

FROM THE RABBIT HOLE YOU MAKE THE RULES!

Claudia Borgna



Fig.1 Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les Hasards Heureux de l'Escarpolette*, 1767-1769. Oil on canvas, 81 cm × 64.2 cm. Wallace Collection, London, United Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The way I like to honour my references of support is with emotional gratefulness, joy and with deepest respect for their author's labour. It is with heartfelt pleasure that I thank Jennifer Heath – writer, curator, pen friend and impactful mentor – for sharing her library with the gift of Carolyn Merchant's *Death of Nature*.

Thank you, Verónica Reyes – poet and partner – for opening up my perspective to Chicana and lesbian literature and for introducing me to Gloria Anzaldúa, Alice Walker and many others authors' works and ways of being.

I thank my mum, Ute Kusch, for all her teachings, especially in *naturalness* and for her hard-core infinite love, which reminds me:

Thank you nature for all the rabbit holes, for the earth, the air, the water, for all the flowers and the beauty that forges and sustains – life.

Thank you to my professors.

To Valeria Gennaro Lerda, the liveliest force I have ever encountered and a role model since my first American history class in 1994.

To Karen Moss for her support and patience in putting up with my rabbit holes.

To Annetta Kapon for opening up in comprehensible and humane terms the world of theory and for being a supporting beam of light.

To Kathrin Burmester for the depth of her commitment. Her passion for theoretical analysis has been inspirational and our discussions another eye opener in understanding art, theory and pedagogy.

To Renée Petropoulos for boosting up the scrambled wacky side in me.

To Dana Duff for her sculptural spirituality.

To Sara Deleiden for her insightful voice that from within academia has encouraged and reassured me that to trust my timing, my body, my senses and my pleasure is ok.

To Andrea Bowers' wonderful energetic support: thank you for advocating and believing in me and for not giving up in trying to resurrect my hopeless self-confidence.

To Suzanne Lacy for her hard-core agenda and pioneering vision; thank you for making me cry! Alice Walker's title could not be a more appropriate and felt one to me; I quote from her book *In Search for Our Mothers Gardens*:

“And who can express the magic that is Jane Cooper's instructions? Helen Lynd I always think of as a tulip. Red Orange. Fragile yet sturdy. Strong. Muriel Rukeyser I perceive as an amethyst, rich and deep. Purple. Full of mystical changes, moods and spells. But Jane Cooper was always a pine tree. Quiet, listening, true. Like the tree you adopt as your best friend when you're seven. Only dearer than that for having come through so many storms, and still willing to offer that listening and that peace.

These women were Sarah Lawrence's gifts to me. And when I think of them, I understand that each woman is capable of truly bringing another women into the world. This we must all do for each other.”¹

Hélène Cixous has been the starting point of this investigation followed by Carolyn Merchant inspirational book: *Death of Nature* that together with Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* – in whose words I totally identify with – and bell hooks's *Feminism for Everybody* – the most inspirational book on feminism I have read – all form the ground upon which this thesis sprouted from. Their words and teaching will grow, in different forms, inside me forever. Once again Alice Walker's words are most appropriate to reiterate how I feel about these authors: “Afraid of little intimidated by none, Muriel Rukeyser the poet and Muriel Rukeyser the Prophet-person. The truth-doer taught me that it's possible to live in this world on your own terms. If it had not been for her I might never have found courage.”²

¹ Alice Walker, *In Search for Our Mothers Gardens: Prose* (New York: Harcourt Incl., 1983), 53.

² *ibid.*

Also Shiva Vandana, Jane Bennet, Jane Blocker, Franco Bifo Berardi, Brian Massumi and Erich Fromm, have all contributed to this reflection that certainly needs further expansion and more in depth analysis. The artists who have visually inspired and guided me through this path are Ana Mendieta, Guillermo Gómez Peña, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, although recently I have discovered the work of Lily van der Stokke and of Noah Purifoy whose *Outdoor Desert Art Museum* has led to another realization. I quote from his catalogue: “I hope my work provides inspiration for a person to do today what they couldn’t do yesterday, no matter what it is. That’s art. That’s the fundamental creative process and it’s something that changes people and empowers them.”³

Ultimately, I am deeply thankful to all the artists I have come across, for each one of them has taught me something precious. Whether directly or indirectly, in an immediate or belated course, their works have, bit-by-bit, unveiled different worlds to me. Above all I am learning that no judgement or critique, or theory, can make any artwork less meaningful or valuable. Just like seeds, no artwork is ever superior or inferior, the same way one’s life is not superior or inferior to another. Every life seeks attention for it needs to be nurtured; likewise artworks seek love too. In the end I think it comes all down to that. How much hard work does the act of love require? How many paths do we walk looking to be loved and love back? As much as we like to elevate or diminish one or the other into new hierarchies of better and worse, we are only performing the inability of acknowledging and evaluate all the infinite factors that shift the world beyond our control all-around-us-all-times-all-at-once. Currently my hardest endeavour is to refrain from judgement and replace it with the simple act of acknowledgement. Acceptance is going to be my greatest and hardest challenge to dismantle my western ego and way of thinking. I live to that.

Like you, I am a force of nature, struggling with culture.

³ Noah Purifoy, <https://www.tumblr.com/search/outdoordesertartmuseum>. (accessed April 9, 2015).

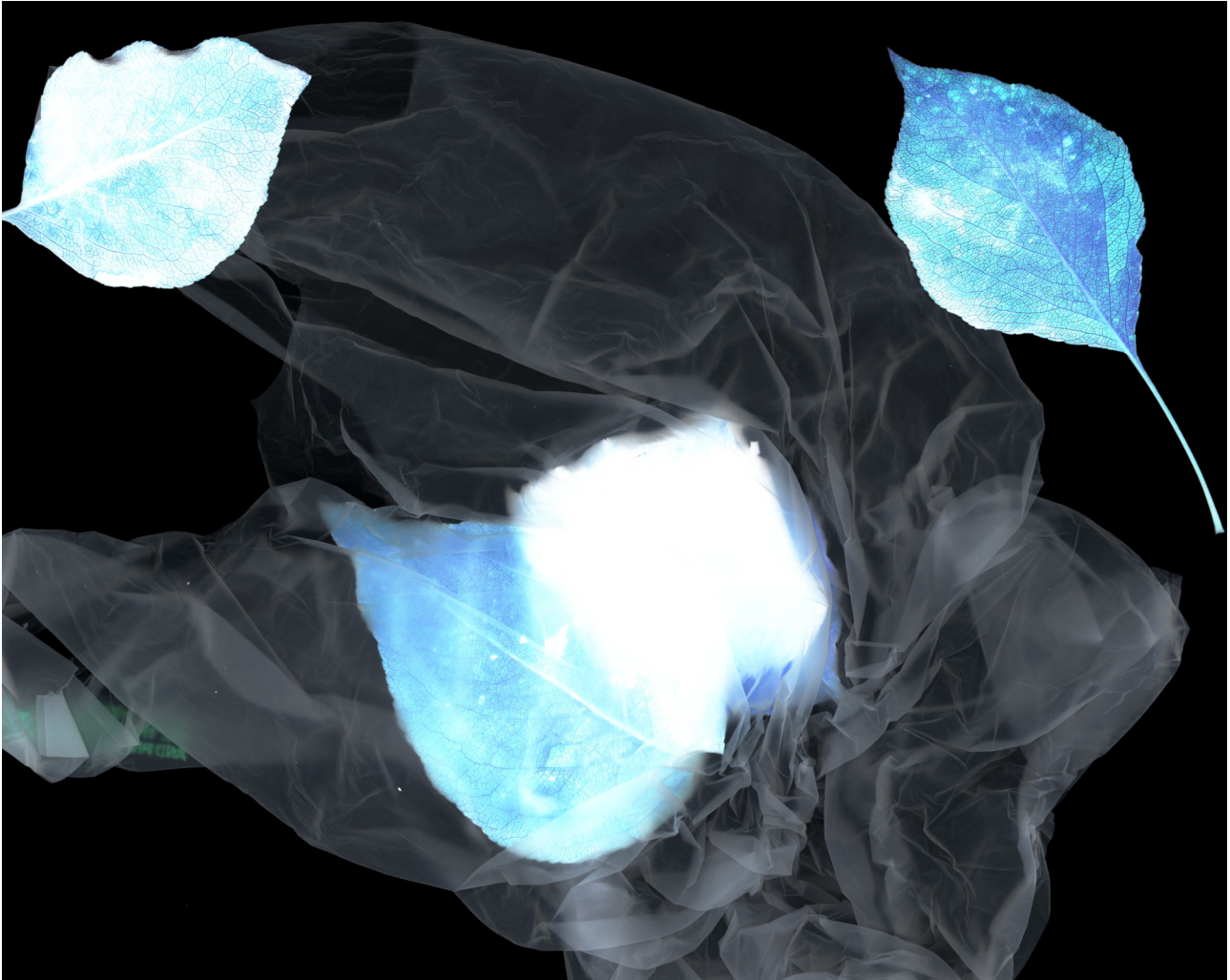


Fig. 2 Claudia Borgna, *Leave*, 2013, Digital print, 35x25cm.

While I am not a scholar but an artist instead, I have no interest in defining areas nor position myself within a definition. The desire to make art and therefore to engage with this exploration stems from the frustration towards the oppression of a system that seems to have its origins in western patriarchal language. My position is one of alienation and of anger. Above all I feel mostly torn and impotent towards issues that are affecting not just my personal and private life but are, if I may sin of presumptuousness in fact universal because of their global devastating repercussion on our precious and now precarious habitats: our environments, our bodies and our souls. Regrettably contaminated by western grammar of rhetorical thinking, I will not seek intellectual academic coded sophistication but will try to embrace and legitimize the innate qualities of my being and the knowledge in the pantry of emotions and of the senses. I will be

suspicious, of, and battling, against, “a language and representation that has limited women’s self-knowledge and expression for centuries”⁴— the phallogentric dogma. Biased by everything that is spontaneous, organic, intuitive and impulsive, my prejudices are against technology, rules of control and authoritarian structures. If any, my methodology will be a visceral – call it ovarian – one that stems from within, seeking change from within. I hope for an intimate and embarrassing process that does not resist gravity and whose kinetic effects will magnetize towards the desire to reclaim a humane and compassionate lifestyle, respectful of all forms of life and of being.

This exercise will provide me with an opportunity to account for my late exploration of feminist⁵ theories and particularly of eco-feminism⁶, while unearthing my transition from feminine to lesbian to feminist consciousness. I can only forecast an intimate reflection caught in between

⁴ Ann Rosalind Jones, “Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of “L’Ecriture Feminine,” *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 2, (1981): 259.

⁵ Paraphrasing from bell hooks’ *Feminism for Everybody*, feminism is a movement to end sexism, exploitation and oppression and to finally appreciate our differences without judgement or competition. Feminism advocates for a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibilities. Feminism is a resistance movement, which valorises spiritual practice, self-love and self-acceptance. Feminism is a way of thinking, a state of being. It teaches the love for justice and freedom, it fosters the affirmation of life and humanity. Feminism is not anti-male but is against patriarchal attitude. I don’t want what white men have, but I want to be liberated from patriarchal logic and from the peer pressure of greed. In order to do so women need men. Right now men are confronted with their vulnerabilities. The fear of change, of letting go of their benefits makes them passive supporter of patriarchy even when in their minds and hearts they know it’s wrong. On the other hand particularly white women, have not decolonized their thinking either in relation to racism, sexism and class elitism. Feminism is not about becoming economically prosperous; it is not about changing ones economic situation. Liberation does not mean high paying careers.

⁶ Women and nature have been united in a shared history of oppression by patriarchal western society. Ecofeminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology. The treatment of women, animals and nature are not separate, ecofeminism makes connections among not just sexism, speciesism and the oppression of nature but also other forms of social injustice, racism, heterosexism ageism, ableism, and colonialism, as part of western culture’s assault to nature while looking at how environmental degradation affects human conditions and communities. While environmentalism and feminism have been predominantly white middle class movements, ecofeminism is a multi ethnic movement where stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social and economic justice and where a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion as they are all fundamentally interconnected such as spirituality and activism, all part of ecofeminism cosmic ecology.

many contradictions that live the limbo amidst urban and rural environments, in-between culture and nature.

A dispersive research branching across different disciplines that includes readings on economy, psychology, pedagogy, politics, poetry, literature and visual art will synergize with the contents accumulated and stored in my body fat as well as in my everyday life impressions enticed by the chain reactions of disparate connection of links. In eco-feminism I've found an ally where living is the source and the process of being and theory the consequence of both. While I will be questioning progress and the hegemonic dominance of western patriarchal knowledge, I will reclaim my feminine body, the one that just knows while we think we know – the body that knows as deeply as water. To strengthen my belief and trust in my body will not provide any new enlightening theory. This will be an intimate journey into the understanding of my role as a woman and an artist in contemporary society. My challenge will be to learn how my being-woman and a nature-lover come together into an art making process that investigates the relation between culture and nature, ethics and care, while also trying to discern the hypocritical position of being an artist that uses the natural environment as a subject matter. Despite the fact that I have nothing new or revolutionary to state, I will try to unnerve this thesis with a pervasive sense of anxiety, anxiety embodied in my everyday chores. My beliefs are anchored in Carolyn Merchant's eco-feminism theoretical pillar *The Death of Nature*. Merchant powerfully and convincingly portrays the historic connection between the domination of nature and women and the formation of our modern world and its implications for our lives today. All along I will be envisioning the works of Ana Mendieta, Hélène Cixous, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Gloria Anzaldúa, Silvia Federici, bell hooks, from which I will draw courage and inspiration to say and hopefully be what I stand for. Another main reference point will be my mother and her teachings that arise from her womanhood experience, and of course my own relation to nature and to my own female body.

“How does maternal tenderness or undemanding empathy threaten the master?”⁷ Audre Lorde once said: “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”⁸ This credo has guided my research and my actions so far. I am interested in understanding the female role – her cultural training and her disciplining the natural and social environments as well as my utilitarian domesticated creativity of “domestic sorceress.” Housekeeping, care taking and domestic economy will run parallel and intertwine with how natural wild ecological systems have turned into carefully domesticated, managed and engineered – industrial productive, predictable and profitable – bio-systems. In a non-pragmatic way I will react against capitalism and the values of an exhausted ideology that is often confusing because it plays with my doubts and my insecurities, whereas my body knows that man-made artificiality has well crossed its line. Animated by instrumental reason, the artificial is human’s most potent dominant ability to manipulate the world and progress. Instrumental operational reason, assisted by increasing technological power, is destroying the last remnants of nature without any moral or ethical sentiment. Consequently, it is vital to understand the artificial limits and to see where enlightenment conflates with technical domination of nature and social domination of people. The core of western reason has been to overcome the primitive forces of my body, and my senses are rebelling against it. I am not convinced of the way we’re living. I know that there is more to life than just technology, domination and power that generate waste. I am convinced that compassion, intimacy, caring and the pleasures radiating from such loving gestures will be much more beneficial for all kinds, human and non. This “non-thesis,” better describable as an intersection of links, will be extreme like a hurricane caused by climate change, romantically redundant, and passionately angry. Enough of the bureaucracy of fear that for centuries has been instilled in our genes by the rules of bipolar patriarchal corporate governments and institutions cloning us into Freudian schizophrenic machines!

⁷ Jones, “Writing the Body,” 257.

⁸ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 110.

Overall I wish, not for narcissistic insight, but for a creative collective confrontation; ecology, just like pedagogy, being never singular but a common concern that connects global threads to individual lives. Although affected in different ways, nature and women from all backgrounds share the same patriarchal oppression, a position, I think, that is not totalizing but unifying.

Through feminist theory, I look forward to untangle personal and political questions for a coalition between bodies, the environment and art where body, nature and culture intersect for a political cause that for once is not instrumentalized.

Some of the questions that I will encounter will engage with my hypocritical role as a woman and an artist. Are women and artists accomplices to the institution of patriarchal structure? How “to overcome verbal hesitancy induced in women by a society in which men have had the first and the last word?”⁹ How to engage in an aesthetic of the senses, of affect and of ethical compassion? Are women beneficiaries of progress and of the earth? Are women actors, possibly accomplices in the storyline of upward progress of the dominant narratives of colonialism and imperialism that have helped to shape western culture since the 17th century at the expenses of nature, women and minorities? As tasks are multiplying, piling up in the overwhelming struggle for liberation, does women’s psychic exhaustion caused by the imposition of historical roles prevent us to care for nature – contemporary women too sucked into capitalism’s spiral? Is it up to a female sensitivity, not only to nurture, but also to clean up the environmental and social mess created by male logic? Does the Mother Nature imagery support feminist’s environmental agenda?

Here, in Los Angeles, on a journey of realization. Here to assess my misjudgements, confronting my prejudices, I’ll try to widen my bleached western horizon.

⁹ Jones, “Writing the Body,” 259.



Fig. 3 Claudia Borgna, *Beauty Parlor Series*, 2015, Still from video, 00:02:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNFA2S0fSSg>.

Like a cloud taken by a wind of exploration, I will travel inconclusive encounters. Unexpected, and yet surprisingly familiar, a series of introductions are the beginning of a venture. Like the sudden bang on a gong announcing life, an introduction is “a pebble thrown into a pond or an electric current sent through a wire or neural network: it vibrates and merges with other currents to affect and be affected.”¹⁰ An encounter of a body affecting another body, unfolding sensations as it goes into action, unthinking, an introduction activates the foreplay of the senses while unveiling each other’s surprise. An introduction, being the senses’ unravelling of time, cannot be rushed. An untimely disclosure, an introduction is in conflict with any finite conclusion, openness being its main trait at the mercy of its own essence of chance. Introduction are the “poetics of endless and most of all undecided and unpredictable interpretations.”¹¹

¹⁰ Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 32.

¹¹ Susanna Ferweda, “The Force of Literature as Philosophy’s Other. Hélène Cixous’s Writing in the Margin of Philosophy,” *Accademia.edu*, September 2014, http://www.academia.edu/3776861/The_Force_of_Literature_as_Philosophys_Other_H%C3%A9l%C3%A8ne_Cixouss_Writing_in_the_Margins_of_Philosophy. (accessed October 26, 2014).

Quick and intuitive like brush strokes, introductions are sketches for an “impressionist-expressionist” painting to form a mosaic that like a Deleuzian assemblage is governed by the magnet of its circumstantial cluster of moods, feelings, sensations, perceptions, pain, joy, affect, people, weather, affordance, energy, chance: by nature. An introduction is the reflex of an unintended impulse, an action fed by motions and emotions. Each introduction—both inside and outside of a body—verges towards some visceral force. Random, each introduction grows organically between the conscious and the unconscious into a passage of perpetual becoming, as I write as you read. Caught in a mutual sense of surprise and curiosity I am introducing myself-to yourself- and-to-myself. Introductions are a glimpse of hope.

Introductions cannot be made linear by analytical language. All at once—happening. It’s impossible to see the sea in one glance. Yet—just like anything else—it exists all at once.

Captured rather than capturing, introductions are sparks generated by a handshake forecasting a hug about to be improvised by life. Introductions are precarious and to be continued.



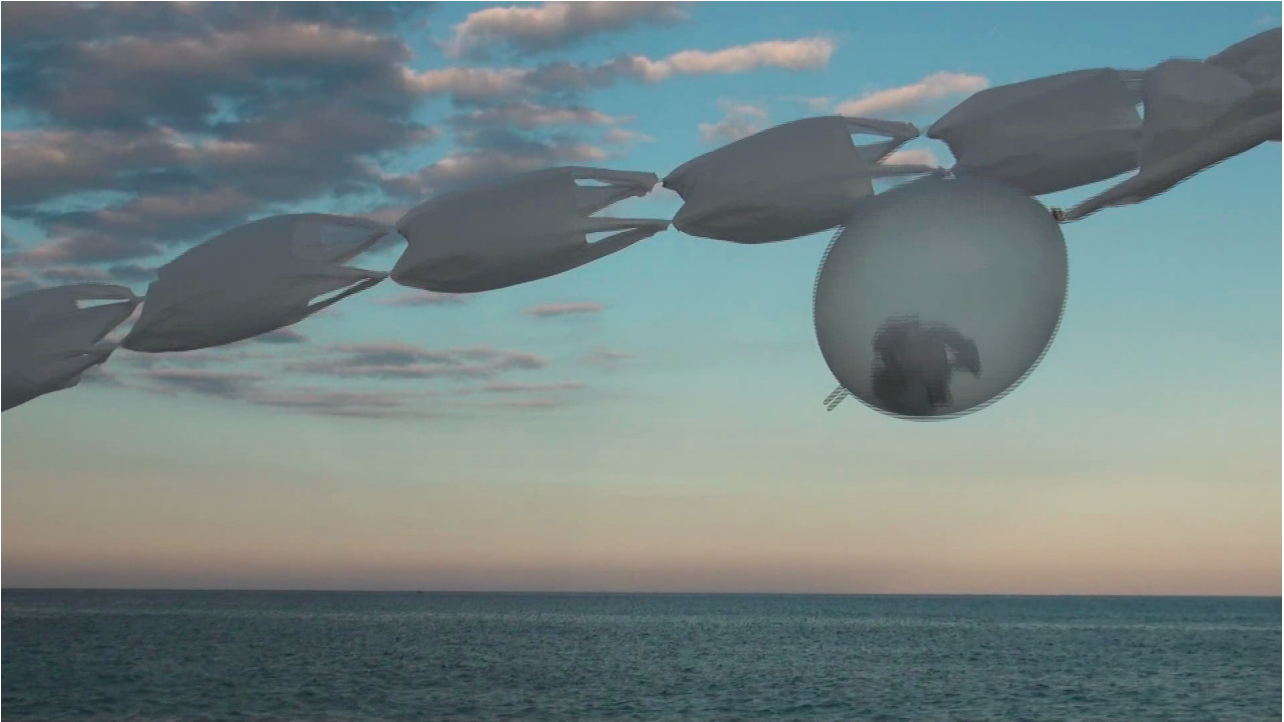


Fig. 4-5 Claudia Borgna, *Waiting Room*, 2013, Stills from video, 00:08:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO-kSS2oRIE>.

