



Università degli studi di Napoli  
**"L'Orientale"**

# **A feminist critique to knowledge production**

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## Table of contents

<i>Editorial Introduction</i> by Silvana Carotenuto, Renata Jambrešić Kirin and Sandra Prlenda .....	5
<b>From UNESCO Humanistic Ideals to Antiracist Politics of Knowledge</b>	
Marina Gržinić, <i>For an Antiracist Politics of Knowledge: Elaborating on Transfeminism and Black Theoretical Thought</i> .....	21
Biljana Kašić and Sandra Prlenda, <i>A Curious Act of Knowing? Obstacles to the Politicality of Feminist Cognition and Feminist Traces within the Academia in Croatia</i> .....	39
Naila Ceribašić, <i>UNESCO's Program of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Women, and the Issue of Gender Equality</i> .....	000
Karmen Špiljak, <i>Non-formal Educational Methodology as a Tool for Emancipatory and Feminist Thought</i> .....	000
<b>Three Key Words in Transnational Feminism: Ethics, Politics and Critique</b>	
Vita Fortunati, <i>Politics and Ethics in Feminist Knowledge Production from the Perspective of Literary Studies</i> .....	000
Jasmina Lukić, <i>Transnational Perspective in Feminist Studies: Minor Transnationalism and its Implications in the (Post)Yugoslav Context</i> .....	000
Sonia Fernández Hoyos and Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, <i>Bauman's Concept of Liquidity and Feminist Transnational Action in Higher Education: the Case of GEMMA</i> .....	000
<b>Women's Assault on the Production of (Mainstream) Knowledge</b>	
Natka Badurina, <i>On the Advantage of Tragedy for Feminism</i> .....	000
Lada Čale Feldman and Ana Tomljenović, <i>Producing the Unknown, Preserving the Birthmark</i> .....	000

Brigita Miloš, <i>Scratches of Disobedience, Or How to Handle the (M)other</i>	000
Silvana Carotenuto, <i>Photographic Difference: the 'Only Side of Life' ..</i>	000

**Archiving Other Knowledges**

Tuula Juvonen, <i>Queer Archival Activism</i> .....	000
Sabine Grenz, <i>Reading German Women's Diaries from the Second World War: Methodological, Epistemological and Ethical Dilemmas</i>	000
Pavla Frydlova, <i>Women's Memory: Searching for Identity under Socialism</i> .....	000
Marijana Hameršak, <i>A Fairy Tale of One's Own: Early 20th Century Croatian Children's Popular Literature and Theatre</i> .....	000

## Editorial Introduction

Silvana Carotenuto, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Sandra Prlenda

Promoting feminist critical voices from the (semi)periphery of knowledge production, this e-book does not aim at adding one more ‘critical turn’ to feminist thought, but it wants to evaluate the potentiality of feminist epistemology for emancipatory education and positive social change. In a world of radical sociopolitical and economic changes, it is becoming ever more urgent to explore structural relationships of power and knowledge from a feminist and transnational point of view. Women have long been excluded from academic and public life, which is why they are particularly sensitive to questions related to the production of knowledge/power, to strategies of empowerment and exclusion as well as to ways of connecting pedagogy, activism, artistic practices, and non-formal education. Women’s knowledge is an important resource not only for studying the dynamics of transnational processes but also for understanding neoliberal practices of discriminations, seclusions, dislocations, and the overall deterioration of social citizenship rights of vulnerable social groups. The limitations of the neoliberal economy and its cultural and sociopolitical values are affecting feminist principles and practices in a way that urgently needs to be interrogated and questioned. Namely, the dangerous drawback can come from within feminism itself, especially when it gets canonised, established within the academe and disenchanted.

This volume is a result of the close collaboration between Silvana Carotenuto from the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and Renata Jambrešić Kirin and Sandra Prlenda on behalf of the postgraduate course *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective* held regularly at the Dubrovnik Interuniversity Centre since 2007. Contributions included in this volume constitute a selection

of papers presented at the Dubrovnik course in 2012 and 2013. The libertarian tradition of Dubrovnik and the inspiring mixture of women's ideas, energies, dialogues and confrontations have brought to life an ad hoc "community of historically located subjects seeking for inter-connections in a non-ethnocentric and non-phallogocentric manner".<sup>1</sup> During the last few gatherings, the common interest of this one-week 'city of women' was to critically reflect upon the possible contributions of feminist, queer, postcolonial and Black theoretical thought to the current struggle for preserving humanities in its full breadth and critical capacity.

Namely, the neoliberal incentives of social Darwinism, political pragmatism, fragmentation and marketability of goal-oriented science are daily reducing the space for free research, social intervention, experimentation and the independent 'life of the mind'. The intersection of economic and neoconservative rationalities in academic discourses threatens the status of Women's Studies programs. The intellectual backlash has not spared the core or the (semi)periphery of the European continent where, due to the devastating effects of the North/South polarisation and debt economy, the material condition and the status of scholars are even more difficult. Besides, the strong neoconservative movement and the influence of the church in postsocialist societies are putting new demands on feminist scholars and activists. In such ungrateful external and internal circumstances – where (feminist) theorists are making additional efforts to catch up with the core of knowledge-production but also to resist the paternalistic integration into this core obsessed with scoring, measuring and ranking – the Dubrovnik IUC course represents a safe zone for encounters and for exchanges the questioning and the affirmation of feminist positions.

Feminists from the European margin are moved there by the urge to act and re-think their peripheral position as a productive, flexible and transgressive epistemic zone that can stimulate new humanistic concepts and values, or the 'new pedagogy from below' (G. Ch. Spivak).<sup>2</sup> Women scholars and students from all over the world have been invited to the course *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective* in order to reflect on basic questions: are the experimental quality of knowledge and emancipatory

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<sup>1</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2012.

knowledge the only two ways of challenging deep-rooted power inequities within and outside the academe? Are the critiques of postcolonial reason and of neoliberal production of centers, (semi) peripheries and margins, still helpful to understand the ways in which the academic world and intellectual authority operate in a 'liquid society'? In an atmosphere of free thinking, vibrant discussion and mutual respect, these women intend to test and develop intellectual politics based on responsibility, justice and proximity to the other, as well as on the production of another knowledge, inscribing feminist po-ethics that affirms life in the face of all impossibilities. Despite many differences in disciplinary locations and research orientations, as well as in national educational traditions (from Finland to Spain, from Germany to Italy and Croatia), the authors included in the volume propose some challenging ways of en/acting the transversal politics of feminist production of knowledge.

The authors included in the first chapter of this volume start from epistemological and methodological questions on how to teach, to develop and to live feminist ethos inside and outside the neoliberal academe (**Part One**). The following three contributions discuss the theoretically and politically relevant conjuncture of feminism, minor transnationalism and literary studies (**Part Two**). The theme of the third chapter is how feminist literary critics confront the merits and disadvantages of historical postmodernism and national literary/art canons (**Part Three**). The last chapter reveals feminist concerns with re-writing gender sensitive histories based on new (non)archival materials, bold interpretations and counter-narratives (**Part Four**).

### **From UNESCO Humanistic Ideals to Antiracist Politics of Knowledge**

Four contributions in the first chapter discuss the potentiality of feminist thought for the re-affirmation of emancipatory knowledge and critical consciousness in contemporary academia pervaded with the devastating consequences of "banking education".<sup>3</sup> The options reflected in detail are the feminist agenda in non-formal educational methodology (K. Špiljak), feminist commitment to the decolonization of knowledge crossing academia/alternative education dichotomy (B. Kašić & S. Prlenda), the Black feminist theoretical contribution to another (transfeminist, migrant, politically subversive and sexually transgressive) knowledge (M.

<sup>3</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, New York, 2005.

Gržinić) and, finally, an example of gender sensitive critique of UNESCO's program of intangible cultural heritage (N. Ceribašić).

**Marina Gržinić** discusses the urge for an antiracist politics of knowledge in order to resist "the normalizing processes of whiteness" with its structural racism and the act of erasure of (colonial) history at the heart of the political project of European unification and homogenization. She opposes universal Eurocentric knowledge through transfeminism and Black lesbian and feminist positions, as well psychoanalysis and contemporary activism, referring to the work of bell hooks, G. Kilomba, H. J. Spillers, B. Preciado and many other scholars. Following the critical works by B. Carr and Ph. Essed, Gržinić argues that "the gendered white bourgeois subject" of normalizing sociopolitical and legal discourses is made by processes of negation, exclusion and disfiguration of 'racialized/colonized subjects' whose access to the representational status of 'human subject' is fundamentally halted. She warns that notions of tolerance, multiculturalism and anti-racism, somewhat popular in the 1980s, have almost disappeared from recent political agendas. An elaborate argumentation is offered in order to exemplify how the modern regime of power that goes from Foucault through Deleuze, Derrida and Agamben, etc., is radicalised in current times of crisis in modes of control, austerity and debt, or even more by the distribution of debts, fear and fantasies misused in political discourses. Gržinić connects the process of racialization with a new global division of labour: "Capital got a myriad of names – cognitive, immaterial, and financial – but we can connect all of them with racialization". Namely, what could be named as a 'neocolonial matrix of power' is based on a control of labour that works hand in hand with racial formations and racial knowledge production.

While **Karmen Špiljak** justifies the need for non-formal feminist education and activism with the deep neoliberal structuring of politics, economics, legal institutions, culture and art, **Biljana Kašić** and **Sandra Prlenda** further discuss the anti-feminist and anti-secular climate in the postsocialist educational system concomitant with the consumerist turn in higher education and cognitive capitalism. Evaluating their own experiences of teaching inside and outside the academic system, both authors illustrate a harsh implication of the peculiar juncture of the neoliberal regime of knowledge and the religious old-new 'patronage' upon gender. The Croatian example reveals certain paradoxes – an increased interest by students in Women's Studies education vs. the lack of interest among academic authority to integrate the WS program within the academic curricula, not to mention the integration of alternative



education based on civil, peace, ecological and feminist agenda. The authors remind us how advocates of feminist and gender studies are easily caught and entangled in the web of conflicting interests and power plays within the academia that produce no sensible strategy of feminist and emancipatory education. As Špiljak argues, rather than empowering the oppressed groups, institutional academic knowledge is rather than not used to increase oppression and further marginalise the already disadvantaged.

Naila Ceribašić offers a gender sensitive critique of UNESCO's program on intangible cultural heritage following the few feminist anthropologists (S. M. Okin, V. Moghadam, M. Bagheritari) who have pointed out its 'blindness' for a frequent opposition between the idea of gender equality and the reality of traditional cultures. It has already been observed that the Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage bears ambiguities, as regards its ultimate outcomes and its capacity to accommodate various identity positions and social groupings. Ceribašić's refined analyses suggest that politics of intervention, be it in the name of the most humanistic ideals, such as the case with UNESCO's example, cannot solve tensions between affirmation and antidiscrimination, human and cultural rights, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, intellectual property and common good, speech in the name of pluralizing and work in essentializing of culture. So it seems that the main – humanistic yet realistic – effect of UNESCO's program is in producing the local appropriate for global understanding and supporting the tourist expediency of national heritage production in the context of managed multiculturalism of difference. Focusing on the example of the Bistritsa Babi, a well-known group of elderly women singers from Bistritsa in western Bulgaria, Ceribašić tries to illustrate the still unresolved ambiguity of whether heritage programs are basically empowering for women or if they confine women within traditional, usually basically patriarchal social arrangements. Following these discussions, she describes the gender structure of the Croatian register of intangible heritage and comments on UNESCO's latest emphasis given to the gender aspect of safeguarding as an attempt to overcome tensions between human and cultural rights.

