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Zdenka Badovinac

Editorial: "The Collective Body"

The Covid-19 pandemic has attacked not only our individual bodies, but our collective body as well. Through thirteen contributions by writers who are mostly from former socialist countries where the space of freedom is contracting once again, this special issue of *e-flux journal* asks what this collective body actually means, and what it has become.

These changes are not only happening in Europe's former socialist countries. Something similar is also occurring in Greece and Turkey, where two essays in the issue originate. This is not to say that all is well elsewhere, that democracy is thriving in Western Europe and North America, for example. On the contrary, we see similar processes throughout the world—heightened surveillance through digital technology, expanding capitalism, hatred towards those who are other or different, populist movements growing stronger, an increasing number of authoritarian leaders.

What distinguishes the East and South of Europe from the economically powerful West is, among other things, the fact that these countries have failed to build a modern system of public institutions where experienced leaders have the deciding vote. They lack the long tradition of strong democratic mechanisms that should offer protection from the capriciousness of whoever is in power. At the same time, the various governments that have come to power since the fall of socialism have shown no interest in socialism's democratic roots, which were very much alive in some places. Today, these countries are dominated by a brutal pact between neoliberalism and authoritarianism, with no end in sight. In this formation, collaborators from the Second World War are given legitimacy while socialism and its symbols are demonized. And, like everywhere else in the world today, the people in these countries are being brainwashed by a bombardment of information, important and trivial, true and fake, that they no longer even react to, let alone take a position on.

Despite the growing absence of clear discernment and reflection, resistance is building in the streets. The protests during the pandemic have not only been a way to stand up to power; they have also been massive cultural events. We now witness a return of the old Eastern European methods of inserting politics into every pore of public life—including public institutions, their staffing, and their content. When corruption, nationalism, and the power of institutional religion are all on the rise, when patriarchal values are again prevailing and anti-immigrant policies are sowing fear, and when governments are minimizing environmental problems, we also see a growing number of resistance movements organizing, which give birth to an alternative collective body.

To give readers a better sense of the voice of difference in this part of the world, I invited only women to write for this issue. Women, after all, are at the heart of many of the protests taking place throughout Central-Eastern and

Marta Popivoda, Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body (still), 2013. Documentary, 61 minutes. Co-written by Ana Vujanovic, it deals with the question of how ideology performs itself in public space through mass performances and counter-demonstrations using footage from Yugoslavia.

Southern Europe. They are victims of the new authoritarian pressures, but also important agents of transformation. These writers portray a climate of division between the memory of the great social ideas that once guided and connected us in a collective body, and the twin forces of nationalism and neoliberalism that each, in its own way, tears what we once called society into pieces.

In order to speak of a society, there must be a prevailing sense of comradeship and mutual solidarity among people. Otherwise, we can only speak of private interests. People are social beings, and today, when we spend most of our time isolated in our homes, what we miss most of all is the touch and immediate closeness of others. But our isolation is being preyed upon by those who want to make money off us, who exploit our pain to bolster their power. The women assembled in this issue write about how our collective body is shaped not only by our desire for closeness and care for others, but also by our fears, our disappointments, and our subordination. Especially today, when authoritarian politicians try to unite us under various populist movements and again attack international solidarity with ideas about "the national body" and "traditional identities," we need to stand up for the collective body in its constant process of emergence and transformation.

Two contributions in the issue explicitly remind us of this. Ana Dević reflects on the use of bone, muscle, and connective tissue as metaphors for the collective body in former Yugoslavia. She positions the anti-fascist partisan struggle as the bones on which the muscle of postwar collective artistic practices grew. The connective tissue is the fluid, non-formalized collective body that is resilient in response to the present crisis. Iskra Geshoska also writes about "tissue power"—the kind that can join various

singularities into a new collective body that emerges from our uncertainty and instability, and our fear of death. Fear, she writes, is what gives us the strongest sense of presence, and a responsive awareness of this fear can unite us in our common struggle.

Care is a term that has circulated widely in the art world over the past year. In contemporary discourse, "care" stands somewhere between ethics and politics, and mediates between the micro and macro spheres of life. The term also reflects a difficulty in demarcating the boundary between ethics and politics today. Even our most private acts of care for others can be both ethical and political. Giving aid to others can compensate for failings in public systems of health, education, culture, elder care, child care, and so on, but also point to different ways that those public services can function. A number of our contributors address several dimensions of the question of care. iLiana Fokianaki examines genealogies of self-care and the different, even conflicting, approaches to it, contrasting individualistic "self-betterment" with a self-care that benefits others. Fokianaki argues that self-care needs to move away from the neoliberal approach and the legacies of the heteronormative, white Western Enlightenment in order to become a radical political act.

Care is essential for our survival, but it can also become an instrument in the hands of those who increasingly curtail our space of freedom. Isolation, for example, is one form of caring for the health of the collective body, and Oxana Timofeeva compares techniques of isolation used in different historical periods to deal with leprosy, bubonic plague, and Covid. Timofeeva finds that measures taken to ensure the health and safety of the population can at the same time intensify a kind of obsessive neurosis in the psychological and physical well-being of the collective body. Similarly, Ivana Bago looks at the militaristic methods used to defend collective immunity during the Covid-19 pandemic. Such defense mechanisms create a situation that Bago compares to autoimmune diseases, whereby a person reacts self-destructively to isolation, and to contemporary life in general, with growing dependencies on comfort, convenience, and pharmaceutical products.

Protests against the new authoritarian regimes have spread through all of Central-Eastern and Southern Europe. Protest and care for one's family and friends are creating new communities—of angry, poor, and otherwise marginalized people. Art is playing a key role in the formation of the new collective body, as Agata Adamiecka-Sitek finds in the current protests in Poland. Women are at the center of these protests, and are, along with other protesters, creating a "community of anger" as a new collective subject. Even before the situation in Poland worsened, the space of freedom in Turkey had already contracted significantly. The country's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has long kept a tight rein on artists and cultural workers, who have now also been severely hit by the pandemic. Neylan Bağcıoğlu, Merve Elveren, Görkem Imrek, Saliha Yavuz, and the Omuz Dictionary Group write about how artists and others in the cultural field have responded to deteriorating conditions by joining together in the informal Omuz network (*omuz* in Turkish means "shoulder"). Omuz is working to broaden mutual solidarity into a wider network that actively connects micro and macro politics. Nikolett Erőss discusses examples of long-term collaboration between artists and various unprivileged groups in Viktor Orbán's Hungary: people living on the edge of society with no basic income or access to public services, women in rural areas, and Roma communities. One of the most important art and culture initiatives in Hungary today—and one that lacks stable working conditions—is OFF-Biennale Budapest, which provides a platform for all these efforts.

Artists and other cultural workers today, focused largely on their own local communities, often forget that the distribution of care takes place on the global level, and that geopolitics still plays an important role. Ana Vujanović writes that the collective body is wounded and cannot be healed until everyone—all groups and all regions—gain equal access to care. It is only when connections and exclusions in the wider international distribution of care are made more visible that we can reimagine our future collectivity. Azra Akšamija has developed a set of ethical and creative principles influenced by various local traditions and experiences of collectivity in her five-year collaboration with displaced Syrians in Jordanian refugee camps, where she worked together with Jordanians and Palestinians from the host community as well as with international researchers in her Future Heritage Lab.

The combination of the pandemic and the new authoritarianisms has not only affected the existential working conditions of artists and cultural workers, but has also intensified political and social pressure on the content of their work, which must contend with new priorities as well as the suppression of critical thought and ideas. Jela Krečič notes that Janez Janša, the authoritarian prime minister of Slovenia, recently stated that he expects to see more "state-building culture" during the time of the pandemic. Krečič discusses two concrete cases of so-called cancel culture: one from populist Eastern Europe, and the other from the liberal art world in the United States. For Krečič, cancel culture destroys a crucial social bond, an inclusiveness in which both agreement and disagreement can coexist.

The collective body exists in an eternal state of emergence and transformation. Its disintegration and new resurrection are dependent on current social configurations and our relation to the surrounding world. In her essay, Bojana Piškur advises us to take nature as our model, arguing that the forest ecosystem requires that all trees are healthy and mutually supportive: no individual tree is ever more successful than the forest as a whole.

For both Piškur and Djordje Balmazović—who made illustrations, specially for the essay, of this healthy interdependence of all living beings—the forest functions as a utopian socialist community. Raluca Voinea exposes the illusion that the idyllic countryside can save us from our psychoses and restore our connection to the social fabric. Referring to artists such as Alexandra Pirici, she proposes that plants can teach us about how to move and grow together without stepping on each other.

All of the contributors to this special issue of *e-flux journal* imagine a new kind of collective body, shaped not by nationalism, populism, media manipulation, or fake news, but by a critical stance towards the present conditions of work and life. These conditions began to worsen with the global economic crisis of 2008. The new autocrats exploited this crisis to launch a new critique of the "rotting West" and its financial and social institutions, and successfully initiated a return to the past—to religion, nationalism, and the illusory strength of national economies. They have also minimized the significance of planetary problems, of environmental crisis and climate change, and in some cases even deny that the pandemic exists. But the lesson of Covid for the entire world, and not just for our leaders, is that the interests of capital have interfered too greatly with nature. Indeed, one of the underlying causes of the pandemic is the destruction of forests—the plant world that the contributions from Bojana Piškur and Raluca Voinea urge us to learn from.

In parallel with our interference in nature's ecosystems, we are also destroying our social ecosystems. Much has been written about these issues, and most of our contributors are no longer content to merely describe the situation. Most of them are putting themselves at risk through their activism, their participation in protests, their care for others and for nature, and their efforts to raise awareness about the importance of care and solidarity. The paths leading to the new collective body arise from everywhere, and together they form a living tissue that connects us, in all of our differences, but most importantly, in our desire to remain connected in these uncertain times.

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Translated from the Slovene by Rawley Grau.

Zdenka Badovinac is a curator and writer who served from 1993 to 2020 as Director of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, comprised since 2011 of two locations: the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. In her work, Badovinac deals with the historicization of Eastern European art and situated institutionality. Her most recent exhibition is "Bigger Than Myself: Heroic Voices from Ex-Yugoslavia" at MAXXI, Rome. Her most recent book is *Comradeship: Curating, Art, and Politics in Post-Socialist Europe* (Independent Curators International, 2019).

> Failure, mishap, and defeat cannot be excluded from the program of those who are dissatisfied with the inventory of the past and the present, but everyone tends to fall down differently, in a direction in which they walked.
> —Radoslav Putar, "new tendencies 1," 1961
>
> To the whole, we oppose the parts. As parts taken out of their whole or a togetherness of
> several wholes that is of ourselves, individuals being in common.
> Communism—this word again.
>
> when I say we, I am counting you in
> when I say we, I am talking about you too and also you
> when I say we, I am speaking from this space
> We were one and more than one before.
> —Marko Gutić Mižimakov, Karen Nhea Nielsen, and LilySlava8 & AmpersandG8, *Thank You for Being Here with Me*, 2020

Ana Dević

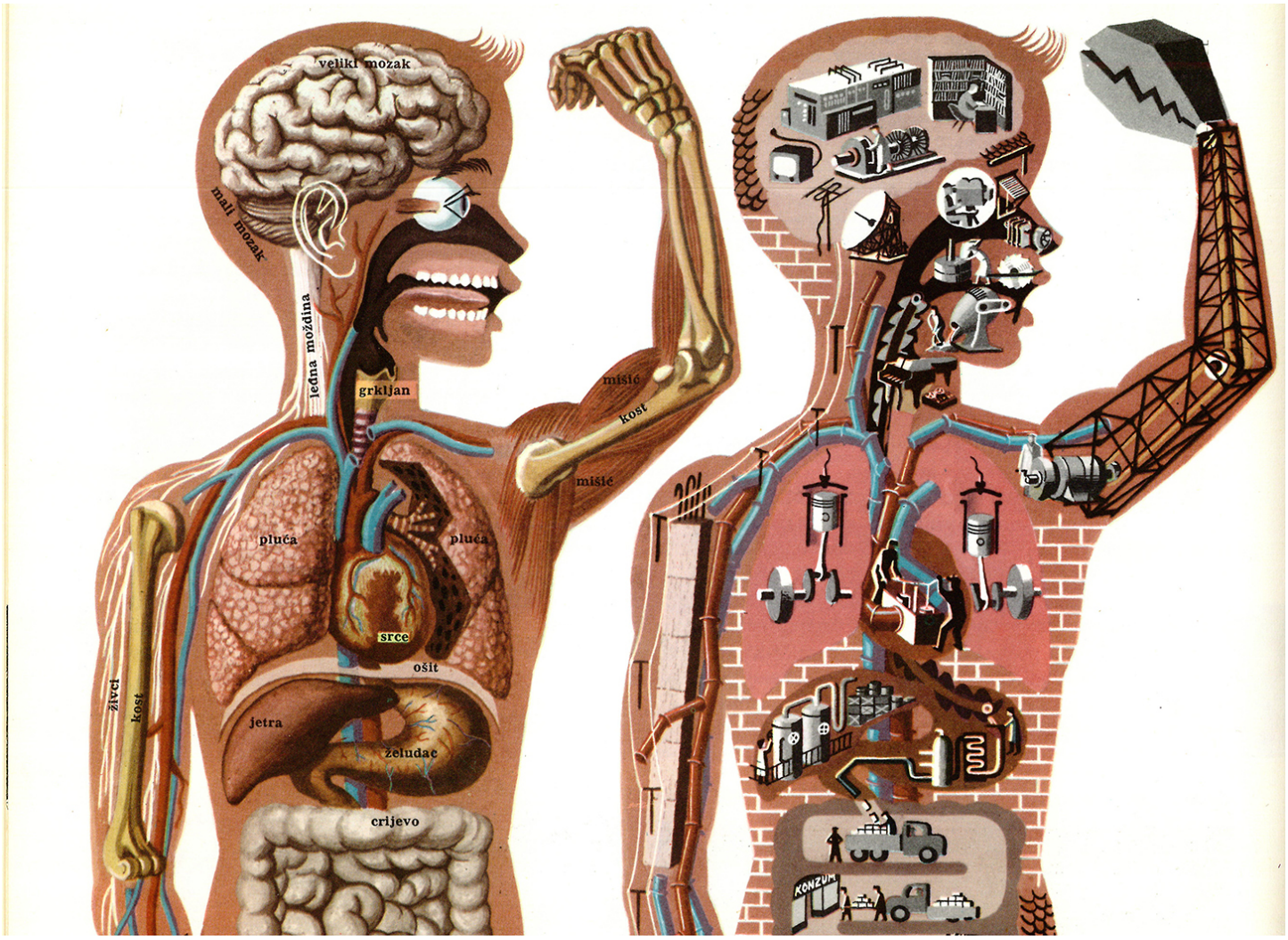
Bones, Muscles, and Connective Tissue: Tales of Collectivity

Old utopias have sobered up. Our collective body is tired and fragmented. How can it be recovered, reconstructed? One way, I think, is to approach the collective body as one might an actual body: through metaphors of the collective's bones, muscles, and connective tissues. In this essay I trace examples of collective practices from WWII to the contemporary moment in the post-Yugoslav context, where collectivity is no longer defined by the essentialist determinism that communist ideology used to supposedly fostered the "inherent collectivism" of the "East." I follow a specific line of forms and structures of artistic production—separate from mainstream discourses—that sought to redefine art's social position, its role as a medium of social relations. I highlight paradigm shifts and trace the methodological and political connections between different generations that shared similar problems.

Ancestral Bones: Anti-fascist Partisan Struggle

The Yugoslav partisan anti-fascist struggle during WWII was a foundational act in forming the new, postwar, socialist society. The Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle (NOB)[1] was characterized by a massive response from cultural workers, who employed artistic production as agitation and propaganda, but also as educational empowerment.

Through the visual articulation of war trauma, partisan art, with its participatory and activist character, involved heterogeneous artistic production, disseminated through partisan exhibitions and congresses of cultural workers during the war.



The World Around Us: An Encyclopaedia for Children and Youth (detail), 1960. Published in Zagreb, Croatia. Scan provided by author.

In the collective body of the Yugoslav region, the historical anti-fascist partisan struggle functions as the bones. In the upright human body, bones are the support structure, the scaffolding. Protecting and supporting the body, bones are the most permanent part of the body, its invisible infrastructure, its foundation, and this is the role played by the historical partisan struggle in the Yugoslav collective body.

The partisan legacy can be also considered a kind of "ancestral knowledge": transmitted not only through official history, but also through cultural and social osmosis, directly, peer to peer. The partisans' transformative knowledge accumulated in the bones of the collective body of postwar generations. The groundbreaking historical experience of political and cultural revolution achieved through this struggle was assimilated by the generations that followed.

Emancipatory artistic projects today still draw inspiration from the legacy of the social institutions established through the partisan struggle—free health care, education, and housing. The diverse cultural practices that accompanied the partisan struggle, many of which were collectivist and anonymous, played an integral role in constructing the new identity of socialist Yugoslavia.

The heterogeneity of partisan art—which sought, according to poet and writer Miklavž Komelj, to construct a new "revolutionary subjectivity"—reconfigured the boundaries between art and society. Komelj describes partisan cultural production "as a breakthrough through the impossible, … a structural change, … a discontinuation, caused by revolution in the field of art."[2]

Yugoslav partisan art can to some extent be seen as an actualization of leftist cultural ideas circulating in the 1920s (e.g., the Dadaist magazine *Zenit*, the Belgrade surrealist groups) and the 1930s. It also created an entirely new cultural situation: a melting pot that mixed

high culture and popular culture, bringing together a wide range of participants from different classes, generations, and genres who would not cross paths in normal circumstances.

The association of artists called Zemlja (Earth) was active from 1929 until 1935, when their work was officially banned.[3] They initially came together to oppose and reflect on the effects of the economic crisis of 1929 and the growing threat of fascism. They exhibited in Zagreb, Paris, and Belgrade. In addition to educated artists, Zemlja included peasants and workers. In the group's 1929 manifesto, a fervent polemic about art and revolution, they called for urgent collectivization and the fusion of life and art. The group continued its radical artistic activity into the 1930s, and then in the 1940s several members became partisan militants. With this shift, art and life became one. Zemlja members Marijan Detoni, Franjo Mraz, and Antun Augustinčić fought alongside numerous younger artists; one of them, Vlado Kristl, later joined the group EXAT 51, which included painters and architects. In 1950s, EXAT 51 developed an experimental artistic synthesis of art and architecture. In addition to members of Zemlja, a circle of Belgrade surrealists also joined the partisan struggle. Poet and writer Koča Popović became the commander of the First Proletarian Brigade and was later made the chief of the general staff of the Yugoslav National Army. As Komelj notes, "Never before or after has a Surrealist poet had such an influential post in a Socialist revolution."[4]

If the partisan struggle constitutes the bones of the Yugoslav collective body, we can also say that bones play a "revolutionary" role in the body, by enabling *movement*. The project of building socialist Yugoslavia through partisan struggle redefined the classes and introduced class mobility, based on the idea of social progress. Bones are also the locus of muscle production, since stem cells from bone marrow can be used to generate more muscle. From a different perspective, bones also symbolize the necropolitics of armed struggle and war—think mass graves and ossuaries. Marked by the tension between utopia and grim reality, the partisan struggle shaped future generations and helped construct the beginning of the Yugoslav collective body.

Muscles Moving and Hanging Around Together

Ideological disputes on the left seemed to be temporarily silenced during WWII, when all hands were on deck. But in the postwar year, the debates resumed. This period also witnessed a surge in artistic collectivity focused on the task of rebuilding society. If the partisan struggle built the bones of the collective body, the postwar years built the musculature.

The aforementioned EXAT 51 group was active in Zagreb from 1950 to 1956.[5] The group positioned itself against

IRWIN, NSK Panorama, 1997. Photo: Michael Shuster.

"outdated ideas and types of production within the field of visual arts," and aligned itself with the "social reality and social forces aspiring to attain progress within all fields of human activity."[6] Its strategy was based on the re-actualization of historical avant-garde movements, predominantly from the constructivist tradition. Although EXAT 51 members each signed their works individually, the group acted collectively to build a platform dedicated to the synthesis of all artistic forms and the abolition of the boundary between fine and applied art. It should be remembered that in early 1950s Yugoslavia, abstract art was considered controversial by official ideology. Following the publication of its first manifesto in 1951, the group and its work received harsh criticism.

Despite this criticism, EXAT 51 remained active, publishing texts and designing Yugoslav pavilions at world expos—like the yearly expo of the Croatian Association of Applied Arts in Zagreb. This latter example in particular shows the group's commitment to fusing art and life. Although EXAT's abstract artistic language is the opposite of the figurative directness of Zemlja and other partisan artists, the work of both groups illustrates, in different ways, what a synthesis between art and life can look like.

This way of looking at these art collectives is influenced by art historian Ješa Denegri's concept of "the other line." He describes this as a "mentality, and a reaction of certain artists and artists' groups to the existing cultural and social circum-stances. It was, in fact, a way of shrinking back from being integrated into those very circumstan-ces and, thus, of searching for an independent artistic attitude."[7]

In the 1960s and '70s many groups withdrew from the

Neža Knez, Danilo Milovanović, Toni Poljanec, and Luka Erdani, Y? (still), 2019–ongoing. Multimedia. Photo: Toni Poljanec. Project updates: →.

political arena in order to produce alternative spaces of togetherness and collective determination, as happened in many other parts of the world during this time. Artist groups like Gorgona, OHO, and the Group of Six Artists were informal collectives that searched for more poetic and anti-systemic approaches to producing art, often at the margins of society and the official art system. These groups were concerned with creating refuges from common spaces and examining their own internal relations on a micro scale. If the partisan artists were the bones of the collective body, and the 1950s artist the muscles, the groups of the 1960s and '70s zeroed in on individual parts of that body.

The Gorgona group was active in Zagreb from 1959 to 1966. It consisted of artists and cultural workers who shared affinities but not a stylistic program.[8] The group's activities were shaped by principles of anti-art, dematerialization, humor, and irony. Instead of a fixed program or manifesto, Gorgona's work involved transient and processual formats such as mail art, artistic walks in nature, and self-organized exhibitions. Between 1961 and 1966 the group also published the anti-magazine *Gorgona*, which lasted for eleven issues, and which included collaborations with Op artist Victor Vasarely, playwright Harold Pinter, and conceptual artist Dieter Rot.

In 1966, when the members of Gorgona voted to terminate the group, another group came together in Ljubljana: OHO.[9] Though OHO was only a loose collective, its founding gesture is considered to be the publication of its manifesto in 1966. Whereas Gorgona ironically deployed the bureaucratic language of socialism to examine collective dynamics within society, OHO's "telepathic Intercontinental group projects" (at one point there were two members based in the US) explored micro-relations within the group itself. OHO worked with what they called "reisms"—conceptual strategies that blended the ideas of Fluxus, land art, and body art. OHO members created artist books, objects, and situations that they claimed were "liberated from primary functions."[10] As for the group's name, the website Monoskop explains its origin: "The term 'OHO' refers to the observation of forms (with the eye, '*oko*', and ear, '*uho*') in their immediate presence, and is also an exclamation of astonishment, said Marko Pogačnik, the group's leader: 'Because when we uncover the essence of a thing, that is when we exclaim "oho."'"[11]

In the 1980s, with the impending disintegration of Yugoslavia, art collectives turned again to the realm of politics, engaging in intense discussions about the political implications of artistic production. IRWIN proposed the "retro principle" concept, which highlights the emancipatory effects of repetition—the restaging or reconstruction of historical avant-garde narratives.[12] Rather than embracing the postmodernism that was all the rage at the time, IRWIN turned back to conceptualism—a part of the collective body of the past.

IRWIN employed strategies of self-historicization and historical reappropriation to question the relations between art objects, exhibitions, museums, collectives, and states. The group constructed its self-narrative around a refusal to take up passive and powerless artistic positions. The larger collective that IRWIN helped found, Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), created innovative (para)institutional forms that paralleled and counterbalanced existing social and state institutions. This was not just about the appropriation or mimicry of existing social forms; it was about creating a space of autonomous action. One such (para)institution, *NSK STATE IN TIME* (created by the groups IRWIN, Laibach, and the Noordung Cosmocinetic Cabinet), functions as "an abstract organism, a suprematist body, installed in a real social and political space as a sculpture comprising the concrete body warmth, spirit and work of its members. NSK confers the status of a state not to territory but to mind, whose borders are in a state of flux, in accordance with the movements and changes of its symbolic and physical collective body."[13]

By the 1970s and '80s, as the collective body disintegrated, artists began to see the cultural production and revolutionary activity of the partisans as anachronistic, as something better left in the past. After a series of officially organized exhibitions of partisan art, some even regarded the work as merely serving the interest of reproducing the state. However, by the 2000s, a younger generation recuperated this history. After the breakup of Yugoslavia and the emergence of neoliberal capitalism, the history and collective values of the partisan struggle became relevant again.

The Group of Six Artists,[14] active in Zagreb from 1975 to 1984, introduced the tactic of the "exhibition action" to bypassed mainstream art institutions. Exhibition actions took place in alternative locations—on the grass, in the street—where the group showed their works and

projected slides and films on the outside walls of houses. Group member Mladen Stilinović once pointed out the difference between the groups of the seventies, which sought joy in collective work, and the groups of today. The collectives from the past dissolved when the enjoyment started to fade, whereas today, this enjoyment has given way to the attempt to bureaucratize pleasure through administrative structures and organizational protocols.

For decades these collectives were dominated by men. But beginning in the 2000s, many new female-dominated collectives formed, focused particularly on curatorial practices: BLOK; Institute for Duration, Location, and Variables (Delve); Kontejner (Bureau for Contemporary Artistic Practice); and WHW, among others. Numerous other independent groups and collectives came together in the former Yugoslavia in the 2000s: BADco., kuda.org, Prelom, How to Think Partisan Art?, Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić, KURS. Many of these groups looked to the emancipatory projects of socialist Yugoslavia to inform their own ideas about collectivity, socially engaged art, and progressive exhibition practices. Self-organized and extra-institutional, these collectives positioned themselves in opposition to the representational model that dominated local culture.

The most important muscle of the collective body is the heart. In the former Yugoslavia, recent years have brought new challenges that threaten the very core—the heart—of many collective initiatives and groups. There is a growing fatigue with collective work, stemming from the pressure to sustain productivity in precarious labor conditions. Working as a collective body over the long term is made even more difficult by ongoing economic and political crises, from cuts to cultural funding to the rise of right-wing politics.

This breakdown in the historical continuity of the collective body is examined in the performance *The Labour of Panic (2020)* by the Zagreb collective BADco.[15] The work can be seen as a metaphor for the collective body's struggle to survive amidst hostile conditions—not only austerity and nationalist politics, but Covid-19 and the ecological crisis. Since its formation in 2000, and until its recent dissolution after twenty years of working together, BADco. explored the protocols of performing, presenting, and observing. *The Labour of Panic* is the third part of their *Trilogy of Labour, Utopias and Impossibilities* (2018–20). It reflects on the uncertainty around beginnings and endings. As the group has stated, "To allow something to end and something new to begin, the infrastructural space itself must allow the possibility of change. That is the terrain where one outlines the contours and excavates the remains of that which cannot come to be and that which may yet occur."[16] Performed outdoors at night in extreme conditions—harsh wind, heat, mosquitos— *The Labour of Panic* shows how the collective body confronts external catastrophes and internal turmoil.

Future: Connective Tissue

For more than a half century, the Yugoslav collective body performed enormous ideological and metabolic work, and became exhausted. Rescued from the dustbin of history, it was turned into an "ur" collective body that neoliberal capitalism and the twenty-first century tore limb from limb—dismembering the collective body. Everyone took a piece—museums, galleries, archives, books. Where that collective body once stood is now an empty stage—which also means that new beginnings are possible. How can we build our collective body anew?

In addition to bones and muscle, the collective body is held together by connective tissue—ligaments, fascia, blood vessels, and so forth, linking all the parts of the body. This connective tissue plays a crucial role in the care of the body.

The generation of artists born in the early 1990s, when the former Yugoslavia was riven by genocidal nationalist wars, will probably be the last generation to be touched by the legacy of socialism—not through personal memory, but through remnants and traces of socialist architecture, history, and political values.

Y? (2019–ongoing), a project by artists Neža Knez, Danilo Milovanović, Toni Poljanec, and Luka Erdani, uses a literal remnant of the Yugoslav past—the Yugo car—to map new geopolitical terrains. In the 1980s, the Yogu was produced in the same factory that, a decade later, would produce arms used in the Yugoslav civil war. In its heyday the car was imported into Reagan's America and, due to its extremely cheap price, sold in massive numbers. At the same time, the American media denounced it as communist and proclaimed it to be "the worst car in history."[17] The artists behind *Y?* drove a Yugo from the city in Serbia where the factory was located, through Europe, to the UK, and then took it by boat to New York, meeting with Yugoslav expats along the way. Travelling this route in a car named after a country that no longer exists was a poignant symbol of unfulfilled narratives of progress and modernization.

A series of collective performances spearheaded by Marko Gutić Mižimakov shows how collaborations that are loosely organized can still be affectively intense.[18] The project centers on interactions between performers and their digital counterparts—kitschy animated figures called "affective clones." This cloning points to the need to duplicate ourselves in order to fulfill the requirements imposed on us by capital. The project thus addresses the reality of precarious labor conditions, but also solidarity between human and transhuman communities, by creating an interspace where we can be (with) others.

The partisan art of the WWII period contributed to imagining a world that did not yet exist. The new generation of artists has inherited fragments of this

emancipatory past, which they use to sketch out a new vision of collectivity. Like the body's connective tissue, this new collectivity is flexible and fluid, but no less intense. Even within conditions of social and ecological collapse, the desire for collectivity continues to drive the formation of creative and affective communities inside and outside the art field. The tissue that connects body parts is the softest tissue, but also the most resilient.

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1
This abbreviation, used in domestic and international scholarship, comes from the Serbo-Croatian phrase for "People's Liberation Struggle": *Narodnooslobodilačka borba.*

2
Miklavž Komelj, "Partisan Art Obliquely," in *Art As Resistance to Fascism* (Museum of Yugoslav History, 2015), 34–35, 19.

3
One of the most recent explorations of Zemlja, by curatorial collective BLOK from Zagreb, traced ties between the group and the Communist Party. See also the work of art historian Petar Prelog https://www.ipu.hr/content/zivot-umjetnosti/ZU_99-2016_028-039_Prelog.pdf .

4
Komelj, "Partisan Art Obliquely," 29.

5
The painters and architects who comprised the group were Vlado Kristl, Božidar Rašica, Ivan Picelj, Aleksandar Srnec, Vjenceslav Richter, Bernardo Bernardi, Zdravko Bregovac, Zvonimir Radić, and Vladimir Zaharović.

6
From the "EXAT 51 Manifesto."

7
Ješa Denegri, "The Reason for 'The Other Line,'" *Jugoslovenska dokumenta* (1989). Exhibition catalogue https://www.avantgarde-museum.com/hr/jesa-denegri-the-reason-for-the-other-line-english~no6584/ .

8
Gorgona included sculptor Ivan Kožarić; the painters Josip Vaništa, Marijan Jevšovar, Julije Knifer, and Đuro Seder; the architect Miljenko Horvat; the art historians Radoslav Putar and Matko Meštrović; and the art historian, curator, and artist Dimitrije Bašicević (Mangelos).

9
Marko Pogačnik, Iztok Geister, Matjaž Hanžek, and Drago Dellabernardina. They were later joined by, among others, David Nez and Milenko Matanović.

10
The quote comes from Branka Stipančić. For more information, see https://www.kontakt-collection.org/objects/421/oho-editions-dreja-rotar;jsessionid=CE8D0E597A86009BD8430C3F31CFCD14 .

11
See https://monoskop.org/OHO.

12
In 1983, IRWIN was formed in Ljubljana by the artists Dušan Mandič, Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Roman Uranjek, and Borut Vogelnik. In 1984, the group cofounded a larger collective known as Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), which was based on the "retro-avant-garde principle," an extension of the "retro principle." NSK acted as the fine arts wing of IRWIN, collaborating with the musical group Laibach and the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater.

13
Eda Cufer and IRWIN, "NSK STATE IN TIME," irwin-nsk.org, 1992 https://www.irwin-nsk.org/texts/nsk-state-in-time/ .

14
Boris Demur, Zeljko Jerman, Vlado Martek, Mladen Stlinović, Sven Stilinović, and Fedor Vučemilović.

15
Ivana Ivković, Pravdan Devlahović, Ana Kreitmeyer, Tomislav Medak, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Nikolina Pristaš, and Zrinka Užbinec.

16
See https://rijeka2020.eu/en/program/dopolavoro/kazaliste/badco-trilogy/the-labour-of-panic-badco-hr/ .

17
See https://www.caranddriver.com/features/a21082360/a-quick-history-of-the-yugo-the-worst-car-in-history/ .

18
The series includes the following performance pieces: *Affective Clones & Whatever They Want* (Ana Jelušić, Ivana Rončević, Ana3, AnaG8, Ivana2 and IvanaG8, Marko2 and MarkoG8), 2018; *Iz tužnog u ono koje se kreće* (From Sad to Moving), (Nika Pećarina, MarQ2, and MitchG8), 2019; *Thank You for Being Here with Me* (Karen Nhea Nielsen, LilySlava8, and AmpersandG8), 2020; and *Performing Sites for Affective Clones* (Marko Gutić Mižimakov in collaboration with Lana Hosni, Sonja Pregrad, Nika Pećarina and Acurata2, LanAcurataG8, Svetlana3, Ona6, MarQ8.1 and MitchG8), 2021.

Iskra Geshoska

The Collective Alice, or, on Fear, Death, Multitudes, and Pain

> "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"
> "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.
> "I don't much care where—" said Alice.
> "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
> "—so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.
> "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."
> —Lewis Carrol, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Every body has its dark side. That goes for individual and collective bodies alike. Every multitude, every community, every collective has its labyrinths with no way out. And this is so because of the confusion that arises betwixt notions of "singular" and "plural," because of the evil spirit that hovers between "I" and "us." In this very abyss, the multitude reflects itself—because the multitude has uniting but also destructive power. And this is the case with political movements: political thought from antiquity to the present has been founded on the differentiation between the one and the several, the many. But the multitude is both the one and the many at the same time.

This is the space in which the key political, but also ontological, battles of our present take place. The combat erupts from questions of: How to create a community within the arena of biopower without killing off the individual? How to create a collective, and not some zombifying crowdedness, while living in a democracy that is currently being transformed into a discursive category debated at conferences? How to create a body, a Hamletian body that will stand against and redefine the imposed lie of capitalism, of injustice?

The new nature of the political body resembles a singular, disoriented tissue that refuses its own organic unity. Civically, aesthetically, and economically speaking, it is a "body without organs." It is a Hamletmachine, which, in Heiner Müller's telling, is not Hamlet. "I don't play a role anymore," his protagonist says. "My words have nothing more to tell me. My thoughts suck the blood out of the images. My drama is cancelled. Behind me the set is being built. By people my drama doesn't interest, for people it doesn't concern. It doesn't interest me anymore either. I won't play along anymore." Earlier in the play, when he *was* Hamlet, this Hamletmachine "stood on the coast and spoke with the surf BLABLA, at [his] back, the ruins of Europe." He goes on:

> The bells sounded in the state funeral, murderer and widow a pair, the town councilors in goose-step behind the coffin of the High Cadaver, wailing in

Alice in Wonderland ride, Disneyland, 1996. Photo: Ellen Levy Finch. CC BY-NC-SA/Wikimedia Commons.

> badly-paid grief: WHO IS THE CORPSE IN THE MEAT-WAGON'S STY / FOR WHOM IS THERE SUCH A HUE AND CRY? / THE CORPSE IS OF A GREAT / GIVER OF ESTATE. The pillar of the population, work of his statecraft: HE WAS A MAN WHO ONLY TOOK ALL FROM ALL. I stopped the corpse-train, sprang the coffin with my sword, broke it to the hilt, succeeded with the blunt remains, and distributed the dead progenitor FLESH ENJOINS HAP'LY FLESH to the surrounding faces of misery.[1]

It can be concluded that it is not easy to understand the identity or anatomy of this non-Hamlet, and all that he may represent. His is a dying body, but one that is not fully aware of its mortality.

Post-emancipatory epochs are characterized by the entropy of traditional social bodies. The new social body fights the old urge to remain in a subordinate, largely comfortable position. It aims to create a dynamic landscape of relations, as opposed to the hitherto static one. Long-established social bodies demarcate the culture of silence. Emerging ones aim to articulate what's been stifled.

We must learn what this new body, this fresh tissue, can do. The tissue of the multitude is in a constant state of avoidance: of the tendency to drown in power, of the unpleasant aspects of culture, of capitalist norms. Its flesh cannot be ensnared by the imperatives imposed by dominant cultural dogmas, because it cannot fit into the molds cast by traditional political hierarchies.