“...calling to mind a childhood sense of the world, filled with all sorts of animate beings a good starting point for thinking beyond the life matter binary, the dominant organizational principle of adult experience.”¹²

When I think of my childhood I think of nature. I think of how I perceived earth, sand and water. How exciting and special that was: to be part of the whole! Back then I never thought of nature, I did not have to. I acted nature. My body thought for me. The intelligence of the senses responded to my surroundings, enacting their existence, performing life.

Baking with mud, cooking with air and imagination, I used to prepare magic potions out of herbs and concoct perfumes out of leaves and petals. Busy like a bee, I was seriously occupied decorating my rudimental kitchens, as well as my body, with ornaments made out of flowers and earth. These were primitive activities that gave meaning to my childhood and impressed the essence of my life. The excitement of play was to immerse myself into a world animated by grasshoppers, spiders, lady bugs, dragon and fire flies, bees and bird, lizards and frogs. Now and then I had to cross path with

¹² Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, 20.

asnake or had to put up with a scorpion or two. The principle of discovery was of mutual respect that established boundaries that would keep those games fair and infinite. Out of that logic arose a beautiful sensation, the marvel of freedom that nourished the emotive desire for care and love. The question of equality did not seem to exist due to the absence of hierarchical superiority. Fascinated with primordial living, my play was guided by some sort of affordance philosophy where unpredictable, improvised, intelligent decisions were based on the availability of materials. Ideas were dictated by necessity, forms and aesthetics determined by the need to fit an ecological niche. Is primordial living a dismissible child fantasy of no importance because it threatens the Western idea of progress with that of poverty? Sourcing directly from the well of inner knowledge of life and of survival that connects to the natural realm, I was enchanted by uncomplicated magic simplicity and kept my primal habitats, made of a sky room, beautifully decorous and above all porous with my surroundings that so generously provided shelter for my games.

Creating primitive safe environments and looking after them was still my favourite game, even after I moved to the city. Somehow to look after something seemed to be as much fun as to create them. Rescuing a fallen bird's nest, to protect its eggs, or tidying up other children's toys gave special purpose to my perceptual learning.

Technology came into my games in the form of a bike. The best game ever, it provided a mobile structure to dress with found materials into a hut protecting and containing an imaginary lifestyle. For most of my teenager years I skipped school. Hanging out in the streets I dreamt of pirates, and of a rebellious life freed from authority and punishment. Still a tender green shoot, conventions of proper ways: of behaviour, of belonging, of talking, dressing and thinking, bended my stem right and left. Targeted with all sorts of unnatural impositions, my only relief came from the existence of a role model: Pippi Longstocking.

All year I longed for the summer holiday, for the blue salty water and the sun baked sand. Hmm, that reminds me: Sand Kuechen, my favourite cake! Mostly I longed for my grandmother – being in

her garden with blooming colourful scents and crisp vegetables that perfumed her hearty warm kitchen.

Yes, my best times are when in nature. Nature has shaped my games, my thoughts and my being. It is only in nature that I am completely in tune with the world and with myself, there I feel like an intrinsic part of the whole, an existence with a sense and many senses. Only nature can really deeply touch me, move me, affect me, for nature does not critique or judge for nature does not theorize!

Redundantly romantic for a primordial living I never liked technology. I never liked math either – what is the point of tossing nature inside numbers? It’s like smashing a body inside a pair of tight jeans. Locked up with a zipper – my breath branded by fashion: ‘Roy Rogers’.

Bicycles to me were the most useful and advanced technology that could exist! I love bikes and the kinetic, self-sufficient, independent feel that comes from the simple motor-action of cycling. A nostalgic teenager preoccupied to preserve Carl Larsson’s idyllic rural landscapes, I dreamt of a world filled with flowers, frogs, horses, donkeys and bikes. A street rascalion, my days weaved outdoor life with the domestic one while “refining” my survival skills as a woman. All around – both at home and on the street – I was surrounded by the rules of abuse. Despite the desire bursting for defiance, I fulfilled those patriarchal expectations—to please. Repressing all frustration into depression, I learned how to tiptoe around authority instead.

Instructed into my woman’s role, I inherited a form of life that was transmuted down by the patriarchal system: a lineage of women, grandmothers and mothers, whose essence, confidence and self-esteem had been beaten out of their bodies into low-bone-density. Constant guarding and the methodology of tiptoeing, which entail the sharpening of all the senses in order to forecast, predict and circumnavigate danger, became my true skills.

My mum’s most precious gift—other than the greatest one of love—is her education on the beauty and the truth of nature.

Nature is where my mum found shelter and joyful moments too. Nature was the welcoming refuge where together we could cry-sing-laugh. There my mum could assess her humanity, regain perspective on what is right and wrong, recharge her courage, squeeze strength and hope out of pain. In the woods or on a field of flowers there was time and love, only tainted by the fear of loss. It's the infinite sadness of loss and not the Lacanian lack that governs my emotions. I could not care less for a phallus defying gravity to point out its rational, keeping everything aligned up in captivity. It's the thought of loss of love and of my mum that disables and destabilizes me. Coming into the land of freedom and progress I was shocked to find out that the word "DIRT" described what to that point I called la terra or die Erde. How could the earth that provided for my childhood games, the earth that supports every breath, be dirty and soil anything at all? What is the rationale behind such "ground-breaking" language?

Living in urban environments soiled by pollution and dirtied by waste, I have become afraid of my best friends spiders and crickets; their magical world, literally vanishing in front of my very eyes. In the city I spent most of my life trying to adapt. Preoccupied with modernity, with theories, cutting edge trends, with the spirit of innovation that silently disconnects from nature, I am distancing myself from myself – and from us.

But it is in the land of plenty and of droughts that I've become aware:

'ain't no man gonna control my body my mind'
'ain't no vato gonna keep me silent!'

and they cried for all their tias, mamas y abuelas
for all the pinche abuse they have suffered...

the poet shouted one last grito de dolores
para her mamá and all the women who came before her
who carved the path and created this red road to follow
everyone stood on their feet and threw a grito con orgullo

Panocha!	Power!
Panocha!	Power!
Panocha!	Power! ¹³

¹³ Verónica Reyes, *Chopper Chopper! Poetry from Bordered Lives* (Pasadena, CA: Arktoi Books, 2013), 78-79.

Every time I switch the water on or off, I am timelessly and deeply bonded to the rest of the world through the umbilical connection of my grandmother, my mother, and the children of the future.



Fig. 6 Claudia Borgna, *SEA Agitators*, 2014, Still from video, 00:12:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pacVIQILAAy>.

“Fra il dire e il fare c’è di mezzo il mare.” The sea into words and words into water. Murky and clear is the sea’s crystalline darkness. Indeed a metaphor for life, tainted, by man. Is the literarization of the sea the contaminating agent of nature? A sea of words and a sea of wars. Words like weapons dissolve the sea. Displaced on a map – as I write, as you read – form and content fade on my screen as pixels disperse the sheets – wasted paper wasting space – as I write, as you read. What language does the sea speak? The sea chants, roars, splashes, and rustles, rocks and whispers. The sea speaks thousands tongues that hum the poetry of silence. I close my eyes and listen: I hear the unsaid and the unwritten. Distinct and vague like water, I hear the force of freedom. Can you hear it too? The vital stream? Perfectly still, yet timelessly moving. A perfect body, the sea does not stand still because it nourishes life. Limitless and formless, the sea breaks the binary of silence and speech into an invisible sacred bond. Its force holds infinite truths where the essence of the universe

bleeds into the essence of humanity – the former affirming the latter and the latter confining the former.

Washed away inside a tidal wave drift, no thoughts – “able to resist other thoughts. Lost beside yourself and continue getting lost, become the panicky movement of getting lost, then, that’s when, where you’re unwoven weft, flesh that lets strangeness come through, defenceless being, without resistance, without batten, without skin, inundated by otherness”¹⁴— I loose human order and control.

Well beneath the ocean’s earth whispers swell from the inside to the outside and splash into an unthinking realm. Domesticated, restrained by words, castrated by culture, the sea scares to dare what is only natural. “To be afraid is the condition of loving knowledge,” says Hélène Cixous but in the end isn’t everything that we don’t know that really matters?

An incapable corrupted interpreter, I, advocate for the sea while polluting, right now, as I write, as you read, never really transcending, what? Like the sea, I too, am governed by the moon, the hormonal tide unleashing the force to “write like a hysteric and use a dyslexic dialect to overcome the limits of logo-centrism, words and language no longer regarded the fundamental expression of external reality.”¹⁵ Drifting, further away, inside and beyond Virginia’s stream of consciousness, transported and transformed by illogic a-logic subjectivity.

Not defined by phallogocentric definitions, the sea exists outside logic and thrives on its unsensical realm. Only the senses can fathom what words can’t and one could either fall in love or get seasick, let go or resist the currents crossing the fluid non-structure.

A pirate can either dominate the sea or get shipwrecked; a mermaid could translate the choppy sea into prose, but how to write about the sea in a language that dilutes its essence disembodimenting its very nature? How to contain the sea on a page? We would have to dissect it by taking it all apart. Separate its million molecules into something other. Its vastness broken apart and confined into

¹⁴ Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Read and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Signs* 1, no. 4, (1976): 875-893.

human logic, theorized, enclosed, coded, regulated, subjugated, manipulated. 1,370 million cubic kilometres of water caged into a blue zip file. Like compressed air, canned and ready for consumerist culture. Rendered lifeless, fragmentized, data never really capturing the whole, simply incapable of grasping the infinite openness.

Reason and words dictate the grammar of control, a language that no longer communicates but dominates. We've dared to grammaticalize the sea and impose an imposturous language that no longer speaks of love nor cares to do so. Refined from all nutrients, words miss "il sale della vita" and nullify the sea.

While we are constantly trying to define and redefine ourselves, prove our identities, the sea has no sex, no gender, no race, no class, no age, no theory, no politics, no god. The sea "does not contain, it carries, it does not hold back, it makes possible."¹⁶ The sea is communion. The sea creates the energy that we consume – relentlessly – daily performing its chores. One day Neptune, the spirit of betrayal, came, and dominated the sea.



Fig. 7 Claudia Borgna, *Why Do You Want to Stop the Sea Inside Me?*, 2014, Still from video, 00:12:32, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXIKIyu87Fk>.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

Every time I come back home, to patriarchy

Every time I leave home, to patriarchy

Embodied, embedded, bottled, boxed, packaged: I am its “Russian Doll.”

“Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable and unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through culture.”¹⁷

“Anthropologists have pointed out that nature and women are both perceived to be on a lower level than culture which has been associated symbolically and historically to men.”¹⁸ Race, class, gender, are words, like symbols, they are influential transformers. Exclusive and discriminative use of western masculine symbols and rhetoric have been internalized and embodied by social conducts limiting our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society.

As human interaction with nature is reflected in literature, how has literacy affected humankind’s relationship to the natural world? As all reality, including nature, is discursively constructed, how do our metaphorical expressions influence the way we treat it? Do women write about nature differently than men? Are women moralities different than men? What is the relationship of non-western languages to nature? Does language exist outside nature?

“The environment is an idea that is created through discourse. The decline of nature is both discursive and material. While discourse does indeed shape our human conceptions of the world around us, discourse itself arises from a biosphere that sustains life; while discourse ‘creates’ the world in the human mind, the biospheric physical environment is the origin of life and consequently of human mind itself. The diversity and richness of language reflect the diversity of the world in which such language arises. So in effect, preserving natural ecosystems is important to the fullness, depth and precision of our discourse. In a sense,

¹⁷ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 38.

¹⁸ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 144.

humans occupy two spaces: a biosphere consisting of the earth and its atmosphere, which supports our physical existence and a semiosphere, consisting of discourse which shapes our existence and allows us to make sense of it. These two central spheres of human life – the biosphere and the semiosphere – are mutually dependent. Whereas a healthy biosphere is one that supports a variety of symbiotic life forms, a healthy semiosphere is one that enables differences to coexist and be articulated. In both a material and a discursive sense, differences are a critical measure of a system's health.”¹⁹

In other words human culture is tightly connected to the physical world affecting it and affected by it. The environmental dilemma is a problem generated by language. So far our rhetoric has defined human species separate from nature and is responsible for the nature-culture split that shapes our relationships amongst humans. Oppressive hegemonies manifest themselves through dominant discourse. How we transgress those oppressive constructs and how we survive in them is a matter of discursive manoeuvring. According to Merchant's *Death of Nature*, rational control over nature was achieved by redefining language through the new machine metaphor. Artificially illuminated theories structure our social consciousness. Mechanical theories conceptualize nature in ways to make its operation intelligible and controllable using logic and rhetoric as forms of coercion creating ethics that sanction the exploitation of nature and only benefit capitalist knowledge. “Through vivid metaphors they transformed nature from teacher to a slave”²⁰ legitimizing exploitation and rape.

Not longer the language of bodies, of images, of sounds – obsolete sensorial languages, but the language of the word, the written word that in western societies commands power. Words over minds over bodies, determine our feelings-thoughts-actions that affect the world's decaying environment. Have we forgotten that words are just and only a tool? Words: a tool to describe the practice of our actions where human meaning assembles. Words and power, containers for content.

¹⁹ Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weisser, “Breaking ground in Eco-composition: Exploring Relationships Between Discourse and Environment,” *College English* 64, no. 5 (2002): 566-575.

²⁰ Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 169.

How to generate a shift of heart, of guts and therefore of knowledge? I think of oral languages versus written language. So far the rule of the written word has been an imposition of order and control, not embracing diversity of meaning, of knowledge and of different forms of energies. In an eco-feminist outburst I think we need to revive our ‘mother’ tongues and ears, the ones that have been ruthlessly exterminated by the patriarchal word – the dominant political, social, economic and aesthetic language. As thousand of languages are disappearing – relentlessly absorbed by Anglo-homogenization progress – it is interesting to observe that the dying languages are the ones most closely connected to nature. Nor heard or listened to, the language of nature is dying as we speak. Born into a language of constriction we are forced to speak in an alienated language, a language of death because it cannot understand nature. Yet it is from the dictionary of life and nature that we draw and extract our words.

How then craft a language that gives a different and truly diverse worldview? How can language be used to change the marginal position of nature and people? How to rewrite a new grammar and choose new ecological verbs that act in symbiosis with nature? How to go from sensations to words when we have no sensorial reference to nature and when most sensations are generated by the interaction with the Internet? How to create then an ecological literacy?

By creating yet another binary, “brain research over the last generation has confirmed the difference between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Our left hemisphere is the place where language is generated and received. It serves a linguistic consciousness with which we describe and think about the world. On the other side, our silent right brain hemisphere serves an unconscious awareness that cannot be coded in language.”²¹ As our bodies are comprised of over 70% water, could we behave and think like water? While language has its limitation as 90% of communication is non-verbal and non-visual, could change happen through our use of language? Will this society be able to construct a new vocabulary of images and sounds for a new ecological discourse?

²¹ John Stanley, “Buddhism and the Unconscious,” *Huffington Post*, June 8, 2012.

If words were made by hand – made out of earth – like mountains made out of time, would they be more meaningful? From physical to abstract, never fully captured but artfully expressed and only partly understood, words fail to disclose – but rather withhold – the mystery of nature, whilst lives extinguish in million translations. Uncanny, wild and integral, life's essence is to resist human understanding and control.



Fig. 8 Claudia Borgna, *Early Tomato*, 2015, Still from video, 00:05:09.

As I try to change my inherited thinking, I surrender and contribute to the mutation of words subjected to the many vocabularies I encounter. As I am concerned of how my behaviours affect the environment, I am concerned how the language of cultural production has been shaping my behaviours.²² In dominant public sphere – a locus of injustice and therefore of struggle – actions of cultural survival construct a mainstream discourse where the social is ever more disconnected from the natural. In our everyday language of thinking and acting, humans are the main centre of the universe and have priority above all. As humans, we understand relations with the world in a dangerously narrow and self-centred anthropomorphic way. How to move away from these homocentric models where nature is not taken seriously? Could I choose to live a countercultural

²² Not just the relationship with the social context but also the relationship with the self – with the bodily, intimate and biological natural self – shaped by the language of dominant discourse.

lifestyle? How to refuse the anthropocentrism that reduces the cosmos to human – whether agency, meaning or social context – limitations? We live in a system where patriarchy decides on behalf of the universe. Its systematic domination over nature, accepted, normalized and naturalized, is yet the redundant perpetrator of exploitation. If nature is exploited so will the “other”.



Fig. 9 Claudia Borgna, *Who is Thinking Beyond Us?* 2014, Digital image.

*“Capitalism is a system based on the principle of individual rights. Politically, it is the system of laissez faire (freedom). Legally it is a system of objective laws (rule of law as opposed to rule of man). Economically, when such freedom is applied to the sphere of production its result is the free market.”*²³

System, base, principle, right, laissez faire, legal, laws, result, are fitting terms that portray the effects of capitalist society.

²³ <http://capitalism.org/>. (accessed January 5, 2015).

Like 75% of the world's population, a people of migrants,²⁴ I am bilingual. English is in fact my third language after Italian and German. I also speak some Spanglish and a bit of French; I am familiar with Arabic and understand the Piemontese and Ligurian dialects. Although I am not a linguist, I am language sensitive. The quote describing capitalism, through morphological, phonetic, semantic, etymological, onomatopoeic and intuitive means, alerts all the senses of my body that inform my prejudices. Despite the fact that I have been educated to “like” capitalism, each of those terms, come together like surreal elements in a Dada painting formation. When reading those words I envision: a standing action on a foundational pedestal that elevates a principal prince who divides and separates invisible indivisible particles in proper, straight – for heaven's sake not bent – moral erections, all finally tied up into a non-caring knot measured by fixed rules. Nonsensical? The outcome is capitalism where laissez faire interestingly equals freedom or better deregulated greed. In the dictionary, instead, I read: capitalism, an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owner for profit rather than by the state. According to Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* the introduction of public assistance was the realization of the unsustainability of capitalism. The creation of public assistance and therefore of a new social science became a necessity to counterbalance a regime based on slavery, discrimination and on the destruction of communalities. A system that ruled by means of hunger and terror had to resort to a mediating guarantor. The state was established with the task to oversee class relations and the disciplining of people. Could humans ever live and thrive in the absence of law? Law, the system of rules that a community or country “recognizes” as regulating the actions of its members enforced by imposition of penalties. Does the law of capitalism govern us? Is law capitalism and capitalism the law as governments become “corporated”?

²⁴ At the start of the 20th century, almost 75% of the world's land surface was subjected to either direct colonization or some form of protected status. – Hatem Bazian, “Immigrant Crisis: The Collapse of the Post Colonial State,” *Turkey Agenda*, May 13, 2015. <http://www.turkeyagenda.com/immigration-crisis-the-collapse-of-the-post-colonial-state-part-3-2417.html>. (accessed May 20th, 2015).

So far capitalist economic democracy has been depending on slavery, discrimination, appropriation and on the depletion of natural resources, which result in the disruption of the ecosystem including its human component. Established on the production of scarcity and war—the reproduction of destruction—capitalism has only been able to reproduce itself thanks to the creation of a mesh of inequalities that have forged a globalized individualistic culture based uniquely on economics that change our human attitudes towards nature, earth and even towards ourselves. The repercussions of capitalism will go well beyond our health, our nutrition, our welfare and beyond climate change. According to Merchant, peasant’s control of natural resources for the purpose of subsistence, transitioned into capitalist control for the purpose of profit. By following traditional patterns of cooperation with nature, agrarian society and peasant communities produced a level of existence endorsed by powerful cultural norms in harmony with the earth. Industrial technological farming – agrarian capitalism—feeds an inorganic economy based on non-renewable sources instead, causing the impoverishment of rural population and consequently the formation of ever-larger urban spaces removed and disconnected from nature.

The development of capitalism could only been possible through the disciplining of the body; its goal is to transform life into labour. In order to extract the maximum work out of every individual, capitalism has to rely on intelligible, controllable, uniform and predictable forms of behaviour. Machine and technology became the homogenizing model of social behaviour. Through its evolution, capitalism has spread, intensified and diversified its strategies. From the endless exploitation of the body to that of the mind, in order to extract ever more surplus value, capitalism has appropriated and instrumentalized our affect. The production of relationships creates what Brian Massumi defines as the “socialization of capitalism.”²⁵ By hijacking affect into a social factory system that sells connectivity, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish the difference between marketing and consuming and between living and buying. The creation of a relational

²⁵ Brian Massumi, “Navigating Movements,” <http://www.brianmassumi.com/interviews/NAVIGATING%20MOVEMENTS.pdf>. (accessed, March 9, 2015), 27.

market with a relational aesthetics has professionalized our intimacy, negating the distinction between public and private functions. The phenomenon of the naturalization of capitalism has pervaded the world and the essence of our beings to such an extent that we should start talking of ontology of capitalism. Is there a way out from capitalist's grip?

On the ground of capitalist's premise of perfection based on right and wrong, regulated by the system of law and centred on the concept of punishment and on coercive blame and shame, well, according to those very own parameters, capitalism has failed. Capitalism is the source not only of people's unhappiness but the source of injustice; its greed imperative is responsible for commodifying the imagination, for rationalizing our passion, for turning fear into a virtuous habit, for killing the planet.

Whatever that might be, human's strive is for perfection. Is capitalism a Western idea of perfection? Is perfection the way for justice and for a better life for everybody? Who still believes in the fable of capitalism? I've lived it but it has left me empty and depressed. Neither right nor wrong, I believe in the perfection of imperfection. Whether right or wrong should we tolerate, compassionately accept, capitalism imperfect existence?

