

INTERMEDIALITIES

PHILOSOPHY, ARTS, POLITICS

Edited by
Henk Oosterling
and
Ewa Plonowska Ziarek

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Intermedialities

Philosophy, Arts, Politics

Edited by Henk Oosterling
and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek

General Editor:
Hugh J. Silverman



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A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
<http://www.lexingtonbooks.com>

Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY, United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Intermedialities : philosophy, arts, politics / edited by Henk Oosterling and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek.

p. cm. — (Textures)

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-0-7391-2735-3 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-7391-2736-0 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-7391-4655-2 (electronic)

1. Philosophy. 2. Arts. 3. Political science. I. Oosterling, Henk. II. Ziarek, Ewa Plonowska, 1961—

B53.I55 2010

001—dc22

2009052353

Ⓟ™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

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Chapter 9

Allegro, ma non troppo: On Feminist Becomings

Rosi Braidotti

A commitment to critical theory may be seen as an addiction like any other. Contrary to most addictions, however, it meets with a relatively high level of social approval. It is even tinged with a touch of intellectual prestige—the kind of prerogative mostly reserved nowadays for non-profit activities. Philosophy is commonly understood to be a gratuitous display of the human predisposition for mental restlessness. Intelligence, after all, is that peculiar human talent which can be described as a practice of suspicion of and chronic discontent with the obvious. Critical theory is a stubborn and proud addiction to this practice. An addiction is a sedimented habit that is structurally necessary to one's survival. It involves modes of relation to the external objects or activities that constitute the habit and therefore it constructs moods of positive reliance upon or empathic resonance with them.

This need not be an entirely anthropocentric exercise. For example, critical theorists may value some of their books more highly than some of their human siblings, but this reliance upon language, as well as to writing technologies—from the pencil to the palm computer—is both intense and expansive. This type of empathic activity spins the web of restless meanderings on the part of questioning bodily entities known as subjects. Yet it also stabilizes their patterns of motion, expansion, dilation and stillness in a regular sequence that can be sustainable, or at least temporarily so. Such is the power of thought.

Feminism is critical theory at its most paradigmatic, that is to say, addictive. It shares with contemporary philosophies the critique of the delusions of grandeur of the subject that insists on believing that it coincides with consciousness, thus rationalizing *His* logocentrism. Feminist theory also embraces enthusiastically the call for more conceptual creativity, more imagination and courage in designing adequate and informed cartographies of the present. The normative elements are conveyed by serious conceptual logistics. Thus, one of the specific aims of feminist practice is to overthrow the pejorative connotations that are built into the notion of difference, and also into the dialectics of self and other. This faith in the possibility of such transmutations of values leads to reassert the positivity of difference defined as the project enabling a collective reappraisal of the singularity of each subject in his/her complexity. In other words, the subject of feminism is

not *Woman* as the complementary and specular other of *Man* but rather a complex and multi-layered embodied subject that has taken her distance from the institutions of femininity and of masculinity, unhinging them both. "She" no longer coincides with the disempowered projections of a dominant subject who reflects the unwanted aspects of his masculinity by casting them upon her, in a universalistic posture of appropriation. She, in fact, may no longer be a she at all, but rather the subject of quite another story: a subject-in-process, a mutant, the other of the Other, a post-Woman embodied subject cast in female morphology who has already undergone an essential metamorphosis. In short, a virtual feminine. The feminist subject of knowledge is intensive, multiple and it functions in a net of inter-connections. It is rhizomatic, which means it is non-unitary, nomadic, non-linear, web-like, embodied, and therefore perfectly artificial. As an artifact this subject is machinic, complex and thus endowed with multiple capacities for inter-connectedness in the impersonal mode. It is abstract and perfectly, operationally, real. One of the main fields in which it operates is the metaphysically founded institution of sexual difference, which is not, however, immune from the flows of transformation that define our historicity.

Feminist acts affirm political and ethical passions. They design tools and road maps by which to establish values, not in the normative mode, but in the sense of evaluation of the interaction with a large variety of others, including external objects and projects. This "intensive" reading of feminist theory expresses a non-unitary, nomadic subject that is opposed to classical humanism, or liberal notions of the individual, but also to facile postmodern celebrations of fragmentation for its own sake. In opposition to the urge to complete the loss of specification or marking of the subject, this position expresses my desire to defend the relevance of that historically obsolete institution known as the "feminine." Neither as an essentialized entity, nor as an immediately accessible one, femininity is rather a virtual reality, in the sense that it is the effect of a political and conceptual project aimed at transcending the traditional ("molar") subject position of *Woman* as other. This transcendence, however, occurs through the flesh, into enfolded locations and not in a flight away from the body. My addiction is real and therefore embodied and embedded. It comes in alignment with a classical philosophical vision of materialism defined as the mindless vitality of embodied matter in its fundamentally restless mode.

