ideological state apparatuses,* such as school, family, and church. These institutions perpetually reinforce capitalist values and thereby succeed themselves; and capitalism is successful because it creates subjects, who, in turn, become the means and the subjects of its endurance. In its core, ideology is dependent on the concept of subjectivity. It constitutes subjects by interpellating them into subjects. Interpellation is what happens in the famous example given by Althusser in which a policeman calls out to someone in the street: "the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*." (Ibid., 163) In this respect, interpellation is merely the production of the very subjectivity that the system requires. Althusser's theory is Marxist. He differentiates ideology from science and believes that Marxism is capable of gaining scientific insights into the true nature of the social order. These insights can then be used to help a new social order emerge.

In short, Althusser presents the reader with his own model of truth and it is in this very emphasis that Foucault most intensely deviates from him. To the latter, there can be no such thing as an objective, scientific, and impersonal truth. At least since Rousseau (2001), the popular belief has been that the true nature of the human self is hidden beneath cultural and societal influences, which are the realm of compromise and humiliation and, as such, bring out the worst in people. However, claims this optimistic view, a true self supposedly lurks somewhere beneath all that junk. It is free, uninhibited, even

accessible – to those at least, who make the *right* decisions; those who choose the *correct* social group, use *appropriate* language, etc. (Mansfield 2000, 52–54)

It is the critique of this very interpretation of subjectivity that stands at the beginning of Foucault's thought on the subject:

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (Foucault 1980, p.98)

If for Rousseau (2001) the individual comes first and it is the subsequent intervention of power that confuses and limits him, Foucault's reasoning is reversed. Power comes first, and the individual, together with the idea of individuality, is its effect. Subjectivity is seen as the substance of power as well as its means of expression. It is precisely this assumption of natural freedom that enslaves the individual within the ideological discourse and submits it to power. The unified and autonomous subject of the Enlightenment is more than a mere historical concept or an old-fashioned theory of subjectivity; it is this very model that conceals power and allows it to function in the most effective manner. The utopia of individuality encourages the individual to become self-obsessed and preoccupied with narcissistic endeavours, much too distracted to be able to politicise the quotidian life. Kant (1998), for example, understands self-consciousness as the origin of all human experience, whereas Foucault (1980) reveals this perception of self-consciousness as yet another contribution to the definition of the modern individual. According to him, it pretends to pursue the study of its uniqueness and

originality and aspires to determine the objective truth about subjectivity, but in reality it merely reproduces the existing relations of power, which in fact target and prevent precisely the efforts towards uniqueness and the autonomy of desire. (Mansfield 2000, 54–55)

4.4.2 From anti-subjectivity to the aesthetics of resistance

Nietzsche (1967) also rejected the enlightened traditions pursuing faith, reason and equality. He divided humanity into two categories: the people who routinely follow convention and those who possess a certain amount of internal power, which supposedly represents a glimpse into the forthcoming superhumanity. Although Foucault's writing, generally speaking, is somewhat more respectful towards the majority of people than Nietzsche's, Nietzsche still provides him with enormous inspiration in his interpretation of subjectivity and its connection to discourse. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* (2007) Nietzsche writes:

> A quantum of force is just such a quantum of drive, will, action, in fact it is nothing but this driving, willing and acting, and only the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it), which construes and misconstrues all actions as conditional upon an agency, a 'subject', can make it appear otherwise. And just as the common people separates lightning from its flash and takes the latter to be a deed, something performed by a subject, which is called lightning, popular morality separates strength from the manifestations of strength, as though there were an indifferent substratum behind the strong person which had the freedom to manifest strength or not. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought, – the doing is everything. (26)

Usually, we tend to interpret an event as a manifestation or an effect of the thing's internal reality; this notion gained prominence in the enlightened emphasis on the individual. But Nietzsche (Ibid.) challenges the morality that such perspective generates. He claims that it is erroneous to presuppose that behind every effect there is someone responsible for it, someone intending that event. According to Nietzsche, (Ibid.; see also Nietzsche 1967) lightning, for example, is not something lasting or something that perpetually exists and only

occasionally flashes before our eyes. Flashing is all there is to lightning, as lightning is nothing more than its effect. Therefore, it is a mistake to want to separate the two. Flashing is all that lightning can *do* and lighting only exists in its flashing. Yet again, the culprit is language. It provides us with the misapprehension that the phenomenon we call lightning can and in fact does exist detached from the act of flashing. Similarly, language deceives us into believing that subjects are free to act as they wish and that they can choose their paths autonomously, when in fact grammar fundamentally constrains our behaviour. According to Nietzsche, morality is the invention of a weak majority and as such it is anything but a universal value system. Rather, it is merely a specific weapon in the human power game; and the same goes for language. (Mansfield 2000, 55–57)

Foucault (1977a) argues that subjectivity arises as an effect and consequence of the interaction between power and language. He claims that by the end of the 18th century, pre-modern modes of power, dependent on religious conformity and brutality, could no longer handle "the mobile and fractured nature of the human population." (Mansfield 2000, 58) The new type of power that appeared consequentially was not invested in individuals, but in social systems of governance. Power was transferred from the upper classes and royalty to modern institutions. According to Nietzsche (2007), the concept of morality produced that interpretation of the subject, placing it under the governance of language, in order to further the impression that individuals are accountable for their actions. Foucault (1977a) develops this argument even further, claiming that this new power, which was distinctively impersonal, engineered new insights into human subjectivity and made a distinction between normal and abnormal behaviour. Sociology, psychology and many other new disciplines flourished and started to produce "scientific" insights into the supposed truth of subjectivity, producing discourses, which Foucault (Ibid., 2004, 54) defines not as "groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that

systematically form the objects of which they speak." Furthermore, discourse is defined as a "group of statements that belong to a single system of formation." (Ibid., 121) Even more precisely, Foucault defines discourse as

> a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained) ; it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. (Ibid., 131)

In consequence, novel discourses reinvent the subject and define it as the source for all human behaviour and every individual decision, which inevitably transforms the subject into the ultimate object of analysis. (Mansfield 2000, 58–59) The body is not to be trusted anymore and is ultimately proclaimed as s site of deceit.

The origins of this genealogy of subjectivity, according to Foucault, can be located in the enlightened dream of the autonomous and unified subject. However, owing to Foucault (1980), discourses of knowledge have been exposed as instruments of power. Foucault argues that the link between knowledge and power is so strong that either of them cannot exist without the other. He therefore uses a single term "power/knowledge" (Ibid.) to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the two concepts. He notably demonstrates his argument on the ways of functioning of power/knowledge with his research on the development of the prison. For Foucault, (1977a) this development is characteristic of the changes that have happened within the politics of subjectivity since the Enlightenment. In the early modern era, crime was regulated by dramatic and public displays of (absolute) power that disciplined and punished the offender's body. The body used to be tortured, executed and dismembered for everybody to see. The power performed on the body was spectacular and dramatic, but absent from everyday routines. However, "by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the gloomy festival of punishment was dying out, though here and there

flickered momentarily into life." (Ibid., 8) The development of prison and "the disappearance of punishment as a spectacle" (Ibid.) systematised and rationalised crime and punishment, making discipline less ceremonial, but interiorised within the public logic, quotidian life and the social order. Furthermore, the physical presence of prisons and other correctional institutions altered the urban landscape and transformed the public places, where the masses used to gather for open executions.

However, the key transformation caused by prison was the shift of emphasis from the body to the subject.[115] Certainly, prison confines

[115] According to Žižek (2008), the linear shift from the physical to systemic, and, finally, to symbolic violence points at the substance of subjectivity, which is always the addressee of any given violence. Firstly, the violence was aimed at the body, which implies that the body was seen as the substance of the subject. Later, as the substance of the subject became the autonomous individuum, the violence focused on limiting his autonomy and freedom. Finally, we are now left with symbolic violence, which is fundamentally performative in the sense that it is inherent to the discourse of the Other. As the subject (necessarily) enters the Symbolic Order, it (necessarily) takes this violence upon himself, thus freely choosing the "forced choice". (Žižek 2000, 19) Contemporary versions of the autonomous subject can still be located precisely in this exclusive domain of the illusion of freedom. Shannon Bell performs herself as liberated from ideology, hegemony, *malestream* theory, and mainstream practice by recognizing herself as freely choosing the *anything goes* (Feyerabend 1993) maxim, subverting conventions, "normalcy", and traditional standards. However, upon closer scrutiny, this "anything" always turns out to be already limited, regulated, offered by society as a set of legitimate, albeit marginalised, options. It is the slips of the body that most convincingly show that not quite anything actually does go – sometimes, the body performs as a brake, stopping us in our tracks, constraining the seemingly unconstrained set of possibilities. It is in these (mis)haps where one should look for potential of subversion rather than on the margins of the possible as the subject is always *subjected* (it subjects itself), whereas the body, although (and precisely because) it is reduced to an object, objects:

> If, then, the subject's activity is, at its most fundamental, the activity of submitting oneself to the inevitable, the most fundamental mode of the object's passivity, of its passive presence, is that which moves, annoys, disturbs, traumatizes us (subjects): at its most radical the object is *that which objects*, that which disturbs the smooth running of things. (Žižek 2006, 17)

the body, but in fact it operates on the level of subjectivity. This influence can be observed by analysing the forms of truth that emerge around the crime and the criminal and the methodology used within the modern prison system. (Ibid.; see also Mansfield 2000, 59–60)

> Beneath the increasing leniency of punishment, then, one may map a displacement of its point of application; and through this displacement, a whole field of recent objects, a whole new system of truth and a mass of roles hitherto unknown in the exercise of criminal justice. A corpus of knowledge, techniques, 'scientific' discourses is formed and becomes entangled with the practice of the power to punish. (Foucault 1977a, 22–23)

As people are not imprisoned arbitrarily, a proper legal system must be installed, which provides definitions of delinquency, criminality, and transgression, as well as the justification of incarceration. In order to justify imprisonment, the individual becomes an object of study, a phenomenon. Furthermore, the person who committed the crime becomes the criminal. Science starts to investigate what makes somebody a criminal (but also what differentiates the criminal from the madman, for example); it wonders what the social influences and cultural factors are, etc. The individual is no longer seen as autonomous; rather, it becomes the central object of research and analysis. Subjectivity is seen as the realm of truth, which is "objectively" pursued by systems of knowledge. Interior life is no longer understood as one's own; rather, it is the site of answers, findings, discoveries, definitions and judgements to which it is always inferior. Furthermore, the criminal has become one of the possible modes of subjectivity which results in permanent anxiety of the individuals, who read sociological and psychological verdicts and seek criminal traits in themselves, at the same time avoiding the scrutiny of others, nervously walking past surveillance cameras. The hypothetical Big Brother, the ever-present impersonal audience, is awarded with exaggerated performance of legality and normality. This unavoidable, yet informal paranoia in fact regulates the quotidian life and adapts it

to the ways of the prison without even having to imprison our bodies. (Mansfield 2000, 60)

Bentham's idea of the "panopticon" provides Foucault (1977a, 200) with an image of how the criminal subject is managed – a single guard placed in the guard tower in the middle of the prison courtyard can see inside numerous prison cells simultaneously, whereas the prisoners never know when they are being observed and whether the guard is even present. "The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognise immediately." (Ibid.) The prisoners, not knowing when if at all they are being observed, are forced to always behave appropriately: "He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication." (Ibid.) The appearance of acceptable conduct has become a sign of the innermost qualities of the subject, "Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of the power." (Ibid., 201) Subjected to the panopticum, the prisoners either become reformed or penitent[116] and the prison's focus shifts from punishing the body to correcting the soul. The system firmly believes it can change the nature of the criminals' subjectivity by isolating and monitoring the body. (Mansfield 2000, 61) According to Foucault, "the soul is the prison of the body." (1977a, 30) The main functions of constant analysis of the prisoner's subjectivity (and every other citizen alike) are threefold: to individualise, normalise and hierarchise. Firstly, the subject is to be interpreted as separate from others. This enables the subject to be measured according to the standards of suitable, appropriate, legal, healthy, etc. behaviour. And thirdly, with the employment of norms, behaviours (and thus subjects) can be compared which results in the production of hierarchies (of what is more or less appropriate). (Mansfield 2000, 61–62)

[116] In the 19th century, prisons got new names – reformatories and penitentiaries.

Hence, Foucault sees the panopticon as representative of the processes of modern subjectification.[117] Population is organised into single units, which are then subject to supervision and discipline. The site where this system is most effective is the modern institution, full of files containing “objective truths” about ourselves. Individuals do not even have access to this information and the data about themselves that is collected. The Foucauldian convergence of power and knowledge takes places in these institutions, which operate according to knowledge they claim to have about types of subjectivity which individuals occupy, whether they know it themselves or not. This principle of categorisation is power at work. According to Foucault, then, individuality is anything but what Rousseau (2001) envisions. In its core, it is not liberated and naturally occurring. Nor is it internally good and then corrupted by society. Instead, subjectivity is an ambition of ideology. It is the site of vulnerability to the institutional interpretation truth and power. The latter is anonymous, depersonalised, and overwhelming. It saturates our privacy, self-image and identity. (Mansfield 2000, 62–63) The principle of the panopticon is as relevant today as it was in Foucault’s time, especially in the context of emerging (digital) technologies, which introduce the threat of an omnipresent gaze of the anonymous Other (behind the machine). The panoptic principle as a Foucauldian site of subjectification is multiplied and dispersed onto surveillance cameras, mobile communication technologies, social networks, etc. The internet is a contemporary cultural necessity and an example of the panopticon *par excellence*. (Brignall 2002)

Foucault finds the potential for resistance in the aesthetics of existence. As power/knowledge successfully operates at the level of the subject, this is also the realm where rebellion is possible and can be effective. Foucault (1997a) claims there is no authentic self that can be emancipated, therefore the only possibility is an active and

[117] Foucault's term for the construction of the individual subject, further explored by Deleuze and Guattari (1980).

experimental self-invention that attempts to research and expand the possibilities of subjectivity and rebel against the preferred modes of being and behaving: “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.” (Ibid., 262; see also Mansfield 2000, 63)

In *What is Enlightenment?* Foucault (1997c) argues that subjects should be conscious of various selfhoods that are being constructed for them in order to somehow plot an alternative. By gaining such self-awareness it becomes possible to construct an alternative, even if it is merely hypothetical or imaginary, “outside of, or in pure hostility to, the conventions modern life seeks to normalise.” (Mansfield 2000, 63) In this argumentation, Foucault (1997c) brings together the fields of aesthetics, ethics, and politics. The sexuality of Ancient Greece and Rome, as studied by Foucault, (1990) exposed a subjectivity, managed in accordance with ethics of pleasure. The subject was able to (re)produce itself endlessly and in continuous response to specific cultural and historical contexts; it was able to incessantly problematise its own status within the world as well as its relationship with others. The self was to be handled responsibly, and that was seen as an ethical demand. As such, it was also concerned with both politics and aesthetics. (Mansfield 2000, 63–64) Foucault perhaps represents the avant-garde of performance philosophy. Not only has his theory of self-creation inspired everyone from performance artists to queer movements, provided the imagery of popular culture, engaged in revealing the Western sexual practices, etc., but his own life also provided a case study for his theory. Foucault was involved in radical, non-heteronormative sexual practices, experimented with BDSM, dealt with AIDS, etc. and his engagements in transgressions provided him with new possibilities of interpreting subjectivity as well as the potential for resistance. (Ibid., 64)

We have explored how the enlightened subject is comprehended as free, autonomous, and natural, but inevitably obscured and oppressed by society. The psychoanalytic model

structures subjectivity according to concepts, such as desire and lack and sees it as a product of family relations, sex and gender, and language. Foucauldian views, however, represent a reference point for very diverse and wide-ranging theoretical endeavours, which have never really been unified within any specific theoretical movement. Nevertheless, they still agree on the basic premise that subjectivity is always a fiction without any given structure or essential reality. This fiction can be – and should be – altered, distorted, and reinvented as a subversion of power and/or an aesthetic of existence. Since Foucault. it has also become practically impossible, and quite awkwardly so, to say anything at all about subjectivity – any such statement can be interpreted as an exercise of a technique of power. This scepticism is perhaps so intense because it competes against the endless cynicism, converged in the illusion of freedom that this very power sustains.