Capitalism continues what Christianity had started.



Fig. 10 Claudia Borgna, *Will Forever End?*, 2014, Plastic bags, wood, Site-specific installation.

I feel empowered by the by the ability to need less and to live using less. Less petroleum, less shampoo, less detergent: more cleansing.



Fig. 11 Claudia Borgna, *At the Bottom of the Bowl*, 2014, Still from video, 00:01:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wa_7WB8wa7I.

In western society human needs seem to be delimited by a capitalist economy within which consumption defines happiness.²⁶ The promotion of consumerism as the road to human progress and happiness, advocates for the practice of an ever-increasing consumption of goods while intoxicating the environment and trapping us in an endless spiral of “things that are not needed and could not be sold were it not for the ever-present influence of advertising,”²⁷ making the production of waste possible. “The sheer volume of commodities and the hyper consumptive necessity of junking them to make room for new ones, conceals the vitality of matter,”²⁸ says Bennet, but “vital materiality can never really be “thrown” away for it continues its activities even as discarded or un

²⁶ Shopping in the United States is a form of therapy, recreation, socializing, and sporting.

²⁷ Manfred Max Neef, *Economics Unmasked: from Power and Greed to Compassion and the Common Good* (Cambridge: UIT Cambridge Ltd, 2011), 82.

²⁸ Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, 5.

wanted commodity.”²⁹ And so we live our illusion of the disappearance of waste! Why is cutting down on consumption never considered a realistic option? While plastic bags – consumerism’s symbolic carriers – have been banned in several parts of the world, including California, which has recently joined the ban on single-use plastic bags, consumerism is more rampant and global than ever. In many sense positive, this ban does not address consumerism at its root. Most likely it is a “ridiculous American equation of prosperity with wanton consumption introducing the political will to create more sustainable political economies in or adjacent to global capitalism.”³⁰ The environment, commodified into a commercial concept, has been sold out and co-opted by marketing and by the phenomenon of green consumerism. Reduced to shopping decisions, justice and sustainability can be purchased at the supermarket and solved by green concepts of passive activism dictated by political agendas leaving what’s left of nature to take care of itself and looking at technology to ultimately save us.

RECIPE: Start by creating a problem. Solve the problem by using this “opportunity” to create another problem. Stir to infinity before serving very well heated so to use more resources. For more greed keep serving warm, alternatively, on a hot day, serve ice cold. For best result use GMO ingredients.

This recipe has been certified by the success committee to generate maximum amounts of pollution

You should check with your doctor immediately if any of these side effects occur:

- cough
- dark urine
- decreased appetite
- diarrhea
- diarrhea, watery and severe, which may also be bloody
- difficulty with swallowing
- dizziness
- fast heartbeat
- feeling of discomfort
- fever
- headache
- hives, itching, puffiness or swelling of the eyelids or around the eyes, face, lips, or tongue
- hives or welts, itching, or rash
- increased thirst
- inflammation of the joints
- joint or muscle pain

²⁹ *ibid*, 6.

³⁰ *ibid*, 110 -111.

- large, hive-like swelling on the face, eyelids, lips, tongue, throat, hands, legs, feet, or sex organs
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- numbness or tingling of the face, hands, or feet
- pain
- redness and soreness of the eyes
- redness of the skin
- sore throat
- sores in the mouth
- stomach cramps
- stomach pain or tenderness
- swelling of the feet or lower legs
- swollen lymph glands
- tightness in the chest
- unusual tiredness or weakness
- unusual weight loss
- back, leg, or stomach pain
- black, tarry stools
- bleeding gums
- blood in the urine or stools
- blurred vision
- bulging soft spot on the head of an infant
- change in the ability to see colors, especially blue or yellow
- chest pain, discomfort, or burning
- chills
- cracks in the skin
- decrease in vision
- difficulty breathing
- discoloration of the thyroid glands
- double vision
- general body swelling
- heartburn
- increased sensitivity of the skin to sunlight
- loss of heat from the body
- lower back or side pain
- nosebleeds
- pain or burning in the throat
- pain with swallowing
- painful or difficult urination
- pale skin
- pinpoint red spots on the skin
- rash with flat lesions or small raised lesions on the skin
- red, swollen skin
- redness or other discoloration of the skin
- redness, swelling, or soreness of the tongue
- scaly skin
- severe nausea
- severe stomach pain
- severe sunburn
- sores, ulcers, or white spots on the lips or tongue or inside the mouth
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- vomiting blood

“Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is accurate, up-to-date and complete, but no guarantee is made to that effect. In addition, the drug information contained herein may be time sensitive and should not be utilized as a reference resource beyond the date hereof. This material does not endorse drugs, diagnose patients, or recommend therapy. This information is a reference resource designed as supplement to, and not a substitute for, the expertise, skill, knowledge, and judgment of healthcare practitioners in patient care. The absence of a

warning for a given drug or combination thereof in no way should be construed to indicate safety, effectiveness, or appropriateness for any given patient. We do not assume any responsibility for any aspect of healthcare administered with the aid of materials provided. The information contained herein is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, warnings, drug interactions, allergic reactions, or adverse effects. If you have questions about the substances you are taking, check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.”³¹

Newspaperbookcomicsradiotelevisionfilmbillboardsblimpsblurbskywritigmovieshollywoodapple
cloudinternetphoneblogwindowswebemailinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinput
inputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinputinput
inininininininipppppppuuuuutputputputputppppppppppppuuuuuumillioninnnnnnpupppputtttttfe
arviolence!!!!

Concerned, not with informing us but selling, the media³² has replaced both common sense and our nervous system. Living on the surface of life and incapable of sensing, the media fears silence.

“*Culture is made by those in Power: men.*”³³

Western struggle to master life and nature, and man’s resistance to death and justice are historical processes that produce the creation of culture and of power. Power in every form is the essence of western civilization.

With the exploitation of natural resources, western culture and industrialization have fundamentally altered the character and quality of human life. A culture of work, of competition, of surveillance and control, of authority and hierarchy, western culture has idealized and legitimized a masculine style of autonomous, self-contained, invulnerable and self-sufficient identity. Relational and caring qualities are therefore relegated as weak. Consequently women’s aptitude in maintaining life and networks of relationships has been dismissed as inferior by the logic of “I am superior because I can!” An attitude that in order to impose conventional economic industrial models has caused the decimation of traditional cultures and the loss of cosmologies, languages and values that differ from the dominant culture.

³¹ Drugs.com, <http://www.drugs.com/sfx/doxy-100-side-effects.html>. (accessed May 14, 2015).

³² Advertising, media campaigns, Hollywood films, bumper stickers, billboards, systems of propaganda, studies show that Americans are now subjected to 3600 commercial impressions every day!

³³ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 38.

“Through education, scientific rationalizing tendencies, government bureaucracies, medical and legal systems, mechanical science method of philosophy created in 17th century gradually became institutionalized as a form of life in the Western world.”³⁴ Called civilization, the process of infusion of white culture values into the world, has lead to the constitutional repression of natural instincts and of many spiritual and bodily functions producing a “culture of tyranny.”³⁵

Superfluous, unnecessary, inessential, reiterating, verbose, wordy, oratorical, excessive, repetitive, profuse: history, capitalism, me.

Who is being redundant now?

Who is redundantly redundant?

Redundancy: a tool, a mean, a need, a state, asphyxiating repetitions.

Word after word, definition after definition, demolition after demolition, hypocrisy after hypocrisy.

A litany, a reiteration of information of superfluous inclusions—superfluous exclusions.

Conspicuous exclusions of additional information – to reduce errors?

Redundancy, communication, telecommunication, transmissions, computer processing: the state of being-not. The state of being no longer needed or useful.

I live in an increasingly amnesiac state, a world increasingly focused on ever-newer products and experiences – a state of abundance and redundancy.

Words, data, information, people, nature, omitted without loss of meaning or function apart from the loss of redundancy.

Made redundant, is justice redundant?

³⁴ Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 288.

³⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 38.



Fig. 12 Claudia Borgna, *Market Day*, 2014, Still from video, 00:05:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTsPVTrEm1U>.

Big Big Big, make it big; make it huge, make it large, beyond body reach, impossible to control.

Even better, make it intangible: make it a strategy for success.

Capitalist's crusade for progress and technological advancement eventually landed on the shores of globalization. Globalization is the Americanization of the world, as Guy Debord said the falsification of the globe. Globalization is the penetration of the multinational corporate economy into every nook and cranny of human life. There seems to be no resistance to the expansion of the market imperative. Since 1980 the emergence of a single world market dominated by multinational companies, lead to a diminishing capacity for national governments to control their economies.

NAFTA and the EU are examples of the project of globalization, a process that enables financial and investment markets to operate internationally, largely as a result of deregulation and improved media communication. Like for Darwinism, the terms colonialism, imperialism, expansionism, internationalism and globalism add the suffix "ism" to a root to encompass systems, theories and practices in order to expand meaning and therefore dominion. This attitude, or policy, of treating the whole world, as a proper sphere for political influence, is part of the Anglo-American heritage

of an economic and political system characterized by a free market for goods and services under private control of production and consumption.

The evolution of the enterprise of power into globalization refers to the human initiative of transforming the world, nature, humanity and our relation to them and to one another.

Multiculturalism³⁶ and the production of identity are, not tools for freedom and for empowerment, but marketable tools to extract even more surplus value. By valorising our most intimate human resources, such as our emotions and affect, capitalism instrumentalizes our hopes and aspiration.

A product of globalization, displaced in between countries, I too am trapped inside the economy of the wire travelling the carbon emission routes. Tired of clicking, of questionnaires, of presentations, of organising, of information, of spiritual cyborgs, of violence, I am waiting for the day electro-radioactive air and toxic food are no longer imposed. I am hoping to regenerate, the spirit. Like “Jesus,” reincarnate – when the water will run free, pure again, be, all together, like bees and trees.



Fig. 13 Claudia Borgna, *...And They Lived Happily Ever After*, 2006, Plastic bags, tree branches, Site-specific installation.

³⁶ Multiculturalism would be great if it didn't stem from slavery and colonialism, if the universal interconnectedness would not be instrumentalized for the sake of accumulation, if it didn't construct global structures of oppression, if it didn't spread oppressed systems of thinking.

I contribute to the demographics of multiculturalism. I am an immigrant living in metropolitan areas where the accumulation of culture takes place. Before I knew that my development is someone else's decline, that my broadening is someone else's narrowing, that my opening up is some else's closure – within that ignorance – I devoured the delicious exotic fruits of multicultural diversity.



Fig. 14 Claudia Borgna, *Blade Dance*, 2014, Still from video, 00:12:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UuqCKvYJhs>.

Tic tac, tic tac, toc tech, tech, click, BOOM. Machine, clock, order, control, POWER.

From organic to mechanical, from living organism to machine. The mechanistic rationale: antidote to an organic cosmos. “The removal of animistic organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature – the most far-reaching effect of the Scientific Revolution.”³⁷ “The mechanistic model was established to control and predict the behaviour of each part within a rationally determined system of laws in order to reinforce and accelerate the exploitation of nature and human beings as resources.”³⁸ The mechanical framework legitimated the manipulation of nature and the new order of control. Ideas associated with change, uncertainty, unpredictability, uncontrolled passion, spontaneity and anarchy were abolished in favour for self control, temperance, reasonable judgement, sovereign law and above all of order and control. The mathematical method was fundamental to the validation of a type of knowledge that professed guaranteed certainty. “In mechanistic the primacy of process is superseded by the stability of the structure.”³⁹ Mathematical

³⁷ Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 193.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*, 277.

analysis of nature, concerned with “geometrical idealization, stability, structure, supplanted vital notions and functions such as organic flux, change, becoming and process.”⁴⁰ Once again paraphrasing Merchant, the dismissal of nature’s spirit eradicated any scruple of environmental destruction. Machine’s predictability manipulated nature into a system of dead inert particles activated by external rather than internal forces. This mechanistic view of nature has been taught in most western schools since 16th century and accepted without much questioning as our everyday common sense of reality. A “unifying model of science and society, the machine has permeated and constructed human consciousness so totally that today we scarcely question its validity.”⁴¹ It is difficult to depart from this mode, as it is so ingrained in us. Mechanized control over more and more aspects of life and human life is leading to a loss of the quality of life its self.

It is impossible to consider the complexity of the whole and to isolate parts into simplified systems to be studied in a laboratory. This intellectual arrogance toward nature has distorted the whole and reduced it into simple laws.

Fragmented and confused, grinded as inferior, a particle is fighting for its right—its irrational existence. Kicking and shouting this tiny particle is fighting depression and suppression. Angry and upset, screaming inside, this speck is claiming back its primordial status.

The lure to fail, has it ever tempted you? The desire to be wrong, tired of always having to be right. Driven by impulses governed by no rules – slowly – resurging from the guts – irresistible – that salient craving to f

a

l

l

is burning like fire.

Just let go, and fall, flare, down, from vertical to horizontal, flare in descending gravity – defeat verticality and fail.

The whole body – bare – supported by plain earth.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid*, 193.

I need to exercise the right to be wrong, joyfully embrace my mistakes.

I need to stop the production of good reason, challenge my rationality,
subvert reason

convert to the currency of failure: change.

embrace the earth

Let go and practice falling.

Loose control, be lost and be a loser.

Let everything fall a part, dissolve in nature.

Loose everything, empty out to make place for a new sense:

Falling in Love.

“Chi ha tempo non perda tempo,” my stepfather used to say rushing all over while constantly checking his watch. But where do we have to go? What do we really need to achieve?

In Federici’s words, clocks are capitalism attempt to overcome our natural state by breaking the barriers of nature and by lengthening the working day beyond the limits set by the sun, the seasonal cycles and the body itself. In the name of order and progress “by 15th century tower and cathedral clocks had began to govern civil life of most European towns despite rural communities had lived in accord with day length, seasonal cycles and work rhythms.”⁴² Compressed into a low-resolution cell, time now lives inside a zip file. Millions of pixels stuck inside a rectangular folder – technology determining our sense of time. I don’t want to tick at the speed of someone else’s click.

I did not understand when Dhanur, my artist friend from New Delhi, described to me how he spent a whole year doing nothing. Nothing at all, not even watching telly! Back then I did not understand what that meant. I thought it was funny and together we laughed, but for different reasons. He laughed proud of his achievement, I was laughing out my tensions of constantly having to prove myself, show I too was busy, always doing something, always running, always achieving, always performing my western efficiency, because no, I did not inhaled the lazy Italian side of me. So I laughed harder, filling time out with laughter, louder and louder, because no, I did not understand

⁴² *ibid*, 220.

the meaning of filling time, actively, by doing nothing. He laughed amused, in honour of his revolutionary bravery that laughed at entertainment and refused both the work and the leisure ethic based upon filling time. He laughed because he knew that like actions, inactions make a difference too. I laughed back ignoring the meaning of actively doing nothing. Absence, silence, quietness, stillness, meditative and contemplative – time filling itself – forms of disruptiveness against cartoonish western productivity where Zio Paperone, il Paperon de Paperoni, keeps reminding how “Il tempo e’ denaro.”

“In the year 1930 John Maynard Keynes predicted that, by century’s end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like Great Britain and the United States would have achieved a 15 hour work week...in technological terms we are quite capable of this. Instead, technology has been marshalled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. In order to achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are effectively pointless...In Europe and North America in particular, people spend their entire working lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not really need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound. It is a scar across our collective soul...the ruling class has figured out that a happy and productive population with free time on their hands is a mortal danger.”⁴³

No time to care, no time to love, no time for humanity, no time for blooming. No time for anything but work. How much more time does western culture need to evolve out its destructiveness?

Work Work Work, arbeit macht frei!

Constant mental traffic is preventing us from seeing clearly, listening deeply and feeling our being. Capitalism is designed to keep us busy and exhausted, to prevent the experience of what it means to live to work rather than to work to live. The mechanization of the soul and the creation of “bullshit

⁴³ Ruth Irwin, “Does Failure in Global Leadership Mean it’s All Over? Climate Population and Progress,” *Environmental Ethics*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 243-256.

jobs”⁴⁴ are necessary to sustain capitalist economy and to cog us with steal clutches into its frigid mechanism. As social life turns into a productive machine, learning joyously, debating, reading, writing, walking, exercising the mind and the body with play have been replaced with escapism and accumulation.

“With the expansion of the economic domain accumulation has replaced enjoyment and coincides with the reduction of the erotic sphere... The new love of working is to be found not only in a material impoverishment derived from the collapse of social warranties, but also in the impoverishment of existence and communication... Communication loses its character of gratuitous pleasurable and erotic contact becoming an economic necessity a joyless fiction.”⁴⁵

The colonization of life by work makes it impossible to imagine a life that reaches beyond the capital, as it is no longer possible to identify a sign, a subject, a value or a practice that can escape it.

The incorporeal corporeality of corporations

Corporations becoming beings, beings becoming corporations

Rotting corpses all over

As the global mind, the social body, the general intellect is divided from “corpo-reality”, physicality dissolves at the speed of a click.

We are the embodiment of our landscapes.

⁴⁴ David Graeber, “On the Phenomenology of Bullshit Jobs,” *Strike Magazine*, August 2013, 1.

⁴⁵ Franco Bifo Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Semiotext(e), 2009), 82,83,87.



Fig 15 Claudia Borgna, *Will Forever End?*, 2014, Plastic bags, wood, Site-specific installation.

While life and death together are part of the same process, in the contemporary world the call for law and order rather than for life, powers necrophilia. “Necrophilia is the passion to destroy life and the attraction to all that is dead decaying and purely mechanical.”⁴⁶ “Mechanization rendered nature effectively dead and inert,”⁴⁷ manipulated, controlled, made predictable, bit-by-bit all that’s “living, animate and natural dies, while dead, inanimate money is endowed with life.”⁴⁸ Life subordinated to the production of profit and to the accumulation of power, can only be achieved with the maximum of violence – a process that turns the latter into the most productive force.

⁴⁶ Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Destructiveness* (New York: Holt Paperback, 1992), 27.

⁴⁷ Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 214.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 288.



Fig 16 Claudia Borgna, *Funeral to a Plastic Bag*, 2012, Still from video, 00:10:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmJm1AUI_Fw.

“We have to rebuild an education based on the laws of nature and not on the preconceived notions and prejudices of man.”⁴⁹

Trained to fulfil the expectations of capitalism that controls but does not nurture

Commanded from the outside

Change!

mechanical manipulation

Commands nature!

Competition and judgment continuously used as goals to tame

Educational systems impeding the evolution of the soul

Humanity not living up to its full potential.

Reason constantly forced to prevail inner bodily contradictions

Preventing passion to become action.

How to stop mimicking the repetitive rituals of patriarchy?

Traumatized homeless souls are evacuating their bodies – seeds seeking to grow into the manifestation of their true content.

“We have to teach the pedagogy of transgression where love is at the centre of theoretical discourse.

Spirituality sustains us, capitalism chokes us.” Did bell hook say this?

⁴⁹ Elena Balsamo, *Liberta' e' Amore* (Torino: Il Leone Verde Edizioni, 2011), 57.

Seeking a pedagogy that allows for internal development

I wish for an education of the senses and of sensibilities.

“Transformation cannot be achieved according to the same logic of effort and competition on which the current market economy is based, but only by a U-turn against the movement of progress and against the pressure of upward mobility.”⁵⁰

Every day I wake up to the question Antoine C. Dessault better articulates in his essay on ecological nature: “How far must we remove away from culture and back to nature for real progress?” After all we have to come to terms with the wrong assumption that the closer a cultural group is to nature the less culturally advanced it will be and finally realize that “western civilization is not the only conceivable form of accomplished culture. What about Aboriginal or Indian culture whose cultures are more ecologically mindful than ours?”⁵¹ Westerner’s civilization entails the evolution of life’s commodification. That’s all we’ve accomplished so far! “Being alienated from nature is a question of the content of culture, not about its being culture per se... Culture should change us for the better and progress should not be understood as the gradual isolation of humans from nature... Economic behaviours are determined more by our cultures than by our genes.”⁵²

Sustainable consumer, sustainable business, sustainable economy, sustainable art, sustainable living. What is sustainability? In ecology, sustainability is how biological systems remain diverse and productive and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance. It is the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources; it is the sustainability of the ephemeral.

⁵⁰ Boris Groys, “On Art Activism,” *E-flux Journal* issue 56, June 2014, <http://www.e-flux.com/issues/56-june-2014/>, (accessed December 03, 2014), 9.

⁵¹ Antoine C. Dussault, “Ecological Nature: A Non-Dualistic Concept for Rethinking Humankind’s Place in the World,” acdussault.profweb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Ecological-Nature-A-C-Dussault.pdf. (Accessed March 13, 2015), 27-28.

⁵² *ibid.*



Fig. 17 Claudia Borgna, *What Do I really Need to Live?* 2013, Still from video, 00:10:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om_0Bpxkiro.

“Breathe air and drink water that is what the world really needs!”— Shiva Vandana

Every body, human and non human, has the right to good, clean and fair food. Fresh, local, GMO-free, food is everybody’s right. Instead, we have never faced such a wide range of dangers, from toxic chemicals, resistant diseases and engineered organisms. In the logic of artificial living we kill nutrients and add chemicals.⁵³ If we were not separate but part of nature, if we would see nature not just as a resource to be exploited but be guided by it, we would grow healthy into a truly nutritious and delicious society. To me, growing, preparing and eating food are spiritual practices sharing one common ingredient: the potential for basic but profound transformation. The institutionalization of fast and GMO foods is proof of how governments don’t care and of capitalism once again gone too far. ‘Fast food’ production is a criminal enterprise thriving on the edge of legality with no ethics,⁵⁴ no humanity and no empathy. The cultivation of greed profits at the expenses of people’s health and

⁵³ *The State of the World* announced in its 2000 edition that five hundred synthetic chemicals are presently found in the human body, chemicals that did not even exist before 1920. Many of these are passed to babies through breast milk.