Feminism, like all critical theories can express affirmative forces and thus liberate in those who partake of it is a yearning for freedom, dignity, justice, lightness and joyfulness. These values can also be translated both into dogmatic gloom and into more constructive rational beliefs and policies. They form in any case a substratum of affect that activates the movement in the first place. In feminism, as elsewhere in critical theory and practice, the wager is to move beyond the negative stasis and the slave morality of an oppositional culture. One must avoid the deadly serious priestly revolutionary zeal of *dogma* and *doxa* joining forces within the gravitational pull of a new normative order. If politics begins with our

passions, then what I yearn for is spirit.

I. In-Between What's Betw

The archetypical site of in-between *lence* has historically been the fen where different meanings and attri cally sedimented. Psychoanalysis sl male fantasies and castration fears l it has been metonymically displacer cal edge of lacanian politics consist (imaginary) to women (empirical) an instability of any subject and the imp and binary institutions of masculinit Lacan's political gesture. What to dc limits question for psychoanalysis. body becomes therefore the site for f priations of woman's subjectivity.

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The technological artifact as a z that it represents a connection, a link tions: cogs and spikes and tubes pen energy. To the extent that it mimes tl logical other fulfills a libidinal functi between the functional and the gratuito excess. Gratuitousness, or the principle of the machine. Historically, automata

passions, then what I yearn for is the gay knowledge of an affirmative critical spirit.

1. In-Between What's Between Bodies and Machines

The archetypal site of in-between-ness, inter-medial and inter-active *par excellence* has historically been the female body. This body is a multi-layered text where different meanings and attributes related to the "feminine" have historically sedimented. Psychoanalysis shows that the female body is the screen where male fantasies and castration fears have been projected and performed. As such, it has been metonymically displaced and replaced over and over again. The radical edge of lacanian politics consists in exploring this reduction of the feminine (imaginary) to women (empirical) and the masculine to men, stressing instead the instability of any subject and the impossibility of being anchored to the imaginary and binary institutions of masculinity and femininity. Exposing this imposture is Lacan's political gesture. What to do about changing any of it, however, is an off-limits question for psychoanalysis. Not so for feminism, of course.¹ The female body becomes therefore the site for feminist reinscriptions and symbolic reappropriations of woman's subjectivity.

The symbolic being firmly grounded on material foundations, the female body is also the site of productive and reproductive labor the whole world over. Women are the great industrial robots and agricultural workers of the earth. As the most under-paid workers, their intermedial function is to create surplus value. Thus, women, like machines, are great conductors and connectors; their circulation, and the circulation of the goods they produce and reproduce, literally makes the world go round. It is no coincidence then that the technological other holds a strong link to the feminine in its functionality and availability for usage. In high modernity the mechanic body double, the technological artifact, is sexualized in the feminine mode and is eroticized accordingly. The woman's body functioned as the site of inscription of the artificial or mechanical other, as in *Metropolis* and *L'Ève future*. This followed from the principle of functionalism. In the modernist mode tasks that are usually performed by women, animals or others are delegated to the machines. This is the case of vacuum cleaners, household appliances, and the technologies that replace basic motion functions, such bicycles and cars. The social imaginary around them is intensely sexualized.

The technological artifact as a zone of transition is libidinally charged in that it represents a connection, a link or an in-between. Machines make connections: cogs and spikes and tubes penetrate each other with fierce and mindless energy. To the extent that it mimes the workings of sexual energy, the technological other fulfills a libidinal function. Techno-bodies question the boundary between the functional and the gratuitous, productivity and waste, moderation and excess. Gratuitousness, or the principle of non-profit is central to the erotic power of the machine. Historically, automata fulfilled a decorative function, which was

explored and exploited in clockwork machinery, music boxes, street organs, "tableaux vivants" of all sorts, mechanical dolls and toys. Like freaks, automata are for display and delight of children of all ages. Anthropomorphic machines, being eroticized as objects of imaginary projection and desire, titillate our sexual curiosity and trigger off all kinds of questions about sexuality and procreation.