This projected, but also in some social pockets realized, multitude is an open, expansive network where all differences can be freely and equally expressed. It offers tools for living and working together through encounters with our own disappearance. We live in a time of omnipresence, of the cult of availability. All of this emphasizes our disappearance from the space of relations, and our absence from ourselves. We float in the illusion that we are embodied in our community; in fact, only our shadows reside there.

The project of assembling a true multitude demands a participative global society built on equity. Today, however, rotting ideologies and a particular, constant socioeconomic "state of exception" endanger the possibility of a democratic, multitudinous body. All of the above, along with our constant state of anxiety, is dictated by capital and a false sense of freedom. The latter has been manufactured on the premise of an emancipatory, democratic utopia, and has all the effect of a billboard slogan. In fact, what we may believe to be "freedom" is a continued state of captivity generated by various nodes of power.

The common social body is a viable matrix that resides within the very core of the production and reproduction of contemporary society. It carries the potential to create a new and alternative society, or at least new, alternative communities. These communities are comprised of an amorphous tissue that has yet to form a new body. Their armature should be built with entwined fibers of resistance and critical social inclusion. They are, in essence, friendships formed for the public good. In order to hold their shape, they must develop tactics for maintaining deep social insight and a willingness to combat all carcinogenic political phenomena. They are the nuclei of cells that will be mobilized for creative confrontation. Individual integrity and diversity will become a vital organ of the common social body.

And who or what exactly will form that type of body? Will it be molded from the "service industries" of capital, or will it crystalize under the pressure of marginalization? Is this body going to be the new Frankenstein's Monster or Cabala's Golem—both of them yearning for love and acceptance, each a paradigm of the excluded, the unwanted? Certainly, this new social body can be reduced to a productive organ of the eclipsing global figure of capital. But there is another possibility for autonomous organization through a particular "power of the tissue." The power of the collective body is to transform itself.

Manufacturing the Illusion of Reality

To experience the real is to experience horror, which is often accepted as normal or even invisible. Horror is of course material and present, and our individual, social, and political bodies are shaped in large part by either responding to it or not. However, the current social body, especially as it functions under panoptical power, sometimes has an easier time accepting existent horror as simply an *illusion* of reality, as some unpleasant, walking daydream that never escapes the realm of the suppressed.

We need to see that our conceptions of reality have been hijacked by the unjust, fragmented social body designed for profit and by the absence of an applicable—not only discursive—idea of the commons. In other words, we must clarify our collective vision and rearticulate the real. If we do not want to experience entropy on every social level, we need new modes of production (of life), of understanding the meaning and function of community. If we, the emerging social body, want to be situated in a reality based on political and even aesthetic solidarity, we need to create an autonomous zone of trust between individuals who share a vision of an emancipatory community that relies on mutual care. In the present world, in the life offered by our state and political apparatuses, we can see, as if through a palimpsest, the dominion of carelessness. The dream, then, is to create space for a multitude of concepts and opinions that will not be operatively blocked by dominant political narratives based on particular interests. This zone of trust can overcome the provincial and personal existential fears that plague the present. It can encourage a fearless step away from imposed political concepts and cultural behaviors, a horizon which will in turn move continually further away.

We must also create strategies for constructive confrontations. In the present era, the dominant social body wishes to avoid seeing radical otherness, precariousness, discomfort. This body wishes to be safe, comfortable even in its suffering. The illuminated billboards of today advertise the following slogan: better to be in submission than at risk. If others do not agree with us, we leave the conversation at that; we do not try to penetrate their otherness. If the other suffers, too, then that is their own problem. Death is the only force or topic that can bring us back from our shared, fear-induced coma. We must reinvent risk and adventure and work against certainty. It is of urgent importance to search for new, confrontational forms of political imagination.

The Unfinished Democratic Project

The new topography of economic, cultural, and political hierarchies transcends national borders. Today, processes of state legitimization rest upon the biopolitical productivity of power. We need to find a way to recognize the warning signs of new and extant forces that drive injustice and internal socioeconomic and cultural tensions. In such vigilance we can recognize the potential of our contemporary world. We live in a state of global apartheid. It is not only a system of exclusion, but also a productive system—one that produces representations of power. This is common for developed, "democratic" spheres full of discourse dedicated to equality, inclusion, diversity. However, the language of democracy is often inapplicable to reality, and it remains on the level of populist advertisement.

Democracy has remained an unfinished project throughout modernity, trapped in its fragmentary national and local forms. The processes of globalization in recent decades have only added to its challenges. The primary obstacle to democracy, however, is the permanent state of

exception mentioned above. Therefore, the dream has been irretrievably lost, a project with pieces strewn and buried under panoptical weapons and security regimes.

Global society is being read as a regime of global security. And of course, political scientists say that existing nation-states and the old international order can no longer protect us from the threats facing our world today. They maintain that various new forms of sovereignty need to be created in order to manage the conflict between the world and itself. None of their arguments, however, allows for a full realization of the concept of democracy, since they all preserve the organization of social elements in an organic political body, thus inescapably reducing freedom for action, and establishing hierarchies among them. The democratic multitude cannot be a political body—not in its modern shape, at least.

—Peter Hoeg, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*

Let us not deceive ourselves: we are afraid. Very much afraid. We tremble like cherry blossoms in the wind at the very thought of fear itself. And because of that, we cannot even recognize fear, articulate it, name it. We are also afraid of the absence of fear.

At present, we live in cruel times in which market parameters are also applied to practices of ontological exchange—of identities, thoughts, and feelings. The psycho-dynamics of this exchange determine the paths our lives take. And this journey goes by extremely fast. This speediness produces an even bigger emptiness, where we are losing exactly what we are trying to exchange. Enticed by the mystery of new individualisms,

Robert Wilson, Hamletmachine, Kunsthalle, 1986, Hamburg. Photo: Friedemann Simon.

We Are Afraid, So What?

I can't stand fear. I hate being afraid. There is only one way to free yourself from fear. It leads to its core.

we have tripped and fallen down a rabbit hole. At this moment, a collective, or if you wish, cloned, Alice rules the roost. She is endlessly reflected in microscopic prisms

that she hopes will clearly reveal all aspects of her journey. Hers is a quest to make distinctions between communities and mobs, between critical and creative resistance to the silently, democratically, and consensually accepted suppressive concepts of social order. She still proceeds, intent on creating maps of specific trajectories that will lead to a common space. Alice's journey this time is not in Wonderland, but in the land where our longing and our bodies are thrown on the garbage heap of economic and political violence. Alice finds herself in the infinity of emptiness, in a hall of mirrors showing crooked images of reality instead of what she'd wished to see. In these reflections, reality is simulated through a false overcrowding of activities, actions, products, "projects," "works"—all sorts of engaged acceleration. And the rabbit is always late and never manages to get to the most important tea party. And he is confused because the celebration is still going on, but without him. Fear has become the only consistent thing that can retrieve and construct the stories we tell about our wholeness, about the justification of our existence here and now—our avowals that we are not virtual, that our lives are not phantasms, that we are not writing them out by following certain commands. And nothing but the fear of our own impermanence feels more fitting to provoke our reflections on community. Nothing is more disturbing than the entropy of the idea that the community is property jointly owned by the subjects that join in it.

In the cauldron of this entropy of identities and in the semantic worthlessness of their definition and naming, we are left only with fear. The fear we are aware of stands against the fear that is not yet articulated and is suppressed. We refuse to consider it the principal force behind the evil done in its wake. As such, fear has become one of the most exciting emotions, a refuge from our endless, sorrowful drifting from birth to death. By knowing our fear, we get stronger, we get nobler, we overcome it, while the Other, for whom this fear remains the single motor for practicing power, paradoxically weakens. Fear can provoke an illusion that simulates a longing for life. Sometimes we stoke fear by not facing it and resolving it in the first place. Fear activates the feeling that we are alive, that we have a kind of motive for living. But we fail to notice that this fear is, in fact, our death.

But what kind of fear are we talking about? We are talking about a fear of the anesthetized man who has distanced himself from everything that can make him face himself, the Other, or even the very meaning of FEAR itself, laid bare and recognized. The man who does not know that he is afraid is like a crystal glass on the verge of being broken into a thousand pieces with a single touch.

And therefore, His Majesty, FEAR, remains enthroned. The present is marked by a lack of communication, or to put it more correctly, an onslaught of hypertrophic, empty communication codes, charged with high-frequency public and private noise, with the rhythm of indifference keeping the beat. We're locked in a struggle to invent an apathetic, automatized, "pleasant" coexistence that is supposed to camouflage the discontents of culture. Fear becomes the second name for the thing that is to remind us, not of life, but of being alive.

We are afraid of making decisions, of travelling, flying, staying put, being jolly, crying, of loving, of commitments, of looking at ourselves through the eyes of the Other, of being gentle, different, silent, saying "no," saying "yes," of confrontation, of standing up. We are afraid of freedom although we keep summoning it and dreaming about it (but we say to ourselves, it is all right, it should stay there, in the sphere of the unconscious, because it is easier to be subjugated than free—freedom demands responsibility and love!). We hate terrorism and violence, but we would not know what to do without them. We are appalled by the ruthlessness of political crime, but we say to ourselves, woe betide if we are to deal with ourselves and our evil, and not with the unconscionable stupidity of others. We fear that the film tape of our life will be clumsily cut by some bad editor during the most important sequence—the scene that was going to finally show our true face, in soft focus. And while fearing, we hide our fear behind the cloak of fearlessness. We "cover up" all the fears mentioned above by persistently and repeatedly practicing them in vain.

Fluidity and Democratic Socialism

We know that the fluid life we lead is a result of inconstancy, taking place in a situation of sustained uncertainty. The hardest and most acute concern that haunts the fluid life is the anxiety that one will not keep pace with time, with swiftly changing events—that one will miss the sell-by date, that one will be overcrowded by the things one owns but no longer needs, that one will miss the moment that signals a change in direction. This fluid life is an endless string of new beginnings—and for that very reason, the ends come quickly too.

Disjointedness, incoherence, and surprise are common phenomena. We might not even be able to live without them anymore; they have become inherent to our sense of self and community. Our warped conception of joy can no longer be fed with anything else but sudden changes and new stimuli. We cannot stand anything that lasts.

That is why fluidity is the other determinant, for better or for worse, that shapes our bodies, our communities. Our being fluid is a suitable metaphor to help us understand the nature of the present, which is, by many indicators, a new stage in the history of modernity. We spill out, we diffuse, we leak, we melt. And thus, we discover the cracks and crevices in the body of life through which we manage to escape from the unpleasant and uncomfortable, from radical otherness, perhaps undamaged. This process of leakage and escape stands in contrast to the experience

of the "solid" bodies among us—those which are, in biopolitical terms, desirable, "healthy," incontestable, and which don't ruin the perfect, imagined backdrop of society's stage. Solid bodies do not have critical capacities and they ignore the fact of our universal finitude. By facing the finiteness, we, the less solid, face the fragility of the community, the fact of losing our loved ones and values. Contemporary times have found solid bodies in a particularly advanced stage of denial and decomposition.

How to address all of this decay in our midst? The key idea behind democratic socialism, which could help us resolve many dilemmas (without, one hopes, becoming the new religion), is to have institutions (including educational institutions and modes of political thinking) that enable individuals to lead their lives in full recognition of their dependence on others and on collective projects. And it is crucial for democratic socialism to have institutions in which people participate, because we *recognize ourselves and our freedom* in their shape. This participation—including in the care work we acknowledge as necessary for the maintenance of our society—should not be forced, but rather motivated by our active commitment. The primary task of our democratic society is to be organized in such a manner as to motivate us to contribute and transform its current life span, owing to the fact that we have been educated to fulfil our spiritual freedom. This fulfilment must also include the opportunity to criticize or reject the preestablished forms of participation. Just as the institution of marriage is not an institution of freedom unless it allows for the legal possibility of divorce, democratic socialism as an institution of freedom must also offer a practical possibility to refuse to partake in a given form of life. Otherwise, our participation will not be free, but a result of material concerns.

Together or Alone

Nothing appears more suitable and more necessary in this moment than the reconsideration of the notion of community. The old idea of community as shared property is problematic at best. The fluid modernity we inhabit consists of societies in which conditions change faster than their members can imagine, faster than it takes improvised modes of functioning to consolidate into habits and routines. These fluid contemporary communities, just like fluid life, cannot maintain the same shape, nor keep moving in the same direction.

Eric Hobsbawm noted: "Never was the word 'community' used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life."[2] He proceeds to say that people look for groups to belong to, temporarily or permanently, in a world in which everything else moves and shifts and nothing else is certain. And at the very moment when the community collapses, identity is invented. The community is a home that, for the majority of people, is just a fairy tale rather than the reality of their personal experience.

What is the confusion, then, that arises with respect to the community and the individual—what is the trap? To be an individual means to be unlike anybody else. To be an individual means "I am what I am." The problem with this is that the "others that are the same," and from whom you cannot differ, are the very same people who incite you to be different. This is what we call a community, a society, in which you are only one of many members, only one in the mass of people, known and unknown, who expect you and everyone you know to possess undeniable proof that you are individuals, made "different from others," either by someone else or by yourself. In the society of individuals, it is expected that everyone should be an individual. But paradoxically, not only are differences completely annulled, but everyone is also exceptionally similar to each other. They have to follow the same life strategy and use shared, recognizable, and readable signs that convince others that they are actually acting as individuals. They announce their autonomy, in other words, by the book.

Individuality belongs to the "spirit of the crowd" and to the demands imposed by that crowd. To be an individual means to be similar to everyone else among the many—even identical to everyone else. Under such conditions, when individuality is a universal must and everyone's burden, the only thing one can do to be different and truly individual is to try not to be an individual, and that is indeed very hard. This is the Gordian knot of the present—an almost unsolvable problem. It is not only logically contradictory; it is also a practical task whose solution haunts us from cradle to grave. We have no choice but to follow the path that will cause us to probe deeper inside ourselves, which appears as the best refuge in an already overcrowded and noisy world of experiences that resembles a marketplace. We seek to wander inside ourselves, unpolluted and intact, untouched by external pressures.

Individuality is the final product of societal transformation. The rise of individuality marks the progressive weakening of the dense network of social relations, and this marks the loss of the power of the community or the loss of interest in the normative regulation of its members. This normative emptiness is filled with a new ordering of the social space that leaves out of its focus all interpersonal relations, as well as the microworld of closeness and directness.

Responsibility and the Daimonic as Political

The relation between secrets and responsibility, that is to say, between the mysterious/sacral and responsibility, is perhaps of key importance in the articulation of the conditions under which those of us interested in fostering

an emergent social body are now trying to build community. Many philosophers, Martin Hägglund among them, warn of the danger of the daimonic (divine) as a sort of plundering whose effect, and sometimes paramount purpose, is to remove all responsibility—that is, to cause a loss of the meaning of responsibility and to annul our awareness of it.

We humans tend to incline towards the daimonic, to the authoritarian, to the concept of "deus ex machina," and we do all of this in order to avoid responsibility. The daimonic must be correlated with responsibility—a relation that does not initially exist. The daimonic is first defined through irresponsibility, or, if you wish, through the absence of responsibility. It belongs to a space where the command *to be responsible for* has not echoed yet: the call for being responsible for oneself, for one's actions and thoughts, for the other, has not been heard yet. The genesis of responsibility is not related to the history of religion or to religiosity. It should instead be analyzed in relation to the genealogy of the subject who says "I," to the genealogy of the relation of this "I" to itself as an instance of freedom, of uniqueness, and of responsibility, of the relation to itself as an existence before the other—others with their endless alterity, the ones who see without being seen, but also the ones whose endless goodness *gifts* an experience that can be reduced to *gifting death.* To gift death: this expression is equivocal.

Trapped in historicity, we can ask ourselves whether the communities that "read" themselves based on national identity can perceive their own history as a history of responsibility, illuminated by pain. Is historicity the idea that kills the political and annihilates the aesthetic? If a historian of national identities fails to interrelate historicity with responsibility, for all that this history tells of—which is typical, for example, of Europe, and perhaps of all humanity—this historian will reveal the defeating fact that historical knowledge is used to mystify, block, and satiate all questions, all foundations, but also all abysses. In the very heart of our history, our present, and perhaps also our future, there exists one such abyss—a huge cleft that opposes the longing for change, emancipation, and a redefinition of all quandaries regarding our history, to the political and ethical responsibilities of the community.

The Ending Is an Open Work

> Last night I dreamt about reality. What a relief it was to wake up!
> —Stanisław Lem

Oblivion, rejection, erasure, and effortless replacement—these are the new paradigms for survival,

Stanisław Lem Garden of Experiences, Czyżyny, Kraków, Poland. Photo: CC BY 3.0/Wikimedia Commons.

for sparing us from bare life. And for this very reason, this life could be characterized as the story of a constant, uninterrupted string of endings.

The paradigms we live by in our societal, cultural, political, and even artistic spaces are the following: creative destruction, uncertainty as value, and instability as fear and motivation. The most contemporary survival skill is a sort of acceptance of disorientation, immunity to fainting, adjustment to vertigo. It is clear that our new collective body does not foster, but is rather a result of, inconstancy; it moves fluidly to occupy its place in a continuous state of uncertainty. In this space we must create an alternative collective body, one that squirms and cries in pain. In the maelstrom of death we must build new models of community—autonomous zones of trust.

The world is at war again. This is not a traditional conflict between sovereign political entities, that is, nation-states; there are new, supranational forms of sovereignty—a global empire that has changed the forms and nature of war and of political and economic, and even aesthetic, violence. War has become an immanent part of the quotidian, and it is in communication with infinity.

Beyond the End

As Giorgio Agamben emphasizes in his *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, there is nothing more important in times of oppression and unbearable confrontation with bare life than to become a witness, archiving the memory of suffering.

Bearing in mind the political, cultural, and economic context in which we live, which produces a meaningless void in a flood of action and information, it seems all the more important to become responsible witnesses to the hidden traps in our societies. We are losing ourselves in

this void, even as we work to renew the idea of the commons, community, and togetherness. The societies in which we live inflict "noble," invisible humiliation, violence, and even tyranny (in addition to the very visible versions of these). Witnessing and making visible all of the tools of suffering is not a step toward resentment and revenge, but rather a foundation for launching a constructive battle against what Virginia Woolf terms "the false tyranny of plot." Since we inhabit the very core of several overlapping tyrannies (capitalist, ecological, climate, populist), with foreseeable complications but unforeseeable resolutions, it is our duty to be authors, artists, and creators not only of resolution but also of complications. We must not allow anyone else to create our own tyranny of plot. We must remain a creative, authorial, and conceptual step ahead of the tyrant.

In the early stages of the transformations that produced today's world, young Karl Marx noted in one of his secondary-school essays that at sunset, moths fly toward the lights inside people's houses. When imagining what our contemporary light-in-the-dark might be, what comes to mind are the individuals and small groups appearing all over the world with a still-hushed but extremely important voice for the voiceless, for a more just society. And indeed, the attraction of night-lights grows proportionally with the darkening of the external world.

X

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1
Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage* , ed. and trans. Carl Weber (Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984), n.p.

2
Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World 1914–1991* (Vintage, 1996).

iLiana Fokianaki

A Bureau for Self-Care: Interdependence versus Individualism

It feels like I am talking to you from the future, or the past, because the present is like a continuous, monotonous screeching sound. I have begun to believe I must be an extra in *Groundhog Day*. I am writing to you from a self-made office. My small, jerry-rigged desk, approximately sixty centimeters in length, is made from a metal shelf. We have been confined to the house for about five months now, with very few days when measures have been loosened and we're allowed greater freedom. We have to text the government every time we leave the house.

Living in a small flat in a pandemic with your partner and dog means reconceptualizing the architecture of your domestic environment. I work in a corner that was formerly occupied by plants, and the plants are now in front of a window, which I guess is better for them. The plants are in an altered state of orgasmic growth, taking over walls, growing immense roots that spread out wildly on the floor, obstructing the movement of our dog but also giving her shelter and shade on sunny days. She is happier, calmer, and more eager to learn new tricks. Perhaps our continual presence has provided a more diligent, meticulous type of care for both dog and plants. Our nonhuman kin are thriving in this space of confinement, whereas the humans feel not only cramped, but very uncertain about the future. Our collective closeness, however, has changed the relations of care within the space. The humans here are discovering a new purpose: prioritizing care—care for others as well as ourselves. In fact, caring for others changes the way one cares for oneself. Care and self-care become interdependent.

States of Change

The pandemic has altered the state of so many things: the state of relationships, the state of movement. Zooming out of my own personal confinement, I think of the large-scale things that have changed: the way nation-states function, the way care systems for whole societies work, the way citizens conceive of their liberties and responsibilities. Such changes have made it necessary to place care at the forefront of conversations, locally and internationally. However, states and societies remain trapped in technocratic discussions about legislative measures, vaccination campaigns, and the distribution of services and funds. I would like to focus on self-care through a reading of the collective, distinct from the general notion of self-care as concerning individuals (an act for one's self).

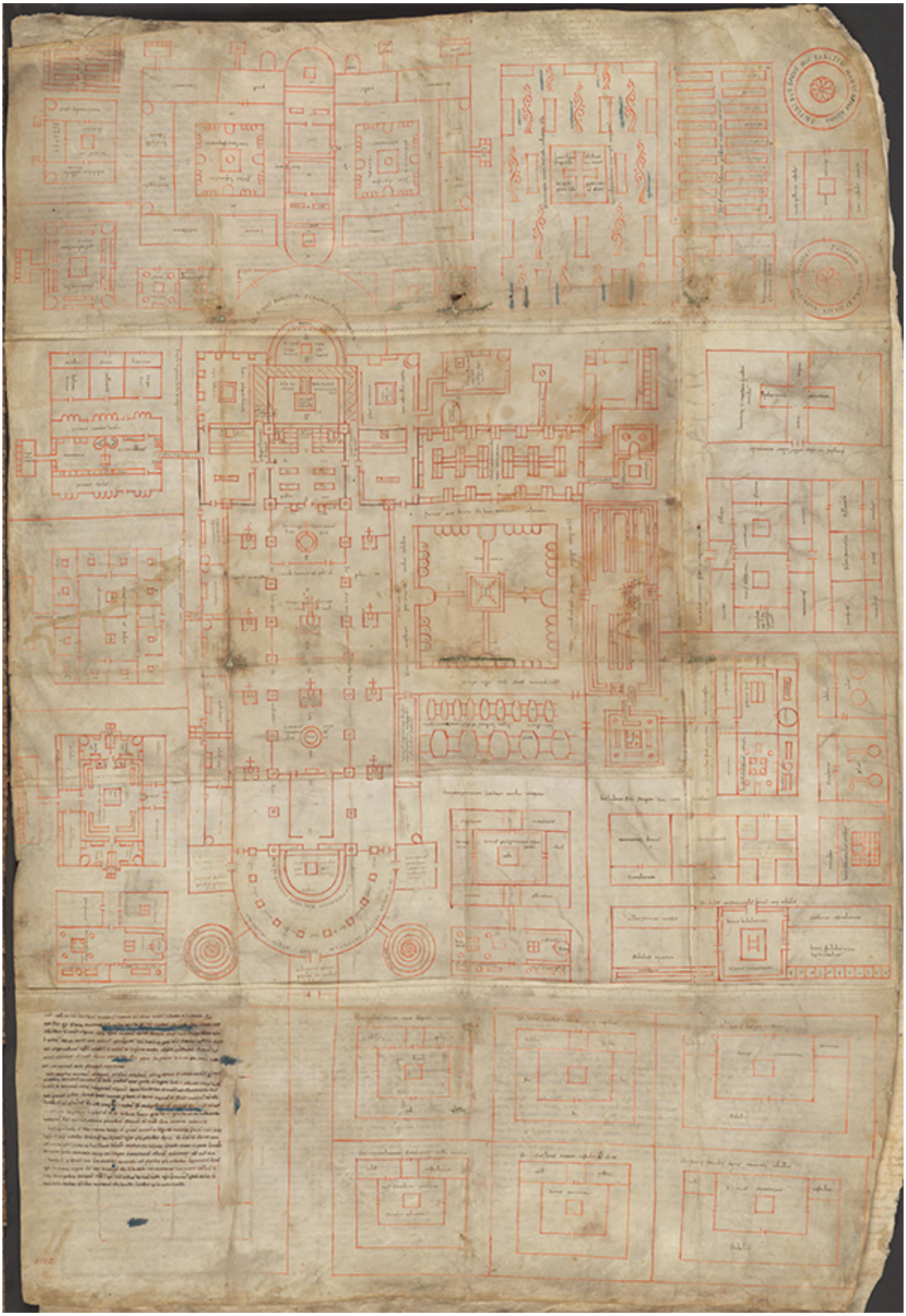
The pandemic has shown that when it comes to providing care for those who care for us, we have a long way to go. Millions of care workers have been on the ground trying to hold us all together. Yet the primary way we have acknowledged this work is by clapping from balconies. However moving this display has been, it doesn't begin to

Libia Castro & Olafur Olafsson, In Search of Magic: Proposal for a New Constitution for The Republic of Iceland, 2020. View of polyphonic performance-demonstration, Reykjavik Art Museum, Reykjavik´s city center and Austurvöllur Square, Iceland. Walking with the work: Libia Castro & Olafur Olafsson and The Magic Team, 2010 National Assembly Note: DO NOT BULLSHIT YOURSELVES AWAY FROM THE RESULTS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY, 2020. Photo: Owen Fiene.

do justice to the immense sacrifices these workers have made for those of us with the privilege to stay home. Healthcare workers, funeral home workers, couriers, and many other workers have endangered their own lives for others, and have put their self-care aside. It is crucial to recognize that care work is gendered, racialized, and typically delegated to the precarious classes. The communities who do not enjoy white Western privilege or wealth are those who provide the majority of care for those who do, while receiving disproportionately little care themselves. For those of us in safer positions, the first act of care we can offer these workers is to simply recognize the privilege of being able to stay inside and care for ourselves and our loved ones. In what follows I will flesh out the history and politics of self-care in relation to community care, and argue that self-care should be considered a collective project.

Self-Care, Gardening, Gurus, and Neoliberalism

I have recently written about the roots of care, picking up on its linguistic, philosophical, and sociopolitical genealogy and its connection to the idea of *curare*, the Latin word that means both "to cure" and "to care."[1] This connection between care and healing, including the curative relationship to the self, is found in many ancient cultures—for example, ancient Egypt with its advanced medical practices. The ancient Greeks borrowed medical knowledge and techniques from Egypt and mixed them with their own traditional folk healing practices. The belief that care for oneself is paramount to living a good life can be found in the Greek mantra νοῦς ὑγιής ἐν σώματι ὑγιεῖ ("the body can only be healthy if the mind is"). Many cultures have drawn a connection between mental and physical health. Qi Gong, an ancient Chinese practice of movement, breathing, and meditation that aims to improve both mental and physical health, has been practiced in China since the fifteenth century.



Plan of the Monastery of St. Gall, Reichenau, c. 820–830. The drawing shows that gardens were included in the medical section of the monastery alongside an infirmary, a physician's house, and a bloodletting house, demonstrating the historical importance of medicinal herb gardens. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

From Egypt to Greece and China, we encounter the human need to preserve and develop knowledges of self-care. In the Middle Ages, these knowledges were preserved by medieval monasteries in northern Europe, which maintained gardens full of curative herbs. The only surviving major architectural drawing from the Middle Ages—the plan of the Monastery of St. Gall (dated between 820–830 AD) in what is now Switzerland—demonstrates the importance of herb gardens during those times. The plan shows that the gardens were included in the medicinal section of the monastery alongside an infirmary, a physician's house, and a bloodletting house. Until the industrial revolution, this type of garden was extremely popular, cultivated not just in monasteries and manors but also in peasant communities. In other words, before the arrival of industrial capitalism, the cultivation of herb gardens was a practice of collective care and curing that was accessible and open to almost anyone.

With the industrial revolution, curing and caring for oneself took an individualist turn: it became a private affair for the privileged. Self-care was turned into a sign of cultural sophistication for the Western imperialist class, and looking after your own well-being was framed as the individual's obligation towards society. This warped notion of self-care is exemplified by Victorian Britain, where it was widely propagated through the work of Samuel Smiles. Smiles was a Scottish political reformer and author of the 1859 book *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct*.[2] A lifestyle guru before lifestyle gurus existed, Smiles was hailed in his time as the epitome of Victorian liberalism. His book proposes that any man can become anything he wants as long as he does not depend on others. As historian Asa Briggs writes:

> Relying on yourself was preferred morally—and economically—to depending on others. It was an expression of character even when it did not ensure—or indeed, not offer—a means of success. It also had social implications of a general kind. The progressive development of society ultimately depended, it was argued, not on collective action or on parliamentary legislation but on the prevalence of practices of self-help.[3]

This focus on the individual is fundamental to the founding of the United States. A 2017 paper titled "Frontier Culture: The Roots and Persistence of 'Rugged Individualism' in the United States," coauthored by economists Samuel Bazzi, Martin Fiszbein, and Mesay Gebresilasse, revisits an influential 1893 essay by historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner analyzed how "the frontier that divided settled and yet unsettled locations strongly influenced American culture, fostering the development of unique cultural traits. Salient among these were individualism and opposition to government intervention."[4]

The settler colonialism that created the United States was one chapter in Northern Europe's colonization of much of the globe. The individualistic ideology at the root of this colonialism positioned self-care above and in opposition to care for the community and for others. This notion was at war with the collective notions of care held by indigenous populations in much of the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Individualist self-care, with its implied cultural superiority, helped Western imperialists justify their takeover of whole territories and continents.

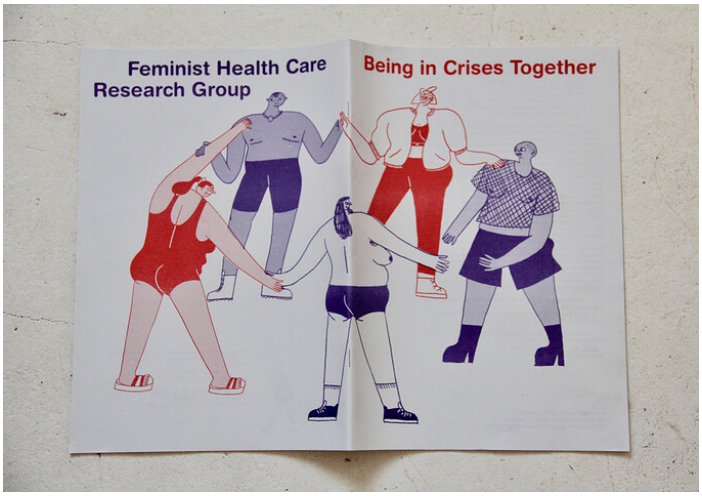
I want to focus on one specific aspect of this individualist notion of self-care: its relationship to cure and hygiene. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating how systems of colonial oppression operated in part by imposing certain standards of hygiene and diet on indigenous populations, "teaching" them to take care of themselves. Alison Bashford writes in her book *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*:

> "Imperial cleanliness," wrote an early twentieth century public health bureaucrat, is "development by sanitation … colonising by means of the known laws of cleanliness rather than by military force." Like many of his contemporaries, the connection between hygiene and rule was obvious for this commentator, both commonplace and a driving mission. This relationship between public health and governance has, in many ways, been rediscovered by critical sociologists and historians of health and medicine. "The power to govern," wrote one, "is often presented as the power to heal."[5]

This logic later gave rise to the twentieth-century notion that Western global powers had no responsibility to care for so-called "second-" and "third-world" populations.

Although individualism continued to develop after the industrial revolution, and still thrives today, there was a brief moment in history when a radical shift seemed possible, with the arrival of two earth-shaking events: the First World War, which began in 1914, and the Spanish influenza epidemic, which started in 1918, before the war ended. The state of exception that was created by this war—the first war after the industrial revolution—was rooted in an idea contrary to individualistic self-care: that of collective action. Although colonialism and imperialism continued to expand during the First and Second World Wars, this era precedes the commodity capitalism of the 1950s, which would reinforce individualism, exploitation, and class disparity. I cannot help but think that there was a small window of opportunity in those years to conceive of care towards others and towards oneself on a collective,

rather than an individual, basis. If such a change had happened, maybe today's Covid-19 crisis would have turned out very differently.



Feminist Health Care Research Group, Being in Crises Together, 2020. Zine, Epilogue, Berlin Biennale 11. Photo: Inga Zimprich.

Individualism, Community, and Self-Care

In the 1960s, the idea of indulging one's own well-being through practices that became known as self-care took center stage—and quickly became monetized. A segment of mainstream society from the sixties onward began to base its existence on "self-betterment" and social mobility; upward mobility was dressed as self-care. With the rise of globalization and then the turbo-capitalism of the 1970s and after, collective care declined globally. State-provided healthcare and welfare went from a right to a service. Increasingly, it has become a paid service, due to the privatization of health systems and public infrastructure.

Research shows that belief in individualism correlates with wealth and GDP per capita.[6] Wealth drives individualism. The most "developed" regions of the world are the most individualistic, compared to regions such as Eastern Europe, which is defined as "partly" individualistic. The most collectivist cultures are found in so-called "developing" or "underdeveloped" countries in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast and Central Asia, and South and Central America.

The counterculture fever of the seventies brought Western appropriation of non-Western culture into the mainstream. New-age spiritualism and hippie culture appropriated Eastern and South American religious and self-care practices such as yoga, meditation, and Buddhism. In the eighties, the growing popularity of new-age ideas of self-care led to an explosion of the wellness industry. The era of the guru had arrived. Jane Fonda—"Hanoi Jane" of the sixties—popularized practicing self-care in the comfort of one's living room and became an icon of the fitness industry. The cultural imprint of that period can still be seen today. In a 2020 article in *Women's Health*, the author writes that when she discovered Fonda's 1982 workout videos during quarantine, they were a "bright spot in my self-isolation."[7]

In contrast to these individualist notions of self-care, the Civil Rights Movement in the US and the second wave of feminism promoted both collective care and a different type of self-care. The Black Panther Party offered an array of free social programs, including clothing distribution; classes on politics, economics, self-defense, and first aid; free medical care; transportation to prisons for family members of inmates; an ambulance service; drug and alcohol rehab; and its famous Free Breakfast for School Children Program. The idea that self-care should be a form of care towards one's community is clear in the words of Black Panther cofounder Dr. Huey P. Newton:

> All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organise the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressors.[8]

The feminist movement of the sixties and seventies focused on healthcare and the patriarchal systems that defined how the female body was understood and cared for. Feminists contested the idea that care was an obligatory act of female love, and that healthcare should be an unemotional governmental service. Housework as a form of care was reconfigured through the work of Marxist feminists who demanded that domestic and reproductive care labor be recognized *as labor* and be duly compensated, most famously in the Wages for Housework campaign. One of the main figures of the movement, Silvia Federici, argued that "by denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone."[9]

Although many white feminists failed to recognize the systemic oppression imposed on black women, a common front developed against the white patriarchal medical profession. Caring for one's community and oneself became an act of political dissent. Activist groups adjacent to or allied with feminism and the Civil Rights

Movement highlighted how poor health was correlated with poverty. Facing a medical profession that disregarded the needs of women, POC, and LGBTQIA+ people, members of these communities organized to share information about safe abortions, nontraditional medical practices, and self-healing methods. As poet and theorist Audre Lorde, who battled cancer, wrote in her essay "A Burst of Light" (1988): "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."[10] Here, a focus on the self does not contradict caring for the community, but is instead integral to it.

In the late eighties, the LGBT community reconceived self-care as an act of self-defense and grassroots organizing against a heteronormative system that was apathetic during for much of the early AIDS epidemic. The Treatment and Data Committee of ACT UP provided healthcare and research when the careless state would not. In 1991, the Treatment and Date Committee was renamed the Treatment Action Group, eventually becoming a nonprofit organization focused on accelerating treatment research. In 2020, Doctors without Borders, in collaboration with the still-working Treatment Action Group, exposed the astronomical profit margins of the pharmaceutical company Cepheid, which was overcharging patients for rapid tests for tuberculosis, Ebola, and Covid-19.[11]

Viral Care

The pandemic has undeniably brought people together, increasing our sense of collectivity. We have cared more for our families, partners, pets, neighbors and coworkers. Those of us who could afford to stay home began to care for our overworked and overstressed bodies and souls. We finally had time to because the turbo-capitalist global economy was on pause.

At the same time, the pandemic has shed a harsh light on the state of care, both collective and individual. Self-care has never been more individualistic (nor more commercialized). Simultaneously, systems of collective care have rapidly deteriorated. Care workers around the globe have faced burnout during the pandemic. In countless news stories, tweets, and Facebook posts, these workers have described the emotional toll of long hours, and of seeing patients die a grisly, lonely death. Some healthcare workers have taken their own lives, unable to cope with the feeling of having failed their patients—or with the knowledge that they themselves have been abandoned by the systems that should have supported them. Many people like me, staying inside, have been preoccupied with our own survival and the well-being of our immediate loved ones. We have not given sufficient attention and care to the workers saving our lives. Could this apathy be the natural outcome of a system that regards care workers as employees who deliver paid services? Can we only think as consumers?