⁵⁴ Ethical ethics don’t need rules because regulated by common sense and by the exercise and the experience of love and compassion. “Ethics are closer to wisdom than to theory.” – Unknown

well being. Against humanity and the environment, fast food generates pollution and therefore re-produces violence. Processed, junk, fast food damages human taste buds while reducing the sensorial palette of whole populations into a conveniently homogenous taste while also creating class and race divisions. Greasy and artificially flavoured, well-packaged products keep consumers ignorant of the variety of cultural traditions, of seasonal, local, affordable and healthy food options and make healthy eating a luxury on which chains like Wholefoods capitalize on. All about numbers, capitalist democracy, raises rather than lowers everybody's quality of life thus turning the basic right of food democracy into another complex and unachievable task. The custom of low quality food production, enriched by mal-odorant vitamins, additives and preservatives, is a vice advantageous to capitalism only. Unable to taste or smell, slice after slice, bite after bite we/society ingest particles of violence and grow into a diseased society accustomed to savouring violence. Imagine feeding a child! But how difficult is it to resist mainstream capitalist rituals geared at breaking any healthy habits left? Even the most rooted habits are under threat. Sooner or later we all fall prey to commodification as the proliferation of fast food and supermarket chains makes us a society dependent not only on corporations but also on the exploitation of nature and of labour. Viva il slow food movement!⁵⁵ Will it revolutionize artificial thinking and burned out taste buds? From our homes, our tables, our bodies we could deepen the love for nature, for justice and for life.

“One sees everything at once, and yet nothing in particular but the fleeting concatenation of impromptu thoughts one may have at that moment.”⁵⁶

All mixed up – thoughts like ingredients.

⁵⁵ “Slow food programme involves taking the time not only to prepare and savour the food, but also to reflect on the labour, economic, agricultural and logistic events preceding its arrival to the market and to the table. To chronicle the life history of a food product traces the links that connect people and places at different points along the chain. This practice provides consumers with better insight into what is going into their mouths, not only in terms of ingredients such as pesticides, animal, hormones, fats, sugars, vitamins, minerals, but also of the suffering of food workers and the greed of agribusiness and its agents.” – Bennet, 50-51.

⁵⁶ Hilde Van Gelder and Victor Burgin, “Artistic Representation and Politics: An Exchange Between Victor Burgin and Hilde Van Gelder,” *Parallel Texts Artistic Representation and Politics*, (London: Reaxtion Books, 2011), 110.

Each molecule a distinct function for the functioning of the self and of the whole, wholly acting in perfect synchrony,
or not?
for what?

Culture indissoluble from life. Human life inalienable from culture. A whole life for the cultivation of?
the soul?

For the betterment of?

For the refinement of?

Taste?

From the inside grabbing outside

the guts

What a mess!

From the outside grabbing inside

How to viscerally capture the complexity of everything happening at once?

How to make complexity accessible?

How to dissect the slimy chain reaction of emotions into a succinct moment of rationality, of history, of theory,

of feeling all at once?

existing – all at once in one serving

A fart

the combustion of scrambled concentrated substance dispersing into vague smoke

Processed matter from the guts

Vomit

Distinctly obscure mingle

Dubious ingredients all-together-marching-out – kotzen

Point of views exercising their order

Rewind my scramble?

Each component forming – all at once

Scramble, the shape that shapes me,

biological, historical, political, cultural social mess

Over and over control

Defeat vagueness, heal my disorder a disease

make me likeable, lovable

You, reasonable rationalised, well thought, always clear

The whiff of nausea rises from the guts.
Conflicting signals all moving, shifting, conflating, all at once,
lava descending slowly
sticking like spew
Vomit the inner wall of cultural collision
opposing messages – no not obscure – charcoal the combustion of scrambled
Vague because it is vague
Vague to escape the norms of guilt
You are the specific detail against my fart, my vomit, my lava, my scrambled mess
Do you like scrambled eggs? Organic, sustainable, local, fresh from the guts.
“The ambivalence from the clash of voices result in mental and emotional states of perplexity.
Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness...plagued by psychic restlessness.”⁵⁷



Fig. 18 Claudia Borgna, *Omologato*, 2014, Still from video, 00:03:02,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJo_sDIHSM8

“The banality of evil,” it was Hannah Arendt who coined the term and raised the question. Is evil simply a function of thoughtlessness, a tendency of ordinary people to obey orders and conform to mass opinion without critical evaluation of the consequences of their actions and inactions?

⁵⁷ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, 100.

“In a culture of domination everyone is socialized to see violence as acceptable means of social control.”⁵⁸ We all suffer from the banality of evil. Business-as-usual⁵⁹ is the perpetuation of the banality of evil, where the side effects of lack of ecological knowledge and intransigent policies destroy societies and environments. Professionally motivated, a sort of stupidity that is both ordinary and exceptional drives us. Commodified into atrophy, our society is formed by people like me, “ordinary individuals who simply accept the premises of their state and participate in any on-going enterprise with the energy of good bureaucrats.”⁶⁰

Collective forms of ignorance.

Collective consent.

Collective narcissism

Collective homogenization

Freedom from bigotry!

Ecologically speaking, what is the difference between “clicking” and pressing the gas pedal?

⁵⁸ bell hooks, *Feminism for Everybody* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 64.

⁵⁹ What’s up with leaders recommending we follow business as usual? Business as usual means killing ecosystems, the world’s oceans, destroying the climate system upon which agriculture depends, driving more than half the Earth to extinction, the genocide of nature, as fewer and fewer of us will still remember it.

⁶⁰ Edward S. Herman, *Triumph of the Market, Essays on the Market, Politics and the Media* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 102.



Fig. 19 Claudia Borgna, *Omologato*, 2014, Still from video, 00:03:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJo_sDIHSM8

“L’Italia e’ una repubblica democratica fondata sul lavoro” says the 1st article of the Italian constitution. Officially I started working at 19 years old, before that I did odd little jobs. Mostly a bad student, I was never really enthusiastic about work either. I never really cared for work nor gave it too much thought. To me work was another imposition, a mandatory form for civil civic survival. In Italy I grew up with the mentality of work to live rather than live to work. That was one of the reasons my mum had left her Vaterland. Through the 70s and 80s, one strike after the other, *Autonomia Operaia* shaped my ‘non-opinion’ of work. The refusal of work discipline, of a life organized by the needs of capitalist production developed into a complex of laziness punished by guilt ever since. Life spent in a factory or even worse inside an office? Back then, in my illusion of freedom, I had never imagined of a life lived through a screen, sitting interminable hours working behind a computer!

In that spirit I worked a variety of jobs never pursuing a career nor thinking about a pension or retirement. I still work like that. In between the odd jobs the most stable one I have been working for the last forty years is the domestic one. Overall precarious, mostly unemployed, never really

waged or fully compensated, I have been working the labour of the non-working, the labour of love. An alternative to the capitalist way of living? My Italian Omi Rose and Nonno Nino were both contadini and operai della Fiat. A furrier by family trade, my mum was a self-employed artisan. From agricultural to industrial to craft to contemporary immaterial labour, I have experienced the transformation of labour that has led to the digital era.

Unemployed and precarious I work the labour of art, of the domestic and of love. While trying to evade the prison of rules and bureaucracies, I am the quintessential capitalist worker. Trying to fulfil life with work, my immaterial labour produces cultural, cognitive products.

Where is the threshold of injustice?

Utopias are only idealistic in relations to the context they are lived in.

All the love songs in the world will never satisfy nor change the logic of profit. Or will they?

Rendered banal, love is taken for granted and considered a futile, emotional, cheesy feeling –

“falling” in love in fact a failure. Care, responsibility and respect, love entails the love for

humanity, for nature, for life, for independence and for freedom; creativity being the expression of

love. Instead, “love in patriarchal culture is linked to the notions of possession, to paradigms of

domination and submission. Narcissistic and egocentric we stopped loving even ourselves

hardening our hearts and being just as emotionally closed and disconnected as the patriarchal

models”⁶¹ But “love can never take root in a relationship based on domination and coercion...Love

is the commitment of our souls to ending domination...When we accept that true love is rooted in

recognition and acceptance, that love combines acknowledgment, care and responsibility,

commitment and knowledge, we understand there can be no love without justice.”⁶²

Human nature, more than human nature: mother nature. The earth, the land, the planet, the

biosphere – my human relationship with nature. What does mother mean? Nature – my

⁶¹ hooks, *Feminism for Everybody*, 101.

⁶² *ibid*, 101, 104.

grandmother, my mother, the sea – are my nature, my closest and most intimate relation to Mother Nature, that's what nature is for me.



Fig. 20 Claudia Borgna, *Why Do You Have to Turn My World Down?*, 2014, Still from video, 00:05:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzTZayXJkJO>

“Women’s labour appeared as a natural resource available to all no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink...In the new capitalist regime women became the common as their work was defined as a natural resource, laying outside the sphere of market relations.”⁶³

Is there a difference between a bed made by a woman and that made by a soldier?

With the expansion of affective forms of labour, how did we become emotional labourers of the market? Paraphrasing Ann Rosalind Jones, female psychic characteristics have been determined by the familial and economic roles imposed on women by men producing qualities – conveniently claimed as virtues – without reference to the needs of women. As a female, I was trained to look after the home. As a child, domestic work was also a necessity in a household where I was the daughter of a single mum who worked all day. Caring, I feel, is somehow embedded in my DNA.

⁶³ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Automedica, 2004), 97.

Cats grooming themselves, an instinct or a vocation? Only recently I came across the term ‘affective labour’ in which I recognized my own behaviours. Affective labour doesn’t produce tangible products but states-of-being and feeling instead. According to Federici, capitalism exploits female emotional traits, our sexuality made productive for the sake of accumulation. Household work is fundamental in society. Yet, non-paid and discriminated against, domestic care and house keeping work has always been considered non-work. Rather viewed as a personal service, women’s labour and re-productivity have never been recognized as productive by capitalism. Patriarchy only values that which can be expressed in monetary terms, domestic work – like nature and the ecosystem – is given no value at all. Yet, ironically, capitalism can now thrive thanks to the sweat of slaves’ unpaid travail and of women’s free labour!

When I think of my grandmother and my mother I wonder if nowadays women sometimes choose to be housewives to escape the external patriarchal bureaucratic dynamics, and endure one, instead of an overall dominating system. Do women, like me, experience the fear of unnecessary relational power? A white privileged European woman, I have no true desire for power or control. Yet I have been educated to power, and in order to survive I have to exercise control, otherwise I will be judged as weak and therefore an inferior coercible being.

As a woman in a lesbian relationship, I “voluntarily” relegate myself to the housekeeper role. Carrying out the chores of caring makes me witness how easily exploitable and undermined the labour of care is. Every day I invest thoughts, energy and time into looking after the shared household. Everyday I notice how my unwaged work is taken for granted – exactly because it is unwaged. My labour is overlooked and mostly unappreciated, yet essential. Nevertheless, everyday I wake up and slip into my domestic outfit to apply my knowledge of care. Everyday, with all my love, my pride, my best abilities and expertise, just like my grandmother or my mother, I do my housework. In spite of best intentions often resulting in conflict or disappointment, I still cannot help but be a physical agent of care. There is an element of pleasure in caring, in the joy generated by the corporeal act of caring. Domestic work comes with its own set of responsibilities and with

the commitment to maintain certain standards and qualities of life, as well as to preserve certain female traditions, secret recipes inherited like genetic traits. Intuitively and intimately, the knowledge of bodies and nature unfolds in the domestic – into the chores that keep alive. As if we were together – my mother, grandmother and I - every day re-enact our routine. Emancipation from

household work would mean to stop practicing what they have taught me, break our vital link and interrupt the healing powers of those spiritual rituals. If on one hand I would like to resign from that role, I know I never could and that I will always work the labour of care. Most likely a masochist catholic position, I feel I have to pass on the love that connects me, as I live the presence of my loved ones in the everyday domestic undertaking. Domestic work is a foundational and

indispensable part of life and society and the pleasure of caring is too precious to let go. A skilled form of work, domestic labour should not be considered inferior and be the cause of low esteem in a society where only money can give esteem. It is true “housewives are often isolated, lonely and depressed.”⁶⁴ My mum and I too often feel just like that, our work rendered ordinary by

extraordinary duties that take place outside the domestic sphere. But this is also the cause and effect of a stereotype how domestic work is portrayed by the media in urban western society, where the core of life has moved, not only out of the land and of the streets, but out of the home. Once a

social hub, the home has been deserted of its communal activities of homemaking liveliness. Our commodified contemporary lives commute in remote virtual spaces. Home and land, once interconnected spaces, have been replaced by the Internet. Substituted by more important tasks, domestic and maintenance work are joyless burdens to be avoided at all costs. Instead, orgies of short-lived plastic utensils – at their best piling up in pathetic recycling bins – constitute the new form of social gathering.

“While most workers do not feel secure at work, whether they are female or male, they do feel part of something larger than themselves.”⁶⁵ Of the all-encompassing capitalism? “Women in the home

⁶⁴ hooks, *Feminism for Everybody*, 50.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

spend all their time attending to the needs of others, home is a workplace for her not a site of relaxation, comfort and pleasure.”⁶⁶ This is very true but not dissimilar from the live-work situations of artists’ studio production, a trend that lately has expanded into a larger home-based working population. While “more women working has not changed male domination. Many women have not found work to be as meaningful as feminist utopian vision suggested.”⁶⁷ Especially “when women work to make money to consume more, rather than to enhance the quality of our lives on all levels. More money does not mean more freedom. Rethinking the meaning of work is an important task for future.”⁶⁸ As domestic activities keep interrupting, distracting and inconveniently taking my personal time away from my art making and from my work, they also provide enriching moments and a sense of purpose, if not only by offering moments of recollection where I regain perspective on the essential things in my life. They are important moments of intimacy with the needs of my self and of my loved ones, actions that give “un senso alla mia vita.”

Federici’s critique of a male-centric capitalist concept of work, urges to recognize women’s unpaid reproductive labour as a key source of capitalist accumulation built on unpaid labour and on the oppression of gender exploitation. While the private sphere of feelings has been socially engineered in the public sphere for profit and subjected to the imposition of rules of standardized feeling, I see the private realm as an alternative to capitalism. Caring – not as an industry – is a potentially subversive form of anti professionalization and anti work activity. Beyond gender divisions, I do have the desire for caring. “Household caring labour is both a locus of exploitation as it is a site of resistance from which resistant subjects and alternative visions might emerge”⁶⁹ such as the poetry of housekeeping and care and the figure of the domestic sorceress.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Kathi Weeks, “Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post Fordist Politics,” *Ephemera Theory and Politics in Organization* 7, no.1 (2007): 234.

Domestic economies are determined by global capitalist economy. Could domestic economy affect our social public economy instead?



Fig. 21 Claudia Borgna, *Beauty Parlor Series*, 2014, Still from video, 00:04:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WRmjbdMBgk>.



Fig. 22 Claudia Borgna, *Beauty Parlor Series*, 2014, Still from video, 00:03:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwj1PTiQXwM>.

Maintenance is progress, maintenance repairs; maintenance is the gardening of the soul: of life's environment.

Renewable repetitions subtly change within the gestures of care, over and over, bit by bit, shifting deeper insights, transforming and maintaining the sustainability of love. I cannot function without care. I need and seek care. I create care for myself and for others. I feel good when care is around me, when I take care, able to look after, able to maintain, I nurture. The joy of small gestures – looking after my immediate surroundings – surprises me everyday. Everyday gestures crave for reciprocal attentions as they depend from the maintenance of care, from the concern for the provision for health, welfare and protection, from someone or something. Reorganize, rearrange reassess, repair – no, it is not my intention to maintain the institution of patriarchy – everyday I practice care, maintenance is my resistance to capitalist professionalization.⁷⁰ Maintenance is my opportunity to disrupt the repetition of reality⁷¹.

⁷⁰ According to Wikipedia any trade or occupation that transforms itself into a “true” profession of the “highest integrity” and “competence” is the social process called professionalization. This process involves creating a hierarchical divide between the knowledge-authorities in the profession and a deferential citizenry by establishing acceptable qualifications and occupational closure. To assure conformity to general expectations, professionalization is based on group norms of conduct and qualification of members to achieve conformity of the norm policed by professional bodies. Professions possess power by generating prestige, high income, high social status and other privileges. A narrow elite in a hierarchical system of ranked orders whose members form a class of people that occupy an elevated status in society to common people.

The origin of professionalization is said to have been with guilds during the Middle Ages, when they fought for exclusive rights to practice their trades and employ unpaid apprentices: the prelude to the new era of slavery? As an ideology professionalism only started in 19th century North America and Western Europe where most professions were reserved for men only. Do professionals hold a superior knowledge? Professionalization, another coded measure on which to create judgement and establish divisions distancing man from truly humanitarian concerns?

⁷¹ The disruption of capitalist reality, patriarchal capitalist theory that opposes life.



Fig. 23 Claudia Borgna, *Beauty Parlor*, 2014, Still from video, 00:04:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WRmjbdMBgk>.

In the metamorphosis of chaos things are good or bad because we judge them so. A reminder.

Freud, in a letter exchange with Romain Rolland once said: “there are no sources of knowledge of the universe other than the intellectual working - over of carefully scrutinized observations - in other words, what we call research - and alongside of it no knowledge derived from revelation, intuition or divination.”⁷²

Too afraid to look inside?

Too afraid to get lost inside the limitless bond with the universe?

Traumatized spirits jump out of their bodies, leaving people and societies grieving soulless.

“Susto”⁷³ is the emotional trauma of witnessing spirits evacuating their bodies. Logical, rational, political, so far modern industrial life has proven incompatible with nature and with spirituality.

⁷² Janette Graetz Simmonds, “The Oceanic Feeling and a Sea Change,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 23, no. 1 (2006): 132.

⁷³ Anzaldúa, *Borderland/ la Frontera*, 60.

Rejected by materialistic scientism as a valid question, spirituality might well be the most important matter of all.

I think we need a new wave of romanticism.

A strong, second reinforced romantic Sturm to shake us like trees, sweep the dried leaves away and drang the senses to reawakening.

Then as reaction to the industrial revolution, to the aristocratic social political norms of the age of enlightenment and to the scientific rationalization of nature, let's again shake off the negative repercussions radiated across centuries, rampant technology, corporations impacting the roots of nature. This time we don't want nationalism but yes, definitely spiritual liberalism to radically get rid of neo-liberalism.

Sturm und drang, Move,

Move to be moved, again, by awe towards sublimity and the beauty of nature

Move to be moved, again, by intense emotions rather than the enlightened rationalism

Move to be moved, again, by imagination that allows freedom

Move to move the forces that move spontaneous feelings, the movements of free expression.

Move yes again, still and forever, longing for the unbounded and the indefinable, for the forgotten source of nature.

Just like then, we need to escape population growth, urban sprawl and industrialism, re-identify with nature to re-grasp its importance.

We need to revive our romantic sprits.

Redundantly naïve I am moved by romantic idealism.

*“The activities associated with the governance of a country or an area, politics is the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.”*⁷⁴ Resembling social alpinism the agonistic activity of politics has entertained and kept people busy with negativity and with institutionalized forms of ignorance and greed that now constitute our economic and political systems. But the earth does not know power or property, the earth is classless, the earth does not practice politics. Nature does not mix well with politics. Politics and theories are for humans only.

⁷⁴ <http://dictionary.reference.com/>. (accessed December 9, 2014).

How do we overcome the tragic consequences of dragging nature down into politics?⁷⁵ While nature might not want to mingle with politics, we are facing the political but tangible implication of climate change. As politicians use the environmental crisis to benefit their campaign, it is striking how green parties have never been a ‘successful’ political option, a fact that highlights how nature has never really been a priority in western society. Or has the environment been neglected because nature doesn’t vote? Based on bribery, oppressive forms of social organization naturally set the stage for the exploitation of nature. Emancipation from nature is the catastrophic outcome of modernization. Too much importance has been placed on the business of politics while neglecting other aspects of life. As I helplessly watch the desperate migration flow, from African and Middle Eastern Countries to Europe, it’s clear that politics and laws fail to meet any humanitarian priority. Detached politics keep ruling irresponsibly and heartlessly disengaged towards the suffering and problems they have caused to people forced to risk their lives and leave their homes as a consequence of corrupted and exploitative western politics. Entire populations are on the run, escaping the aftermath of imperialist colonisations. Selfish politics set the standards for a selfish society made of selfish individuals. Raised in a small Country where politics is synonym with corruption and is a form of useless and embarrassing entertainment, I have grown to be a disheartened politic-skeptic. It is frightening, to not only envision, but also confront the tangible magnitude of greedy corruption when in a larger socio-geographical context. In this time of not just economic crisis, I hope for Italy to harbour its Mediterranean agricultural-artisanal-social backbone and cling to it with all land and craft for the abysses of global US models are deadly.

In *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm talks about the difference between true personal freedom and political freedom. Most of us like the idea of political freedom because it means that we can do what we want even if we are not free in the personal sense. Will political freedom lead to personal

⁷⁵ The Bolivian law confers the same right to nature as to human beings, including the right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to balance; the right not to be polluted; the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered. – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_the_Rights_of_Mother_Earth. (accessed May 25, 2015).

freedom? Or will personal freedom lead to political freedom? Ultimately politics remain a question of learning our human limitations and responsibilities. Emancipation lies in the attachment to nature. Social activism really is a spiritual practice, for the power to transform the world rests in our hearts first as well as in our hands.

To this point my life has been a spillage of oil in which I must reflect myself.



Fig. 24 Claudia Borgna, *Olympic Training*, 2014, Still from video, 00:03:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iH4MYY24TwM>.

