

Care in Conflict: Artistic Reflections on Broken Worlds/Words

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Yet Another Buzzword. Languages of Care, Language-As-Care

Elpida Karaba, Valia Papastamou
Marianna Stefanitsi and Ioanna Zouli

“Okay, all of us here, what, what are the languages we speak? What can we do with our hands? What do we need to build this?” If we put together every language each of us speaks, our memories and knowledge, we realize how much we have.

—Vergès (2023, 15)

This publication seeks a rupture with the way we speak, taking *language-as-care* as the starting point for a reflection on what could critically resist the emergence nowadays of “care” both as a buzzword in the contemporary cultural scene and as an, often aestheticised, representation in various artistic and theoretical contexts. Our goal is to present a publication that is related to the projects of the Care Ecologies programme but goes beyond the programme’s specificities, aiming to resonate with critical issues of our times and to serve as a source of dialogue for expanded theoretical, artistic and pedagogical contexts. As this project engages with diverse geographies and languages, our preface proposes language and its engagement with care as an analytical tool – both in the contributions of the invited writers and for reflecting on how language itself shapes forms of resistance. It also reflects on how we break away from language biases based on words and notions – to the canon and the hierarchical structures inherent in the creative industries and their fluctuating geopolitical stakes.

The development of the book’s content has been challenging as different stances emerged on how we understand and perform care and collaboration. After a series of meetings with the programme’s partners, several issues occurred regarding the publication and, specifically, our initial proposal for the texts to deal with the language *of* care not only literally but also symbolically. The use of English as our common language, which is often the case in EU-funded programmes even when no one speaks it as a first language, shapes how we position and relate to one another. Yet, in navigating language, we share common struggles and demands that arise from our different but interconnected cultural backgrounds and unfold through the language itself; a process that can be seen as an act of care.

Language reveals issues of power relations among cultural and geopolitical hegemonies and, in this context, “ecologies of care” would be an ideal place to take care of ecology through languages of/as care and by speaking differently. While our initial proposal invited partners to contribute directly to the publication with texts written in the four languages spoken by the project partners, thus making the texts available to broader audiences through English translation, this approach proved unfeasible. Practical parameters, the scale of the translation work and budgetary constraints – barriers at the heart of collaborations that operate in such a way that the politics of language and the politics of working together are also attuned to the politics of time.

So, as our aim to include texts in different languages alongside their English translations as a common bridge proved unattainable, we decided to commission authors from different geographies and disciplines to write new texts. Our call to authors aimed to include the issues that emerged both in the context of the project and in relation to the content of the publication itself. We turned the focus towards aspects of the Global South, caring, feminism, situated knowledge and the challenges of language as a tool to destabilise hegemonic creative industries, issues that are also at the core of our work at The Centre of New Media and Feminist Public Practices.¹ In this process, which we are sharing as we believe it contextualises language barriers and their hierarchies, we also encountered the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon language, making its hegemony particularly evident. Facing, once again, financial and administrative constraints, language and translation emerged not only as significant matters of care but also as a critical tool to highlight and address these challenges.

Meanwhile, our research practice, the collaborations and participations we had, seemed to resonate even within that scope. When, for example, we participated in the NoSymmetries symposium in Barcelona, co-organised by our partner Idensitat and the Imarte research group of the University of Barcelona (see Index, p. 49), processes of translation between Spanish and English acted as a linguistic stance and barrier. Translation, thus, emerged as a key theme, literally but also symbolically, intervening with notions of care and justice and the ways that institutions *translate* care. Some months ago, when we took part

¹ The CNMFPP: Elpida Karaba, Iris Lykourioti, Valia Papastamou, Marianna Stefanitsi and Ioanna Zouli.

in a forum on feminist art and activism in Skopje, we met important feminist theorists, activists and collectives who gave inspirational talks introducing notions conceptualised by situated, localised contexts. They talked about kinship (soy)² among women from different fronts during the Yugoslav Wars, about extended families, exile, memories and storytelling as emancipatory tools, and other such issues. It was an encounter that we felt was close to our approach and, although our experiences politically and culturally might be very different, we felt a kind of elective affinity that connected us to that part of geography as well as to their understanding of the world and words. Even though our interlocutors are very active and thought-provoking, with a substantial body of work to their name going back many years, we found very little of their output available in English, and none in Greek. This scarcity reminded us of how ideas and knowledge are structured and disseminated in alignment with specific power/knowledge (language) relations. We conceptualise these kinds of projects as terrains for enacting practices of labour, drawing on the interplay between speculative thought – in this case language itself but even more than that – as well as ethics as articulated by Puig de la Bellacasa (2017). This perspective is firmly grounded in feminist traditions, which inform our methodologies and enable us to critically engage with the systems we inhabit, speaking/hearing both from within and about them. In another experience that we felt was close to our practice and ethics of care work, we recently participated in the Coming Times symposium,³ where we had the chance not only to share ideas and thoughts regarding feminist, decolonial and intersectional (re)thinking of care but also feel like contributing to the formation of this ephemeral community and sharing a much-needed breathing space in these times. Institutional spaces within the arts, whether manifested as programmes, funding processes or organisational structures, demand our resilient engagement, not only to critique their limitations but to dismantle and reimagine them altogether,

² At the Gender Summit forum in Skopje, we came across the word *soy* (kin), which is also used in Greek, carrying connotations of forms of relating that lay in the heart of the patriarchal family and the nation-state. The use of the word “soy” made us question kinship structures and further reflect on *other* possible forms of interdependence as kinship, as well as on imagining care on a global scale while underlying connections, cultural connotations and habits in our ec-centric localised framework. How can we reappropriate and revisit them while introducing words that come from a diverse cultural context to coexist with relevant words most broadly used, coming from strong languages? The similarities and differences in the use and recontextualisation of such words is something worth looking at.

³ The symposium was a three-day event on feminist practices in the broader performing arts field curated and organised by Undercurrent, an independent curatorial platform for discursive, performative, and educational practices. Valia Papastamou and Ioanna Zouli’s presentation “Mind the Gap: Ways of Thinking around Care and Complaints” proposed a critical rethinking on issues of care through and with notions of complaint, recognising the empowering and caring role that “complaints” can have inside and beyond institutional settings.

no less. In such a spirit, forming a new vocabulary of care seems imperative. The language of *care* has been co-opted by neoliberalism, turning it into something transactional: self-care as consumerism, healthcare as an industry, social care as an individual burden rather than a collective responsibility. To reclaim care beyond the neoliberal profit agenda, we need to shift both our vocabulary and our frameworks for thinking about care. We can create new words outside the buzzwords of profit-driven understandings, we can expand our languages towards words that come from different cultures and interweave them into new feminist care vocabularies.

In that regard, the publication in hand, *Care in Conflict: Artistic Reflections on Broken Worlds/Words*, aims to create a discussion around care as a contested term and situate "conflict" as a methodology in order to identify the conflicting ideologies, interpretations and politics in diverse contexts and geographies. It reveals our effort to explore how care is entangled with power, responsibility, resistance and repair via political, ecological, affectful or linguistic art mediations. How might artistic practices offer alternative ways to understand or reimagine what care means, and how it is enunciated, as care for language, or as care as a language of new words and new worlds? Care's restitution – its potential to unsettle, heal or reproduce existing structures – unfolds through both articulated and more subtle or disguised forms, across different cultural, social and geographic contexts. On another level, the publication highlights how conflict and care are central to collaborative research and curatorial work, reflecting on initiatives such as *Curating through Conflict with Care*, a working group commissioned by the general members' assembly of *neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK)* and developed as a collective research project which explores the contradictions embedded in curatorial practice, especially when working across languages and borders. In that sense, our title also gestures towards the challenges inherent in such programmes and the potential for those challenges to generate new possibilities. As an archive of argumentations against the mainstream system of accreditation, ranking and metrics of excellence, this publication could act as an empowering tactic to revisit the issue of care and collaboration within the economy of knowledge. Reflecting on the production of knowledge and the amount of discourse regarding issues of *care*, we are revisiting questions about the ways we could write with and about care within our own languages and the dominant canon. Since the relevant bibliography is extensive, often radical yet

also often instrumentalised, we believe it is essential for this publication to take a stance on the different approaches the subject entails. For instance, it takes a critical position towards certain appropriations of care: the use of the “language of the master”; issues of language and beyond; acting as a minor manifesto for micropolitical strategies and situated language among them for resisting exclusion; the pressure imposed by hegemonic creative industries as a tool of reterritorialisation within cognitive capitalism and industries of knowledge and creativity.