With contemporary technologies a lot changes: digital and electronic technologies intersect and intermingle with the flesh in multiple, intimate ways that transfer the prosthetic function into the body. Videorecorders, electronic toothbrushes, frozen embryos and IVF, breast implants, telefax, and phone chat-lines bring this kind of technological others right within the parameters of the embodied self. This could be described as a form of vampirism, or Gothic take-over of the human body by advanced technologies. A perversely fruitful alliance with technology has emerged, which stresses the proximity and familiarity of the relation between the human and the technological universe.²

It is consequently no longer possible to speak about simple in-between spaces, between bodies and technologies—nor of a simple delegation process. It is rather a case of degrees of both delegations and in-between-ness.³ For instance, the maternal function, traditionally a task that was socially delegated to and performed by embodied female agents, has nowadays become successfully assimilated by advanced technologies. The techno-doctors and their incubators, genetic engineering, the sperm banks and their donors and inserters are the site of human reproduction. Women are very much participants in this new social consensus about technology mediated reproduction and its commercial spin-offs, all the more so as their body is no longer the sole theatre where the game of filiation is played.

In our cyber-universe the link between the flesh and the machine is symbiotic, creating a bond of mutual dependence. Paradoxically, the corporeal site of subjectivity is simultaneously denied, in a fantasy of escape, and strengthened or reinforced.⁴ The corollary of this is that technology today is no longer associated with a specific sex—let alone the feminine, as it was in modernity, but rather neutralized as a figure of mixity, hybridity, interconnectiveness. It lies in a sexually undecided position, an in-between state such as trans-sexuality. If the machine is prosthetic and trans-gendered and the maternal has become mechanized, the embodied female agent is unhinged from its classical frame of sexual difference, floating into a sort of undifferentiated becoming-other.

Hybridity is the capacity to blur categorical distinctions or constitutive boundaries. The dividing line between masculine and feminine is one of the major socio-symbolic boundaries currently under reconstruction, as Lyotard argued.⁵ Just as prominent nowadays is the relocation of the distinction between different species—the human; the animal; the organic other; the inorganic other; the technological. The blurring of these categorical divides between self and others creates a sort of heteroglossia of the species, a colossal hybridization. Technology is at the heart of this process that combines monsters, animals, insects and machines

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into a transversal posthuman takeover of what we used to call "the subject." To say that this takeover transforms identities and sexualities is an understatement at best: the very political ontology of otherness is dislocated in the process.

This raises a number of crucial questions. If the female body is a site of scrambling of the code of femininity, while the technological other is the site of schizoid transsexuality and hybrid in-between-ness, what will the consequences be for the socio-symbolic organizations of our culture? Just consider the kind of toxic contaminations that proliferate in our post-industrial landscapes: machinic takeover of the maternal function; feminism without women; reproduction without uteruses; sperm banks without penises; money without cash; communication without contact; displacement without movement. These contaminations are virtual only in the sense that they concretize and materialize yet unseen possibilities. They are ways of literalizing what techno-bodies are capable of and thus confront us with this challenge in an embodied and embedded manner. The virtual has firm roots, foundations and spin-offs; it is a material event. Techno-babes and cyberbabies proliferate, just as Western demographics plummet.

Through these paradoxes, in late postmodernity, the body remains a privileged site of transformation and reinscription of the natural, through reincorporation of the technological. This reinvention of a post-naturalistic natural order lies at the heart of the perversion of our technological universe. Susan Squier⁶ sums it up in three key images: the extra-uterine fetus, the surrogate mother and the pregnant man. Inspired by Foucault, Squier reads them as the simultaneous effect and production of contemporary bio-power, which are not unilinear, but complex and often contradictory. Donna Haraway⁷ crystallizes the process of the reinvention of nature in the mirror images of the female man, the oncomouse and the figuration of the critical thinker as modest witness. These reconfigurations of a naturalized techno-world, following from the impact of advanced technologies, are contemporary variations on the theme of techno-primitivism.⁸

II. Modes of In-Between-ness

In the light of contemporary genetics and molecular biology, techno-bodies can be defined as complex systems of self-sustaining forces. The DNA and the cells communicate effectively with each other, transferring vital information. In terms of bio-diversity, we humans are actively and destructively involved in manipulating our environment. Neurosciences have increased our understanding of memory and the extent to which the storage and retrieval of information is essential to the progress of the organic self. It is therefore important to rethink the subject from the assumption of a convergence between biotechnologies and information technologies.⁹