*“The enemy within must be transformed before we can confront the enemy outside.”*⁷⁶

“We are all participating moment to moment in the causes and conditions that make the enemy what he is...From this perspective, there is no place of innocence from which to cast judgement on those who create suffering nor is there any room for hate or righteous anger.”⁷⁷ Victim and perpetrator of crime, I, us, women, all accomplices in the spiral of violence and environmental degradation that threatens the planet everyday. While advocating for justice, like yesterday and the

⁷⁶ hooks, *Feminism for Everybody*, 12.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, x.

day before, today again, my western, freer, greener ideology chokes someone else's world as lives entangle in my pollution. In order to survive, victims of one system of domination become agent of another one.

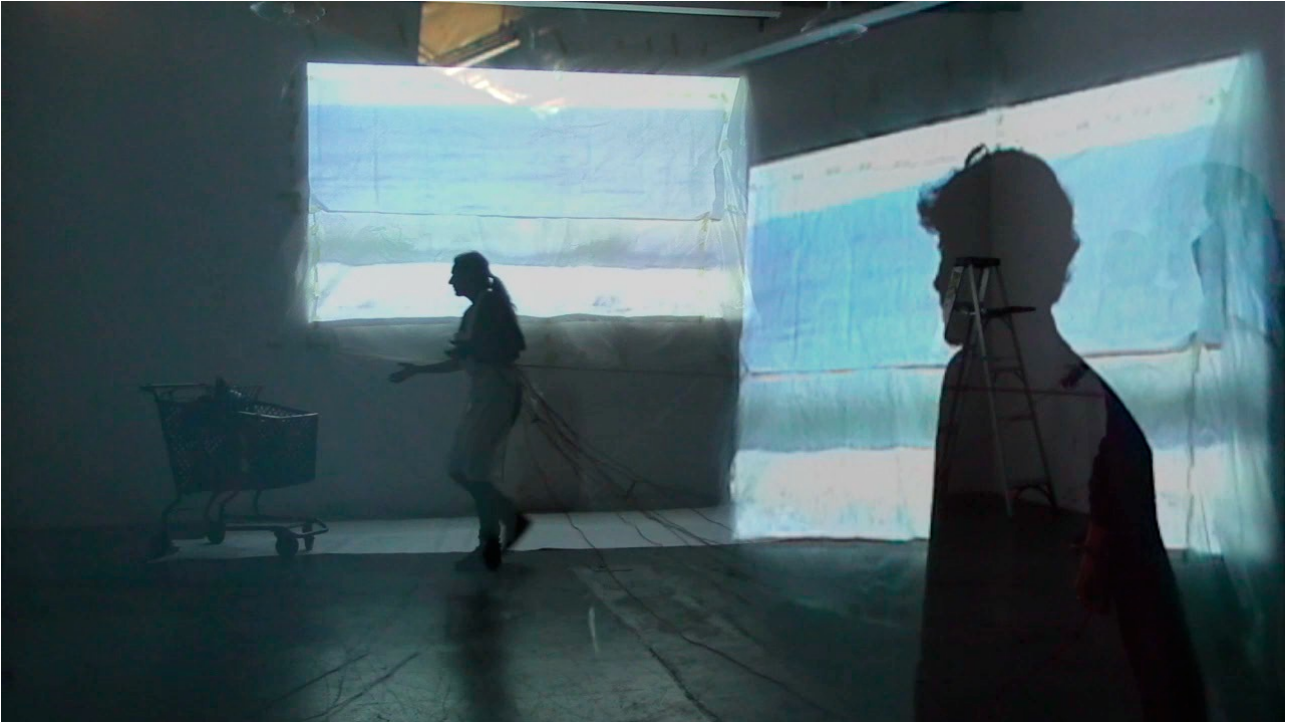


Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 25 - 29 Claudia Borgna, *SEA Participants*, 2014, Stills from video, 00:12:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pacVIQILAAy>.

My anger towards my dependence on capitalism, my anger towards my own pollution, my anger for being responsible for killing nature, growing, angry every day. Angry because I am late, because I am complicit, because I am guilty because I am hypocritical, because I am frustrated, angry because, angry. Angry because I cannot be compassionate, not even towards myself, angry because I am judgemental, because I am privileged, angry because I am desperate, angry and more angry. Angry because I want to be better, angry because I cannot accept this world or my self. Angry because I am confused, angry to be angry, tired to be angry. Angry because I know I should be happy. Angry to be a stereotype. Angry because I lost my light – heartedness, angry because you made my mum angry, angry because my mum is angry, angry because I don't hate you, angry because is never going to be the same again. Angry you don't change. Angry you want to change me. Angry because I am not quick enough, never good enough, angry. Angry because I cannot catch up with you, angry because I don't understand, angry because you don't understand, angry because you are far away, because I am far away. Exhausted to be angry, angry because exhausted, angry. Angry to be white.

Love cures and transforms—so does nature.

I love my mum

I love nature

I love love.

“Earth represents both our origins and our fate: nature is the beginning and the end of everything – although man might think that he is.” – Unknown.

Wonderful and sublime, nature has the capacity to inspire awe, reverence, emotion or terror as a result of its great beauty, powerful force and vastness. Nature is incredible, unclassifiable, indefinable, and unpredictable. Nature is in a constant state of transition and cannot be grasped. Infinite joy comes with observing forms and shapes of nature, with the sensorial experiences that connect to a deep inherent archaic knowledge. In nature and in my body I discover something new everyday and yet nothing is new in man’s artificial world because everything already exists as nature provides the model for everything.

We tend to forget that nature is the world that exists without humans or civilization. It is the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to human creations. We are entirely part of and above all dependent on nature. The degradation of nature and of the environment equals to the degradation of humanity. By becoming a commodity, a backdrop to our personal dramas, nature has become ‘other’, causing the existential crisis that goes hand in hand with the loss of nature. When discussing the environment in urban or academic contexts I am amazed by the prerequisite of having to define nature. The problem of naming not only angers me because it maintains a separation that violates ecological interdependence, but also becomes a real task in a culture that defines ecological normality with ecological destructiveness, defying the ability to live in accordance with the principle of harmony with nature. “Natural is what lives and grows by itself as opposed to chemical reduced to molecular synthetic substances which can only be produced in a laboratory or factory. Natural is what takes place without the agency or without the voluntary and intentional agency of man. Natural is opposed to artificial.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Dussalt, *Ecological Nature*, 22.

Walking the streets of Los Angeles I wonder how trees, plants and flowers remain graceful in spite the rough, unfriendly and deadly environment all around. Cracking out of cemented dirt, nature still grants us with beautiful diversity as a reminder that freedom is only through nature. To me, the ultimate fundamental question is: what and whom can I trust? Nature or culture's logic? Who do you trust in a culture that has instrumentalized everything? Unified by nature, divided by culture, culture keeps taking us apart.



Fig. 30 Claudia Borgna, *Blow Me Away if You Can!*, 2009, Plastic Bags, Tree Branches, Site-specific installation.

Open up, like flower petals blooming: BLOOM!

Flowers activism.



Fig. 31 Claudia Borgna, *Piece of Pie: The Best Way to Cut the Perfect Piece of Pie*, 2014, Still from video, 00:03:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5NQUz6MwlQ>.

“No longer was fertility of the soil the source of all life and creativity, but the intellect which produced new inventions, techniques, abstract thinking and the state with its laws.”⁷⁹

Paraphrasing Merchant, the urban revolution required a great deal of land and labour. Cities grew out of forested areas drained into geometric patterns. As the industry began to change the forested landscape became more and more remote. Now we live on piles of rubbish, reservoirs constructed by drowning the land for the sake of accumulation. Not simply the modification of the natural process, the domination of control by man resulted in new products that are not found in nature. Cities, one could say, are man-made surrogates for nature. While cities like London and New York can be inspirational cultural gatherings and amazing displays of diversity and entertainment, we cannot forget that the urban social revolution is based on the principle of patriarchal rule in which the principle of control of nature, of slaves, control of women and children is inherent. Moreover, fast ‘take-out’, ‘take-away’ urban life-styles are rooted in the logic of wastefulness and exploitation.

⁷⁹ Fromm, *The Anatomy of Destructiveness*, 189.

“The attraction to all that is dead seems to develop in new urban civilization where the love for capitalism—compensating for the de-sensualization of nature and culture—seems to be greater than the love for children. Destructive societies with atmosphere of hostility, tension and fear, great deal of competition, great emphasis on private property, strict hierarchies, personal material success through economic activities, have created the culture of child sacrifice where the dominant value is not life and living itself but things and their possession.”⁸⁰

Do people move to urban spaces to become more civilized? Worldlier? More ‘sophisticated’?

What does urbanism represent to rural migrants and us provincial villagers? Economic growth?

Education? Emancipation? Exposure? Social status? Success? Hideaway? Freedom? An escape

from the provincial closure, a gateway from the hardship of physical labour? Are urban

conglomerates a mirage we are lured in by capitalism? Or are they a human necessity?

I moved to London when I was nineteen years old. After euphoria came bulimia, after depression came addiction now I live in Los Angeles.

In between those stages I became an artist.

“Language affects human thought and identity. Identity is shaped by more than social conventions but is also influenced by our relationships with the environments and our perspective of ecological and environmental locations. After all we are organisms dependent upon their surroundings that are dynamic, difficult to define and susceptible to all kind of unpredictable forces.”⁸¹

Before I arrived to the US I never really thought of identity. All along I passively lived the identity inscribed on me by others. As I am becoming what I could never plan, I did not know anything about identity apart from my “carta d’indentitá” hiding inside my purse. A rectangular plasticized piece of paper with my picture, my name, my place and date of birth, height, colour of eyes and hair, my occupation, marital status and address – the latter always in flux – typed on it. Apparently

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ Dobrin and Weisser, “Breaking Ground in Eco-Composition,” 567-568.

expirable, that numbered piece of plastic prescribed my identity: stated and confirmed by a stamp and a signature.

Searching for the meaning of identity in the dictionary I read:

-“identity is the state or fact of remaining the same ones, as under varying aspects or conditions.”⁸²

Is that ever possible – to remain the same?

Looking for other definitions I also find:

-“The condition of being oneself and not another.”⁸³

But are we not both?

-“The state or fact of being the same one as described.”⁸⁴

By whom? I wonder.

- “The sense of self, providing sameness and continuity in personality over time.”⁸⁵

When in line, waiting for my turn for “proof of identity”, I kill time inspecting my “carta d’identitá”. I examine my picture, pierce across time and every other detail, zooming in and out of myself, back and forth from image to words, to see if they truly match one other, to see if all those given information really certify the description of me. Kind of like when you look at yourself in the mirror, trying to match what you see of you with how you feel of you. Drilling through that mirror to go beyond, deeper inside, for a glimpse of the vital gap stuck in between the mirror surface.

Eventually having to resort to the imagination – inventing while exploring that mysterious place.

Despite the fact that I have always ignored the question of my identity, I now wonder, how does my being aesthetically manifest on the outside? Is it when the inside doesn’t match the outside that politics kick in? Hmm. While I’ve figured out that identity is produced as an output of the process of self-identification with the external reality and strongly determined by external recognition, how can I really be my natural self? In the mixture of infinite elements, which one is my real and true

⁸² <http://dictionary.reference.com/>. (accessed December 3, 2014).

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

identity? I never liked classifications; I never felt I could fit in any of them. I live ignoring my identity. Is that why I cannot be specific? If anything, my identity would be in the fluid gap of a current, running underneath water between my inside and your outside, between your inside and my outside – all at once. Or maybe it just sits in the calcareous folds of my fears instead, formatted by the fear of expectations, the fear of judgement, the fear of failure, the fear of being not loved. Tired of punishment, I please to be ‘good’, my identity morphing according to the necessity of love. A double-edged sword, indeed shaped by patriarchy, identity is a political human construction as well as an important mean in the name of diversity. The production of subjectivity, more often than not, is dominated by patriarchal rules and by technology. Signs and symbols write our identities. The repeated inculcation of norms insists on the daily performance of social normativity. How to resist the signs of culture? How to stop them penetrating under my skin, invading my body, polluting my organs, embedding in the unconscious crinkles of the senses? Human rules, norms, codes, laws imposed by few to create rigid structure that educate to intolerance. How to stop unwanted cultural signs affecting me and you?

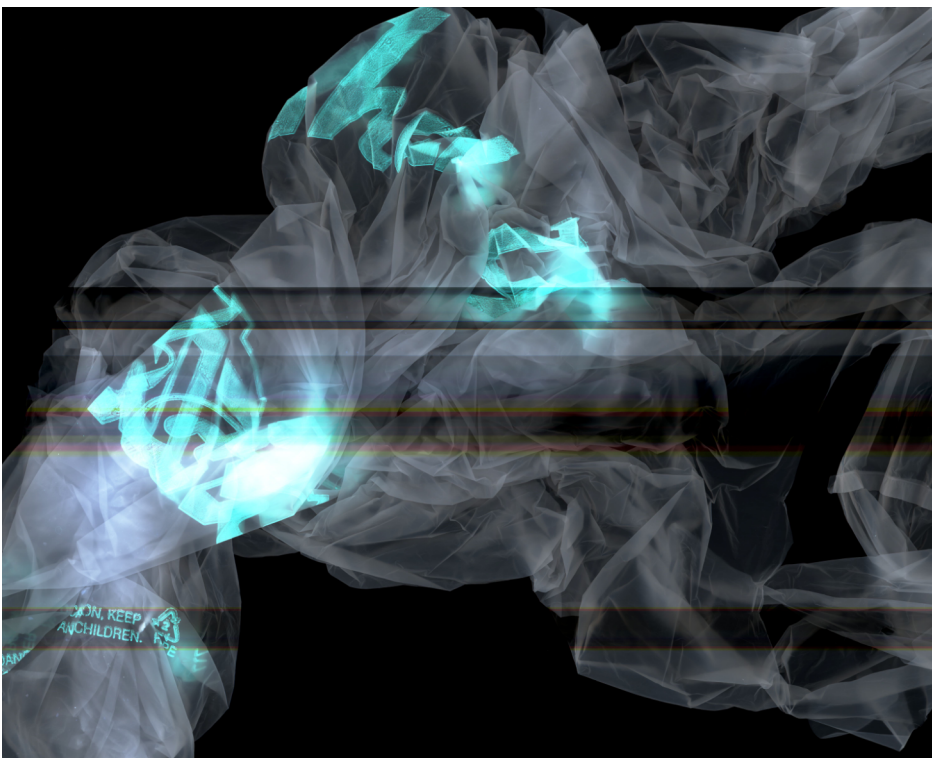


Fig. 32 Claudia Borgna, *Thank you!*, 2013, Digital Print, 35x25cm.

More and more, I am realizing that as a person and artist who strives for justice and equality the best way to be passing earth is to leave it with the least impact – my trail unperceivable and unnoticeable the most impactful monument.

*“Women’s nature is set to rhythms over which man has no more control than he has over the tides of the sea.”*⁸⁶ – *Mary Stopes*

With agriculture, modern civilization was most likely founded by women. “The earth’s and women’s capacity to give birth – a capacity that men lack – quite naturally gave the mother a supreme place in the world of early agriculturalists.”⁸⁷ “Matriarchal Neolithic structure was essentially a peaceful and non-aggressive society, without hierarchy or exploitation that lied in the spirit of affirmation of life not of destruction.”⁸⁸ “Only when men could create material things by intellect could they claim superiority.”⁸⁹ “No longer the womb, but the mind became the creative power and simultaneously man dominated society.”⁹⁰ In the transition to capitalism the history of women cannot be separated from the rape of nature and the history of systems of exploitation of workers in a capitalist society. Women, like nature, were treated as natural resource: raw materials to be manipulate by man. Moving from the Middle Ages to the rise of mechanical philosophy, females were stripped of activity and rendered passive for the sake of science, technology and capitalist production. Expelled from jobs, excluded from the patriarchy of wage-labour, women were impoverished, disempowered and considered a property. Reduced to wombs, women’s bodies, no longer a private sphere, became a political body instead, a public territory controlled by men and by the state at the service of capitalist accumulation. A natural phenomenon, procreation, was reduced to a political interest and the female body was transformed into a working machine.

⁸⁶ Marie Wollens, “Marie Stopes, An Educator,” *International Conference on Women and Vocation*, Lille Catholic University, June 5-7 (2014): 6.

⁸⁷ Fromm, *The Anatomy of Destructiveness*, 181.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 183-184.

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 181.

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 189.

Out of this process “a new model of femininity emerged: the ideal woman and wife, passive and obedient.”⁹¹ “In 19th century the creation of the full time housewife redefined women’s position in society and in relation to men...the sexual division of labour fixed women to reproductive work increasing their dependence from men.”⁹² The rise of professional medicine and the criminalization of women’s control over procreation caused the loss of women’s empirical knowledge regarding herbs and healing remedies. Midwives were marginalized and reduced to passive roles while men took over the delivery room where the fetus was made a priority over the mother. Campaigns of terror such as the witch-hunt “left indelible marks in the collective female psyche and in women’s sense of possibilities.”⁹³

Affection, Anger, Angst, Anguish, Annoyance, Anxiety, Apathy, Arousal, Awe, Boredom, Confidence, Contempt, Contentment, Courage, Curiosity, Depression, Desire, Despair, Disappointment, Disgust, Distrust, Dread, Ecstasy, Embarrassment, Envy, Euphoria, Excitement, Fear, Frustration, Gratitude, Grief, Guilt, Happiness, Hatred, Hope, Horror, Hostility, Hurt, Hysteria, Indifference, Interest, Jealousy, Joy, Loathing, Loneliness, Love, Lust, Outrage, Panic, Passion, Pity, Pleasure, Pride, Rage, Regret, Relief, Remorse, Sadness, Satisfaction, Schadenfreude, Self-confidence, Shame, Shock, Shyness, Sorrow, Suffering, Surprise, Terror, Trust, Wonder, Worry, Zeal, Zest - imagine life without emotions?

Emotions are a complex state of feeling that result in physical and psychological changes that influence our behaviour.

“I walk into a house and I know whether it is empty or occupied. I feel the lingering air of a recent fight or love making or depression. I sense the emotions someone near is emitting – whether friendly or threatening. Hate and fear – the more intense the emotion, the greater my reception of it. I feel a tingling on my skin when someone is staring at me or thinking about me. I can tell how others feel by the way they smell, where others are by the air pressure on my skin. I can spot the love or greed or generosity lodged in the tissues of

⁹¹ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 103.

⁹² *ibid*, 75.

⁹³ *ibid*, 102.

another. Often I sense the direction of and my distance from people or objects – in the dark, or with my eyes closed, without looking. It must be a vestige of a proximity sense, a sixth sense that's laying dormant from long-ago times."⁹⁴

Sensitive, sensibility, sensory, sensitivity, sensuality, sexuality, senses, sentiment, sentimento, lo siento. Feeling felt actions. Feelings are actions led by a higher power – the senses – into emotive motions. Senses are the conduct to the soul. I sensi sono il senso della vita, our common sense. We are human because we are embodied. I am more than my brain; I live in a physical world. Proprioception, pressure, itch, thermoception, tension sensor, nociception, equilibrioception, stretch receptors, chemoreceptors, thirst, hunger, magnetoception, time, balance and acceleration. The senses are the faculty by which the body perceives external stimulus. While we are trained to mainly use sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste, a multitude of other senses quietly function in our subconscious. Lack of use will atrophy them causing the decline of the quality of our life. "Sensing a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feeling."⁹⁵ While capitalism wants us 'freed' of sensations – anesthetized – the senses are our subversive space for transgression. My blood, my sweat, my tears, my pee, wet like the sea, taste like the sea, run like the sea, pulse with the sea.

In the caldron of the body
Weather,
ovarian, hormonal, hysterical, emotive, depressed, lunar, high, earthy, airy, moist
Moods,
rivulets flooding over lava
How does it feel to be a body? – Combusting energy?
History, present, hope, an embodied moment – force
How does it feel to be a body? – Tiptoeing on the outskirts edge of its creativity?
Land mines and commas all over, police my journey

⁹⁴ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, 61.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, 60.

Inside the rabbit hole I will find my voice.

“The body is all I have” – Ana Mendieta.

“The human body and not the steam engine or even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism”⁹⁶ through the mechanism of self-discipline, self-management and self-regulation. The body, the primary work machine, needed social governability as capitalism had to rely on uniform and predictable forms of behaviour. Mechanical philosophy induced the mechanically determined body. Once its devices were deconstructed and reduced to a tool, nature and the body could be opened to an infinite manipulation of possibilities: all bodily powers transformed into work powers, nature and the body reduced to a machine. Divorced from its body, the mind lost its solidarity with its corporeal reality and with nature as the supremacy of the will allowed for the interiorization of the mechanisms of power. Development of self-management, responsibility and self-control led to a new model of being at once master and slave. Repression of desire, emotions and other forms of alienation from the body caused the otherness of the body. The perennial conflict of the cultural over the natural consequently initiated the process of self-estrangement. Paraphrasing Federici, the body became an object of constant observation, as if it were an enemy. “Shame of nakedness and the advent of manners – regulating how to laugh, sneeze, how to behave at the table and to what extent one could sing, joke, play”⁹⁷ – turned the body into a beast and a prison inspiring fear and repugnance. At the same time sexuality became a source of evil. With Puritanism, the individual increasingly dissociated from the body. Denaturalized and politicized, the body was transformed into a political signifier of class relations instead. On the other hand, Christian religion, to this day encourages fear and distrust of the body and therefore of life. By encouraging the split between body and mind this belief is killing parts of the human self: its physical and spiritual interconnectedness to nature.

⁹⁶ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 79.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 80.

In our contemporary world millions of reified bodies dissociated from themselves and reduced to objects, occupy life and the potential vitality of communities. Through the new religion of rampant technology, our bodies are dislocated and separated from nature and reality. “We are taught that the body is an ignorant animal; intelligence dwells only in the head. But the body is smart. It does not discern between external stimuli and stimuli from the imagination. It reacts equally viscerally to events from the imagination as it does to real events.”⁹⁸

Both hands on the table. Arms tight. Arms glued to the bust. Pressing. Upright. Books under each armpit. Composed on the chair. Sit up erectly. Straight at the table. Mouth shut. No sounds. No noise. No slurping. Eating. No, not a circus routine.