If the pandemic has made one thing clear, it's that individualistic notions of care and "self-care" are extremely harmful to human existence, even threatening the future of the planet. Depleted healthcare systems, the idea of healthcare as a paid service instead of a human right, special deals between rich countries and big pharma for vaccines—all the care-lessness has been revealed in its full ugliness. On the micro level, isolation has shown that our established practices of self-care are entirely individualistic. Those who could afford to made bread, created Corona-kitchen Facebook groups, took online yoga classes, made jam, and paid insane amounts of money for "loungewear," new tech, and organic food, all brought to them by delivery workers who pee in bottles so as not to miss their daily target of two hundred deliveries.[12]

I cannot help but think that art and the art institution, after forty years of neoliberalism, are very much shaped by the individualistic approach to self-care: for many, art is considered an indulgent activity, entertainment, an acquired taste, proof of social standing and class, something one does for oneself as a part of "self-betterment." More importantly, mainstream cultural institutions, with their claims to political neutrality, often ignore work that centers collective care and self-care as political acts. Until recently, it has been difficult for politically engaged art to enter the mainstream art world, let alone the art market. The pandemic seems to have changed things a little. Some art institutions are now seeking out artists they regarded as "too political" before 2020.

Community, Self, and Care Politics Today

The pandemic has begun to break down the entrenched divisions between collective care and self-care. Many new initiatives have been launched to care for those communities most affected by Covid-19 across the globe. Facing the failure of governmental care, citizens have organized themselves into impromptu groups that gather protective equipment, deliver food, or simply check on neighbors.

Cultural practitioners and institutions have been discussing ways to offer better care. In the field of contemporary visual arts (the field I'm most familiar with), the notion of self-care is losing its commodity facade, and many institutions are realizing that they must revisit the idea of self-care as a political act. They are inspired by the work of feminists and civil rights organizers of the past, but also by the feminisms and social-justice movements of the present. "Myseum" in Toronto is a nomadic para-institution that presents projects around the city. Their "Stories" series addresses issues such as the historical presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Toronto and a

Libia Castro & Olafur Olafsson and The Magic Team, 2010 National Assembly Note: DO NOT BULLSHIT YOURSELVES AWAY FROM THE RESULTS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY, 2020. Installation view, Magic Meeting - A Decade On, Hafnarborg Art Center Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, 2021.

string of racist attacks in the city in 1977. Most recently, Myseum began a series of "Stories on Collective Care in the Time of Covid-19" together with artist collectives and activists.

In Germany, the Badischer Kunstverein organized an event called "Being in Crises Together," which posed the question of how we care today and involved members of the Feminist Health Care Research Group. An artistic project by the group, focused on Berlin's Feminist Archives, was presented at the 11th Berlin Biennial in collaboration with artist Virginia de Medeiros. It featured documents, posters, and interviews about radical health initiatives such as HeileHaus (Healing House), Radical Therapy, Apothekerkollektiv (Pharmacists' Collective), and Feministisches Frauengesundheitszentrum Berlin (Feminist Women*'s Health Centre).

Other artists have addressed the commodification of self-care. Geumhyung Jeong's installation and performance *Spa & Beauty* (2017), exhibited at various institutions since its launch at the Tate in 2017, examines the relationship between beauty products and their users. Beauty products are used to take care of one's body, but they also require careful management, according to the artist. In the installation, Jeong carefully arranges beauty products by type; images demonstrate how the products are used. At the same time, Jeong intersperses images showing the industrial production process behind these objects of "grooming" and "self-betterment."

Curators have also been discussing the dichotomy between individualism and community. For instance, curators Galit Eilat and Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez aim to undermine the illusion of the "independent curator," since it is interdependency that defines their livelihoods. They present themselves as "interdependent" curators rather than independent ones. This choice of words calls attention to the larger structures that force dependency, but also expresses a desire to position oneself as part of a group, especially given the extensive unpaid care labor that female freelance curators are often expected to provide.

Self-care needs to abandon the individualistic approach of "self-improvement" and focus on bettering the self for the benefit of others. In our efforts to cure ourselves, there is one affliction we should not overlook: the neoliberal approach to self-care, which is rooted in the legacy of the heteronormative, white, Western Enlightenment. If we can cure ourselves of this affliction, self-care might become a radical political act. In order to change the policies that for decades have prevented us from thinking of care as a human right that must be protected, self-care must aim to transform people into active and engaged citizens.

For artistic duo Libia Castro and Olafur Olafsson, this translates into engaging in local politics though a framework of care. Their long-term project *In Search of Magic: A Proposal for a New Constitution for the Republic of Iceland* demands the implementation of a new Icelandic constitution that was passed by a national referendum in 2012 but never put into effect. Their project is a collectively conceived and executed performance of musical scores that recite and explain the articles of the new constitution. The impact of their work was evident in an email I received from the artists while writing this essay. The mayor of the town of Hafnarfjörður, on the outskirts of Reykjavik, ordered the removal of one of their works that hung on the facade of the local museum where Castro and Olafsson were having an exhibition. The work was part of a series of conceptual paintings that resemble banners. As Castro explained to me in the email:

> The images are copied and enlarged parts of forms that were used by various citizens to write anonymously their concerns, questions, wishes, and warnings about the future of the democratic process they were starting in the country in the second national assembly in 2010. The notes were addressed to different bodies, such as the parliament, the press, and the constitutional assembly. Many of these note were used in the national assembly in 2010, when the writing of the new constitution was decided and the future of the country was being debated in an unprecedented democratic process … Those

> anonymous notes written by the thousands are now kept in the national archive of Iceland. They read now as letters that were sent to the future. But they were lent to us now, and as with the rest of this project, we are making them public again through our artworks.

A mobilization by local citizens, institutions, and the artists led to the reinstatement of the work two weeks after its removal. The artists' careful and diligent work is one example of how care for national politics and care for the commons can align. It makes me think of Sara Ahmed's reading of Audre Lorde's "A Burst of Light" essay, which is useful for artists and cultural institutions interested in the politics of care and self-care:

> Self-care: that can be an act of political warfare … And that is why in queer, feminist and anti-racist work self-care is about the creation of community, fragile communities, assembled out of the experiences of being shattered. This is why when we have to insist, I matter, we matter, we are transforming what matters … For those who have to insist they matter to matter: self-care is warfare.[13]

It is noble warfare, and culture should be its shock troops. The transformation of art institutions may have to wait for now, since many are still closed or operating below normal capacity due to the pandemic. But we can think of these places the same way we think of our homes: as intimate spaces where care can be nurtured. For the time being, our private homes can offer fertile ground for future transformations in how we practice care in both private and public space: as an interdependent and revolutionary process that creates new relationships among humans, nonhumans, and their shared habitat.

X

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3
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Oxana Timofeeva

Rathole: Beyond the Rituals of Handwashing

In the spring of 2020, when the World Health Organization formally announced the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and governments began introducing new restrictions, some philosophers looked to Michel Foucault, who created tools for analyzing mass disease in relation to discourses and strategies of power. Exploring the places where power and the body intersect—in prisons, hospitals, schools, menageries, and so forth—Foucault's political history of illness points to the continuity between diverse discursive practices that shape our experience of infection, pathology, mental illness, or sexual perversion.

In his 1978 lecture course "Security, Territory, Population," Foucault identifies three regimes of power relating to epidemics: a regime of sovereignty based in exclusion (as in the case of leprosy); a disciplinary power that introduces quarantine restrictions (as in the case of the plague); and finally, a more recent politics of security introducing new practices such as vaccination and prophylaxis, which have been used since the eighteenth century to control, for example, smallpox. Foucault arranges these regimes chronologically, but emphasizes that they do not so much replace each other as evolve into one another, so that each subsequent regime retains elements of the previous ones.[1]

In his earlier *History of Madness* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault elaborates on the difference between the first two regimes, sovereign exclusion and disciplinary control, and on the transition from the former to the latter. I will focus on this distinction, as elements of both persist through modern regimes of security as well as in Covid-19 regulations. In the first part of *History of Madness*, Foucault mentions how multiple leprosaria caused many spaces in Europe to empty out by the end of the Middle Ages, but soon such places of the damned were filled again with the new outsiders—vagrants, criminals, madmen, and the poor.[2] Through the principal mechanism of exclusion, a community rids itself of its troublesome elements. Discipline is another type of management. It does not rely on exclusion or expulsion, but rather on the careful segmentation and reorganization of society from within to control all its members and parts. In *Discipline and Punish*, referring to seventeenth-century French archives, Foucault depicts the plague city as a segmented, fixed, and frozen space in which every individual is locked and observed:

> First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals; the division of the town into distinct quarters, each governed by an intendant. Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death. On the appointed day, everyone

Werner Herzog, Nosferatu the Vampyre (still), 1979.

> is ordered to stay indoors: it is forbidden to leave on pain of death … Every day, too, the syndic goes into the street for which he is responsible; stops before each house: gets all the inhabitants to appear at the windows; … he calls each of them by name; informs himself as to the state of each and every one of them … [3]

The strict segmenting of the plague city is opposed to leprosaria, where an individual "was left to his doom in a mass among which it was useless to differentiate."[4] According to Foucault, "the exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a disciplined society."[5]

However, these two models are not incompatible: further developments in mechanisms of power reveal new convergences. Thus, according to Foucault, in the nineteenth century, disciplinary techniques began to apply to the spaces of exclusion "of which the leper was the symbolic inhabitant," whereas "beggars, vagabonds, madmen and the disorderly formed the real population."[6] This is how leprosaria transform into psychiatric hospitals and prisons. Disciplinary power permeates disorderly spaces of exclusion in order to carefully register and individualize its inhabitants, who remain stigmatized as excluded. In Foucault's perspective, modern society does not need such external disciplinary mechanisms, as it has already internalized them through sophisticated practices of self-control and self-discipline.

The term "isolation," which Foucault sometimes uses as a synonym for the exclusion of the leper, deserves special attention. In fact, chaotic spaces of exclusion and segmented disciplinary spaces are both forms of isolation. The leper is isolated in a colony where the authorities may never appear in person. The resident of a plague city is isolated at home, which the authorities visit daily to ensure that everything is in its place. A prisoner is isolated in a ward, and remains under constant, armed observation. In all cases, isolation persists as a matrix of interactions between the disease and the authorities. Foucault didn't have a chance to see the digital strategies used today to manage Covid-19, but they retain and synthesize the previous forms of administration regimes that he described. Today's most obvious disciplinary mechanisms—quarantine regulations, lockdowns, and

border closures—combine procedures of exclusion on the one hand and security practices on the other. The strategy of security bases itself in mass vaccination, as well as obligatory face masks and hand washing. Importantly, what enters into the contemporary picture is not simply isolation, but self-isolation. While in the plague city, "the syndic himself comes to lock the door of each house from the outside; he takes the key with him and hands it over to the intendant of the quarter; the intendant keeps it until the end of the quarantine," we are encouraged to voluntarily lock ourselves within our apartments and practice social distancing when and if we venture outside.

There are also explicit sanitary and hygienic aspects of Covid-era self-isolation practices. People who can afford to not only lock themselves in their homes, maintaining contact with the outside world through delivery services, but also try to protect their faces and bodies from potential external dangers, using medical masks, disposable gloves, and antiseptics. The focus is not so much on authoritative forces exerting outside control over bodies, but on self-protective technologies applied by individuals themselves, above all on the routine construction of physical barriers intended to prevent the spread of the virus. Individual responsibility becomes the primary subject of moral reflection and discussion, making consumer choices extremely difficult. Since the virus is invisible, and contact with it cannot be clearly identified, a person is forced to make a variety of constant situational decisions: It is worth wearing a mask in a given situation, or necessary to meet the courier in protective gloves, to disinfect purchases, or take extra measures avoid infection when pressing the dispenser of a sanitizer bottle? Extremely careful strategies of self-isolation can only make clearer that the chain of barriers cannot be absolute and uninterrupted, and that they will necessarily break somewhere during vital contact with the outside world.

In this context, obsessive-compulsive disorder presents a paradigmatic case. To quote a description of the hygienic routine of a person who suffers from mysophobia during the pandemic:

> Now, when I bring my groceries home from the shop, I set them all down in a little-used corner of my flat, the same way I might carefully set aside a pair of shoes after stepping on a discarded plaster or a wad of chewing gum. I wash my hands. Anything that can be shaken free from its protective packaging, I set aside—confident it's clean enough already. Then, methodically, I clean the remaining items with household disinfectant or washing up liquid and water, placing the finished ones down in a new pile. I wash my hands again, and put my purchases in the cupboard or fridge.[7]

As Dr. Hayk S. Arakelyan explains, mysophobia, "also known as verminophobia, germophobia, germaphobia, bacillophobia, and bacteriophobia, is a pathological fear of contamination and germs. The term was coined by William A. Hammond in 1879 when describing a case of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) exhibited in repeatedly washing one's hands."[8] Among the symptoms are: "excessive hand washing," "a fear of physical contact, especially with strangers," "excessive effort dedicated to cleaning and sanitizing one's environment," "a refusal to share personal items," and so on.[9]

OCD is characterized by obsessive thoughts—like fear of infection—and compulsive rituals. Sigmund Freud described it in his 1909 essay "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" with a story that is among the most famous of Freudian practice, the "Rat Man case," in which an educated young man who just returned from the military service complains about his obsessive fears and impulses. Freud's analysis of the case presents a fascinating narrative where a kind of detective investigation unravels a tangle of complex psychic connections and symptoms to reveal further curious details. The patient is afraid that his actions or thoughts may result in the death of his father, who in fact had already died several years ago. Freud enquires into the scheme of the patient's relations with his father to find its explanation in infantile sexuality.

Freud's psychoanalytic investigation can also be understood as a kind of archaeology that digs into subterranean layers of a patient's psychic life, from adult symptoms to adolescent and childhood episodes. Freud refers to the scene in which the patient (who was very young and has no memory of its occurrence) is told by his mother that

> he had done something naughty, for which his father had given him a beating. The little boy had flown into a terrible rage and had hurled abuse at his father even while he was under his blows. But as he knew no bad language, he had called him all the names of common objects that he could think of, and had screamed: "You lamp! You towel! You plate!" and so on.[10]

Importantly, according to his mother's recollection, he was punished because he had bitten someone. After this episode, as the patient himself notes, his character changed: "From that time forward he was a coward—out of fear of the violence of his own rage. His whole life long, moreover, he was terribly afraid of blows, and used to creep away and hide, filled with terror and indignation, when one of his brothers or sisters was beaten."[11]

Werner Herzog, Nosferatu the Vampyre (still), 1979.

Further analysis brings Freud to the conclusion that, behind the patient's love for his father, there is hatred. The fear that the father will die reveals the truth of the patient's deeper desire: he longs for the death of his father (who is already dead). The crucial point here is an obsessive fantasy "about a punishment meted out to criminals in the Orient: a pot is turned upside down on the buttocks of the criminal and rats in the pot then bore their way into his anus."[12] This fantasy opens an associative flow in which rats play the most important role. Their image creates connections between different parts of the patient's personality, between his present and past, hatred and love. The rats' symbolism is multiple: in the patient's mind they are associated with, among other things, money (his father's debts or dirty cash), the penis (anal eroticism), dangerous infections (fear of contracting syphilis), but also with children.

In this last association, between rats and children, Freud comes close to the most profound truth. But then he shifts his focus to infantile sexuality and family drama before arriving at it. There is a kind of trapdoor within the analysis of the Rat Man, something like the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, into which one can eventually fall: the rathole. It amounts to a feint in time, wherein the present and the past coincide: the father may still be alive, and the boy can still prevent his father's death (which he fearfully desired), just as he can prevent his own mental alienation. It is also the grave of the present, in which hidden possibilities are buried. The entrance to this rathole in Freud's analysis can be found in the following episode:

> Once when the patient was visiting his father's grave he had seen a big beast, which he had taken to be a rat, gliding along over the grave. He assumed that it had actually come out of his father's grave and had just been having a meal off his corpse. The notion of a rat is inseparably bound up with the fact that it has sharp teeth with which it gnaws and bites. But rats cannot be sharp-toothed, greedy, and dirty with impunity: they are cruelly persecuted and mercilessly put to death by man, as the patient had often observed with horror. He had often pitied the poor creatures. But he himself had been just such a nasty, dirty little wretch, who was apt to bite people when he was in a rage and had been fearfully punished for doing so. He could truly be said to find "a living likeness of himself" in the rat.[13]

Freud evokes this recollection in order to link it, via infantile sexuality, to the initial fantasy of the form of torture he'd read about, as if the rat-boy might satisfy his unconscious desire through imagining it. I would like, however, to shift the focus of analysis and point to the contrast between the phantasmatic torture using rats and the real torture of rats themselves—the scenes of merciless persecution of these creatures that Freud's patient used to observe with horror.

The "rat" from the father's grave (in fact, Freud notes, it was not actually a rat, but a weasel) is one that sank its teeth into the father. But was it not also tormented and exterminated by people whose cruelty was comparable with that of the father when he punished the young patient for biting? The child and the animal are captured within the closed circle of violence without being able to respond to it, only being able to cry: "You lamp! You towel! You plate!" This is the first rat circle. The second rat circle is a deeper one: the father, with whom the boy identifies, is also a rat. Apparently, the rat-weasel emerging from the grave is the ghost of the father. The rat sutures the present and the past: inside the grave, which is at the same time a rathole, his father is alive and still loved. This lower circle is the one of love, where the living and the dead, the human being and the animal, the son and the father, are amalgamated. The rat-children have to pass through the circle of violence and torture in order to become sources of infection, dirty money, dirty penises, and guilt, which the patient, with his obsessive fears and impulses, obsessively tries to wash off his hands as if they were microbes.

The Rat Man case is one of three in which Freud shifts the focus of his analysis of unconscious material from animality to infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex. The other two are the case of little Hans who was afraid of horses, and that of the Wolf Man. In all three cases, a real or imagined encounter between a child and animality causes mental illness: psychosis in the Wolf Man, obsessional neurosis in the Rat Man, and phobia in little Hans. Freud seems to pay a great deal of attention to the moment of the rat's suffering, which creates the conditions for the child to experience solidarity at the beginning of the story. In further developments (including sexual ones), this solidarity, or love, turns into neurosis, psychosis, or phobia. What if sexuality only cloaks this traumatic initial encounter with animality in violence and repression, and covers the truth of the rathole in our psychic life?

In his "Notes," Freud makes a distinction between the two mechanisms of repression that mediate the process of psychic trauma transforming into mental illness—amnesia (for hysteria) and isolation (for obsessional neurosis).

> In hysteria it is the rule that the precipitating causes of the illness are overtaken by amnesia no less than the infantile experiences by whose help the precipitating causes are able to transform their affective energy into symptoms. … In this amnesia we see the evidence of the repression which has taken place. The case is different in obsessional neuroses. The infantile preconditions of the neurosis may be overtaken by amnesia, though this is often an incomplete one; but the immediate occasions of the illness are, on the contrary, retained in the memory. Repression makes use of another, and in reality, a simpler, mechanism. The trauma, instead of being forgotten, is deprived of its affective cathexis; so that what remains in consciousness is nothing but its ideational content, which is perfectly colorless and is judged to be unimportant.[14]

I find a certain structural homology between Freud's two types of repression and Foucault's two strategies of power. In a sense, the exclusion of lepers correlates to the amnesia of hysterics: a traumatic event is expelled out of hysterical consciousness. The forgotten dissolves into an undifferentiated mass and finds its refuge in a leprosaria of the soul. Isolation in the psychoanalytic sense is closer to the disciplinary model of a plague city: the cause of illness is isolated within consciousness: locked up and neutralized or emotionally disinfected. The patient remembers his traumatic event, but all its connections to the present symptoms are blocked. Unlike the causes of leprosy or plague, the source of mental illness is localized not in space, but in time. Thus, the consciousness of a hysteria or an obsessional neurosis sufferer operates in time in a way similar to how power operates in space during epidemics.

Isolation is one of the main components of OCD. As Freud notes in his later work *Inhibition, Symptom, and Anxiety* (1926), the fear of infection characteristic of this neurosis relates to the archaic taboo on touching. Touch is mutable: it can be loving, erotic, or gentle, but also aggressive and destructive.

> Eros desires contact because it strives to make the ego and the loved object one, to abolish all spatial barriers between them, but destructiveness, too, which (before the invention of long-range weapons) could only take effect at close quarters, must presuppose physical contact, a coming to grips.[15]

According to Freud, isolation as a psychic mechanism amounts to

> removing the possibility of contact; it is a method of withdrawing a thing from being touched in any way.

Werner Herzog, Nosferatu the Vampyre (still), 1979.

> And when a neurotic isolates an impression or an activity by interpolating an interval, he is letting it be understood symbolically that he will not allow his thoughts about that impression or activity to come into associative contact with other thoughts.[16]

An obsessional neurotic mounts a defense by placing touching at the center of a prohibitive system or set of excessive protective rituals. A similar mental operation isolates a traumatic impression or activity from other associations by forbidding thoughts to touch each other. "You lamp! You towel You plate!" is a magic spell. In order to protect the patient from the violence of his father, whom he loves, the boy draws a sacred rat circle around him. Perhaps we were once beaten, or saw others being beaten—mercilessly, like rats—and since then, we have kept washing our hands.

The conclusion could be drawn that self-isolation, as practiced in the era of Covid-19, turns OCD from an individual symptom into a collective one. An obsessive-compulsive disorder, with one manifestation being the fear of infection, presents itself as contagious—not in the physical sense, but socially. This conclusion, however, is a bit superficial. It would be more accurate to say that the way Covid-19 functions in space corresponds to the psychic reality formed by the temporal structure of OCD. This would mean that Covid-19 probably has its own ratholes, which our society—as a hybrid of disciplinary power and collective mental illness—tries to block with the help of protective masks and sanitizers. If recent psychotherapeutic treatment for OCD mainly aims at correcting the symptoms of the disease, the task of Freud's psychoanalysis was to find its cause. Freud's archaeological method is aimed at releasing blocked associations, and this is where rats come to his aid. Freud's rat is a medium, biting through the walls the boy tried to hide his desire behind, breaking through the cordon sanitaire of his misplaced affections. A rathole is a break, a crack in a disciplinary blockade.

Rats mediate between the two machines—the epidemic machine described by Foucault and the mental illness machine described by Freud. Interrupting the state of isolation, they open contact between the world of the healthy and the world of the sick (by spreading the plague, for example) on the one hand, and between the symptom and the cause of neurosis on the other. In a traditional cultural framework, rats are dirty animals that bring disease and death, and their destruction is a necessary

measure of sanitary regulation. This narrative, however, can be interrupted at some point, and holes open through which the viruses of associations spread. This new porousness can create collective bodies of contagion, comingling, sympathy, or solidarity. In the isolation of a collective OCD, our emotions have been disinfected. Looking at rats, we have to mind the infection and keep washing our hands.

X

The author thanks Alexander Pogrebnyak, who brought her attention to the story behind the choice of images for this essay. The rats Werner Herzog filmed in *Nosferatu* were in fact white laboratory rats. Instead of wild and scary, we see them tame and scared, stressed, perplexed.

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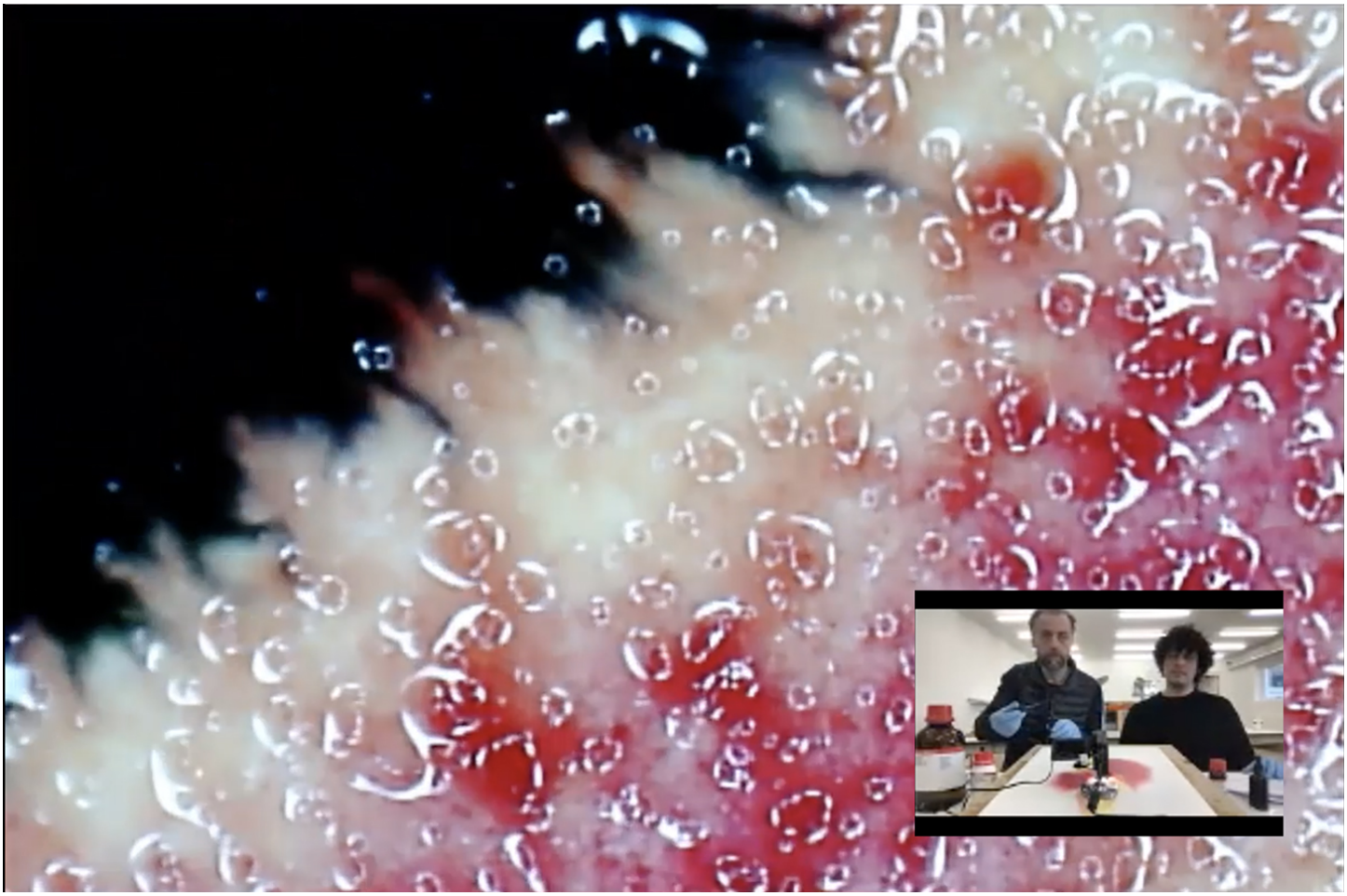
Ivana Bago

The Autoimmune Condition: A Report on History

With the recent discovery of the sheer diversity and the life-sustaining function of organisms like yeast, viruses, and bacteria that populate the human microbiome, medical science has provided potentially new meanings to a long tradition of philosophical critiques of autonomous selfhood and notions such as singular-plural being.[1] Yet ironically its effects are largely felt in the booming lifestyle and self-enhancement markets, where, for instance, the advertising of fermented foods comes with the previously unforeseen promise of health and immunity by way of, not despite, human-bacterial cohabitation. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, has sidelined even such a commodified science of coexistence, reinstating—in the collective imaginary—a militaristic conception of immunity, in which the human appears once again as a closed system, defending against the alien invader.[2] But this singular and collective body hardly faces the virus in a robust state: obesity, chronic diseases, allergies, cancers, and lifelong dependencies on pharmaceuticals mark the growing reserve army of those deemed to be "immunocompromised" and therefore particularly susceptible to the virus.[3]

Among these "underlying conditions" is a series of still mysterious autoimmune diseases, whose very definition challenges the idea of self-contained existence. Encompassing over eighty diverse chronic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, and type-1 diabetes, the term "autoimmune" names an immune system that has gone haywire and turned against its own tissues—misrecognizing the (presumed) self as enemy. Although discovered in the 1950s and taken as an explanation for already existing pathologies, autoimmunity has only recently been more widely acknowledged, and conditions falling under its purview are also on the rise, currently affecting between 5 and 10 percent of the US population, mainly women.[4] Generally characterized by tissue damage and a little-understood rhythm of flares and remissions, autoimmune diseases are predominantly treated by the lifelong administering of immunosuppressant drugs, and their ultimate cause remains a matter of speculation. As Ed Cohen has written, autoimmunity names a "known unknown," which has "resisted every digitized, high-tech, genetically engineered means that has been thrown at it."[5]

Can this autoimmunological riddle be seen not just as a medical, but also a historical condition? One, indeed, whose etiological crisis calls for the very appearance of history as a way out of the epistemological presentism that François Lyotard diagnosed in 1979 as the postmodern condition, characterized by the dissolution of "grand narratives" into competing "language games"?[6] In the set of notes that follow, I will propose that we view the autoimmune condition both as a medical diagnosis and a heuristic, periodizing device, whose etiological impasse encapsulates the symptoms of the planetary crises of today, and at the same time activates a mounting pressure, and desire, to overcome them.



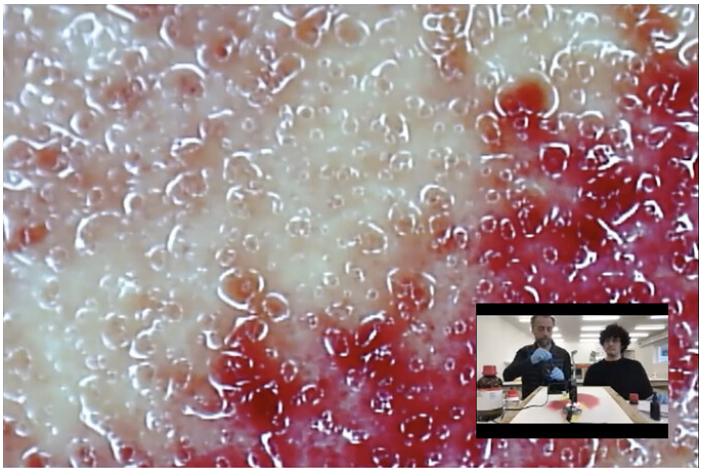
Goldin+Senneby, Star Fish and Citrus Thorn, 2021. Lecture performance. Photo: Index Foundation.

Diagnosis Unthinkable

Although hypotheses about physiological autoreactivity have appeared in medical research records since at least the early twentieth century, the diagnosis of autoimmunity remained unthinkable before the 1950s, when the terms "autoimmune" and "autoimmunity" were first recorded.[7] Until then, there was only immunity, which gained its biological meaning only in the late nineteenth century, by merging the ancient Roman concept of immunity, understood as legal exemption, with the political notion of self-defense that Thomas Hobbes defined during the English Civil War (1642–51) as the first "natural right."[8] Thus defined, biological immunity reinforced the evolving field of bacteriology and its key tenet, germ theory, which associated disease with external microbial agents invading the body and triggering its defensive, immunological response.

To think of *auto* reactivity meant to disrupt this essentialized opposition between self and other, saliently expressed in the turn-of-the-century presumption of *horror autotoxicus*—the idea that while the body technically *could* create autoantibodies and turn against its own tissues, it would necessarily regulate against such blasphemous, "dysteleological" behavior.[9] Germ theory, which ontologized disease by relating each condition to a specific pathogen, itself had displaced the earlier constitutional model, which saw illness as a complex of internal disturbances resulting from the interaction of individual physiology and the environment. In 1911, George Bernard Shaw scoffed at this shift: "We are left in the hands of the generations which, having heard of microbes much as St. Thomas Aquinas heard of angels, suddenly concluded that the whole art of healing could be summed up in the formula: Find the microbe and kill it."[10]

Shaw's demeaning of the positivist authority of microscopic test-tube evidence—whose validity he equates with angelic, metaphysical hearsay—is an unsurprising case of poetic skepticism towards scientific reductionism. However, skepticism of the attack-defense model persevered in the medical community too, as a number of conditions (rheumatoid arthritis, for example), remained without a designated guilty pathogen, and so were left unexplained. Seemingly deviant immune responses, such as allergies and immune system overreactivity, increasingly captured the interest of



Goldin+Senneby, Star Fish and Citrus Thorn, 2021. Lecture performance. Photo: Index Foundation.

researchers across Europe and in the US, whose experiments in the first decades of the twentieth century involved discoveries or hypotheses of autoreactivity. By the 1950s (and many intentionally brain-injured lab monkeys later), a breach of *horror autotoxicus* became an increasingly common explanation for previously inexplicable diseases and various chronic inflammatory conditions. "Once an immunological solecism," write Warwick Anderson and Ian MacKay, in the postwar years "autoimmunity became widely available as a conception of disease causation," marking "a change in contemporary assumptions about the normal human body and its pathologies, as well as a shift in theories of biological individuality and the nature of the self."[11] This change by no means implied a sudden shift: autoimmunity only gradually gained adherents, remaining "a stubbornly marginal, and even farfetched" notion, which is "still emerging" and has only recently "begun to find its voice in public."[12] This prolonged, oppositional emergence, Anderson and MacKay also argue, should ultimately be read as a challenge to the prevailing disease-specific therapeutic approach, and a call for a return to the constitutional, Hippocratic model that saw disease as a *biographical*, idiosyncratic process, which demands a personalized, holistic treatment.[13]

It could be said then that the autoimmune condition presents biomedicine with a set of paradoxes: the autoimmune body self-destructs and disaggregates on the cellular level, yet it makes itself discernible and treatable only as a person, as a whole. The individual tissues scrutinized for evidence of the immune system's self-offensive self-defense force the perversely specialized, modern biomedical apparatus to avert its gaze from its razor-sharp microscopic lens and consider the blurred edges of an ancient, Hippocratic bird's-eye view. Most crucially, the autoimmune subject demands not simply the saving of its bare, physiological life by means of targeted pharmacological intervention but the possibility of endowing this life with text (biography), the chance to reconstruct its story. What is this story?

Beyond the Self-Principle

The immunologically divided body—a self intolerant of itself—can be seen as a kind of physiological analogue to the psychoanalytic split subject, never coinciding with itself, its integrity ever muddled by the dark realm of the unconscious. Just as autoimmunity can only be properly treated "biographically," the psychoanalytic "talking cure" depends on the notion that it is possible to suture the psyche's unsayable wounds and erasures, creating a meaningful narrative of one's self and life, fictionalized and (re)constructed as it may be. The medical discovery of autoimmunity following World War II could also be analogized to Sigmund Freud's post-World War I discovery of the death drive, derived from his observation of psychic phenomena such as the compulsion to repeat an unpleasurable or even traumatic event. Evidence of the ego's seemingly illogical, self-hurtful behavior revealed to Freud the uncharted psychic territory that lay "beyond the pleasure principle," in the same way that the self-destructive autoimmune response revealed a living organism straying beyond the immunological principle of self-defense.[14]

To explain the death drive, Freud acknowledged the limits of his existing psychological model, and turned to microbiology for answers. He proposed, with a great deal of confabulation, that all living cells seek to return to their original, inorganic condition: inanimacy or death, the ultimate neutralization of all incoming stimuli. Although Freud did not speak of immunity, his biology-derived reading of drives as mechanisms shielding the body from excessive excitations structurally mirrors the role of immune defense. The death drive, as manifest in the compulsion to repeat a traumatic event, is an overactive and retroactive dispensation of such a shield, which compensates for the lack of protection at the actual moment of the traumatic "breach of the protective barrier."[15]

Similarly to Freud, in order to explain the body's overactive response to its living cells postwar immunologists had to acknowledge the limits of their biochemical model, and resorted to (re)theorizing the biological self, finding inspiration in cybernetics and philosophy. Unhappy with what he thought were predominantly reductionist, biochemical theories of antibody formation, Australian immunologist Frank Macfarlane Burnet sought a "communications theory of the cell," in line with the writings of Alfred North Whitehead and Norbert Wiener, which included ideas on biological individuality and identity as a pattern-forming process of self-inheritance and self-creation.[16] The key immunological riddle was no longer the issue of defense against specific invaders but the mechanism of recognition and tolerance, the question

of how self and nonself come to be differentiated in the first place.