The texts by Gigi Argyropoulou, Ethel Baraona Pohl and Lisa Maillard, Elke Krasny and Suzana Milevska, written in English, articulate diverse approaches to conceptualising care, each engaging with its multifaceted dimensions revealing their complexity and relevance across various contexts. We are grateful for their contributions that made us (re)think and be responsive to issues regarding care, further expanding and enriching the perspectives originating from the Care Ecologies programme. Moreover, we wanted to express our gratitude to them for sharing writing and collaboration ethics that remind us how important this is for our work and lives; in our effort to find other affiliations of critical thinking so as to orient ourselves with the challenges we are facing.

Serving as the epilogue of the publication is bell hooks’ seminal text “Teaching New Worlds/New Words”, which has been included in its Greek translation (*Γλώσσα: διδάσκοντας νέους κόσμους, διδασκοντας νέες λέξεις*). This text not only addresses the polyphony of the project but also extends an invitation for introspection and transformation. By urging us to embrace new words as pathways to new worlds, hooks’ work resonates as both a critical reflection and a heartfelt call to action, opening up possibilities for reimagining collective futures through language and care. The decision to republish this text in its Greek translation was a deliberate gesture on our part that resonates with hooks’ call. While the English version is widely published and accessible through various printed and online mediums, we believed it was important to offer a version in the language of the editors. This not only provides an opportunity to redistribute the text in a less-accessible language but also aligns with our decision to write the introduction in English to facilitate engagement with readers across diverse language backgrounds. Ultimately, this choice to publish the Greek translation of hook’s text offers us a possibility to attempt a detournement of language restrictions; it shows our desire

to engage with, reflect on and write in a language in which we feel more at ease, emphasising the significance of language and translation as a praxis that shapes our intellectual and creative processes.

Furthermore, an autonomous yet interconnected section, an Index, has been incorporated in the publication. The Index does not literally respond to indexicality as such, acting for example as a navigator to the body of the publication. It rather aims to make a reference point presenting the overall Care Ecologies programme and, as such, it presents the project partners and the relevant actions they undertook during the programme. Each partner wrote their contribution to the Index in both their language as well as in English translation, making this section function also as a space for experimentation, where different languages can coexist as traces, as a visual imprint, as a reminder of a multicultural diversity, while contextualising the linguistic diversity of the overall publication. It operates as a feminist index, more than just a cataloguing or referencing system; it is a dynamic practice that brings to light otherwise peripheral or ec-centric positions, pathways, relationships and interconnections. By highlighting the trace of diverse initiatives, it creates opportunities for fostering relationality and uncovering the interconnectedness or raptures between bodies, spaces and histories. In doing so, this methodology prioritises the recognition of relational and affective networks over the rigid categorisation characteristic of traditional indexing systems. As a counter-practice, the feminist index challenges conventional epistemological frameworks that often perpetuate hierarchical and exclusionary systems of knowledge. Instead, it foregrounds feminist ethics of care, intersectionality and polyphony, offering an inclusive and transformative approach to knowledge production. By privileging multiplicity and relationality, the Index questions dominant paradigms, advocating for a more equitable and interconnected understanding of histories, practices and futures.

The commissioned texts strive to re-read care and its discontents and clarify antagonistic understandings and significations of care. They aim to better understand the fundamental role of care in the contradictions of social cohesion and social emancipation, while addressing, as discussed, issues of the Global South, care and curating, feminism, situated knowledge and affect. Enlightened by a feminist perspective, they try to differentiate and raise consciousness on how these exact values are extracted by the

globalised market to be invested in the rally of profit. Suzana Milevska examines the ways that curatorial agency is expanded through ecofeminist concepts and towards more ethical approaches that exceed forced dualisms and hierarchy systems that perpetuate oppression, exploitation and exhaustion. Rooted in the critique of patriarchal, colonial and capitalist ideologies, ecofeminism resists the violent processes of extraction, both physical (for example, resource depletion, land degradation) and conceptual (for example, the commodification of knowledge and cultural erasure). Milevska proposes the figure of a “kalokagathian” curator as the one who acts as an agent of social practice and strives through curating forms that bridge the ethical and the aesthetic. Milevska further focuses on Violeta Čapovska’s land-art performance “Salt” (2018) as a specific case study, also reflecting her experience in it as the initial project’s curator. The performance, which took place in North Macedonia, challenges the essentialism of nature/gender/memory that ecofeminist art practices regularly reproduce.

Ethel Baraona Pohl and Lisa Maillard reflect on notions of scientific, medical knowledge and their relation to healthcare, challenging the ideas of normality and health of the able-body, as produced and named by the commodified, medical authority of Western-colonial scientific systems of knowledge. They examine the potentialities of other plural knowledges that challenge the Western concept of the “broken and restored” and the ideology of transparency within the system of medical diagnosis/treatment, towards nonlinear processes of the opacity of the body-mind wholeness. The “broken and restored” is also a metaphor for all the turbulences and raptures following a condition of poly-crises. Reading the text, we are interpellated in a “joyful militancy”, as feminist activists and thinkers taught us. Broken bodies, physically, mentally or collectively are a site of potential resistance, creativity and complex identity. Rather than striving to conform to societal standards of “normalcy”, this perspective embraces the “broken” as a powerful expression of diversity and a source of embodied knowledge.

A testament to the eclectic *kinship* of the writers in this publication, Gigi Argyropoulou’s text is also a call to the “broken”, addressing both the systemic dismantling of care as a social good and, at the same time, the transformative potential of the broken. The writer reflects on her experiences of caretaking while thinking about artistic practices through institutional critique, along with paradigms of collective projects that emerged during the years of crisis and the

pandemic. Argyropoulou reimagines the transformative potential of care infrastructures as broken infrastructures, inconvenient relations and ephemeral spaces of care through critical art practices and proposes what “militant care” and “militant curating” can offer to the emergence of “critical publics”, social spaces reimagined and reoccupied and transformational infrastructures.

Elke Krasny proposes a “think-and-feel piece” as a methodology for writing otherwise that strives to overcome the binary between thinking and feeling. Through the question of the “what if”, she wonders “what if women built the world”, referring to and paraphrasing Yael Bartana’s question “what if women ruled the world”. Krasny challenges the heteronormative, patriarchal and colonial ways that are building the worlds we inhabit while imagining other transformative ways of world-building, thinking/feeling, caring and writing.