4.5 The gendered subject

We have not said much about gender in our debate yet. None of the theoretical approaches that we have outlined so far adequately tackles this issue. In psychoanalysis, gender relations certainly are seen as fundamental to the construction of the subject, yet gender is seen as determined by biology, whereas the feminine is seen "as a by-product of the necessarily dominant masculine." (Mansfield 2000, 67) For Foucault, on the other hand, gender relations serve merely as a model for his theorisation of the political transformations of the individual. (Ibid.) In the following chapters, we intend to examine how feminist thinkers cope with these symptomatic theoretical omissions in their own understandings of gender. In our perspective, the absence of theoretical tackling of gender is in fact the other side of the exclusion of non-dualist interpretations of the body from *malestream* theory. To question gender inevitably causes putting an end to repression of the hysterical, feminine monstrous body; it means to actively subvert the established interpretations of the body, which is customarily interpreted as disciplined, trained, rational, controllable, our own, and, above all, fundamentally male. Firstly, let us direct our attention to the central idea of practically every recent gender theorisation, the sex/gender distinction. In Western cultures, the concept of nature has gained a very special status in terms of explaining what we believe to be crucial influences on our behaviour, and the Western conception of nature uncovers the underpinning belief that "our social behaviours are not social in their origin but are inborn, and thus inevitable and incontrovertible." (Ibid., 68) This natural determinism can be efficiently observed through the idea of gender roles. For example, women are supposed to be physically weaker, emotional, and naturally inclined to caregiving, whereas men are seen as contained, rational, protective. Characterisations like these are interpreted as fundamentally natural, grounded in biology, and as such non-disputable, whereas in point of fact what is seen as natural is always a cultural projection, what needs

to be rationalised as a biological motivation for certain behaviours is most certainly merely a proof of cultural intervention.

It is in the very nature of feminist thought to challenge the perception, according to which nature represents the fact decisive foundation for and the source of all gendered behaviour. Traditionally, feminists have been questioning such conventional interpretations of gender by showing that biological realities and cultural identities are distinct. Gender identity and behaviour have been interpreted as socially constructed and hierarchised, rather than naturally occurring. (Ibid.) Or, as de Beauvoir famously put it: “One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.” (1952, 249) Gender behaviour, in clear opposition to the traditional understanding, according to which our genes and genitals rule the world, has been exposed as the product of cultural and historical forces: “ideology goes far since our bodies as well as our minds are the product of this manipulation. We have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature, with the *idea* of nature that has been established for us.” (Wittig 1993, 103) The gender structure of a given society “is the product of a specific political history and specific institutions.” (Mansfield 2000, 68)

The introduction of the sex/gender distinction rejects all theories that rely on biological difference between female and male bodies as the foundations for interpreting different behaviours of women and men. The sex/gender distinction has shown that the “arguments that gender is an inevitable outgrowth of biology … disguise politically and culturally determined differences as something inevitable and immutable.” (Ibid., 69) However, sex is just “as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.” (Butler 1999, 346) If sex itself is a gendered category, then the binary distinction does not make sense. To Butler

(Ibid.), gender is much more than just the “cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex,” it also designates “the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established.” (Ibid.) Consequently, gender does not belong to the order of culture in the way that sex is said to belong to nature, as gender is in fact an instrument, which retroactively produces and establishes sex as “‘prediscursive’, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts.” (Ibid.)

In his *Studies on Ethnomethodology* Garfinkel (1967), in what has come to be a referential ethnomethodological case study of intersexuality, while depicting Agnes, describes Western norms, dealing with sex and gender. According to Garfinkel, Western common sense principles concerning sex and gender can thus be summarised as follows:

- There are two sexes, male and female.
- Sex is given in advance and is fixed.
- Within this environment, everybody counts himself as one or the other.
- Ultimately, members of society are, always have been and always will be sexed as either male or female.
- Sexual organs such as penis or vagina are crucial signs of determining sex. Feelings, activities, behaviours, obligations, etc., are then attributed to people in accordance with their sexes.
- The recognition of sex happens even before birth and does not change by death.
- An environment of sexed objects appears as if belonging to the natural order. Rationalised as natural, the female/male distinction is never questioned; being natural, it instead is seen as precise and correct. (Ibid., 122–123)

In order to be able to theorise the multiplicity of queer deviations from the inexorable norm, social sciences have come up with the sex/gender distinction. However, it can be argued that the introduction of this division is fundamentally social as well. Despite the

fact that its original purpose was along the lines of intending to dispute the “biology-is-destiny formulation” (Butler 1999a, 9) and attempting to prove that “whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed /…/ neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex,” (Ibid., 9–10) it can be argued, that the sex/gender distinction merely furthers the hierarchic valuations of two opposing sexes and upholds the *status quo*. In this interpretation, theoretical introduction of gender is a way of repressing the fundamental discomfort, which populates the notion of biological sex. Sex is the last naturally fixed demand presented to the body; and as such it is at the same time universal and exclusive as we are all defined as male or female, but nobody can be both at the same time. By separating *biological predispositions* from *cultural acquisitions*, the always already hierarchised distinction is not overcome, but simply transferred to another domain.

Thus, it can be argued that the sex/gender binary distinction serves to protect the integrity of sex, a point avoided even by many feminist authors, who are often satisfied with altering the *biology is destiny* motto, proclaiming that *culture is destiny.* (Ibid., 12) The body is often understood as the passive receptor of cultural influences, which is an interpretation just as reductionist as the traditional one it attempts to subvert.

> And what is “sex” anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such “facts” for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called “sex” is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (Ibid., 10–11)

According to Butler's view, gender is not a cultural interpretation of sex, but the other way around, because "sex itself is a gendered category," (Ibid., 11) whereas gender is much more than "the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex /…/; gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established." (Ibid.) Furthermore, gender must also be understood as "the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or a 'natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts." (Ibid.) Butler reinterprets de Beauvoir's (1952) formula, stating that one certainly becomes a woman, "but always under a cultural compulsion to become one." (1999a, 12) Butler is clear that this cultural compulsion has nothing to do with sex and concludes that there is nothing in de Beauvoir's interpretation, which "guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female." (Ibid.) Articulating one of the crucial theses of *Gender Trouble*, adopted by our own writing as well, Butler thus concludes that sex, always already interpreted by cultural meanings, cannot qualify "as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along." (Ibid.)

Sex as the reverse product of the symbolic imaginary of the body (of the culturally determined categories, into which the body is born) is convincingly discussed by Plessner (1981). He assumes that the somatic substance of a human body is unlike that of any other body in the animal kingdom. Plessner introduces the idea of eccentric positionality towards one's body (*I have a body*), which, according to him, is characteristic of humans, whereas the centric position (*I am a body*) belongs to all living beings. Humans also occupy an alienated and mediated position towards the body, which enables them to experience their body in a phenomenological sense – to experience their own experience. To be able to experience the experience of one's body is to symbolise it: "Our bodies, no less than anything that is human are constituted by culture." (Bordo in Soper 2003, 32) Consequently, from the ontological perspective, sex does not exist. A

human being, born into a culture without gender (without its cultural and language descriptions), would most certainly not be defined by what we call sex.

The sex/gender problem thus goes far beyond the common-sense belief that there exists a causal cultural bond between the two; the crucial problem is the fact that sex, too, is culturally constituted. Western sex is constructed by biomedicine, a science on a quest for the substance of sex. According to Foucault (1990), sex is constructed by the paradigmatic mode of sexuality, which is historically specific. This construction occurs "prior to any categorization of sexual difference. /…/ The tactical production of the discrete and binary categorization of sex conceals the strategic aims of that very apparatus of production by postulating 'sex' as 'a cause' of sexual experience, behavior, and desire." (Butler 1999a, 31) Therefore, should a given culture abandon the heterosexual hegemony of gender, the category of sex would disappear. The binary opposition male/female, robbed of its constituting component (the reference to the somatic as such, sex as such, not marked by difference), would dissolve into multitudes of particularities without a common principle. This is precisely Foucault's (1990) point, when he claims that the categories of male and female sexes are products of the sexual economy. The heteronormative cultural matrix cannot presuppose (much less legitimise) the existence of sexual identities, which do not conform to the cultural demands of masculinity or femininity. These are mostly identities, which do not refer to sex in their actualisation and articulation. For this reason, "within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be." (Butler 1999a, 33) We shall return to the performative dimension of gender shortly. In the meantime, however, let us consider some of the attempts to tackle psychoanalytical theorisations of sex/gender.

4.5.1 Back to psychoanalysis

Irigaray, in her collection of essays titled *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985) departed from the Lacanian understanding of feminine identity and sexuality. The key points of her argument are already hinted in the rather confusing title *Ce sexe qui n'est pas un* – in French, the word *sexe* (sex) is gendered as masculine. In this context of "grammatical gendering," (Mansfield 2000, 69) female is always understood as a subcategory of male. Thus, in her title, Irigray identifies the feminine as a sex that is distinct from the masculine and cannot be subordinated by it. Hence it cannot be *a* (in French, *un* is masculine for *a*) sex; it is not "the secondary part of a system defined first and foremost in masculine terms. /…/ The second meaning of the word 'un' is the one the English translation is able to capture: 'one'." (Ibid.) Irigaray points to the difference between the masculine principle of "the singular and unified," (Ibid., 70) which can be said to belong to modernity, and the "feminine immersion in plurality and difference," (Ibid.) a distinctively post-modern approach. The feminine is hence detached from the "totalising logic of oneness that so mesmerises masculine culture." (Ibid.)

According to Irigaray, feminine sexuality has never been theorised on its own terms. For instance, Freud first had to produce a complete model of masculine sexuality before he was able to explain (and quite unconvincingly so) feminine sexuality as a derivation of it. In the *malestream* theoretical production, the dominance of masculine paradigms leads to either reading female sexuality as a subset of masculine sexuality or it is represented as inadequate and marked by a lack. (Ibid.) "About woman and her pleasure, the view of the sexual relation has nothing to say. Her lot is that of 'lack', 'atrophy' (of the sexual organ), and 'penis envy', the penis being the only sexual organ of recognized value." (Irigaray 1985, 23)

Western masculinity is obsessed with phallomorphism, which denies female sexual pleasure, as the "value granted to the only

definable form excludes the one that is in play in female autoeroticism." (Ibid., 26) The penis is the sexual organ *par excellence*, and it is "the *one* of form, /…/ supplants, while separating and dividing, that contact of *at least two* (lips) which keeps woman in touch with herself but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched." (Ibid.) Western culture is filled with representations of phallomorphism, which reveals the masculine as an economy based on the visual, whereas female genitalia are invisible. (Mansfield 2000, 70) Woman is *"neither one nor two,"* (Irigaray 1985, 26) represented by her sexual organs as "the horror of having nothing to see." (Ibid.) The *malestream* emphasis on the visual produces a fascist aesthetic, which above else "idealises formal structural qualities." (Mansfield 2000, 70) It strives for stability, wholeness, and consistency, whereas the "incongruous, jarring, asymmetrical, arbitrary and unfinished," (Ibid.) characteristic of femininity, become sites of criticism and regulation. In theory, this prominence of unity and stability of form results in the production of fixed and final meanings and the mere idea of subversion, the idea that something that has a dynamic or inconsistent identity, something that has ambiguity at its very core, can exist, is terrifying for the culture of phallomorphism. The inhomogeneous, the erratic, the inconsistent, and the monstrous cannot be tolerated by this *malestream* economy of the visual, and thus have to be repressed. (Ibid., 71)

Irigaray critiqued Lacan's understanding of language and its core engine, the ideal of the Symbolic Order, the Name-of-the-Father. This obsession with "the proper name," (Irigaray 1985, 26), "literal proper meaning" (Ibid.), which femininity is robbed of – "she has no 'proper' name" (Ibid., 26), as the essence of language represents a symptomatically masculine anxiety about the phallus, an anxiety that the feminine is not concerned with. (Mansfield 2000, 71) In a revolutionary move, Irigaray defines the "female imaginary" (Irigaray 1985, 28), "that repressed entity" (Ibid.), which, like the masculine, "replicates the meaning of the genitals." (Mansfield 2000, 71) We have already established that male genitals are understood as a symbol of

unity, whereas female genitals are more plural and dynamic, more post-modern in their construction. “Woman ‘touches herself’ all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) – that caress each other.” (Irigaray 1985, 25) This plurality stands in direct opposition to the logic of the masculine and results not in the culture of the visible but in that of the tangible – especially since “*woman has sex organs more or less everywhere*.” (Ibid., 28)

The feminine culture, established on diversity, “is built around an implicit difference from itself.” (Mansfield 2000, 71) “‘She’ is indefinitely other in herself,” Irigaray (1985, 28) argues, “said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious …” (Ibid.) In a non-*malestream* discourse, this characterisation could be reformulated into the hypothesis that the feminine simply does not insist on a precise distinction between the self and the other. In short, it does not insist on the taxonomy so characteristic of the paranoid and self-obsessed masculine culture. The process of inclusion of the other within the subject is seen as indefinite, “open to an endlessly renewable difference.” (Mansfield 2000, 72) In the context of the Symbolic Order, feminine language poses a hazard for the fetishised stabilities. Lacan’s understanding of language, to Irigaray, is completely masculine. Instead, feminine language triumphs in “an internal difference and ambiguity, which is a reflection of the difference implicit to feminine being.” (Ibid.) Irigaray satirically describes the feminine linguistic threat as follows:

> not to mention her language, in which ‘she’ sets off in all directions leaving ‘him’ unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. For in what she says, too, at least when she dares, woman is constantly touching herself. She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence left unfinished … When she

> returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure, or of pain. One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing *an 'other meaning' always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them*. For if 'she' says something, it is not, it is already no longer, identical with what she means. What she says is never identical with anything, moreover; rather, it is contiguous. *It touches (upon)*. And when it strays too far from that proximity, she breaks off and starts over at 'zero': her body-sex. (1985, 29)

According to Irigaray, then, feminine fluidity and indefiniteness have been culturally constructed within the dynamic field of gender, together with the masculine. A genealogical approach reveals the feminine, the masculine, the cultural values of both, as well as the theories that grasp them as products of the same specific historical context. (Mansfield 2000, 72) Irigray's work provides us with a valuable critique of psychoanalysis; yet, it is positioned "in and against" (Ibid.) an ultimately *malestream* tradition, which attempts to provide content and stability, "however provisional or culturally contingent that content might be." (Ibid.) In her notion of performativity, however, Butler appears to be able to perform an intervention within that same tradition more effectively. Like Foucault (1997a), she is highly suspicious of the possibility that the subject might have any kind of content at all.