The techno-bodies of late postindustrial societies are embedded in complex fields of information, which engender both their explosion into sets of regulatory social practices (dieting, medical control and pharmaceutical interventions), as

well as their implosion as the fetishized and obsessive object of individual concern and care (self-management or all-out prevention of anything that moves). The political economy changes accordingly: bio-power¹⁰ constructs the body as a multi-layered entity situated over a multiple and potentially contradictory set of variables. The "informatics of domination"¹¹ enmeshes the body in data-flows of the molecular biological, genetic and neurological kind, which redefines it as an integrated site of information networks. The body is like a sensor, a messenger carrying thousands of communication systems: cardio-vascular, respiratory, visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory, hormonal, psychic, emotional, erotic, etc. Coordinated by an inimitable circuit of information transmission, the body is a living recording system, capable of storing and then retrieving the necessary information and to process it at such speed that it seems to react "instinctively." Fundamentally prone to pleasure, the embodied subject tends towards the recollection and repetition of experiences which pleasure has "fixed" psychically and sensually upon the subject. To re-member, after all, it to re-peat and repetition tends to favor that which gave joy and avoid that which gave pain. The body is not only multi-functional but also in some ways multi-lingual: it speaks through temperature, motion, speed, emotions, excitement that affects the cardiac rhythm and the likes. A piece of meat activated by electric waves of desire, a script written by the unfolding of genetic encoding, a text composed by the enfolding of external prompts. Neither a sacralized inner sanctum, nor a socially shaped entity, the enfleshed nomadic subject is rather an "in-between": it is a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outward of affects. A mobile entity, an enfleshed sort of memory that repeats; it is capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations while remaining faithful to itself in its radical immanence.

The key word is contaminations. The spaces between ourselves and our technologies are a site of transition, filled with dense materialities, of symbiotic interconnections and unsuspected mutual cross-fertilizations. There is no longer a space between us and the technological artifacts that we delegate to. There are only degrees of in-between-ness, of complicity or promiscuity. The age of prosthetics has displaced the form of anthropocentric delegation or consensual mediation, to which we had become accustomed in industrial modernity. A new form of viral or contaminating intimacy has taken its place.¹²

A social reaction of panic often accompanies these transformations, triggering either neo-conservative returns to an allegedly naturalized past, which should rescue us from our inhumane post-human future;¹³ or restore us to a humanistic faith in the decency of the rational order.¹⁴ I situate myself elsewhere, in transition and on the side of Haraway¹⁵ in affirming the positive aspects of "the promises of monsters." I am accustomed to a posthuman condition that has already taken firm roots here and now.¹⁶ In this approach I recognize the legacy of that tradition of bodily materialist philosophies of the subject, which I call my own.

I also want to challenge some of the self-destructive or nihilistic tendencies of our cyber-universe. Nomadism is an anti-essentialist vitalistic philosophy that

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calls for rethinking human embodiment in a manner that is coextensive with our complex technological habitat and in tune with our techno-habits. Deleuze shows that both the established ideas of the organic and those of the mechanical world are equally inadequate and often result in the humanistic vision of assembled parts working together to create a harmonious and well-functioning whole. In opposition to this holistic view of the mechanical world, Deleuze defends a molecular, machinic one, which is about becomings, without ultimate purpose or finality.

The "machine" in the abstract sense proposed by Deleuze bears a privileged bond with the process of becoming-imperceptible, in the sense of an empirical transcendental capacity by the subject for dissolution into and merging with his/her environment.¹⁷ The merger of the human with the technological, or the machinic environment, not unlike the symbiotic relationship between the animal and its habitat, results in a new compound, a new kind of open whole. This is neither a holistic fusion nor a Christian form of transcendence—it rather marks the materialist plane of radical immanence. This in-between-ness is best addressed not as biology, and certainly not as bio-ethics, but as an ethology of forces; an ethics of mutual interdependence and of sustainable interactions. Bodies have become techno-cultural constructs immersed in networks of interconnections and thus of self-contradictory and conflicting power relations.

The culture of advanced capitalism—always loath to miss a good opportunity when it raises its ugly head—tends to react to the new techno-bodies of the cyberworld according to a predictable manic-depressive double-pull: on the one hand hype and on the other hand nostalgia. And in between: "*Prozac Nation*." Speaking from a different field of addiction, I would plea for a form of neo-materialist appreciation for the embodied intelligence of critical questioning entities known as subjects. Rethinking the embodied structure of human subjectivity requires an ethics of lucidity, as well as powers of innovation and creativity. It need not refer to the paradigms of human nature in terms of any of the traditional brands of essentialism: biological, psychic, genetic or historical.

This nomadic evolutionary thought contrasts openly with contemporary evolutionary psychology or genetic neo-determinism. What implodes under the strain and the velocity of this change is the perspective of anthropocentrism that is inbuilt in so much evolutionary, biological, scientific and philosophical thought. Radically immanent philosophical nomadism, on the other hand, sponsors a post-human subject that is impacted upon and thus composed of external forces, of the non-human, inorganic or technological kind. It is territorially based and thus environmentally bound. Nomadism is non-unitary because relocated across a number of natural, cultural, social and technological fields and practices. It also remains involved in the pursuit of active processes of becoming, through the creation of sustainable mixes and compositions of forces and affects.