The considerations of care presented in the texts’ case studies make us reflect anew on how aesthetics of care could disrupt the dominant narratives on broken bodies, bodies/lands as sites of extraction, and further urge us to resist the gender essentialism that frequently characterises various “eco” approaches.⁴ We also contemplate on how bodies reproduced through the dualisms of thinking and feeling are inherently flawed or need fixing, instead asserting that breaks offer alternative ways of experiencing and interacting with the world. This affirmation calls for a dismantling of ableist structures, advocating for a society where all bodies/entities deserve care and are integral to the social fabric. In this vision and perspective of justice demands and care practices, the broken is not a symbol of what is lacking but a radical challenge to oppressive systems; an invitation to rethink what matters and reclaim languages of care through our differences and positionalities. Furthermore, we think about “kalokagathian” practices through the *philanthropist* and *social sensitivity turn* of large, profit-driven contemporary cultural institutions which present themselves as the great patrons and benefactors of humanism and humanitarian causes. Speaking of words, this convention brings us in yet another way to

⁴ As we participate in the Care Ecologies project, we have been thinking a lot about the issues raised in ecofeminist approaches. While we recognise their important contribution to shaking up entrenched, gendered notions of ecology, we also find that in several cases they tend to reiterate essentialist undercurrents. During our research on the subject we came across relevant bibliography in English as well as in other languages; however, within the timeframe of the programme we were unable to provide an essential reading list that could support a critical contextualisation of the very programme we are involved in, let alone to suggest other readings beyond the English literature. Nonetheless, we would encourage the reader to approach this publication with these considerations in mind, and maybe making some such texts accessible could be a potential next step as a continuation of this volume.

the concept of the broken, as in the vernacular “broke” means bankrupt, penniless. And this is exactly what it is about, that the beneficence of private institutions masquerades as the bankruptcy of the welfare state.

Critical issues, such as those discussed in the texts, remind us once more how caring is gendered, and in relation to the “female” as developed, for example, through the parenthood experiences in Argyropoulou’s text or the “women” who may rule the world, critiqued in Krasny’s text, stressing the importance that epistemologies of care (enlightenment vs feminist or other epistemologies) play. At the same time, recurring issues of institutional appropriation of *care* address a call for its necessary rethinking through intersectional thought as well as locality and diverse geographies through its interconnection with language and power. Feminist theorists have argued extensively that gender is performative, meaning that the ways we act and speak about women contribute to the social construction of gender. Thus, the discussions on diversity and inclusion that aim to create consciousness around terms such as “woman” or “female” strive to rethink the ways that such identities are not neutral descriptors but are imbued with cultural and ethicopolitical meaning that can both empower and oppress, further trying to unsettle these essentialisations and include transfeminist positionalities, or move away from gender binaries and include other nonbinary-identified positionalities and languages. We strongly align with the aforementioned discussions and the constant struggles to reclaim such terms, while acknowledging that it remains in many cases an immanent notion and takes various disguises, as the texts of this publication problematise in different ways.

Reflecting on the notions that emerge in the texts, we also think about new perspectives of care in artistic practice and artistic knowledge production which have acted as reference points in the genealogy of today’s thought. Works that have been exemplary, which have been greatly influential in Western feminist art, such as the manifesto entitled *The Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition “CARE”* (1969) by Mierle Laderman Ukeles, which gave visibility to gendered maintenance work, and her performances in the 1970s that highlighted maintenance work in institutional and public spaces such as *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Inside* (1973) and *Touch Sanitation* (1979–1980), or Mary Kelly’s much-discussed *Post-Partum Document* (1973–1979), which highlighted the conflicting psychic/social investments of motherhood, childcare and femininity. In the current context, where the works that

negotiate the concept of care are abundant, produced to respond to the open calls of cultural actors regarding "care", they often seem undifferentiated in terms of the sociopolitical stakes and function in abstract ways to appropriate notions of care. We keep thinking about the new order of things across the world, where the far right is gaining ground and increasingly marginalising those who do not fit neatly into the safe, well-rounded version/vision of society and its much self-indulgent rhetoric. In this context, the debate about *care* seems to be preparing a new lower caste: a class of people who needs to be numerous to provide for the select few, whose maintenance needs will only become more demanding. This sounds similar to the dystopian vision of the world designed by Atelier Van Lieshout, the *Slave City Urban Plan* (2005): a project designed for a city with 200,000 inhabitants, establishing an advanced concentration camp that utilises the latest technology and management techniques. The residents, referred to as "participants", work in various office roles, such as customer service, IT support, telemarketing and computer programming. Their schedule – work, maintenance and sleep hours – is strictly programmed in order to keep the city operational. The efficiency of the participants is constantly monitored, and corrective actions are taken when performance falls below a predetermined threshold. In the city, for these purposes, "The Female Slave University" operates. The female slaves are trained to be functional and effective towards the goals of the Slave City. The university offers limited positions and is advertised as "an environmentally friendly biological facility", a model which deafeningly echoes the elitist-driven educational reforms around the globe. On a different note and in another project of Atelier Van Lieshout resisting this tendency, we recognise the potential that practices of activist intervention carry in raising critical issues of political geography, such as the movable abortion clinic *A-Portable* (2001), created in collaboration with the Dutch nonprofit organisation Women on Waves, which performs as an art project while providing reproductive health services to women from countries with restrictive laws. We further think how interdisciplinary collective practices of care through projects such as the *Pirate Care Project*, the transnational network of activists, practitioners and scholars build on common care infrastructures to respond to the current care crisis. Such projects, not only contribute to the relationship of care and feminism as well as to the methodologies, technologies and resistances to them, regarding biopolitics and biopower, but, even more, help us build our resistances to the *care overload*, to the downgrading of care from a social good to a personal matter.

In our situated case, artists have been recently confronting the issues of care in the Greek scene, with paradigms such as Dimitra Kondylatou's artistic research on art and tourism since 2012, with works such as *In the Shade of the Season* and *Luxenia* (2021) on the unseen affective labour within the tourist zones of Greek islands; or Sofia Exarchou's film *Animal* (2023), which exposes the conditions of Greece's all-inclusive hotel sector; the photographic work *Sunday Women* (2021) by Tatiana Mavromati and Lora Maragoudaki on immigrant domestic workers in Greek homes; or Doreida Xhogu's *Mama Klorin*, ongoing since 2018, on house cleaners and the obscure institution of the *ψυχοκόρη* (soul-daughter), a common practice in which young girls from poor families were sent to wealthy homes as informal servants, especially during wartime, that lasted until the application of laws against underage labour and which recently also surfaced in the storylines of popular television series. Through these paradigms, we ought to consider how the appearance of issues of care remain critical or are mainstreamised, finding ways for this appearance to become less edgy and threatening. How can we confront the silencing that mainstream media – such as the TV series mentioned above – perform when they reduce care to a personal drama, making it the constitutional basis of a society of the powerful and the subaltern, diverting attention from the unjust and unethical constitution of economic, social and political structures of which we are the agents (and voters)?

Adding further to the situated context, the project partners' contributions to the critical reconsideration of the local cultural field can also serve as points of reflection, with paradigms such as The Bureau of Care– the interdisciplinary research programme about the ethics and politics of care initiated in 2020 by State of Concept Athens as well as the G. and A. Mamidakis Foundation Research Residency Programme regarding care economies and care ecologies, launched in 2022. Both projects emerged during or right after the pandemic, a period that underscored the urgency of these discussions, while it amplified the precarity in the cultural sector and intensified the efforts of cultural workers to organise in unions. All the above are expressions of an increasing consciousness regarding issues of the care economy. These and other cases are not necessarily exemplary, but they are indications of a process that needs persistent attention and a critical systematic approach. Not all initiatives are of the same order; therefore, a more systematic research and genealogical mapping are necessary with the aim to identify cases and assess their qualitative differences in terms of intentions, starting

point, orientation, methodologies and ethics as well as the kinds of traces they leave in the field. This is important especially when reflecting on how these traces converge with those in the wider perspective, where dominant institutions overdetermine artistic, curatorial and cultural practices and while institutional agendas shape artistic work in both overt and subtle ways. Whether through funding priorities, curatorial choices, market trends or ideological frameworks, institutions influence not only what kind of art gets made but also how it is received and is circulated. Large institutions function as gatekeepers of patriarchal and economy-driven values so that the specific curatorial directions of museums, biennials and galleries influence which artists gain visibility. Themes for major exhibitions can shape the discourse, sometimes reinforcing institutional narratives about identity, politics or aesthetics. This leads most often to a feedback loop where artists begin producing work that fits institutional expectations instead of actually challenging them. Institutions may exercise control over artistic expression, either through direct exclusion or neglect of certain works and initiatives that do not directly serve their cause or through soft censorship by encouraging predictable themes and formations.