4.5.2 Performing gender

Feminism managed, at least in theory, to undo the causal nature of the relationship between the biological body and the social and cultural identity. The common-sense idea, according to which gender is determined by sex (*biology is destiny*), has become old-fashioned. After the introduction of the sex/gender distinction, gender definitions are seen as varying in time and space. However, in the binary opposition between sex and gender, biology still comes first, separating the human species into two distinct categories. (Mansfield 2000, 73) We have already outlined Butler's (1999a) deconstruction of the sex/gender issue earlier in this chapter, but let us evoke the key points of her analysis, in order to contextualise the forthcoming debate on the performativity of gender.

Firstly, Butler firmly asserts that the only way to theorise about biology is from the side of the great nature/culture divide on which we live: the side of culture." (Mansfield 2000, 73) We are overpowered by the existing values, definitions, and structures, defined within the dominant gender system, before we can even begin to theorise about nature. Therefore, there is no such thing as biological truth and even if there was, there would be no way of uncovering it, it would be ultimately inaccessible. Our culture is fundamentally dependent on the principle of binary oppositions; seeing pairs of differences everywhere one looks is "not a revelation of the basic structure of nature," (Ibid., 74) but, rather, a "reflection of the gender logic in which we are so deeply immersed" (Ibid.) The body, thus, is "always already a cultural sign," (Butler 1999a, 90) and it "it sets limits to the imaginary meanings it occasions, but is never free of an imaginary construction." (Ibid.) This means that the ultimately fantasised body cannot be interpreted "in relation to the body as real," (Ibid.) rather, the only way to understand it, is to think it "in relation to another culturally instituted fantasy, one which claims the place of the 'literal' and the 'real'. The limits of the 'real' are produced within the naturalized

heterosexualization of bodies in which physical facts serve as causes and desires reflect the inexorable effects of that physicality." (Ibid.) To interpret nature as pre-existing culture is thus yet another "culturally instituted fantasy." (Ibid.)

Therefore, Butler understands gender as "neither a result of nature's own categories, nor an interpretation appended to them. Distinctions attributed to nature are only produced from within culture." (Mansfield 2000, 74) Gender thus pre-exists sex; and it is gender that sets in motion the inescapable binary system of oppositions, which constructs nature as a projection of culture and colonises social life. (Ibid.; see also Giblett 2008) Gender in fact dominates almost every level of our predominantly visual culture; it is "thoroughly visible" (Ibid.) and we are always conscious of it.

In *Gender Trouble,* Butler (1999a) also argues that gender functions on the premise of performativity. In doing so, she draws from Riviere's *Womanliness as a Masquerade* (1929). In this paper, Riviere, whilst somehow still keeping to the traditions of her time and jargon (that of Freudian psychoanalysis, of course), argues that womanliness "could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it." (Ibid., 306) Furthermore, Riviere argues that it is impossible to differentiate between "genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'." (Ibid.) There is no difference between them, "whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing." (Ibid.) The "mask of womanliness" (Ibid., 307) is an especially fortunate metaphor for our own endeavour in defining gender, as it brings together every crucial notion that we have identified and played with so far; the body, the subject, performance, and the carnival. In this carnival, gender is a costume to be "worn over an apparent void." (Mansfield 2000, 75)

To Butler, Riviere's essay is an opportuinity to rethink the question of "What is masked by masquerade?" (1999a, 67) There is no such thing as femininity prior to the masquerade – and if the libido is by definition masculine, then femininity must be the denial of that libido. (Ibid., 68) Butler links the idea of womanliness as pretence with

an anti-subjective distrust towards a potential substance of subjectivity. As Foucault famously claims, “the soul is the prison of the body,” (Foucault 1977a, 30) what he means is that subjectivity “lacks any interior structure, and is always everywhere a position in a field of possible behaviours constituted by power/knowledge.” (Mansfield 2000, 76) The body is expected to function as a truthful sign of the innermost condition of subjectivity – a disciplined body denotes correct subjectivity, whereas a voluptuous body signals trouble. The subject’s essential activity has become proper self-representation. To Butler, gender operates in an analogous manner, as it is nothing more than a properly organised set of acts that associate the subject to the predefined systems of health and normalcy. As we have already phrased and rephrased several times, being feminine or masculine does not mean giving expression to some natural interior certainty and truth. On the contrary, it means performing in such a manner that one’s subjectivity is structured in accordance with one of the established ends of the gender continuum. What is really significant (and signifying), though, is not that organisation of subjectivity, consistent with pregiven gender choices, but, rather, performance alone. (Ibid. 76–77)

The aforementioned interior truth is hence revealed as merely a fantasy of the gender system. Identification is understood as “an enacted fantasy or incorporation /…/ it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification.” (Butler 1999a, 173) Furthermore, words, acts, and desire fabricate the illusion of an internal substance, “but produce this *on the surface* of the body.” (Ibid.)

> Such acts, gestures, enactments generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence,

> that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the 'integrity' of the subject. (Ibid.)

Therefore, the illusion of an interior gender essence is enacted by desires, acts, words, and gestures. The reason that this illusion is sustained is that it enables the regulation of sexuality and confines it within the heteronromative frame. (Ibid.) In an ultimately cynical twist, the subjects are required to pretend that their gendered behaviour is spontaneous and authentic – and this very pretending, again, serves to sustain the gendered system. Failing to perform gender correctly causes social isolation and violence, as the visually mediated ideological messages saturate the media, educational institutions, medical explanations, and our own subjective readings of our gender and the proper way to represent it. (Mansfield 2000, 77) Butler interprets gender as performative;

> the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. (1999a, 33)

Gender is a regulated system of performances, which, unsurprisingly not unlike repression, is built on the premise of repetition; "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results." However, the occasional failure to repeat perfectly, experienced by everybody, is in itself yet another proof of the artificiality of the system. Also, failure to repeat is evidence of "a continuous, even unplanned resistance to the norms of gender. We may all be subject to these norms, but we cannot stop ourselves violating them as well." (Ibid.) For that reason, we tend to reinforce and subvert the gender system at the very same time.

4.5.3 The abject

Again, let us turn our attention to the work of Kristeva, especially her conceptualisations of abjection and horror in *Powers of Horror* (1980). We have already seen how Irigaray challenged the Lacanian masculine Symbolic Order by proposing a feminine Imaginary. Kristeva, however, picked a different tactic for her confrontation with psychoanalysis. In the murky depths of the fluid subject, she finds potential for resistance. As the traditionally *malestream* psychoanalysis strives for stability and reconciliation, Kristeva, in a somewhat performative gesture, celebrates the very unresolvability of subject and finds in it potential for subversion.

With the introduction of the abject, subjectivity can finally be theorised as a process, as something fundamentally unwhole, something by definition unfinished, and always irregular. Kristeva, although she stays within the established psychoanalytical language, re-reads Freud and Lacan, identifying new highlights, "especially in terms of a willingness to embrace the ambivalent, unresolved and dangerous," (Mansfield 2000, 80) whereas the founding fathers of psychoanalysis were committed to and dominated by "stability, order and a fixed and constant identity." (ibid.) The daughter of these fathers, unhappy with their authoritative explanation of her own subjectivity, resists, pioneering "a whole cultural politics: the contest between a traditional power hoping to be able to control and manage a stable and knowable world, and a subversive force seeking to set the future of the world in motion again, into a hopeful and productive uncertainty." (Ibid.)

Kristeva returns to and retraces Freud's ideas about how the repressed material returns, about how it resurfaces in dreams, Freudian slips, and neurotic symptoms. However, by revisiting his argumentations, she identifies an area, in which repression is inadequate and always incomplete:

> The ‘unconscious contents remain here *excluded* but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive *position* to be established … As if the fundamental opposition were between I and Other or, in more archaic fashion, between Inside and Outside. As if such an opposition subsumed the one between Conscious and Unconscious. (Kristeva 1982, 7)

For Kristeva, as opposed to Freud and Lacan, subjectivity never necessarily stabilises. The repressed unconscious material floats “on the very fringes of the subject’s self-definition,” (Mansfield 2000, 81) condemning this very definition to always stay incomplete, as well as inadequate. A defensive position of the subject, which necessarily ensues, cannot produce any kind of subjectivity that would be clearly separated from the world around it. No absolute distinction between the subject and the object is produced; the subject turns to be “merely the hypothetical inside of an imagined container whose walls are permeable.” (Ibid.) The subject attempts to establish itself as this very inside, but the unconscious material presses on it all the time. The stability and the significance of consciousness are thus in constant danger. The subject turns out to be “powerless outside, impossible inside” (Kristeva 1982, 48) Kristeva challenges the traditional psychoanalytic view, according to which subjectivity is seen as steady, yet susceptible to sporadic, utterly unintelligible and irrational eruptions, the occasional victim of an ”odd outlaw thought or image crossing the boundary fence from the unconscious to the conscious.” (Mansfield 2000, 81) Kristeva maintains that subjectivity in fact never quite forms; however, the dramatic nature of such subjectivity always comes across as ambivalence. Stability, order, and self-comprehension, are denied to the subject, and it finds itself in an uncertain state, which is “as tempting as it is condemned.” (Kristeva 1982, 1)

We prefer to equate our subjectivity with the distinctiveness of our physical bodies. The body is protected by an imaginary border, which defines subjectivity as something internal, something existing

within the individual body, the distinct, separate body, “one’s own clean and proper body.”[118] (Kristeva 1982, 71) This new politics of the body is especially captivating as it locates the drama of subjectivity in the processes of the physical body itself, especially those processes, which are situated on the very threshold of the body, probing the border, looking over the edge; in short, the processes, associated with the separation and the integrity of the body. As the body lacks unity, this separation is imperfect. When we use the word *I*, however, what we have in mind is precisely Kristeva’s “one’s own clean and proper body” (Ibid.), *le corps propre.* French, again, provides an additionally ambiguous atmosphere to the concept; *propre* stands for clean, but it also denotes ownership. The body is therefore defined as “something that the subject owns and maintains in hygienic order.” (Mansfield 2000, 82)

However, the subject that we rely on and erroneously perceive as stable is defined as subjugated to ideology. The harder we try to establish the border between the inside and the outside, the more it eludes us; “the correct perimeters of our clean and proper bodies are forever broken, punctuated by the physical flows that cross them: flows of urine, tears, shit, vomit, blood (especially menstrual blood), sweat and semen.” (Ibid., 83) These flows of “corporeal waste” (Kristeva 1982, 70) undermine both the body’s sense of hygiene and the subject’s security in terms of the ownership of the body. However, why is it that something as everyday and universal as, for example, urinating or defecating, appears so threatening? Do we own our faeces, do they belong to us, and do they belong to our bodies? Why does something that used to be safely contained within the body minutes ago, suddenly cause disgust, anxiety, and aversion?

> The body's inside, in that case, shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside. It is as if the skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one's

[118] This is a rather inelegant translation of Kristeva's original expression in French, *le corps propre*.

> ‘own and clean self’ but, scraped or trans- parent, invisible or taut, gave way before the dejection of its contents. Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its ‘own and clean self.’ (Ibid., 53)

As we frantically dispose of what the body produces, we are in fact attempting to “to strengthen the subjectivity – or, more accurately, the ‘defensive position’, which is all we have of subjectivity.” (Mansfield 2000, 83) This defensive position most accurately points at “the drama of abjection.” (Ibid.) As the flows of corporeal waste protrude from the body, the body is denied its wholeness, its integrity, and sovereignty – and as the subject’s own autonomy is seen as identical to the body, the subject, too, finds that it is utterly incomplete. The subject thus attempts to define itself by this process of alienation;

> During that course in which ‘I’ become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects. (Kristeva 1982, 3)

Furthermore, the establishment and the alienation are also fundamentally incomplete; the subject exists in an eternal process of attempting to establish itself. It persistently struggles to alienate itself from everything that questions its borders. Moreover, as the dividing line between the inside and the outside of the body is never quite clear, the subject is faced with anxiety, which suddenly makes everything that crosses lines or belongs to both sides deeply unsettling. This goes for both physical and abstract borders. Kristeva gives two examples of processes of abjection: on the skin on the surface of hot milk and corpses. However, she also speaks of abjection in a somewhat broader sense.