This is as far removed from the advanced capitalist hype about technology as it can be. The latter constitutes an all-pervasive master-narrative of flight from the

human embodied self, into the fake transcendence of a machine aiming at short-term profit. It makes feminism complicitous with the aims of advanced capitalism and its belligerent economy. This strikes me as molar, oedipalizing, despotic and profit-minded approach that results, in terms of emancipatory politics, in a woman like Condoleezza Rice. It is against this social imaginary of techno-domination that I want to argue for a more empowering and hence more dissipative, eroticized and flowing interaction between the human and the bio-techno-logical. An evolution of the non-teleological, but rather the nomadological kind, as my friend Kathy Acker¹⁸ said.

III. Moods of In-Between-ness

What forms of symbolic mediation become possible and even necessary under the impact of the new prosthetic bodies we have come to inhabit? The advanced technologies enable a short-circuiting of traditional social roles and a great deal of experimentation with alternatives. They introduce a mild form of schizophrenia, in that they induce a multiplication and splintering of possible roles within each subject. What sort of ethical subjectivity does this shift of perspective call for? In reproductive technologies, for instance, you may donate the sperm, or rent out the uterus, but may not want to either claim or raise the baby. On the internet, one may say or act in ways that conflict with one's everyday behavior in the three-dimensional world.¹⁹ The key question is precisely the extent to which new forms of technological embodiment displace or replace the symbolic function. Is it a new deal? Or an act of defiance? Is it mere aggression? What are the limits of these symbolic dislocations? One may delegate a great deal of crucial and even vital functions to others, but, when it comes to it, can someone else die in your place?

It becomes important to assess what kind and degree of symbolic displacement occurs through these new configurations of in-between locations of technologically mediated bodies. In order to know the difference, we need a system of ethical evaluation of the forces or investments that are being made of these technologies. Of special concern to me is the affirmative dimension of this ethical question, namely how to move beyond the aporia of deconstruction, or a post-lacanian hystrionic exacerbation of the guilt and aggression that fuel the phallic symbolic. How can we grab the historic chance to create the new and thus avoid flat repetitions of the same, through the disguise of quantitative cumulation of changes?

One of the many positive side effects of dependency on feminist ethics is that one gets used to time loops, or a permanent state of jetlag. A feminist critical position assumes the dislocation of the linearity of time and hence the necessity to inhabit different and even potentially contradictory time zones at the same time: a sort of trip through chrono-topia. On the theoretical level, feminists have developed crucial critiques of ideologies, revisions of the symbolic and a vast array of counter-models and paradigms to configure the shifts of subjectivity actually

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in progress in our globalized world. Those who were still hoping to use such immense creativity to correct the mistakes of the patriarchal order soon realized they would run out of time before they could reach their aim. One of the possible figurations of oppression is being systematically behind: living in one time zone behind the times—like reading yesterday's paper. It is not so much being second-best as being minus-one.

To give a concrete example from my own politics of location as a privileged twenty-first century subject in a cutting-edge university setting, engaged in critical theory. The point is that "I" is not only "there" and not even "that." I am not one, because I am socio-symbolically signified as a woman, but also because I claim back my not-oneness as a feminist location. So there is a part of me that is too well aware of the persisting patterns of marginalization and exclusion of women in the world today. Were I to put this awareness aside, I would make a functional subject of advanced capitalism and a worthy one, being myself an institutional manager of female emancipation. Yet I will not. Choosing to resist this mono-logical reduction, I acknowledge the multiplication of my possible locations, which are not only spatial but also temporal. My memories splinter and proliferate accordingly, bringing in data that may or may not relate directly to my lived experience but are integral to my consciousness.

Whenever I fail to forget the continuing patterns of marginalization of women, I simply "forget to forget," which does not mean that I fall into a stupor, but rather that I am zigzagging across different time sequences. Forgetting to forget the imperative of one-way time travel, I inhabit my critical consciousness as a time machine which allows me to travel across different realities, or spatio-temporal coordinates. Being a critical female subject, inscribed a-symmetrically into the power relations of advanced capitalism, splits me temporarily. Attempting to reconcile the pieces would be madness: better to settle into the everyday schizophrenia of late postmodernity, also known as early global techno-culture. I call this a form of active resistance, understood as a strategy to deal with the typical of schizophrenia of our times.