In a conclusion that implied a negation of ontological selfhood, Burnet proposed the clonal selection theory, which explained that the organism's "immunological pattern," i.e., self-recognition, or self-tolerance, was not hereditary, but formed during embryonic life through the mutation and cloning of lymphocytes with different antigen receptors. Those lymphocytes that have the potential to react to antigens of the body's own tissue are destroyed and not allowed to clone, which explains the eventual development of self-tolerance. Autoimmunity, then, is an aberration of normal immunological function, a proliferation of self-reactive lymphocyte clones, which Burnet likened to a "mutiny in the security forces of a country," a failure of communication and control in the immune system, the normal function of which he also compared to "the control of crime or delinquency or the economics of industrial society."[17]

What is this mutinous army of cellular clones rebelling against? Burnet's model is shaped not only by cybernetics—evident in his binary, one-versus-zero model of self and other—but also by the Cold War imaginary of threats to state boundaries and the normal functioning of the "industrial," that is, capitalist, economy. His idea of self-identity might not be ontological (an organism is not "conceived" as self; it becomes one during embryonic development), but it is teleological. Self-identity is posited as a goal that a healthy immune system—and, by the logic of Burnet's metaphors, a healthy self, healthy state, healthy economy—ultimately needs to achieve. It is no coincidence that autoimmunity is defined as the pathological inability to attain coherent selfhood precisely in the postwar era in the US, when individual freedom became a key ideological weapon in the staged American immunological response to the dreaded threat of communist, collectivist-totalitarian invasion, including a threat to the free-market economy.[18] Translated back into the Cold War imaginary that it came from, the autoimmune "mutiny" implied not simply pathology but also a *resistance* to the idea of individual freedom reduced to self-interest (as defined by capitalism). Burnet's autoimmune "mutiny" may be none other than the threat of communism.

Mostly in conversation with Jacques Derrida's reflections on autoimmunity in his late writings, philosophy and the medical humanities during the last two decades have picked up on this rebellious germ inherent in autoimmunity's breach of the enclosures between selfhood and alterity.[19] Rather than an index of pathology, autoimmunity is analyzed as a concept with critical, and even political, potential, one that can point the way towards a more radical or ecological conception of life, as well as beyond human exceptionalism. Such a view would align with a general contemporary propensity to think politics in terms of vulnerability, and the body as a ground for political subjectivation, the limitations of which Marina Vishmidt identified as grounded in a certain "ahistorical formalism."[20] The perspective on autoimmunity that I wish to explore here also seeks to view it beyond the presentist terms of a generalized logic of identity and alterity based on the scientific discovery (or interpretation) of the "how" of a presumably universal biological condition. It is precisely autoimmunity as an etiological riddle, a "known unknown," which demands that we also see it in terms of the "why"—as a historical condition, both in the sense of its historical emergence as diagnosis, as well as with regard to its growing prevalence as a debilitating, sometimes life-threatening condition whose *case history* is still open.[21]

Etiology of the Present

This search for causes—which is very much ongoing in medical research, with a number of existing hypotheses—involves not only a novel activation of the "biographical," Hippocratic approach, as Anderson and MacKay have argued from the perspective of medical treatment. It also calls for a counter-presentist, historical turn that is able to situate individual stories within their broader material and historical environment. Such a turn is enacted in the artist duo Goldin+Senneby's online lecture-performance *Star Fish and Citrus Thorn*, part of their ongoing project *Crying Pine Tree*, a novel-in-the-making about an autoimmune tree, begun in 2020.[22] In the performance, Goldin+Senneby read two parallel narratives: one about Elie Metchnikoff's 1882 discovery of biological immunity, which happened when he inserted a citrus thorn into the transparent body of a starfish larva and observed its defensive reaction under a microscope. The other narrative is about the persisting effects of this discovery on the body of Jakob Senneby, one member of the artistic duo, who lives with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, an autoimmune condition that damages the body's nerve sheaths. The narratives are accompanied by a live microscopic camera recording of a piece of paper being stained with three different tissue dyes, which, the artists explain, Metchnikoff used to make laboratory specimens "readable" under a microscope.

Goldin's narration of Metchnikoff's observation of the starfish is intertwined with Senneby's memories of his first encounter with an MRI scan, an occasion when his own body was "made readable" to biomedical technology.[23] The myopic, microscopic vision of the camera is juxtaposed with Senneby's narration of the life experiences connected to the onset of his illness, eventually proven by the MRI scan's static image of "spots" on his brain and spinal chord, and presented to him as evidence of his autoimmunity. Senneby disbelieves the diagnosis, claiming it should rather be called "surrealism." Senneby's surrealist disbelief of the biomedical diagnostic apparatus is reenforced by Goldin's parallel deconstruction of it, by means of a story that tells

Goldin+Senneby, Star Fish and Citrus Thorn, 2021. Lecture performance. Photo: Index Foundation.

of biological immunity's historical origins in the late nineteenth century. The starfish larva stabbed by a thorn and placed under a microscope to reveal its defensive response suddenly looks different, and less transparent, once the scientist observing it, Elie Metchnikoff, is presented as a Russian Jew who "had hastily left his home and university position in Odessa earlier that year, following a flare-up of antisemitic pogroms, and was living in exile on Sicily."

Biomedical technology in *Star Fish and Citrus Thorn* can be said to encapsulate Fredric Jameson's idea of the death of historicity in late-capitalist postmodernity, one aspect of which he describes as "the reduction of our temporality to the present of the body."[24] By juxtaposing the atemporal, myopic view of the body in the biomedical laboratory with biographical and historical narratives, Goldin+Senneby create a dialectical image that at once identifies this presentist, corporeal reductionism and activates the desire to overcome it, by providing the affected body—which is conceived as both individual and collective, as both "starfish larva" and "Jakob Senneby"—with the outlines of its history. In a twist resembling what Laurent Fournier calls an emergent "authotheoretical turn,"[25] here the *auto* or self is both the central object of investigation and a mere point of departure. No longer simply biographical, the *autohistorical* self is a case history of a generalized, autoimmune condition.

The outlines of such a historically conceived autoimmune condition can be read through different hypotheses as to its etiology. Research into the connection between autoimmunity and hormone production stems from the statistic that over 70 percent of autoimmune patients are women. This fact enables another link to psychoanalysis, via Freud's research on hysteria, which also posed itself as a problem of etiology. Initially, Freud suggested that hysteria arose as a result of sexual abuse in early childhood—which he euphemistically called "seduction"—but he later retreated and suggested that abuse might not be a product of his patient's experiences but of their imaginations, even wishful thinking, accounted for by his new theory of the Oedipal structure.[26] The possible social, materialist explanation was thus supplanted by a psychological, structural one, whose elements were drawn from the repertoire of myth and literature. Surely, Freud's suggestion of sexual abuse as causative of psychological disorder must have provoked for his male colleagues a scandal similar to the "dysteleological" breach of *horror autotoxicus*, only here in a reversed logic that suggested that the hysteric condition is not self-induced, but the result of external, oppressive circumstance. Similarly, the prolonged resistance of the larger scientific and medical community to theories and experimental evidence on autoimmunity may have stemmed from the gradual rhythm of paradigm shifts in science, as well as the internalized Christian dogma of bodily integrity, and the taboo of suicide. But it was also surely related to the gendered nature of the diagnosis, and the repeated experience by patients of the dismissal of their symptoms as "merely psychological," or even "hysterical," which results in years, sometimes decades of living with aggravating symptoms, and without diagnosis, and thus also without treatment.[27] It's all in your head!

Various hypotheses to describe autoimmunity's rise have emerged. The infection hypothesis presumes that autoimmune disorders, although presenting as autoreactivity, are ultimately caused by an earlier germ invasion, which went undetected.[28] If true, this would mean that nothing has really changed since classical immunology. The genetic hypothesis sees autoimmunity as an inherited condition, but this view is complicated by the new science of epigenetics, which shows that biology is not destiny, and genetic makeup is not simply given, but is highly dependent on environmental factors.[29] In fact, most explanations of the etiology of autoimmune diseases do consider environmental factors and are generally grounded in the idea of autoimmunity as a "Western" condition, with higher prevalence in industrialized nations. The pregnancy-compensation hypothesis is a recent one, based on the gendered prevalence of disease in industrialized nations and the fact that women no longer have as many children as they did in the past. The idea is that women's immune systems, normally elevated during pregnancy, are no longer working as they might have in preindustrialized eras.[30] The hygiene hypothesis—which does not sit well with the current pandemic—proposes that members of hyper-sterilized, fully vaccinated, affluent societies have no bugs left to fight, so their immune systems have weakened and turned against themselves.[31] According to this logic, an excess of immunity causes autoimmunity. This idea is perhaps more frightening when applied to the real threat of so-called superbugs, which have developed antibiotic resistance, and which are thus a prime example of the immunological turning autoimmunological.[32]

Unlike classical epidemiological nemeses in the form of plagues, which have haunted the world for centuries, and which are exacerbated by poverty and poor hygienic conditions, autoimmunity has been classified among the so-called "diseases of affluence," as opposed to diseases of poverty. Such a view is complicated by a demonstrated link between traumatic experience and autoimmunity, which would help explain the high prevalence of autoimmunity in both industrialized nations and underprivileged social groups, such as women and ethnic minorities.[33] This simultaneity of affluence and scarcity, the slippage of one into the other, is the most symptomatic point of the etiological inquiry into autoimmunity, and is most evident in the prominent place accorded to "Western" lifestyle and diet as contributing factors of autoimmune disease, including "high-fat and cholesterol, high-protein, high-sugar, and excess salt intake, as well as frequent consumption of processed and 'fast foods.'"[34] Such a diagnosis of "excess" yet

nutritionally deficient "intake" points to exactly the kind of fake, excess abundance of capitalist consumerism that consolidated under the restructured, US-dominated feeding of consumer-capitalist desires in the aftermath of World War II, right at the time when autoimmunity was proposed as a theory of sovereign selfhood gone wrong.

Under the hegemonic imperative to pursue happiness by way of the "excess intake" of endless consumption, the sovereign, immune, "Western" self becomes autoimmune and dissolves in the very enjoyment of its "pursuit of happiness," which, as Antonia Majaca writes, is nothing but a US liberal, Jeffersonian nickname for the Lockean "pursuit of property."[35] The self-destruction evidenced by such self-interested pursuit reveals autoimmunity as the very "illogical logic" of immunity, as Derrida suggested.[36] But the slippage of immunity into autoimmunity can also be seen as a historical succession. If immunity is understood as the social and political logic of sovereignty grounded in the nineteenth-century redefinition of healing as war by other means (the Hobbseian natural right to self-defense), then both the Freudian death drive and autoimmunity suggested the dark side of immunity at two historical moments starkly marked by death and catastrophe. The Freudian death drive signaled the final blow to the aggressive libido of the modern, bourgeois, rationalist cogito of European capitalist coloniality following World War I and the end of the "age of empire."[37] Following World War II, and the devastating seek-and-destroy immunitarian logic of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the discovery of autoimmunity extended this beyond-pleasurable hit to this cogito's surviving body, which then dissolved in the "excess intake" of "pleasure" over the course of the global capitalist expansion. In contrast to this suicidal, (auto)immunitarian logic, international socialist and decolonial movements, as twentieth-century alternatives to global capitalism, have proposed and practiced more constructive ways for the dissolution of the prison of the liberal-capitalist self and its key tenet, private property. But by 1989, "Western affluence," meaning capitalist scarcity disguised as abundance, was everywhere, and the riddle of the autoimmune condition now a global problem.

The autoimmune condition presents a set of diverse, chronic symptoms that are not immediately deadly, but rather come and go, numb and debilitate the limbs, cloud the brain, leave a body without energy to perform even the most ordinary tasks, acutely inflame the tissues, and gradually eat at the organs. This accumulation of symptoms on the individual level echoes the current moment of prolonged planetary crisis, a sort of slow apocalypse in which "immunological" defense—in the form of protecting individual freedoms and private property, policing national and racial borders, extracting labor and resources and exterminating competition while maximizing production and consumption—has turned, or rather revealed itself to be, suicidal. This slippage of immunity into autoimmunity is more immediately obvious in concrete examples that mark contemporary reality in the social and geopolitical peripheries of global capital. The devastating story that Sharmila Rudrappa tells of southern Indian farmers who committed suicide by poisoning themselves with the same pesticide used to protect their sugarcane crops speaks to the autoimmune logic of capital, which forced farmers to kill themselves so as not to suffer the even worse consequences of not being able to pay off their high-interest loans once their crops remained unpaid-for or unsold.[38]

Still, in the mirror of autoimmunity seen as a condition of "Western affluence," global capitalist coloniality appears as a death by a thousand cuts. There are periods of *remission,* when it all seems better, or even when it seems like nothing at all; when one doubts the diagnosis, attributing the symptoms to a number of other potential causes. But the onset of a *flare*, a sudden, dramatic reappearance or worsening of the symptoms, incites yet another search for *the absent cause*, an image that would somehow make evident the exact structure and genealogy of suffering. However, this image never simply solidifies into a resolute causative agent, but pixelates in the never-fully-collectable sum of its effects, just like in Louis Althusser's notion of "the last instance," with which he redefined the classical Marxist understanding of the superstructure's dependence on the (economic) base.[39]

Etiological Grand Narratives and our Daily Bread

The current moment seems to be a time when the conspicuousness of the crisis—the exacerbation of "symptoms"—is triggering a feverish quest for a cause, for an image of the present's etiology. Theoretical and academic concepts such as the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, ancestrality, coloniality, cosmism, and big history are all marked by procedures of historicization that attempt to name an ultimate cause, or origin, of the catastrophe of the present, whether they find the "culprit" to be the human, capital, the colonial matrix of power, (post-)Kantian correlationism, death, or even the Big Bang. Evident also in more "profane" realms—such as nutrition, where "paleo" diets have become prominent (as a way of overcoming the Neolithic shift to a sedentary life and nutrition based on grains), popular histories of *Homo sapiens* and its historical duel with other human species, all the way to fringe or conspiracy theories on the activity of ancient alien civilizations on earth—this resurgence of interest in the *longue durée* and deep history in the last decade indicates a negation of postmodernity's presumably lethal duel with history and its grand narratives.[40] If the postmodern condition was characterized by a spatialization of time and a dissolution of historicity into a set of fragmented and dispersed narratives and "language games," now grand narratives are called back onto the stage, if only in the form of etiological reconstruction, invoked as a kind of deux ex machina, to salvage the unsalvageable.

As has been shown, the autoimmune condition can be seen to encapsulate this shift, from a spatialized present reduced to a diagnosed body, to the etiological search for the biographical and historical causes of diagnosis. But the presentist ideology of evidence-based science, grounded in anonymous peer reviews and double-blind studies—despite the acknowledged "reproducibility crisis"[41]—is ill-suited for proving hypotheses which depend on so many "environmental" factors, and whose causation becomes evident only in the Althusserian last instance. The (auto)biographical or the testimonial can only partly help, since as a matter of principle they must be relegated to merely "anecdotal" evidence. Such an impasse, of which the problem of diagnosing autoimmunity is but one example, has engendered another contemporary symptom: a growing distrust in science and the scientific method, and a recourse to a host of alternative modes of treatment, from the new fields of integrative and "functional" medicine, to non-Western and vernacular medicine, shamanism, various new-age practices, special diets and fasting methods, Instagram guru-doctors (with their supplement lines), Google diagnostics, Facebook groups dedicated to specific diagnoses, and a meeting of all the above in a whole new conceptual territory called "conspirituality."[42]

One of the most frequently discussed remedies across these diverse "alternative" realms is changing one's diet—again reflecting the prominent place of "excess intake" in societies of "Western affluence," but also a sort of autonomization of food in Western societies, where it appears less as nourishment and more as an opportunity for individual (culinary) creativity, with restaurants turning into new museums mapped and reviewed as tourist attractions, with food blogs, food photography, cooking shows, celebrity chefs, and Michelin stars escalating in proportion to the lack of time, energy, and resources that the late-capitalist subject has to actually buy, grow, and prepare nourishing food for themselves and their loved ones. In this deprivation that hides behind overabundance, various "autoimmune protocols" suggest that autoimmunity may be remedied by "elimination diets," or methods of fasting based on the Nobel-awarded discovery of autophagy (a kind of positive analogue to autoimmunity, in which cells regenerate by "eating themselves").[43]

Interestingly, within this repertoire of triggering foods, one again finds items that lead beyond the physiological implications of their consumption, and into history. One of the most frequently suspected culprits of autoimmune reactions, gluten, could be seen in light of the biochemical theories of protein molecules causing inflammation. But it also appears as the key antihero of recent histories that are, quite literally, "against the grain," in proposing the cultivation of wheat as a key factor that helped give birth to the now hegemonic form of governance, the state—which, it could be added, is a paradigmatic case of immunological enclosure, with its territorial and national borders protecting against "invading" migrant others.[44] The already mentioned "paleo" diets remove all grains, based on archeological findings of the surprisingly good health of our paleolithic forefathers, and the very late—from the perspective of deep history—introduction of grains in the Neolithic era, to which human bodies have still not adapted. In the paleo dietary solution, then, autoimmunity is cured by means of a historical regression beyond the immunitarian, or the sedentary, land-grabbing, and domesticating mode of life and production associated with the Paleolithic's antipode, the Neolithic era. Another suspected food, dairy, is an example of a food adopted by many non-Western nations as a symbol of civilization and affluence, at great environmental cost.[45] Sugar, of course, is most intimately linked with the history of colonialism and its drawing and policing of the boundary between savagery and refinement.[46]

Waking Up From the End of History

Even if all these ventures from the present-in-crisis into deep history are, as I suggested, primarily etiological quests, which do not necessarily translate into social and political action to remedy the consequences of the individual and collective crisis, taken together, they still enact an ever-stronger desire for such remedy. Waking up from the dream of the end of history has renewed the energy to reconstruct alternative, previously suppressed visions of both the history and the future, and it has also fueled new struggles. Anti-racist and indigenous movements, for example, are not grounded simply in the voicing of immediate concerns, but in an articulation of these concerns as histories of the present. For the Black Lives Matter movement, racially motivated police violence cannot be disentangled from the US streets marked by historical monuments coextensive with the history of slavery, racism, and colonialism. Even if the activation of such counter-histories includes multiple and diverse individual and collective experiences, they are no longer the disconnected "narratives," let alone "language games," of postmodernity, whose effect is exhausted in their very multiplicity. Instead, they are instances of "storytelling for earthly survival,"[47] specific histories that gesture toward universality, and that meet in the common point of pushing against the enclosures of the unsupportable, unlivable present.

Such emancipatory historicity, which arises in the midst of acute crisis, is not without precedent, and it is no wonder that today Walter Benjamin's "theses on history," written during World War II, hold such theoretical and poetic appeal.[48] Much less cited is *The Crisis of European Sciences,* the text of another German Jewish philosopher, Edmund Husserl, written in the 1930s, in the midst of the Nazi takeover.[49] In this text, Husserl acknowledged the limits of his own earlier "phenomenological reduction" method, defined as a scientific-philosophical investigation of the relation between an intentional consciousness and its intended object, and proposed what he called

"historical reduction," based on the discovery that no object nor consciousness exists simply here and now, without history. Beneath "layers" of what he called "the crisis of European sciences," instantiated by a mathematized science and philosophy that emerged following Galileo, lay a "lifeworld," whose "sediments" and "horizons" needed to be unearthed if humanity is to overcome the condition of living in an unlivable world.[50]

Finally, let us not forget also the patient's protest—epitomized by Goldin+Senneby's performative conflating of autoimmunity with surrealism—against the very terms of diagnosis and its suggested treatments. Who knows, maybe autoimmunity will turn out to be surrealist after all. Collected as individual pixels that merge into an image, no matter how blurry, both the "evidence-based" and "anecdotal" instances of storytelling that tackle the known unknown of the autoimmune condition coalesce into a *whole story*, the telling of which may point to a way out of planetary (auto)destruction. At their center is the autoimmune body, which has responded to social autonomization and isolation by multiplying within itself, in a desperate attempt to compensate for the loss of both politics and sociality, in a gesture of weak heroism, pledging its "consent not to be a single being"[51] —pledging also, as this story has hoped to tell, to be a not-single being with history.

X

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1
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

2
For the historical appearance of this concept of biological immunity in the nineteenth century, and in connection to responses to the cholera pandemic in Europe, see Ed Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body* (Duke University Press, 2009).

3
With the word "army" I am referencing a Darwinian discourse that pits the immunocompromised against the group that presumably can fight. My usage is also reminiscent of the term "loser militia" that artist Jesse Darling uses in her work *Neoliberal Agitprop Poster* (2013). See the discussion of this and other works by Darling in Giulia Smith, "Chronic Illness as Critique: Crip Aesthetics Across the Atlantic." *Art History* 44, no. 2 (2021): 286–310.

4
See https://factor.niehs.nih.gov/2018/4/science-highlights/autoimmunity/index.htm .

5
Ed Cohen, "Self, Not-Self, Not Not-Self but Not Self, or the Knotty Paradoxes of 'Autoimmunity': A Genealogical Rumination," in *Autoimmunities*, ed. by Stefan Herbrechter (Routledge, 2018), 29.

6
Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester University Press, 1984).

7
"We want to see how autoimmunity became thinkable," write Warwick Anderson and Ian R. MacKay in their conceptual history of autoimmunity: *Intolerant Bodies: A Short History of Autoimmune Disease* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 4. The adjective "autoimmune" was first used in 1951, and the noun "autoimmunity" coined in 1957. The brief overview of the history of autoimmunity in this paragraph and the next is based on Anderson and MacKay's account.

8
Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending*, 3. Cohen's book provides a masterful analysis of this merger's (bio)political, economic, and medical implications.

9
This prohibition against self-harm was proposed by the immunologist Paul Ehrlich (1854–1915), who called the idea of "autotoxins" "dysteleological in the highest degree." Cited in Arthur M. Silverstein, "Autoimmunity: A History of the Early Struggle for Recognition," in *The Autoimmune Diseases, 6th Edition* , ed. Noel R. Rose and Ian R. MacKay (Academic Press), 10.

10
Cited in Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies* , 34.

11
Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies* , 48–49.

12
Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies* , 2–3.

13
Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies* , 3–4.

14
Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings* (Penguin Classics, 2003).

15
Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," n.p.

16
Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies* , 74–76. This theory, which earned Burnet a Nobel Prize in 1960, is still accepted today as the mechanism of the immune response.

17
Burnet, cited in Anderson and MacKay, *Intolerant Bodies*, 89.

18
Anderson and MacKay situate the discovery of autoimmunity within the Cold War context of "cybernetics, and theories of command and control" (143) as well as "significant postwar investments in clinical research" (49), which Burnet and his colleagues benefited from, especially in the US. For an insightful analysis of the Cold War mobilization of the "post-ideological ideology" of individual freedom, see Antonia Majaca, "Odysseus of the Nimble Wits: The Spirits of Totalitarianism and the Cultural Cold War's Entscheidungsproblem," in *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War* , ed. Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara, and Antonia Majaca (Sternberg Press, 2021), 123–49.

19
Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (Routledge, 2002), and *Rogues* (Stanford University Press, 2003).

20
Marina Vishmidt, "Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability," *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 8 (2020): 35. For a perspective that focuses more specifically on contemporary art, see Smith, "Chronic Illness as Critique."

21
In fact, Cohen's "known unknown" refers not just to the unknown etiology, since even on the level of the accepted description of (auto)immune response, grounded in Burnet's account of differentiation between self and other, it is still unclear why the body would not launch a lymphocyte response to "friendly" bacteria in the gut microbiome, or a fetus in pregnancy—all questions that some immunologists have posed to challenge the classical model. Cohen thus wonders whether "immunology's unquestioned appropriation of a *logical* opposition—derived from and embedded in Western thought's governing epistemo-political ontology—as a *bio*-logical axiom unnecessarily limits our capacity to grasp our own complicated nature as living beings." Cohen, "Self, Not-Self, Not Not-Self but Not Self," 30.

22
The video recording of the lecture-performance, which took place at Indeks, Stockholm, is here: https://vimeo.com/539030362 . See also the essays by Maria Lind and Brian Kuan Wood written in conjunction with Goldin+Senneby's exhibition "Insurgency of Life" at e-flux in New York, 2020: Maria Lind, "What Is Wrong with My Nose: From Gogol and Freud to Goldin+Senneby (via Haraway)," *e-flux journal* 108 (April 2020) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/108/325823/what-is-wrong-with-my-nose-from-gogol-and-freud-to-goldin-senneby-via-haraway/ ; Brian Kuan Wood, "Insurgency of Life," *e-flux journal* 109 (May 2020) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/109/331477/insurgency-of-life/ .

23
Goldin+Senneby, *Star Fish and Citrus Thorn* , lecture-performance script shared with the author by email. All ensuing quotes from the discussion of the performance are from this script.

24
Fredric Jameson, "The Aesthetics of Singularity," *New Left Review*, no. 92 (2015): 128.

25
"Extra-institutional and, perhaps, extradiscursive, authotheory has the potential to become 'the next big turn' in visual culture and literary studies." Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (MIT Press, 2021), 2.

26
The argument proposing that Freud's retreat on his "seduction theory" was not performed in good faith has been controversially made by Jeffrey Moussaieff, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (Penguin Press, 1985).

27
This is the experience recounted by Carolyn Lazard in their text "How to be a Person in the Age of Autoimmunity," *The Cluster Mag*, January 2013. Lazard identifies as nonbinary; the dismissal of their complaints as "hysterical" nonetheless illustrates the gendered response of the medical professionals who treated Lazard. For more on Lazard's own artistic work on autoimmunity, see Smith, "Chronic Illness as Critique."

28
Yehuda Shoenfeld, *Infection and Autoimmunity* (Academic Press, 2015).

29
On the philosophical implications of epigenesis, see Catharine Malabou, *Before Tomorrow: Epigenesis and Rationality* (Polity, 2016).

30
Olga Khazan, "A Breakthrough in the Mystery of Why Women Get So Many Autoimmune Diseases," *The Atlantic* , June 18, 2019.

31
H. Okada et al., "The 'Hygiene Hypothesis' for Autoimmune and Allergic Diseases: An Update,"

Clinical and Experimental Immunology 160, no. 1 (2010): 1–9.

32
The WHO cites antibiotic resistance as "one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and development today" https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antibiotic-resistance .

33
Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (Penguin Books, 2015).

34
Arndt Manzel et al. "Role of 'Western Diet' in Inflammatory Autoimmune Diseases," *Current Allergy and Asthma Reports* 14, no.1 (2014): 1.

35
Majaca, "Odysseus of the Nimble Wits," 140.

36
Derrida, *Rogues*, 123.

37
Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (Abacus, 2014).

38
Sharmila Rudrappa, "Famines, Fertility Interventions, and Death: Modernization Projects in Southern India," e- *flux architecture* , April 2021 https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/exhausted/388538/famines-fertility-interventions-and-death-modernization-projects-in-southern-india/ .

39
See the discussion of Louis Althusser's "absent cause" in Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics* (Duke University Press, 2011), 55–59, or, via Jacques Rancière's reading, in Jaleh Mansoor, "Militant Landscape: Notes on Counter-Figuration From Early Modern Genre Formation to Contemporary Practices, or, Landscape After the Failure of Representation." *ARTmargins* 10, no. 1 (2021): 20–38.

40
Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* .

41
Fiona Filder and John Wilcox, "Reproducibility of Scientific Results," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2018 Edition) https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-reproducibility/ .

42
Ironically, one of the major points of contention that has drawn a boundary between the supposedly oppositional realms of science and anti-science—namely, vaccination—was the invention of a nineteenth-century scientist who took a cue from vernacular knowledge, borrowing the anecdotal evidence of a farmer who successfully inoculated himself and his family against cowpox. Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity From Antiquity to the Present* (Fontana Press, 1999).

43
See https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2016/press-release/ .

44
James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (Yale University Press, 2017). Scott borrowed his title from an earlier investigation along the same lines: Richard Manning, *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization* (Paw Prints, 2008).

45
Felicity Lawrence, "Can the World Quench China's Bottomless Thirst for Milk?" *The Guardian*, March 29, 2019 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/29/can-the-world-quench-chinas-bottomless-thirst-for-milk .

46
Diane Kriz Kay, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement Picturing the British West Indies, 1700–1840* (Yale University Press, 2008). It is of course precisely refined sugar, as well as refined wheat, that is thought to be the most detrimental to health.

47
Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016).

48
For one of the most theoretically rigorous and illuminating readings, see Sami Khatib, "Where the Past Was, There History Shall Be," in "Discontinuous Infinities: Walter Benjamin and Philosophy," ed. Jan Sieber and Sebastian Truskolaski, special issue, *Anthropology & Materialism* (2017) http://am.revues.org/789 .

49
Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* , trans. David Carr (Northwestern University Press, 1970).

50
Although Husserl speaks of "the crisis of the European sciences" as inherent to the "internal" historicity of science and philosophy, his account must also be seen against the background of his own experience as a philosopher of Jewish origins who, with the rise of the Nazis, suddenly lost his identity as a German and European intellectual, together with his right to partake in intellectual life. See Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928–1938* (Yale University Press, 2004).

51
Consent Not to Be a Single Being names a trilogy of Fred Moten books published by Duke University Press: *Black and Blur* (2017), *Stolen Life* (2018), and *The Universal Machine* (2018).

Agata Adamiecka-Sitek

Polish Autumn: Body Politics and a New Subject

Bodies Defiled, Bodies Allied

I really want to believe that the year 2020 was a turning point in Poland's thirty years of constitutional democracy. Even though coronavirus transmissions and deaths skyrocketed during fall 2020, the streets of Polish towns and cities were filled with hundreds of thousands of protesters. The fear of contracting the virus and the palpable presence of death did not stop the collective rage, which erupted after the November 22 decision by the Constitutional Tribunal to no longer permit abortion in one of the three circumstances under which it was permissible in Poland—making the procedure almost entirely unavailable to Polish women.

At their peak, the demonstrations swept through over six hundred towns. They were the largest in post-1989 Polish history. However, their significance goes beyond mere numbers. The demonstrations also constituted a radical performative act that questioned the very legitimacy of the present social contract in Poland. In the fall, we participated in a violent break with the theater of legitimacy that had repeatedly played out in the country. In the streets and squares, a new collective political subject appeared and demanded to be recognized.

This subject consisted of bodies whose presence in the public sphere had never enjoyed full legitimacy in Poland: the bodies of women, the bodies of young people (who participated in great numbers), non-heteronormative bodies that are openly persecuted by the government. They revealed their fragility and vulnerability as their basic political condition. Their public, political act was what Judith Butler calls "an appearance."[1] It laid bare and questioned the prevailing distribution of the privilege of physical, economic, and social safety. These bodies formed an alliance built as much on mutual care as unbridled fury. For the first time in the history of democracy in Poland, a new, allied, heterogeneous subject dared to rupture the conservative-liberal consensus, which until that point had marked the horizon of political possibilities in Poland.

At the center of the new social contract, there is the body: vulnerable, recognizing its interdependence with bodies like it, celebrating its sexuality, and demanding a fundamental right to equality for all bodies. The protests' main slogan, "GET THE FUCK OUT," emblazoned on posters and chanted for weeks, was not only addressed to the right-wing government. It was also a forceful command aimed at oppressive systems, demanding that they step back from bodies that are subjected to physical and symbolic violence. It was a performative act that revealed the contingent nature of the biopower that has always presented itself as an unquestionable social order. It was a radical refusal to obey.

The widespread uprising was commensurate with the

Protesters in Warsaw march against Poland's breach of EU obligations over LGBT and women's rights, 2021. Photo: author.

scale of the violence that the government has inflicted. The puppet Constitutional Tribunal—politicized by the right-wing government, in violation of checks and balances—handed down a decision that forces Polish women to carry their fetus to term even if it is incapable of living outside the womb or will face profound disability after birth. Condemning women to this experience is torture. The decision therefore violates the basic constitutional rights of female Polish citizens, not to mention their inalienable human rights.

Although the tribunal's decision undermines Poland's cultural ties to liberal democracies, it is by no means surprising when we consider that democracy in Poland was founded on an unwritten compromise between public officials and the Catholic Church. Even before this arrangement began after 1989, the Church had enjoyed a hegemonic position in Polish culture for centuries. As the feminist cultural critic Agnieszka Graff meticulously demonstrates, this foundational compromise centered on a specific exchange: the Church was given total control over the moral sphere in return for supporting Poland's effort to join the European Union and transform its economy in a neoliberal direction.[2]

For the Polish Catholic Church, morality is inextricably tied to the strict regulation of sexuality, which takes the form of patriarchal control over the female body, stringent rules around procreation, and the oppression of nonnormative gender and sex. The alliance between the throne and the altar was established first and foremost at the expense of women and their reproductive rights. In 1993, authorities introduced a strict law against abortion that allowed just three exemptions: when the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest, when it would threaten the mother's life or health, or when the baby would be born with profound and irreversible birth defects. At the time, Parliament disregarded a petition with 1.7 million signatures demanding a referendum on the matter. This was the truly foundational act of Polish "democracy."

Women paid first. But the aggressive colonization of sexuality soon encompassed the entirety of Polish society. The Polish Catholic Church has sought to replace sex education with "teaching purity," prohibit contraception, scare children with "the mortal sin of masturbation," and promote conversion therapies to "cure homosexuality." Because of the Church's aggressive presence in the Polish public sphere, sexuality has became a snare that it uses to trap not just its followers, but all of society.

Even in their childhood, Poles are violently *interpellated* (to use Althusser's term) by the Church as "defiled bodies." In an Althusserian sense, the experience of symbolic sexual trauma is almost universal in Poland, due to the Church's universal colonization of sexuality and its hegemonic position in wider Polish society. In addition to its harmful control over public life, the Church has also consistently acted to protect perpetrators of sexual violence. This is why the new social contract enacted by the collective body of protestors in the streets last year began with a new politics of the body—an alliance for the freedom, safety, and equality of our bodies.

Both conservative and liberal politicians in Poland calculated that the Church could be used to build democracy (never mind that women and minorities were sacrificed in the bargain), but this has proved to be shortsighted. In the early 2010s, the Polish Catholic Church took a fundamentalist turn. While the Church was still perceived internationally as an ally of EU integration and a silent supporter of the neoliberal agenda, it now embarked on a crusade against "gender ideology and LGBT ideology," and accused the EU of being "the civilization of death." Its clergy have called sexual minorities "the rainbow plague," and it has become a key partner of other rising international fundamentalist organizations.

Due to the Church's open collaboration with the Polish ruling right, it has become clear that the failure of either partner will bring down the other. In recent years Polish society has learned of the monstrous scale of sexual violence that the clergy has inflicted on Polish children; this violence is systemic in character, with perpetrators enjoying institutional protection. At the same time, it has become clear that John Paul II, the Polish Pope, participated in the cover-up of sexual abuse by clergy members, as revealed by the 2020 McCarrick Report, which focused on the sexual violence perpetrated by a former cardinal in Washington, DC.[3] These revelations have rocked the Polish Catholic Church to its foundations.

A Hanged Statue and a Felled Cross

We can appreciate the depth of the Church's symbolic power if we notice how rarely contemporary art has publicly critiqued the institution's violence. Despite the visibility of this violence, the Church has been virtually ignored by contemporary critical art, at least since 1989. Although art has criticized other forms of systemic oppression—capitalism, gender and class inequality, nationalism—the Church has been let of the hook. This is perhaps the clearest proof of the structural censorship the Church exercises over the Polish public sphere.[4]

While isolated controversial artworks have appeared, sometimes accompanied by scandals, their energy has been promptly appropriated by the dominant regimes of visibility. This mechanism of censorship is illustrated by the case of Dorota Nieznalska's art installation *The Passion* (2001), which gave rise to the first notable post-1989 art scandal. The work addressed oppressive models of masculinity and the suffering they cause. One part of the installation featured a photograph of male genitalia cut into the shape of a Greek cross. As a result, the artist was tried in court for "offending religious sensibilities," a serious crime under the Polish penal code. Nieznalska was eventually acquitted after eight years of hearings and appeals. But convicting Nieznalska was less important than simply charging her. The years-long court proceedings fueled the self-censorship of other artists and curators, not to mention the economic censorship of art, which is almost exclusively publicly funded in Poland and thus depends on the favor of politicians and government officials.

For years, nothing disturbed the homeostatic arrangement among political, religious, and economic powers. It was an incredibly efficient system of rationing the visible. Then in 2017, Poland was again shaken by a controversial work of art: director Oliver Frljić's *The Curse*, based on a play written in 1899 by Stanisław Wyspiański. Frljić resolved to launch an attack against the violent consensus regulating the public sphere in Poland. His goal was to lay bare the mechanisms of structural censorship and spark a real social conflict: to open an "agonistic" public space, as Chantal Mouffe has termed it. Rather than start a rational debate between the antagonistic parties—which is impossible in Poland—Frljić wanted to show that Polish society is locked in a "clash of communities."