Abjection is everything that “disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a

savior." (Ibid., 4) Abjection is the Star of David, tattooed onto a non-Jewish chest, an older female body with pigtails, a woman, holding a teddy bear with one hand, while stroking her clitoris with the other, and the art of female ejaculation. In terms of our debate, the lack of theorising female ejaculation (even as abject) is of special interest. Interestingly, Kristeva (1982), when listing the contagious bodily fluids, does not even mention any such discharge, although she discusses menstrual blood in great detail. Abjection is "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you." (Ibid.) Painfully lacking any theorisation of female ejaculation, from the radically queer point of view, Kristeva's theory of abjection, too, appears as a friend who ultimately stabs you. Still, Kristeva's contribution to the psychoanalytic conception of gender is valuable. She identifies the Symbolic Order with the patriarchal position and finds political potential in the other extreme; in "the pre-Oedipal indefiniteness that is preserved in the forces and flows that defy the clear perimeter of the clean and proper body," (Mansfield 2000, 88) which she labels as distinctively feminine, the maternal. The mother's role in the development of a sense of bodily borders is crucial – she is focused on the very holes of the body "through which the outside becomes inside and vice versa: the mouth, anus, genitals, even the invisibly porous surface of the skin." (Ibid.) As the boundaries are established, the body loses intimacy with the mother's body – and the stronger the demarcation from the world, the stronger the position within the Symbolic Order, and the solider the commitment to masculine dominance.

However, there is no such commitment without a concurrent "subversion of that subjectivity's wholeness and completion by an impulse of fragmentation, ambiguity and ambivalence," (Ibid., 89) which is characteristically maternal. The maternal is seen as grounds for resistance, as the carnivalesque, as an asylum from the paranoid masculine insistence on logic and reason. Still, the distinction between the abject and the Symbolic Order is not clear-cut either, and the

commitment to any of them is beyond our conscious choice. As the subject gives its all to be able to accept the terms of the Symbolic Order, abjection eternally lurks in the vicinity. Kristeva's key contribution to gender politics is perhaps the theorisation of this perpetual "struggle between the subject and the abject." (Ibid.)

Kristeva's paradigmatic example of abjection is the corpse. The corpse does not signify death; signified death is culturally mediated, safe, and clean. Corpses, on the other hand, do not signify, they "as in true theatre … *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live." (Kristeva 1982, 3) The corpse, thus, defeats us in a rather performative manner, and it reveals itself as "fundamental pollution. A body without soul, a non-body, disquieting matter, it is to be excluded from God's *territory* as it is from his *speech*." (Ibid., 109) The corpse addresses us as a presence. It is the presence of death, or, better, the presence and presentation of an ambiguous dividing line between life and death.

5. Conclusion: what is right?

In contemporary art, especially in performance art, the body occupies a privileged place. As we have seen with the cases of the body and subjectivity, in art, and in contemporary theory as well, the essential aspect in the context of our debate appears to be liminality, a state of betwixt and between, the problem of the threshold, abjection, the realm of the unspeakable, uncanny, sublime, the arena of surplus and/or lack … The body is the very site where every single Western split is manifested. In performance art, the modern empty, suppressed, and censored body is no longer *displayed*; instead, the post-modern – bloody, sexual, textual, and relational body – *performs.*

As the body is constructed as a process in front of spectators, one cannot help but wonder whether the body is really so fundamentally "at the mercy of language, at the mercy of the symbolic order." (Fink 1995, 11) The body of psychoanalysis is "written with signifiers and is thus foreign." (Ibid., 12) Moreover, according to Lacan, "the letter /…/ kills" (2006d, 16) and "it kills the real which was *before* the letter, before words, before language." (Fink 1995, 24) As "existence is a product of language," the Real does not exist, it "ex-sists". (2006d) The body is indeed foreign, as foreign as death itself, however, one might just as convincingly argue that it is written with signifiers precisely because it is so foreign and not the other way around. In fact, "insofar as we name and talk about the real and weave it into a theoretical discourse on language and the 'time before the word,' we draw it into language and thereby give a kind of existence to that which, in its very concept, has only ex-sistence." (Fink 1995, 25)

To interpret the body solely as an effect of language is an attempt to kill it with the letter (and domesticate it by means of objectification), yet, we have already seen how fiercely the body

resists symbolisation – perhaps it is precisely in the slips of the body[119] where one can observe the "spirit" (Lacan 2006d, 16) that "gives life" (Ibid.) at work. To insist on understanding the body as a product of language is to repress the unspeakable uncanniness of that body, a quality, pronounced clearly in Lacan's insisting that there is always something anomalous in language, something "unaccountable, unexplainable: an aporia," (Fink 1995, 30) something that one might refer to as "*kinks in the symbolic order.*" (Ibid.) We maintain that these kinks not only point at the Real, but also at a fundamentally corporeal force (in fact, we are rather tempted to use the term *drive* instead) with an attitude (or a lack thereof) of its own. The mere attempt to grasp the

[119] In Freudian psychoanalysis, the slip of the tongue is seen as an intrusion of "some sort of alien *intention,*" (Fink 1995, 42) which is a manifestation of the unconscious. It appears somewhat sensible to attribute to the unconscious a certain amount of "intentionality, agency, or even subjectivity," (Ibid.) and, consequentially, the Freudian subject can be interpreted as the alien intruder, speaking the truth by breaching the margins of discourse and penetrating language itself. Oddly, "there is nothing substantial about that subject," (Ibid.) it is marked by its fleeting status, it "surges forth only to disappear almost instantaneously." (Ibid.) The Lacanian unconscious, however, is not attributed any agency, and the Lacanian subject, split between the unconscious and the ego, becomes "nothing but this very split." (Ibid., 45) Furthermore, even though "*the subject is nothing here but a split between two forms of otherness* – the ego as other and the unconscious as the Other's discourse – the split itself stands in excess of the Other." (Ibid., 46) Perhaps it could even be safe to conclude that the ego exists inasmuch as the unconscious only insists – having neither subject-like nor topological, but merely discursive existence. According to Lacan, the subject exists only insofar as it is discussed upon – the Lacanian subject is thus constituted by its lack of being, by what Lacan calls "*manque à être.*" (2006e, 524) It only exists in its potentiality, as a "place-holder," (Fink 1995, 53) in fact, "it's the subject himself who is not there to begin with." (Lacan in Fink 1995, 52) According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, then, we readily cancel out the Real and convert it "into a social, if not socially acceptable, reality." (Lacan in Fink 1995, 56) By repressing the flesh, we end up with the (dead) body, which from time to time hints at the subject, which is fundamentally fleeting in nature and marked with a lack. We are prepared to operate as castrated subjects without being only to pacify the foreign pulsating of something that, unlike the subject, is always there to begin with, the flesh.

body within discourse is always already Cartesian – it is proof of both, utter alienation of the body from the subject, as well as of a clear hierarchical relationship between the two. Nevertheless, if desire is always desire of the Other and if the body is the ultimate Other, narcissistically objectified for our own protection, then who do we *real*ly desire (to desire) for – and who do we enjoy for if "our bodily pleasures all come to imply/involve a relationship to the Other"? (Ibid., 12)

In Lacanian psychoanalysis "jouissance invades the body in schizophrenia," (Ibid., 75) but could this statement not be rephrased to say that schizophrenia is merely the signifier used to make sense of the startling reclamation, even recovery of the body by *jouissance* (of the flesh)? The necessary sacrifice of the surplus *jouissance* at the entry of the Symbolic Order because of "the Other's demand that we speak" (Ibid., 100) consequentially generates "a loss, and that loss is at the center of civilization and culture." (Ibid.) The only way of never giving up *jouissance* (by handing it over to the Other) and thus avoiding any such loss is to escape into autism. However, once we have passed the threshold of the Symbolic Order, can the sacrificed *jouissance* be retrieved – perhaps even by complete renunciation of the desire dialectic, which constitutes the subject?

Are not the breaches of language, the cracks in speech and walking, the slips of the tongue as well as those of the body, the sublime feelings of awe and horror, etc. events, which are sublime precisely because they seem larger than our subjective perception of them? Is it not true that these events happen *to* us rather than *because* of us? It is significant that such events leave us lost for words and that they are most intensely experienced with our bodies, whose borders are breached so that the potentiality of the subject (briefly, yet utterly) disappears, rather than emerges. If we interpret the feelings of the sublime as a forceful negation of the subject, is it conceivable that the surplus *jouissance*, previously "'squeezed' out of the body," (Ibid., 99) can find its way back home? Should one renounce the always unattainable desire for the Other, what would their bodies do?

The (performing) body of performance art is constructed as the contemporary monstrous body; the body of betwixt and between (nature and culture, human and animal, male and female, the self and the Other). (Kunst 2004, 158–159) The genealogy of the monstrous body since modernity can be condensed to the problem of relationality: during the Enlightenment, the monstrous is in search of the body to inhabit, in the Romantic period the monstrous is looking for kin, in the 20th century it is after eroticism, and towards the end of the 20th century, the monstrous, informed with post-colonial studies, claims political legitimacy and representation. (Ibid., 160) The post-modern body, the contemporary embodiment of the monstrous, "appears as our externalized other: it is permeable, vulnerable, aching, mortal, reduced /…/ to the annoying residue of nature and the obsession of culture." (Ibid.)

The contemporary body is both traumatic and pleasurable, which is due to the fact that the body is repressed; it occupies an invisible place in the West. Another reason is the emerging post-humanity, which links the human and the inhuman, and consequently empowers, legitimises, and makes manifest the contemporary body. The liminal monstrous body at the threshold enjoys its status; moreover, it takes pleasure in confusion, and its own unclear borders. (Ibid. 160–162) The contemporary body is not "a narcissistic container of signs, one-way relations and pathological fragments of identity; instead, its relationality is achieved, situated and unfolded as a specific site of the impossible in-between space." (Kunst 2004, 163) In performance art, the body itself provides us with an insight into the process of embodiment, its playfulness, openness, fluidity, etc.

It appears as if social theory has, by losing its *subject*, encountered an epistemological deadlock. As the previously implicit ideological practices, which constitute it, were made manifest, it also became apparent that there principles were all that was to it. The demise of the grand narratives coincided with the death of the subject. That is apparent in several ways. One of the crucial consequences of post-modernism is that there is nothing left to theorise about. All that

we can still do is *perform* (theory). As we have already claimed that the body happens to us, the same can be said about the embodied practice of performance art. We, as subjects, are left in the audience. The subject, thus, may not be dead; it may merely be interpellated as passive, docile, submissive. As the body reclaims the active (what has traditionally been attributed to the subject) position, the subject is forced into the traditionally feminine role.

There are no more possibilities for the birth of new exciting paradigms, complete theories and positivist approaches. We are left with and lost within endless reinterpretations of selected fragments of the final grand narratives' distinguished authors. As goes for past epistemological breaks, the one that is perhaps beginning to unwrap should not be mistaken for a sudden and unexpected event either. In retrospect, epistemological breaks are usually seen as revolutionary breaks with tradition. They supposedly start entirely new paradigms, but in reality they are merely gradual culminations of theoretical imagination. It is as if scientific reasoning had the structure of a Mobius strip – if we proceed along one side of the strip, we eventually find ourselves on the other side. Not coincidentally, exactly the same can be said about the body/mind dialectic.

As it is performatively implied in the structure of this text, the direction of the forthcoming epistemological break might possibly be towards post-humanism. Nowadays, the social sciences and the humanities are no longer describing the same subject or the same body, the body/mind dualism is no longer the opposition between the same concepts as it was decades ago, much less centuries ago. A Foucauldian approach to the subject is interested in how the *Homo sapiens sapiens* (biological species, made of flesh) becomes the subject (cultural construction, made of the body). But a step further is perhaps necessary: in anthropology, it is a well-established fact that culture also has very biological, corpo-real consequences and influences, a point shared with psychoanalysis. The body is seen as secondary to culture and subjectivity and consequentially rather neglected in theory.

A question worth pondering on is how has that body, its repressed biology, imprinted with discourse, transformed (if at all) after everything that the subject has recently been exposed to? Or is it the other way around – perhaps it is the subject, who is the *Real* victim, as it clings on to outdated modes of human experience, their descriptions, (de)constructions and theorisations, not unlike in the cult trilogy *The Matrix*? Certainly, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that it is the "body which gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects like words." (2005, 273) Perhaps all this talk on subjectivity is merely the body's way of perpetuating the hallucination of the (male) Cartesian *cogito*, when in fact the potential subject is by definition autistic, singular, closed off, psychotic, and serving only one end and (ethical) demand – to pursue *jouissance* for the (feminine) body. In *Seminar XIV*, Lacan himself acknowledges that no "*jouissance* is given to me or could be given to me other than that of my own body." (Lacan in Fink 1995, 101) As the modern *malestream* philosophy had emphasised the subject, as art had celebrated the author, and as the body had predictably been repressed, post-modern resistance inevitably came in the form of an embodied paradigmatic shift, which has since become known as "the performative turn." (Dirksmeier, Helbrecht 2008)

5.1 The performative turn and the body/mind dialectic

Performativity is, above all, an embodied concept. As such, it is at the same time a concept and a process, and both are marked with gender. (Butler 1999a) In fact, “gendered performance takes place within and on the surface of bodies.” (Holliday, Hassard 2001, 7) However, the performative turn does not only stand for the metaphorical intervention of the body in theatre and performance art in the 1960s, but also for a very literal one. One of the crucial aspects of the performative turn as outlined by performance studies (Fischer-Lichte 2008) is the bodily co-presence of performers and spectators, in which the performer’s body no longer necessarily signifies a fictional character. A similarly embodied shift towards the performative can be observed in social sciences and humanities in the 1990s, when performative aspects of culture were put in the foreground in a similar manner as performative aspects of bodily co-presence came to the fore in performance art. Both spectators of performance art and *connoisseurs* of (post-)post-modern theory are forced to constantly shift their attention from (fictional, textual) content to (phenomenal, bodily) experience, and back. As they are made to transfer their attention back and forth, any possibility of a fixed and stable (perception of) reality necessarily eludes them. Their perception is then finally compelled to focus on the process of transgression itself. As the borders are breached and transformed into thresholds, the attention turns away from pregiven options and is instead fixated on the very state of liminality, locked in-between two fixed points; namely that of the (always already fictional) content and that of (always already symbolised and thus unapproachable) phenomenal experience.