In this institutional framework, we constantly ask ourselves how has care been instrumentalised so that the social contract of welfare is subordinated to the basis of individual responsibility and charity? How can the above be linked to the question of education, especially now that public education, which is one of the basic foundations of the social contract of democracy, is being devalued? And how, in general, is care slowly falling into the hands of individuals who are assuming an educational and knowledge management role? Acknowledging that we don't want to abandon *care* in the neoliberal context, admitting its contradictions within capital that lead to crises of care and the broader crisis of social reproduction that is inherent in capitalism yet differentiated in the historic phases of capitalist development, as Nancy Fraser (2016) mentions, while also taking into account the responsibility of elaborating today (and again) on issues of care, we wonder how can we speak about care while situated in the precarious positions of working in the expanded cultural field and in eccentric geographies that are radically reshaped in the global neoliberal system. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her question about whether subjects can speak for themselves, works on issues of power/knowledge by transforming the question "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" (1988) into whether subaltern subjects can be heard. Motivated

by her thought, we reflect on how we could possibly articulate a discourse of caring, with care and towards caring, so as other, dyselected voices could be heard. By exploring the situation of being subjected as a “regime of gendered silencing” (Athanasίου, 2016, 155) and, concerning the complex processes of subjectivisation, the importance of language is highlighted in relation to issues of gender, intersectionally, in relation to their intertwining with class, nation, ethnicity, race, etc., and within the globalised knowledge economy. In the search for new forms of language practices that do not reproduce the existing forms of patriarchal oppression and besides specialist language(s), expertise-driven knowledges and individualised or market-driven forms of (self) care, we rather acknowledge a certain shift that is needed.

Regarding the imperative for alternative forms of knowledge production, Gerald Raunig argues that, in times of subservience of desire, affect and cooperation, it is difficult to draw lines of flight, to diffuse assemblages of social subjugation and machinic subservience. Modes of resistance, more than ever before, must carry out and renew both movements of reterritorialisation and that of deterritorialisation (2013, 28). This publication aims to shift towards those movements regarding our languages, thoughts, claims and ideas within the broader so-called creative industry. It tries to rethink the forces of care in cognitive capitalism and acknowledge the complex entanglement with political issues in order to destabilise not only the imposed carelessness of nation-states’ supportive structures and operational systems but also the theoretical tools used. Should we move, for example, beyond the notion of *production* of knowledges, “move away from the notion of ‘production’ – which is very patriarchal – and back to a notion of ‘caring’ as the primary form of value creation,” as David Graeber remarks when sharing his thoughts on the “revolt of the caring classes” (2019)? Should we also strive to articulate alternative vocabularies of care through rethinking the ways that neoliberalism invests in certain forms of creativity and unevenly distributes the resources in the cultural field as well as how “neoliberalism, in other words, has neither an effective practice of, nor a vocabulary for, care” (Care Collective 2020).

In an autoethnographic manner we make ourselves the objects of our study. As part of this “knowledge production” culture, as mentioned from the very beginning of this introduction, we reflect on how to present this book at hand. We would like

to present and use this book as a case study to ask who are the individuals involved and what are their trajectories? What connects and distinguishes them? Are these connections sustained through long-term affiliations or are they the result of temporary encounters? What are the sources of funding, and how do they influence the project's scope and direction? How do the various practices within this project intersect, diverge, resonate or evolve over time? And, moreover, how are we dealing with the tantalising issue where, despite the proliferation of programmes that claim to foster care and inclusivity, the tide appears to be turning in the opposite direction? Are our initiatives truly instruments of change, or do they serve as a veneer, a laundering of ideas that renders us ever more docile, restless and complicit in our own subjugation? As the release of this book comes at a time when history has taken on a sombre hue amid the rise of transphobic stakes and the resurgence of traditional family values, all woven into the fabric of an ascendant and unorthodox far right, care is a very serious matter to be abandoned all together.

In this call for care, collectivity proves to be a critical and ambiguous matter. We faced the challenge of how we can think of this project as a collective project, as most of the time we did not even have enough opportunities to brainstorm or meet, or we were absorbed in our own tasks and endeavours. But collectivity in this and in other similar cases has been an exercise of acknowledgment of similar practices that was emphatically put forward with our proposal for the multilingual Index in this publication. Rather than viewing it solely through the lens of joint action, formed necessarily only through shared activities, we understand it as a mode of recognition that emerges from the resonance through analogous concerns, methodologies and aims. Thus, collectivity is formed through the mutual recognition of relevant struggles. In this vein, collectivity involves the acknowledgment of shared practices rather than the convergence of individuals into one cohesive group. Collectivity can also be seen as an epistemic formation rather than a physical or organisational one. Situated knowledge emphasises how knowledge production is inherently collective, even when it occurs through the separate efforts of individuals or groups. Knowledge, from this perspective, emerges not from a single source or united effort but from a network of practices that contributes to the ongoing interweaving of common ideas and actions. That double-faceted care (radical and capitalised) is living proof of the need to think of this particular case study to hand under such a lens.

We encourage readers to approach each initiative, practice and text as a unique case while situating it within the larger constellation of the project. This perspective invites a nuanced understanding of the interrelations, tensions, continuities and ruptures that emerge, fostering a critical appreciation of the complexities and relationalities at play.

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Ecofeminism and Kalokagathian Curating

Suzana Milevska

Ever since Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969) wrote her proposal for the exhibition "Care" titled *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!*, the feminist art, the discourses of institutional critique and the issues of care in the arts became inevitably interwoven and reciprocally related. This and Ukeles' other acts of intervention were aimed against discriminatory and exploitative institutional rules and unfair expectations from women artists, among many other aspects. The artist's *Manifesto* pointed out that, unlike male artists, women artists have been traditionally underrepresented or completely excluded from institutional spaces. Moreover, even when they were included, Ukeles and other feminist artists of the time claimed that the institutions did not offer equal conditions for work to women artists – they did not treat them equally to their male peers or embrace their specific role in society.

I want to argue that sometimes in writings about art and in curatorial texts about art projects that address environmental topics, the ecological arguments are obscured, obfuscated and contradictory to the ones of the feminist critique; and this gives way to a possible conflation of the essentialisation of the relation between women and the environment and the political connectedness of feminism, art and ecology. Such an interpretation becomes particularly problematic when the references to highly theoretical and radical ecofeminist experiments are taken literally and without critical interpretation and recontextualisation. Thus, the art projects or their interpretation may remain rather on the level of illustration, without paying attention to the complex and nuanced differences between different ecofeminist movements and arguments.

Ecofeminists came up with several interrelated concepts, terms and movements such as: ecological feminism (Warren), feminist environmentalism (Seager), social ecofeminism (Heller, King) and critical feminist ecosocialism (Plumwood) (Maris 2009). It was in the 1980s that two dominant strands of ecofeminist theories started to be distinguished, since they had begun to branch out into two distinct schools of thought: cultural and social ecofeminism. Cultural ecofeminism incorporates symbology, drawing on religious and mythical iconography. Social and

constructivist ecofeminism incorporates environmental activism and action, and it does not accept the assumption that earth is inherently feminine since “Mother Earth” is a form of “essentialism”. Constructivist ecofeminism thus emphasises that the link between women and nature is a social construction – it’s not because women have an essential biological relationship with nature that men do not have. Pointing out these differences, however, is not the same as saying that the various ecofeminisms are not correlated (Wildy 2011).