### **Three Key Words in Transnational Feminism: Ethics, Politics and Critique**

The three contributions in this chapter have been presented within a joint panel at the IUC course *Feminist critique of knowledge production* (Dubrovnik, May 27-31, 2013) entitled "Three key words

in transnational feminism: ethics, politics and critique". They are part of a larger research in transnational women's literature that Vita Fortunati, Jasmina Lukić, Sonia Fernández Hoyos and Adelina Sánchez Espinosa have currently undertaken. The three articles, each in its own way, address some of the theoretically and politically relevant issues relating feminism, transnationalism and literary studies. Thus Fortunati speaks of the relevance of ethical and political questions in current feminist thinking; Lukić examines the main claims of minor transnationalism and its applicability in the post-Yugoslav context, while Fernández Hoyos and Sánchez Espinosa move the debate to the domain of academic knowledge production.

The contribution by **Vita Fortunati** discusses how feminist literary criticism and theory have embraced 'the narrative of responsibility' in a transnational context following Levinas' ethics. The feminist credo on 'situated knowledge' has been complemented by attention to ethics and the sphere of affection. This turn is connected with an urge to escape from ethnocentric logics and to encourage a dialogue among different feminisms and women's trajectories. A new ethics does not mean being focused on our self and imposing our own thoughts to others, but to perform a willingness to listen to the other (woman) in order to understand her positions, constraints, hopes and fears. This ideal is connected with an attempt to create 'the third space' of interaction (described by Azade Seyan) or 'the third ear' (C. Ch. Spivak) and to work on a new set of expectations about language medium, translation, negotiation and the proximity of understanding.

**Jasmina Lukić's** article deals with the concept of minor transnationalism as it was introduced by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih. One of the main claims of Lionnet and Shih is that the traditional binary model of 'center-periphery' should be replaced by a more complex model of 'minor transnationalism', which introduces multiple spatialities and temporalities. This model allows for a better understanding of creative interventions across national boundaries between 'monitized cultures'. The perspective allows for a more refined approach to complexities on a local level, where mutual influences, between geographically or historically close regions, can be of much higher importance than influences from some assumed 'centre'. At the same time, it points to the relevance of local topics and local knowledges as opposed to the dominance of imported theories and interpretations.

The contribution by **Fernández Hoyos** and **Sánchez Espinosa** offers a critique of the traditional practices of research and teaching

and new forms of knowledge that can be generated in higher education through transnational postgraduate collaboration. A case in point is the GEMMA program Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's Studies and Gender, taught simultaneously at seven universities within Europe with the collaboration of eight other universities worldwide. The authors focus on some specific examples of how new feminist transdisciplinary and transnational practices are gradually producing new forms of knowledge.

### **Women's Assault on the Production of (Mainstream) Knowledge**

In the third chapter, feminist critique gives itself the form of an 'assault' on the production of knowledge. The critical texts, gathered here and presented, know that feminism is undergoing a confrontation with historical postmodernism, characterised by the insights of the 'weak thought'; they know the fatal effects of the neoliberal economy on feminism; they know how dangerous it can be for feminism itself to be canonised; they know that reflecting on a feminist critique constitutes a question of life and death, thus vindicating a female difference which claims its passionate right to existence against all negation and negativity. In such knowledge, these essays implement feminist thinking; they oppose and resist the contemporary policies of cultural and institutional, that is, economic equivalences; they question the actual politics of canonization; they develop (a term here used in its technical sense, meaning a gradual process, a skill or a strategy) a feminist 'po-ethics' that affirms life in the face of all impossibilities.

Implementation, resistance, questioning, affirming – the trait of these papers' cultural interest, literary passion, political responsibility and vital engagement is the production of another knowledge, inscribing its performances within the present conditions of the Humanities, through a different valence of poetry and its metaphors, thanks to *technè* and the art of new writings. Theatre, the tale, poetic figurations, photo-*graphy* – are envisioned and proposed by the feminist critique here in action, each element tackling and establishing a peculiar link with the general aim of this publication. It is the claiming back, from a male colonization, of the participatory instances of a female 'tragic and sublime'. It follows the quest – in the declared form of 'allegories of new feminist reading' – for the 'unknowable' as what literature produces and dissipates, against any interest, debt, credit and value. Somehow enlarging the already spacious scope of the previous essay, it then becomes a desire that questions all framings of a woman's 'ironic insubordination' to patriarchy, even

when it defines itself as revolutionary or alternative. It is the final difference of a 'life', one's own female life, in the exposure to the visual traces of a violent past and a difficult present, always ready to imagine, envision and share the chance of the future-to-come.

The relationship between identity and alterity is the privileged focus of these papers, marking the question around which they construct their specific legacies, the specificity of their scholarships, the knowledge of other feminists who come onto the stage of these pages to debate, contradict, deviate or support the lens of the critique here exposed. The range of these references is so vast and the creative game of interlacing voices so compelling that we can only briefly present these fast, passionate, engaged *oeuvres* of feminist critique of knowledge production.

**Natka Badurina** thinks that the 'tragic turn' has been underestimated by contemporary feminism. The return to the 'tragic' and the emergence in critical thought of the 'sublime' have constituted one of the most interesting efforts of modernity to criticise the Enlightenment's conviction in the power of Reason, Man, and Totalization, proving its demise in history and the necessity of epistemic difference. The interventions of Nietzsche, Adorno, Horkeimer, Arendt, Foucault, and Lyotard, to mention only some of the tragic authors, prove the most radical instances of critical thought, which have, in modern and postmodern times, vindicated the potential of Dionysian pessimism, the end of the 'grand recits', the necessity of new forms of sociality, democracy and common goods, inscribing on the stage of the tragic and sublime scene the encounter with the other who cannot be possessed or controlled, only invented and experienced in collaborative sharing, generosity in living, care in pain, and democracy in co-existence. Why have feminists reacted so negatively to this genre of fruitful virtuality? Badurina acknowledges that, in canonical renderings of classical tragedies, women have often been confronted with the predominance of male values; still, she insists that the tragic must be de-colonised and claimed back, so as to be able, as it is, to suit feminist contemporary declinations. Her final reference goes to the work of Croatian teatrologist Nataša Govedić, who vindicates the therapeutic effects of drama and specifically, of tragedy, both for the individuals and for the community. In her critical view, tragedy shows the enactment of direct forms of democracy, the translation of participation into a generalised politics of care, the precious com-participatory facing of the lack of hope, by witnessing the pains of oneself and of the other, and by offering a chance to countersign our social and cultural indifference...

Along a similar direction of thought, still in critical singularity (the invocation of the 'tragic turn' turns into the opposition to the 'cognitive turn'), **Lada Čale Feldman** and **Ana Tomljenović** start their critical journey into contemporary times with a provocative assumption: who is 'we'? The question of 'alliance' is central here – are experiencing new forms of academic levelling, a sort of intellectual colonialism where everything turns into financial profits, when funds reach only (English-speaking) centres of power, geographically, culturally and institutionally, then the so-called intellectual minorities, vernacular languages, and the university peripheries need to configure themselves as subalterns who 'do not speak' not because they are unable to or because they accept the silencing hierarchical over-ruling of international and global financial and cultural powers, but because they defiantly refuse to be part of this economy, differently searching for the 'uneconomic' that materially leaves its traces in literature, thus proposing to gather around its 'subversive' force, sharing sexual difference across the huge sphere of subaltern positions, invoking 'other' tactical and strategic (readings of) collaborations. It is Monique Wittig, in her queer theoretical essay (and on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death), who teaches this to Feldman and Tomljenović; it is even more Elizabeth Bronfen who, in reading the enigma of *The Birthmark* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, offers them the critical space where, in radical difference from any cognitive turn, they can read the material inscription of what cannot be appropriated, defined or possessed by any logic – the inscription of the traces of the unconscious, its radical alterity to any established knowledge, its profound radicalism in escaping their translation into rational 'revelation/interpretation'. In neo-colonial times, we 'others' must gather around writing and language, support the humanities in their declining conditions, read literature *otherwise*, in that the literary 'as if' gives strength and puissance to uneconomic desires, disseminated roots, different singularities and other voices silently opposing the system of equivalences, profits and credits; in feminist writing, imagination and creation, what 'glows' for the 'others' to read, learn and know, is what adamantly resists the logics of reading, learning and knowing aligned to the principles and values of contemporary neo-liberal economies.

What 'resists' in **Brigita Miloš's** paper is indeed the refusal to comply with any mundane feminist theory, even in its most radical outpourings. Miloš's essay questions if we all, for example, feel represented by that appeal to 'unsubordinated sisterhood' claimed by contemporary Deleuzian strands of nomadic feminism.

In truth, the question is: who defines what insubordination is? What 'abstraction' does the definition require in its parameters of 'feminist acceptance'? Is this superimposition from above – from critical theories that seem to know little of everyday life – valid for a free configuration of practical and radical engagement? Is the labelling of 'insubordination' – and the cultural norms of feminist behaviour it necessarily implies – respectful of the other, approaching her with care, real intimacy and love? Miloš starts her writing by evoking the statue of a sea urchin created by the Croatian artist Sanja Iveković, which figures as a trophy or symbolic part of an award in the field of social integration delivered by the Erste Foundation. The spikes of the sea creature materialise on the critical stage the gravity and the difficulties in handling the other, her/his alterity, her/his art and her/his life, with care, in respectful relation. Along the Deleuzian legacy, it is not Rosi Braidotti who inspires such care, but Elizabeth Grosz, and her notion of 'freedom in desire'; it is not the abstraction of the gathering of 'undutiful daughters' to direct the instances of a true contemporary insubordinate feminism; Miloš, somehow practising what she states and interrogates, chooses the figuration of the (m)other, used and abused in the most radical works of national poetry. Two important poems by the revolutionary Janko Polić Kamov draw the figure of female alterity in the shapes of a Gypsy and of a mother whose heart is obsessed by commodities; in both cases, the alterity of these women is subsumed to the interests of the anarchist revolution, mainly constituted as the 'helper' or 'companion' in the male fight, always defined by the heteronormative necessities of sexual reproduction, already and only identified as inspiring 'muses' or commoditised 'others'. If it is ironic that these patriarchal traits appear in what is rightly considered as innovative poetry, free in spirit and experimentation, for Miloš, the irony we need to practice, as feminists who are not fearful of the difficulties of innovative enterprises, is the one that underscores the danger of mundane exploitations of women in their drives for freedom, wherever it comes from – well-established theoretical feminism or revolutionary, liberating national poetry!