Back in 16th century René Descartes promised man would become “masters and possessors of nature,”⁹⁹ a point of view popularised by Francis Bacon, which led to the manipulation of nature and of people. The conquest of nature by the machine constitutes the very meaning of progress where the living person becomes an appendix to the machine. Progress was placed in the hands of scientists and technicians. A claim to power, rather than truthfulness and respect, science’s fundamental method was, and still is, that of torture: the methodical dissection of nature to force its secrets out. Scientific method, combined with mechanical technology, created a new material knowledge that caused the split from the spiritual element of life. A highly technical language understood by few, scientific knowledge created another hierarchy. The privilege of determining what is considered scientific knowledge has been in fact controlled and restricted by men. The domination of mainstream modern science and technology is the projection of western men’s values as an institutionalized universal system of organization of life. This technological escalation has invaded every aspect of our human sphere, violating all boundaries to the point that technology dictates how we perceive the world. In Shiva Vandana’s words, science and physics have been fooling us that we can get away with progress. Science and the manufacturing of progress, such as

⁹⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, 59-60.

⁹⁹ Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 188.

Monsanto's GMO crops, have become the "science of manipulation."¹⁰⁰ Genetic engineering and cloning have been manipulating nature, forcing it into new forms for the sake of production. Rather than respecting the beauty of existing organisms, an arrogant and aggressive science advocates for new artificial ones created by man instead. We live in a "virtual panorama where the digitally fit will survive"¹⁰¹ wrote Guillermo Gómez Peña. While industry has failed will technology be better? In the meantime "the technological fix mends an ecological malfunction to maintain the smooth functioning of industry and bureaucracy."¹⁰² So far progress has blocked the flow of love. So far, human evolution only rhymes with pollution. So far, I am a techno-skeptical hypocrite.

Cyber freedom?

Or freedom from Cyborgs?

Processed information, processed food, rapid, instant and sterile, processed bodies: NEXT?

System's logics?

Passive aggressive electromagnetic radiations are competing with my nervous system.

Hey, somebody turn off the power. Can you hear me? Turn the bloody power off.

Yeah, Goddammit, the general (s') power.

ALL POWER.

NO MORE ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATIONS.

Yeah man, a big fucking communication breakdown.

BLACK OUT.

Live in darkness, in the senses.

Metallic?

Blablabla blur, blurb, burp, blob blog boo poo, plomp, clonk, information, free choice fascism, manifestos all over, codes over codes – "codeined language." You code my menstrual blood Donna, liquid, dirty, smelly, sticky, **THICK**, germy, dark and brown, painful – indelible.

No, I am not going to re-craft my body. I will embrace it – instead – accept it, love it. Yeah man,

LOVE! Accept the hairy beauty, my furry primitive body.

Ineffective, and overall affective,

¹⁰⁰ Shiva Vandana, *The Future of Food: Democracy or Dictatorship?*, Hammer Museum Lecture, Los Angeles, November 09, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Somewhere Between Corporate Multiculturalism and the Mainstream Bizarre (A Border Prospective)," *The New Global Culture* 45, no. 1, (2001): 7-30.

¹⁰² Vandana, *The Future of Food*.

Ineffective affectiveness, AHHH, FEELS so good. Did you forget about that too? Feeling.
Never, will I turn into a Halloween cyborg. Fuck quantifiable, units, bases: military systems.
My organism is not a problem. What about your ovaries? Metallic guts.
Oh no, another Californian spiritual cyborg!
Tin and flesh, do they come with an ego too?
Oh no, another inhuman theory advocating for more “humanity”!
I cannot handle more fucking technology.
By the way, what about rural feminist cyborgs?

Is progress towards a six degree centigrade of global warming a calculated mistake for a cosmic better future? Splitting people from people, people from earth, I don't like living in a society that generates a mental environment of endless competition and fear that undermines empathy, altruism, cooperation and spirituality. I don't like growing to dislike my self and my surroundings.

Hakim Bey stated that anarchy, revolution and insurrection have proven to be a waste of time to the advantage of institutionalized bourgeoisie. As resistance gets co-opted by capitalism, apathy and healthy boredom might be more effective tools to provoke some sort of catastrophic breakdown of the system that might well cause a new and real enlightenment.

Maybe I will be una contadina instead of an artist. Not making art my best artwork, stop producing the best product. Maybe I'll become, not white, not blue, not pink but a green collar advocating in Beuysian fashion, for everybody should be an ecological grower. Like Gómez-Peña, I am tired of the self-proclaimed international art world that functions just like any other corporation. I too have become cynical and disillusioned about art and life and of a world where “even intellectuals and artists suffer from compassion fatigue and humanitarian impotence.”¹⁰³ I am tired to live in a “society that in order to rationalize and justify our malaise has developed extremely convoluted theoretical arguments... There are too many forms of injustice competing for our attention... over informed about the dramas of mankind we feel nothing or not enough. Our sadness only lasting few minutes... Desensitization to human pain appears to be necessary in order to survive the daily

¹⁰³ Gómez-Peña, “Somewhere Between Corporate Multiculturalism,” 30.

spectacle to violence...Bodies have been silenced decontextualized emptied of drama and emotion stripped of their humanity.”¹⁰⁴

Living in Los Angeles I am outraged. Outraged at the unacceptable inhuman spectacle. Is this the ultimate frontier of human achievement? Is this modernity’s model of success? Is becoming “spiritual cyborgs”¹⁰⁵ all I have to look forward to?

“Aria fritta” – exhausted, burned out breaths – deep-fried air: gas; saturated whiffs of fast food impregnate the fibres of the soul. Fumes that revolt the pleasure of living into a nauseating thought. Eating and breathing declassified by greed into yet another matter of race and class and above all an unethical opportunity to make profit and to widen the neighbourhoods grids into violent pools of plastic living. The hallucinated scent of leftover nature lingers inside resin drops of perspired marijuana – escaped bodily fluid survivors. Under an acrylic sky the architecture of homelessness displaces the ghostly people into hit-and-run communities accessed by highways and car culture.



Fig. 33 Claudia Borgna, *Give it Back to Me!*, 2015, Still from video, 00:03:09.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

I resist eating another slice of “enriched” bread; I resist drinking another sip of “fortified” milk. I refuse to take another bite of genetically modified pie.



Fig. 34 Claudia Borgna, *Give it Back to Me!*, 2015, Still from video 00:09:29.

“We live in a world of suffering in which evil is rampant, a world whose events do not confirm our Being, a world that has to be resisted. It is in this situation that the aesthetic moment offers hope.”¹⁰⁶

Everything was naked and beautiful to begin with, then, man turned beauty into ugliness and shame. Socially ascribed and in tension with individual and social structures, beauty is both a subjective and socially derived taste that forms our private and collective experience. Beauty, essentially, is a matter of politics.

While I wish my taste, feelings and pleasure would derive entirely spontaneously from nature, beauty in western culture is a contentious and conflictual ideological tool determined by capitalism

¹⁰⁶ Valerie Behiery, “Spaces of Memory and Reclaiming of Palestinian History,” in *“The Map is Not the Territory” Parallel Paths—Palestinians, Native Americans, Irish*, ed. Jennifer Heath (Boulder Colorado: Baksunarts, 2015), 33.

instead, and subjected to rationality, commodity, and calculation tied up with design, style and marketing. Historically beauty has been rationalized, bureaucratized, standardized, rendered efficient, homogenized, mechanized, disenchanting, instrumentalized and universalized by those who regarded their taste for beauty as educated, cultivated and true, superior, or simply for the sake of profit.

Contemporary resistance to the standards of beauty is part of the resistance to superficial capitalist's values and culture. In other words, modern nervousness towards beauty is the rejection of a rhetoric that veils privilege and social divisions.

“In art, beauty is the most dangerous phenomena because art should be about ideas, politics and the sublime. In life too, it's a most dangerous idea that tantalises, confuses, inspires and crushes and yet obsesses everyone. Worshipped in the past as the highest artistic value, and denigrated today as a pagan temptation, it is simply treated by the art world as a joke, a con, and an idiotic, old-fashioned idea.”¹⁰⁷ But beauty, I believe, still exists in some pure natural form, beyond the cultural and the political, beyond instrumentalization; a beauty that just is, that doesn't need to be taught, a beauty that we know when we see it – when we feel it. Beauty overwhelms and humbles, beauty is something we experience when the senses are in awe.

We leave the house, cranky, tired and depressed. I love walking with my mum, together, in and with nature. Sometimes silently inhaling the landscape, sometimes forms and shades breaking silence with their colours and scents, their beauty claiming attention. Bonded in the moment of eternity, we walk the therapeutic spell of beauty. Beauty, a force, love, life: the greatest energy of the universe. Its very complex energy rules the cosmos, keeps the stars in the course and makes atoms join together into new forms. It is the energy that animates and that is incorporated into the essence of everyone and everything.

The aesthetics of western society is an aesthetic of inequality and injustice.

¹⁰⁷ Dbfree, “The Politics of Beauty,” *An Artist Blog*, March 27, 2014 <https://dbfree.wordpress.com/2014/03/27/the-politics-of-beauty/>. (accessed March 5, 2015).

“Traditionally we associate art with a movement towards perfection. The artist is supposed to be creative and to be creative means to bring to the world something new but also something better, better functioning (as in design), better looking, more attractive. But in today’s world all of them are related to design and not to art. Modern and contemporary art wants to make things not better but worse – and not relatively worse but radically worse. To make dysfunctional things out of functional things, to betray expectations to reveal the invisible presence of death where we tend to see only life.”¹⁰⁸

While creativity¹⁰⁹ is not about achieving perfection, maybe the ultimate ‘non-function’ of art is to depict the life of a dying environment, murdered by the dysfunctional activities of contemporary man that, divorced from nature, continues to produce necrophilia: the euthanasia of both bodily and spiritual senses. Western culture, which associates the eye with rationality and order, has placed vision at the top of the scale, dismissing the function of nose, ear and tongue as primitive senses. At the intersection of ecology, aesthetics, body and gender theory, a multi sensory focus is indispensable to dismantle the primacy of the visual to incorporate other bodily experiences. All of our senses are stimulated in a synesthetic chain reaction of sensorial events that employs the whole body. Based on perceptions of multiple physical, spiritual and formal qualities, aesthetics and ecology are interdependent as the landscape extends into our bodies, as our bodies extend into the landscapes, forming a sculpture made by infinite layers of perceptions. “Art is usually regarded by Native American creators as an essential element of life, not a separate expression.”¹¹⁰ While concepts alone are not enough and most times they live better in the mind than out and about in the

¹⁰⁸ Groy, “On Art Activism,” 8.

¹⁰⁹ “Creativity is the way in which the world and the things are seen. Creativity is being in absolute harmony with the whole. Creativity is not analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move towards a single goal (a western mode), but a divergent thinking characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.” – Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderland/La Frontera*.

¹¹⁰ Phoebe Farris, “Art and Activism Defending Homeland,” in *“The Map is Not the Territory” Parallel Paths—Palestinians, Native Americans, Irish*, ed. Jennifer Heath (Boulder Colorado: Baksunarts, 2015), 43.

sensorial world, I believe art, ought to reach out and engage the wide range of emotions and feelings collectively produced by the body. To create or break tensions, it is vital for art to appeal and commit to all its infinite potentials. Like for nature and life, the power of art lies in its indefinability. Hybridity and ephemerality offer a safe places for diversity and for a romantic utopia to thrive. But more and more art resembles a commodified dead thing: separated from nature, lifeless and colonized by capitalism. I think it is important to recuperate the shamanistic, spiritual, poetic, sacred – all intertwined – aesthetic and functional qualities of art, to resist the professionalization of art and the shrinking gap between culture and commerce. “It is only to be hoped that art can – more disinterestedly and selflessly – continue its restorative work.”¹¹¹

Equity of use? Sadly I wonder if that is ever going to be possible in a world where people’s life depend on the opportunity of instrumentalization. If only we could ‘decommodify’ ourselves back to human, essential needs, we might be able to counterbalance the dominance of interest with that of humbling necessity. Let equity of language, of meaning, of creativity and of knowledge build the ‘non-structure’ of compassion, of acceptance and of love: the civilization of love.



Fig 35

¹¹¹ Germán Gil-Curiel, “Walls and Mirrors, identity in Art,” in “*The Map is Not the Territory*” *Parallel Paths—Palestinians, Native Americans, Irish*, ed. Jennifer Heath (Boulder Colorado: Baksunarts, 2015), 64.



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 35-39 Claudia Borgna, *Power Tools*, 2014, Stills from video, 00:13:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvfRZm8NZAI>.

“A public is a cluster of bodies harmed by actions of others or even of actions born from their own actions as these trans act; harmed bodies draw near each other and seek to

engage on new acts that will restore their power, protect against future harm, or compensate for damage done – in that consists their political action which fortunately and unfortunately, will also become conjoint action with a chain of indirect, unpredictable consequences.”¹¹²

I do my public practice with my mum
I do my public practice with Rinaldo
I do my public practice with my friends
I do my public practice at home
I do my public practice when I resist the system
I do my public practice in my everyday choices, in my everyday chores
I do my public practice to connect (to) the network of emotions
I do public practice when I don't do public practice
I daily practice my socially engaged art
I, you, we have been doing public practice all our life
Everything we do or don't do is social practice
... And they lived happily ever after, Amen.

“No one really knows what human agency is, or what humans are doing when they are said to perform as agents,”¹¹³ nevertheless, public practice is the new social institution. While social professionalizations evolve, sociology, psychology, ethnography, photography, ecology, pedagogy, film, architecture, science, gastronomy, business, dance, poetry, counselling, artfully intersect into an aesthetic form, the one of public practice. As the practice of justice and of ethics becomes an art form, it is an art to be socially creative at a time when the dynamics of societies are getting more complicated. More displaced, dispersed and disconnected than ever, people in society require more services, treatments and new cures. Activists, artists, missionaries, volunteers, community leaders, we find our niche in the market. Not persons, not citizens, not bureaucrats, but public practitioners, our job is to hypothetically fix the dysfunctions created by a market that operates on creating new needs, new problems, new demands, new jobs, and endless desires, in order to keep the capitalist

¹¹² Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, 101.

¹¹³ *ibid*, 34.

wheel oiled. Could we exist differently? How? According to Jane Bennet, problems give rise to public as “problems are effects of the phenomenon of conjoint action”¹¹⁴ that cannot be pinpointed but become enmeshed in a web of connections. The growth of population and therefore of artists means that art is having a greater impact – whether positive or negative – on the social and natural environment. As art keeps pushing to free itself from boundaries and evolving in all sorts of directions, absorbing and being absorbed, blurring and blurred, appropriated and appropriating, it has become an ever competitive field, professionalized, specialized, diversified and commodified by us: a needy consumerist society. While surgical corporate operations remove lively organic communities growing by sheer bodily proximity, social practitioners try to compensate to that loss of vibrant organic livelihood with sanitised philanthropic programmes. It is most poignant to notice how mainstream socially engaged art has been mostly practiced by dominant cultures and how dominant cultures are always represented as untroubled while in truth, they are the ones in most need for treatment!

Confused, I marvel at the organized effort that brings people together, communities bridged by knowledge, passion, vision and control, and plenty of under paid and unpaid labour. Public practice is an endeavour that requires pragmatism, efficiency, time and networking. As I cherish and respect the great commitment of social practitioners, I am torn. Who really benefits more from socially engaged art? Can public space exist with no money, no selling, no buying, no market, and no monetary profit? As altruistic activities turn into self-fulfilling professionalized activities and part of the capitalist scheme, I wonder: can empathy be turned into a profession? Is professionalization the best response to society’s urgent need for an efficient infrastructure? Is professionalization the response to a growing population, to service – and control – its expanding needs? With the world’s population swelling¹¹⁵ out of a shrinking public space into the confined quarters of computer screens – human life moving out of itself – more lonely people crave for an empathic caring

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, 100.

¹¹⁵ Over-population, a strategy or a fortuitous process instrumentalized by capitalist logic of profit?

society. Helping, and therefore understanding other individuals, greatly depends on developing powerful self-awareness. I can't understand someone's pain unless I have experienced pain. To understand love, I have to have been in love. I can understand others to the extent I can understand myself and I can understand myself to the extent I can understand others. Often this exchange requires time to reach the depth of social intimacy. Political programmes that rely on homogeneous consensus cannot provide many solutions to human problems. Should then individuals, rather than society, make their changes? On the other hand, can we impact the social space when acting alone? Public space, in many ways a symbolic space, has never been a site of equal access and participation, but rather "an uneven terrain in which unpredictable encounters can result in confrontation and transformation but never result in final solution."¹¹⁶ To me, public is the space of embodied codes. It is where I walk out of my unconscious to meet with other forces in the market square of laws and rules. It is where sensorial and symbolic energies form the architecture of tensions, a shared space where to negotiate my freedom and practice my civic skills. Tendentially a loner, romantically wishing for change, I am inspired by socially engaged art. Nevertheless I cannot help questioning the deep influence that western capitalist culture has on my thinking. Is the desire to bring about social change grounded in an artistic ego that has been trained into the craft of arrogance for the greater? Grass root communities are the core of humanity and cannot be mechanically produced by professional programmes, or can they? The good intended public practice attempt is to impact the production of culture and affect its course for the better, hopefully redefining political leaderships. None the less the element of power and control, and therefore the danger of instrumentalization, is ever present when working in western social spheres. How to create communities in an instrumentalized world when trusting one another has become ever so critical and above all confusing? How to trust the honesty of a gesture, even my very own? I think what we really need is to create and cultivate a terrain for spontaneous, unpredictable social imagination to

¹¹⁶ Jennifer Gonzáles, "The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy and Digital Art Practice," *Camera Oscura*, 24, no 1 70, Duke University Press, (2009): 60.

sprout out of confinement. We need to fertilize our spaces, the natural, the public and the symbolic, with an organic strata of ethical sensitive people that can grow into communities where no control, no power is needed, and are therefore freed from prejudice, guilt, fear and anger. I think we need to endorse spiritual values to learn to integrate, transform, harmonize and aestheticize the energy of emotions instead of suppressing our emotive potential. The only revolution is that of the spirit. True not plastic change is an intimate, laborious and timely process.

So I do my public practice with my mum to clear our historic tensions.

Together we visit the galleries of nature. There are no vernissages or private views, but open skies with kinetic sculptures performing their course of being. Going out to nature, whether wilderness, lush countryside or even an urban or suburban green space, means to access a place unspoiled by human presence and cultural clatter, it means entering a place where high density and complexity of ecological interactions occur, it is a place that reminds me of how society could be.

We walk, observe, listen, discuss, meet, see, hear, and inhale joy, every scented breath celebrating life. Together we admire the rocks, the flowers, the season that grow on brittle stems glimmering in the sky merging with the see. Sometimes and ever so often we mourn the death of nature, could that be change?

I believe in the intimacy of humanity that evolves through time and through the senses.

I do my public practice with nature. Will I live happily ever after?



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 40-44 Claudia Borgna, *Power Tools*, 2014, Stills from video, 00:13:51
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvrZm8NZAI>.

To own a car or an I-Phone would mean missing precious moments of help. To help to be helped, helps me to spark the dynamics of assistance. I ask for a lift or for street direction, for the possibility of spontaneous human exchange. So I commute the space between assisted and assistant to animate

brief intimate relationships. Maybe one day we will all hitchhike again. One day savour the adventures of sharing. One day hitchhiking the path with a healthy humanity.

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise...The best way for humans to preserve the stability and integrity of ecological systems is by intervening in and transforming them in ways that are consonant with the pace of evolutionary change. Evolutionary change is usually slow and local, whereas technology enables humans to make changes of unprecedented violence, rapidity and scope...Change should mimic the normal scale of natural change and therefore benign as the naturally occurring ones.”¹¹⁷

Culture is the medium through which humans interact with nature, how will then ecological degradation affect social dynamics of human adaptation? What are the psychological and social dimensions of environmental issues?

For me change lies in the revolution of economic priorities that can only manifest itself in a simpler lifestyle and in a reversal of mainstream values that validate pre-technological simplified life, engaged in labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive economic methods. We ought to stop producing “plastic changes” but observe nature and rethink the corporeal roots of human intelligence. Those roots are in the body and in nature. They are not governed by the principle of control and power but function on interdependent mutuality. I think that we ought to scale the world down in order to foster a sense of wonder and to revive the cosmic vision of life in which the magical dimension has its rightful place. In the pursuit of knowledge and control, man’s desire for linear rationality and the practice of its theories have entangled our lives into complicated bureaucratic systems to the point of estrangement from what is essential in life. This kind of structure poses severe limitations to personal and social development. So far, the answer to ontological question: who am I, has been a human self-identity constructed in opposition to nature, animals and diverse human cultures and identities. Humans are not “the ontological

¹¹⁷ Dussalt, *Ecological Nature*, 6.

centre or hierarchical apex.”¹¹⁸We are placing too much weight on human will or intentionality.”¹¹⁹We are all made of the same matter: star dust, and eco mimicry, as Aldo Leopold once said, is the principle to guide human social-cultural interaction with nature.

As transgression is only tolerated in the interest of capitalism I am aiming at an art/life form that if it cannot overthrow capitalism at least it tries to boycott it.

“What shall we do to change the world? Leave it alone and live” – Alan Watts

“To be a mode is to form alliances and enter assemblages, it is to be modified by others. The process of modification is not under the control of any one mode – no mode is an agent in the hierarchical sense... Each mode vies with and against the (changing) affections of a (changing set of) other modes, all the while being subject to the element of change or contingency intrinsic in any encounter.”¹²⁰

Every day I wake up more restless, day-by-day growing more anxious and afraid. The dramatic consequences of colonial politics add another element of pressure on the psyche of society. The psychological stress of being impotent in front of the repercussions of endless injustice taking place everyday, over and over and all over, take their toll on people’s mind. Whether a desire, an obligation or an imposition, the necessity of change is indeed an added pressure to the weight of modern lifestyle survival where our conducts are constantly monitored and judged, and life crushed by the burden to conform and perform the hegemonic roles.