As the body takes the central place by (temporarily) forcing the content into the background, that content is revealed as constructed for the subject’s mind. However, this does not allow art or theory to

abandon the fictional and hypothetical subjectivity, and to instead rely on bodily experience alone. The experiencing body, which the signifying body morphs into both in performance art and, later, in theory, turns out to be just as constructed – only this time for the subject's gaze. Thus, the attention is ultimately turned to the very processes of transformation. As we observe the shifts of attention from fictional content (the semiotic body, the subject) to the phenomenal body (the body of the subject), the in-between state of liminality itself proves to possess real "transformative power." (Ibid.)

Although the performative turn in (performance) art cannot be simply equated with what we choose to call the performative turn in theory, there is clear discursive resemblance between them. The body takes centre stage, and as the bodily co-presence transforms the nature of (aesthetical and/or ethical) experience, we are forced to focus on the process, structure, and epistemology rather than on particular content and/or what at first appears as genuine phenomenal effect (of art and/or theory). This is precisely how we have tackled the case study of Bell – we employ her as a concept that can be used to study the tension between subjectivity and corporeality. As we force various theories on her, the never-ending process of shifting attention allows us to observe the dynamics of the constant performative (re-)construction of the paradigmatic contemporary Western body/mind dualism rather than merely the construction of the body or of the subject. With this manoeuvre, we can claim that contemporary notions of the body and the subject always already presuppose (and somewhat cancel out) each other.

In theory, together with the issues of the gendered body, gendered theorists also entered the field. In the masculine/feminine hierarchy, it is clear that masculinity stands as universal, whereas the feminine is interpreted as gendered. The performative turn in the context of theorisations of the subject thus coincides with the metaphorical, as well as literal interventions of the (gendered) body. The literal intervention of the female gendered body is observable in sexual revolution, as well as in theoretical psychoanalysis, the

traditionally patriarchal, if not phallocentric, discipline, where it also took a woman to popularise the performative turn within the traditional school of thought. That woman, of course, is Butler.[120]

Butler understands the concept of performativity as "the reality-generating power of (and through) bodily actions." (Klein 2006, 45) Additionally, she tackles the question of "the action-character of linguistic expression." (Ibid.) In her theorisation of constructing subjectivity through performativity and linguistic expression, she also seeks alternative and subversive modes of speech. To her, performativity is not constituted by a single intentional act but is seen as perpetually re-established and reinvented by the discourse in order to produce the designated effects. (Butler 1997;[121] see also Klein 2006, 45–46)

As such, performativity is seen as an expression of the power of discourse, which produces what we label as, for example, masculine or feminine: "gender is ritualistically repeated, whereby the repetition occasions both the risk of failure and the congealed effect of sedimentation. /…/ the power to gender precedes the 'one' who speaks such power, and yet the one who speaks nevertheless appears to have that power." (Butler 1997, 49) Thus, performativity needs a power to be effective. (Ibid.) As we have seen, the speaker is not sovereign (the power precedes the one who speaks it), yet it still appears to have power. Butler argues that this power is located in the concept of embodiment: "If agency is not derived from the sovereignty of the speaker, then the force of the speech act is not sovereign force. The 'force' of the speech act is, however incongruously, related to the body whose force is deflected and conveyed through speech." (1997,

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[120] We have already explored her theorisation of subjectivity in chapter 4.5.2.

[121] In the context of Butler's work, *Excitable Speech* (1997) is seen as a "turn to psychoanalysis," (Rothenberg 2000, 71) especially in her interpretation of the problem of embodiment, which runs throughout the text. That is not to say that her previous work is not informed by psychoanalysis; on the contrary, she uses both the concepts and the jargon of psychoanalysis extensively. However, she mainly does so to critique psychoanalysis (for being ahistorical, etc.).

39) Thus, the speech is interpreted as having a “sovereign force” (Ibid.) which no longer derives from language. Instead, it is rooted in the body.

In her theorisation of political agency, she argues that “the performative needs to be rethought not only as an act that an official language-user wields in order to implement already authorized effects, but precisely as a social ritual.” (Ibid., 159) Butler does not reject the linguistic performative and its influence on the subject’s interpellation, but she extends her theorisation by drawing from Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus* in maintaining also that “embodied practices channel and reproduce social authority.” (Rothenberg 2006, 76) Furthermore, Butler critiques the concept of habitus as performatively sustaining (rather than subverting) the power of ideology. Instead of insisting on Bourdieu’s external source (outside of language) of the performative force, she turns to a Derridian position, according to which the performative force is in fact internal to language. This perspective allows for the liberating power of the performative: “Derrida’s formulation offers a way to think performativity in relation to transformation, to the break with prior contexts, with the possibility of inaugurating contexts yet to come.” (Butler 1997, 151–152) However, as she rejects Bourdieu’s theory for its political impotence, she also discards Derrida’s for being too formal in its interpretation of the performative. She attempts to bring the two lacking theorisations together by conceptualizing interpellation as functioning through iteration, “calling subjects into being, but never perfectly reproducing them, so that interpellation has to be continually, iteratively, performed.” (Rothenberg 2006, 76–77) By understanding subjectivity as produced by continual interpellation, she limits the power of the speech acts. As the speech acts need to be repeated in order to function, a space for resistance and a site of subversion emerges:

> The body, however, is not simply the sedimentation of speech acts by which it has been constituted. If that constitution fails, a resistance meets interpellation at the moment it exerts its demand; then something exceeds the interpellation and this excess is lived as the

> outside of intelligibility. This becomes clear in the way the body rhetorically exceeds the speech act is also performs. This excess is /…/ the abiding incongruity of the speaking body, the way in which it exceeds its interpellation, and remains uncontained by any of its acts of speech. (1997, 155)

Butler puts the body at the core of her theory, understanding it both as a victim of language and a rebel against it. Language continuously interpellates the body, "words enter the limbs" (1997, 159), they "bend the spine," (Ibid.) etc., but the body can also resist interpellation. Butler argues that the speech act is both "bodily and linguistic" (Ibid., 141) and that the speech act "always exceeds its intended meaning thanks to unconscious motivations." (Rothenberg 2006, 78) In Butler's own words, the body's actions "are never fully consciously directed or volitional." (1997, 10) It is the naïve body, which contradicts the intentionality of any speech act. Butler demonstrates that in the case of a threat – if it is not supported by aggressive body language, we do not take it seriously: "the threat emerges precisely through the act that the body performs in the speaking act." (Ibid.) In Butler's view, then, the body is a direct gate to the unconscious; the body act is seen as an expression of the unconscious, which is not necessarily consistent with what is being said. Language is defined as excessive and the body as the site and sign of that excess. However, the body does not merely represent that excess; rather, it enacts it, performs it. Bodies are therefore a site of freedom against interpellation, which can articulate its own intentions, and subvert the intentions of interpellation. (Rothenberg 2006, 80) This is apparent in Shannon Bell's depiction of herself, the FF:

> FF /…/ [is] Haraway's cyborg, the phallic mother, the Sadean woman, Deleuze and Guattari's little girl, female Don Juan, all gone hyper, doing gender as escape velocity not only from woman but even from what feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti has identified as 'post-woman,' getting rid of the postmenopausal culturally positioned waste of time wasteland. (2010a, 22–23)

Commenting on the Foucauldian theorisation of subjectivity, which interprets it as an effect of discourse, Butler maintains that "the subject is not a unilateral effect of prior discourses" (1993, 189) and that the Foucauldian perception is in need of "psychoanalytic rethinking." (Ibid.) However, as already mentioned in footnote 120 for Butler, psychoanalysis is in need of major rethinking as well, especially on the subject of castration as the universal lack. In the final chapter of *Excitable Speech* Butler introduces her own version of the lack, which, according to her, can be historicised. She introduces the concept of *exclusion*, which produces a new realm of *unspeakability* "as the condition of the emergence and sustenance of the subject proper, but the 'contents' of which are determined historically."[122] (Rothenberg 2006, 83) Butler claims that before entering the normativity of language, the subject exists merely as a grammatical fiction. Moreover, "that entrance into language comes at a price: the norms that govern the inception of the speaking subject differentiate the subject from the unspeakable, that is, produce an unspeakability as the condition of subject formation." (Butler 1997, 135) In her theory of subjectivity, she reintroduces the concept of foreclosure "as a way of designating preemptive action, one that is not performed by a subject, but, rather, whose operation makes possible the formation of the subject." (Ibid., 138) Butler argues that the foreclosure of what most threatens the subject is also the condition of the subject's survival:

> Acting one's place in language continues the subject's viability, where that viability is held in place by a threat both produced and defended against, the threat of a certain dissolution of the subject. If the subject speaks impossibly, speaks in ways that cannot be regarded as speech or as the speech of a subject, then that speech is discounted and the viability of subject called into question. (Ibid., 135–136)

The constitutive foreclosure must take place continuously; it must be repeated in order to be effective, but that also opens up a

[122] Or culturally – as we have seen with the case of the question of universality of the Oedipus complex.

space for resistance. Butler claims that the subject must “speak impossibly” (Ibid., 139) to access what is concealed by foreclosure, the subject must take the risk and cross the threshold, “even at the cost of being seen as something other than subject.” (Rothenberg 2006, 84)

5.2 Performance art

We have employed the metaphor of the threshold throughout this dissertation in an original manner. Body margins get translated into the delineating subject, culminating in the conceptualisation of subjectivity as both a lack (of the *natural body* in a human) and a surplus (of corporeal *performance* over *representation*). Both lack and surplus are manifested in the slips of one or another, the body or the subject. With the latter, we have in mind Freud's *slips of the tongue*, which apply to the involuntary evocation of the ***subject's*** truth, whereas the *slips of the body* is an original concept, theorised in chapter 3.3 of this text. We have seen how for Mauss (1973), body techniques such as walking are dependent upon human-specific abilities, but also shaped by cultural training. In this perspective, which we couple with the psychoanalytic repertoire of interpretations, the body is seen as irreversibly caught-up in the subject/object dialectic – it is doing something, but something is also done to it and with it. Moreover, the body also does things to us.

In this sense, the notion of *the slips of the subject* might be theorised as the involuntary evocation of the *truth of the body*. In this sense, the slip of the subject is precisely what is excluded from Lacanian theorisations of subjectivity from the beginning – the very Real, which was impossible to symbolise and was thus (left) (primordially) repressed. This Real is what the modernist notions of subjectivity attempt to eliminate, eradicate, and disconnect from by disciplining the body. Rephrasing Kant's definition of the sublime, we might thus proclaim that just as nature is sublime in excess, chaos and pleasure, just as "the sublime is the place where nature enjoys," (Zupančič 2000, 157) the slip of the body is the site of subject's pleasure, whereas the slip of the subject is the sublime site of the pleasure of the body. To repeat the words of Kristeva: "Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that it is lacking its 'own and clean self'." (1982, 3) Also, "during that course in

which ‘I’ become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects.” (Ibid.)

In chapter 3.8, we have already seen how the sublime feelings of awe and terror literally stop us in our tracks, leaving us unable to symbolise what has happened. We tend to clumsily resort to highly metaphorical language when we attempt to describe what has happened, but all we are left with are references to the body. The subject disperses and the body becomes present, its boundaries agitated, breached, reversed. Slips of the body and/or the subject and the unspeakable events, which produce feelings of the sublime, have one noteworthy point in common: the body completely takes over and makes the subject helpless against its will. Within the dominant discourse this might be expressed in negative and undesirable terms (we, the subject, are reduced to the body, the object), whereas in fact the opposite might be just as believably hold true (the body is increased, it erupts into abrupt stillness and exorcises the subject). The subject is thus revealed as its mere potentiality (always at the cost of symbolising the body), as something that always already *is not*, but is still privileged over something that always already *is.*

Western theory is deeply imprinted with distinctively binary problems, or, more precisely, its key problem is the never-ending multitude of oppositions. These dualisms, when fiercely critiqued, are not destabilised, subverted, or overthrown. Rather, they split into further polarities, they are multiplied in a chain of antagonisms, such as nature/culture, body/mind, sex/gender, feminine/masculine, etc. On the particular level of the sex/gender continuum, masculinity is revealed as a parade of pleasure (parading *jouissance* into existence), whereas femininity is constructed as a masquerade of non-pleasure (masquerading *jouissance* into concealment). In this perspective, the fact that modern art (as well as science) is defined, theorised, and produced predominantly by men, it the very reason why it is modernist

in the first place – it is *presented* as whole, universal, and non-gendered. It should therefore not be surprising that (post-)post-modern art, especially performance art, is always *performed* as un-whole, particular, and distinctively gendered: “FF took some femininity lessons from the Godfather: *A woman is a whore in the bedroom, a chef in the kitchen and a lady in public.* FF could never keep the requirements and locations straight: a whore in public, a post-hysteric in the kitchen, a cook in the bedroom?” (Bell 2010a, 74)

Performance art attempts to voluntarily invoke the truth of the body outside of unpredicted bodily events that interfere with everyday life. It is a public celebration of the lost *jouissance* and a festival of unforeseen lapses. Performance art does not worry itself with (grand) narratives, universal concepts, and modernist aesthetics. As such, it is distinctively gendered as non-masculine. Performance art stands at the threshold between art and everyday life, between aesthetics, traditionally associated with art, and ethics, conventionally associated with everyday life. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 12)

Since post-modernism, ethics and aesthetics have started to intersect and swap places. They have been transformed and their boundaries blurred – art has appropriated ethics and parted the key modernist feature of aesthetics, beauty, whereas quotidian life has become obsessed with beauty and aesthetics, while it has denounced ethics, celebrating instead its vulgar counterpart, morality. (Šterk 2012, 117) Performance art questions both, ethics and aesthetics, and it plays them out on the body – in performance art, the materiality of the artist’s actions dominates their semiotic attributes. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 18) Furthermore, the materiality of the artist’s actions precedes “all attempts to interpret them beyond their self-referentiality.” (Ibid.) Performance art happens, it is an event. Fischer-Lichte (Ibid.) gives an example of the infamous Marina Abramović performance *Lips of Thomas* (1975) to demonstrate how a performance art event demands redefinition of both, the artist and the spectator, as well as art itself.

Šterk (2012) interprets the sublime as that, which collapses Lacan’s (2006b) three logical times – “the instant of the glance, the

time for comprehending, and the time of concluding" (Ibid., 167) collide "into a single moment. /…/. A single glance explains everything." (Šterk 2012, 173) In this sense, performance art is sublime. There is no time for, no place for, and no purpose of symbolisation. In performance art, production and reception of art happen simultaneously, rendering the binary opposition between the two obsolete. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 18) This, again, goes to prove, that what keeps subject alive in theory and life is merely the assumption of its gaze. The subject is alive merely as the flabbergasted spectator of performance art.