Frljić divided the audience in two. One half was shown the strongest of stimuli—representations that provoked "iconoclastic jouissance,"[5] or sudden explosions of bliss at the sight of the desecration of the Other's idols. The other half was shown images of the utmost horror and disgust, while also being aware of the bliss experienced by the "Others" at the sight of extreme cultural transgression. In doing this, Frljić made the divisions in Polish society visible. The affective exchange in the audience, and later also in front of the theater during weeks-long pickets organized by both supporters and opponents of the performance, showed how strongly we as a society are bound by mutual disgust and rage. "Bodies that are disgusted are also bodies that feel a certain rage, a rage that the object has got close enough to sicken, and to be

Oliver Frljić, The Curse (Klątwa), 2017. Theater performance view, Powszechny Theater, Warsaw. Photo: Magda Hueckel.

taken over or taken in," writes Sarah Ahmed. "To be disgusted is after all *to be affected by what one has rejected.*"[6]

One icon shown during Frljić's performance was a plaster statue of John Paul II, resembling the thousands of monuments that fill the Polish public space, but with an erect penis attached. Two acts were performed on the statue. First, an actress put a condom on its penis and then passionately fellated the statue. Next, the entire ensemble cast—playing a rural community in Poland—hung a sign on the statue that read "PEDOPHILE PROTECTOR" and tied a noose around its neck, as if preparing to execute it. While these actions have an intense affective charge, their meaning is ambiguous. The statue's erect penis may represent the Catholic Church's gendered power structure. It could be the literal visualization of the obvious fact that only if you have a penis can you wield Church power. The fellating of the statue could be interpreted to represent the physical and symbolic violence inflicted on Polish women by the Church and its clergy. It could refer to the boundless adoration and love that many Polish women, whose sexuality has been colonized by the Church, compensatorily direct at the figure of the Polish Pope. From a feminist psychoanalytical perspective, it could portray the daughter's relationship with her symbolic father, whom she desires to seduce in order to prove her full value as a woman.[7] As for the sign and the noose, which in Poland evoke executions carried out in World War II death camps: these gesture towards the rage felt by those who are oppressed by the Catholic Church and deemed to be "the despicable Other." With his staging, Frljić enacted the "revenge of the weak" against the Church—a Nietzschean "slave revolt" by those who are denied real power.[8]

Similar dynamics play out in the final scene of the performance. After saying she has had an abortion, a woman wields a chainsaw and cuts down a giant cross that has loomed over the stage since the beginning of the performance. This image of the cross being cut down so radically violated accepted standards of public visibility that it constituted "a critical exception" in Polish symbolic space at the time. It stirred feelings of horror, but also euphoria in those who had been affected by the Church's violence. It was "a surrogate act" that stood in for the impossible act of removing crosses from public spaces, which is prohibited in Poland. Crosses can be found in public-school classrooms, government offices, local

councils, pharmacies, hospitals, and notably, the main chamber of the Polish parliament, where a member of a conservative Christian party secretly hung a cross in 1997—which no member of parliament has dared take down since. These crosses are still up, but the public sphere has undergone a revolutionary transformation.

Performing Monuments

As its creators intended, *The Curse* provoked a social performance that lasted for months, even years, testing the limits of freedom of speech and artistic expression in Poland. All of the main forces of the state were involved: the police, the justice system (an investigation into whether *The Curse* offended "religious sensibilities" is still ongoing, and amounts to harassment of artists and institutions), local and national politicians, as well as the media and all sides of the Polish culture war.

Thinking about *The Curse* in light the 2020 protests, we might be tempted to say that Frljić's play was prophetic. It would be more accurate to say that Frljić correctly read an ongoing social process. The performance foreshadowed a revolution—and unfortunately also an impasse in the continuing cultural war.

During the protests, the structural censorship enforced by the Church was transcended. Numerous street performances involved monuments, which became the centerpiece of interventions into public spaces all over Poland.

A particularly impassioned battle of symbols was waged over a statue of John Paul II that was erected in front of the National Museum in Warsaw in the fall of 2020. The museum itself had already been a site of ideological struggle when the new director, appointed by the right-wing minister of culture, began a dramatic process of "nationalizing" the flagship art institution. Among other moves, he closed down the contemporary art gallery as "unnecessary" to a national museum. Even before the closure, works by feminist artists were removed from the gallery for being "demoralizing to the youth." These works included Natalia LL's *Sztuka konsumpcyjna* (Consumer Art, 1972) and Katarzyna Kozyra's *Pojawienie się Lou Salome*.[9] In response, the activist art collective Czarne Szmaty organized a large public happening where participants ate bananas, alluding to Natalia LL's censored work—a public celebration of sexual freedom.

In what was possibly a reaction to the protesters occupying the museum's courtyard, the John Paul II statue was erected there several months later, in a decorative pool. Titled *Zatrute źródło* (The Poisoned Spring) and created by Jerzy Kalina, the former pope is portrayed raising a massive rock over his head, as if preparing to smite a hidden danger lurking within the blood-red water, colored by crimson fabric at the bottom of the pool. The sculpture was also an artistic response to another work: Maurizio Cattelan's *La nona ora* (The Ninth Hour), which provoked controversy when it was exhibited in Poland in 1999. Cattelan showed a wax figure of John Paul II crushed under the weight of a meteor. In contrast, the 2020 pope of right-wing fantasy lifts the rock with superhuman power. At whom is the pope hurling the rock? The answer came one day after the Constitutional Tribunal's decision, when a group of young women jumped into the pool and were photographed striking dramatic poses as they protected their bodies from the pope's shattering blow. The intervention, full of bravura humor and carnal courage, but also staged with careful dramatism, says a lot about the performative strategies of the new political subject that emerged in the fall of 2020.

In July 2020, before the Constitutional Tribunal's decision, there was another significant performance involving a monument. It foreshadowed the breakthrough that was to come in the fall. Queer activists from the Stop Bzdurom collective and the SamZamęt Gang put rainbow flags in the hands of several statues of historical figures in Warsaw. They also attached a short manifesto to each statue's pedestal calling for open resistance against violence and for excluded and stigmatized people to take up space together. It concluded with this statement: "This city belongs to all of us. Fuck you, bigots!" One of the targeted statues was a figure of Jesus Christ in front of the Holy Cross Church in central Warsaw. The police quickly located the activists and apprehended one of them, leading to a street riot. The crowd blocked the police car that was attempting to take the arrested activist, Margot, to a police precinct. The incident was deemed "the Polish Stonewall," and the slogan chanted by the protesters, "You'll never walk alone," later became important in the fall protests.[10]

"THE SUBJECT DISAGREES WITH THE PREDICATE"

This slogan emerged at the very beginning of the fall protests. It is a play on words in the original Polish: the word for "predicate" (*orzeczenie*) means both a part of speech and a court decision. The slogan points to the "grammatical" error of violating the fundamental norms of democracy and asserts that the nation does not consent to the state's actions.

At the order of fundamentalist politicians, the puppet Constitutional Tribunal deprived half of the country's citizens of the basic right to make their own decisions about their bodies and health. In response, a political subject demonstrating its vehement dissent appeared in the streets, ready like never before to speak in a vulgar, aggressive language unfit for public debate. "GET THE FUCK OUT" and "FUCK PiS" ("PiS" is Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, the ruling party in Poland, known in English as the Law and Justice Party)—the slogans that emerged from the protests broke with democratic

procedures of negotiation. They established a radical counter-audience. The democratic, agonistic arena, where each side is a legitimate participant in public debate despite the impossibility of achieving consensus, had ceased to exist due to the government's actions. The protesters expressed their rage by breaching the default communication contract. By using the kind of language they did, they showed that the government had no democratic legitimacy.

In an unprecedented move, protesters also entered churches during Sunday services. The Catholic Church was openly exercising political power, and thus its places of worship ceased to be sacred. These interventions were usually less dramatic than those involving monuments. Often, people silently entered churches with signs reading things like "WE PRAY FOR ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTIONS." This was still too radical for Polish symbolic space, as protesters were accused of profaning the churches. If we follow Giorgio Agamben's understanding of the profane act, which, he argues, reclaims what has been separated and excluded from common space as "sacred," these accusations are accurate.[11] But as Dariusz Kosiński aptly suggested, if any Agambenian profanation occurred, it was to women's wombs rather than churches.[12] The protesters had no interest in reclaiming Catholic spaces, which would be of no use to them, but the owners of the wombs wanted to reclaim what had been appropriated by the right-wing government and the Church as the sanctified "temple of new life." This "temple" was becoming a living, breathing female body again, publicly declaring its right to be freed from the obligation to procreate. This inspired numerous signs that cheekily referred to human sexuality. Popular among them was "ALL WE HAVE LEFT IS ANAL" and "MY PUSSY, NOT JARUS'S" ("Jaruś" is the diminutive form of "Jarosław," referring to ruling-party leader Jarosław Kaczyński.)

The Coming Community

In response to accusations of vulgarity and aggression, the protesters chanted: "SHOULDN'T HAVE PISSED US OFF!" This rage quickly combined with the power of play and subversive parody, leading to an eruption of creativity and sensuality—a celebration of a corporeal being-together in common space. Slogans and banners bore witness to an inexhaustible creativity that freely combining all cultural registers. The oldest known sentence written in Polish, " *Day, ut, ia pobrusa a ti pozivai* " (Come, let me grind and you take a rest), was transformed into a call to Kaczyński: " *Day ut ia pobrusa, a ty wpierdalaj*" (Come, let me grind and you get the fuck out). Another popular slogan translates as "Anushka has already poured the oil," taken from Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*.

The appearance of vivid bodies in public space, marching together in solidarity, cancelled out the celebrations of national memory and military martyrology that had dominated Poland in previous years. In this context, it is instructive to compare the language of the 2020 protests with the language of earlier protests, such as the 2016 demonstrations against Law and Justice's attempt to pass a more restrictive abortion law. Like the 2020 protests, 2016's Black Monday demonstration (on November 3) was coordinated by the grassroots social movement Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (The All-Poland Women's Strike); and like in 2020, hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets.[13] However, as Joanna Sieracka points out, the prevailing strategy then was to feminize the national narrative and the patriotic imaginary.[14] Protesters wore black clothing, referencing a period of national mourning in the nineteenth century when Poland lost its independence and patriotic women displayed grief as a form of resistance. The most popular signs played on slogans and symbols from Poland's various struggles for independence—the Partitions of Poland, World War II, the Cold War—sometimes humorously, sometimes seriously.

This language emphasized cultural continuity while trying to force its feminist reimagining. The protests centered on the figure of the woman-mother; at stake were her reproductive rights, safety, and freedom. The ideological horizon ended at the right to individual freedom, posited as the foundation of democratic society.[15]

While the 2020 protests certainly drew from the energy of the 2016 protests, they were driven by a different idea of community: a self-organizing network of allies and supporters rather than free, individual subjects with a right to a common national tradition. In other words: the coming community. In the 2020 protests the right to abortion, understood literally and symbolically as the right to a freed body, ceased to be an individual matter (as expressed in the 2016 slogan "I THINK, I FEEL, I DECIDE"), and transformed into a common cause. Self-organization replaced the oppressive state, as declared in the chant "WHEN THE STATE DOES NOT PROTECT ME, MY SISTERS I SHALL DEFEND."

These words were actualized by an organization called Aborcja Bez Granic (Abortion Without Borders), which helps women travel abroad to have safe abortions or obtain medication to terminate a pregnancy. During the 2020 protests, its telephone number was displayed in apartment windows and on picket signs, spray-painted on sidewalks and church walls. The organization received huge numbers of donations. As a result, between the announcement of the Constitutional Tribunal's decision and April 2021, it was able to help seventeen thousand people.[16] This example of material solidarity testifies to the possibility of building new social structures that oppose the logic of neoliberal techno-patriarchy. It shows that community can be built on the recognition of interdependence and the strengthening of mutual care. This should be "promiscuous care," according to the Care Collective, which draws the idea from the care practices of

gay communities during the AIDS epidemic. Promiscuous care transcends traditional familial relationships and professional care institutions. It spreads widely, creating transversal connections and demanding new institutions: "It should … inform every scale of social life: not just our families but our communities, markets, states, and our transnational relationships with human and non-human life as well."[17]

The bodies that filled the streets of Polish towns and cities in the fall of 2020 created these kinds of transversal connections and grassroots institutions. Artists were part of this great creative collective too. In particular, their work supported the communication strategies of the protests. A prime example of this was graphic artist Ola Jasionowska's red thunderbolt symbol, which was visible everywhere. Artists' intense presence in the streets, as documented by *Magazyn Szum*, helped gather together the protesters into one collective artistic subject.[18]

What kind of strategies should progressive art institutions pursue in order to support and continue the 2020 movement in Poland? We need a profound revolution of care today; we need public queer-feminist-antiracist-ecosocialist cultural institutions. Poland's decentralized system of cultural funding fortunately means that most public art institutions are in the hands of local authorities, who enjoy some independence from the ruling right, at least for now. This is a resource that may prove invaluable for social movements fighting for a new order. For some time now new institutional models have been discusses, and pioneering projects are underway.[19] But the process is too slow. Art must catch up with the street.

X

Translated from the Polish by Aleksandra Paszkowska.

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1
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2
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3
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4
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5
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6
Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 86.

7
Jane Gallop, *The Father's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Cornell University Press); *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* , ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (Rutgers University Press, 1997).

8
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9
See https://artmuseum.pl/en/filmoteka/praca/ll-natalia-sztuka-konsumpcyjna?age18=true and http://katarzynakozyra.pl/en/projekty/appearance-as-lou-salome/ .

10
Notably, in its original Polish the slogan "Nigdy nie będziesz szła sama" is in the feminine gender, and activist Margot describes herself as nonbinary.

11
Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. by Jeff Fort (Zone Books, 2007).

12
Dariusz Kosiński, "Prześmiewczość, performatywność, profanacja," in *Język rewolucji* , ed. Piotr Kosiewski and Fundacja Batorego (forumIdei, 2021).

13
On the 2016 protests, see Elżbieta Korolczuk, "Explaining Mass Protests against Abortion Ban in Poland: The Power of Connective Action," *Zoon Politikon* , no.7 (2016); Kasia Narkowicz, "Czarny Protest: How Polish Women Took to the Streets," *Open Democracy*, October 11, 2016 https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/czarny-protest-how-polish-women-took-to-streets/ ; and Agnieszka Graff, "Angry Women: Poland's Black Protests as 'Populist Feminism,'" in *Right-Wing Populism and Gender* , ed. Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth (Transcript Verlag, 2020).

14
Sieracka analyzed the language of both protests in her conference presentation "Strajki Kobiet w Polsce AD 2016 o AD 2020: zmiana czy kontynuacja" (Women's Strikes in Poland AD 2016 and AD 2020: Change or Continuation), "Poetyka protestów" (Poetics of Protest) conference, March 2021 https://kntlparabaza.wixsite.com/website/konferencja .

15
Sieracka, "Women's Strikes in Poland."

16
See https://oko.press/od-wyroku-tk-z-pomocy-aborcyjnego-dream-teamu-skorzystalo-17-tys-osob/ .

17
The Care Collective (Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal), *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (Verso, 2020), 72.

18
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19
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Neylan Bağcıoğlu, Merve Elveren, Görkem Imrek, Saliha Yavuz, and the Omuz Dictionary Group, on behalf of Omuz

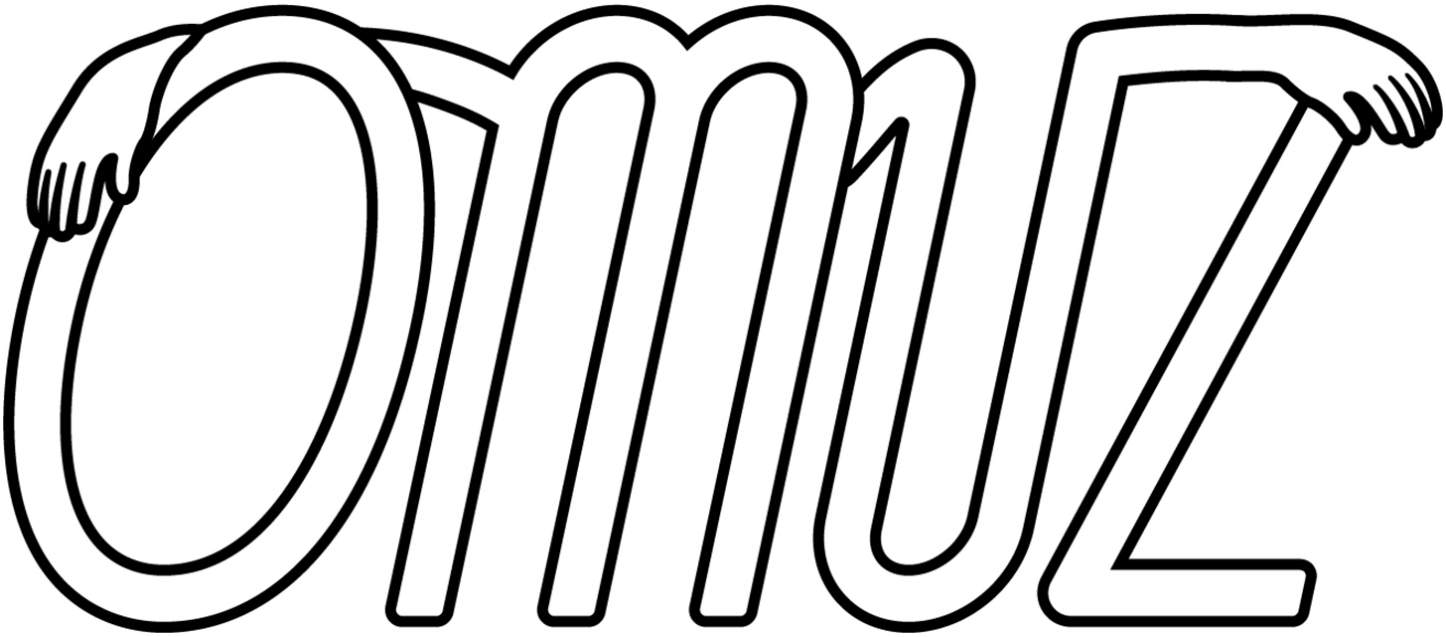
OMUZ

Omuz is a new solidarity network in Turkey that came into existence shortly after the worldwide lockdowns in early spring 2020. A few days after the first Covid case was "officially" announced in Turkey, a small group of art professionals began seeking financial support for art practitioners who lost their secondary jobs, which had been their primary sources of income. Personal relationships helped in collecting modest sums for a close circle of colleagues, whose issues were quickly resolved. The aim was to save the day. But by the end of the month—and in the following two months—the group started meeting regularly to respond to similar cases, urgencies, and economic inequalities in the art world that the so-called first wave of Covid-19 laid bare, including but not limited to lack of institutional support, resources, and even health insurance for art workers, especially due to the high ratio of immaterial and unwaged labor in the art world.

1.

Omuz is a response. A response to the extant cry for help and solidarity made resonant by the pandemic. The Turkish word *omuz*, which literally translates as "shoulder" in English, is associated with several metaphors that carry a strong sense of togetherness: *omuz vermek* and *omuzlamak*, meaning to support and to back up; *omuz omuza* and *omuzdaşlık*, to be in solidarity; *omzunda taşımak*, to show respect; *omzunda ağlamak*, to cry on one's shoulder, and so on. It is no coincidence that over the course of nine months (from June 2020 to March 2021), Omuz received 916 inquiries, 212 of which were fulfilled. The initial small group expanded to include over twenty-five volunteers who manage the operational needs or share their know-how in advisor roles, helping to build an alternative and transparent resource exchange within Turkey's art community.

As a network of solidarity, Omuz is based on unreciprocated resource sharing, bringing together artists, curators, researchers, art handlers, technicians, art historians, art writers, and others in the visual arts ecosystem. Omuz is not a legal entity; it is not a foundation, a corporation, or an association, and it does not have a bank account. It does not have office space or staff but instead has facilitators who rotate every three months. Through the website (omuz.org), Omuz acts as a mediator between those in need and those who want to provide resources. This is an unconditional and unilateral mechanism. The supporter, or the group of supporters, agrees to give 1,000 TL (approximately 122 USD).[1] There are no conditions for the recipient. The supporter directly transfers the amount to the assigned recipient. In facilitating this peer-to-peer transfer, Omuz simply collects the necessary data and connects the individuals. With all of its participants, Omuz is built on mutual trust, unconditional financial support, and the sharing of labor and resources.



2.

Perhaps it makes sense to refer to the shortcomings of Turkey's state support system before delving into the specific role of Omuz. Since the late 1980s, art and cultural institutions, including museums as well as other bodies that support contemporary art production and projects in Turkey, have been predominantly initiated and maintained by the private sector. It is practically impossible for artists, curators, and researchers to rely on public support. Even now, in this exceptionally threatening period, neither local municipalities nor the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have allocated any emergency support for the visual arts.[2] But the situation is chronic and cannot be understood by focusing solely on the Covid-19 period. The lack of funding and support, social security, and insurance in the arts have always been contested and equally overlooked issues. First introduced in 1978 and amended throughout the years, the failures of the current social-security system in Turkey reveal the limited scope of the definition of arts, artists, and cultural workers within it.

During the first wave of the pandemic, Eda Yiğit, an independent researcher, surveyed one hundred and fifty artists living and working in Turkey.[3] Yiğit's results show that 43 percent of respondents have a monthly income of approximately 245 USD or lower, and 26 percent have incomes that fall between approximately 245 and 490 USD. The survey further reveals that 80 percent of respondents work a second job to maintain their artistic practice, and 40 percent have no social-security coverage whatsoever. According to data published by TURK-IŞ (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions) in March 2021, the monthly hunger line, above which a family of four can have a healthy and balanced diet, is approximately 335 USD. The monthly poverty line, including expenses related to clothing, housing (rent, electricity, water, gas), transportation, education, health, and nutrition, is approximately 1,091 USD. The cost of living for a single individual is approximately 406 USD.[4] Yiğit's investigation exposes the present-day situation of artists practicing in Turkey—43 percent of participants have an income below the hunger line and 97 percent below the poverty line—and evokes the term "precariat." In their article "Precarity and Cultural Work In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness, and Cultural Work," Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt approach the double meaning of precarity and explain that it "signifies both the multiplication of precarious, unstable, insecure forms of living and, simultaneously, new forms of political struggle and solidarity that reach beyond the traditional models of the political party or trade union."[5] Gill and Pratt explore precarity in the individualized fields of artistic labor and question whether commonalities between these types of precarious workers could be expanded into new models of alliance or solidarity. While Omuz is one such solidarity model born out of an identified precarity, it (obviously) wasn't the only network founded within the art community in Turkey during the pandemic.

In her article "Pandemi Sürecinde Sanat Alanındaki Dayanışma Pratikleri ve Orgütlenme Uzerine Bazı Saptamalar," (Observations regarding practices of solidarity and organization in the field of art during the pandemic), Yiğit explores several nonunified attempts by cultural workers to form organizational models, initiatives, and/or groups in response to the precarious position they have found themselves in once again due to recently worsened socioeconomic conditions.[6] Yiğit's report reveals that until now, no "broad, effective, and inclusive organization" has been established that's capable of analyzing and responding to the specific realities of the contemporary art domain in Turkey in a productive and

sustainable manner.[7] In addition to the vital urgencies that arise during times of crisis (such as the pandemic), the report further emphasizes the permanent need for organizations that foreground solidarity in addition to alternative and creative methods for the realization of collective ideals, however disparate they may be in the field of art.

There are two major takeaways from Yiğit's report. First of all, the models of organization developed in this process are expected to spawn new ones, and not just within the art community but also in other, equally precarious disciplines. The second takeaway is that these responsive organizations should not be regarded simply as economic support mechanisms but also as social and emotional ones. For cultural workers, the pandemic engendered not only an economic emergency, but a social one. The latter manifested itself when both work and life moved inside people's homes (for those who were lucky enough to afford or hold onto them) and onto computer screens. Suddenly everyone was divided into two-dimensional grids, leaving streets, galleries, museums, and most other public spaces empty. Humans are social animals, and these new, responsive organizations became an outlet to cope with the newfound isolation, a place to share similar concerns and issues and to learn from one another. Comparable to the "consciousness-raising groups" of the 1970s in many ways, these organizations provide a safe environment that facilitates strong bonds between individuals. They are primarily convened online, but simultaneously those bonds are forged in intimate spaces: participants' homes, broadcast via Zoom. They follow no formal methodology and most importantly, they are horizontalist.

Groups and individuals engaged in consciousness-raising became more apparent in Turkey in the early 1980s, about a decade after the tactic's popularization in the West. This was a time of exceeding oppression and restrictions in Turkey's public realm. During the three-year military rule following the September 12, 1980 coup d'état, small groups founded by academics, writers, and activists sought to challenge the growing violations of individuals' rights in Turkey. Many of these were grassroots attempts that eventually contributed to the transition towards democratization. Planting the first seeds of civil society, these groups and networks both underscored the growing, mutual disengagement between the state and individuals, and responded to the depoliticization and atomization of society.

Realized during the military regime when arrests, long imprisonments, the suppression of critical thinking, the stripping of rights, and general political oppression were common, these meetings provided a safe space to start building collective resilience. Therefore, it is fitting to evoke to these closed meetings when describing Omuz in today's equally concerning sociopolitical atmosphere. Embracing the methodologies of consciousness-raising groups, feminists in Turkey, who were among the principal actors of these alternative groups during that period, sought to build new alliances that managed to maneuver between cracks in the status quo. With varying agendas and priorities, the networks of solidarity, political action, and resistance that have confronted various forms of precariousness since the 1980s have predominantly been comprised by women. Omuz is no exception. The gender composition of such entities is an indication that women, or in fact everyone except cisgender white men, generally face a more perilous existence firsthand, and are thus more inclined and prepared to challenge, respond, and organize together and with others. The methodologies practiced in the 1980s, such as holding festivals and exhibitions as well as marches and gatherings, continue to offer unique and enduring potentialities for the future.

3.

In her doctoral thesis "In Support: A Theoretical and Practical Investigation into Forms of Display," artist and writer Céline Condorelli unpacks the concept of support within physical, economic, social, and political structures.[8] Condorelli poses questions about the dynamics of support between institutions of various sizes, cultural producers, and the public. By showing how cultural production is used, owned, viewed, processed, classified, and ultimately displayed, Condorelli emphasizes the importance of adopting various perspectives and of experimenting with different methods in attempts to instigate change, rather than speculating on what support should and could mean. As a means of unconditional resource sharing, Omuz can be considered a *support structure* that generates a chain of resilience to counteract abrasive and isolating conditions. The primary practice of this resilience is informally offering one another a *shoulder*. Omuz formulates questions around which support mechanisms can be adopted and forged in collaboration.

"There can be *no* discourse on support, only discourse *in* support," Condorelli asserts.[9] And as a structure of support, Omuz strives to take action and to *shoulder* responsibility. A shoulder is a unique support structure in the body: it is a joint whose primary function is to carry loads, but it is also a surface that can just as well be shared with others. The expression about crying on somebody's shoulder exists for a reason. As long as one has the intention and ability to provide it, a shoulder never becomes unavailable. But such support is also very intimate; it's only natural to hesitate if a stranger were to ask for your shoulder. It requires personal contact as well as trust to be in such close proximity to somebody else—the very thing that the pandemic rendered virtually extinct. One year ago, Omuz became a joint in the cultural body of Turkey's contemporary art scene. It adopted a pragmatic approach, which was to respond to urgency, to perform the role of a Band-Aid on the wound inflicted by

the economic fallout magnified by the Covid-19 pandemic. But a more significant task might emerge in its future: to generate methods to counter the processes of alienation in an extremely dispersed local cultural field.

Just as an engine cannot operate when a component is missing, communities cannot function as one if any member is left behind. The struggle is not only against difficult external conditions, but also against our own growing indifference to one another, our isolation from each other, and the differences in visibility and access to resources that divide us. Ignoring these issues doesn't just create social detachment between cultural workers, it also perpetuates exploitative working conditions. For these realities to change, one cannot be apathetic or avoid posing questions that may cause conflict. After all, if you pray for rain, you can't complain about the mud. We will all have to wade through that muck collectively. It is not enough to identify the difficulties that cultural workers face in their living and working conditions. One of the first necessary steps is to confront individuals and organizations that break structures of support, and to synchronize an ethical compass in order to act together. As an emerging network, with only one year of experience, it is difficult to assign such intertwined issues as discrete tasks, yet all of Omuz's volunteers are willing to take notice, and hit the ground running without neglecting the group's founding purpose.

The reality is that dysfunction and insufficiency define any scant extant public support available to cultural workers for survival in Turkey's neoliberal ecosystem. The interests of legal entities take precedence over improving individuals' work and living conditions. In Turkey's current political and economic environment, cultural workers have found themselves obligated to work for a tomorrow they can't even envision, for lack of a survivable today. In fact, basic lessons on surviving various challenges are not being taught as much as they should in schools or workplaces.

Regardless of scale, every organizational entity has its own methods and means to sustain itself in line with its specific missions. In that regard, Omuz can be considered a mesoscale entity that can potentially address decision makers, form bridges between micro- and macro-scale entities, support smaller endeavors, and negotiate with the macro-scale structures operating as an egg white–like binder between the formal and the informal realm. It does not have a solid form or immovable properties. It can be put in a bag and carried from one city to another in the form of an idea. It has the ability to move as systematically as a macro-level entity and with the agility of a micro-level one. It can embrace failures. Situated in the middle of this spectrum, Omuz has the potential to generate solutions to technical, organizational, and ethical problems. Depending on the ambit, it can melt in water or evaporate into air.

4.

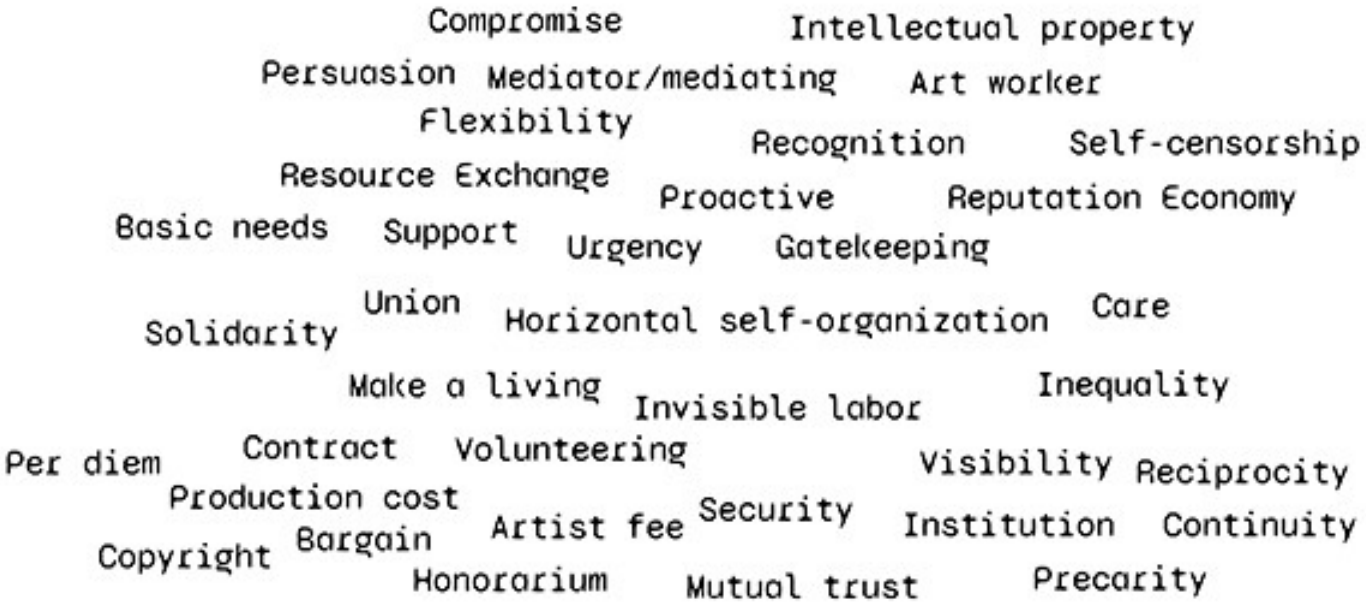
The Omuz network is divided into smaller working groups, including communication, fundraising, visual design, and editorial support. The responsibilities of the various working groups include producing informative texts, keeping close contact with other structures—neighborhood groups, local municipalities, other grant-giving entities, etc.—to build awareness, commission volunteer designers for social media content, follow up on grant providers and receivers, and ensure that these processes run smoothly. Besides the operational responsibilities, another purpose of these working groups is to generate an alternative discourse on the issues related to social and economic precarity in contemporary art. They work independently but inform each other with regular biweekly meetings. As the backbone of Omuz, volunteers become part of a growing network of individuals who encounter similar precarities and choose to adopt a grassroots attitude rather than waiting for support that will likely never arrive from existing structures.

Another working group is responsible for the "Omuz dictionary," started as a repository of words that highlight the conditions under which the network was founded. The dictionary group is interested both in support mechanisms and in bringing existing and unspoken problems in the field to light. With an awareness of the precarious nature of support structures like these—that run the risk of becoming a "cover-up" that simultaneously supports systemic exploitation—it seeks participation beyond resource exchange. While a necessary first step, financial and other forms of support in themselves are only an interstitial solution, a means to end. With that in mind, the intention of the Omuz dictionary is to become a tool for resistance by developing its own narrative.

Instead of providing static dictionary entries, it functions as a shared dissemination platform, assembling a web of potential definitions for each word based on various experiences. Apart from these fluid descriptions, the Omuz dictionary also aims to safeguard memory and build on the empowering methodologies of past solidarity initiatives in Turkey such as Meslek Birliği,[10] Turuncu Çadır,[11] and Sanatta Orgütlenme,[12] as forebears of Omuz. The dictionary group is also working on a contextual bibliography of the design of linguistic and discursive mechanisms to reference artworks that deal with insecurity.

In its first stages, the Omuz dictionary focused on predominant words and terms, such as what can be seen in the below image.

As of May 2021, the Omuz dictionary group started convening polyphonic discussions focusing on controversial terminology in the field. The group expanded it's work on definitions by consulting lawyers, union



leaders, and other professionals outside the field of art who could provide diverse perspectives. The intention with these online discussions is to configure the dictionary in order for it to further function as an evolving guideline for cultural workers, especially for younger generations.

The group also started addressing larger issues, including the urgent need to define *urgency* and to focus on permanent solutions to fundamental problems; to construct a path towards an *association* (which may not be a long-term solution); to define the contemporary conditions of *precarity*; to disseminate the culture of *solidarity* based on horizontal organization; to question the inequality of *visibility*; to determine who *cultural workers* are and what they do; to offer a variety of definitions and contextual examples of chosen words through public talks; to address the unspoken realities behind terms such as *artist fee* and *volunteer work*; and to redefine or attempt to coin new terms to replace worn-out words like *interaction* and *sustainability*.

Although the primary role of Omuz is to continue generating financial resources for the cultural workers that constitute its ecosystem, it is not the network's only task. At a time when local economies are rupturing and social structures are dissolving, when *life as we know it* is long gone, Omuz is an attempt to curtail the disparities fomented by systemic inequalities and underscored by the pandemic. Omuz is a work in progress.

After more than a year of Covid-19, Omuz is now in its fourth period. What was initiated in response to the pandemic has now evolved into a network that bears the burden of further urgencies as it progresses, drawing on past experiences of solidarity. But is it a viable task to maintain such a fluid structure in an economically, socially, and politically volatile context?[13] For a time-sensitive network aiming to remedy daily needs during a long pandemic, is it possible to continue providing solutions, or at least guidelines, to the ongoing precarities in the field of contemporary art? What can we learn from similarly motivated solidarity networks, and how can the knowledge of Omuz be shared with such associations? And perhaps most importantly, what kind of know-how can the supporters, recipients, and volunteers that comprise Omuz acquire from this experience?

X

Omuz (omuz.org) is a solidarity network in Turkey—initiated by a group of people working in the arts and culture who believe in the urgency of unreciprocated resource-sharing and cooperation—which will only be sustainable through the support of others.

1
All US dollar amounts are converted using the USD/TRY exchange rate on March 29, 2020.

2
Other disciplines that have not received any support include the music, theater, film, and design communities. Statistics regarding the number of theaters, concert venues, and cultural centers that have closed due to the pandemic, and the number of people who have lost their jobs or even committed suicide due to economic uncertainty, have not been shared with the public.

3
Eda Yiğit, *Prekaryanın Görünmeyen Özneleri: Pandemi Döneminde Sanatçılar* (The invisible subjects of precarity: Artists during the pandemic) (self-pub., 2021) https://0314029a-988e-4d0b-93e7-926df1f131f8.filesusr.com/ugd/889197_2b95d24894084ef0aed322aee5ffca63.pdf .