'Poetry' for the unbound lucidity of critical feminism; 'photography' for a female 'po-ethics' that wants to envision the existential interaction with alterity – **Silvana Carotenuto** reads the relation between the mother of *écriture féminine*, Hélène Cixous, and the art and *tekhne* of photography. Here the poetics of the French-Algerian writer seems to gather most of the elements discussed in the previous essays: it impresses and develops the

tragic turn; it favours the secret of the unknowable; it partakes the experiential need to be careful with alterity. It does this in three works that Carotenuto identifies as the specific instances of writing where Cixous reflects (on) the photographic apparatus: *Albums and Legends*, the novel *So Close*, and *Index Cixous*, a work done in collaboration with the American photographer Roni Horn. These texts develop Cixous's autobiography always placed on the edge of her constituting alterity. Initially it is the encounter with the photos of her diasporic past – 'tragic' if only because exposed to historical wars, personal deaths, colonial apartheid, and generalised misogyny – that gradually reflects (on) her decision to become a writer. It is then the photo of her mother – Eve, the mother of humanity, our mother, Cixous's mother – Cixous takes as the 'masterpiece' that announces its productive affects. After the photo of her mother, the camera follows the writer in her 'so close' return to the mother-country Algeria, accompanying her in her painful visit to her father's grave. In its witnessing, the technical eye reveals itself to be finite – it cannot 'take' the pain and the tears of Cixous's traumatic journey; on the other hand, it inscribes her *oeuvre* and reflects (on) its always-renovated beginning. In *Index Cixous*, for instance, its trace exposes Cixous's face to the camera of the other, opening up the 'index' of her 'visage' as the artistic 'singular plural' that gathers together the absolute uniqueness of her gaze and the infinite plurality of the images metonymically exposing it to the other. Will the other arrive to watch the woman's indexed face? Will the other respond to the singular and plural 'glow' in her eyes? We cannot be sure of her arrival; what we can be sure of is that we need to be tragically, strategically, ironically ready to offer absolute hospitality to the other. Our *oeuvres* producing other forms of knowledge for the coming – if and when it happens – of the other, who will finally – or maybe never – unknot our secrets, our alterity to ourselves. This future encounter will celebrate life, nothing else but the shared survival of life...

### Archiving Other Knowledges

The act of 'archiving' is crucial in feminist knowledge production. Information on women's lives and experiences have historically been so scarce that the search for materials in existing archives and the creation of new records has become one of the most important tools in feminist historiography. The three texts included in this section are based on their presentations at the Dubrovnik course in 2012, which was devoted to *Women's Heritage*

as the starting point for examining the concepts and practices of feminist memory, history and archiving.

**Tuula Juvonen** outlines the main problems in queer archival activism. Starting from the critique of the historical practice of patriarchy, which denies women and queers the control over the creation and the interpretation of past records, she calls for the queering of the archive through several types of action that readdress the prevalent conditions of silence and the absence of traces of lesbian and non-heteronormative relations. Referring to valuable examples of emerging queered archives, in New York or in Tampere, Juvonen discusses the politics of collecting queer documents and the issue of their access, especially in relation to the lesbian and queer communities that both produce and use the archive as a part of their claiming full citizenship. Thus, by reminding us of the key relation between memory and identity, Juvonen problematizes the role of professional archive management and, finally, the need for producing and sharing the subtle knowledge of queer interpretation, which is capable of producing meaning out of silence and even the most discrete traces of affect in writings and material objects.

**Sabine Grenz** leads us further into the discussion of the methodological, epistemological and ethical dilemmas in unearthing knowledge out of written texts; her case study is the diaries written during the Second World War by German women. As personal documents of a specific form, these diaries are here approached with the consciousness of their diversity, fragmentary character, deceptive solipsism, and often-vacillating construction. Among the various epistemological questions involved, Grenz dwells on the problem of the construction of textual selves, and, furthermore, on the textual construction of historical female selves – since her interest lies in the period of the Second World War. Although individual and subjective, these diaries are repositories of cultural memory; Grenz provides us with carefully chosen examples aptly illustrating her argumentation on the epistemological values of diarist texts. The ethical dilemmas she discusses are raised by reflecting on the researcher's relation to her material when confronted by the evidence of the victimization of her subjects (not in the last place, by the hegemonic gender order) and by their being part of the Nazi system.

Sabine Grenz's piece of methodological and epistemological analysis is supplemented by the presentation of the fifteen-year long international oral history project on Women's Memory by **Pavla Frýdlová**, one of the project leaders. Born out of the need for



information on women's lives during socialism, the project results in the rich oral history archive with more than 500 biographical interviews, as well as numerous books, films and other products and programs made by several national teams besides the original Czech one. Frýdlová gives us an insight into the selection of methodology, interviewees, and approaches to interviewing as a feminist interaction that demonstrates, once again, that any historical practice, especially a practice that actively produces its materials such as the aforementioned queer or oral history archives, is a political act. The main findings of the project – Frýdlová here chooses to highlight the economic independence, access and attitude to education, and the independent social identity of women – are certainly results of utmost relevance to any research on the history of socialist countries and on their gendered realities. The author's acknowledging of the cases of abuse of oral history archives and of documentations and materials for political purposes, directs our attention to the conditionality of knowledge production, and on the need for its feminist deconstruction as well as activist (re)construction.

The last contribution in this volume by **Marijana Hameršak** offers a specific view of the conception of children as both creative agents and consumers that were inherent to multimedia (radio, theatre, gazette) in Croatia during the period between the First and Second World War. With historiographical scrutiny and a feminist background, the article outlines how this new concept emerged in the period of the most intensive changes in women's social and cultural lives, connected with new expectations towards (educated) women as caterers and educators of children. It is also a period when consumerism arises as the key operative mechanism of modernity. Consumerism of cultural products confronts us with the question of the complex relationship between patriarchy and capitalist structures, the reproduction of patriarchal ideologies through children's literature and paternalistic attitudes towards children. Without offering solutions to all these problems, Hameršak critically observes two important cultural phenomena in the interwar period in Croatia – the penny literature of fairy tales and the children's project "The Children's Kingdom" (*Dječje carstvo*) – as a strand of commodification of childhood and children's culture throughout the provisory broadening of children's agency.

The authors included in this volume offer a whole range of modes, strategies and techniques of resistances to the mainstream production of academic knowledge; from the rejection of the

'rational' and hidden racist script of neoliberal academy to joyous pessimism, from the desire for freedom and experiment to subaltern alliances, from 'undutiful sisterhood' to auto-hetero-bio-graphy, from the minor transnationalism of multiple spatialities and temporalities to the queer principle of archiving contemporary women's lives. Such strong decentered 'standpoint' positions of transversal and transfeminist knowledge cannot avoid signalling their generous passions and/or critical solutions, sublime participation and confrontation always accompanying the birth of new reflections and creative visions. Thinking, reading, envisioning, writing – the drive for critique offered by these texts aligns itself to the production of feminist knowledge only strategically. In truth, *A Feminist Critique of Knowledge Production* wants to touch history, to engage with the present and its difficulties and dangers, to offer its creative engagement to *l'à-venir*. Feminist commitment, intellectual resistance, the experience of civic rebellions are different faces of our 'assault' on institutionalised knowledge. Knowledge itself only needs to continually restart and interminably offer its new beginnings: it is the universal 'weapon' of our fight over the past, present and future justice of feminism.

**From UNESCO Humanistic  
Ideals to Antiracist  
Politics of Knowledge**



## For an Antiracist Politics of Knowledge: Elaborating on Transfeminism and Black Theoretical Thought

Marina Gržinić

I intend to discuss universal Europocentric knowledge and its racialized premises in today global capitalism through transfeminism and Black lesbian and feminist positions, as well psychoanalysis and contemporary activism, referring to the work of Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Hortense J. Spillers, Philomena Essed, Beatrice Preciado, Angela Mitropoulos, Žarana Papić, Brian Carr, and many other scholars from the so-called Black studies terrain, transfeminist studies and positions, and, last but not least, from former Eastern European positions. I am interested in talking about politics and not about colour, not even about gender, but about another knowledge that is transfeminist, migrant, politically subversive and sexually transgressive.

I start with the proposition given in the last years by a transfeminist theoretician Beatriz Preciado. She talks about global capitalism that combines pharmaco-pornographic levels of biopolitical life to what she refers to as the hot, punk capitalism, that is all centered under the belly, and connects biogenetic, pharmaco-pornographic and drug substances (in an enormous quantity). Technology is having a substantial place in producing a specific meaning that is mostly semiotically-technologically organized. This is the world of hot capitalism that develops overwhelmingly in the 'former' West and first capitalist world. On the other side, I propose to conceptualize global capitalism not as a coin that has two sides, but as a Mobius strip, a surface with only one side and only one boundary component. In such a frame, I argue it exists a cold capitalism, not only a biopolitical,

but a necropolitical one, that extracts its surplus value from non-mediated dispossession, exclusions, looting, and death.

Biopolitics and necropolitics are working globally, though necropolitics functions mostly in the so-called periphery, making surplus value by death, social death of any kind (with the value of life equal zero), and where non-mediated violence is present. We see violence of unbelievable proportions against the LGBTQI people, beatings, killings and as well negating them the basic human rights. This is the former east of Europe reality. We also see this, literally, daily, in the sea corpses of those who want to come to the 'former' Western Europe, the refugees, the people without papers from Africa and Asia, the people who drown along the coasts of Italy, Malta and etc.

Therefore, on one side, we have the 'former west', the once first capitalist world that is the Christian-capitalist patriarchal regime of power, with its processes of financialization and liberalization, that goes hand in hand with the inclusion inside its capitalist (global neoliberal) matrix of power of all those once perceived as 'others', precisely, the non-heterosexual identities (though there is still a big discrimination of the transsexual and intersexual ones). On the other side, and at the same place and time, we have necropolitics, a brutal logic of violence, persecutions, discrimination and racializations in the former Eastern European space (ex- Yugoslavia, Russia and other post-Soviet countries). To be precise, it is not about the new 'enlighten logic' of the 'former west' against the 'former east', but it is a new process of discrimination that takes the 'other' into its borders to produce new others in the West, and these are the migrants, the refugees, the *sans-papiers* (paperless), the men and the women of colour coming from other parts of the world and from other religious backgrounds.

While some are made 'equal', others are left to die and are brutally abandoned. An illustrative case is the disaster on October 2013, when the death toll of African migrants who drowned (measured in hundreds bodies in one single day) near the Italian island of Lampedusa was an additional confirmation of the alarming crisis with refugees in the EU. Though, the most perverse situation happened afterwards when to these hundreds of dead bodies were given the Italian citizenship (so that they could be buried in Italy, which was obviously cheaper than sending the dead bodies back to their country of origins and to their respective families), while those few who survived were to be prosecuted as they tried to enter Italy and the EU illegally. This is the clearest

sign of the new category of citizenship; we have at least two categories, the necropolitical citizens and the biopolitical citizens. Citizenship can be, as we see, divided within itself into two: one is the category of the biopolitical citizenship (the EU 'natural' citizens), and the other is the necropolitical citizenship given to refugees and *sans-papiers* after they are dead, drowned near the EU islands and lands.

In this context, what is important is the construction of the transfeminist queer movement where the so called not-right and not-quite identities take advantage of the situation of the hot global capitalist pharmaco-pornography system of re/production, sex and labor, in order to point the finger towards these divisions and as well to radicalize their and our positions. If in the hot, punk capitalism we are an oppressed group of zombified positions, all on medicaments and dopes, that consume sex as the only food in the time of austerity, in the cold Europe and global capitalism, we only have blood, death, being beaten and killed. Therefore, the necropolitical horizon of dispossession and exploitation, part of the techno-sexual matrix of global capitalism today, fully teaches us that neither gender nor sex are natural conditions of our lives.

'Becoming human' is a specific process of racialization that works hand in hand with class racialization. Racialization transforms societies into racialized societies through stigmatization, and labelling based on the constructed category of race. This process is today going so far that we have a process of racialization being imputed without any 'race' prerogatives while nevertheless serving as a measure of discrimination, subjugation and finally dispossession. In Europe, it functions through the manufacturing of the former Eastern Europeans, of former 'non-subjects', so to speak, into gendered European white middle class subjects. It is about *us* acquiring our capitalist's conservative, chauvinistic, patriarchal, mostly petit bourgeois lineage, with which to safeguard the heterosexual family and the racialized nation's 'substance'. The European Union aims at the manufacturing of former 'barbarian communist' Eastern Europeans into 'humanized' and 'civilized' Europeans.