Although the performative turn in performance art occurred in the 1960s,[123] an analogous epistemological turn in theory (the turn from textuality to the performative), something that we interpret as the performative turn in psychoanalysis, came much later, in the 1990s. Merleau-Ponty (2005) had laid grounds on which Butler's theory was able to flourish half of a century later, claiming that the body is the repertoire of infinite possibilities. Butler (1999a), drawing both from Merleau-Ponty's (Ibid.) and Austin's (1976) theories from approximately half of a century earlier, interprets the performative construction of identity as a process of embodiment, which is not unrestricted, open, and free. Rather, it is, just like the modernist theatrical piece, reliant on shared experience, collective action, re-enactment, and re-experiencing. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 28) As we have already established, it is precisely in this necessity of repetition (in terms of repetitively limiting our own freedom by performing given identities), where we can, paradoxically, find grounds for resistance. Apparently, interpellation into a certain subjectivity (as the consequence of performing one's identity) is so unstable and fluid that

[123] Most theorists agree that the performative turn can be located in the 1960s, however, as Fischer-Lichte (2008: 31) also notes, it is possible to observe the performative turn at an earlier stage as well, namely at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century.

it needs to be established over and over again. On the other hand, it is enough to only slip once.

Ever since the first modern theorisations of theatre – Fischer-Lichte (Ibid., 30), obviously influenced by the German context, for example mentions Herrmann's – the crucial premise that constitutes a performance, is the "bodily co-presence of actors and spectators." (Ibid., 32) Furthermore, "their bodily co-presence creates a relationship between co-subjects." (Ibid.) Herrmann also claims that performance is established by the body and the physical space rather than the fictional characters and spaces which are created – the body is seen as much more than just a carrier of meaning and inscription. Performance is thus marked with a highly specific materiality, which is fleeting in nature, and is constituted as a dynamic, singular, and non-recurrent process rather than an artefact. (Ibid., 35) Thus, "performance is regarded as art not because it enjoys the status of an artwork but because it takes place as an event." (Ibid.) According to Herrmann, the spectator is involved into highly creative activity, (Ibid.) resulting from a "secret empathy, a shadowy reconstruction of the actors' performance, which is experienced not so much visually as through *physical sensations*." (Herrmann in Fischer-Lichte 2008, 35) Hence, the spectator's activity, not unlike the artist's, is fundamentally embodied.

Performance art is constituted, "generated and determined by a self-referential and ever-changing feedback loop," (Ibid., 38) the unspeakable exchange and co-influence between the artist and the spectator, which is unpredictable, impulsive, and erratic. Butler understands the performative nature of identity construction in an analogous manner. Just as modernist art attempts to control the feedback loop in order to discipline the spectators, a similar, highly regulated loop is at work in society, where we are expected to obediently perform certain roles and disregard every single unspeakable embodied consequence of the feedback loop dynamics. The feedback loop constitutes a brief, transitory community, which is based on the bodily co-presence of artists and spectators and

represents an arena where the aesthetic and the social merge. (Ibid., 51–60) With the performative turn, the feedback loop's unpredictability can be celebrated, and the focus is shifted to its the specific characteristics. The feedback loop emerges as "a self-referential, autopoietic system enabling a fundamentally open, unpredictable process." (Ibid., 39) The autopoietic feedback loop negates the notion of the artist as an autonomous subject, who creates an artwork, which may be interpreted in various ways, but its materiality remains unchanged. The feedback loop interpellates both artists and spectators as sovereigns. (Ibid., 163)

Certain staging strategies, characteristic of performance art, such as "the *role reversal* of actors and spectators; second, the *creation of community* between them; and third, the creation of various modes of mutual, physical *contact* that help explore the interplay between proximity and distance, public and private, or visual and tactile contact." (Ibid., 40) Every one of these strategies plays with and subverts the hegemonic interpretations of well-established dualisms such as subject/object, and, more importantly, the very dualist organisation of the world. As performance is (both in art and in theory) basically a social event, aesthetics, ethics, and politics, all come in interaction on the body, on which these categories are sewn together – "the fundamental bodily co-presence of actors and spectators engenders and guarantees" (Ibid., 44) such a connection. Therefore, just as with the performative turn in art, the political becomes indivisible from art itself, with the performative turn in theory, the political necessarily intermingles with theory. In fact, with the ethics and the aesthetics of the performative, "the realms of art, social life, and politics cannot be clinically separated." (Ibid., 51)

Touch is another strategy, emanating directly from the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, which blurs the conventional distinctions. Touch, a highly intimate experience, occurs in the context of a public performance and can be interpreted as "the invasion of the real into fiction." (Ibid., 60) The dichotomy between the public and the intimate becomes vague, leaving the spectator in a liminal position,

which transcends the modernist spectator position of *just watching*. Fischer-Lichte again uses Abramović's performance *Lips of Thomas* as an illustration of the claim that the gaze is first and foremost an aesthetic decision, whereas touch is an ethical choice: the spectators could choose whether they would watch her die and behave aesthetically or make an (un)ethical choice and intervene, alter, even end the performance. (Ibid., 64–65) A similar event occurs when Bell asks the spectators of her workshops to step closer and physically inspect her female phallus – the spectators find themselves betwixt and between: neither do they determine the course of the performance nor does the performance unfold outside of their influence. The spectators find themselves at the threshold, sometimes quite literary so – think of Abramović's and Ulay's performance *Imponderabilia* (1977), in which they stood at the front door to the gallery, forcing the spectators to squeeze themselves between their naked bodies, inevitably touching one or the other. (In Fischer-Lichte 2008, 65)

The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and the autopoietic feedback loop are both features of "liveness" (Ibid., 67) of the performance. Most of the stage strategies, specifically characteristic of performance art, are ultimately dependent on the liveness of the event. As performance art has the nature of an event, it cannot be reproduced – a live performance is authentic and subversive, it cannot be repeated. (Ibid., 68) Although Auslander (In Fischer-Lichte 2008, 68–69) argues against this uniqueness of performance art, claiming it is long since it has merged with mediatised performance, he also says that "live events are becoming more and more identical with mediatized ones." Although the point he raises does make sense – we do live in an era where digital media are seen as the place of "intimacy and immediacy" (Ibid., 69) – it is in the bodily events of performance art rather than on the screen where one can be confronted with the sublime. Such is exactly the kind of performance, which explores what Butler sees as potential for revolt.

As we have stated and/or performatively shown numerous times throughout the text, the body is the central concept of

performativity as established in the 1990s. In performance art, two bodily aspects of the event, two aspects of corporeality, come forward: embodiment and presence. In theatre, embodiment was traditionally designed not as materiality, but, rather, as a sign, whereas in the avant-garde, the actors' individual physicality is seen as materiality – "the dominance of their specific phenomenality induces fear." (Ibid., 87) In performance art since the 1960s, the body is not seen as material, but rather as transgressing yet another dualism between the phenomenological and the semiotic body, "thus transferring the perceiving subject into a state of betwixt and between." (Ibid., 89) This development calls for a radical redefinition of the concept of embodiment. Grotowski's (Ibid., 82–84) reversal of the relationship between the performer and his role, informed by Merleau-Ponty's (2005) idea that every human interaction with the world is embodied, led to the following redefinition of embodiment: it "denotes the emergence of something that exists only as body." (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 84)

It turns out, with Wilson (Ibid., 86), that there is no such thing as a character anymore "beyond individual physicalities of the actors." (Ibid.) Concluding that performance art entices the spectators' attention to the performer's body, Fischer-Lichte (Ibid., 89) produces an original redefinition of embodiment: "By emphasizing the bodily being-in-the-world of humans, embodiment creates the possibility for the body to function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic construction, as well as the product of cultural inscriptions." In this definition, Fischer-Lichte pays tribute not only to Merleau-Ponty (2005), but also to Csórdas (2003), who adamantly claims that "culture is grounded in the human body." (Ibid., 6)

This novel understanding of embodiment, according to Fischer-Lichte (2008) can open up a whole new methodological field: one, built on the very premise of the phenomenal body. This new paradigm puts the body in the centre of attention, stating that it is impossible to participate in culture deprived of the body. The same can be said about the status of the phenomenal body in performance art. In

performance art, such understanding of embodiment has a very particular effect, which is easiest to observe in those performances, where performers inflict literal violence to their own bodies, putting themselves in danger. (Ibid., 89–90) In performance art, spectators are robbed of a context or a referential field, which would put the artists' self-inflicted violence into a culturally acceptable perspective. Thus, they are "entirely exposed to the brutality of these actions, their own horror, and sadistic-voyeuristic lust." (Ibid., 91) Interestingly, spectators of extremely violent performances such as the already mentioned *The Lips of Thomas* by Abramović report of "overwhelming physiological, affective, energetic, and motor responses." (Ibid.) As the performers open up the body and renegotiate its borders without pointing to a comforting context, the body enters an infinite transformative process, re-establishing itself with every single gesture, constantly *re-embodying.* "The human body knows no state of being; it exists only in a state of becoming." (Ibid., 92) Thus, the speed, defining contemporary subjectivity, is displaced from an imaginary inner reality onto the phenomenal body. For the body to be able to perform, the subject, utterly reliant on ever-increasing speed, needs to (be) stop(ped). We shall return to this point in the closing chapter 5.3, titled *Deceleration as a strategy of resistance*.

An intriguing reversal occurs. The subject, deadened by a sudden halt, can be symbolised as a modernist work of art, whereas the body becomes an agent, a process, a becoming, impossible to represent or grasp in any logical manner. "It recreates itself with every blink of the eye, every breath and movement embodies a new body." (Ibid.) The living body, unlike the bodies put on display (Body Worlds) "vehemently refuses to be declared a work of art, or be made into one. /…/ The body happens." (Ibid.)

The (post-modern) redefinition of embodiment also redefines the concept of *presence,*[124] which is no longer interpreted as an

[124] The term presentness is also sometimes used to denote the same concept. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 93)

expressive category, but rather, as a performative category. (Ibid., 96) Performance art focuses on purely bodily presence as opposed to understanding presence as a semiotic category. (Ibid., 94) This new version of presence is obviously fundamentally dependent on processes of embodiment. Fischer-Lichte (Ibid., 96) describes the consequences for the spectators as follows:

> To the spectators, who are struck by this presence as by lightning – a "stream of magic" – it appears unforeseeably; its inexplicable appearance lies beyond their control. They sense the power emanating from the actor that forces them to focus their full attention on him without feeling overwhelmed and perceive it as a source of energy. The spectators sense that the actor is present in an unusually intense way, granting them in turn an intense sensation of themselves as present. To them, presence occurs as an intense experience of presentness.[125]

Presence in the context of performance art is a phenomenon that resists and subverts dualist thinking. It is impossible to think it in terms of body/mind dualism, as presence effectively "collapses such a dichotomy." (Ibid., 98) With the concept of presence, it becomes clear that the body and the mind are "always already implied in the other" (Ibid., 99) Fischer-Lichte (Ibid.) speaks of *embodied minds* in an attempt to surpass what we have earlier deemed a deeply Cartesian attitude in theory. It is clear that most theories on the body and subjectivity outlined in this dissertation, spanning from the Enlightenment to rather recent history, whilst insisting on variations of the original body/mind dualism, completely disregard and diminish the implications of "the experience of being an embodied mind." (Ibid., 168)

The binary relationship between (modernist) representation and (post-modern) presence does not fare any better in the aesthetics of the performative. Spectators do not occupy a stable position as they

[125] In terms of "attention economy" that defines contemporary life, performance art, where all the attention is on (most often a single) performer's body, can be interpreted as an excess in attention (Ibid., 165, 167), a potlatch of sorts.

are constantly forced to shift their attention from (symbolised) meaning, mediated by a fictional character, which is itself an effect of the artist's phenomenal body. There is no fictional character beyond the artist's physical body and it is merely a matter of perception, which embodiment might take place at any given moment. (Ibid., 147–148) Perception is anything but committed to idleness, every single "shift produces a break, a discontinuity. As the previous order of perception is disrupted and abandoned, a new one is established." (Ibid., 148) During this process, one finds themselves in a state of liminality, at the threshold, betwixt and between. If the artist's presence causes frequent shifts of perception, spectators' attention eventually focuses on the discontinuity itself. (Ibid., 148–149) The numerous transitions direct the attention to the process of perception itself. "In such a moment, they [the spectators] are conscious of their own perception as emergent and elusive." (Ibid., 149) Furthermore, spectators are forcefully reminded that "meaning is not transmitted to but brought forth by them." (Ibid., 150)

Performance art strives for the collapse of dichotomies. Performers question the dualisms like body/mind, subject/object, nature/culture, and signifier/signified, attempting to transcend their unequivocal meaning, in order to finally destabilise the paradigmatic principle of dichotomy itself. The self-referential status of the performance constitutes (a) reality. Not only is it suddenly impossible to determine what is fiction and what reality, such distinction is simply no longer valid. Art and life become one and the same. (Ibid., 169–170) By undermining the established dichotomies and schemes, performance art demonstrates how binary oppositions serve as reality-constituting principles and that such artificial reality has little to do with quotidian life: "performances /…/ constitute a new reality in which one thing can simultaneously appear as another; this reality is unstable, blurred, ambiguous, transitory, and dissolves borders. The reality of performance cannot be grasped in binary opposition." (Ibid., 174) It becomes apparent that the latter is not merely an instrument of describing the world, but also regulates our action. Thus,

destabilisation of the binary principle is not merely a destabilisation in perception, it is also a destabilisation of the most basic cultural norms – it "shatters both our perceptual and behavioral framework." (Ibid., 177)

The moment when attention is directed from one or another pole of a given binary opposition to the betwixt and between stage itself, to the liminal phase, which occurs at the threshold, is the crucial moment of performance art in terms of our debate. That moment is a performative, gendered, and post-colonial critique of the Enlightenment project, which still has a solid (albeit invisible) grip on contemporary science. Performance art stands for no less than a complete break with the tradition of *cogito, reason,* and *rationality.* It is an anarchic event, which endeavours to re-enchant the world.