Schizophrenia means the co-occurrence of internally contradictory and even incompatible trends and time zones. And the status of women is a powerful indicator of these. These are historical times that see the return of the most primitive forms of naturalization of the status of women, alongside high technological celebration about the death of the naturalized order: times when geopolitical wars are being justified in the light of the backward status of women in non-Christian cultures. More than ever sexual difference is exacerbated and polarized. Gender roles and stereotypes, far from being effaced, are strengthened in the new world order. Hence, the status of women is both central to and paradoxically multiplied across the social and political agenda. In such a context, the feminist awareness of internal discrepancies, or differences within the subject, becomes quite a vantage viewpoint. Feminist reappropriations of feminine specificity strike a dissonant note in this framework, to mark forms of political resistance: a multiplicity of pos-

sible strategies, internally contradictory, paradoxical and non-linear. They may not be one united party, but a kind of a kaleidoscope of potentially contradictory strategies.

The orthodox Deleuzian clones will object that this claim to specificity is a way of blocking nomadic subjectivization. In response I would say that I do not understand why feminist appropriations of feminine specificity as a moment in a process should be set in opposition to nomadic becomings. I do not see the necessity for such a belligerent logic of mutual opposition and elimination. These are, after all, processes, and their ethical indexing depends on the affective forces that they express and are expressive of. Moreover, I am neither a dutiful nor an oedipalized daughter, but very much a child of my schizoid times. I believe we need visions and practices of complex and multiple differences as an antidote to the fortifying of unitary identities which is happening through the global world order these days: a resurgence of many, specular forms of fundamentalism. While fundamentalism is about claiming as authentic an identity others taught you to despise, feminism is about suspending belief in all authentic identities. We need a web-like approach, a zigzagging pattern that cuts across the paradoxes, the asymmetrical locations and the revival of brutal power relations that underscore them, because not one linear or progressive political line can account for them all. If power relations are not linear, neither is resistance.

IV. Positively So

Affirming sexual difference is a positive passion that implies "[t]hat the subject is acted upon by other bodies and that this produces the possibility of a certain transformation: it is an induction into life, a seduction into life, where life itself cannot be understood apart from the dynamic transformation for which we seek to give an account" (Butler, unpublished, 2001). This expresses a nomadic kind of loyalty, not so much to what one is, or could be, as to what one will have been. This is a new form of activism, which takes seriously the active force of affects understood as affirmative ethical inputs. I call them positive processes of becoming which are neither abstract nor disengaged from concrete material and historical situations. They are processes of actualization or materialization of qualitative shifts that occur across a number of interrelations, or in-between spaces: between different species; human/non-human actors; different categories; masculine/feminine, or European/native; and between different forces: negative/positive or reactive/active.

How can we establish ethical categorical distinctions between different types of becoming? Deleuze and Guattari argue that processes of becoming are collective, so one can only know them by getting involved in them.³⁰ Moreover, they are non-teleologically ordained processes of transformation, which means that no one is truly in charge of them. No one is in charge of the course of historical

developments—*pace* Hegel and his Marxist disciples who, down to Toni Negri, do not seem able to kick off the addiction to totalizing master-plans. The only way to make sense of the schizoid economy of our times is by thinking in a non-linear and yet rigorous and sustainable manner about accelerations, speed and movement, that is to say processes of becoming. We need to think about them not merely in quantitative terms, but also as qualitative or ethical distinctions.²¹

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the molar or sedentary and the molecular or nomadic distinction must not be reset in a dialectical opposition: they are neither opposites, nor mutually exclusive. They represent an ethical indexation system that can help us organize qualitative distinctions among the different forces that are invested in and circulating across such processes. Molar is reactive or negative, molecular is active or affirmative. There is no becoming in the molar mode: the center is static. By extension, terms such as nomadic or molecular are ways of introducing qualitative ethical distinctions into this script, by stressing the positive or active forces involved in the processes of transformations. This in turn is a way of demarcating them from general processes of change which, being central to the political economy of advanced capitalism, are a-moral, generally profit-driven, if not downright immoral. Therefore, molecular/sedentary and molar/nomadic are not empirical categories. They are not quantitative pluralities, but qualitative multiplicities, or lines that cut across existing categories. The point is not to opt for one of these and adopt them fully, but rather to engage with the affective forces they express. In other words, feminist politics in the third millennium can be both emancipatory and sedentary, and radical or nomadic; the logic is not that of either/or, but rather of and/and. Ethical balance is just a matter of creating the condition for synchronicity among parallel forces and frames, so that we can sustain them.