Of course, this process is provided with its "ghastly underside: the story of the racialized subject's *dehumanization*."<sup>1</sup> In 1998, Brian Carr elaborated this relation of the production of 'humans' by posing a question: what is left at the threshold of the process of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brian Carr, "At the Thresholds of the 'Human': Race, Psychoanalysis, and the Replication of Imperial Memory", *Cultural Critique*, 39 (Spring, 1998), p. 120.

manufacturing the humans? His answer is punctual: race! Kwame Nimako, the director of NiNsee (The National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and Its Legacy), in Amsterdam, bitterly states:

Now that the Berlin Wall (in 1989) had fallen, Western Europe had Eastern Europe to go to and they could do away with Africa. Africa was no longer relevant. African migration started to be controlled. This is the major preoccupation of Europe today – how to prevent Africans from coming to Europe. Now Eastern Europe has become the source of full agricultural production. Another factor is the civilization mission of the ‘former’ Western Europe in Eastern Europe. They are going to civilize the Eastern Europeans to teach them democracy, to teach them how to treat the Roma citizens, to teach them about race relations and human rights. Western Europe ‘solved’ all these problems – the problem of education, the problem of development, the problem of freedom – and it is the rest that has to be taught. From the point of view of race relations, it also marginalizes the black community, because once Europe becomes larger, the black community becomes small.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to Angela Mitropoulos, I can state that Europe is today, in its most basic sense, constituted by “the problem of the legal form of value, of its imposition and perseverance by origin and lineage.”<sup>3</sup> Europe’s migration/labor, capital, sexual reproduction and race are nowhere more disputed and uneasy than at the frontier between the spectral former Eastern Europe and ‘former’ (note my use of quotation marks in this case) Western Europe, at the meeting point between ‘natural’ citizenship and ‘bastard’ migrants and descendants of the colonized, European Union and non-EU states, etc.

Thinking about former Yugoslavia, or better, about different states that came out of its shadow, impels us to rethink at least three discontinuities of the last thirty years. The first presents the space once known as Eastern Europe, that was, in the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), transformed into former Eastern Europe partly in order to be integrated from 2004 onward into the European Union or EU (to become in the future the United States

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kwame Nimako’s talk at the workshop on *Education, Development, Freedom*, Duke University, Durham, USA (February 25–27, 2010). The workshop was organized by Walter Mignolo at the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities, Duke University, <<http://trinity.duke.edu/globalstudies/education-development-freedom>>, retrieved on January 16, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Angela Mitropoulos, “Legal, Tender,” *Reartikulacija*, 7, Ljubljana, December 2009.



of Europe, or simply to vanish!), and, partly, waiting at the EU's threshold. The second happened after the period of transition in the 1990s and was elaborated in the new millennium through a genealogy of contemporary performative practices and political spaces in former Yugoslavia that dismantle the singular and established contemporary history of art and performance, that has been imposed by Western Europe's historiography. The third is connected with the EU's hyperbolic regained whiteness (as formulated by Kwame Nimako) and with the reiterated ideology of Western Occidentalism, that, brutally, reproduced the regimes of racial and class coding governing economic, social and political inequality in Europe. It clearly exposes that which has and will have a pertinent political weight in the Europe of today: the question of race. Europe has to critically review its colonial and racial past and present.

This constructed genealogy (it always implies taking a political position) of former Yugoslavia and the EU can also be viewed through the optics of feminism, gender and queerness, which is a point of departure for this text. We can recuperate the aforementioned discontinuities by making the following point: we can trace a path beginning at a 'difference that matters', that establishes a relation between feminism and postmodernism, that develops in post-colonial theories of the embodied Other/s in the 1990s, and that presents itself as a queer positioning of affects and politics with a demand to take back the question of race after 2001. After the fall of the Berlin wall, in former Yugoslavia, we were part of a colonial narrative of rescue under liberation in Western terms. It reached its peak with the exhibition *Gender Check – Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, displayed in the Museum of Modern Art, or MUMOK, in Vienna from November 2009 to February 2010, curated by Bojana Pejić, and in every respect produced, i.e. initiated, and what is even more important, enabled financially by ERSTE Foundation. It was a project through which the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2009 gained its ultimate sense.

I will say that, in this case, it is important to differentiate between a 'naive, benevolent' support of women's practices in Eastern Europe, on one side, and the feminist and theoretical imperialism that can be unmistakably recognized throughout recent decades. As was exposed by bell hooks, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Goldie Osuri, for example, at the center of such imperialism lies a colonial politics of representation, expressions of cultural tolerance, and attempts to identify with the

Other (wo/man). Indeed, this imperialism works hand in hand with the worship of capitalism as freedom, the celebration of a privatized selfhood, and a gender politics that becomes a measure of biopolitical governmentality. It is important to understand that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this Other was celebrated precisely by privileging identity politics and culture as divided from the social and political, not to mention the colonial and neoliberal.

As Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue in their book *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*,<sup>4</sup> the substitution of a rights-based conception of race in the 1960s with ethnicity theory in the 1970s and 1980s meant that the issues of systemic racism were replaced by those of adaptation and assimilation. Multiculturalism as the neoliberal domestication of artistic postmodernism in the field of culture, has become a privileged narrative of the nation that displaces racism, segregation and exclusion as the 'business' of marginalized groups. Omi and Winant's arguments make clear that the historical development of race has to connect to racism, race-class-gender interrelationships and everyday life, while insisting that an effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentred' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. Therefore, parallel to this mostly or uniquely defined cultural postmodernism, another process must be envisioned and elaborated, a process that permeated the culture, social fabric, politics, and economy of former Yugoslavia and all its respective republics that are today new states in Europe. It was a process of the construction of second-rate citizens in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and former Yugoslavia, based on the myth of lost ancient territories disseminated by communist party nomenclature and the military apparatus of former Yugoslavia, that started the 'Balkan war' in the 1990s. The war resulted in a massive annihilation of people, an ethnic cleansing, and the destruction of cities in emblematic cases of contemporary genocides after World War II in the heart of Europe. The Srebrenica massacre, known as the Srebrenica genocide, refers to killings in July 1995 during the 'Balkan war' in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when more than 8,000 Bosnians (Bosnian Muslims), mainly men and boys, were slaughtered in and around the town of Srebrenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina) by units of the Army of Republika Srpska (in BiH) under the command of

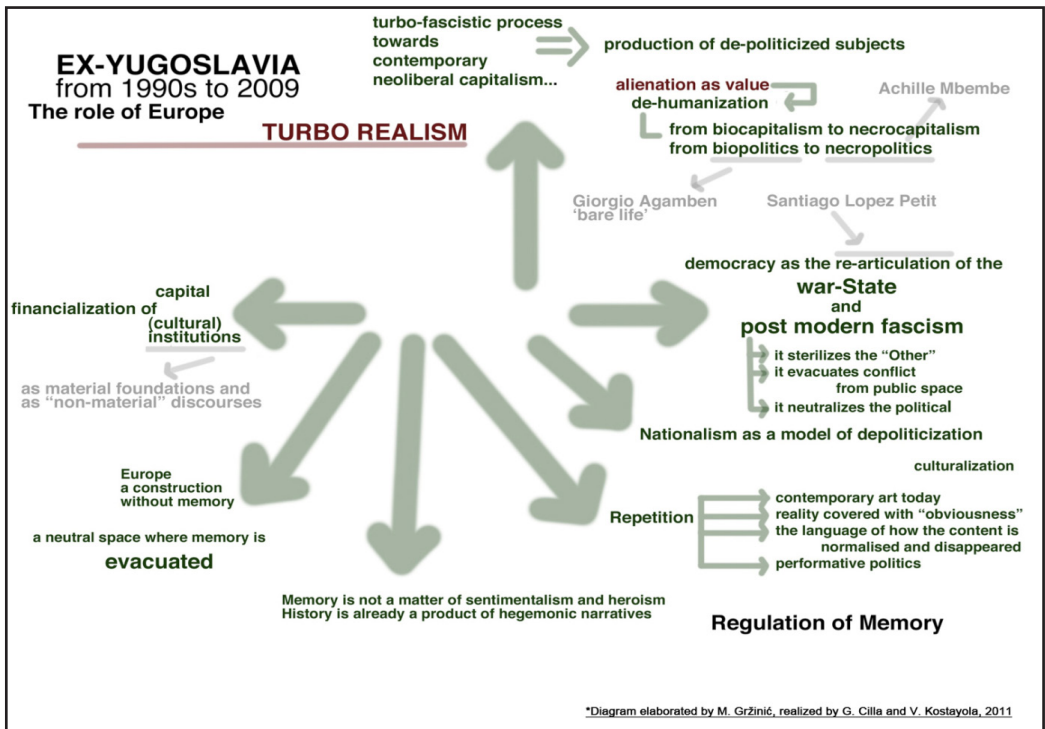
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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, Routledge, London, 1994. First published in the mid-1980s and republished, including new insights, in the mid-1990s.

General Ratko Mladić, supported by Slobodan Milošević and by the mass media and public opinion in Serbia.

After the war, the ethnic cleansing continued through a myriad of processes of racialization, dispossession, exploitation and deregulation. Žarana Papić described this process in Serbia with the notion of neoliberal turbo fascism.<sup>5</sup> It has at its core a racialization that refers to the assigning of racial connotations to the activities of those termed as (ethnic) minorities. These processes are judicially, economically, and discursively and, last but not least, representationally conceived and normalized, and they have started to metastasize more and more.

At this point, in order to grasp a better picture of the state of the things, I will make recourse to a diagram. I refer to a diagram designed by Giulia Cilla and Vana Kostayola in Geneva (Switzerland) in 2011 onto what I was elaborating in series of lectures I presented upon invitation at CCC, Haute école d'art et de design Genève in 2011.



<sup>5</sup> Žarana Papić, "Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, The Fascisation of Social Life and Body Politics in Serbia", *Filozofski vestnik*, (special number *The Body*, edited by Marina Gržinić Mauhler), Institute of Philosophy ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, 2002, pp. 191–205.

The diagram bears as its central title ex-Yugoslavia in the last 20 years with a focus on the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the role of 'former' Western Europe in the re/constitution of the former Eastern Europe as a defunct, concluded and buried story. In this redrawing of the EU and global capitalism, a key date is the 2001, when global capitalism entered a central stage performativity.