4
TURK-IŞ, "Mart 2021 Açlık ve Yoksulluk Sınırı," *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* , May 5, 2021 http://www.turkis.org.tr/MART-2021-ACLIK-VE-YOKSULLUK-SINIRI-d501756 . In an online talk titled, "Omuz Konuşuyor: Güvencesizlik ve Aciliyet" (Omuz is talking: Precarity and urgency), which took place on May 2, 2021, journalist and activist Hacer Foggo highlighted that the numbers published by TURK-IŞ underestimate the current level of poverty endured by the working-class population.

5
Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, "Precarity and Cultural Work In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 7–8 (2008): 3.

6
Eda Yiğit, "Pandemi Sürecinde Sanat Alanındaki Dayanışma Pratikleri ve Orgütlenme Uzerine Bazı Saptamalar," (Observations regarding practices of solidarity and organization in the field of art during the pandemic) *Birikim*, no. 380 (December 2020): 65–78.

7
Yiğit, "Pandemi Sürecinde Sanat," 66.

8
Céline Condorelli, "In Support: A Theoretical and Practical Investigation into Forms of Display," (PhD diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2014).

9
Condorelli, "In Support," 2.

10
Started in late 2011, Meslek Birliği (Professional Association) was a network initially focusing on ongoing censorship issues. Organizing regular meetings, the network, later named Sanat Emekçileri (Art Laborers), continued its discussions for almost a year and a half.

11
Turuncu Çadır (Orange Tent) was initiated by cultural workers during the Gezi Resistance in 2013. Initially marking a meeting place in the park, it soon transformed into a platform for discussions in an open-forum format. Turuncu Çadır was gradually dissolved along with the exigencies of the Gezi Resistance.

12
Sanatta Orgütlenme (Organizing in Arts) was a series of public talks organized at Mimar Sinan Fine Art University in 2014, almost ten months after the first assemblies at Gezi Park. The aim of these talks was to allow a variety of solidarity groups—including Turuncu Çadır, Siyah Bant, and the January 19 Initiative—to share personal efforts and experiences on censorship, precarity, violations of artists' rights, alternative models, and freedom of speech. The talks, as well as other related texts and discussions, were later made available on the initiative's website.

13
In the three months that have passed since this article was initiated—between February 1 and May 1—the USD/TRY exchange rate has fluctuated between 6.9170 and 8.4397.

Nikolett Erőss

Triple Braid, or, What Gives Us Reason to Hope?

As far as I can remember, last year was the longest one of all. Although we wish to put it behind us, the path it put us on will extend further than we may think. We continue on our protracted journey, carrying the baggage of loss and lessons on our back. All the while we keep gathering into it the things we need in order to understand and endure the "new normal." On account of the pandemic, even those who had never really faced such issues before have now experienced vulnerability and lack of safety. But the lives of those who lacked safety to begin with became even more burdensome. We're navigating the same storm, but we are not sitting in the same boat by any measure. We each began our journeys in different vessels, from dinghy to ocean liner.

In Hungary, the country where I live, the government is not unique: it intends to give people a sense of safety by pointing at potential enemies and taking action against them. Besides immigrants, the impoverished and the Roma minority are also in the Hungarian government's crosshairs, as well as LGBTIQA+ communities. Those who aim to rewrite stereotypical gender roles are considered suspicious at best, just like the NGOs that address dire problems and provide help where it is otherwise lacking.

In addition to other changes, the pandemic has resulted in an even stronger incoherence between hypothetical and real enemies, and has deepened social inequalities and deficiencies in fundamental access to sanitation, infrastructure, and healthcare. We are undergoing a crisis that claims lives in the tens of thousands and results in the existential undoing of hundreds of thousands. It was caused neither by immigrants swarming our homeland, nor by rainbow families disrupting traditional values, nor "unpatriotic" NGOs. We are undergoing a crisis that does not afflict all of us equally.

As in many other countries across the Central and Eastern European region, the pre-pandemic operation of institutional power in recent years had already undermined public confidence in the system's ability to maintain democracy and justice in Hungary. Years before Covid's disasters exacerbated the situation, Hungarians found it ever so easy to give up on institutions whose professional autonomy had been curtailed, and which were reduced, via government seizures or closures, to pawns in power maneuvers—that is, if the news of their loss even got out.[1]

Instead of reclaiming these institutions, it is proving more viable to create extra-institutional initiatives capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Often these are the programs and groups that stick around to see the painful wounds of the collective body, that tend to them and facilitate healing, that share news and raise hope.

A project that my colleagues and I worked years to develop was set to open to the public in spring 2020—but then the pandemic engulfed Europe. The OFF-Biennale,

PAD Foundation for Environmental Justice, from the project Everyday Shortcomings, 2021. Photo: PAD / Barnabás Neogrády-Kiss. More information about PAD can be found here: →.

which would've had its third edition last year, is a grassroots series of events in Budapest initiated outside the system of art institutions, realized with the participation of independent curators, artists, cultural organizers, and civil initiatives, and without Hungarian state resources.[2] Knowing that in today's Hungary, most cultural production is state-financed, such DIY detachment is a token of independence for ourselves and the projects we represent—even if any form of independence here can only be relative.

OFF creates a platform for dealing with topics that are either excluded from mainstream political discourse or are represented as a danger to national integrity. It is a long-term engagement involving extensive collaboration and a context-responsive modus operandi. From 2020 onward, the shutdowns and lack of personal presence have enhanced the ongoing projects with new perspectives, including increasing the stakes for those that were conceived in collaboration with marginalized communities, and highlighting issues of representation and care.

In the age of neoliberal self-care, the initiatives represented in OFF are defined by collective responsibility and collective care. They are based on, and also publicly disseminate, knowledge that is otherwise widely inaccessible.

Such collective practices of solidarity are positioned between two extremes on the spectrum of care: on the one hand, invisible domestic work carried out predominantly by women, and on the other, state welfare systems. These two disparate types of collective bodies are both underappreciated and underfinanced.

Water

People who live on the margins of society, who have to perform hard labor to receive basic services that are a given for the majority in Central and Eastern Europe, are collectively rendered invisible. An existential precarity defines almost every minute of quotidian life for those who suffer from a lack of public services. It is unfathomably

PAD Foundation for Environmental Justice, from the project Everyday Shortcomings, 2021. Photo: PAD / Barnabás Neogrády-Kiss.

difficult to escape this situation, which is not a result of individual decisions. Hungary does not suffer from a shortage of water; nevertheless, tens of thousands of households have no access to water in their own homes. Thus, a significant part of many peoples' days is spent lugging plastic buckets to and from public wells to get the most basic means for cooking, personal hygiene, and cleaning. Winter through summer, day and night. Water-related household chores are generally done by women, whose domestic work is already invisible by default. The cruel and unnecessary resource scarcity they disproportionally have to deal with is the result of a systemic, structural defect. Sometimes, during heatwaves, public wells are shut off. This gesture is nothing other than the Hungarian government's show of power, a political weapon aimed at those living in poverty.

If they do emerge from invisibility, people experiencing poverty are framed as lazy and squalid by Hungary's mainstream media; they're consistently represented as passive, apathetic people who refuse to do anything to improve their lives. One focus of the PAD Foundation for Environmental Justice is altering the tone of the visual representation of poverty.[3] Deeply rooted visual clichés, negative stereotypes, and sometimes even shows of solidarity can obscure our view of the systemic issues determining poverty in the first place. PAD's team, composed of cultural anthropologists and visual artists, carries out long-term collaborations with excluded communities deprived of public services. Their aim is to co-facilitate solutions to poverty in a manner devoid of any sense of shame. The process of seeking solutions is rendered visible; community members are its productive, creative agents.

Another aspect of this work is revealing the time-consuming challenges that residents of these precarious, isolated settlements deal with on a daily basis. Time passes differently if you need to fill a bathtub with water from a public well that's dozens or even hundreds of meters away, or when, in the winter, frozen wells must first be defrosted by starting a fire. PAD aims to bring these processes into focus instead of simply portraying images of the people who carry them out. The latter can lead to romanticizing poverty, which, according to PAD, can mask the dysfunctionality of the system and the responsibility of those in power, or create a tendency to blame the individual for their systemically induced hardships.

The visual representation of poverty is reorganized by involving those living it in the creation of the images emerging from their existence. One stage of the project involved a public installation made from everyday objects that were no longer in use in residents' households, but that somehow related to the infrastructural shortcomings that circumscribed their days. As people in the neighborhood are always forced into the role of solving some problem with their living conditions, the PAD team augmented the advocacy process with a series of artistic acts that represent this DIY work as a community effort, rendering it visible to the community as well as the social majority, which would otherwise look away or askance.

In the process of creating the monumental artwork, which measured three meters in height, weighed approximately three hundred kilograms, and was coated in white after assembly, the people involved could experience the transformation of their individual quotidian efforts into a tangible and symbolic form of community action. Such experiences are often missing from neighborhoods on the so-called margins. The installation will be displayed in the central square of the city that the segregated settlement is part of. The collective artwork outlines a fresher and more sensitive image of stigmatized neighborhoods along with a history of the objects that come from them.

The clear line between the lack of public services and the extreme living conditions that such deprivation generates is rarely presented to the broad public. In large part this is

for want of appropriate spaces for public communication and informed means of representation and self-representation. The few journalistic platforms that are still standing—the majority of the Hungarian media is now centralized under government control—also regularly use visual clichés to represent those forced to the periphery of society. Thus it is up to collaborative, grassroots initiatives to create new platforms and modes of representation.

Alicja Rogalska with Katalin Erdődi, Réka Annus, and the Women's Choir of Kartal, News Medley, 2020. Video still: Arpád Horváth.

Sound

If state television channels confuse information with propaganda, if dissident radio stations are deprived of their broadcast frequency, if local papers are bought up by government-friendly companies and forced to align their reporting accordingly, little opportunity remains to convey personal stories or the experiences of a community. This remains just as true when it is not an option to share these stories on the internet because of infrastructure deficiencies or a less digitally networked lifestyle.

In the past year, though, there was one mostly forgotten channel that the project *News Medley* revived and filled with new content. Artist Alicja Rogalska, curator Katalin Erdődi, and folk singer Réka Annus spent time working with a locally renowned women's choir in Kartal, a small village in central Hungary. Stepping out of the shadow of the patriarchy, choir members could collaboratively present the life experiences of rural women, disclose their stories that have otherwise been omitted from public discourse, and voice their desires for change. The women's choir was formed in the early 1980s as the successor to the local cooperative's choir, which had been established decades earlier. The artistic team and the choir members selected songs from the group's regular repertoire and collectively wrote new lyrics for them. These alternate lyrics tell the stories of the women's lives, their relation to work and familial expectations, and the coercions and constraints they experience—all in a manner that allows their individual voices to emphasize collective experiences.

The Women's Choir of Kartal is in a special position; unlike similar communities elsewhere, it's not only the elderly of this village who gather to sing and put on public performances. The group also has young members, thus maintaining an intergenerational continuity that is scarce in more homogeneous choirs. The choristers' stories reach back as far as the decades of communism, the period of forced collectivization. They also include the experiences of the recent post-socialist past, as well as of the present.

The news items eventually included in the project's medley of repurposed songs were the result of a monthslong collaboration that continuously expanded spheres of trust. In this particular news outlet, the personal is the political and the private is the public. Topics include hard labor the women have done since childhood, underpaid factory work, the search for individual paths through the regime change of '89, the burden of domestic work that has always been their lot in life and has never been monetarily compensated, forced marriages, and the shame of divorce. A film of *News Medley* was made, and it starts with this enumeration of hardships. As the women sing in a closed circle, facing outwards, and as the personal topics shift towards matters of the village and the choir, their faces open up and the circle dances with arms interlocking. This progressing formation literally embodies collective trust and the supportive power of community. The lyrics become increasingly reflective, rebellious, and also humorous, reinforcing the creators' intentions for *News Medley* to operate as a document of a subaltern counterpublic, á la Nancy Fraser.[4] The alternative public created by these women allows those who are excluded from dominant narratives and platforms to be heard. Several disparate worldviews are encountered within the choir; the members' convictions are far from similar. Singing and dancing in a circle creates a powerful bond while simultaneously allowing for difference: turning outward and inward takes place on the boundary between the outside world and the safe space provided by the community.

In this terrain of personal struggles extended into a collective space, the women in the choir also seem to see their own lives in a different light (shed by the encounter between different opinions and approaches). Their rewriting of folk songs at once strengthens and breaks tradition, both reaching back to a traditional form from the past and radicalizing it into a contemporary mode of exchange.

Tamás Péli, Birth, 1983. Installation view, "Collectivelly Carried Out," OFF-Biennale, Budapest History Museum, 2021. Photo: Akos Keppel, BTM.

Oil

We rarely experience a painting metamorphosing into an event—the air around the artwork beginning to stir and becoming perceptibly refreshed. Recently, however, one painting did just that. This was made possible by the tenacious, decades-long work of several people who participated in this metamorphosis.

A Hungarian painter of Roma descent, Tamás Péli completed his panel painting *Birth* in 1983. The enormous work, painted on fiberboard, is an allegorical vision of the origin of the Roma people and their integration into Hungarian society. It was conceived and exhibited at the refectory of a children's home that operated in a late-nineteenth-century mansion in Tiszadob, a small village in the Northern Great Plain region of Hungary. The painting held special significance at an institution that predominantly housed Roma children who, through loss of family and community, suffered irreparable damage to their knowledge of their people's origin and culture. The process of making the painting was an event in itself: as a prominent member of a circle of Roma intellectuals that first formed in the 1970s, Péli created a truly discursive space by inviting his disciples and colleagues to help complete the work.

The children's home operated until 2007, and then the mansion underwent renovation starting in 2011. The children would never return to the beautiful building complex reminiscent of a château in the Loire Valley. Nor would the painting. Dismantled into four panels, it was wrapped up and left in the corridor of a museum in the nearby city of Nyíregyháza, forgotten. A mythical, community-forming and -preserving artwork, rendered invisible in this manner, was deprived of its magical powers.

While the painting is powerful and culturally significant, it is not unproblematic. In fact, the reason the painting has become so important to Roma and non-Roma people alike is that the work—despite its fundamental optimism—provokes a number of unsettling questions about Roma (and other minorities') identity, as well as their contemporary culture and the institutions that maintain it, or rather the lack thereof.

The mythological core of the painting is the goddess Kali, who shows her son, Manush, to a god on horseback. They are surrounded by symbolic animal figures and scenes that refer to the roles of the Roma people in Hungarian history, complemented by the representation of Roma intellectuals who were influential figures at the time the painting was conceived. This group of intellectuals also comprised the painting's first spectators, besides the children. Rendered in vivid colors, the vast mythological-historical vision the artwork depicts extends as far as the recent past, and its future is being revised now, in the present.

As a prerequisite to this revision, conditions for its renewed visibility had to be created. The three curators of the "Collectively Carried Out" exhibition—sociologist Anna Szász, historian Eszter György, and literary historian Teri Szűcs—have been planning to present the painting for years. On account of the painting's enormous physical dimensions, its fragility, and the deficiencies of the infrastructure of host institutions, their project was thwarted time and again. My OFF-Biennale colleagues and I started working on the possibility of exhibiting the painting in Budapest as part of the biennial, and we found a partner in the Budapest History Museum. The exhibiting conditions provided by that institution—museum infrastructure and a generous, ornate, historic environment in the former Royal Palace at the Buda Castle—stand in stark contrast to the narrow museum corridor where the painting has hidden over the past decade. That contrast is necessary for initiating broad discourse around the work.

The current government has sought to use the area around the historic Buda Castle as a representation of its power. The new quarters it established around the historic building complex allow less and less room for the cultural and academic institutions that moved there during the socialist period, which now once again face, or have already undergone, relocation. The Budapest History Museum is run by the opposition-led Municipality of Budapest and, in remaining in the castle, occupies a rather emblematic site. The museum's recently revamped vision, which is more open to community thinking and sees conflict as constructive, is favorably suited to the presentation of the Péli panels.

Hungary has no Roma art collections, and Roma contemporary art is scarcely, if at all, represented in public collections. Because museums, since the nineteenth

century, have generally functioned to embody and strengthen the ideology of the nation-state, and because this remains the case in Hungary, the Roma people have had no place in Hungarian museums. Tamás Péli's painting was made for a community space not only because this was where he could best fulfil his intention for the piece, but also because there was no question of the art establishment making room for it.

Conceiving of a collection of Roma contemporary art today requires an artistic approach, as the existing institutional infrastructure is insufficient and occasionally even obstructive. The imagination of Hungarian art institutions is still strongly bound to the decades-long practice of ethnographically presenting Roma art—the liberation of which is one of the project's goals. Presentation and visibilization is but a point of departure, and Péli's painting is a Trojan horse that allows perspectives opposed to preserving the canon to slip into the very space that hosts it. This raises an array of questions regarding Roma contemporary art as well as Roma integration and autonomy, all without disregarding these realities as they pertain to art institutions and all they represent. The RomaMoMA project, a collaboration with ERIAC in Berlin, is a partner in such thinking, having undertaken the theoretical construction and performative creation of a potential Roma Museum of Contemporary Art.

Is there a need for a Roma museum of contemporary art? Who would shape its collections, and according to what criteria? Is it possible to avoid the traps of stereotypical representation? How would such a collection represent the civil rights and emancipatory struggles of the Roma people, along with the historical and present-day contexts of these efforts? These are the questions that inform the discourse around RomaMoMA, which defines itself through works and collaborations, and prefiguratively creates itself, its own setting, and its public, without waiting for the establishment of a stable infrastructural foundation.

The Péli panels tell a story of multitudinous birth: the birth of the Roma people, the "Romangarian" / "Hungaroma" people, the birth of the Roma intellectual movement that's been active since the seventies and is now experiencing its own rebirth. It is a mythical artwork empowered by the Roma community, which, in looking after the painting, in fact looks after its itself. The painting has several wounds: the fiberboard is pierced by screws, the surface is chipped along the corners and edges, and the assembly, disassembly, and moving of the four panels has also left several scars. The thoughtful installation in the Budapest History Museum by artist Tamás Kaszás erects a stage made of raw planks, battens, and laths, whose dimensions are identical to those of the painting. The artwork's four panels are installed on this structure, each an inch apart, seemingly conscious of being torn apart yet belonging together.

By connecting the mythological origin of the Roma people and their embeddedness in Hungarian history to the self-representational statement of a contemporary (1980s) artist, Péli positions the work in the tradition of European historical-allegorical painting. He places it in another tradition as well, which is more contradictory and problematic from a contemporary perspective. The extremely eroticized representation of Roma women in the piece ranks them lower in the fight for independence. They are but decorative extras in the painting; despite their powerful presence, they are exposed to the male gaze. Péli's work was a gigantic emancipatory step towards the recognition of the Roma people and Roma art, but he left the task of women's emancipation to women themselves. This is also the painting's legacy, which we should draw on nevertheless—and debate fiercely.

This combination of personal and political engagement is evident in all the aforementioned collaborations comprising the OFF-Biennale. These projects provide platforms of participation where people silenced and made invisible by hegemony are their own agents in becoming heard and seen. OFF intends to support, expand, and interlink all of the efforts represented in the show. The idea is to have a space where small islands of freedom can adjoin—a space that facilitates thinking about the nature of the collective body, which is otherwise difficult to define. This edition of the OFF-Biennale seeks to reflect on whom we should show solidarity with and what duties and responsibilities this entails for our organization. Instead of the (more or less) predictable functioning of government-financed art institutions, OFF is defined by constant adaptation to changing situations—which sometimes feels like trying to build a foundation on quicksand. Nevertheless, to our collaborators and partners we seek to offer stability and solidarity.

In Hungary, it is difficult to talk about the collective body because the metaphor of the national body looms in the background. The latter is a vague concept; we hear about its sublime quality, but also about its pain and wounds, about the dangers afflicting it, and about those whose presence disturbs it, those who basically do not belong in it. The national body is posited as a given entity, its order and maintenance determined by the ruling power. By contrast, the communities of the excluded and their allies shape themselves— *embody* themselves—collectively. This does not magically render collaboration easy, as synthesizing diverse ideas is a long learning process for all. The freedom inherent in it, though, is the very life energy of the variable, vulnerable, and constantly evolving collective body.

X

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1
The process of transferring a number of higher-education institutions (including their real-estate assets) from public ownership to foundations set up by the state is called a "model shift." In these cases, professional and economic decisions are made by a politically based board. One prominent, recent example of the transfer of public assets to foundations and the erosion of university autonomy is the case of the University of Theater and Film. See Nagy Gergely, "Stateless Democracy at an Occupied University," trans. Péter Veres, *artportal*, January 9, 2021 https://artportal.hu/magazin/stateless-democracy-at-an-occupied-university/ .

2
See https://offbiennale.hu/2021.

3
See http://pad.network/about-us/ .

4
See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25–26 (1990): 56–80. See also: Alicja Rogalska, Katalin Erdődi, and Réka Annus, "There Is a Strength in the Collective Voice, Especially the Collective Female Voice," *We Are Not Made of Sugar, We Are from Concrete,* ed. Katalin Erdődi (OnCurating Zurich, 2021), 21–37.

Ana Vujanović

The Collective Body of the Pandemic: From Whole to (Not) All

The Wounded Collective Body

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has had a global reach, spreading through various social strata and geopolitical contexts, nothing makes more sense than to revamp the social imaginary of our collective body. That body is in danger. It is under attack by other species. It is wounded. Its immunity has to be built. It has to be taken care of. It should heal. And it can only heal collectively. At the same time, nothing seems less probable. The wounds that the virus and its long aftermath inflict don't hurt everyone equally. Immunity is not built equally either. Care is administered unevenly.

The anti–Covid 19 measures that governments introduced last year struck the collective body with a shock comparable to that of the virus itself. Both the nature and the severity of the measures collided most markedly with the neoliberal capitalist part of the world's basic economic, political, and ideological premises.[1] Not surprisingly, people responded to these measures in different ways: trusting that they protect us, being suspicious, resisting the rules, and creating conspiracy theories. Reactions depended on the rigorousness of the public health measures, the numbers of infected and dead, as well as local social histories and mentalities. In terms of intellectual elaboration, in the first months of the pandemic some European critical theorists—such as Paul B. Preciado and especially Giorgio Agamben[2]—expressed mistrust of social distancing, lockdowns, quarantining, and curfews, drawing attention to the despotic inclinations of neoliberal governments and the sociopolitical consequences of separation. When we are reduced to bare life and desocialized via isolation in our homes, they argued, we are left without the political agency that gathering has historically provided within the democratic tradition. These and similar discourses often produce a binary between "them" (evil governments) and "us" (good people), creating strong and complete social narratives. They are useful in politicizing precarious people; however, this approach presupposes the collective of the people as a whole entity, and as such it can hardly bring us beyond existing sociopolitical horizons, where individualist and holistic perspectives have fought for primacy for centuries.

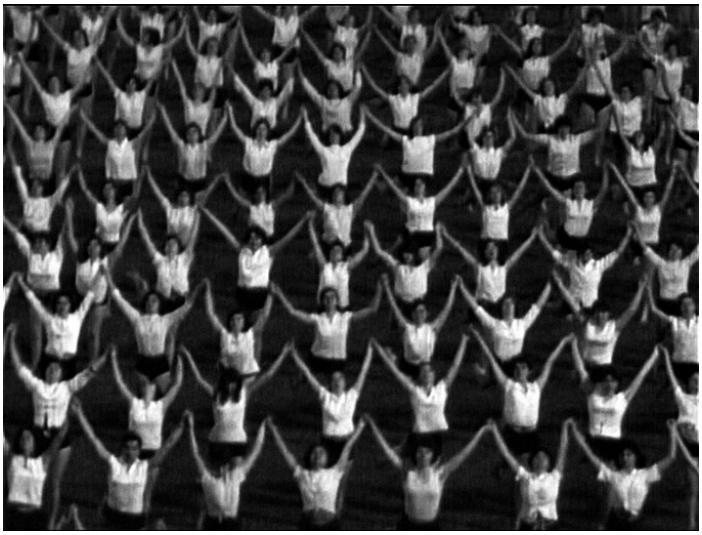
The imaginary of the collective body as a whole is implied not only in the critical responses to these measures to combat Covid-19. The measures themselves purport to address a dubious unity, wholeness, and completeness of humanity, which comes after decades and centuries of capitalist disintegration, predation, exploitation, and segregation between social groups, classes, nations, and identities. Soon after the first wave of the pandemic, as the numbers of infected and dead rose everywhere, we heard theoretical voices trying to think through the contradictions of the situation. Roberto Esposito, for instance, although he shared Agamben's concern about desocialization, took the edge off the demarcation

Marta Popivoda, Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body (still), 2013. Documentary, 61 minutes. Co-written by Ana Vujanovic, it deals with the question of how ideology performs itself in public space through mass performances and counter-demonstrations using footage from Yugoslavia.

between "them and us" and insisted that without social institutions we would not have been able to combat the virus.[3] He repeated his thesis about the aporic character of immunity, where the immunitary function of law is also based on saving individuals from violence by using violence. For him, lockdown is therefore a violent measure that attacks individuals' freedom in an attempt to protect their lives.

Taking this more complex sociality as a starting point, my thesis is that the pandemic will not turn out to be an opportunity to change how we live together and (not) care about one another unless we change the social imaginary of the collective body. Without this, the pandemic only magnifies long-standing problems in our neoliberal capitalist society, whose structure can be best described as a "network." Amidst the drama of Covid-19, this structure has sometimes been described instead as "a whole," "a unity," "a totality," suggesting that the crisis has brought people together. But my worry is that such words raise an empty hope. In our existing network society,[4] there is no such thing as a "rupture," breach, or fundamental inclusion or exclusion.[5] Instead, we live in a world of provisional entanglements, where disturbances arise around certain nodes and links, and where some people, regions, and groups get disconnected. New links appear to repair the damage, and new nodes are formed. This localized activity has little influence on the network structure at a whole. In our network society, the Covid-19 crisis has served to more tightly weave together systems of governance, digital technology, and our physical bodies. However, within this networked framework we can prefigure collectivity through "intersectional," unstable, even ambiguous links and hyperlinks, from loved ones to allies to comrades to fellow travellers (which happens to be the English translation of *sputnik*), provided that we

think using the transindividual categories of "all" (and "not all") rather than "whole."



Marta Popivoda, Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body (still), 2013. Documentary, 61 minutes.

The Virus and the Whole

With their warlike approach, anti-coronavirus measures treat us as if we have suddenly become united, interdependent, indispensable, and together, living collectively and taking care of one another. However, the measures taken on a mass scale don't address everyone equally.[6] Gender inequality and domestic violence are on the rise amidst the pandemic, and job losses are staggering. In addition, memory and history make many of us feel frustrated with measures that restrict our individual freedom, daily practices, and interactions with friends and collaborators in the name of the greater good. I myself have experienced these feelings, while being torn between my divergent contexts and positions.

One of the main sources of my anxiety is the legacy of corrupt and incompetent governments in Serbia. Since the 1990s they have devastated public goods and sold social and state property, resulting in tens of thousands of mostly young and highly educated people leaving the country every year. In 2020, the government imposed very restrictive coronavirus measures, including a curfew, which aligned with the president's heavy-handed way of leading the country.[7] Simultaneous with the discourse of unity, Serbian media have frequently reported on how the rich have continued clubbing and partying in secret and without penalty, while the poor have faced some of the most restrictive quarantine measures in Europe. In addition, the European Court of Human Rights brought charges against Serbia for the degrading treatment of Roma families during the pandemic: a Roma settlement in Belgrade was left without running water during the crisis.

More recently, the Serbian government has done an about-face on its vaccination policy, now offering jabs to refugees, asylum seekers, citizens of neighboring countries—everyone, no matter their citizenship status or place of residence.

In Berlin, where I live, the vaccination rollout has been late and slow. It is frightening that a country far richer than Serbia still has a strict system of priority groups (mostly defined by age), which has resulted in a vaccination rate of only 6.9 percent as of late April. The rest of the EU has a similarly low rate due to inefficient administration and transactional approaches to immunization. In Amsterdam, I work at the Academy of Theatre and Dance (SNDO). As a freelancer at a public school, I have to follow all official measures. Although I was vaccinated in Belgrade in April, the Dutch government doesn't have a policy for vaccinated travelers yet, so I had to quarantine upon entering Holland in May. Such inconsistencies between countries come with a price: I had to cancel a project in Berlin in order to travel to Amsterdam a week before my job starts there, and the school doesn't pay me for the days I spend in quarantine. At the same time, when working with students I have to encourage them to follow the rules, of which I myself am not always convinced. But since the risks are too high and my knowledge too little, I have no other option.

My experience is one of a privileged, white, middle-class European, but it points to several wider issues around the collective body that have been accentuated by this pandemic.

The first is a sociopolitical question: Why should we suddenly trust the state and its institutions when they have been manipulative for a long time? As Ivan Illich wrote, institutions, rather than focusing on serving people, above all serve to further institutionalization.[8] Why should we believe that the government, the pharmaceutical industry, and healthcare institutions have suddenly ceased serving their own interests and are now serving the health and well-being of the people? How can we be sure that the safety protocols that have been imposed are not a prelude to biometric fascism?

The second issue concerns the semantic-conceptual domain of the Covid-19 crisis. Values and ideas that have traditionally been regarded as positive have been swiftly redefined as negative. The most striking example is the idea of freedom, which, together with the autonomy of the individual, is fundamental to the ideology of neoliberal society. Many of the Covid-related measures cast freedom in a negative light, causing an earthquake in our conceptual system. Values that used to be treated a self-evident truths now seem arbitrary.[9]

The third issue is ontological. In the oscillation between following and resisting measures that treat us as a whole, we must revisit the relationship between the collective

and the individual, so that we empower the individual without harming others—or the individual's relationships with others. To open this complex issue, I would claim that in our society the individual is commonly seen as a primordial category, while the collective is an entity into which formed individuals enter. In the dominant neoliberal capitalist narrative, the collective is an oppressive formation; in order to enter the collective, the individual must sacrifice their freedom, personal preferences, private property, and free will, becoming subsumed under a universal, often totalitarian worldview. Within this ontological framework, describing a collection of autonomous selves as a whole can only bring anxiety, as it implies a sacrifice and a subtraction from something that is in itself complete—the individual.

interesting because it implies that only ordinary people are part of the whole of humanity, not people in power. This notion of the "not-really-whole whole" excludes and criticizes the authorities by employing the very same imaginary used by the authorities themselves—the "collective body" of society taken as a whole, which the authorities seek to mobilize in a "war" against the common enemy that is the virus. This image of the collective body, whether deployed by governing elites or critical scholars, erases the differences, antagonisms, and aporias that exist in our society, especially during a pandemic. Although I sympathize politically with how scholars make the inclusion-exclusion strategy work against neoliberal governments, this imaginary is ultimately an obstacle to thinking and acting collectively in situations such as a pandemic. In order to do this, we must first acknowledge a few basic principles:

Marta Popivoda, Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body (still), 2013. Documentary, 61 minutes.

Some populist critiques of quarantine measures posit a collective social body unified against a privileged minority (governments and economic elites). This rhetoric is

–We live in a world of manipulative institutions. At the same time, institutions are essential for cultivating, preserving, and transmitting important practices between social groups, geographic regions, and generations.

–The values and ideas that form our worldview are indeed arbitrary. But this fact—that values and ideas are not given—also means that the power to shape them is in our hands.

–The notion that individuals are fully formed before entering the collective ignores the process of individuation, which has a collective dimension. This process embeds the collective within each individual.

The Transindividual Collective Body: Sharing What We Don't Possess

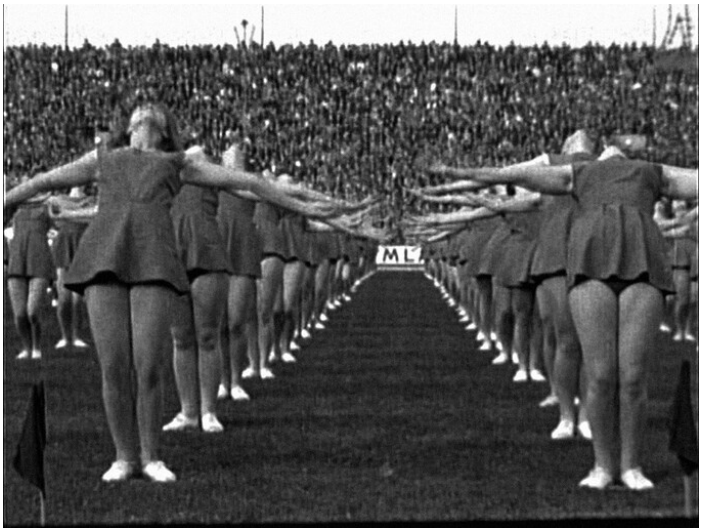
These aporic and transversal principles of living together could be a starting point for replacing the idea of the collective body with a less cohesive "all." While it may be an imperfect quantifier, "all" at least acknowledges the multiplicity involved in collectivity.[10] "All" is more resilient, open, and flexible. It's also more transindividual, which is the aspect I would like to elaborate on here.

In socialist and communist narratives, the collective is not necessarily oppressive to the individual. The individual in fact largely benefits from entering the collective; as a member of the collective, each person becomes more than they could ever be individually. This is especially important for marginalized members of society, who don't possess property and political power. However, since we—even the poor and the precarious among us—are born into the ruling ideology, we are accustomed to perceiving ourselves primarily as liberal individuals. Therefore, many people perceive collectivity as involving sacrifice and restriction, even when they collectivize for a bigger cause in which they believe. A question that can open up another perspective on the individual-collective relationship is: How is that which characterizes and belongs to me individually formed in the first place? One answer is: collectively—especially if we acknowledge that human beings are social from the start.

This thesis was developed by thinkers such as Gilbert Simondon, Bernard Stiegler, and Paolo Virno.[11] According to Simondon, an individual emerging from their pre-individual conditions—biological, social, technological—is individuated through the reciprocal individuation of the collective. From this process of collective individuation, the transindividual emerges. As Virno and Siegler argued, the individual's actions and deeds contribute to transindividual achievements, which form our civilization and legacy for future generations (artworks, governing institutions, public infrastructure, etc.). Therefore, in thinking about the collective body we should not ask how we as individuals should form a collective, but rather how we can sustain the transindividual as our collective horizon, wherefrom the individual appears. As Jason Read lucidly writes: "At the basis of Simondon's understanding is a fundamental fact of existence, that Marx indicates (and Virno underscores): the very things that form the core and basis of our individuality, our subjectivity, sensations, language, and habits, by definition cannot be unique to us as individuals."[12]

Since my main sphere of interest is art and culture, I want to examine them through the lens of the principles outlined above. What role can art and culture play in healing our collective body?

The idea that we need institutions even as we struggle to trust them brings us back to the artistic tradition of institutional critique. Is it (still) useful to attack the art world, or should we adopt more nuanced understandings of institutions, their histories, and their roles? Equipped with the knowledge developed through institutional critique, what new kinds of institutions can art propose? What kinds of institutions could serve as many people as possible while still taking seriously the differences in identity, needs, and desires among them? Ivan Illich developed the notion of "conviviality," which refers to "the freedom to create things among people," instead of just consuming whatever is imposed on us by dominant institutions.[13] Art can be a powerful tool for fostering convivial institutions and practices—more accessible, shareable, and "friendly" practices.



Marta Popivoda, Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body (still), 2013. Documentary, 61 minutes.

Art, as an actualization and embodiment of imagination, has many times in history revised, glorified, and ridiculed the grounding concepts of our world. For this reason, art has an ambivalent position in society; it is enjoyed,

disputed, feared, and banned, sometimes all at the same time. Art can thus subversively reverse the hierarchies found within binary concepts (man-woman, white-nonwhite, individual-collective, freedom-captivity) and challenge the traditional (racist, patriarchal) order with figures such as a black heroine or a "loving father" who is also a rapist. By playing with and subverting these binaries and hierarchies, art exposes their foundation in dominant economic and political systems. Can art position itself today as a sort of "aesthetic education" that "trains the imagination for *different* epistemological performances"?[14] Can art help create new social imaginaries that aren't bound by binaries and hierarchy?

One of the binaries I have touched upon is the individual vs. the collective, where the individual is a normative concept, in relation to which we add the collective as the less worthy element of the pair. It is a standard conceptual hierarchy whose rationale lies in Western liberalism and capitalism, starting at least from eighteenth-century British political philosophy (John Locke and "possessive individualism"). Art can encourage us to rethink this ontology by foregrounding *collective* processes of identity formation: the figure of the hero can be replaced by a multitude of protagonists; individual life stories can be examined against their social and community backdrops. Another approach is to insist on artworks as transindividual achievements, which therefore must remain public goods because they depend on the general intellect. Discarding the figure of the author-genius and the notion of private ownership over artworks is one more way to experiment with the collective as inscribed in the individual, and vice versa. To make these experiments sustainable will require deep changes in the entangled economic, political, and biological dimensions of life.