We can translate this in terms of the time sequence by arguing that there are qualitative differences between different forms of becomings. If we start from the assumption that consumerism is the logic behind the enforced accelerations of our times, then we could argue that capitalism steals the present. We are always behind, and the next generation of gadgets is still to come. You may have Microsoft Windows 2000, but forget it, you should already have 2003, or maybe it should be 2020? The next installment of *Harry Potter* is about to come out, but there are several more coming and who knows if we will live to read them. *Lord of the Rings* is also tantalizingly slow in actualizing itself. They have succeeded in stealing our present: we all live in a state of regulated frustration and suspended animation, addicted to logos and gadgets to consume. Tomorrow, however, may never come.

In such a context, the time travel of consciousness which I mentioned before acquires another aspect, which leads me to Deleuze's idea of the "becoming-imperceptible." Let us think back to the simultaneity of different time zones that a third-millennium feminist inhabits. Emancipatory feminist politics looks towards the past, in so far as it attempts to correct it. Like Benjamin's angel of history, it stresses the need to catch up and bring women into full citizenship rights. We need to give women the vote, and not only in non-Christian lands, but, till a few years

ago, also in countries like Switzerland. It is progressive, but backward looking. You could argue therefore that the only possible processes of becoming that are hinging on that kind of historically delayed and marginalized subject are limited in what new perspectives they can unfold. The best you can do is to catch on, and hence risk a flat repetition of the aspects of linear history that, for better or for worse, have already happened before. The process of becoming—becoming minoritarian, woman, animal—is a way of marking off ethical distinctions that liberate the subject from the sedentary risk of flat repetition by introducing a different velocity or affective speed into this process. Taking the risk of repetition—the awareness of the inevitability of vicious circles—is the only way to break out of the molar or sedentary mode. Repetition with a difference is a feminist strategy of resisting the gravitational pull of the same—flat mimesis without difference—in order to inject healthy doses of disruption or unpredictability into the process.

This process of speeding up—*allegro, ma non troppo*—detaches the present from its backward looking tendencies and introduces another time sequence which actively creates the future by innovating on the past. In my view this is the “event” that Deleuze theorizes as the “becoming imperceptible,” marking the eruption of the future into the present. Like a floodgate of creative possibilities, what can actually be fully inserted into the here and now is defined as the unfolding of potentials but also the enfolding of qualitative shifts or relocations within the subject. The paradoxical price to pay for that is some sort of death of one’s social identity, or all the identity labels that are socially enforced and thus institutionalized in different ways. The process of becoming thus results in the death of the ego, in favor of a proliferation of generative possibilities of an altogether different kind. Carried by one’s affirmative passions—or life-enhancing addictions—one can undergo sustainable processes of un/enfolding or becoming. These entail, paradoxically and productively, the evanescence of the self. Ultimately, all one has is what one is propelled by and not-in-charge-of, namely one’s affects. One is constructed in these transitions and through these encounters: one *is* not, one *becomes* a series of not-ones, to the infinite power.

We could rethink this with various brands of secular spirituality. I prefer to think of becoming as the necessary death of the self, understood as the social clearing house of conventions, a by-product of *potestas*, or institutionalization processes. The dislocation of the social self brings the subject to some point of evanescence, which may cost one’s immediate social identity, but in return one undergoes a qualitative leap towards an enlarged and empowered sense of what one is indeed capable of becoming. It is a qualitative leap towards a sustainable future. Deleuze talks about it as an eruption of the future: an event. He also distinguishes the time of the event from linear, historical time. An eruption of the event entails a dislocation of time,²² but it has the paradoxical quality of something that takes place between the “no longer” and the “not yet.” By disrupting the time sequence, the event makes it impossible to identify with and hence name any substantive content. The event is an act or occurrence for which there is no immediate

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representation. Becoming is the path and the trace of this event. It is impossible to locate the act of becoming either in relation to the past or in relation to the future as we know it. In that state the individual that desired is already gone and the one who would welcome it, is not yet here. It is a paradox of subjectivity at the height of its process of becoming-other than itself.

This process of becoming-imperceptible is the redefinition of spaces of interrelation and of the time frame that accompanies them. Loyal to my habits, I see it as the other, the nomadic face of feminist politics: the eruption of a "virtual feminine" as a singular universal that accomplishes a qualitative leap towards the affirmation of positivity. No longer the Molar "Woman," not yet the singular universal in its fullness, it is the site of a qualitative transformation—the non-place where the "no longer" and the "not yet" reverse into each other, unfolding-out and enfolding-in their respective "outsides." This short-circuits linear time and causes a creative conflagration. It propels a leap of faith and as such it is an act that has no place. Becoming is a way of configuring the leap itself, the actual process of transmutation of values which will propel us out of the void of critical negativity into the paradoxically generative void of full affirmation. At that point of becoming, all a subject can do is mark her/his assent and respectfully merge with it. Some call it adoration, but that would be altogether another trip.