What we get in the context, after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 until today, is a turbo fascist process that goes from a transitional space of post-socialism toward a neoliberal capitalism. In general, I name it 'turbo realism'. I made a reference for such a coinage to the late Serbian theoretician and feminist scholar Žarana Papić, who described the process in the end of the 1990s in Serbia by saying, "I am freely labelling this as *Turbo-Fascism*". She continues:

It is, of course, known that Fascism is a historical term; that the history of Nazi Germany is not the same as that of Milošević's Serbia. However, in post-modernist and feminist theory we speak of 'shifting concepts,' when a new epoch inherits with some additions concepts that belonged to an earlier one, like, for instance the feminist notion of *shifting patriarchy*. In my view, we should not fear the use of 'big terms' if they *accurately* describe certain political realities.<sup>6</sup>

I think that what is conceived as the main characteristics of the turbo fascist elements of post-socialist transitional states, hiding toward fully developed neoliberal global capitalism (that has its proper fascism as well, that is 'postmodern fascism'), can be excellently implied in the present moment when discussing Europe and its transfeminist and migration processes. Therefore, I will quote Žarana Papić's designation of turbo fascism in present tense. I will modify her statement in the following way:

Serbian Turbo Fascism (Papić refers specifically to Serbia but we can extend this to post-socialist (former) Eastern European countries as well) has its own concentration camps, its own systematic representation of violence against Others, its own cult of the family and cult of the leader, an explicitly patriarchal structure, a culture of indifference towards the exclusion of the Other, a closure of society upon itself and upon its own past; it has a taboo on empathy and a taboo on multiculturalism; it has powerful media acting as proponents of genocide; it has a nationalist ideology; it has an epic mentality of *listening* to the word and *obeying* authority. The prefix 'turbo' refers to the specific mixture

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<sup>6</sup> Papić, "Europe after 1989", cit.

of politics, culture, 'mental powers' and the pauperization of life: the mixture of rural and urban, pre-modern and post-modern, pop culture and heroines, real and virtual, mystical and 'normal,' etc. In this term, despite its naive or innocent appearances, there is still fascism in its proper sense. Like all fascisms, Turbo-Fascism includes and celebrates a pejorative renaming, alienation, and finally removal, of the Other(s). Turbo-fascism in fact demands and basically relies on this *culture of the normality* of fascism that had been structurally constituted well before all the killings in the wars started.<sup>7</sup>

This turbo fascist reality of the former space of ex-Yugoslavia is to be connected with another more general process that happened after the 2001, and that the Spanish theoretician Santiago López Petit calls a change from *nation-State* to *war-State*.<sup>8</sup> In fact, this change means that the former Imperial capitalist colonial states (the so-called first world western European states, and USA) transformed themselves into war-states. At the same time, the post-socialist countries or neoliberal turbo fascist countries remained nation-states without an international sovereignty, though having a mandate, a power to control and to systematically push terror as an evacuation of history, the re-establishing the other, the insistence on heterosexual and ethnic hegemony, etc., inside its border, that means only culturally, socially-institutionally, and exercising power. Nationalism plays an important role in such a context, and it is an atavistic format of ideology. These biopolitical measures transform themselves into necropolitical brutalities, beating and killing the members of the LGBT community, segregating Roma ethnic members, and ferociously attacking on the communist past and left positions. Turbo neoliberal fascism coincides with the general situation in neoliberal global capitalism in its production of an evacuated, privatized space that resulted in a process of de-politicization. The implications of all these processes are at least twofold: changes in the mode of life and, as stated above, in the form/mode of the State.

The mode of life envisioned by Michel Foucault and named biopolitics in the 1970s changed into necropolitics, a term coined and elaborated by Achille Mbembe in 2003 in order to capture a mode of life in Africa after 2001, when capitalism literally

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Santiago López Petit, *La movilización global. Breve tratado para atacar la realidad* [Global Mobilization. Brief Treatise for Attacking Reality], Editorial Traficantes de Sueños, Barcelona, 2009.

changed into neoliberal global capitalism.<sup>9</sup> To understand the difference, I can state that Foucault's biopolitics can be described in an axiomatic way as "make live and let die." With necropolitics we can, on the other side, precisely define the transformation of regulation of life within extreme conditions produced by capital. Necropolitics is a coinage in-between necro (Death) and politics. Necropolitics regulates life through the perspective of death, transforming life therefore in a mere existence below life minimum. I defined necropolitics as "let live and make die." These two modes of life present a brutal difference in managing life and death; in biopolitics life is controlled; for the citizens of the sovereign first world capitalist countries it is about providing a good life; at the same time, today what is at the hand is a pure abandonment of these structure (let live), and death is managed, used and capitalized by the war machine. Today, in global neoliberal capitalism, the biopolitical and necropolitical modes of life reproduce one another by transforming many of the former biopolitical sovereign states into necropolitical ones. Why does this happen? Because capitalism is a system that lives on exploitation, dispossession and discrimination, that is not at all cultural (though it affects culture) but it is economic and, therefore, social and political. This has the consequence that art and its institutions are only biopolitical machines, and the social is necropolitical. Memory as a question of biopolitics, and history is the main terrain of necropolitics. Constantly under attack, erased, rewritten, evacuated.

Santiago López Petit states that what characterizes neoliberal global capitalism is another change, from the nation-State to the war-State. In fact, this change means that the former imperial capitalist colonial states are transformed into a war-state that exists with a transformation, or better to say, a fragmentation of all its social and public fields. Petit calls this fragmentation postmodern fascism. The latter functions with the sterilization of the other, the evacuation of conflicts, and the act of fragmentation/individualization. While turbo fascism is reserved for those regions coming out of the war situation in the recent history (the war in the Balkans, massive deregulation of the social, direct and brutal evacuation of history, erasure of thousands of people, etc.), postmodern fascism presents a process of implosion, a pastoral mechanism of fragmentation, almost invisible processes of ferocious privatization, all done under the formal system of judicial

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics", *Public Culture*, 15/1, 2003, pp. 11-40.

regulation and administration. The systems – necropolitics and biopolitics – work one next to the other.

The passage from nation-state to war-state has an important function in global capitalism as well. It is the answer to what happened after the fall of the Berlin wall (1989) that resulted in the proliferation of new states. This was possible because of the simultaneous disintegration of the Westphalian principle of the sovereignty of nation-States established in 1684. Therefore, the uneasiness provoked by the proliferation of new states was not solved as in the past with world powers' direct and brutal force of control. Rather, it was resolved through an intensified process of disintegration of the Westphalian principle of nation-States' sovereignty, and the transformation of the imperial nation-States into war-States. This logic enabled big international powers to succeed in maintaining order in the mass of new states, 'reborn' with the fall of the Berlin wall.

The war-state, especially in the first capitalist world (USA, Japan) and in the former western European context, is here to maintain the illusion of society, the biopolitical mode of life, while the necropolitical is pressing and 'metastasizing' inside the neoliberal capitalist biopolitical system. This measure means that, from its biopolitical feature (from the politics of taking care of the life the population though systematically controlling it), the contemporary state changes into a necropolitical regime (a politics of the state which is only taking part in the war of transnational capital abandoning the citizens to find a way of their own how to survive).

In this change from the nation-State to a war-State we also have the so-called 'missing' link that is the racial-State. It is there, in fact, but not pronounced and named clearly! This passage from nation-State to the war-State goes through a racial-State that has racism at its core. This presents a new condition for rethinking memory and history and feminism and gender and queer. This presents a new condition for rethinking memory and history regarding feminism and its policy. The outcome is that, in the 1970s until today, the regime of biopolitics memory has been perceived as an intensified anthropological biopolitical mechanism while, in the time of necrocapitalism, it is history to be completely evacuated. This is why histories are completely evacuated. Let's conceptualize these processes by drawing a homophobic history of post-Yugoslavian space that is in fact a necropolitical one.

In 2001 Serbia's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community (LGBTQ) attempted to hold the country's first Gay

Pride in Belgrade. When the participants started to gather in one of Belgrade's principal squares, a huge crowd of opponents (right wing, fascist-orthodox organizations and individuals) attacked the event, injured several participants and stopped the march. The police were not equipped to suppress the riots, or to protect the Pride marchers. Non-governmental organizations and a number of public personalities criticized the assailants, the government and security officials. In 2009, a group of human rights activists announced their plans to organize a second Belgrade Pride. However, due to the heavy public threats of violence made by extreme right organizations, the Serbian Ministry of the Interior moved the location of the march out of the city center, thereby effectively banning the Pride. In October 2010, petrol bombs and rocks flew at the parade, after the authorities allowed it to go forward, announcing they would protect the participants. A presence of thousands of policemen guided the way for 1,000 marchers; several policemen were injured; a few dozen people were arrested in the wake of their anti-gay violence. In 2011, the Interior Ministry banned the Belgrade Pride Parade, allegedly because they saw/viewed the parade as an "obstruction of public transport, endangering health, public moral or safety of individuals and properties." In this case, not a word was uttered by the Serbian Ministry of the Interior related to the preoccupation of the obstruction of basic human rights.

In 2013, the planned Belgrade Pride Parade was cancelled once again, under the 'decision' of the Bureau for the Coordination of Security Services in Serbia. Ivica Dačić told TV Serbia that this "did not mean a capitulation to hooligans." He also noted that the security assessment reached by the Bureau was unanimous, that "nobody could guarantee a safe holding of the parade", while there were "serious threats to the peace and public order." Bureau's chair, Aleksandar Vučić, stated that the decision was made having in mind the citizens' interests. That means that, once again, the necropolitical interests of the majoritarian (racist, chauvinist, heteronormative) citizens suppressed the basic human rights of non-heteronormative others. These majoritarian interests prevailed and were presented just as a biopolitical measure protecting the safety of the citizens; in fact, it was a majoritarian necropolitical decision at the expenses of the others who were necropolitically – that is, terminally and brutally – suppressed with their basic human rights nullified.

Although the first LGBTQ event in Slovenia dates back almost 30 years ago, deep in the times of socialism, in 1984 when in



Ljubljana a first gay coming-out public project called “Magnus” was organized (the first coming out, moreover, in all the former Eastern European states), the first pride parade in Slovenia was not organized until 2001, and it was the result of an incident in a Ljubljana cafe where a gay couple was asked to leave for being homosexual. Though vandalism and beatings targeting the LGBTQ population held sway in the new millennium and repeated during the 2010s, the sign of a Slovenian society becoming more and more openly homophobic and transphobic happened in 2012, when Slovenians voted against the new Family Law. The law expanded provisions protecting the rights of children, such as outlawing corporal punishment, and existing same-sex registered partnerships to have all the rights of married couples, except adoption (excluding step-child adoption).

A conservative group called Civil Initiative for the Family and the Rights of Children, which proposed the referendum to ban the law, “opposed same-sex unions and demanded the referendum out of respect for motherhood and fatherhood,” which allegedly was a statement that would function as a ‘counter’ statement to the proposed definition of family in the new law, described as a “community of a child or children with one or two parents or guardians.” It was clearly presented in the debates (not exempted from an invigorated racist and homophobic rhetoric) that, if accepted, the Family Law would be a first comprehensive overhaul of family legislation in thirty-five years (the last one was approved in the 1970s). The new law was indeed rejected!

In 2011, the Pride Parade in Split, Croatia, was met with a face of shocking primitivism and violence. The parade was surrounded by hundreds of very hostile Split citizens who were shouting “Kill the fag”, making the fascist salute with their right hands, and throwing stones and various objects. The situation was shameful for Croatia, which, in 2011, signed the treaty of accession to become the twenty-eighth member of the European Union.

How can we rethink these cases not only as cultural identity ‘failures’ of dumb and conservative post-communist national bodies, but as phenomena of a much bigger discrimination and deregulation of capital? In these former Eastern European countries, neoliberal turbo capitalism pushed forward the raw processes of capitalist’s racialization. What has been the result? A massive pauperization, millions of people without jobs on the street; in a word, a new division of labor not only in Europe, but on a new established line of geopolitical dispossession. The Capital has got a myriad of names – cognitive, immaterial, and

financial – but we can connect all of them with racialization. What we have as the promise of liberation by capital, therefore, is a paradoxical and cynical measure where liberation is presented as an infinity of fragmentations, but not of just any kind. It is a process of capitalism's racialization at work here. One of the functions of 'the colonial matrix of power', a term coined in the 1990s in Latin America, that frames historical colonialism's actualization by means of new forms of coloniality, is, according to Nelson Maldonado-Torres, a control of labor that works hand in hand with racial formations and racial knowledge production.