In response to various urgent issues related to contemporary art, culture and politics, curating started to call for a bridging of both the gaps and the incommensurable dissimilarities between different genders, and differently conceptualised art practices (e.g., poor theatre, fine art, cartographies), while strongly opposing those hackneyed hegemonic forms of curating that impose themselves on the art of disenfranchised communities and “subaltern cultures”.

While aiming to expand the curatorial field and reflect on its social relevance, feminist curators advocating such a type of practice no longer see the exhibition as the ultimate format of their curatorial work. These curators assimilate the research process and – as culminating manifestations in parallel to their exhibitions – they include theoretical critical formats such as conferences, seminars, interviews, participatory close reading workshops, projections, public debates and various online events and platforms that are responsive to actual urgencies. Overall, one could say that this is a kind of kalokagathian curatorial practice in which curators perhaps aim for and correspond to a type of ethical curatorial agency instead of a bland form of managerial practice.¹

Curatorial agency is directly indebted to the rethinking of the ethical role of curating in the context of contemporary art, culture and society (Milevska 2013). Drawing on Alfred Gell’s concept of “art as agency” (1998), curating indeed can unleash and enhance art’s power to act, instead of just passively representing the world. In particular, ecofeminist curatorial

¹ Kalokagathia, from the Ancient Greek *καλός καγαθός*, meaning the beautiful and good. The word is derived from two adjectives: kalos (beautiful) and agathos (honest, good, noble, courageous, worthy of admiration). This Ancient Greek ideal of harmony between any artistic action and the noble and good human personality is documented in Plato’s teaching on the harmony between bodily, moral and spiritual values (also present in other ancient texts). For example, in Plato’s dialogue *Lysis*, the relationship between beauty and goodness is established with an emphasis on both categories as positive human values. Socrates says, “Now I maintain that the good is [the] beautiful. What do you think? (*λέγω γὰρ ταγαθὸν καλὸν εἶναι οὐ δ’ οὐκ οἶσι*).” See Milevska (2020).

agency inevitably draws together the ethical and aesthetical components of art that is critical of institutional and systemic discrimination and hierarchy.

Curatorial agency assumes that the curator is no longer considered to be a mere presenter of existing artistic concepts or projects. It acts as a social and ethical agency that entrusts its intellectual and theoretical capacities to curatorial knowledge production and art for social change and collaborations among curators, artists and activists. It is embedded as one of the major cultural policy concepts in relation to the urgent need for cultural translation of lesser-known art and cultural traditions inevitably linked to postcolonial critique and theory.

If conceived in this way, a kalokagathian curator is rather assumed to be an active societal agent that contributes towards a cross-referential understanding of art and towards the rapprochement between different artistic, cultural, ethnic, class, gender and sexual camps and, moreover, towards the improvement of society in general by building a bridge between aesthetics and ethics. Such a practice does not require a particular figure to master the intricate balance implied in kalokagathia, and it does not require a particular platform from which to speak and impose this harmony between the aesthetic and the ethics. It simply requires from anyone who ventures onto this noble path a kind of social practice of shared learning and doing – one which suffers no top-down managerialism.

Case Study

In July 2018 Violeta Čapovska completed her land-art performance “Salt”. This was the third part of Čapovska’s long-term project that formed a kind of trilogy – it followed her previous land-print projects: “Small Lake” (1994) and “I and the Eye” (1996). It is important to stress that this project took place 25 years after Čapovska and I, as the initial project’s curator, climbed to the Small Lake for the first time in order to realise and record her art project at this location. “Salt” thus also points to the artist’s intimate relation to the nature and culture of her country of origin, North Macedonia, although she lives and works in Melbourne, Australia (Milevska 2019). What is common to all three projects and also makes them specific is their unique location: they all took place at the Small Lake on Baba Mountain in North Macedonia.² However by climbing the mountain once again all the way to the Small Lake while realising the latest

² One of the two lakes on Baba Mountain, the Small Lake is at an elevation of 2,180 metres, near its peak, Pelister.

project, "Salt", Čapovska managed to address the various aspects of the relationship between her cultural and gender identity, nature and her artistic practice.³

The Small Lake, particularly its purity and the incommensurable sublimity of nature in general, could be interpreted as a metaphor for temporality: "culturalscape" and "memoryscape". During the three projects, it was particularly important for Čapovska to stress the impossibility to represent the sublime and the difficulty in preserving fading childhood memories of aesthetical and ethical purity from the past.

Here it is important to address the distinctive complex connotation of the material "salt" from the title of the latest project (and the exhibition) and to unravel the specific background and development of the entire concept. At first sight, the art project's concept and its structure are very simple: the artist aimed to climb once again to the Small Lake, to walk in a circle around it and to "mark" her walk by a trace made of salt. She brought salt with her, but not any kind of salt. The origin of the salt was important in the artist's words. The salt actually consisted of a mixture of different kinds of salt that originated from Europe and Australia as a kind of metaphor for the intersection and marriage of different cultural identities in a time of global movement and migration.⁴

Čapovska's ongoing concerns and the main focus of her projects explores the possibility to return to the same. She admits that each time it is more difficult to climb the mountain and to make the full "circle" around the lake's circumference (in fact, during the third project she did not even complete the tour). In ecofeminist terms, it is impossible to reverse time to "innocent" nature, if there was ever such a thing.⁵

Salt has additional pertinent significance for Čapovska as it is a durable substance (sodium chloride) that dissolves in water but doesn't evaporate, similar to memory. To be more precise: an imbalance in the salinity of fresh and salt water

³ In 2019 Čapovska presented the "Salt" project within the framework of an eponymous solo exhibition at the Open Graphic Art Studio in Skopje. She exhibited the photo and video documentation of the performance and an accumulative installation of one tonne of salt.

⁴ In 1996 Čapovska similarly brought sand from the Australian desert Kakadu to the Small Lake and mixed it with the lake's own soil.

⁵ The artist, however, adhered to the initial self-imposed rules: not to use any artificial materials throughout the whole production process, thus making the etchings with natural materials originating from the lake or elsewhere, that may dissolve but do not pollute the lake. An important motive was also to raise the awareness of the harm that printmaking could cause depending on the chemicals used.

can subsequently cause an imbalance and disruption of the micro and macro ecosystems and can affect biodiversity depending on society's capacity to manage salination (Cañedo-Argüelles, Kefford, and Schäfer 2018).

The demarcation of the lake's shape during the artist's performance during which she was slowly walking around its shore as she was pouring small amounts of salt in an irregular line was, in addition, a kind of ephemeral print that could also be interpreted as illustrating the borderline between the intact nature and our questionable actions, as well as calling for "paying attention" in Isabelle Stengers' understanding of the term (Savransky and Stengers 2018). Although Čapovska's project is not focused on a discursive analysis of the major arguments of feminist and ecological theorists, or activist initiatives for the preservation of natural resources, "Salt" (as well as the first two parts of the trilogy) makes clear the argument that ecology and feminism can and should learn from each other, in many different ways.

Obviously, the artist engaged with the complex relations between woman, nature, memory and art. Thus, it is important to emphasise that Čapovska interpreted nature as culture, and not as a material resource that can be exploited endlessly in the interest of humans. For the artist, the salt and lake offer the symbiotic context that enables our cultural anchoring in nature even when one decides or has had to leave the original territorial and cultural landscape. Thus, with its subtlety and complexity, "Salt" could also motivate us to look more carefully at the potential misunderstandings that could stem from the misleading essentialist ways in which some theoretical assertions of ecofeminism have been simplified, appropriated and recontextualised in contemporary art, in visual and popular culture, or throughout digital media and social networks.