The re-enchantment spurs from the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, from the performative kind of materiality, (Ibid., 181) as well as from the self-referential status of performance art, which liberates "from all endeavors to understand." (Ibid., 186) As performance art is clearly preoccupied with collapsing effective dichotomies, it keenly disrupts the fine line between art and reality as well.[126] Fischer-Lichte (Ibid., 203) thus defines the aesthetics of the performative as focused on crossing borders. "It unflaggingly attempts to transcend historically established borders which have since become so ossified that they appear natural." (Ibid.) The aesthetics of the performative stands directly against the enlightened disenchantment of the world, crushing the binary oppositions, "replacing the notion of 'either/or' with one of 'as well as'," (Ibid., 204) turning the patriarchal, colonial, and class borders, marked with the principle of exclusion, into thresholds, which invite crossovers. Borders are clearly on the side of the universal law, whereas thresholds, marked with liminality, have more to do with magic. The poetic irony of this performative re-

[126] We should be aware that this is a line that has not always been there – in the West, the borders between art and non-art, art and reality, art and life, etc. have been defined no sooner than in the late 18th century. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 203)

enchantment of the world is that the spell was unleashed by the most celebrated achievements of the Enlightenment “the modern sciences and the cultural, technological, and social developments they enabled.” (Ibid., 206) The enlightened minds have thus provided the body with a context in which revolution appears possible.

5.3 Deceleration as a strategy of resistance

Linking the symptomatic handlings of the body/mind problem with the concept(ion) of gender, we have been able to show that Cartesian spirit is alive and well in mainstream theory, which, although critiquing Descartes's model, is absorbed in the rule of binarism, which is, not surprisingly, also the law of language. Any attempt to conceptualise the body otherwise than completely dependent on, even established by language, destabilises the paradigmatic status of dualism as the universal epistemological approach. It becomes apparent that the body is as repressed in the act of theorizing as it is in the contents of any particular theory. This comes as no surprise, because the body, operating in a very anarchical manner, eludes complete theorisations, models, and schemes. Generally speaking, theory is seen as progressing forward, unravelling the mysteries, conceptualising human experience. However, is theory not also a hegemonic system, set out to defend the *status quo*? Although Marxist thought teaches us that such critique is only valid in terms of dominant theory (ideology), it is still perhaps safe to claim that in actuality every theory, striving for wholeness and universality (Marxism included) is hegemonic in terms of keeping the current dichotomies alive. Let us not forget that it is in the very epistemological foundations where the existing power relations are born, protected, and guaranteed.

In mainstream Western thought, dualism is still the governing principle, creating a hierarchy in which, unsurprisingly, everything that is attributed to the masculine side of this imaginary dualism, is favoured as true, real, and significant. Forced in this binary organisation of the world, the body appears clearly on the side of the feminine. It is hysterical, unpredictable, impulsive, and, interestingly, most authoritative when it is at its most quiet, static, and tranquil – it is the potentiality of the storm that is fascinating and/or threatening, not the storm itself.

However, as beautifully expressed in Virilio's work, speed is the dominating force both in theory and in practice. Stillness is frightening, rest unnecessary, tiredness (as we have seen in chapter 3.3) a sign of old age. Contemporary life and theory are held hostage by the demands of reason, purpose, practicality, and longevity as opposed to quality of life. In the same manner as surplus value is taken away from us in capitalism, surplus *jouissance* is forbidden should we want to call ourselves subjects. But, has not Butler already warned us that in order for the resistance to succeed, we might have to give up that hypothetical label?

> Our world is marked by its speed. /.../ This speed exposes us to the danger of a very great incoherency. It is because things, images and relations circulate so quickly that we do not even have the time to measure the extent of this incoherency. Speed is the mask of inconsistency. Philosophy must propose a retardation process. It must construct a time for thought, which, in the face of the injunction of speed, will constitute a time of its own. I consider this a singularity of philosophy; that its thinking is leisurely, because today revolt requires leisureliness and not speed. This thinking, slow and consequently rebellious, is alone capable of establishing the fixed point, whatever it may be, whatever its name may be, which we need in order to sustain the desire of philosophy. (Badiou 2004, 51–52)

Philosophy is impotent against speed if it is not performative, embodied, crossbred with performance art, posited on the threshold between everyday life and art, fiction and reality, the monstrous and the lovely. As we have seen in the chapter on the body, we as subjects are also impotent, as we race towards or away from the (imaginary) border. In everyday life, it is when the body interferes in the form of a slip of the body (or the subject) that we are awarded with a glimpse into the magic of the re-enchanted world. In performance art, artists and spectators together let their bodies play, open-up, and deliver a similar sentiment in the self-referential process of embodiment. Shannon Bell, the concept we have used throughout the text to be able to *slowly and rebelliously* think, is as much victim to the unsettled Cartesian subject and his [*sic!*] demands as she is a

performance artist. She is involved in generating performative effects, celebrating her presence, and casting a spell on spectators in performances, workshops or lectures. However, Bell's body, when too tormented by the status of contemporary subjectivity, also sometimes decides to *speak impossibly*, as Butler (1997, 139) would put it, getting involved in anarchic revolutionary events, which normally end in discomfort, pain and/or humiliation. The fact that Bell is such a good sport when it comes to handling the consequences of bodily interventions (and, it should be added, not such a good one when it comes to more subjective defamations), appears as good an indicator as any other that the body, the ultimate site of *jouissance*, is our first and last ally, from which we are inseparable. On the other hand, the subject, in most of its contemporary nuances, is revealed as a double agent, a mole, which infiltrates our awareness in order to debase, subjugate, and occupy the only *real* site of freedom; the body. The body, as it is forced into symbolic mortification, finds itself in a hibernating state, colonised by pure thought, which is defined only by its velocity. The Cartesian utopia of a *brain in a vat* (Descartes 1996) is exactly the same as the transhumanist dreamland of uploaded consciousness. However, observed from a slightly altered angle, such utopias become cyberpunk dystopias of low life and high tech, where the passivity of the phenomenal body is merely the consequence of overstimulated subjectivity. As Neo swallows the red pill in the distinctively cyberpunk *The Matrix* (1999), the body is liberated from its comatose state, and the subject is forced to stop and observe the simplicity of life, shifting the focus from the abstract, fluid, fleeting, and unattainable *now* back to the physical, fixed, and stable *here.*

Philosophy, too, should benefit from a comforting shift from now to here, which might in a novel way cope with post-modern cynicism, distrust towards authority, fluid identities, unfaithfulness, etc. Nowadays, theory is interpreted as distinctively irrelevant, even redundant. It is an excess of thinking. The contemporary value-oriented research, marked by pragmatism and mostly devoted to the craft of empirical investigations, often uses theory as a way of

rationalising its always already pre-established findings. As we have hopefully convincingly shown in our own theoretical performance, concepts can be persuasively grasped within a number of given theories. Such particular endeavours, however, convey very little. Contemporary theory often serves merely as justification for a given case study, whereas in our instance, the case study serves as a tool for performing theory. Such indulgence in the unnecessary and impossible activity of thinking represents a private little rebellion, analogous to the ones, described throughout the dissertation. The author is always interpellated in a given context, marked with speed as the common denominator of contemporary instabilities, and fundamentally limited by bureaucratic procedures and deadlines. As such, there is little sovereignty in thinking within the university system. However, the dissertation behind you is in itself a product of softening the borders into thresholds, a creation of extensive idleness, and an artefact of pleasure. Although it is clearly the product of symbolised *jouissance*, and as such only pointing at its own lack/surplus, I will defend it with my body.

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Daljši povzetek v slovenščini

Doktorska disertacija Uprizarjanje teorije skozi filozofijo, umetnost in telo dr. Shannon Bell se uprizarjanja teorije loteva preko študije primera profesorice, performerke, politične aktivistke in avtorice. Bell, profesorica in prodekanja za podiplomski študij na Oddelku za politične vede Univerze York v Torontu v Kanadi, poučuje postsodobno teorijo, kiberpolitiko, postidentitetne politike, estetiko in politiko, nasilno filozofijo in hitri feminizem. Njeno obsežno bibliografijo se zdi najbolj smiselno študirati v navezavi na njeno biografijo, saj med njima ni jasne meje. Nasploh se zdi teza, da je teorijo mogoče razumeti le v kontekstu avtorjeve biografije, še posebej prikladna, vsaj odkar je postmodernizem razglasil konec velikih zgodb. Tudi sama Bell se izreka podobno, saj se drži načela, da ne piše o ničemer, česar ni dejansko storila oz. izkusila.

Bell se izreka za hitro feministko, to pozicijo pa opisuje kot utelešen spolni terorizem, ki temelji na dejanjih. Poleg spola in Viriliove hitrosti se kot ključen koncept hitrega feminizma izkaže človeško telo. Bell je kot ena prvih performerk/edukatork izvajala in teoretizirala delavnice o ženski ejakulaciji, v njeni izrazito performativni bibliografiji pa najdemo še teme, kot so kralji preobleke, otroška pornografija, s/m seks, vzgajanje tkiv, spolnost med človekom in strojem (*humachine seduction*), materina smrt, spolna zloraba s strani očeta.

Zadnja avtoričina knjiga, ki je hkrati tudi njeno najpomembnejše delo v luči naše razprave, *Fast Feminism* (2010), se pri opredeljevanju svojega temeljnega koncepta napaja v zelo raznolikih teoretskih tradicijah, popisuje pa dvajset let avtoričinega izvajanja/uprizarjanja performativne filozofije (*performance philosophy*). Gre za prej omenjeni način akademskega izrekanja, ki si za temeljni etični standard jemlje zahtevo po tem, da je predmet teoretskega preučevanja lahko le nekaj, kar je teoretik fenomenološko izkusil na oz. z lastnim telesom. Performativna filozofija se spogleduje z raznolikimi feminizmi, *queer* teorijo, poststrukturalizmom, prav tako pa

veliko dolguje Virilievima konceptoma hitrosti in nezgode. Hitri feminizem je tako avtoričin originalen teoretski doprinos, ki svojo izvirnost črpa prav v distinktivni metodi performativnega filozofiranja.

Če je ideja vedno locirana v dejanju in če se neposredno naslanja na koncepcije performativnosti, je jasno, da je hitri feminizem globoko utelešen koncept. Tako so telesna dejanja Bell vedno utelešenja filozofije, natančneje, filozofski dogodki. Aktivizem in akademija učinkovito sovpadeta. Bell kot ključne poteze potencialnega manifesta hitrega feminizma navaja principe, kot so: hitra kritika, telo kot osnova teoretskega dela, pisanje teorije kot umetnosti, proizvajanje umetnosti kot teorije, nasilje nad originalnim besedilom ...

S temi definicijami se jasno izrisuje diskurzivna skladnost med performativno umetnostjo in performativno filozofijo. Obema omenjenima kontekstoma je mogoče pripisati skupne ključne besede, kot so na primer: telo, performativnost, spol, seksualnost, nasilje, politika, dogodek itd. Hitri feminizem se kaže kot praksa na presečišču filozofije (metateorije), pornografije in politike, performativna umetnost pa tudi ni daleč od te definicije. Če k temu pridodamo še foucaultovsko estetizacijo življenja, življenje kot umetniško delo, se hitro izkaže, da sta performativna filozofija in performativna umetnost tesno povezani polji. Da bi lahko raziskali njuna presečišča in preplete, se moramo najprej osredotočiti na raziskavo postpostmodernih ostankov koncepta telesa, nato pa preiskati še postpostmoderni preostanek subjekta. Ob tem se kot tema, ki ji ne moremo ubežati, jasno pokaže še po definiciji utelešeni koncept performativnosti.

Da bi učinkovito pokazali na skladnost med poljema performativnega teoretiziranja in performansa, se torej lotevamo dveh tem, ki smo ju v sodobni teoriji prepoznali kot ključni za obravnavo multidisciplinarnega fenomena Bell, teorije subjekta in telesa. Da bi lahko demonstrirali konstrukcijo teh dveh domen znotraj nedavnih teoretskih tokov, si moramo pobliže ogledati zlasti sodobno teoretsko misel, pa tudi vznik trans- oz. posthumanističnega telesa.

Analogijo tistemu, kar je gledališka znanost poimenovala performativni obrat in časovno umestila v 60. leta prejšnjega stoletja,

bomo poiskali tudi v teoriji. Izvirni performativni obrat je sicer res najbolj radikalno redefiniral umetnost, vendar sta humanistika in družbena teorija sledili zgledu. To se vidi prav v naših ključnih temah, temah, ki sta v novejši teoretski zgodovini dvignili daleč največ prahu, torej v problematikah subjekta in telesa.

V disertaciji se sistematično lotevamo modelov subjektivnosti in utelešenja tako v kontekstu teorije kot prakse, preučujemo pa jih zlasti v kontekstu postmodernizma in postpostmodernizma oz. sodobne teorije ter dominantosti koncepta (zlasti tehnološke) hitrosti. Teoretske preostanke sodobnih koncepcij telesa in subjekta mislimo s pomočjo Bell kot koncepta, ki je dober za misliti. Ko študijo primera tako izrabljamo za pisanje metateorije, subverziramo običajne principe te metodološke izbire in se distanciramo od pragmatične rabe teorije, ki naj služi za razlago izbranega primera.

Ključni teoretski temi disertacije sta torej koncepta telesa in subjekta v svojih sodobnih inkarnacijah oz. njuni genealogiji. Vsaki od teh dveh monumentalnih tem v besedilu resda posvečamo obsežno ločeno poglavje, vendar dokončnih sodb in resnic o njiju nalašč ne izrekamo. Besedilo puščamo odprto, osredotočamo pa se na povsem arbitrarno izbrana poglavja sodobne zahodnjaške misli, ki jih zlasti v prvem delu besedila preverjamo s konceptom in telesom Bell, da bi tudi na ta način performativno pokazali, da je mogoče katero koli telo zamejiti in interpretirati bodisi kot kartezijansko, foucaultovsko, fenomenološko, psihoanalitsko ali katero koli drugo telo, nobenega od njih pa ni mogoče celovito ali vsaj zadovoljivo pojasniti s katero koli od teh paradigem.