These are just a few ways that art can participate in the current crisis as a contemplative, critical, and affirmative social practice of examining the collective body. Its experimental and speculative character creates an opportunity to disrupt the regular course of life and experience other possible lives. As Gertrude Stein famously wrote, "She is moving in every direction in doing everything … She is doing everything in moving in every direction." When talking about our collective body today, we have at least two options. We can either discard the aforementioned image as a seductive but implausible proposal coming from art, or, we can take it as an invitation to train our imagination for the epistemological performance of living together as individuals in a life always populated with others.

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1
I focus my discussion on this part of the world because it's the part I'm most familiar with—specifically the cities of Berlin, Belgrade, and Amsterdam, where I live and work.

2
Paul B. Preciado, "Learning from the Virus," *Artforum* 58, no. 9 (May–June 2000) https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823 . Giorgio Agamben, "The Invention of an Epidemic" (February 26, 2020), in "Coronavirus and Philosophers," ed. Fernando Castrillón and Thomas Marchevsky, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/ .

3
Roberto Esposito, "The Biopolitics of Immunity in Times of COVID-19," interview by Tim Christiaens and Stijn De Cauwer, *Antipode Online* , June 16, 2020 https://antipodeonline.org/2020/06/16/interview-with-roberto-esposito/ . See also Btihaj Ajana, "Immunitarianism: Defence and Sacrifice in the Politics of Covid-19," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 43, no. 25 (2021).

4
Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Blackwell, 1996). Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski, *New Spirit of Capitalism* , trans. Gregory Elliott (1999; Verso, 2007).

5
Cf. Arundhati Roy, "The Pandemic Is a Portal," *Financial Times*, April 30, 2020 https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca .

6
See Helen Lewis, "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism," *The Atlantic*, March 19, 2020 https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302/ .

7
Milena Sošić, "A Brief Analysis of the Legality of the Government Measures/Response to COVID-19 from the Human Rights Perspective," *Civic Space Watch*, May 12, 2020 https://civicspacewatch.eu/serbia-a-brief-analysis-of-the-legality-of-the-government-measures-response-to-covid-19-from-the-human-rights-perspective/ .

8
Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (Marion Boyars, 2001).

9
See Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Freedom and Potency," *e-flux journal* , no. 116 (March 2021) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/378694/freedom-and-potency/ .

10
In contrast to "whole," "all" can refer to both singular and plural nouns or pronouns, and its corresponding verb can be either singular or plural. "All" can signify both open and limited generalizations. "Not all" signifies a part of "all" without dismissing the whole group entity.

11
Gilbert Simondon, *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020). Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford University Press, 1998). Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Semiotext(e), 2004). Simondon's concern is ontology, while Virno and Stiegler focus on political categories.

12
Jason Read, "The Production of Subjectivity: From Transindividuality to The Commons," *New Formations*, no. 70 (2011): 118.

13
Illich, *Tools for Conviviality.*

14
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

Azra Akšamija

Future Heritage?

Global society is facing unprecedented challenges. Aside from the existential threats of climate change, the emergence of the pandemic and its mismanagement in many countries has revealed a very brutal picture of social, political, and economic inequalities that can no longer be ignored. Furthermore, today's generations are faced with the rapid erasure of natural resources and cultural infrastructures, which go hand in hand with chronic social ills: power grabs by elite classes and their strategies of sowing division and fear, political violence, economic injustice, and social alienation. These planetary challenges are putting the world's population through an existential test: How is one to find strength, inspiration, and hope in a moment in which weakness, cynicism, and despair seem so easy to surrender to?

If the world must change radically—as soon as possible—how, then, must the usual ways of being and doing be changed to enable life on this planet for future generations of humans and nonhumans alike? What role could culture play in this shift? This text explains the reasoning and context behind a project I've developed called the T-Serai (Textile System for Experimentation and Research in Artistic Impact). Created by the MIT Future Heritage Lab, it explores how art and design can offer creative and critical tools to not only expose global inequalities and amplify the voices of those who have been silenced, but to also imagine and create alternative futures.

I suggest that we learn from people who struggle to create a life worth living in conditions that deprive them of any sense of agency: from the thousands and thousands of people who are forcefully displaced every day around the globe. To that end, I will outline some perspectives that I gained from collaborating with displaced Syrians in various desert camps in Jordan, together with the Jordanian and Palestinian members of the host community and the international researchers from the Future Heritage Lab. During the past six years, we have been conducting research and producing educational and creative projects in the Azraq and Zaatari camps in Jordan.[1] Collaborating across political, cultural, and disciplinary borders, we hoped to trace elements of possible futures in our present moment that could prepare us for the challenges of the world to come. These insights informed our various responses to conflict and crisis at the intersection of art, design, and cultural preservation.

Toward Cultural Shelters

I would like to start with an image of "future heritage" that, to my mind, most powerfully exemplifies the problems, paradoxes, and opportunities of the contemporary moment. The image depicts a sandcastle built by a Syrian refugee in front of his shelter in the Azraq Refugee Camp in Jordan. The sandcastle looks like a model of the famous Palmyra arch that ISIS destroyed in 2015. It stands in front

A sandcastle stands in front of standardized humanitarian T-shelters, Azraq Refugee Camp, Jordan, 2017. Photo: MIT Future Heritage Lab.

of a standardized steel shelter, the ubiquitous so-called T-shelter, built by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to house displaced Syrians who were arriving in Jordan on a daily basis during the years 2016–17, in search of safety.

The Azraq Refugee Camp was established by UNHCR in 2014 as a response to the overflow of the previously established Zaatari camp.[2] Located ninety kilometers from the Syria-Jordan border, the Azraq camp shelters almost thirty-eight thousand people.[3] Jordan is the second-largest refugee host country in the world after Turkey,[4] and the Zaatari refugee camp is the largest in the country, accommodating almost eighty thousand Syrian refugees.[5] Different from the organic urban growth of the Zaatari camp, the Azraq camp appears much more rigidly structured. It is a centrally planned, closed camp administered by the UNHCR under the regulations of the Jordanian government's Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate. From a distance, the camp looks like an endless grid of white containers, bordered by an infinite fence, and surrounded by nothing but the sand of the Eastern Desert. The barren landscape extends to the horizon, and temperatures reach 118°F (47°C) in the summer. Among the fifteen other refugee camps in Jordan, Azraq is the most representative example of institutional humanitarian infrastructure. It constitutes what the humanitarian field considers an advancement in governance, security, and design. Local guidelines prohibit the building of permanent structures and the planting of crops, and limit the customization of interior spaces.

This image of the sandcastle is striking because in it one sees the juxtaposition of two types of shelters. The white, steel T-shelter in the background epitomizes the established response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Beyond claiming to fulfill the housing needs of refugees, the T-shelter is an icon of the global politics of inequality, echoing the parameters that shape the established (capitalist) approach to humanitarian design based on efficiency, security, control, and surveillance. Such an approach reduces the conception of a human being to their biological needs, such as the need for food and for a roof over one's head. The DIY sandcastle in the foreground represents a different idea: self-determined shelter that prioritizes cultural and emotional needs. Built from sand, the only surplus material in the desert, this

counter-model to the ready-made steel box is fragile, porous, and handmade. It is a type of shelter that humanizes humanitarian aid by putting art, culture, and creativity at the forefront of humanitarian relief. The same material also points to possibilities of future construction that is informed by transcultural heritage and that allows for coexisting sustainably with nonhuman beings.

Considering the unprecedented existential threats posed by climate change, the scarcity of resources, and the ever-increasing number of forcefully displaced people that at this point have surpassed eighty million worldwide, we must ask ourselves which type of future heritage we want to build today.[6] Is the T-shelter really the best we can offer to protect the bodies of displaced people in the present and in the future?

MIT Future Heritage Lab, Displaced Empire, 2021. Tent made of humanitarian textiles, discarded clothes, military camouflage mesh, and a modified carport. Installation view of Co-habitats, 17th International Architecture Exhibition, la Biennale di Venezia 2021. Photo: MIT Future Heritage Lab, 2017.

Building Future Heritage

To explore how art and design might inform the creation of a future heritage that is more empathetic and more caring of our collective body—a term I use to refer to global society, including its most vulnerable human and nonhuman members—I introduce the T-Serai (Textile System for Experimentation and Research in Artistic Impact), a portable palace that draws from the arts and crafts of various cultural traditions that have served shared causes. The project includes a tent prototype that is used for exhibitions, as well as co-creation workshops in various locations, during which participants engage in transcultural exchange by creating their own textile prototypes. Taken together, the architectural, material, and pedagogical dimensions of the project outline a culturally sensitive, socially inclusive, and environmentally conscious framework for humanitarian design

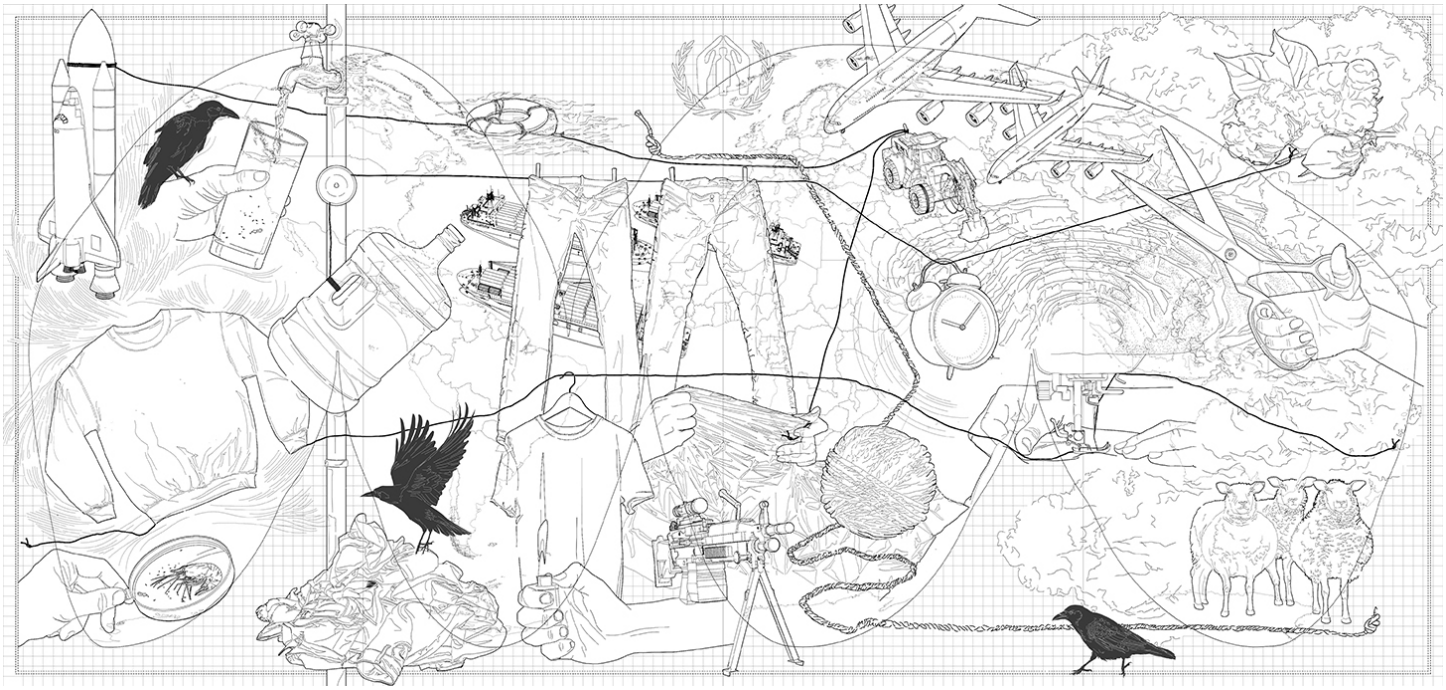
The modular tapestries of the T-Serai are created from upcycled humanitarian textiles. They can be used to insulate and personalize refugee shelters, preserve cultural memory, and inspire hope. The tapestries can also be used for mobile storage, or to set up tents for social gatherings. The tent, produced as an exhibition piece, represents a visual critique of humanitarian design by positioning culture as an essential human need.

Building on legacies of participatory art and interrogative design, the T-Serai workshops connect people across borders to explore how the past might inform the present to shape a better future. The material dimension of the project incites contemplation and offers a critique of the social and environmental costs of our consumer lifestyle. Through the upcycling of discarded clothes, the project probes how the overproduction of the global textile industry could provide a resource to support the social revitalization of communities affected by war.

Displaced Empire

Presented as a mobile installation and exhibition piece—currently on view at the “Co-Habitats” section of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia 2021—the tent speculates about the collective body in a near-future world in which the majority of people have been forcibly displaced.[7] The Azraq Refugee Camp has become the capital of a new sociopolitical entity called the “Displaced Empire.” The displaced people have become the dominant and ruling class. The T-Serai represents the Empire’s headquarters; it is a portable palace that collapses different timescales into one imploded form. The design is informed by the longer cultural history of empires and the ongoing inventiveness of people living at the Azraq camp. The tent shape is a hybrid of an Ottoman imperial tent (serai) and the UNHCR’s T-shelter. The imperial aesthetic is reflected in the interior panels that feature repetitive patterns of arches with lanterns, in a color scheme of red and gold. The interior space is reminiscent of the palatial tent complexes of Ottoman sultans. These complexes had multiple functions, providing storage for holy relics, serving as the sultan’s treasury, fulfilling important representational roles—anything the sultan might have needed.

Imperial “almanacs” that hang from the side panels of the tent feature drawings laser-burned on denim. These drawings depict various DIY modifications made to the Azraq camp’s architecture in the past (our present), highlighting the fascinating inventions created by displaced Syrians. These inventions reveal the cultural, emotional, and architectural needs of displaced people



MIT Future Heritage Lab, Process Drawing, 2019. CAD drawing, dimensions variable. The drawing depicts the environmental footprint and social cost of materials used for the T-Serai panels, pointing to our global connectedness and interdependencies.

within a context of scarcity, trauma, confinement, and struggle for a future. By altering and domesticating the standardized humanitarian T-shelters, displaced Syrians humanize humanitarian architecture, using art and design as a medium of self-determination and world-building.

Viewers learn from the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Azraq camp's former residents—people like Wael, a young man born in Syria who grew up in the Azraq camp and sought to defy his daily reality. Despite his confinement, Wael managed to create a life worth living by building new friendships with other young people—people like Jar, who landed in the camp after being displaced from Syria. Jar dropped out of school because he did not see how traditional education could improve his future. Nonetheless, he figured out how to combat the unbearable heat of the T-shelters with DIY air conditioners and water fountains he made from shisha pipes, and he taught others in the camp how to build these things too. Wael conquered the 2021 Olympics in Japan, winning the gold medal in tae kwon do. Both Wael and Jar are protagonists of a growing population of new nomads with fractured histories and hybrid cultural identities.

A Socially Inclusive Modular System

The T-Serai panels reference the T-shelter modifications made by Azraq camp residents to personalize the standardized dwellings. As I mentioned earlier, the refugee camps are mostly planned according to paradigms of security and efficiency. This is not surprising considering the type of a crisis they are designed for, when thousands of people are arriving at a place on a daily basis. How might one accommodate their needs quickly? It is difficult to address the multiple aspects of this problem, be it politics, logistics, or economics, not to mention the emotional challenges of traumatized people who are left with nothing but bare life.

In light of these challenges, it is imperative to take into account culturally sensitive issues, like privacy concerns and the need for social connection—issues that rarely figure into humanitarian design. Standardized humanitarian shelters ignore the culturally specific spatial organization of the domestic environment in terms of gender, age, and privacy. In addition, although humanitarian agencies offer spaces dedicated specifically to sports, learning activities, and events, refugee camps lack dedicated spaces for socializing, and they often prohibit the erecting of culturally specific infrastructure. The modular tapestries can help overcome the deficiencies of T-Shelters by serving as space dividers, wall insulation, and even mobile storage. With its socially inclusive and culturally sensitive design, the T-Serai counters the logic of the T-Shelter, offering alternative architectures for displaced people, inspired by displaced people themselves—specifically, the Syrian refugees of the Azraq Refugee Camp. Above all, the T-Serai deploys culturally sensitive design as both a form of inquiry and a critique, positioning culture as an essential human need.

Abundance and Scarcity

The exterior of the T-Serai tent uses various humanitarian textiles—wool and mylar from blankets, fabric from clothing donations—as a way to reflect on surplus and scarcity in the world of displacement. All refugee camps in the world have one big problem in common: trash. Not just the trash that the camps produce, but also the trash sent to them, the trash of the world disguised as humanitarian donations. The T-Serai is made of trash in a way that turns the careless discarding of waste into the valuable production of meaningful new cultural items. This type of upcycling is inspired by textile traditions from around the world, such as the Japanese boro technique and African-American appliqué. Many of these traditions link the patching and fixing old clothes to social bonding and the strengthening of community.

On a global scale, the project critiques the social and environmental costs of our consumer lifestyle. Many of us are guilty of buying fast-fashion items and then throwing them away when they get worn out or when we gain weight. Some of these trashed clothes might get recycled or resold, but much of it ends up in our atmosphere after being shipped to recycling facilities and burned. What isn't burned gets sent to places like Bangladesh and India, where certain villages specialize in shredding these fabrics and turning them into refugee blankets, thus closing the global loop of abundance and scarcity.

Textile manufacturing is among the most lucrative and polluting industries in the world: more than eighty billion square meters of unsold garments end up in landfills or get burned. When demand is lower than expected, leftover stock is channeled into the parallel economy of stock destruction, which works to control prices. Critiquing this wasteful capitalist strategy, the T-Serai probes how the overproduction of the global textile industry could be used to help revitalize communities affected by war. The T-Serai panels turn clothing donations into a resource for the refugee-led improvement of humanitarian architecture.

The materials used for the T-Serai panels and tapestries are humanitarian core relief items (CRI), including donated clothing that goes unused by refugees because it is culturally inappropriate. The layering of these fabrics is used to create appealing patterns, but it also increases thermal comfort without the need for air conditioning. The tapestries reduce absorbed solar radiation and the subsequent re-radiation of heat into the interior. The construction of the tapestries requires minimal low-tech infrastructure.

From the choice of materials to its manufacturing and construction, the T-Serai incorporates measures to ensure economic viability and environmental sustainability. Surplus textile material found locally is used to manufacture modular insulating tapestries. For refugees in camps, local employment opportunities are limited. The textile sector is one the few places where Syrian refugees in Jordan are allowed to work. The T-Serai framework allows refugees to use the skills they develop in textiles jobs to transform the built environment of their camp. The T-Serai promotes new ethical standards for socially inclusive design and supports the cultural resilience of threatened communities.

MIT Future Heritage Lab collaborators and students, T-Serai modules, 2019. Photomontage of T-Serai panels designed by various participants in a workshop held by MIT, American University Sharjah, and Zaatari Refugee Camp. Photo: MIT Future Heritage Lab, 2019.

Co-creation Across Borders

Through transdisciplinary design processes and cross-generational knowledge exchange, the T-Serai project helps preserve the living culture and social relations of communities threatened with erasure. Besides collaborating with displaced Syrians in Jordan, the project organizes students from the USA, Europe, and the UAE to engage in cross-cultural co-creation. This multi-directional exchange of knowledge among participants from different backgrounds advances pluralism and self-determination.

The reverse-appliqué technique of the T-Serai panels borrows from the rich appliqué traditions of the MENA (Middle East North Africa) region, including the Egyptian *khayamiya* technique, which uses intricate patterns and sophisticated craftsmanship to decorate the interiors of tents. One of the better known examples of appliqué technique from the region, *khayamiya* is known for its symmetrical designs and beautiful vegetal patterns. *Khayamiya* textiles can still be purchased along the Street of the Tentmakers in Cairo.

Textiles use iconography and ornament to express cultural identity and history. Creators of T-Serai panels use textiles to record their personal stories and preserve cultural memory. The panels also highlight the dialogic dimension of textile patterns from neighboring countries, and promote knowledge transfer among participants from different backgrounds.

To conclude, I would like to share a few stories from students of mine who created their own tent panels:

"My grandmother was a known seamstress. She often made a piece of clothing called a *Quechquemitl*, a shawl-like garment sewn together from two pieces of rectangular cloth. The *Quechquemitl* has been worn by indigenous people in Mexico since pre-Hispanic times. Women from various traveling communities often share cross-stitching techniques and unique patterns from their indigenous groups. Since the colonial period, the *Quechquemitl* has been popularized. For my T-Serai panel, I sought to preserve and develop the common yet intricately beautiful embroidery patterns of the *Quechquemitl*."
—Alejandro Gonzalez-Placito

"My tapestry is inspired by the carpet-weaving tradition of Pirot, a town in Southern Serbia. I grew up with these carpets, which are called *ćilimi*. The world *ćilim* comes from the Farsi *gelim* and the Turkish *kilim*. The specific Pirot tradition was influenced by both Ottoman carpets and Bulgarian *chiprovtsi* carpets. My design looks at the ornamental symbols of *kornjača* and *sofra*. Although I was specifically inspired by the Serbian tradition, the influences of these symbols span across Europe and the Middle East."
—Alexander Boccon-Gibod

"My tent panel tells the story of the Kazakh people through the ornamental symbology of the yurt, which reflects the nomadic Kazakh lifestyle. The *shanyrak* symbol sewn into the center of the panel was a family heirloom passed down from generation to generation. It represents the hospitality and openness of the Kazakh people and also recalls their strong ties to their roots. My design seeks to make visible the changes that Kazakh migratory life has experienced under various ruling states, and draw connections to the challenges of displaced Syrians today."

—Jierui Fang

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The findings and designs presented in this essay build on my collaborative writing with Melina Philippou and on multi-annual research conducted by various researchers at the MIT Future Heritage Lab, together with outside collaborators. For the full list of credits, please see the list of collaborators with the T-Serai project: https://www.futureheritagelab.com/projects#/tserai/ .

2
Jordan currently hosts approximately 2.9 million Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, and Somali refugees. About 85 percent of the 654,700 Syrian refugees are urban based, with the remaining population living in camps. UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019* , unhcr.org, 3, 20 https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019 .

3
"Jordan: Azraq Camp Factsheet (July 2020)," UNHCR Operational Data Portal https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/78179 .

4
"Jordan: Azraq Camp Factsheet (July 2020)," 20.

5
"Jordan: Za'atari Camp Fact-sheet (January 2020)," UNHCR Operational Data Portal https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/73845 .

6
UNHCR, "Forced Displacement Passes 80 Million by Mid-2020 as COVID-19 Tests Refugee Protection Globally," unhcr.org, December 9, 2020 https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/12/5fcf94a04/forced-displacement-passes-80-million-mid-2020-covid-19-tests-refugee-protection.html#:~:text=While%20a%20full%20picture%20for,displacement%20released%20today%20in%20Geneva .

7
See https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2021/co-habitats .

Jela Krečič

Cancelling Art: From Populists to Progressives

According to the Slovene philosopher Mladen Dolar, the Covid pandemic acts like a magnifying glass that exposes and magnifies the more dire antagonisms in contemporary societies, from rising social inequality and the increased exploitation of women to contemporary forms of racism. It's hard to judge if Covid-19 also amplified latent and already visible antagonisms within the art system all around the world. One could argue that the lockdown and the standstill brought to light certain vulnerabilities of the art system, especially the precarious positions of artists and other workers in art institutions—many of whom were laid off and denied compensation or left without labor protections because they were in flexible or freelance positions. On the other hand, without the audience and global events that usually invigorate the art world, the pandemic enabled the possibility for many cultural workers, including artists, critics, writers, and all who engage in art discourse, to take a step back and analyze some intriguing conditions in the art sphere that point to broader sociopolitical phenomena.

Art for Populists

In January 2021, the Slovene ambassador to Rome, Matjaž Kunstelj, revoked the embassy's endorsement of the upcoming exhibition "Bigger than Myself: Heroic Voices from ex-Yugoslavia," curated by Zdenka Badovinac at the National Museum of 21st-Century Arts (MAXXI) in the Italian capital. He retracted his support because the exhibition didn't agree with the ambassador's notion of an appropriate celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia. The ridiculous part of the story is that the exhibition never intended to address either Slovenia or its historic accomplishments; in fact, it was planned years before, delayed only because of the pandemic, and meant to historicize and document the art scene of the former Yugoslavia, expressed through its relations in a wider Mediterranean region. The other ridiculous detail to this story is that neither the embassy nor the ambassador were asked to endorse the exhibition in the first place. Thus, it seems that there was a certain urgency on the ambassador's part to publicly share his (artistic) sentiments, not realizing that his take on the role of art would jeopardize his stance in the diplomatic community. The whole situation is best described as embarrassing: embarrassing for the ambassador and therefore for Slovenia itself, which appeared as tone-deaf to the functioning of art as well as to foreign politics, especially given that the Slovene foreign ministry and the ministry of culture endorsed the ambassador's decision.

The whole event unveiled the pitiful conditions of Slovene domestic and foreign affairs today, but more importantly, it also disclosed a specific right-wing populist stance towards art—namely, that it should function as nationalist propaganda. It therefore came as no surprise that on Prešeren Day, the Slovene national holiday on the eighth of February dedicated to celebrating art and culture, the

Bigger than Myself: Heroic Voices from ex-Yugoslavia, 2021, curated by Zdenka Badovinac. Installation view, MAXII, Rome, Italy.

Slovene prime minister Janez Janša reprimanded all artists in the country who, as he put it, were enhancing divisions and hatred in Slovenia during the pandemic. "From culture, which is the key to nation's spiritual existence and as such a source of people's power when faced with dire challenges, I would expect a different, more state-building attitude."[1]

And there we have it: the times are crucial and difficult, so artists should not take advantage of their freedom; they should not contemplate their precarious situation, but rather try to help the state prop up its image. That is the position of today's right-wing populists. Moreover, one can see that challenging and antagonistic art—art that does not actively serve state-building purposes—is not welcome in Slovenia, or at least not eligible for state funding.

This is just one case of a right-wing, populist government in Europe executing its power in the domain of art. By prescribing the roles of art and artists, it has joined frightening nationalist tendencies in several countries in Eastern and Central European, from Hungary and Poland to Serbia to Slovenia.

The strains of populism coming from the above-mentioned countries are explicitly critical of former authoritarian communist regimes and former communists, while their strategies—although in the service of a different ideology—are almost identical to those of past totalitarian rulers. That said, one must realize that in the former Yugoslavia, at least in the eighties, many forms of dissidence, including controversial art, were more or less tolerated or even endorsed by the Communist Party. So one has to conclude that the right-wing populists in Eastern Europe are adopting even more hardline maneuvers than their authoritarian communist predecessors. Like the former ruling authoritarian Communist Party, today's right-wing populists think that art should empower the state and celebrate the nation or the regime. In both cases, art has a clear task provided by the governing party, and the art community must adhere to it. Those in power today believe that the art sphere should not have autonomy because it is largely subsidized by public money (at least in Slovenia); art must serve the rulers' agendas. It shouldn't surprise us that these populists so often rail against disciplines that challenge such an understanding of power. The political agenda overrides any professional objection. And, of course, if you

are not satisfied by the rulers' decisions, you can always try out your artistic or other ideas on the open marketplace. To emphasize how much this political line has strayed from the most modest democratic standards would be to state the obvious. However, at least in Slovenia, one should take notice of how quickly the transition from a relatively normal-functioning art system to a populist one took place over the course of the last year or so since the current government came to power.

Preemptive Cancellation

At the end of last year, another story came out that raises parallel concerns while demonstrating a different form of (self-)censorship. The National Gallery of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Tate Modern decided to postpone an exhibition of Philip Guston's work titled "Phillip Guston Now." Guston needs no introduction as he is considered one of the greatest American painters of the twentieth century. From very early on in his adult life, in the early 1930s, he was an avid civil rights activist, when such engagement was not yet fashionable but highly risky. Later, in the sixties, he produced paintings that depicted members of the Ku Klux Klan. These works can be understood as a critical reaction to white supremacy based on Guston's firsthand experiences of extreme American racism, which he endured as a Jew. The leaders of the four acclaimed institutions expressed concern that, in a time of the Black Lives Matter movement, Guston's images could trigger people of color and activists for black liberation. Kaywin Feldman of the NGA, Matthew Teitelbaum of the MFA Boston, Gary Tinterow of the MFA Houston, and Frances Morris of the Tate Modern explained that they decided to postpone the exhibition "until a time at which we think that the powerful message of social and racial justice that is at the center of Philip Guston's work can be more clearly interpreted."[2]

It has become abundantly clear how "politically correct" discourse and the sensibilities of so-called "cancel culture" have become tools of the art-system hierarchy, enhancing an image of museums' self-doubt and self-reflection. As much writing by contemporary activists and theorists of black liberation show, this is only a cosmetic reaction. The new social climate demands that the artistic sphere recognize its blind spots and start accepting those who were systematically excluded from museum collections, exhibitions, and canons. To a certain extent, one can only commend the few art institutions that admitted that the art system was almost always a willing accomplice to dominant social power structures and their accompanying ideology. Now some have started to rethink and rebuild their collections and exhibitions more and more from the point of view of those without power, though many have opted for cosmetic rather than structural changes, as seen in the Guston fiasco.[3]

I believe it is important for art institutions to contemplate

Philip Guston, Courtroom, 1970. Oil on canvas. Copyright: The Estate of Philip Guston. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth.

their role in the (re)production of social antagonisms, though I don't believe "political correctness" can contribute to any relevant systemic change. The main goal of this type of liberal, representational politics is to satisfy the prescribed demands of the enlightened liberal elite while the power structure of the museums, including the art market and capitalism, remain unscathed. One could also speculate whether and to what extent the museums' new politics further enrichment the elite—under the umbrella of diversity.[4]

But my dispute with the four museums does not concern their sensitivity to what has become known as "cancel culture." I can accept that institutions, especially if they want to flourish in a wider social environment, have to communicate with their audiences. However, in the case of Philip Guston, I was alarmed by the preemptive withdrawal of the exhibition. Before there was any protest, before there were any offended individuals on the horizon, the museums already decided to wait for a more suitable time, which will allegedly secure "a clearer interpretation" of Guston's work. In this respect, the four eminent institutions de facto subordinated themselves and their programs to a standard that has very little to do with art (or social justice), and that they themselves remain the progenitors of. And not only that: they are subordinating art to a standard that cannot stand as a standard. It is more a subjective whim that can come from anyone in any given moment without any reason or argumentation, based solely on a the kind of feeling usually formulated in a Twitter rant. Furthermore, does any work of art, even the oldest of masterpieces, have "a clear interpretation"? The only art that has a clear interpretation is either art conceived and promoted by totalitarian regimes (Hitler's and Stalin's come to mind) or commercial art: graphic design and advertising. With these two examples in mind, there are connections to be drawn between the way liberal forms of museum self-censorship operate and the way several countries in Eastern and Central European have begun to troll and withdraw funding for non-nationalist art.

The Politics of a Cemetery

I have always considered museums as essential to any society because they present very specific types of artifacts and knowledge to the public. The workforces in museums—the curators and all of those who take care of and preserve collections, who create and design catalogs, the writers and the critics, the cleaners, programmers, educators, and guards—are the backbone of art. They guarantee (at least ideally) that the works on display or in the collection are carefully chosen and studied for the benefit of public. The institution stands for these choices, investigations, and explorations of art.

I would like to further elaborate this point by referring to Boris Groys's essay "On Art Activism," in which he compares museums to cemeteries. Museums, he claims, mortify objects. A certain artifact loses its function the moment it enters the museum. However, he finds this function of the museum to be its most important. Contrary to our everyday reality, to our consumer culture, and to cutting-edge designs and new technological "breakthroughs" that profess to improve our daily lives, the museum gives up on ideals (of progress) in advance:

> The aim of design is to change reality, the status quo—to improve reality, to make it more attractive, better to use. Art seems to accept reality, the status quo, as it is. But art accepts the status quo as dysfunctional, as already failed, from the revolutionary or even postrevolutionary perspective … By defunctionalizing the status quo, art prefigures its coming revolutionary overthrow. Or a new global world. Or a new global catastrophe.[5]

Art institutions, therefore, enable us to look at things critically; they make us see the status quo as already failed, and its every improvement as a sign of impending doom. In other words, they demand that viewers give up their many prejudices (about art and life) and look at the collected items from a different perspective. In the museum, visitors are not strictly reduced to consumers and they are not "to be consumed." Going to an art museum is a complete waste of time (and usually money), but this is its most important quality in an era where everything and everyone has to be accounted for. In museums, viewers confront times and spaces from the past; they can acknowledge corpses (artifacts) of our civilization in new ways, and maybe even realize that our global civilization is already a corpse, at least in some respects. In a museum's dedication to the defunctionalization of artifacts, one can indeed find its most political dimension: the museum engages people differently than supermarkets or any other consumerist institution.

To put it in another way, museums conform to different standards of exhibiting and engaging with audiences, so they should be given the benefit of the doubt. One has to assume that the works on display were selected by professionals who followed professional procedures and codes. And one has to assume that the artworks are not exhibited to hurt anyone's feelings, although they may (intentionally or not) provoke strong emotions.[6]

This does not mean that one has to agree with a museum's selection, its collection, or its exhibitions. A museum should challenge viewers, it should provoke polemics. However, these polemics should be articulated in a reasonable fashion: not through "cancelling." Self-censorship based on the presumption that someone might be offended by the professional work of an artist and of museum employees goes against the mission of both art and museums, and against public wellbeing too. Moreover, one could argue that cancel culture prevents real political change by trying to use cosmetic reforms to address deep social injustice, thereby sweeping that injustice under the rug. One can only imagine how the art world would look if all its constitutive elements were judged from the point of view of their possible offensiveness, potential harm, toxicity, etc. I am quite confident that there would hardly be any art left, historical or contemporary.

If one part of my argument against canceling Guston and cancel culture in general is based on the function of museums, the other part concerns the function of artworks. I would argue that in modern Western history, the prevailing function of art was to be offensive to dominant sensibilities. In the modern age, art was never created to make people feel good, to further their well-being, to reinforce their prejudices; on the contrary, it undermined established aesthetics and sometimes prevailing social values and orders through the function of the works' production and reception. To demand that art be non-offensive, polite, and all-inclusive, that it conform to fashionable social norms and sensibilities, is to deprive it of its main power: to challenge the constraints of our senses, our sensibilities, our minds, and our world. No one can prescribe in advance what a good piece of art is, or what its effect is going to be; no one can say what kind of art resonates with the challenges of our reality. This is exactly the reason why we should restrain ourselves from imposing any such restrictions on art, and rather focus on allowing art to challenge dominant forms of power, aesthetics, and violence. Constraining it for the wrong reasons—for example, to fulfill liberal notions of self-censorship and to avoid controversy—is in some ways to do something very similar to what the populists are doing—the only difference being the criteria for cancellation: populists cancel art that isn't sufficiently nationalistic, while institutions that pretend to be "progressive" cancel art that they construe as potentially harmful to viewers, while inflicting actual harm on these viewers through their connections to systems of global

violence. Instead of heeding and responding to the legitimate demands of liberation movements, such forms of cancel culture take the place of structural changes and produce a patina of progressiveness.

Judging What's Cancelled

Here I would like to turn to Kant's conception of aesthetic judgment, i.e., judgment of taste. Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment is a useful tool for examining the destructive effects of so-called cancel culture. It also offers a way forward. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant writes:

> If [someone] pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Hence he says that the *thing* is beautiful, and does not count on the agreement of others with his judgment of satisfaction because he has frequently found them to be agreeable with his own, but rather *demands* it from them. He rebukes them if they judge otherwise, and denies that they have taste, for he nevertheless requires that they ought to have it; and to this extent one cannot say, "Everyone has his special taste." This would be as much as to say that there is no taste at all, i.e. no aesthetic judgment that could make a rightful claim to the assent of everyone.[7]

Kant's argument about aesthetic judgment here seems contradictory. If judgments of taste are based on the pleasure or displeasure of the individual, then they are judgments based on subjective feelings. At the same time, these kinds of judgments demand the assent of others, meaning that aesthetic judgments are subjective but also seek universal acceptance. How does one understand this? I believe Kant's point is actually very coherent. The field of beauty (or ugliness) is a unique one. Viewers approach it with the subjective senses that they possess (feelings of pleasure or displeasure), but to debate these feelings they have to elaborate judgments in a way that can be endorsed by all reasonable people.

Kant implies that the *form* of aesthetic judgment has to be inclusive of everyone. (He stresses that acknowledging everyone's "taste" isn't possible, since if it were, we would not be able to talk of taste at all.) So in an aesthetic judgment, one has to mold one's immediate impulse (a feeling) into a form that can be understood by anyone. This doesn't mean that everyone has to agree, but it does mean that everyone should be able to understand and respond to it. Its (inclusive) form is agreeable to everyone, although some can passionately disagree with its content.

Although some things grouped under the label "cancel culture" are on the right side of liberation, too often they take an individual impulse (pleasure, displeasure) and express it in a form that destroys social bonds. Kant's notion of aesthetic judgment is rooted in the perspective of a social, communal, public good. You are allowed to disagree, but your disagreement must come in a form that does not diminish our common public domain.