On the other side, this is hidden also by global capitalism's demand not to talk about racism, a demand made by saying there is no racism in contemporary global societies. A case par excellence is France, being a 'colonial republic' (can you see the absurdity of this coinage, with which the French republic describes its past colonial implementations of fraternity, freedom and equality, in Africa and elsewhere?). I suggest making a turn away from identity politics, away from a strict process of so-called culturization, and toward global capitalism's racializations. Racialization is not just a process of producing tropes; it is not only about a fast process of capital's narrativization of racialization, or the implication of immanent levels of dispossessions, so to speak; racialization is a process inherent to capital itself. This means that a process of racialization is actually at the core level of the organization of contemporary global capitalist society: it supported the process of identity politics, which is not simply a multicultural process, not simply a cultural differentiation in society, but a process of steady racializations within the racial scale of contemporary society.

Even more precisely, what occurs at the Schengen border (the frontier between the European Union and the rest of Europe) can be put in parallel with another border, the Tijuana border (thirty-two kilometres from downtown San Diego, and the busiest point of entry into the USA from Mexico), or, still, with the borders within the USA and Mexico, that influence employment, social security, the deportation of illegal workers, and the relations of increasing criminality and paralyzed social and political space.

Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur describes the situation in Austria as twofold.<sup>10</sup> On the one side, we have migrants who

<sup>10</sup> Cf. also Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur and Belinda Kazeem, "Café dekolonial. 'Sag zur Mehlspeis'leise Servus...'" *Reartikulacija*, 1, Ljubljana, 2007, <<http://www.reartikulacija.org/?p=418>>.

[The translation of the last part of the title of the contribution by Johnston-Arthur and Kazeem is "Decolonial Café. 'Whisper the Pudding Goodbye.'" The

were invited into the country by the government in the 1960s to aid the post-war reconstruction of the country, and, on the other, we have a new, vast group of refugees, fugitives, asylum seekers and deported persons who find themselves caught in the ever-changing immigration laws established and reinforced by transnational EU laws and implemented daily and improved nationally (as in August 2010, when France – supposedly ‘legally’, as it was based on EU laws – deported hundreds of Roma back to Romania and Bulgaria). I stated at the beginning that ‘the human’ and ‘race’ reside in an asymmetric, ghastly position; the humanization of former Eastern Europeans is done at the expense of racialized ‘non-subjects’ whose access to the representational status of the ‘human subject’ is fundamentally halted. Or more, following Carr, and as I tried to present in the first part of the essay, “the gendered white bourgeois subject is ‘made,’ of course, with racialized/colonized subjects being. . . ‘unmade.’”<sup>11</sup>

What we witness today in Europe is actually what was announced by Partha Chatterjee already in 1993,<sup>12</sup> and which was reworked in the essay by Brian Carr, written in 1998. There exists a limit in the Foucauldian understanding of the modern regime of power, a limit on which the contemporary biopolitical resides today. Actually, when biopolitics was elaborated in the 1970s, it was a mode of governmentality only for the Capitalist First World, and its apparatuses. In that time migrants were invisible, the ‘Other’ did not exist, it was there but made invisible and mute. Therefore, in Europe we have two modern regimes of power working at once! One is the generalizable modern regime of power that goes from Foucault through Deleuze, Derrida, Agamben, etc., and is radicalized in the current times of crisis throughout the global world in modes of control, austerity and debt. This regime functions by demanding integration, and even more by the ‘distribution’ of debts (!), fear and fantasies. The other is functioning through exclusion, marginalization, de-symbolization and disfiguration.<sup>13</sup> We have, therefore, two regimes

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word *Leise* implies ‘quietness’ rather than ‘silence’ or the total absence of sound, and the contemporary Austrian (Viennese) meaning for the term ‘*Mehlspeise*’ refers to (sweet) desserts in general. The British would refer to dessert in general as ‘pudding’, which I think is better suited here than ‘dessert’ because it has a more colloquial feel.]

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Carr, *At the Thresholds*, cit., p. 120.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1993, quoted in Carr, *At the Thresholds*, cit., p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> All terms are used by Brian Carr in citing numerous scholars, among others Hortense Spillers.

of discrimination, racialization, exploitation, that are almost the same, though the latter is not white!<sup>14</sup> The entanglement of these regimes is visible in the myriad of class racializations. “Race thus stands at the vanishing point where sexual difference and the human resolve,” as stated by Carr, “into the ungendered figure of dehumanized racial ‘flesh.’”<sup>15</sup>

In relation to this conceptualization of racism and racializations it is also necessary to pose the question about a proper position of enunciation. I have to ask why a snow-white European scholar, as I am, enters the topic of Black studies. This is not a polite question for a political correct theoretical essay, but an important question for a former Eastern European, that I presently am as well. Being former is not an excuse nor an identity marker, but a social, political and epistemological condition of my work. I pose this questions as somebody who was born in hard core socialism, went through the processes of transition from socialism to bloody neoliberal global capitalism, and is as well rooted in the Western epistemological edifice of contemporary theory and philosophy that daily re-establishes the processes of racializations through a Western—maybe it is more accurate to say, an intensified—Occidental epistemological hegemony. Coming from the former Eastern European context in the European Union without borders, as it is presented ‘daily’, we, the former, ‘taste’ the conditions of racialization ‘without a race’, daily as well. In the processes described above of an unspoken, but reiterated reproduction of differences between the East and the West of Europe, racism, hegemony and discrimination constantly reverberate. This condition, along with an intensified dissymmetry in the global world regarding allocation of capital, discrimination, and dispossession, neocolonialism made me aware that, in order to understand and analyse such situations of racism and racialization, it is necessary to deeply enter in the findings of what is called Black studies/Black thinking, as these studies provide, historically and presently, the most important tools, strategies and tactics for the future.

This portraying of structural racism of/in Europe is further developed by Philomena Essed who, in her lecture “Racism in Europe: Humiliation and Homogenization”, argues that:

The European unification has been foremost a project of whiteness. Notions of tolerance, multiculturalism and anti-racism,

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Homi Bhabha in Carr, cit., p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Carr, cit., p. 125.

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somewhat popular in the 1980s, have all but disappeared from political agendas. The turn of the century has been witness to the emergence of what I call entitlement racism: the idea that majority populations have the right to offend and to humiliate the 'Other.' Expressions of this form of racism vary according to racial, ethnic and religious group attributions and can range from assimilative paternalism to extreme cultural humiliation.<sup>16</sup>

Essed specifically concentrates on 'Dutch racism' by saying:

The Netherlands has passed through history as a tolerant country. That tolerance is mainly the legacy of the religious reform during the sixteenth century. It was the time when the repressive Catholicism was confronted and other Christian religions found their place in most parts of The Netherlands. 'Tolerance' is understood as almost equivalent to 'not racist'. However, can a tolerant country be racist? Or is it blindness that prevents a collectivity to perceive its own form of racism? Talking about Dutch racism, in The Netherlands, is something that only the brave do.<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion, it is obvious that my interest lies in the thinking of Black scholars who have developed a sharp critique of the normalizing processes of whiteness, with its structural racism, constructing parallel processes of constitution/erasure of history and its 'body', while powerfully elaborating on the question of agency against and within brutal racial violence and colonial dispossession.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Philomena Essed, "Racism in Europe: Humiliation and Homogenization," lecture at Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney, Australia, March 2012.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



# **A Curious Act of Knowing? Obstacles to the Politicality of Feminist Cognition and Feminist Traces within the Academia in Croatia**

Biljana Kašić and Sandra Prlenda

## **Introduction**

This paper is envisioned as a joint venture, with the aim of problematising the current status of Women's/Gender Studies in Croatia from two interrelating and overlapping positions and perspectives, namely inside and outside the academic system. Both locations are insecure, and both function as a defiant oasis of feminist knowledge-production within the almost 'naturalised' anti-feminist climate accompanied by a functionally operating educational agenda, a consumerist turn in higher education, the right-wing instigated fight against gender ideology, and cognitive capitalism. These problems urge us to stand against the long-term implications of the peculiar juncture of the neoliberal regime of knowledge production and the awaking of the idea of an anti-secular, religious, old-new paternalism over gender that appears in an aggressive, very well organised and systemic way. In this context, we will endeavour to articulate several recent trends in order to critically direct feminist attention to possible pitfalls in the encounter of feminist knowledge and academia.

Firstly, one can observe an increased interest by students in Women's Studies education, but also the lack of interest among academic authorities to integrate a Women's Studies program within the academic curricula. Secondly, there is an intentional de-politicization of the discourse of sex-gender issues carried out via the politics of gender mainstreaming and neoliberal narrative,

as opposed to the ideal of an emancipatory feminist knowledge. Thirdly, the trend of fostering ‘pure’, closed scientific disciplines is being opposed to the acceptance of feminist theory as trans-, cross-disciplinary theory in academic discourse.

By analysing these emerging paradoxes we are living with, we will examine the question of how and to what extent the subversive aspects of feminist knowledge can function as sites of resistance in favour of social change, as well as what place is left for the feminist commitment for decolonizing knowledge while crossing the academia/alternative education dichotomy.

**Fig.1:** Women’s Studies educational program posters (since 1995). Courtesy of the Centre for Women’s Studies, Zagreb, 2012.



### In which Contexts do Paradoxes Concerning Women’s/Gender Studies Emerge?

In order to give more profound insights into the abovementioned paradoxes, we will point out certain processes, events and conditions of the contexts that enable, create and affect the status of Women’s/Gender Studies at the university, and critical knowledge in general.

The changes in the last two decades in European academia have created a springboard for the final affirmation of the neoliberal production of knowledge and neoliberal university, partially embedded in the Bologna process and its directives.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Claire Hemmings, “Ready for Bologna? The impact of the Declaration on Women’s and Gender Studies in the UK”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 13(4), 2006, pp. 315-323; C. Hemmings, “Tuning Problems? Notes on Women’s



The skepticism towards the viability of humanities and social sciences, in the era of technicisation and so-called rationalization, is currently so prevalent that we are witness daily to the process of annihilating humanities across Europe, by closing down departments and programs on the pretext of economic (un)competitiveness. Women's/Gender Studies programs are among those that go off as easily as, for example, Slavic languages, in the continuous process of their reduction, mutation or decreasing institutionalisation across the world. When marketability is presented as one of the key factors for evaluating the need for specific forms and contents of knowledge, sometimes cynically masked by the more 'sophisticated' turn of phrase such as 'scientific excellence', politics and money become tightly interconnected, as the only factors in creating new programs. In Croatia's case, while a number of experimental interdisciplinary programs, such as human rights education, didn't survive long after the initial phase, there is a proliferation in bachelor degrees and programs in areas such as marketing, journalism, public relations, economy, management, and other similar studies that can offer youth the doubtful promise of employability in an economy which is steadily going downhill in the abyss of a de-industrialized, impoverished, and thoroughly colonized micro-market. At the same time, throughout this part of Europe, workers' rights and protection have been progressively abolished promising an increased flexibility of the work force, while the burden of professional success is completely individualized. Thus, cognitive capitalism and increasing precarisation tendencies go hand in hand.

Secondly, there is the intersection of neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities in new discourses on academia since "hybridization of neoliberalism with other political projects (e.g., neo-conservatism) and with other social relations (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity)" is one of the world-wide geographical demands that neoliberalism generates.<sup>2</sup> Humanities are being attacked from two sides: on the one side, the corporation-controlled media are clearly devaluating and discrediting humanities, basically proclaiming them "a waste of time";<sup>3</sup> on the other side, they are

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and Gender Studies and the Bologna Process", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 15(2), 2008, pp. 17-127.