York City. <http://www.whitney.org/2002biennial/>.

40. Online interview with the curator of the Biennial.

41. <http://www.maryflanagan.com/collection.htm>.

42. The term "posthuman" means the human condition evoked or fabricated by modernity. "Posthumanism" is above all a "point of view," as suggested by N. Kath Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). In this point of view, the human body is understood as a prosthesis and can, therefore, be equally imagined as simulated by artificial devices such as AI. As a result, biological embodiment is seen as an "accident of history" (p. 2), and consciousness an "epiphenomenon" or "minor sideshow" (p. 2). Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston have claimed before that the posthuman condition "upon us" in our Western culture at the turn of the new millennium. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingstone, *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1.

Chapter 9
ALLEGRO, MA NON TROPPO:
ON FEMINIST BECOMINGS
(Rosi Braidotti)

1. See Luce Irigaray, *Spéculum De l'autre femme/Speculum of the Other Woman* (Paris: Minuit, 1974); trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), *Ce qui n'en est pas un/This Sex Which Is Not One* (Paris: Minuit, 1977); trans. Cath Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), and *L'éthique de la différence sexuelle: An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Paris: Minuit, 1984); trans. Carolyn Burke & Gillian (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

2. See Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject In Post-Modern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

3. See Vivian Sobchack, "Beating the Meat/Surviving the Test or How to Get Out of This Century Alive," in *Body and Society* 1 (1995): 209-214.

4. See Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

5. See Jean-François Lyotard, *L'Inhumain. Causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988).

6. See Susan Squier, "Reproducing the Posthuman Body: Ectogenetic Fetus, Surrogate Mother, Pregnant Man," in *Posthuman Bodies*, eds. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 113-134.

7. See Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. Female_Meets_Oncomouse?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

8. See Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey, *Global Nature, Global Culture* (London: Sage, 2000).

9. See Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingstone, *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
10. Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); English translation: "Discourse on Language" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
11. See Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991).
12. See Keith Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).
13. See Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* (London: Profile Books 2002).
14. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).
15. See Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), 295-338.
16. See Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
17. See Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000).
18. See Kathy Acker, "The End Of The World Of White Men," in *Posthuman Bodies*, eds. Judith M. Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 57-73.
19. See Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1999).
20. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie, vol. I / Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Paris: Minuit, 1972); trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), and *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie, vol. II / A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Paris: Minuit, 1980); trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
21. See Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992).
22. I am grateful to Paul Patton for clarifying this point during the 2002 symposium in Rotterdam.

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"*Intermedialities* is a stunning collection of prestigious international scholars from various disciplines reflecting on the in-between, or interval, so crucial to imaging an ethics of difference and a politics of transformation. The essays in this collection go to the heart of current discussions in continental theory about the relationship between identity and difference."
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Bringing together an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars, *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics* is a comprehensive collection devoted to the new field of research called "intermedialities." The concept of intermedialities stresses the necessity of situating philosophical and political debates on social relations in the divergent contexts of media theories, avant-garde artistic practices, continental philosophy, feminism, and political theory.

The "intermedial" approach to social relations does not focus on the shared identity but instead on the epistemological, ethical, and political status of inter (being-in-between). At stake here are the political analyses of new modes of being-in-common that transcend national boundaries, the critique of the new forms of domination that accompany them, and the search for new emancipatory possibilities. Opening a new approach to social relations, intermedialities investigates not only engagements between already constituted positions but even more the interval, antagonism, and differences that form and decenter these positions. Consequently, in opposition to the resurgence of cultural and ethnic particularisms and to the leveling of difference produced by globalization, the political and ethical analysis of the "in-between" enables a conception of community based on difference, exposure, and interaction with others rather than on an identification with a shared identity.

Investigations of "in-betweenness," both as medium specific and between heterogeneous "sites" of inquiry, range here from philosophical conceptuality to artistic practices, from the political circulation of money and power to the operation of new technologies. They inevitably invoke the crucial role of embodiment in creative thought and collective acting. As a mediating instance between the psyche and society, matter and spirit, nature and culture, and biology and technology, the body is another interval forming and informed by socio-linguistic relations. As these complex intersections between media, materiality, art, and the philosophy and politics of the in-between suggest, the project of intermedialities provides new ways of rethinking relations among arts, politics, and science.

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ISBN 978-0-7391-2735-3



9780739127353