At its worst, cancel culture can be a force of social disintegration. Anyone who feels offended can launch a violent verbal attack and demand that this or that problematic artifact be removed. The aggressiveness of cancel culture seems radical to liberal sensibilities, when in fact it is not radical enough. Instead of supporting real processes of radical change or heeding the demands of liberation movements, it covers up social problems with mandates for capitalist "diversity, equity, and inclusion." The problem is not just the violent single-mindedness of this sort of judgment, but also the presumption that the "I" is always right, and that this "I" has a right to claim its right. For the agents of cancel culture, their right, and being right, is the goal in itself. It doesn't matter to them if the form of their judgement is destructive. Kant argued the opposite: it is not important to be right (to have a correct judgment); what's important is to have the right form of judgment (a Universal form), regardless of the substance.

One can of course debate furiously with directors of major museums and demand that they respond. However, the form of criticizing museums cannot be just a slur or an angry complaint. If it is, the museums are not obliged to respond.

I find Kant's reasoning productive not only for the contemporary art field but also for the field of politics. It is not enough for a given political struggle to be "right"; the form of struggle is crucial. Any progressive political project requires not just the "right" political agenda, but also on the "right" political form. If it is to be genuinely political, if it is to deliver meaningful systemic change, its form has to be an inclusive form. We might also say, in a further extension of Kant's argument on aesthetic judgment, that this inclusive form is the only way to fight the dangerous forces of contemporary right-wing populism.

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The prime minister's address is available here: https://www.gov.si/novice/2021-02-08-predsednik-vlade-janez-jansa-kultura-je-eden-kljucnih-temeljev-slovenske-nacije-in-samostojne-slovenske-drzave/ .

2
The public statement is available here: https://www.nga.gov/press/exh/5235.html .

3
Contemporary art institutions can simultaneously celebrate politically correct agendas and guarantee that the wider political power structure (along with its antagonisms) stays intact. Let us recall the reopening of MoMA in late 2019, when protesters pointed out that the $450 million investment in renovation and expansion of the museum was endorsed by two very problematic board members. Steven Tananbaum's company GoldenTree Asset Management controls over $2.5 billion of Puerto Rico's debt. Board member Larry Fink, CEO of investment management company BlackRock, was scrutinized for his company's investments in private prison companies. For more information on MoMA's problematic sources of financing, see the website of a new coalition of activists targeting MoMA: Strikemoma.org.

4
Before the opening of the renewed and enlarged and diverse MoMA, the employees of the museum protested because of their precarious status within their institution. I believe this is a lovely illustration of how relations of capitalist exploitation can go hand in hand with absolute political correctness and museum diversity politics.

5
Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (Verso, 2017), 54.

6
I am, of course, fully aware that sponsors, donors, and board members of big art institutions dictate museums' programming as well. This is also something that needs to be addressed and taken into account.

7
Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*) (1790; Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98.

Bojana Piškur

Trees, More-Than-Human Collectives

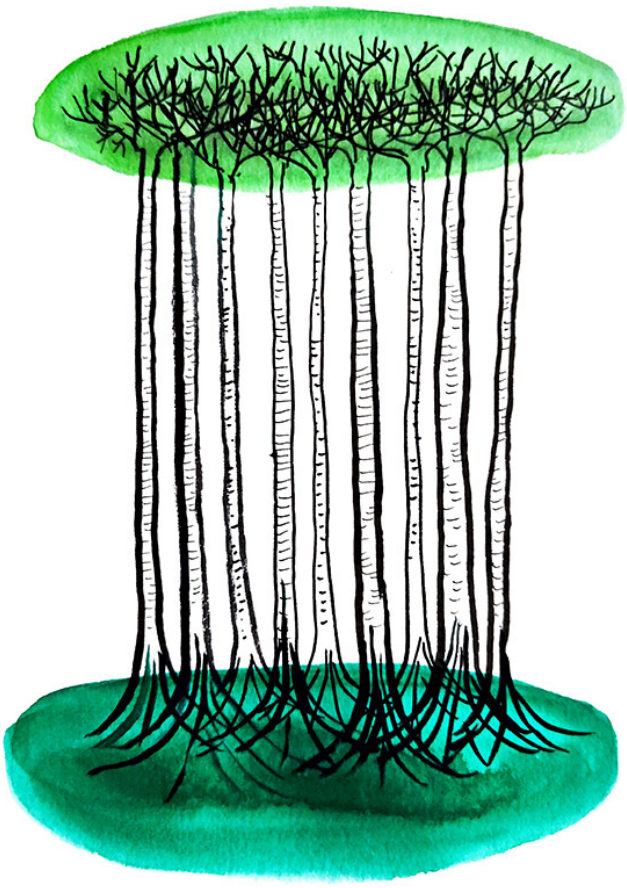
Djordje Balmazović, from the series "More-Than-Human Collectives," 2021.

1.

Since growing up in a small village in the south of Slovenia in the 1970s, I have always been surrounded by forests. Our family has "owned" forests for generations, my father and my siblings have studied forestry, and my grandmother was known in the village for her herbal medicine skills. My father was one of the researchers of the Pečka virgin forest nearby, a very special reserve that includes majestic fir and beech trees. For us, back then, forests were not scary places where one would get lost or die. Throughout history, forests have provided an abundance of food and resources: berries, nuts, mushrooms, beech juice, and animals too. Forests have always been a kind of refuge, for humans and nonhumans alike. During the Second World War, forests protected Yugoslav partisans who were fighting for freedom against the occupying forces. Partisans built hospitals and schools, printed books, and even organized art events in the forests, which provided them with shelter and privacy. There was a special comradeship between forests and partisans; it is not a coincidence that a famous partisan hymn begins: "In the forests and the mountains of our proud country, partisan troops are marching, spreading the glory of struggle!"

About a decade ago, in a place distant from Slovenia, the writer Arundhati Roy spent some time "walking with comrades" through the dense forests of Dandakaranya in central India.[1] These comrades were a troop of indigenous rebels hailing from the Gond, Halba, and Muria tribal communities, and they were fighting state-backed

exploitation, including the destruction of forests, lands, and water. Roy describes how the Indian state's "institutionalizing [of] injustice" affected these groups. The Dandakaranya forest has been a highly contested space for decades, because the corporate appetite for minerals and other resources remains limitless. The tribal communities of the Dandakaranya forest, as well as the tribal communities of the Amazon like the Kayapo, the Arara-Karo, and many others, have been defending rainforests for a long time. Many indigenous people living in forests have a specific relation to nonhuman life there; often they do not distinguish between humans and nonhumans. For these communities, deforestation means losing not only their ancestral home, but also their source of knowledge. The communities living in close relation with these woodlands are aware that, by exploiting forest resources, it is not only human lives that are ruined, but all other life that depends on the forest.



Djordje Balmazović, from the series "More-Than-Human Collectives," 2021.

Humans that are closely entangled with nonhuman environments and attentive to nonhuman life do not need to theorize about any nature-culture division. For others, the concept of nonhuman life and the idea of a more equal or just relation to it causes considerable difficulties. Recent criticism has focused on the way nonhumans are included in discussions of nature, ecology, and climate change. This critique says that speaking for the nonhuman is unproductive, and thinking on their behalf only supports existing humanist ideologies that anthropomorphize and patronize other species. Astrida Neimanis, for one, has written about the ways that nonhuman "others" are represented. She proposes a "representation without colonization," pointing to the questionable ethics and politics of humans who position themselves as spokespeople for nonhuman beings.[2]

Other critics claim that in the current political situation, with the rise of fascism, human-rights violations, new wars, displacement, and migration, times are not ripe for discussions on nonhuman life. With the pandemic, it has become clear that humanity itself is in deep trouble; perhaps humans must first solve their own problems. But the problems of humans are the problems of nonhumans, and vice versa.

As the inhabitants in India's Dandakaranya forests and many other communities living close to forests have always known, everything on the planet is intertwined, and life in all of its dimensions cannot be separated—humans from nonhumans, nature from culture, object from subject, mind from body. As a child I was taught that every single species, even the smallest, has a place in the forest, and humans have no right to destroy that ecological equilibrium. There is no good or bad in the forest; everything there is just the way it should be, and there is no need for human intervention. This is especially the case with virgin (old-growth) forests. Dušan Mlinšek, a forest researcher from Slovenia, spoke in the 1980s about the "true nature of a forest." For him, this "true nature" could be best observed in a virgin forest, an ecological space eternally growing in cyclical patterns, where death and life are intertwined. In other forests where humans have intervened, such cycles are not so visible, since dead trees are cleared and new trees planted. In an old-growth forest, a dead tree can be more abundant with life than a living tree. A forest is not the sum of its tree-parts. It is more than that: an ecosystem based on complex, intertwined relationships among plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, and other organisms.

We need to learn from trees and forests. We need to practice a politics of solidarity with nonhumans. Of course, there are always difficulties with terminology when discussing nonhumans, and "solidarity" in this context might even sound politically problematic. However, this solidarity is not from "above"; it's not pity, sympathy, or Christian love. Rather, it is the kind of solidarity that reaches across racial, class, gender, generational lines, and also across the human-nonhuman divide—the solidarity of "being present in the other."[3] One example of this kind of solidarity is recent multispecies ethnographic

research, which enables humans to envision new ways to comprehend nonhumans. Without this understanding, the only common ground that humans and nonhumans will have is a planetary future without us.[4]

2.

"We are tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles."[5]

Deleuze and Guattari wrote these lines in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in a paragraph concerning a longstanding model of knowledge as hierarchical and tree-like. This model contrasted with the authors' own notion of rhizomatic knowledge. Trees, at least as a philosophical construct, were not something Deleuze and Guattari held in high esteem. They believed trees were *ontologically vertical* and thus could not represent nonhierarchical knowledge.

The other knowledge they spoke of—rhizomatic knowledge—concerned trans-species connections, but was still knowledge produced by and for the human species. To paraphrase Anna Tsing: that *is* actually a limitation, as "we will never have a chance to become trees."[6] It is less difficult than it may seem to bridge the divide between species. Much recent research has shown that trees have much more in common with human and nonhuman species than previously thought.

The relationship between nature and culture, and the so-called division between them, has been a major subject of debate throughout Western history. This endless analysis and negotiation has even been regarded as a kind of "conceptual prison."[7] In the Western tradition, this dualism is for the most part rooted in Enlightenment rationalism, where nature is considered "other" in relation to culture. Many thinkers have recently challenged this assumption, through terms like "transversality" nature-culture "hybridity."[8] Donna Haraway's notion of "making kin" with the more-than-human world takes account of the gendered and racialized aspects of the nature-culture dichotomy.[9] Neimanis writes about "flat ontology," where nature and culture are flattened into one, which is both destabilizing and liberating.[10]

Who is actually given the privilege to speak in the name of nature(s)? What is the right way to "represent" the thing we call "nature"?[11]

What, or even *who*, is a tree?

3.

A paradox: in order to preserve nature, humans must protect it, which in many cases means making it inaccessible to other humans—often at the risk of social

Djordje Balmazović, from the series "More-Than-Human Collectives," 2021.

injustice. Nature reserves around the world are usually based on Western ideas of appreciating nature. These reserves can have adverse consequences for local inhabitants, such as displacement, limiting access to resources, and consequently pushing them into poverty. At the same time, nature is at risk of total destruction at the hands of massive corporations like Rio Tinto, British Petroleum, and Exxon Mobil, which regard nature solely as a source of raw material. Forests continue to be cleared, minerals continue to be extracted, and destructive practices like monocropping continue to expand, which in turn causes pollution, the extinction of plants and animals, and poverty and disease among humans.[12] A recent report concludes that humans are driving up to one million plant and animal species to extinction, at a rate hundred of times higher than the average rate of extinction over the past ten million years.[13]

Today more than 10 percent of the eighty thousand tree species that have been identified are endangered. At least seventy-seven tree species have become extinct in the past hundred years, and over six hundred plant species

have gone extinct in the past two hundred and fifty years. The extinction rate is five hundred times faster than the rate at which plants would be disappearing without human influence.[14] In the Amazon rainforest alone, if deforestation continues at the current rate, more than half of the fifteen thousand tree species there will likely become extinct.[15]

Who is to blame for this destruction? Is it humanity in general, with its ever-increasing material needs satisfied by expanding capitalist production? Or is it the rich and the powerful, who are most responsible for resource extraction? Andreas Malm argues that we need a new politics of nature and ecology—an antagonistic politics—if the current trajectory of extinction and destruction is to be changed. Species-thinking on climate change only induces paralysis, asserts Malm.[16] What he means is that the mainstream narrative on ecological destruction, which naturalizes the capitalist mode of production, implies that all of humanity is equally responsible for the destruction of life on the planet, when it is economic elites who consume the most resources by far.

Slavoj Zižek similarly argues that ecology is one of today's major ideological battlefields. The nature we encounter, he writes, is always already caught in an antagonistic relationship with human labor.[17] Naomi Klein has argued that climate justice should become an aspect of social justice.[18] This move has the potential to change the meaning of both "social" and "justice." Capitalism prevents any kind of meaningful ecological action simply because it is not profitable. As long as discussions on climate change are attuned to the interests of capital, no significant change will happen.

4.

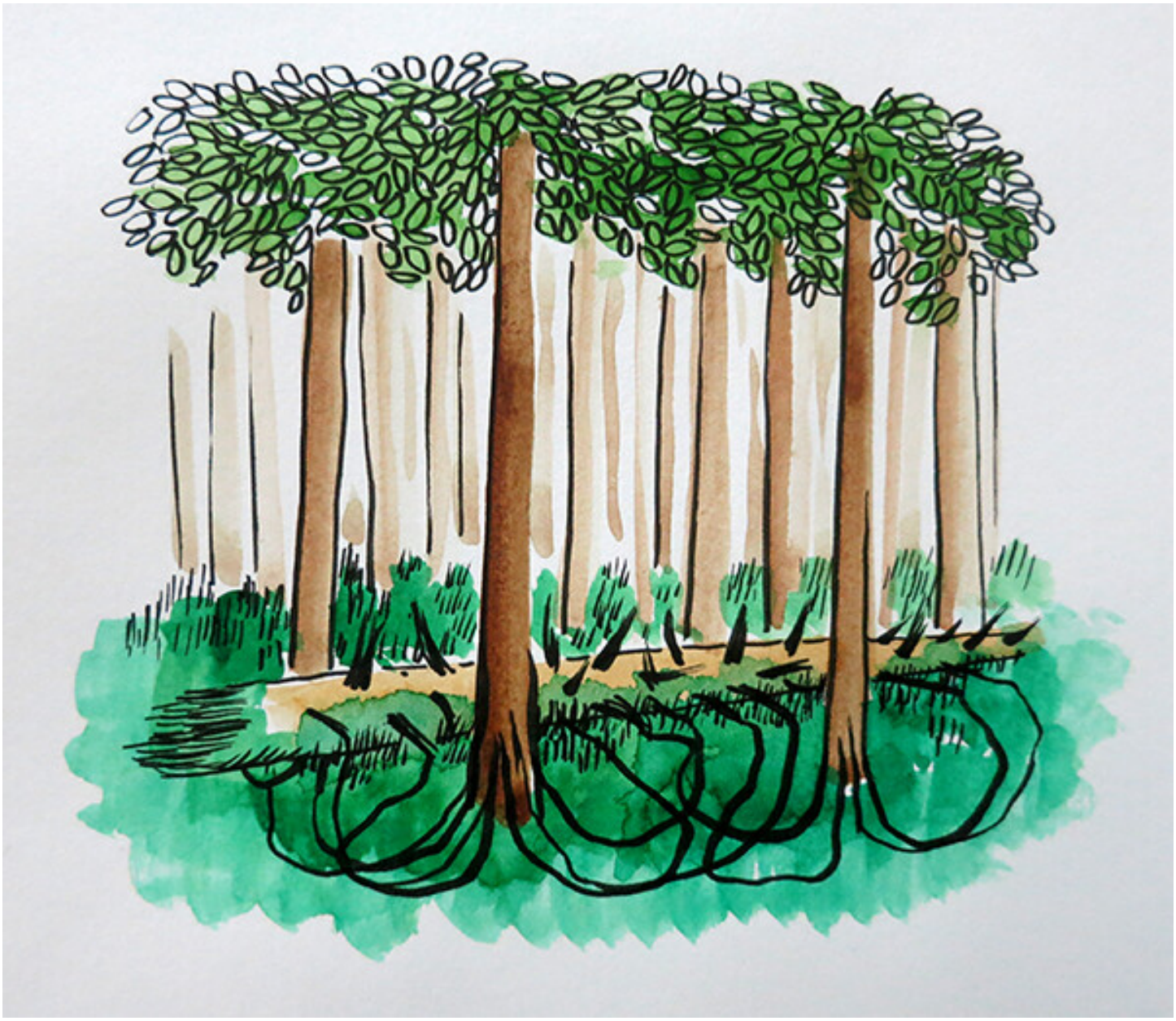
Many human societies have always had a special relationship with trees, plants, animals, and other nonhuman kin. To take trees as an example, people have not only depended on trees for shelter, fuel, and food, but also for medicine and spiritual fulfillment. In many cultures around the world, trees represent an important aspect of communal life; in villages throughout Africa, elders discuss important matters under particular trees, such as baobabs in Madagascar. Until quite recently, in Slovenia the linden tree symbolized the central space of village communities. In traditional Japanese culture, tree spirits, or *kodama* (first mentioned in the eighth-century *Kijiki* chronicle), and holly trees, or *shinboku*, still play an important role in cultural life. Not only are these trees protected in Japan, but knowledge of the trees that *kodama* inhabit is very important for many communities, being passed from one generation to another. Trees have also sometimes been declared monuments, signifying important sites, events, and even people.

We cannot say that trees are actually aware of the *monumentness* imposed on them by humans. The same goes for other human concepts applied to trees, such as "history"—do trees *have* history beyond their human-made ones? What could that history be other than the genetic changes trees have undergone since the first *Archaeopteris* species of proto-tree arose more than three hundred million years ago? What is certain is that trees are without a clear division between life and death, between the present and future, at least not in the same way humans understand these concepts.

A forest is a complex community where trees make up only a portion of the many species. There are different kinds of forests on the planet, from primeval, old-growth forests to commercial forests. Old-growth forests are very diverse, with old and young trees of varying heights clustered unevenly throughout the forest. Such forests are self-sustaining, while commercial forests need constant help from the outside.[19]

Unlike humans under capitalism, trees are not individualistic beings driven by greed to compete with each other for space and resources. Fully grown trees support young seedlings in a shaded understory, while dying trees provide resources for living trees, as well as for fungi, bacteria, bugs, birds, bears, and many other species. When in danger—from insect attack or disease, for example—trees also send out distress signals to other nearby trees. Apparently, the trees synchronize their behavior so that they are all equally successful and the rate of photosynthesis is the same for all.[20] A group of researchers working in the southwestern Pyrenees recently discovered a complementary relationship between different tree species—for example, between pine and beech trees, where growth of both is reduced when intraspecific competition increases.[21] They also noticed that during extreme drought, the number of individual trees may decrease, but tree communities share resources to stay alive.

Scientists have noticed that it is very difficult to distinguish what is actually part of a tree and what is not, as different species crossbreed more than originally thought. Trees form hybrid collectives, involving underground mycorrhizal fungi networks that connect trees, roots, and fungi to one another in a kind of collaborative, self-organized way. This complex assemblage has been termed the "wood wide web."[22] These networks distribute sugar, nitrogen, and phosphorus among trees; some of these networks may be up to 450 million years old. Trees that have access to this network do better; for example, trees connected to mycorrhiza have a higher rate of survival under drought conditions. Suzanne Simard, a leading forest researcher, has pointed out that these networks also have "hub" trees, or "mother" trees, which can be connected to hundreds of other trees.[23] Cooperation over self-interest helps tree communities thrive.



Djordje Balmazović, from the series "More-Than-Human Collectives," 2021.

Forest ecosystems have been affected by trade and transoceanic voyaging for centuries through the introduction of so-called invasive or alien species. Recently the name "new wild" has been used for ecologies created by species that migrate across the globe, losing their habitats and adapting to new ones. Nonhuman migrants and their impacts on ecosystems can be evaluated in a number of ways. Apart from traditional approaches, which monitor and quarantine pests and harmful organisms, repairing the damage in native forests, more recent approaches are based on different principles, such as critical environmental ethics. The field of environmental ethics explores the relationships between humans and nature, the intrinsic value of nature, and the consequences of anthropocentrism—in other words, the "ethical framings of forest health."[24]

There are three ethical frameworks often mentioned in the context of environment ethics.[25] "Biocentrism," developed by Paul Taylor, is a classic approach to forest health management based on a "respect for nature." One tenet of biocentrism is "to avoid restricting the freedom of individual organisms to act and develop in their own way." A second framework, called "entangled empathy," concerns the relationship between parasites (pests, harmful organisms) and hosts (trees)—the disease-causing and the diseased. Developed by Lori Gruen, entangled empathy is an experimental approach focused on "attending to another's experience of well-being," where humans and nonhumans are

intertwined in an active relationship, and where breaking those ties would mean that "our lives would no longer make sense." The third concept is "flourishing," based on the work of Angela Kallhoff, which sees plants as "holding moral status due to their ability to flourish." This approach seeks to grant an ethical status to nonhumans without anthropomorphizing them.

Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that life on this planet also involves the histories and activities of microbial forms of life, of bacteria and viruses, many of which are not friendly to the human form of life.[26] Zoonotic pathogens (such as SARS-CoV-2) that spread among humans do not act intentionally, but in response to the disturbance and destruction of their natural ecosystems. One of the primarily reasons for viral outbreaks in recent years is deforestation (especially of tropical forests), which leads humans to come into contact with "wild" animals, which carry pathogens. But even the idea of "wild" is wrong in this context; it is a construct of human colonizers who believed they had a right to take land from native inhabitants. That's why it's so important to support the indigenous defense of land and forests. In addition, trees are our allies in climate crisis; studies have shown that each year forests absorb between 10 and 15 percent of worldwide carbon emissions. For this reason, 11 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions can be traced back to deforestation and forest degradation account for.[27] The logic is very simple: if forests are destroyed, all life on the planet will sooner or later be gone too.

How do we become better at recognizing "more-than-human" modes of life without anthropomorphizing nonhuman life? How do we practice care, freedom, justice, and equality with nonhumans? How do we mobilize a broad front to demand more just environmental politics?

We should never grow tired of trees, as Deleuze and Guattari did. On the contrary, we should embrace trees. We should speak for them and for nature, "not only in spite of but *because* of the impossibility of the task, even if it is always destined to fail," as Neimanis writes.[28] Realizing that representation can never really be bypassed—we can only speculate about "nature writing itself"—is a crucial part of understanding nonhuman beings and our relationship to them.

X

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Raluca Voinea

Countryside Roads

This text begins with the image of a dirt road snaking between countryside hills and leading to an imaginary farm. In 2020, writer Ema Stere took her pandemic-stranded readers there to tell them about a utopian, inevitably failing community of strangers. This was a group of people united by their unlikely stories, by their complete ignorance of the hardships of living in a rural Romanian village, by an endless winter spent with scarce resources, and by a desire to survive the absurdity of their situation.

> Can you imagine the sight of thirty adults sleeping in three small rooms in a countryside house? Nobody could stretch their legs, we were all branched, jammed into each other like pieces of a puzzle. Someone snuggled on the big table in the dining room, another two were under the table. Some were left in a semi-seated position, leaning against the walls. Two of the Marcelots decided to sleep in the truck. They came back: it was too cold. But somehow, by midnight everyone had fallen asleep.[1]

In socialist Romania of the 1980s, heavy winter snows sometimes shut down the regular commuter buses that carried people from the countryside to the nearest town. At such times, a special fleet of covered, former military 4x4s with wooden benches on each lateral side replaced the buses. People crammed inside with their bags, bumping into each other at every twist in the road. Closed off from the outside world in semi-darkness and forced into heavy sensorial proximity with each other, they remained thankful they did not have to walk for hours in the snow. It seemed that they minded neither the journey nor the companions. There are still many improvised means of collective transportation today, moving people, animals, and objects from one periphery to another, from suburb to village and back. In these temporary autonomous zones on board, distinctions are erased between local and foreigner, humans and hens, luggage and children.

The "Marcelots," as the characters in Ema Stere's novel are called, evoke the image of something that no one believes possible anymore—an image began to fade long before the pandemic regulations took effect. It's the image of bodies touching every square inch of other unknown bodies, overlapping their stories, seeking refuge in the kind of community that can hardly exist these days. Yet they manage to produce, if not the full semblance of such a community, at least the story of how, in order to imagine it, everyone involved has to overcome the pettiness and comfort of their small, individual lives.

Agriculture is what seems to unite these people, but the shared belief that one can live from the land alone often turns out to be a curse. Generations of displaced urbanites

Countryside asphalt road with poplars, 30 km north of Bucharest, May 2021. Photo: Dana Andrei.

have forgotten the wretchedness of country life: they have lost the skills to respond to each season with the appropriate activity, and they have cut ties with their grandparents' knowledge of and bond with the soil. Yet, whenever hard times loom in the horizon; whenever waiting in traffic for hours becomes unbearable; when all the city seems to be doing is waiting for the next fatal earthquake; when the air becomes unbreathable, and not only because of pollution, the dream of rural life lures these city people in again. And for many, 2020 made this choice appear as clear and fresh as a bright country morning.

The only problem is that life in the Romanian countryside has never been idyllic. It is even less so today. An ethno-nationalism that is increasingly pervasive in the public sphere, combined with the Orthodox Church's apparently inescapable grip on every aspect of public and private life, make it hard for many people to make the adjustment from urban anonymity to places where the "voice of the village" reigns, autonomy is restricted by the whims of the weather, and moral enforcement remains a public, collective business. This is a country that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century but is still profoundly racist and segregated, and one in which patriarchy, combined with unemployment and alcohol, makes women's lives cheap and dispensable. Thirty years of dismantling all forms of cooperativism has given rise to an antisocial, if not entirely psychotic, citizenry; ten years of unending protests, motivated by every imaginable discontent—from anti-austerity to labor-union demands, from ecological concerns to anti-corruption campaigns to purely fascist displays of ignorance and hatred—have exhausted the potentially emancipatory aspects of this form of collective struggle. In this place, a choice like leaving the city to live in the countryside is most often associated with escapism, for those who can afford it, and in the end with the abandonment of any hope in the possibility of collective redemption.

In 2020, around seventy-eight thousand people moved to villages from urban centers in Romania, not counting those who returned home from abroad. In itself, this is not a very telling statistic: almost double this number moved the other way around, and compared to other EU countries, Romania still has one of the highest rates of poverty in rural areas. The majority of those deciding to "downshift" to the hills, woods, or plains of a generally very beautiful countryside are members of the middle class who can afford to telework. They want to reconnect with nature, with their families' roots. They take classes on permaculture, they exchange advice, photos, and business ideas with peers on Facebook groups—the most famous of which, "Moved to the Countryside: Life Off the Clock," now counts 147,000 members, having doubled in the year of the lockdown.[2] *The through-line connecting the comments posted in these groups is a desire for solitude. People express their wish to escape not only their hectic urban life, but also their neighbors; not only car exhaust, but also other people's odors on crowded public transit; not only sirens, but also loud music and early morning drilling that rings through apartment walls. Ultimately, these people are chasing an illusion of autonomy. It remains to be seen how many of those growing vegetables by day and posting online advice by night will create communities or integrate with the people they find in their new environs.*

This text continues with the image of another road, one that leaves behind a deadly highway where people shoot each other for water, crosses through vast natural reserves filled with giant sequoias, and turns from asphalt to dirt, losing its trace, hiding from human predators to reveal a farm, whose former inhabitants were killed, which could become a home for a community of survivors. This new home would be built around a symbolic element: the acorn, a seed of hope, a seed for a future life that has time to grow in a world where the right to live is no longer a protected value, where climate change and social inequality have turned each day into an apocalypse. This is the community gathered along the course of a treacherous journey taken by a hyper-empathic teenager named Lauren, the protagonist of Octavia E. Butler's science-fiction novel *The Parable of the Sower*. More than the religious fervor that vibrates in Lauren's guiding words, what carries this group of miserable beings through the end of their journey, as well as beyond the grim hopelessness of their situation, is the promise of the seeds: the life-support they create, the shade they provide, the possibility of total strangers forming a community around their growth. As distant as Butler's Earthseed believers and Ema Stere's Marcelots are from each other, both in terms of the authors' backgrounds and the characters' fictional settings, they share the desperation of people with nothing to lose and the insane belief that maybe they have a chance at collective survival.

But seeds don't always germinate, and communities don't always survive their inner and outer pressures.

In 2018, an artist brought a baby sequoia tree to the garden of an art institution. He proposed measuring the life-promise of this noble being against the precarity of institutions that are forced to bow to the whims of the real estate market, and to count each season of existence as a victory against the system. The little tree spent two years in that garden, growing indiscernibly in its pot, until the art institution left that space. The baby sequoia was relocated to a nearby university's botanical garden, surviving another season and appearing content in the company of its peers. Then it was abruptly killed off by a hot summer during a pandemic year, when schools were closed, teaching shifted online, and hardly anybody was around to make sure that young trees were not left to manage on their own. The little sequoia was not granted time to grow. The art institution did not have the means to cope with its own instability, let alone tend to its nonhuman companions. Not at that time.

Collectivization and industrialized agriculture were types of planned state development situated in the line of modernist thought that held man as the ultimate subjugator of nature. Left on their own without government support, post-1989 peasants were unable to cope with the hectares of land to be cultivated, to do the proper crop rotation to help the soil regenerate, to maintain the irrigation systems or provisions against the increasing unpredictability of the weather. Once Romanian markets opened, the European Union stepped into this fresh territory, filling newly built supermarkets with Belgian cheese, German asparagus, Dutch tomatoes, Spanish strawberries, and Chinese garlic. Now they are giving young Romanian farmers funding to cultivate organic lavender.

Peasants are learning to write grant applications when they're not busy video chatting with their children who are working abroad (many of them gathering strawberries or asparagus in EU fields).

Young and middle-aged countryside transplants begin teaching their own parents about local species of plants, some of them precolonial. They don't plough the land anymore, but plant on raised beds and exchange information about companion plants that keep pests away without destroying the organisms that maintain the soil. As with leftist theories that (re)entered the former socialist countries via Western academia, people are learning about their ancestral, indigenous life visions and practices via worldwide movements toward post-development.

Whether through the advice of grandmothers or the theories of Donna Haraway, compost is now thriving the world over, creating debates among both urban and rural gardeners and leaking its poetry into descriptions of countless exhibitions and biennials. Compost is a community of degrading bodies and newly formed bodies that engage with one another, heating up together to enrich and reproduce the cycle of life. Compost is

Claudiu Cobilanschi, Avanpost Sequoia, featuring Athena Dumitriu, 2018. Tranzit Garden, Bucharest.

pedantry. Farmers and gardeners in the countryside collect animal waste and turn it into fertilizer; they don't necessarily have time to wonder about the moving entities that create life from death. They know it will be their turn to become compost soon enough. Accordingly, burial ceremonies are amongst the strongest community binders in rural villages. Urban services that allow a person to become a tree after death, by providing a prepacked sack where you turn your disposable body into compost, would be laughed off by peasants whose language is loaded with jokes about dying and slang for the four planks of wood between which nature eventually takes them back to the soil. The soil, the ground, the earth is indispensable not only to their vocabulary; it is also part of their collective souls. As artist Anetta Mona Chisa writes:

> *Soil—a word that leaves a flavor in the mouth. Soil, soil, soil. My dear soil, you mean so many things. We even started to verb you and degrade you to something filthy, feculent, contaminated, yucky, abject or morally corrupt. Dirt, shit, mud, muck, dung, crap. I wonder if the language will evolve so that soil will become a swear word. "Soil you!," "You fuckin' soil!," "Soiling shit!" or just "Soil it!" The word "Soil" has a good length and sound for being a juicy curse word. It is a bit softer, less aggressive sounding than "fuck," but it befits better the feeling of disgust and revulsion. Besides the yuck factor it could perform well as a relief interjection. Soil! Or, on the contrary, soil could become so revered by future generations, that the word "soil" would become a word with soothing, caressing connotations, something like "you're the soil of my life," or "having a soiling (embracing) look."*[3]

This text concludes with an asphalt road. It serves as a reminder that we live in post-socialist, still-capitalist times where the comfort of a car is the ultimate sign of achievement in both rural and urban lives. This is the kind of road whose end you don't see; it could take you to the seaside, or to an abandoned village. Either way, you probably don't care anymore.

It is important not to drive alone while traversing it. In previous decades, a small car was big enough to allow for two families to be stuck inside, children included, and all the necessary amenities to survive for a month on a desert island, even when the destination was actually a hotel with three meals included. Overfilling the car with people from multiple households is no longer allowed anymore. Overcrowded public transportation vehicles are regarded with suspicion; during the height of the pandemic they were generally only used by the working classes. Ultimately, what is lost outweighs what's gained: the fee for comfort and safety is paid with overproduction and alienation. Bigger and bigger cars, carrying lonely drivers speaking on hands-free devices, consuming all the fuel that never was enough to begin with, lead us down a certain path to self-destruction. The roads have become conveyor belts for deadly metal sarcophagi, which cannot even be turned into compost.

The asphalt road is lined with poplar trees on each side. Poplars grow too tall for their frail roots, and they break easily. They prefer swampy areas, and if conditions change, they die out. In places that are drying up due to climate change, old poplars, declared monuments of nature, are being considered for mummification in order to be preserved. Poplars are not solitary beings, and the image of clusters of trees frozen in time, disconnected from their former environment, could not be more appropriate as a metaphor for how advanced desertification (a consequence of capitalist modernism and urban agglomeration) is engulfing our collective soul and draining its sap.

Alexandra Pirici, Maria Mora, and Mihai Mihalcea (Farid Fairuz) perform movement exercises that draw inspiration from "crown shyness" (coroana timida), a phenomenon whereby branches of different trees avoid touching or covering each other, growing together by negotiating space and access to light. This forms part of Pirici's research project Describing in Movement / Observing through Embodiment (2020–ongoing). Video documentation can be found here: →.

In her series Embodied Encyclopedia of Relationships Between Plants *, artist Alexandra Pirici uses something other than classic observation to enable an understanding of plant movement and the relationships among different plants: she instead uses her own body and the bodies of other performers, along with a little botanical knowledge. The performances use plant behavior to model new possibilities for humans to negotiate their existence with each other and with other entities in the world. Unlike us, many plants already know how to move and grow together without stepping on each other, how to support one another, how to feel and follow each other so that growth is organic and does not destabilize one's neighbors. Plants know how to confront their own limits, how to adjust to the contours of difference, how to enter the spotlight and step*

out of it with grace.

In a particular garden in Bucharest, after the baby sequoia and the art institution both left, the poplars were also cut down. In some places, seeds stop germinating, trees are seen as a menace, and art does not belong. In those places, drought is not a weather condition and confinement to solitary living is not a consequence of pandemic regulations.

The poplar-bordered road takes both this text and the art institution towards the promise of a future community—one that's no less prone to failure than those of the Earthseed-believers and of the Marcelots, yet one that is not fictional. This community tries to establish itself in a place where art, the art institution, and artists can settle and eventually belong. Where hyper-empathy is a gift, not a painful flaw. Where they can fit in without bending to the pressures of the half-human, half-car people who live nearby behind tall fences, nor of the patriarchs with sharp medieval thorns protruding out of their tongues, foreheads, and hands. Where they can live with each other in small spaces, because the scale is set not by buildings, but by the open sky. A community that has time to germinate its seeds and see them grow, in ways that align both with traditional local knowledge and with planetary wisdom.

X

This text is shaped by work experience over the years as a curator at tranzit.ro in Bucharest, and by the time for reflection I could allow myself in a difficult pandemic year thanks to a research grant from the Foundation for Arts Initiatives.

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1
Ema Stere, *Copiii lui Marcel* (The Marcelots) (Polirom, 2020).

2
Ruzandra Hurezean, "Migrație semnificativă de la oraș la sat ın 2020: 'Numai că viitorul satelor nu ține de mutarea la țară ın masă și atât,'" *SINTEZA*, April 24, 2021 https://www.revistasinteza.ro/migratie-semnificativa-de-la-oras-la-sat-in-2020-numai-ca-viitorul-satelor-nu-tine-de-mutarea-la-tara-in-masa-si-atat?fbclid=iwar3hyqgbdlvs-hqcdhll2xik-zpbk60x0wdvs0saq-kzcv8-x-rqzt1hmhm .

3
Anetta Mona Chisa, *Soil Diary* (Liquid Dogmas, 2020) http://www.liquiddogmas.org/photo/ChisaEn_60916352e9039.pdf .