Context and Conclusion

To conclude, ecofeminism and ecofeminist art are not related only to the critique of the reasons and solutions for climate change, the extinguishing of resources or the lack of a commoning of the commons, metaphors and obvious grammatical rules (Milevska 2018). Most importantly, the difference calls for clarification and reflection on economic and political ramifications when focusing on either of these concepts. The necessity of making an important distinction between the noun *commons*, as a passive resource or property, and the active relations assumed by communing, has already been explained clearly by Peter Linebaugh, who was among

the first theorists to have used the latter term:

To speak of the commons as if it were a natural resource is misleading at best and dangerous at worst – the commons is an activity and, if anything, it expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relations to nature. It might be better to keep the word as a verb, an activity, rather than as a noun, a substantive. (2009, 279)

It all depends on the decision of whether one focuses on the existing understanding of property, object-hood and the materiality of resources (and therefore on the passive acceptance of the existing institutional definitions, frameworks and assumed meanings or governing laws and rules of ownership), or, as suggested by Linebaugh, one focuses on the shift towards a more active stance. This implies either an acceptance of the assigned access to and distribution of the commons or a call for redefinition and its redistribution through ecofeminism and communing (Milevska 2018). It consists of cross-disciplinary theory and practice that introduced various methodologies, theories, concepts and terms.

From the outset, ecofeminist performative artistic practices opted for the use of various objects and written material, as well as different events to be activated, either as ordinary props and passing references or as a basis for creating new critical discourses and artistic strategies. The latter use is to convey an awareness of the importance of feminist knowledge production and to induce the deconstruction of long-prevailing pedagogical hierarchies based on the urgency for a simultaneous activation of materiality and temporality.⁶

As several feminist theorists of the “new materialism” have recently discussed in unison, feminist philosophers in the past did not necessarily argue for either an essentialist or constructivist conceptualisation of gender difference. Rather, this dogmatic division was a result of a non-rigorous reading of seminal feminist theoretical texts. For example, according to Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Claire Colebrook and others, some of the early feminist philosophical texts had already explored the complexity of gender relations, pointing to the inextricability of biology and culture in the matter, but for a

⁶ For an attempt to link feminist new materialism, object-oriented ontology and speculative realism, see Åsberg, Thiele, and van der Tuin (2015).

⁷ See n. 1.

long time “essentialism” was strictly used as a pejorative term (Hemmings 2005). The means and methods of metaphoric transfer intentionally and significantly differ from the assumed, accepted and well-maintained epistemic structures and products inherited from the power-centred, hegemonic scientific discourses.

My role in curating the specific art projects by Violeta Čapovska was also not initially defined as ecofeminist or kalokagathian curatorial practice. I coined the term kalokagathian much later, in 2020.⁷ However, the project had already been imagined as an early invitation to confront the split that modernity instituted between ethics and aesthetics as an act of rejecting art’s aloof autonomy for the sake of the well-being of nature, art and women in the arts without the mediation of art institutions. It is safe to assume that the arrival of ecofeminist and kalokagathian curating on the art scene can heal and renew our relationship with both the beautiful and the ethical, by mediating them with care, regardless of whether the process takes place in an art institution or in a public space.

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Fragments of Wholeness: Western Medicine and Epistemologies of Opacity and Resistance

Ethel Baraona Pohl and Lisa Maillard

In writings on opacity, Édouard Glissant describes the inability of a colonial power to accept or value something that it is not able to fully grasp or understand. Colonial subjects are forced into ontological categories of the colonisers and to become legible to the occupying force; “either the other is assimilated, or else it is annihilated,” he wrote (1997, 49). Opacity, or knowledges that transgress the systematisation of Western understandings, is a threat to the colonial hegemony and is denied. Resisting this perspective, Glissant argues for embracing and celebrating each other’s opacity as a practice of acceptance and solidarity.

The beginnings of Western medicine as we know it today coincide with Europe’s phase of colonial expansion. Not by coincidence do colonialism and the concept of medicine and health share a parallel ideology of transparency, the belief in one superior truth that can be applied to everything, and an ideal linear development for the better over time. In accordance with this, other cultures are to this day described as less- or underdeveloped, on the assumption that they are further back on a Western timeline of progress. Medicinal development is conceptualised similarly; there is one truth and we are continually progressing towards a fuller knowledge of it, which is reached through the uncovering of this truth by science. In what could be understood as an imperative to eliminate opacity, Western medicine is based on a system of ordering empirical findings and categorisation. This ideology persists also when dealing with individuals and their healthcare. When something does not go in a way that is seen as normal, a problem is assumed, which can be solved through understanding what it is and where it comes from. When we look at the notion of “being healthy” within this system, diagnosis, treatment and cure are the three main components of the process in a medical setting. Accordingly, mental and physical healthcare take scientific knowledge¹ and diagnosis as the premises of treatment.

¹ “Scientific knowledge” is understood as knowledge stemming from a Western epistemology.

This seeming obsession with diagnosis has been popularised through some films, books and many popular TV shows, such as *Grey's Anatomy*, *The Good Doctor* and *House, M.D.*, the last being the most obvious example of this obsession. The plot of each episode (over all eight seasons) follows the same narrative in which Dr House, with the help of his team, solves the mystery of a patient's peculiar affliction, which is when the episodes abruptly end. Despite all the teamwork behind each diagnosis – including breaking into a patient's house as a routine tactic in which the team seeks for circumstances, personal histories or clues – the search for it is presented like a manhunt. Dr House becomes a medical genius providing the catharsis in the form of diagnosis, not cure. This imaginary is supported by our Western conception of the physician or scientist, often portrayed as a solitary medical genius, leading to an idealisation of the moment when, almost like an epiphany, the physician is able to provide a diagnosis, which apparently correlates immediately to a form of treatment, and the rest of the healing process loses attention.

Despite the seemingly universal imperative “to know”, who has access to what kind of diagnosis and care is, of course, extremely unequal. “Sickness, healthcare, ageing, end-of-life care and death look very different depending on who you are and where you are,” Sophie K Rosa reminds us (2023, 140). People who receive a diagnosis regarding their physical or mental health are affected by biases based on race, class, age, (dis)ability, and gender and sexual identities. Due to cultural ignorance, medical racism and biased structures, Black men are, for example, much more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia in the United States (Wadley 2010), and Black US Americans are systematically undertreated for pain under the assumption that they feel less of it (Trawalter 2020). In addition to influencing access to diagnosis and treatment, existing inequalities in housing, employment, finances and other areas have an active influence on mental health, to the detriment of BIPOC, poor people and disabled people. And “while the effects of historical and on-going colonialism are understood to contribute to these health disparities, the mechanisms by which pathologising racist, or colonial discourses contribute to the social environments underlying these health disparities remain under-examined,” adds Melissa Noelle Penelope Johnson (2014).

The disparate understanding of what a “healthy body” is and is not, mostly based on differences on size, colour or ability, creating groups of normals and, by exclusion, groups of others, follows what Erving Goffman (1963) called a type of *stigmatising*

rhetoric, that is substantially informed by the societal, cultural and clinical biases of the medical establishment. Irving Zola (1975), for instance, used the concept of “temporarily abled bodies” as a way to challenge these dominant notions of health, and the way that medical discourse determines our thinking in matters of corporeality, ability and, ultimately, normalcy. All those current biases and forms of exclusion reflect a societal and political assimilation of decades of prejudices that lead to a certain feeling of disbelief that things can be different. Following the same line of thought, Ann Cvetkovich, professor and former director of the Feminist Institute of Social Transformation, explains that “political depression” is “the sense that customary forms of political response, including direct action and critical analysis, are no longer working either to change the world or to make us feel better” (2012, 1). And “changing the world to make us feel better”, hence, would require addressing the political, legal and ethical questions behind the concept of a “healthy subject”. Who is a healthy subject? Who decides this and how?