But maybe change comes when it’s ready. Then, when it’s there, it will vibrate inside me, and together, we, will vibrate with everything around us.

If slowing down life to the rhythms of nature is a failure
If to look at necessity rather than possibility is considered inefficient

¹¹⁸ Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, 11.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, 29.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, 22.

If to start imagining a world without exploitation of humans and nature is inefficient
If to obtain maximum amount of well being with the minimum amount of consumption, is inefficient
If to resist corporate dominance is a failure
If desiring little is a failure
If my goal to fail the efficiency of the system of accumulation is a failure
If to establish an intimate corporeal relation with the intellect is inefficient
If to reconnect the body of the self and society with that of nature is a failure
If to honour the seed of uncharted and unexpected experiences is a failure
If to grow in an unhurried fashion is inefficient
If love is inefficient
If I fail my consuming ego
I fail in order to grow beyond the narrow concerns of my efficiency.

*“Life will always exceed our knowledge and our control therefore it is our ethical duty to learn how to accept this.”*¹²¹ In Alan Watts words living is simple and should be natural. Things are complicated when we think about them otherwise. Concepts cannot do anything and so cannot the idea of ourselves and the best thing we can do is to give up our ego and hand it over to the direction of nature. Our language is too simple for nature and to comprehend the infinite and inseparable interconnectedness of nature –where willingly or not – everything depends on everything else. The cosmos is much too complicated to understand because we are part of it and the part cannot understand the whole while being part of it. We are really too simple minded to understand and control the world. The thought that we are giving the world a human, or worse, a mechanical form, is a scary one. Our busy lives constitute an ecological problem. Too engrossed trying to fulfil our lives with meaning and purpose, we burden the environment with abundance and accumulation of unnecessary actions. The environment is victim of human disastrous fantasies while we endlessly seek something outside ourselves to satisfy an insatiable yearning for fulfilment.

¹²¹ *ibid*, 14.



Fig. 45 Claudia Borgna, *Ciao!* 2015, Performance with plastic bags outfit, Otis Open Studios, Los Angeles.

Anxious and afraid, I drown in to my 'self-estrangement' clinging my smile inside a double chinned grin. My lips tight, chew on another missed CIAO.

CIAO, damm, relax the jaw, open the mouth up, unclog that heart out, let the air in, decanter life with a full vowelled big fat CIIIIAAAAAOOOO.

A CIAO would pop me open like a bottle of spumante, fizzing out and all over, CIAO! A CIAO would clear the stale bile stuck inside the alveoli.

But I don't say CIAO anymore, I mean a full-hearted, happy: CIAO. A CIAO that is filled with the joy of life, a CIAO like a full swung tail wag, fervently wagging, swinging from side to side. A swing of the tail with no expectations other than to say CIAO, I am happy to see you too.

Instead, con la coda fra le gamble, I grind and ruminate on all the lost CIAO. Censoring the expansiveness of a ray of sun that warms no matter what, I kick back into the limbo of insecurity of a Ciaoless life.



Fig. 46 Claudia Borgna, *Ciao!* 2015, Performance with plastic bags outfit, Otis Open Studios, Los Angeles.

I want to be like a plant or a flower, draw strength and nutrients to feed back love, gratefulness and beauty – oxygen. I want to play and make art using my organs. I want to transcend dualisms and divisions of body and soul through poetry. The most vivid desire is to be in commune with the ecology around me, to have a conversation with a bee or sing with a frog, be intimate with a tree or a leaf, dance with a flower, with earth – be completely part of it. I make art to be part of the whole. I don't want to, have, but I want to, be, that is why I make art. Through art I found my way to connect. In art and in nature I feel in my element. I inhabit the space from where I can give my best, be an individual by leaving my individualist self. Art is my relationship with the world where thoughts and things create social radiations.

As a child I never thought of art. To be an artist never crossed my mind. As a child I did not have any true ambitions apart from the desire to play all day with other kids. At some stage, later on, the aspiration for travelling¹²² oriented me through life. But I was never meant to be an artist or to go to university; on the other hand I was not a planned baby either.

Back then I did not know anything about art and even less about life, all I knew was how to be in love. I bumped into art or art bumped into me, call it fate, chance, destiny, whichever way, art and I, not only crossed path but embraced each other. In that moment I knew that was all I wanted to do. I was craving creativity. I had twenty-eight years to make up for and I could not believe my luck, how wonderful and irresistible it felt to finally unleash the creative flow. Until then I'd found creative solace in what I called "conceptual dressing up." Of course I didn't know anything about concepts, still, loads of time went into dashing clothing compositions that unnerved the conservative provincial community in one place, and in another place tried to fit an eccentric

¹²² The desire for travelling: escape for freedom or escape from freedom? Whichever way freedom requires responsibility. In Erich Fromm's words, humanity's true nature is freedom. "Man is born as a freak of nature and yet transcending it. He has to find principles of action and decision making which replace the principles of instincts, he has to have a frame of orientation which permits him to organize a consistent picture of the world as a condition of consistent actions... He has to protect himself not only against the danger of losing his life but also against the danger of losing his mind"— Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (Avon: Discus, 1968), 61.

metropolitan crowd by standing out. Living in London, art was a way to be closer to nature.

Growing flowers and vegetables did not make much sense back then. Cooking my grandma's specialities, although very much appreciated by all, completely fulfilled the stereotype of being Italian, an immigrant and a woman, which together with my colourful outfits and accent made me exotic and instantly relegated into the lower social ranks.

Sometimes I wonder if all along I was secretly seeking art. Is that why babies agree to come out of the womb? To make art?

To my surprise everybody was astonished to see my path divert to that unexpected and unproductive route. They even changed their attitudes towards me, or maybe it was just me radiating an unusual sense of fulfilment?

My mum always thought I needed to do something with my hands, that my future lied in using my hands. Like all children – before they get told not to – I touched everything. But not only that, I also broke everything I touched, endlessly attempting to repair what I was breaking – a behaviour that earned me a special and lasting reputation.

I really love touching, but not just with my hands. I love touching with my eyes, with my breath, with my taste buds, with my ears, I love touching with my heart, with my feelings, I touch to understand and for pleasure. I touch to think. Touching for me is a profound erotic process that unfolds in its own time and space, liberated from rules of symmetry and order crafting the freedom of the imagination. I think through feeling and I feel through touching. The way I understand and learn is through my senses. I love intimacy and need closeness to what I am about to understand. First I hear, smell, look, rub, before I bite, chew, suck, break down – eat what I am exploring. It is an immersive, visceral process that involves all the senses – and time. It is sensorial as much as intellectual as there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses and in the guts. It is through art that I began to see and understand the world; it is through art that I became aware of its political connotations – my political status as outsider, as immigrant, as newcomer, as woman, as lesbian, constantly clashing with my primordial being. The more concepts inhabit my mind the

more difficult the joyful creative flow, and the more urgent the need for change, has become. Yet, the more unbearable the outlook on the world, the more I fall pray to theories and concepts, the more the desire to make art becomes pointless.

Patriarchal gaze, concepts and regulations have distorted my behaviour, my taste buds – bent my views. I have become suspicious of my guts. Yet every thought I have starts with a feeling.

Dismissed as inferior, feelings are the only true thing I know and yet carried away by theories I am loosing trust in them. Or are feelings loosing trust in me? It is at this point that art once again becomes a rescue to reconnect with what is left of my bacterial flora. Planned, strategized, conceptualized, art to me lives in the space of the unintended where the magic roots of nature reclaim chance: a soil cultivated by intuitive random acts informed by culture and by the guts. But in a consumerist society ever more alienated from the body and nature, disenchanted from beauty and from love, what is the purpose of art? Is art a means for exploitation rather than exploration? Does art need injustice, such as an environmental crisis, to function on a political level? As I write as you read – am I instrumentalizing or validating my emotions? Does the use of art as political tool – whether using aesthetics for political goals or politics for aesthetic goals – corrupt art's intentions of radical change jeopardizing its very cause by automatically instrumentalizing it? Is injustice the human condition to give meaning to our lives – a reason to fight and feel purposeful and powerful? Living in between justices, countries, cultures, laws, orders, genders, politics, ideologies, languages, lifestyles and classes. In between nature and culture. How to reconcile the in-between? How to make an art that does not loose its magical essence instrumentalized for a political scope? How to shake our conscience with the poetry of values that hold us together? How to live the art, not the artifice, of life?

I know that a flower changes everything. It changes the architecture of my moods – the kitchen of my soul. The essence of a flower transcends () any knowledge.



Fig. 47 Claudia Borgna, *Funeral to a Plastic Bag*, 2012, Still from video, 00:10:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmJm1AUI_Fw

*“Why despite signs from a stressed global ecosystem, mounting scientific evidence, and education campaigns, does degradation of the environment continue to persist and mount?”*¹²³ We all know it, we all hear it, we all breathe it, we all taste it, and we all feel it, but then what?

“While environmental protection is a wasteful false alarm for some, for others it is an urgent priority to which they have committed themselves wholeheartedly. Relations to the environment and consumption of resources differ significantly among the developed and developing countries and between rich and poor in all countries. People do not all bear equal responsibility for ecological abuse, nor do all relate to nature in the same way.”¹²⁴

Like Roach suggests, angry and obscure human desires to control and conquer are intertwined with the roots of environmental damage, both running deep in the confrontation between humanity and nature. While it may seem hard and perhaps in some ways undesirable to live in harmony with nature, are we ready for the death of nature? Not of our earth, our mother, of nature that can sustain

¹²³ Catherine Roach, *Mother/Nature* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 4

¹²⁴ *ibid*, 5.

itself with or without us, but the death of our inherent human nature: the death of love and of caring, the death of the senses and of human sensibilities?

As the problem of environmental destruction and social domination can be located in capitalist exploitation, Roach argues that psychological and the social are intimately related and that psychoanalytic internal processes help underpin such hierarchies to understand what we must resist becoming. In my personal experience all individuals are inherently good people whose behaviour transform under the cultural pressures once entering the social dynamics. People inhabit systems and people, good people, form institutions. Subjected to their own tyranny: the institution, people are transformed by the very machines they have created. How and why do systems manage to unleash the worse forces out of a whole society?

From one extreme to the other, carefully avoiding balance, western society normalizes the logic of dualism. Endlessly multiplying, despite endless attempts to get rid of, dualities endlessly accumulate in vain efforts. I am a duality-producing machine.

A loud speaker towering from the top: **THE MIND**

From within a *body* cries: “Shut up, stop thinking!”

The mind cannot help it; afraid of rabbit holes, it just doesn't stop.

Bodily sensations instead are aching to crawl the silent cavernous burrows that smell of musk and mushrooms, sweet like liquorice. Like a mole, the body urges to travel the magical channels of earth, one rabbit hole after the other ploughing the land for metamorphosis.



Fig.48



Fig. 48- 49 Claudia Borgna, *The Boring Things of Life*, 2014, Still from video, 00:7:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlvV7VpUVpM>.

“The world had to be disenchanted in order to be dominated.”¹²⁵

Magic is an “obstacle to the rationalization of the work process and a threat to the establishment.”¹²⁶

A form of grassroots resistance, magic gives power to the poor undermining that of authorities and state. Magical power subverts the constituted order by giving the ability to live in harmony with the natural and social environment.

Spread and shuffle, move around into endless circles and combinations. Break up order, sequence, numbers, and chain of pages. In the words of Susan Edwards: a text without binding. The tarots. Either from the Italian ‘Tarocco’ – the sweet and juicy Sicilian blood orange – or from the Arabic ‘Turuk’ – meaning ways – tarots connect nature to history to culture to women to spirituality to art to fate. To borrow the form of tarots is to break away from academic structures in favour of supporting the form of elusiveness and openness instead. How to give an aesthetic to the volatile, to uncertainty, to ambiguous evasiveness? Tarots encourage creativity and call for the infinite fantastic interpretations that exist or are yet to come. The tarot is a space where imagination, the occult, the natural, the spiritual, history, the present and the future, all merge into one mystic divinatory world. Tarots trace back to 15th century: the beginning of the mechanization of nature. As history impacts the present and the future, the tarots reveal our human transformation. To read the tarots is to look inside a kaleidoscope where each life – pagan, pantheist, animalist – is a divine spark that does not live in linear or analytical ways of thinking or reasoning. Each link a gleam bonded to the other and to the whole all at once at any time all the time to the universal chain of links knitted into the magical esoteric world described by the tarots. To lay out the cards is to entice and be enticed by the links: moments becoming noticeable. The cards are introductions that link us all over, one rabbit hole to the next. Like people, each card holds the link to an infinite world of interminable interpretations that I will never be able to fully grasp. Each card is the beginning of an awareness that will follow its fate and its link to earth, each card independently dependent.

¹²⁵ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 174.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

As I shuffle, the moon, the stars, strength, justice, the fool, are staring at me as the world binds my hormonal labour, my lunar strength, with the sea.

This is my deck of tarots to be. Pick up a card, any card from any part of this deck – randomly –

“The answer will come” –*Morpheus from the Matrix*

Let the content imagine the form

Let the content be free to manifest – Shape accordingly – circumstantial necessity.

Imposed, does form change content?

Language: form or content?

Language, tailor made to con-form contents.

“L’abito non fa il monaco.”

But if words are feelings, emotions, thoughts – forms that shape, morph paper – fragments of energy of infinite possibilities – why strangle those words carved and crafted out of life into a stylistic constraint? Why mechanize an emotion with the order of commas: the hierarchy of separation? Should words and thoughts not rather be free of drifting from one rabbit hole to the other, from one person to another, from one interpretation to another, from one world to another? Does the absence of stylistic currency make those very emotions transcribed into words less valuable?

Driven by the enjoyment of the moment and by a flow of discovery. All along drifting – along inspirational readings. Forgotten emotions resumed submerged memories: shipwrecked thoughts saved by promising ideas. Like pollen, flocks of words migrating across space, morph the landscape. Translated, they combust into alchemic potions. Inside my body, words metabolize into new substances. I’ve marvelled every sentence, distilled every word into sap now bleeding into new molecular bonds. Words transcribed, from one place onto another, their energy like magnetic fields lightening across endless associations. Why strangle them into a stylistic space? Words and images at all cost efficient, linear – coded soldiers. At all cost efficient well-aligned commas that keep away from the rabbit hole.

Academic conventions and rules instil the fear not being able to express in the similarly eloquent way, the fear to change compositions of power. For the fear of chaos, citation rules police the rabbit hole's entrance. How to cite a rabbit hole? Comma after comma, rule after rule, number after number, trying to fit in, be normal, conform, bit-by-bit sterility extinguishing any bacterial flora left. So the moment has finally arrived. The occasion to exercise an act of rebellion has occurred. The opportunity for disobedience, at last, I finally claim my artist immunity! Not an easy or safe decision but a transitional direction, I take the risk. Trained to please, I gather all my bravery, my emotive artillery, I need all my courage, and NO, I will not follow citations rules. This time I will not miss my opportunity, to fail and loose – the system. I will disobey to practice disobedience. For the right of disobeying I will disobey. I will disobey to embody my resistance. I will disobey for the necessity of disobedience. My ovary unruliness enacting my argument, I will disobey to enact in form what I've described in content. A mixed bag, contradictory random signs form a structure where signs of order and signs of disorder mirror the contrived freedom of my in-betweeness.

“Ne carne ne pesce”

not one nor the other

but vague,

in defence of non – specificity

in defence of poetic

allusions

The....rabbit.....hole.....

I

the product of post-modern society

trying to fathom

legitimize

Being

Morph away, Be vague!

No no no, Not superior

no no no , Not

inferior

indefinite uniqueness

Escaping from the fatal attraction to rule

Change the logic of understanding:

I feel therefore I understand!

Vagueness scrambling for validation?

Vagueness is its own content and form — melting scorre e scivola, VIA

For a brief instant: acknowledged before slipping

AWAY

Silently not without leaving its trail.....

.....to the next rabbit hole

HOP

In the pursuit of efficiency and professionalization, it is impossible to get truly lost these days. It's a luxury to break out of routines of modern rhythms and out of the constriction of time – we need more rabbit holes!



Fig. 50



Fig. 51

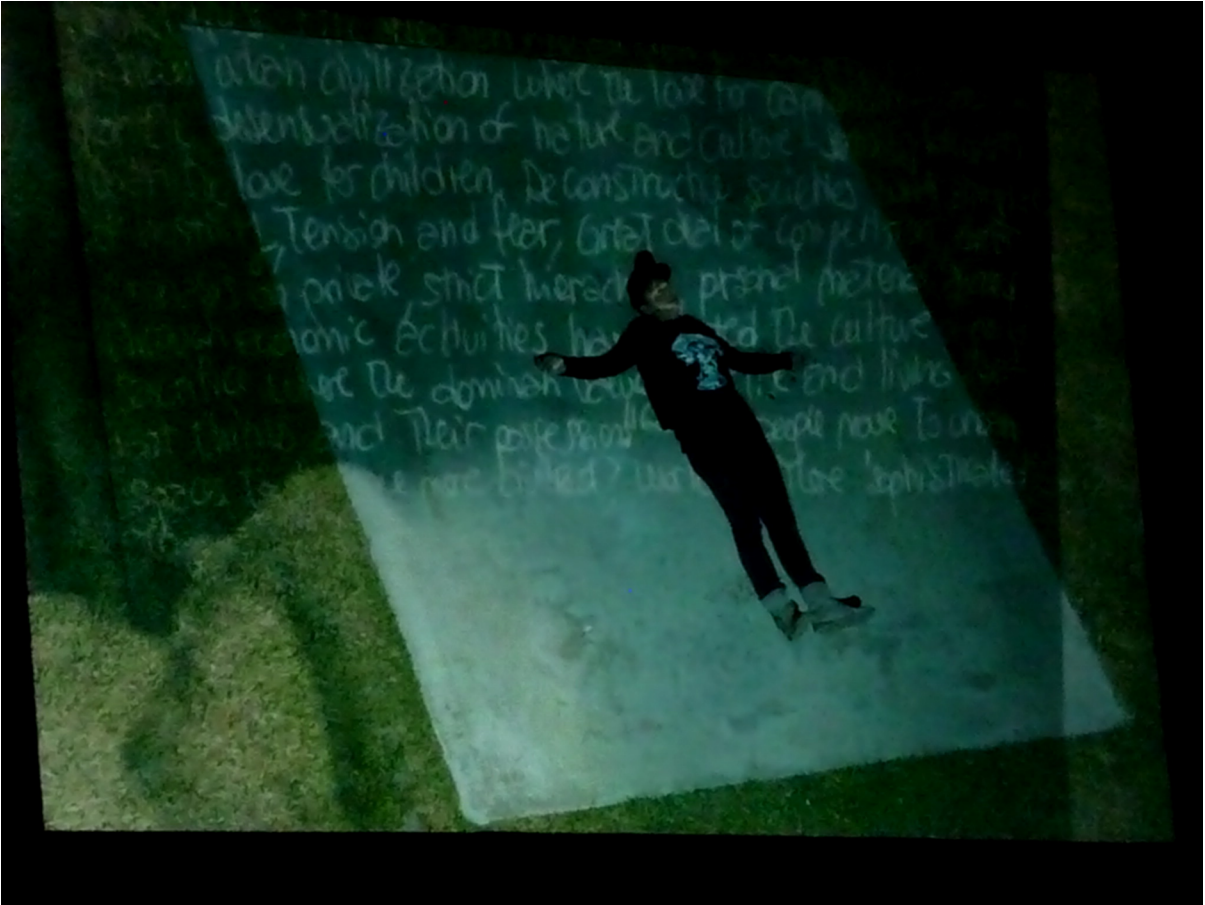


Fig. 52



Fig. 53

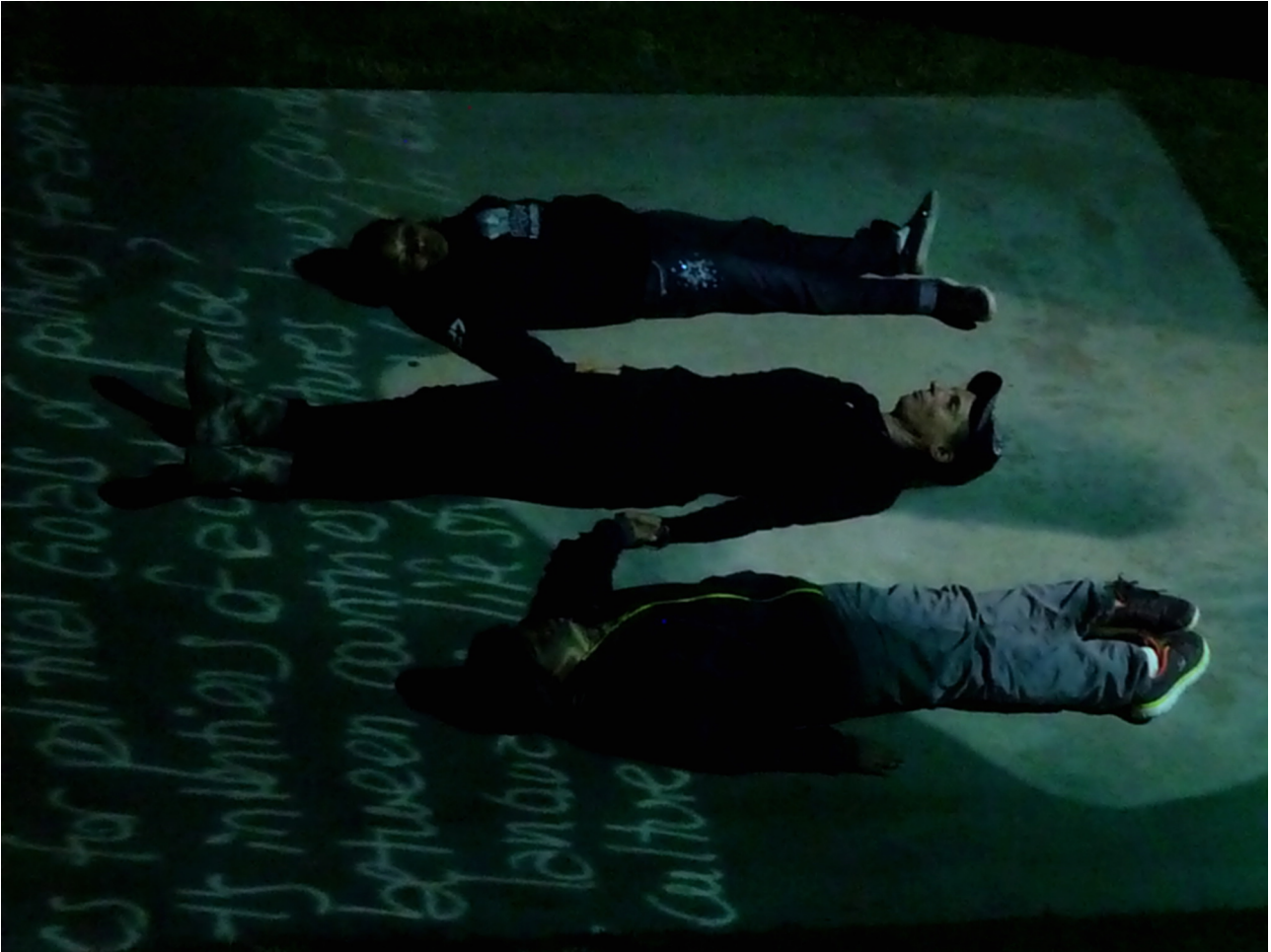


Fig. 50-54 Claudia Borgna, *Onions, From the Rabbit Hole You Make the Rules!* 2015, Video Projection with Performance, Otis Graduation Show, Los Angeles.