<sup>2</sup> Clive Barnett, "Publics and Markets. What's Wrong with Neoliberalism?", in S.J. Smith, R. Pain, S.A. Marston, J.P. Jones (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Geography*, Sage, London and New York, 2010, pp. 269-296. <[http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/emergentpublics/publications/barnett\\_publicsandmarkets.pdf](http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/emergentpublics/publications/barnett_publicsandmarkets.pdf)>, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Within the discourse of utility, cost and marketisation of knowledge,

deemed suspicious as untrustworthy theorizations that have nothing to do with nature and natural in the neoconservative discourse. The neoconservative movement has gained strength in the last couple of years in Croatia, firstly galvanized around the issue of health and sexual education in schools, and then culminating in the referendum for changing the constitutional definition of marriage, to specify it as exclusively between a man and a woman.<sup>4</sup> This was an organized transnational movement that was partially imported to Croatia through the channels of Catholic organizations that systematically seek to undermine all emancipatory gains, especially in the area of human rights (LGBT issues, women's rights) and women's/gender issues. In the public sphere, there has been a mobilisation of religious discourse that simultaneously seeks to produce submissive, obedient citizens, and targets homosexuality and what they call 'gender ideology' as primary culprits for the erosion of the idea of traditional society. At its core, and accompanied by the current intellectual backlash against liberating cognitive discourses, it is a movement against constructivist thinking, invoking essentialism and presumably traditional (traditionalist) values of ideologically imposed and sanctioned certainties (of nature, sex/gender relations, anthropology, metaphysics). A critical analytical framework against these trends is still missing both in the public sphere and in Croatian academia, although there have been valuable contributions to the better understanding of the roots of the anti-gender neoconservative discourse.<sup>5</sup>

### Women's Studies Programs in Formal and Non-Formal Settings

In this context, perhaps there is no surprise in witnessing the lack of interest among academic authorities to integrate a Women's Studies program within the academic curricula, however the situation is almost absurd when we consider the

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Croatian media have often invoked the figure of the 'eternal student', especially of humanistic disciplines, thus attacking the presumably inefficient socialist system of cost-free education with more flexible regulations that did not financially penalize the prolongation of studies.

<sup>4</sup> The referendum was held on 1 December 2013, as the first national referendum initiated by citizens after collecting a sufficient number of signatures. With two thirds of positive votes, the referendum de facto prevented any future change in legislation that would allow same-sex marriages. The campaign for the referendum was led under the motto "In the name of the family", although the relevant legislation concerned only marriage, and not family.

<sup>5</sup> Jadranke Rebeke Anić, *Kako razumjeti rod? Povijest rasprave i različita razumijevanja u Crkvi*, Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, 2011.

peculiar, almost unique status of Women's/Gender Studies in Croatia. Paradoxically, the only comprehensive and systematic, as well as interdisciplinary place for Women's Studies education still exists outside the academic system, in the area of non-formal, alternative education.<sup>6</sup> On the other side, gender studies as a recognised interdisciplinary field of science functions as an empty signifier for a not yet established academic scientific program. Namely, as of 2009, Gender Studies entered into the official categorization of sciences, fields and disciplines recognized by the National Council for Science that was result of an initiative led by the Centre for Women's Studies and the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb.<sup>7</sup> Since the Croatian legal framework for higher education and science poses a very low barrier for entrance into the university system, this move was seen as an important precondition, and a relatively most easily obtained, necessary step in the direction of introduction of a Gender Studies program.<sup>8</sup> However, there is no Gender/Women's Studies program yet at any university, although some women's studies topics have been integrated within the educational curricula of some faculty departments during the last two decades. More precisely, since 2000 courses with a feminist content were introduced at several universities,<sup>9</sup> mainly within the social sciences and humanities, and later those art-related, with a major role being played first by departments of literature (Croatian and foreign literature), and then departments of ethnology, sociology, anthropology,

<sup>6</sup> Women's Studies, as an interdisciplinary and pluri-perspective field, has functioned through an independent Centre for Women's Studies education since 1995/1996, by gathering theorists, artists and activists in the creation of a complex innovative program in order to dialogise key questions of contemporary feminist theoretical thought at the crossroads of disciplines, artistic practices and women's activism. During the process of educational learning students are, apart from the various knowledge they obtain, encouraged to articulate their own voice and become aware of their own theoretical affinities concerning women's/gender studies issues and how to use a feminist perspective in their research. Cf. A. Čakardić (ed.), *Privilegiranje rubova. Intervencije i prilozi feminističkoj epistemologiji*. Centar za ženske studije, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, Zagreb, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> *Pravilnik o znanstvenim i umjetničkim područjima, poljima i granama* [Ordinance on scientific and artistic areas, fields and branches], from 22 September 2009 (n.d.), <[http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009\\_09\\_118\\_2929.html](http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009_09_118_2929.html)>.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gabriele Griffin, "The Institutionalization of Women's Studies in Europe: Findings from an EU-funded Research Project on Women's Studies and Women's Employment", in E. Blimlinger and T. Gerstenauer (eds.), *Women's/Gender Studies: Against All Odds*, Studienverlag, Wien, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that most of these courses retain an elective status regardless of the disciplines within they are taught.

and philosophy at the philosophy faculties throughout Croatia. In addition, certain feminist and gender content also began to be taught within departments for social work, law, history, political science, art departments and interdisciplinary studies such as cultural and media studies. However, the few attempts to propose a full program were not fruitful chiefly because of the ignorance and resistance from the academic side, especially by practitioners of disciplines such as psychology, which supposedly have a 'natural authority' upon sex/gender issues.<sup>10</sup> It is not less significant to note that a mixture of academic arrogance, and consistent cynical criticism, when feminist theory is at stake, have successfully masked the embedded misogynist disciplinary background and overall lack of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Apparently, this integration approach that includes various dispersive feminist approaches and interventions in combination with the interplay of power relations and different gate-keepers inside universities, especially during the last seven or eight years of implementation of the Bologna process, in absence of a gender/women's studies academic unit demonstrate its well-known weakness and fragility.<sup>12</sup> Thus, practitioners of feminist and gender studies are easily caught and tangled in the web of conflicting interests and power plays within the academia that does not produce any sensible strategy of feminist education at the university level.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> V. Barada, J. Janušić, B. Kašić and J. Pešut, *Institucionalizacija ženskih studija u Hrvatskoj – akcijsko istraživanje*, Centar za ženske studije, Zagreb, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Biljana Kašić, "Women's Studies: Ideological Images, Common Problems and Dilemmas", in G. Jähnert, J. Gohrisch, D. Hahn, H.M. Nickel, I. Peinl and K. Schäfer (eds.) *Gender in Transition in Eastern and Central Europe. Proceedings*, Trafo Verlag, Berlin, 2001; B. Kašić, "Women Studies in Croatia: Challenging Contexts and Boundaries", in T. S. Pavlidou (ed.) *Gender Studies. Trends/Tensions in Greece and other European countries*, Tessaioniki, Zitis, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> G. Bowles and R. D. Klein, "Introduction: Theories of Women's Studies and the Autonomy/Integration Debate", in G. Bowles and R. D. Klein (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> As an example of the aforementioned power play, we can cite an attempt to create a Master's specialisation in Gender Studies in the sociology program at one Croatian faculty (Faculty for Croatian Studies) proposed by professor J. Kodrnja, which was easily dismissed by her superiors, as she had given her support to students protesting against increasing tuition fees and the neoliberal onslaught on affordable, equal opportunity education.



**Fig. 2:** Books published by the Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb. Courtesy of the CWS.

The main question which continues to provoke argument, because it is rooted in the real context of our academia, is how can it happen that the verification of a scientific field exists without its academic field framework and structural background, and what are the long-term effects of Women's/Gender Studies absence at the university both upon potential students as well as the very respective cognitive field?<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the interest in the non-formal, comprehensive one-year Women's Studies program offered by the Centre for Women's Studies in Zagreb has been significantly increasing.<sup>15</sup> While explaining their motivation,<sup>16</sup> prospective students express the need for both core feminist knowledge and systematization of Women's/Gender Studies theoretical insights (citing genealogy of

<sup>14</sup> Another case demonstrates the paradoxical situation of Gender Studies in Croatia. Since the inflexible regulation of scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines prevented the validation of a PhD awarded in Great Britain for a thesis dealing with women's human rights as a PhD in Law (human rights are apparently not a subdiscipline of law in the Croatian scientific system), Gender Studies were considered as an alternative solution in the validation procedure. However, with a PhD in Gender Studies, one cannot teach at the Faculty of Law, thus this particular scholar's entire academic career in legal studies was jeopardized.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the trend in the last three years has shown that the number of candidates interested in enrolling in Women's Studies at the Centre has climbed up to 80, for only 35 places in the regular program every year.

<sup>16</sup> This overview is based on an analysis of 80 letters of motivation received by the Centre for Women's Studies in 2012.

feminist theory, feminist history, politics, biopolitics, body control politics, engaged art, LGBTQ issues as centres of interest). Since many of those students have taken courses with gender/women's studies content at the university, this directs our attention to the potentially questionable results of the integration approach to women's/gender studies at the academic level, and its illusory expectations concerning the wider impacts on institutional education.<sup>17</sup> Another motivation for being a part of the Women's Studies program seems to be the politicality of the feminist approach<sup>18</sup> that is tamed in academia. Namely, the wish for social activism, meeting proactive people, recognition of injustice and discrimination and wish to contribute to the fight against discrimination by learning, in order to share the knowledge with others, are all important aspects invoked in this regard by the women's studies candidates. Women's Studies and feminism are seen as important spaces of critical epistemology and a fresh perspective on knowledge.<sup>19</sup> There is also the dimension of awareness raising as outwardly directed action, but also as a personal transformation, personal growth and development of identity based on feminist knowledge.

Finally, non-formal Women's Studies are themselves in a precarious position as a result of the same process of pseudo-rationalized, market-driven mainstreaming of so-called lifelong learning and civil society engagement in general. Functioning within the structural constitutive paradox of civil society seen as a set of alternative agencies for social, educational and cultural services and policy implementation, the question remains how it is possible to claim autonomy while having to adapt programs in order to receive public grants.

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<sup>17</sup> What happens is the fragmentation of knowledge, since the individual elective courses cannot provide sufficiently sophisticated tools of analyses in a complex area of study. The students mention dispersed knowledge (*rasuto znanje*), and the wish to have some kind of rudder, or tail wind. A law student who had enrolled in one of the earlier Women's Studies programs said that only after attending the program did she realize that there was a bigger picture, a much larger critique of knowledge, and that it was possible that anti-discrimination legislation, violence against women and, for example, the study of literature can be related to in a meaningful way.

<sup>18</sup> bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness", in A. Garry and M. Pearsall (eds.) *Women, Knowledge, and Reality. Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, pp. 48-57.

<sup>19</sup> Nora Sternfeld, *Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?*, 2012. <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/unglamorous-tasks-what-can-education-learn-from-its-political-traditions>> (08/13).