Diagnosing Difference: The Imperative of Sameness and Wholeness

On 15 February 2013, Ella Kissi-Debrah died of a fatal asthma attack in south-east London. Seven years later, a coroner’s report named air pollution as a cause of death, after years of activist efforts by Kissi-Debrah’s family and community (Gayle 2020). In this exceptional case, systemic injustice was acknowledged in the diagnosis (air pollution being more present in more precarious and less white areas of London) (Logika Noise Air Quality Consultants 2021), but most diagnoses do not recognise causes beyond individual lifestyle choices as relevant to illness. “In every society, medicine, like law and religion, defines what is normal, proper, or desirable,” explains Ivan Illich (2011) and, more often than not, “health” can also be understood as a term that embodies suppositions, judgments, hierarchies and ideological positions. An example of this is fat people being blamed for the foods they consume, which are directly related to wealth and labour-free time which are scarce in precarious populations, or when depression or burnout are positioned as individual failings. This shifts criticism away from a system serving only few and onto the individual, who is made responsible for their own (poor) health.

In the Western approach to mental health, this ethos of individual responsibility can be seen very clearly: Firstly, a diagnosis grants access to treatment, and in classical psychoanalysis self-reflection and – if all goes as planned –

recognition, or, in other words, finding the root of the problem in one's own past, is the goal of the therapy. Implicit in this is the belief that knowledge itself will provide relief from suffering. While diagnosis can offer access to treatment, and be validating and lead to a sense of community for some individuals, it can also oversimplify complex contexts and fail to recognise the nuances and specificities of a person's situation. According to Eli Clare, diagnosis is useful inasmuch as "it propels eradication and affirms what we know about our own body-minds ... it sets in motion social control and guides treatment that provides comfort. It takes away self-determination and saves lives." But not without sarcasm, Clare adds: "It disregards what we know about our own body-minds and leads to cure – *Diagnosis is useful, but for whom and to what ends?*" (2017, 48, emphasis in the original).

Diagnosis of mental illness has been historically used to discredit individuals and groups. Hysteria, a common diagnosis from the late nineteenth century onwards, and conceptualised by Freud as resulting from repressed subconscious conflicts or sexual desires, at some point was assumed to affect every fourth woman in the Western world (Micale 2021). The symptoms were various, ranging from anxiety and mood swings to fainting and sexual dysfunction, and was treated just as diversely, from social isolation and changes in diet to inducing an orgasm, which is why the first vibrators were produced (Maines 1999). This mass pathologisation of women who did not conform to the societal norms of the time distracted from the oppressive conditions they were forced to live in. In the early 1970s, the Network Against Psychiatric Assault,² among other activist movements in the United States, agreed that psychiatry regularly labelled innocent people as "crazy" in order to deprive them of their liberties and that there are no proven chemical imbalances or other known brain defects that result in what gets diagnosed as mental illnesses. Judi Chamberlin (1978) adds to this, explaining that the common treatments often caused more harm than good; and that the so-called mentally ill were generally an oppressed group.

In addition to discrediting people who are inconvenient to the dominant power structures, diagnosis also individualises struggle and discontentment. Under capitalism, problems with mental health are understood as a personal failing, explains Rosa (2023, 15), rather than the result of societal forces;

² <https://networkagainstoppsychiatricassault.org/>

an understanding that is reinforced by the notion of diagnosis based only on the analysis of certain symptomatology without considering the *social* causes of mental illness or distress. Depression, anxiety and burnout, all very commonly diagnosed in the Western world, are regarded as individual failures and treated as such. This point of view falls short of recognising that people have to work more and more hours to make ends meet, to the benefit of the capitalist class, and proposes self-optimisation rather than class struggle as the solution to this. Within this mechanism, diagnosis is essential to name the problem as belonging to the individual, rather than questioning the unequal neoliberal system that leads to precarity for the masses. Living under a capitalist and cis-heteropatriarchal system, we are all subjected to the narratives created by this system of power. Writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns of what she terms "the danger of a single story". "Power," says Adichie (2009),³ "is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person." More often than not, narratives not included in these structures of power – the stories of women, queer, poor, disabled and Black, indigenous, and people of colour – are often concealed, misrepresented or unexamined in ways that the agency and authority they have to address themes about mental health from different perspectives are ignored.

So, in the case of health, be it physical or mental, it is of radical importance to be aware of the words, labels and languages that are used to refer to it, to its possible causes and diagnosis. This has been highlighted by Nigerian-born philosopher and writer Bayo Akomolafe (2021), who claimed that "autism is not exclusively about neurological events in my son's head, but about the ways we produce and name bodies and the worlds that sustain them". He adds: "It is about the machinic world that names specific kinds of bodies as special – and other bodies as discardable appendages ... It is about the ways bodies become stuck in the worlds they create, in the worlds that create them."

With the concept of one omnipotent, scientific system of knowledge also comes the idea of the normal, "whole" and unimpaired body. Commonly explained as a diagram of human perfection, the Vitruvian Man⁴ – a representation of perfection, the white, European, able-bodied cisgender man – is not just an image of

³ In awareness that there have been accusations of transphobia towards Adichie, we distance ourselves fully from transphobia in all its forms.

⁴ Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490.

a healthy man; it has been appropriated as the ideal body in the practice of medicine. But what happens as the Vitruvian Man ages? Or if it's a Vitruvian woman, a trans Vitruvean, a disabled Vitruvean person? Far from merely being a mean or average image of the human body, the idea of a "normal body" became the ideal to aspire towards. Any deviation from this, be it in the form of disability, body size, appearance or sickness,⁵ is viewed as negative and in need of correction or cure.

Beyond Cure: Embracing Vulnerability and Rejecting Perfection

Following such pathologisation of any kind of body-mind that doesn't fit into the normative standards of Western medical tradition, crip theories have strongly questioned the imperative of cure, arguing that it positions the disabled body-mind as one that is lacking, and the disability as something to be overcome. Clare, for example, problematises the concept of cure:

I circle back to the ideology of cure. Framing it as a kind of restoration reveals the most obvious and essential tenets. First, cure requires damage, locating the harm entirely within individual human body-minds, operating as if each person were their own ecosystem. Second, it grounds itself in an original state of being, relying on a belief that what existed before is superior to what exists currently. And finally, it seeks to return what is damaged to that former state of being. (2017, 15)

According to Clare, cure always implies a hierarchy of value between different states of the body-mind, wherein any deviation from the supposedly ideal norm is inferior to "perfection". Cure in this case is an act of restoration to a complete state, regardless of whether that state has ever existed to begin with. This ideology is rarely questioned but instead becomes an apparently unpolitical imperative that assumes everyone would always prefer to be "normal". Consequently, this framing of disability as something in need of cure or healing reinforces the idea that any abnormal or different body is defective and subsequently of lesser value and refuses to accept it as a valuable expression of diversity (Siebers 2008). Another pertinent example here is so-called conversion therapy, in which this search for "normality" is imposed (by society, families, religion) on a person identified as "different" on account of

⁵ Shayda Kafai beautifully refers to this as "the community who is *also*: *also* queer, gender nonconforming, or transgender; *also* people of color; *also* the incarcerated many, the immigrant many. All of us, *also*" (Shayda 2021).