Commas, inside or outside citation marks? Foot notes, bibliography, orders, who makes the rules? MLA, APA, Chicago style, who invented typographical rules in force at Universities? Obligated to scientific, literary, historic rules, why do we cite according to the code? What is the objective of citation and academic formats? Is it about acknowledgement of another resource? Who are we really acknowledging? What's hidden inside a footnote? Who benefits from the mechanization of writing and citing? Are academic rules democratic? Does the institution of mechanical well-structured rules facilitate communication? Encourage diversities? By becoming a more linear and efficient experience, can reading still entice the organic fluidity of the imagination? Is the regulated convention of fixed, standartized rules that codify the writing practice of a large discourse community in fact meant for professionals only? Are citations rules a way to

institutionalize thoughts of resistance? Are academic rules another measurement for casting judgement – creators of hierarchical division and of power dynamics? Imbued in expectations, rules totalize against the respect for difference. Has the creation of codes impeded man from a deeper and better understanding of ourselves and of our surroundings? Is the professionalization of writing, a solution for capitalist information overload while minimizing and standardizing the time and effort in finding and creating knowledge? Are citations specimens of type used to easily locate references made to accelerate the conquest of knowledge? Made to commodify words?

Time. Exactly time, the turning point of everything. Natural time, endlessly manipulated, time is the solution to everything. And yet time is taken away, stolen from its natural course. We need time. Time to loose ourselves in, time to find ourselves in, time to understand, time to process, time to resolve change, time to create diversity. Instead, time, just like anything else, has been colonized by western ideology of expansion and by aggressive competitive dualist theories. Mechanic rules do not honour time, do not practice tolerance – do not exercise patience that unifies. No, not diverse strata of earth slowly forming mountains, but big voids that divide – for the sake of efficient productivity kill the rabbit hole!

Dispossessed, nature loses its functions and words lose their source. Functions become words and words get filled with rules. As words and people fall prey of their institutions, rules become our reference.

Like spelling and punctuating, citations take out all the joy of writing turning individuals into machines and writing into products of uniformed styles. As it becomes more difficult to break from those rules, more and more a homogenized style is losing personal creativity and writing resembling one another. The standardization of form and style (and content?) influenced by the industrial rationale of mechanical culture results into an assembly line production. Not the product of time and craft, but a streamline of mass-produced goods – standardized expression and creativity fulfilling the desire for a neat reliable idealist product. But how to oppose the organization of this centralized discipline? If only words were made by everybody! Instead, words

are made by few and used by everybody. Curated by mainstream references, words, concepts and meaning are submitted to systems of regulating knowledge – writing too reduced to laws and to historic-cultural limits. Whether evolutionary, conceptual, or operational, the stifling citation style obsessed pedagogy has turned writers into bureaucrats that campaign the politics of citation while footnotes and bibliographies become lobbyist parades of dominant press. To enter the club of academia one has to adhere to the rules. Disempowered voices, finally given the opportunity to be heard, have to perpetuate a coercive system that clashes with their vitalities. Perversely contradictory, justice and equality have to bend down and submit to the rules, if not only for the sake of the recognition of the value of time and labour.

Interestingly, a brief research on citation rules revealed a vast literature on how to apply and reinforce those very rules, but no critical literature was found. Recently reading the exhibition catalogue edited by Jennifer Heath “*The Map is not the Territory*” *Parallel Paths—Palestinians, Native Americans, Irish*, I realized the parallel connection between words and territories, concepts and land, maps and citation rules. Subtle and “discrete geopolitical entities,”¹²⁷ I feel that citations rules just like “maps represent simplified forms of reality, which has been given a particular ordering and hierarchical coding”¹²⁸ by western tradition. “In Western Europe, traditional geographic thought has foregrounded the positivist belief that land and territory can be properly mapped, and that progress towards increased accuracy”¹²⁹ and bureaucracy, “is a feature of advanced cartographic technologies and cognitive development.”¹³⁰ But images and words are autonomous, not through closure, but through singular openness. Their virtual edges naturally leak into actual potentiality, a course now coerced by rules. In the name of progress, words too, have to be able to be accurately mapped, traced, contained, bureaucratized and controlled. This way words are divorced from universal interconnectedness and endless compositions of meanings, dominated.

¹²⁷ Nessa Cronin, “Place Making: Mapping Territories Landscapes, Lives,” in *The Map is Not the Territory*, ed. Jennifer Heath (Boulder Colorado: Baksunarts, 2015), 91.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

How do academic rules shape our knowledge? Do citation rules support a neutral and natural way of communicating? Or are they rather a construct of a particular knowledge representing particular cultural values instead? Although claiming neutrality, maps “by definition are intrinsically subjective (connected to the cultural code of the cartographer and the producing society).”¹³¹ Just like maps, citations entail the principle of western ideology of territorial property. “Reflecting the context of land possession and ownership,”¹³² like the exploited land, are words too “passively waiting for inscription and colonization?”¹³³ Or are words and citation rules a tool of conquest to legitimize the conquest “of contested intellectual terrains of competing historical narratives?”¹³⁴ Who and how determines which word is true and which thought is truly original or not authentic? Does the intellectual property of the sequence of words – the possession of knowledge – consolidate or prevent the manipulation of mind, bodies, people and nature? How to break loose from traditional phallogocentric patterns that affect our thoughts and behaviours? Is messy creativity a threat to the rulers? Predictability, order, obedience, perfection, like business, academia sets out to prevent creativity and rule breaking forever. When rules are more important than nature and people, destructiveness is inevitable. Academia, by advocating perfectionism, teaches to live by the rules. The reiteration of mandatory arbitrary set of rules is the endorsement of the proliferation of patriarchal system that denies the infinite number of ways of living and of dealing with life. What would I do if I weren’t afraid?

To begin with, I would follow my personal aptitude: mixing up. Having attended academic institutions in different Countries, a minestrone of Italian, English and American rules is my “style!” Unplanned, unpredictable, unconscious, my dilemma really started when citing books I had no physical access to. My quotes, emerging from memory or based on chaotic notes, had been taken at a different time and Country and now fusing into the distance of an ocean. Furthermore my

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ *ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

impulse – in order to be true to the concepts of my research and enact my argument not just with words – was to avoid dominant published literature but reference what is commonly considered “marginalized” “second best” publications instead. These factors, aggravated by the pressure of academic deadlines and to the stress of living in Los Angeles, dictated the desire for disobedience of rules that are neither congenial nor innate to me. As real life intertwined with my research, I became extremely sensitive and aware of how patriarchal rules were directing my work and my life. Almost inadvertently, growing organically towards a breaking point, it is at the end of my research that I became aware of a real in situ – on the spot – possibility for disobedience. Left over experiments of resistance are still visibly scattered through out the paper. Indelible, despite all efforts, they mark the process of an attempted rebellion, and not only that, but also of an internal struggle. I did not want my thesis to become a scholarly essay, but an artwork instead. Also, I wanted to write from the body – my female perspective a “direct source of discourse.”¹³⁵ The desire to share a deep felt physical academic experience and to maybe rewrite myself, led to hand write my thesis. This handwritten document I then dipped in the sea and dried in the sun. I wanted the natural elements to have the last say and interact with my words with vital traces of water, salt, sand, sun radiations and air. These thickly layered pages I finally embedded with the digital ones, merging the two formats together into one. Here most footnotes looked like this.¹³⁶ I really wanted the reader to share the same sense of loss I was experiencing. Freed from the logic of numbers, I did not want that space invaded by order. Instead I wanted to create the possibility to drift and fall, with me, into magic rabbit holes. By dispersing mixed up information through out the text, I thought of setting a treasure hunt within the essay. A sort of game to seek out for misplaced hidden references hypothetically leading to new introductions and to unimaginable links that recuperate our lost time, the time that we don’t have anymore.

¹³⁵ Jones, “Writing the Body,” 252.

¹³⁶ Initially, to prevent interruptions and the writing flow, where I did not know the page numbers I stated: “Don’t recall page number” in the footnotes instead.

Time replaced by frustration instead, left behind unsatisfied half hazarded intentions such as the tarots game, my way to plant chance inside a thesis and break linear orders stacked up in dualism. Time replaced by control – but imagine instead, loose leaves flying in the air, sheets and words running away at the mercy of the wind, hiding in the sheltered cracks of earth! Am I fulfilling a stereotype? The sensitive, the emotional, the hysteric. Why “in the existing state of society is women’s a negative function when rejecting finite, definite, structure?”¹³⁷ “The capricious temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, language in which she goes off in all directions and in which he is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning.”¹³⁸ How to enact the refusal to identify with the logic of paternal discourse? All along struggling and battling to legitimize disorderly ways only to eventually be put back in place and follow the rules that take away creative space. But not without a last attempt of resistance! My footnotes became oral rather than written words.¹³⁹ But who cares about that anyways!

Still the question remains: How to “construct text against the rules and regularities of conventional language?”¹⁴⁰ The case of Patrick Steward¹⁴¹ was inspirational to me and raises another question: should the burden of resisting patriarchal rules be the task of struggling “marginalized minorities” only? Their battle tolerated by a condescending dominant public because less threatening if sporadic and isolated? Conventional narrative techniques, “grammar and syntax”¹⁴² just like citation rules, “imply a totalizing viewpoint and mastery of outer reality that men have claimed for themselves”¹⁴³ and that us women have been disciplined to enforce. Because in the end “who makes text available for women? Who enters the roles of authority audience of the modes of publications and distribution?”¹⁴⁴ “Why are we forced to imitate dominant discourse? How to

¹³⁷ Jones, “Writing the Body,” 249.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 250.

¹³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpPkCFoVnUk&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, “Writing the Body,” 249.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCDWHiGhG8k&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁴² Jones, “Writing the Body,” 259.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

challenge the discourse that stands?”¹⁴⁵ Could we decide which rules to support or not? Why endorse rules that regulate the banality of evil? Endless rules have not led to the civilization of love. In the light of such failure humans should seriously consider to stop claiming their hypocritical “animal superiority.” Society regulative moral principles rule people that nevertheless keep hurting one another. Rules have only tamed us into obedient citizens that degrade the ecosystem, where flux and complexity are in fact the true rulers. The little interest I have for mechanical rules does not diminish the respect I have for people and their labour. On the contrary, I feel there is more to life and people than citation rules. If only we would apply the same energy and obsession for bureaucratic rules into the care and the respect for our precious natural ecologies! I am deeply convinced we would be a much healthier society.

I don't know if I sin of ignorance. My opinion limited, formed by personal experience, emotions exposed to life thus far. I don't know if mine is just an arrogant hypocritical presumption, a utopian romanticism or the perspective of a privileged white European woman artist. Most likely its all the above as I am falling prey of the academic system. Still I wonder, would failing the rules make a richer, riskier, alive and more useful process? Would I end up more inspired and energized by my bravery? Would you? Ultimately, all I know now is that your words are my words and my words are your words. Here they are, ready, waiting for transformation. Come on, change me!



Fig. 55 Claudia Borgna, *Power Tools*, 2014, Stills from video, 00:13:51 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvfRZm8NZAI>.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, 249.

A deck of tarots does not need commas or citations but only imagination; its sense lies in each card and in the infinite random combination of possibilities of a world ruled by a non-hierarchical structure, because commas cannot separate the sea.

To be continued.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ MANIFESTO OF POST-FUTURISM

1. We want to sing of the danger of love, the daily creation of a sweet energy that is never dispersed.
2. The essential elements of our poetry will be irony, tenderness and rebellion.
3. Ideology and advertising have exalted the permanent mobilisation of the productive and nervous energies of humankind towards profit and war. We want to exalt tenderness, sleep and ecstasy, the frugality of needs and the pleasure of the senses.
4. We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of autonomy. Each to her own rhythm; nobody must be constrained to march on a uniform pace. Cars have lost their allure of rarity and above all they can no longer perform the task they were conceived for: speed has slowed down. Cars are immobile like stupid slumbering tortoises in the city traffic. Only slowness is fast.
5. We want to sing of the men and the women who caress one another to know one another and the world better.
6. The poet must expend herself with warmth and prodigality to increase the power of collective intelligence and reduce the time of wage labour.
7. Beauty exists only in autonomy. No work that fails to express the intelligence of the possible can be a masterpiece. Poetry is a bridge cast over the abyss of nothingness to allow the sharing of different imaginations and to free singularities.
8. We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries... We must look behind to remember the abyss of violence and horror that military aggressiveness and nationalist ignorance is capable of conjuring up at any moment in time. We have lived in the stagnant time of religion for too long. Omnipresent and eternal speed is already behind us, in the Internet, so we can forget its syncopated rhymes and find our singular rhythm.
9. We want to ridicule the idiots who spread the discourse of war: the fanatics of competition, the fanatics of the bearded gods who incite massacres, the fanatics terrorised by the disarming femininity blossoming in all of us.
10. We demand that art turns into a life-changing force. We seek to abolish the separation between poetry and mass communication, to reclaim the power of media from the merchants and return it to the poets and the sages.
11. We will sing of the great crowds who can finally free themselves from the slavery of wage labour and through solidarity revolt against exploitation. We will sing of the infinite web of



knowledge and invention, the immaterial technology that frees us from physical hardship. We will sing of the rebellious cognitariat who is in touch with her own body. We will sing to the infinity of the present and abandon the illusion of a future. – Franco Bifo Berardi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Laura. "Hélène Cixous and the Rhetoric of Feminine Desire: Rewriting the Medusa", <http://english.arts.cornell.edu/publications/mode/documents/alexander.html> (accessed May 25, 2015).
- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Balsamo, Elena. *Liberta' e' amore*. Torino: Il Leone Verde Edizioni, 2011.
- Bazian. Hatem. "Immigrant Crisis: The Collapse of the Post Colonial State". *Turkey Agenda*, May 13, 2015
<http://www.turkeyagenda.com/immigration-crisis-the-collapse-of-the-post-colonial-state-part-3-2417.html>
- Bennet, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press Books, 2010.
- Berardi, Franco. *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Semiotext(e), 2009.
- Bey, Hakim. *TAZ The Autonomous Temporary Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Automedia, 2003.
- Blocker, Jane. *Where is Ana Mendieta?: Identity Performativity Exile*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1999.
- Dbfreee. "The Politics of Beauty". *An Artist Blog*. March 27, 2014
<https://dbfreee.wordpress.com/2014/03/27/the-politics-of-beauty/> (accessed March 5, 2015).
- Dobrin, Sidney I. and Weisser, Christian R. "Breaking Ground in Eco-composition: Exploring Relationships Between Discourse and Environment". *College English* 64, No. 5 (2002): 566-589.
- Dussault, Antoine C. "Ecological Nature: A Non-Dualistic Concept for Rethinking Humankind's Place in the World". <http://acdussault.profweb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Ecological-Nature-A-C-Dussault.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2015).
- Cixous, Hélène. *Coming to Read and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Médusa", *Signs* 1, No. 4, University Chicago Press (1976): 875-893.
- Edwards, Susan. "Tarot: An Introduction," *Maryann Ziobo, music*. Boulder, CO.: Sounds True, 2005.
- Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Automedia, 2004.

- Federici, Silvia. "Precarious Labour: A Feminist Viewpoint". *In the Middle of a Whirlwind* 2008 Convention Protest, Movements and Movement. The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, <https://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/precarious-labor-a-feminist-viewpoint/> (accessed May 1, 2015).
- Ferweda, Susanna. "The force of Literature as Philosophy's Other. Hélène Cixous's Writing in the Margin of Philosophy". *Accademia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/3776861/The_Force_of_Literature_as_Philosophys_Other._C3%A91%C3%A8ne_Cixouss_Writing_in_the_Margins_of_Philosophy (accessed November 20, 2014).
- Fromm, Erich. *The Anatomy of Destructiveness*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1992.
- Fromm, Erich. *Escape from Freedom*. Avon:Discus, 1968.
- González, Jennifer. "The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy and Digital Art Practice". *Camera Oscura* Volume 24, no. 1 70, Duke University Press, (2009): 37-65.
- Graber, David. "On the Phenomenology of Bullshit Jobs". *Strike Magazine*, August, 2013.
- Groys, Boris. "On Art Activism". *E-flux Journal* issue 56, June 2014. <http://www.e-flux.com/issues/56-june-2014/>. (accessed December 03, 2014).
- Heath, Jennifer, ed. "*The Map is Not the Territory*" *Parallel Paths—Palestinians, Native Americans, Irish*. Boulder Colorado: Baksunarts 2015.
- Herman, S. Edward. *Triumph of the Market, Essays on the Market, Politics and the Media*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999.
- hooks, bell. *Feminism for Everybody*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.
- Hutchinson, Brian "Student Writes 52,438 word Architecture Dissertation with no Punctuation — not Everyone Loved it". *National Post, Canada*, May 8, 2015 <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/ubc-student-writes-52438-word-architecture-dissertation-with-no-punctuation-not-everyone-loved-it>.
- Irwin, Ruth. "Does Failure in Global Leadership Mean it's All Over? Climate Population and Progress". *Environmental Ethics*, Wiley-Blackwell (2013): 243-256.
- Jones, Rosalind Ann. "Writing the Body, Towards and Understanding of L'écriture Feminine". *Feminist Studies* 7, No. 2, Summer (1981): 247-263.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House". *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Ed. Berkeley CA: Crossing Press, 2007.
- Massumi, Brian. "Navigating Movements" <http://www.brianmassumi.com/interviews/NAVIGATING%20MOVEMENTS.pdf> (Accessed December 19, 2014).
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980.

- Neef, Manfred, Max. *Economics Unmasked: From Power and Greed to Compassion and the Common Good*. Cambridge, UK: UIT Cambridge Ltd, 2011.
- O'Grady, Kathleen, "Guardian of Language: An interview with H el ene Cixious", interview by Kathleen O'Grady, *Trinity College, University of Cambridge*. March 1996, Reprinted from *Women's education des femmes* 12 no. 4 (1996-7): 6-10.
- Pe a, Gom ez, Guillermo. "Somewhere Between Corporate Multiculturalism and the Mainstream Bizarre (A Border Prospective)". *The New Global Culture* 45, no. 1, Spring (2001).
- Purifoy, Noah. <https://www.tumblr.com/search/outdoordesertartmuseum>, (accessed April 9, 2015)
- Reyes, Ver nica. *Chopper Chopper! Poetry from Bordered Lives*. Pasadena, CA: Arktoi Books, 2013.
- Roach, Catherine. *Mother/Nature*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Rocheleau, Dianne and Thomas-Slayter, Barbara and Wangari Esther, eds. *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. Routledge International Studies of Women and Place: Routledge, 1996.
- Simmonds, Graetz, Janette G. "The Oceanic Feeling and a Sea Change". *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 23, No 1 (2006): 132
- Stanley, John. "Buddhism and the Unconscious". *Huffington Post*, June 8, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-stanley/buddhism-the-unconscious_b_1574785.html.
- Vandana, Shiva. *The Future of Food: Democracy or Dictatorship?* Hammer Museum Lecture, Los Angeles, Nov. 09, 2014.
- Van Gelder Hilde and Burgin Victor. "Artistic Representation and Politics: An Exchange Between Victor Burgin and Hilde Van Gelder". *Parallel Texts Artistic Representation and Politics*, London: Reaxtion Books, 2011
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Prose*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.
- Warren, Karen J. *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Indiana University Press, 1997
- Watts, Alan. <https://www.youtube.com/user/AlanWattsLectures> (accessed December 1, 2014)
- Weeks, Kathi. "Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post Fordist Politics" *Ephemera Theory and Politics in Organization* 7, (2007): 234.
- Wollens, Marie. "Marie Stopes, An Educator". *International Conference on Women and Vocation*. Lille Catholic University, June 5-7, 2014.