## Politics of Gender-Mainstreaming and Neoliberal Narrative Vs. Feminist Emancipatory Knowledge

Following the neoliberal production of hegemonic discourse on politics, economics, law, etc., articulated by various experts with the intentional ignorance of its implications on cognitive or social processes, it is not odd that a similar process can be seen operating in relation to knowledge on women's and gender issues. It is particularly evident in the creation and interpretation of the political concept of gender equality and the politics of gender mainstreaming on the part of the new political and legal elite without any theoretical and critical reflection processes that such concepts and politics carry.<sup>20</sup> The situation in Croatia in this regard is similar to the situation in other European countries, which feminist theorists such as Portuguese researcher Emanuele Lombardo and Dutch researcher Mieke Verloo problematise in the text "Discursive Dynamics Gender Equality in Politics: What about 'Feminist Taboos'?"<sup>21</sup> Through a distinctive analysis they clearly show how the use of the political concept of gender equality and the insistence on a normative and fragmented approach to the feminist concerns in the last decade has affected the process of de-politicization of the discourse on sex/gender issues, and consequently how some feminist scholars could paradoxically be trapped in hegemonic discourses on gender equality policies. One of its implications is an increasing valuation and expression of feminist articulation primarily through normative lenses, while issues such as patriarchy and multiple layers of sex/gender imbalance, or the complex problem of identity and discrimination are constantly being dissociated from the cognitive-interpretative spectrum. Also, female political participation as one of the most pressing topics of gender equality tends to be reduced to normativity and quantitiveness. Vlasta Jalušič calls this emerging process the trend of de-politicization and the process of de-gendering, because the "gender dimension in analyses is often reduced, neutralized, or abolished."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Judith Squires, "Is Mainstreaming Transformative? Theorizing Mainstreaming in the Context of Diversity and Deliberation", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 12(3), 2005, pp. 366-388.

<sup>21</sup> E. Lombardo, P. Meier and M. Verloo, "Discursive Dynamics in Gender Equality Politics: What about 'Feminist Taboos'?", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 17(2), 2010, pp. 105-124.

<sup>22</sup> Vlasta Jalušič, "Stretching and Bending the Meanings of Gender in Equality Politics", in E. Lombardo, P. Meier and M. Verloo (eds.), *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policymaking*, Routledge, London, 2010, p. 111.

Along with the competitive and pragmatic expert knowledge that is simultaneously produced and affirmed within normative hegemonic rationality and the normativistic neoliberal educational policy paradigm, the global commodification of cognition and knowledge within the key paths of the global economy directs us to various, often unpredictable impacts on the sense of knowledge production and process of knowing. However, through the universalizing trajectory of neoliberalism, the implementation of particular educational policies seems to support either strategies feeding governmentality in the Foucauldian sense, or concrete bureaucratic agendas (their 'efficiency'), parallel with rendering 'the social' to its functional residual aspect needed for the global market exchange. This means, according to Clive Barnett's analysis in his paper "Publics and markets. What's wrong with Neoliberalism?" that "social relations of gender, ethnicity, or race, for example, are considered as contextual factors shaping the geographically variable manifestations of general neoliberalizing tendencies" rather than critical social formations.<sup>23</sup>

What does this mean for Women's Studies and for issues that feminists within Women's Studies deal with? Certain issues such as modern slavery that affects women as a result of the global capitalist libidinal economy, as well as the feminization of poverty, or violence against women can, on the trail of the abovementioned trends, emerge as an educational interest only as an articulation of (exoticised, spectacularised, othered etc.) difference that is trivialised, or rather consumed via the market's commodification of cultural difference, or as a particular example for 'rational' explanation of the economic crisis, but not as a cognitive or ethical requirement of (feminist) critical knowledge.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, this means that knowledge that is not marketable seems to be inappropriate and potentially excluded from the academic curriculum. The key question that can be immediately posed is: how can critical, emancipatory knowledge be marketable? What feminist knowledge can possibly be marketable? And what are the possible implications of this kind of 'marketability'? On the other hand, if every academic graduate degree is only measured or 'counted' on the labour market and according to its patterns of consumption and its values, will Women's Studies disappear just because no one will need that type of knowledge on the national

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<sup>23</sup> Barnett, *Public in Markets*, cit., p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> Graham Huggan, *The Post-colonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 12.



or international labour market? And which types of implications will this 'logic' produce in the long-run?

Nevertheless, there are new emerging questions posed to feminism that we are witnessing nowadays. Is it even possible, having in mind the anti-feminist nature of the neoliberal rationalities and marketing university, to talk about knowledge that acts as the power of social change?<sup>25</sup> Not only is the radicality of knowledge in the sense of exposing its political/critical horizon not thinkable within the increasingly neoliberal academic setting that academic management, regulations and monitoring put upon academic programs and their expected goals, but the "(F) aculty have progressively (...) favoured professionalism over social responsibility, and have (...) refused to take positions on controversial issues" and thereby becomes disconnected from what public interest can be.<sup>26</sup> Social responsibility is certainly one of the theoretical premises of Women's Studies since feminism is *per se* an ethico-political project above all responsive for crucial 'social affairs' such as injustice, discrimination, subjectification, subjugation, or in other words, political freedom that power puts at stake.<sup>27</sup> Or, on the other hand, will Women's/Gender Studies, being part of the academic structure, have to practice the policy of exclusion of the Other(s) (poor, socially marginalized, ethnic minorities, other classes etc.) following the current trends of university marketing, instead of enabling the ethics of equal chance and access to the university that is an incontestable foundation of the feminist production of knowledge?

### Disciplining Disciplines and Feminist Trans-Disciplinarity

The third paradox that produces an ambiguous status of feminist theory and knowledge within academia is connected with the neoliberal trends towards the centring of scientific disciplines around their core subject and methodological axis,

<sup>25</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Toward a Woman-Centered University (1973-1974)", in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence. Selected Prose 1966-1978*, WW. Norton and Company, Inc, New York, 1979; T. de Lauretis, "Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms, and Contexts", in Id., *Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986.

<sup>26</sup> Sophia A. McClennen, "Neoliberalism and the Crisis of Intellectual Engagement", *WORK AND DAYS*, No. 51/52, 53/54, Vol. 26 & 27, 2008-09, pp. 459-471, <[http://www.worksanddays.net/2008-9/File24.McClennen\\_011309\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.worksanddays.net/2008-9/File24.McClennen_011309_FINAL.pdf)>, p. 461.

<sup>27</sup> W. Brown, Ch. Colegate, J. Dalton, T. Rayner, C. Thill 2006b, "Learning to Love Again: An Interview with Wendy Brown", *Contretemps*, January, pp. 25-42. <<http://sydney.edu.au/contretemps/6January2006/brown.pdf>>, p. 25.

although keeping the image of academic knowledge as desirably 'interdisciplinary' or 'transdisciplinary'.

What does this mean specifically? On the one hand, there is the reduction of inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary fields of knowledge to either an instrumental or utilitarian 'ingredient' useful for collaborative projects that only mimic or perform interdisciplinarity, and on the other hand, the reinforcement of respective disciplines.<sup>28</sup> The process is mainly connected to the hegemonic dictates of the neoliberal and profit-oriented university that effectively disciplines scientific disciplines in a such a manner that the faculty departments have been forced to strengthen their professional and market-verifiable competitiveness in a technicised and almost biopolitical manner, trying to offer knowledge which responds to the phantasmagorical construction of the (global) labour market economy. Thus endeavours towards the reduction of feminist knowledge as a utilitarian component in the function of certain disciplines or the (ab)use of feminist theory as symbolic 'capital' for very distinctive disciplinary research, or for insuring the status of that very discipline follow the same path. One of the key concerns nowadays is how to provide or keep a space for feminist knowledge within a disciplinary framework. By giving an example from the Department of Sociology that one of the authors is affiliated with, it is apparent that the respective department would rather agree to introduce a course on 'Feminist Sociology' or 'Sociology of the Family' than in the long-term keep the course 'Feminist Theories' within the sociology framework. There are two supposedly functional reasons for this: one is that the course 'Feminist Theories', which is conceptualized as interdisciplinary, apparently 'confuses' students with its experimental openness and use of an epistemological multi-layered approach that is different from the sociological one, and second, that in the long run it does not ensure very specific practical skills and knowledge needed for sociologists as a profession.<sup>29</sup> If we use one of the cognitive

<sup>28</sup> Angeliki Alvanoudi, "Teaching Gender in the Neoliberal University", in D. Gronold, B. Hipfl and L. Lund Pedersen (eds.), *Teaching with the Third Wave New Feminists' Explorations of Teaching and Institutional Contexts. Teaching with Gender. European Women's Studies in International and Interdisciplinary Classrooms*, ATHE-NA3, Utrecht, 2009, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Nina Lykke explained the concept of interdisciplinarity "as transgressing 'borders between disciplinary canons and approaches in a theoretical and methodological bricolage that allows for new synergies to emerge' (...)" (Lykke according to V. Vasterling, E. Demény, C. Hemmings, H. Holm, P. Korvajärvi and T. S. Pavlidou, "Practising Interdisciplinarity in Gender Studies. Travelling Concepts", in *Feminist Pedagogy: European Perspectives Series*, Raw Nerve Books

explanatory examples such as intersectionality that is a primary analytical tool that both sociologists and feminist scholars deploy for theorizing identity, discrimination and oppression, then we can witness how its understanding often means relying on very determined clusters with quantitative indicators that very often enable abstract deductions of the different positions people hold in relation to gender and other social identity categories at the same time while the complexity of relations around sex, gender, race including critical reflections of socio-cultural hierarchies, social tensions and power relations is not an issue. With this, it is not only the idea around which the matrix of feminist educational curriculum is built that is diminished, but also the critical charge that activates the sense of such a cognitive agenda. As we know, since sociology is neither a particular case, nor an exception in this regard, feminist knowledge cannot be seen only as a critical tool either within or crossing disciplinary fields. It is a much more complex procedure in terms of epistemological shifts, dimensions and approaches, material conditions and various contextual demands, and the politics of knowledge within which the challenges of inter-, trans- or multi-disciplinarity are negotiated and articulated.

### Concluding Remarks

In place of concluding remarks we will rather keep our attention once more on the main question: What can we as feminist scholars do and how to act? Appearing at the same time in a space 'in-between' in terms of disciplinary expertise/profession and in a space 'across' disciplines, private-public dichotomy, spaces of being, mainstreaming agendas etc., feminist scholars face a role of agencies of multiple displacement and exiles to the most extent. What to do then? Keeping the subversion of the dominant concepts and cognitive discipline codes and so-called 'new-old' pragmatic and functional knowledge requires an intense processing of dealing with cross-disciplinary conceptual translations and affirmation of critical knowledge.

Yet the invention of new ways of unmasking and resisting the neoliberalisation of universities including development of argumentation against neoliberal trends in knowing and their devastating implications is at stake nowadays. Seen another way,

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Ltd, York, 2006, p. 63; see also M. Liinason and U. Holm, "PhDs, Women's/Gender Studies and Interdisciplinarity", *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 14(2), 2006, pp. 115-130.

as deliberative 'agents' of Women's/Gender studies legitimation, we should break the silence and speak up about the injuries of neo-liberal academia by exploring the ways in which scholarly experiences and 'affective states'; as Rosalind Gill remarkably pointed out in her article "Breaking the silence. The hidden injuries of neoliberal academia", "(...) may be gendered, racialized and classed".<sup>30</sup> Feminist commitment for decolonizing knowledge is sufficiently different to move on in this regard. Or rather, how to deconstruct a neoliberal pragmatic dictate of 'the emergency as a rule'?

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<sup>30</sup> Rosalind Gill, *Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neoliberal academia*, 2010. <<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/cmci/people/papers/gill/silence.pdf>>, p. 4.