V besedilu se osredotočamo na sodobne koncepcije človeškega telesa in subjekta, da bi uprizorili študijo primera Bell, njene teorije, telesa, performativne filozofije in umetnosti. Ob tem se igramo z metodologijo, ki jo Haraway poimenuje po otroški igri *cat's cradle*, kjer s podajanjem elastike med igralci nastajajo vedno novi, čedalje kompleksnejši vzorci. Tako nezamejen in odprt metodološki princip, ki predpostavlja epistemološko nivelizacijo vseh virov ne glede na to, ali so bibliografski ali pač biografski, nas pripelje do hipoteze, da

je tisto, kar ostaja subjektu od postmodernizma dalje, pravzaprav analogno tistemu, kar ostaja telesu. Teorije in koncepti subjekta in telesa so namreč tisto preostalo privilegirano mesto, kjer je še mogoče naleteti na izkustva sublimnega, kjer kolapsirajo Lacanovi trije logični časi, kjer je mogoče uprizarjati lastno prezenco in srečati *das Unheimliche*.

Da bi to hipotezo tudi performativno razgrnili, se zatekamo k širokemu polju študij uprizarjanja, zlasti tistih, ki se ukvarjajo z žanrom performansa. Ko kažemo na diskurzivno skladnost med performativno teorijo in performativno umetnostjo, eno in drugo razgaljamo kot fundamentalno utelešeni aktivnosti. Da bi uprizorili svojo lastno teorijo, si sposodimo telo Bell, filozofske performerke in performativne filozofinje, ki ga rabimo kot koncept.

Na kratko, v disertaciji se lotevamo nemogoče naloge. Performativnost poskušamo zagrabiti performativno, da bi locirali njeno fenomenološko bistvo, ki je v postmodernem teoretiziranju vedno vnaprej izključeno. Pravzaprav skušamo poiskati metodologijo, s katero bi lahko nivelizirali raznolike diskurze telesa in/ali subjekta, ne da bi jih ob tem reducirali enega na drugega, kljub temu pa zaobšli oz. ubežali dualističnemu razumevanju. Konceptov ne predstavljamo, niti jih ne primerjamo med sabo, pač pa zgolj kažemo na njihov (vedno negativen) skupni imenovalec, specifično praznino, ničnost, ki jo različne paradigme različno poimenujejo.

Tako se naš lasten podvig hkrati izkaže kot teoretsko in performativno početje. V enaki meri gre za razgrnitev kulturnega in epistemološkega obrata od tekstualnosti k performativnosti, kot za študijo točno določenega telesa/subjekta/umetnosti/teorije. Na ta način lahko tudi naše besedilo umestimo v žanr, ki ga Bell poimenuje performativno pisanje. Gre za to, da je tudi pisanje fundamentalno utelešeno početje, praksa. Tako kot to počne knjiga *Fast Feminism*, tudi naše pisanje subverzira in redefinira tipično pisanje teorije, saj pisanju dopušča odprtost, svobodo, mešanje slogov in vsebin ipd. Namesto humboldtovske zahteve po eksaktnosti v ospredje postavlja zlorabo originala, igra se z idejo remiksa, nivelizira različne kontekste

... S tem ko sledimo metodološkim napotkom Bell, pa, ironično, neogibno najbolj zlorabimo prav njo.

Disertacija se prične s ponovnim prebiranjem in kritično analizo izbranih teoretskih odlomkov in koncepcij telesa, zlasti tistih, ki so vzniknile v 20. in 21. stoletjih. Obsežno poglavje o genealogiji koncepta telesa se bolj kot s posameznimi telesi ukvarja z iskanjem točke prešitja med njimi. Iskanje skupnega imenovalca ne zanemarja postmodernega zloma velikih teorij, celih idej in univerzalizma. Nasprotno: na podlagi lingvistične lekcije, da je pomen vedno v razliki in je negativen, prav tako pa pod nezanemarljivim vplivom epistemoloških težav, ki zaznamujejo sodobno znanost, se kot ena ključnih tem disertacije, ki teče skozi celotno besedilo, pojavlja poskus uprizarjanja raznolikih malih zgodb.

Metodološki princip v ozadju je partikularno izrekanje o partikularnem, princip, ki nam onemogoča misliti celost, enotnost in univerzalizem. Naša pozicija je popolnoma partikularna in subjektivna: pišemo z zahodnjaške pozicije, globoko zaznamovane z binarnostjo. Enako velja za večino teorij, ki jih v besedilu povzemamo oz. uporabljamo. Četudi so vsebinsko neskladne, pogosto celo nasprotujoče si, si delijo pomembno lastnost: vse kažejo na neko razliko, razkorak, razpoko v teoriji sami, iz katere se teorija šele poraja. Ta razpoka, ki jo včasih teoretizirajo kot manko, drugič spet kot presežek, (p)ostaja edina prepričljiva velika zgodba v času po postmodernizmu, vendar pa se nam tragično izmakne vsakič, ko jo poskušamo simbolizirati in artikulirati v jeziku.

Prvo obsežno poglavje disertacije tako preiskuje, kaj je ostalo od koncepta telesa od postmodernizma naprej. Osredotoča se na različne teoretske razlage, kulminira pa v hitri analizi, interpretaciji in kontekstualizaciji telesa Bell. Prvi del disertacije tako bralca opremi s primernim (seveda spet arbitrarnim in subjektivnim) kontekstom za spopad s preostankom besedila. Teoretsko in konceptualno podpira oder, na katerem disertacija v svoji drugi polovici začne uprizarjati samo sebe.

Sodobna zahodnjaška obsedenost s telesom, ki prežema tako teorijo kot tudi popularno kulturo, dokazuje, da je telo najprej in najbolj zahodnjaški izum, zaznamovan z vznikom modernosti in buržoazne ideologije. Isto velja za postmoderni obrat razumevanja telesa, ki pogosto kulminira v prepričanju, da je telo zastarel, preživet in nepotreben koncept. Resda se številne teorije od postmodernizma naprej telesu odrekajo, to pa kljub temu priča o tem, da je koncept osrednjega pomena za sodobno zahodnjaško teoretsko misel. Vsakič, ko se teorija telesu odreče ali zanika njegov obstoj, se telo multiplicira. Četudi so te multiplikacije v hipu potlačene, skrite pred pogledom, potisnjene v ozadje, pa delujejo in pričajo o pomembnosti telesa.

Skozi celotno besedilo telo razumemo kot mesto, kjer je mogoče izvajati teoretske raziskave in performativno teorijo. Ko teorija telo dekonstruira, zanemarja, se mu ogiba in ga pravzaprav vnaprej potlači znotraj konstitutivne razpoke same teorije, kot protiutež vznikne subjekt. Trdimo, da je takšna dualistična epistemologija v veliki meri še vedno zadolžena pri Descartesu, četudi je organizirana prav okoli kritike kartezijanskega *cogita*. Četudi se je koncept subjekta od Descartesa naprej ključno spreminjal in redefiniral, četudi je bil grobo kritiziran in zavrnjen, je to morda večji učinek pustilo na telesu kot pa na samem subjektu.

Po tem, ko ga je teorija vlekla skozi raznolike in medsebojno konfliktne diskurzivne realnosti subjekta, je telo tisto, ki se je res spremenilo. Vsaka znanstvena paradigma, ki se loti problema telesa, s svojim performativnim učinkom proizvede novo telo. To se neogibno dogodi oz. se venomer dogaja tudi v našem besedilu, kjer ne teoretiziramo več istega telesa kot so ga teoretiki, ki nas navdihujejo, prav tako pa se ne omejujemo na nek singularen korpus teorije. S pomočjo telesa Bell demonstriramo trditev, da je mogoče katero koli telo učinkovito soočiti/zapopasti s katero koli teorijo. S tem ko tudi sami telo Bell interpretiramo v arbitrarno izbranih teoretskih kontekstih in s tem avtomatsko izključujemo druge, se po legitimizacijo in uteho zatečemo k Feyerabendovi koncepciji inkomenzurabilnosti, ne spregledamo pa niti njegovega poziva k anarho-teoretiziranju, v

katerem je vse mogoče – *anything goes*. Telo Bell je lahko, bi moralo biti in tudi je teoretizirano kot vsako od teles, h katerim napotuje disertacija, hkrati pa se izmika svoji celostni obravnavi znotraj vsake posamezne koncepcije telesa in zanika ekskluzivnost vsaki teoretski izpeljavi, ki ga želi zgrabiti v njegovi imaginarni celo(s)ti.

S tem ko je teorija izgubila potrpljenje z izmikajočim se telesom, se je pozornost premestila na bistveno bolj hvaležni subjekt. Telo ni več interpretirano kot pogoj možnosti za (samo)definicijo posameznika, pač pa je to postal subjekt. Skladno s tem je drugo veliko poglavje disertacije posvečeno raziskovanju preostankov subjekta po postmodernizmu in skuša telesom iz prvega dela besedila priskrbeti odgovarjajoče subjekte. Pristop k raziskovanju sodobne subjektivnosti je nujno genealoški ter po definiciji partikularen, pristranski, nedokončan, odprt. Poglavje o subjektu se začne s popisom in ovrednotenjem ključnih (pred)modernih prispevkov h konstrukciji sodobnega subjekta. Kot izrazito subjektivna teorija subjekta je psihoanaliza podvržena vsem kritikam, ki si jih zasluži, vendarle pa na koncu sprejeta kot polje, znotraj katerega je mogoče misliti telesni upor in subverzijo.

Kratka genealogija subjekta se začenja pozno, z Descartesom in razsvetljenstvom, konča pa se prekmalu, s performativno postfeministično in postkolonialno intervencijo v psihoanalizi v 90. letih prejšnjega stoletja, pod katero se podpisuje Butler. V naši interpretaciji gre za zgovoren in nasilen vstop Drugega v izrazito konvencionalen kontekst. S tem ko debato zamejimo s kartezijansko revolucijo na eni strani in postfeministično intervencijo v psihoanalizo na drugi, spet sprejemamo popolnoma arbitrarno odločitev, ki pa se izkaže za učinkovito in v kontekstu naše razprave nadvse uporabno.

Tradicionalno je teorije in resnico proizvajal ozek, privilegiran del družbe, in četudi je danes znanje bolj razpršeno in dostopno kot kdaj koli prej, je produkcija tega, kar obvelja za legitimno, še vedno na ramenih znanstvenikov, ki vztrajajo na umišljeni poziciji moške univerzalnosti in kolonizirajo vse Druge. Začetek naše debate o subjektu uteleša vse te očitke, ki pogosto držijo tudi v kontekstu

sodobnih teoretskih podvigov. Kljub temu pa je sodobna teorija vendarle nekoliko bolj informirana v zvezi z dejstvom, da je kontekst vedno pomemben, ter da je ključno to, kdo neko teorijo/resnico izreka oz. jo artikulira kot tako. Postkolonialne študije (pa tudi študije spola) so prve priznale glas oz. govorico tudi Drugemu in danes so teorije o Drugem nepovratno prepletene s teorijami, ki prihajajo od Drugega. Še več, študije spola so Drugemu omogočile zavzeti tudi telo. Tako se spolno zaznamovan vstop Drugega v teorijo bere kot globoko performativna gesta. Ko ženske pričnejo pisati o ženskah in ženskosti kot taki, se nenadoma izkaže, da govorijo o povsem drugih realnostih, kot so jih zanje prej konstruirali moški. Ta ugotovitev je resda sila preprosta, vseeno pa zarisuje možen domet disertacije, ki se vnaprej odpoveduje jalovemu poskusu, da bi v obzir vzeli vse možne aspekte sodobnega potenciranja subjektivnosti.

Poglavje o subjektu sklepamo tako, da pokažemo na ta partikularen moment v teoriji, v katerem je bila dualistična organizacija problema telo/subjekt prvič napadena ne le s strani subjekta, pač pa tudi s konkretnim telesom. Morda je simptomatično, da je prevladujoča teorija tedaj telo dokončno odstopila marginaliziranim in partikulariziranim študijam, sama pa se posvetila metafizičnim razsežnostim subjekta, problem subjektivnosti pa v vedno večji meri pričela navezovati na koncept zavesti, ki ga sodobna teorija pojmuje kot specifično funkcijo telesa, ki se jo da (vsaj v teoriji) odpeti s telesa in jo premestiti nekam drugam.

Po poglavjih o telesu in subjektu se v sklepnem poglavju disertacija loti prepletanja vseh rdečih in ostalih niti, ki potujejo po besedilu. Epistemološke zagate naše performativne filozofije, kot tudi ontološke implikacije za dualizem telo/subjekt tematiziramo v kontekstu performativnega obrata, ki ga definiramo kot vstop utelešene teorije o telesu v humanistiko in družboslovje. Intervencija Butler, četudi interpretirana kot vrnitev k psihoanalizi, performativno prikaže, da je prav v tej vrnitvi moč najti učinkovito zamajanje psihoanalitskih epistemoloških temeljev ter potencial reinterpretacije psihoanalize kot subverzivne prakse. Butler to doseže s pojmovanjem

teoretiziranja, ki spominja na interpretacijo Bell – gre za v veliki meri utelešeno aktivnost s ciljem spregovoriti nemogoče.

Za konec (performativno) telo, (performirani) subjekt in naše lastno (performativno) izvajanje obrnemo v do neke mere politično angažirano gesto. V trenutku simbolizacije, ki predstavlja nujen pogoj za vsakršno artikulacijo in/ali teoretizacijo, je naš subjektiven občutek o sebi že tako koloniziran (s strani jezika, ideologije ...), da se odklopi od vsakršne potencialnosti realne fenomenalne izkušnje lastnega telesa. Prekinitev te povezave je neposredno povezana s prevladujočim principom hitrosti, pri čemer pa ni pomembno, ali je ta interpretirana, kot da pospešuje proti nedosegljivemu presežku ali stran od neobhodnega manka, saj za eno in drugo velja, da je hkrati nekaj, čemur ne moremo ubežati in nekaj, česar ne moremo uloviti. Gre za izkustvo, metaforično opisano s koncepti, kot je sublimno, ki se izmakne v trenutku, ko ga poskušamo zapopasti. Z Badioujem zato teoriji predlagamo proces upočasnitve, upočasnitev pa jemljemo kot strategijo (vedno telesnega) upora. Gre za lekcijo, ki jo nekaj desetletij pred nami propagira že film: v filmu *WarGames* se ponavlja moto, po katerem je edina zmagovita poteza to, da v igro ne vstopiš; kultni film *Cube* pa po vseh tragičnih peripetijah v skrivnostno kocko ujetih ljudi, prinaša podobno avtistično sporočilo: rešitev ni v neskončnem napredovanju in izmikanju pastem, pač pa v tem, da ostanemo, kjer smo. Ko upočasnitev interpretiramo kot upor, se naša disertacija na tem mestu, ki kipi od subverzivnega potenciala, priročno ustavi.