their sexual orientation or gender identity, through a wide range of dangerous, medically discredited practices in the attempt to change them.⁶

Sometimes the imperative to restore goes beyond the argument of functionality or health. In *The Cancer Journals*, Audre Lorde described her experience of breast cancer, and the navigation of the medical system throughout her illness and recovery. "As I slowly began to feel more equal to processing and examining the different parts of this experience, I also began to feel that in the process of losing a breast I had become a more whole person," she writes (2020, 48). Additionally, no longer having one of her two breasts allows people to recognise her experience and creates an opportunity for community and solidarity, rather than treating breast cancer as a private matter. Contrasting her own experience, Lorde describes the incredulity she is met with as she declines a breast reconstruction after her mastectomy: For her, the proposed prosthesis or a potential breast reconstruction would entail an erasure of her experience. When she, however, enters the doctor's office (a specialist in breast cancer), she is met with a total lack of compassion for not wearing a prosthesis. Her experience shows, along with the expectation that female bodies especially should aspire to conventional beauty standards, a societal incompetence of dealing with "abnormal" body-minds. More often than not, encountering differences or a body that has been altered by an illness makes people uncomfortable. This is then masked with positioning the desire to appear as if nothing had happened, to be visibly unharmed, as self-evident.

The social and cultural construct that certain bodies are desirable while relegating others as abnormal, as well as the person's socio-ecological environment, have an undeniable effect on their (mental) health. This shows that illness and medical knowledge are far from an objective, scientific truth, but in reality, as Milica Ivić (2021) wrote, "healing is a socio-somatic process, not only a somatic state. In the traditional notion of healing, the final aim of that pause is returning to some form of 'normal social order,' to family and friends". Therefore, understanding healing as a socio-somatic process allows the comprehension of it as a process that won't end with diagnosis, treatment and cure but with the acknowledgement of the body-mind vulnerabilities and fragilities that change and transform as the body ages.

⁶ For more info, see <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/conversion-therapy-report/>.

Witch Hunts and the Consolidation of Medical Authority

At this point it is interesting to grasp for the roots of our current Western understanding of cure and the rise of the male medical profession in the nineteenth century, after many centuries in which midwives, nurses and the so-called witches were the healers par excellence. As Silvia Federici argues, in *Caliban and the Witch*, witch hunting played a pivotal role in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe. The demonisation and eradication of so-called witches was an integral part of the subjugation of the female body needed for the creation of a capitalist economy, which required a clear division between productive and reproductive labour. In addition, witch hunts served the purpose of destroying networks of knowledges that persisted outside the control of the state. Women's knowledge, especially when related to health and healing, was seen as threatening, as it permitted a form of (reproductive) autonomy outside the state's control. Especially in times where population growth was seen as integral to the economic success of a state, women could not be permitted their own networks of knowledge. Rather, they should be as dependent as possible on the state and – by extension – their husbands, to ensure that their reproductive and productive labour was at the service of the nation-state (Federici, 2004).

While the power of emerging European nation-states was solidifying from the late middle ages onward, and the partnership between church, state and the medical profession reached full bloom, witch hunts became more and more prevalent (Ehrenreich and English 2020, 26). In addition to fuelling the rise of capitalism by discrediting women, this can be read as a reaction to the threat of alternative, more opaque forms of (medical) knowledge to the dominance of the ruling powers. These forms of knowledge, often practised by female figures like midwives, healers or herbalists, operated outside the centralised control of the state, and thus undermined it. The accusations made against so-called witches were often that they were responsible for unexplainable events – from bad weather and missing money to the loss of a child – which shows how knowledge that could not be explained or systematised posed a threat to emerging nation-states in terms of their credibility and hegemony.

When certain "witches" functioned as healers, their practices became a direct challenge to the authority of medical establishments. This was a dual threat: Firstly, it empowered individuals to control their own reproduction (through contraception or abortifacients), bypassing the authority of

the state and its institutions. Secondly, this knowledge was not systemic, meaning it did not align with the dominant scientific and medical frameworks controlled by the state, and, by offering an alternative, questioned its omnipotence. Additionally, these non-systemic, alternative knowledges were difficult to grasp and regulate, making it impossible to incorporate them into state power, which relied on the control and centralisation of knowledge to manifest its authority. In summary, alternative knowledge was dangerous because it defied the centralised power systems and was often used to ends that challenged state-sanctioned practices.

It follows that the consolidation of medical knowledge in the hands of "scientific" doctors and institutions was more than just a move to efficiency and professionalisation; It was also a deliberate exclusion of alternative forms of knowledge in the service of concentrating power. The discrediting of midwives, healers and witches by doctors, and their expulsion from the delivery room, for example, was only one element within a broader effort to centralise and solidify power. By creating a monopoly of medical knowledge, the state not only controlled health but it also substantially manifested its dominance over the population, be it within the European nation-state, or within colonised territories. The targeting of "witches", female healers and midwives was a political tool to ensure that the female body, along with established medical knowledge, was under its control.

The Commodification of Health

The elimination of wilder, more opaque forms of medical knowledge did more than consolidate the official power of the nation-state; it also regulated and standardised the way in which illnesses or abnormalities were dealt with. This, like the concentration of power in colonial states, came with the expansion of capitalism. Mark Fisher (2011), writing about "the privatisation of stress", recalls David Smail (2009) stating, "there is no secret desire, no hating fear, no tremulous shred of anxiety, no fragment of tenderness that will not be exposed to the jaded inspection of the market, worked over and placed on the junk stall for mass consumption". Medical treatment and its products have long entered the capitalist market economy, dominated by the multinational complex of big pharma. This not only controls the profit and distribution of medical treatment, but also which illnesses and people are worthy of it in the first place.

The mass production and distribution of pharmaceuticals was enabled in part by the popularisation of diagnosis. First

published in 1952, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I) was the most used manual in psychiatric studies (and updated versions are still widely used today). Providing a tool to diagnose mental illness, it made it possible to pathologise almost all human emotion if it was disruptive to daily (productive) life. Historian Anne Harrington (2019) describes that prior to the 1970s, society tended to distinguish between forms of depression that should be treated medically and depression caused by what we can call “bad stuff going on in your life”, which used to be treated by therapy instead of drugs. Nowadays, it is common practice in many places to treat diagnosed mental illnesses with pharmaceuticals, sometimes with additional talk therapy, to the benefit of the pharma industry.

With diagnosis paving the way to treatment, not only do DSM manuals have a controversial history of financial ties to drug companies, but the ties between pharmaceutical companies and academic medical research also raise questions about conflicts of interest. In 2012, it had come to light that seven in ten DSM-5 (the newest version of DSM-I) panel members had financial ties to drug companies (ABC News 2012), and, according to David Healy and Michale Thase (2003), almost 90 percent of authors published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* have received research funding from, or acted as a consultant for, a drug company.

But it is not only through medical professionals and their frameworks of diagnosis that pharma companies distribute and propagate their products; individuals themselves are conditioned as potential consumers and targeted as such. Physician H. Gilbert Welch (2009) summarises this situation by saying that “in the past, people sought health care because they were sick, now the medical-industrial complex seeks patients”. Patients or potential patients are appealed to directly via advertisements in all kinds of media, talk shows and free online lectures. This leads to profit for the pharma industry from a complex economic system that relies on what can be called a *medicalising rhetoric*, propagating the pathologisation of everyday life, on the one hand, and the availability of pharmaceutical solutions, on the other. In many countries, just a couple of decades ago drugs were scarce and people relied on herbalists, local healers or community ancient knowledge when in pain. Today, drugs are easily accessible, and they are sold online, on television or in newspaper advertisements. In many cities, international pharmacies blossom alongside boutique hotels and trendy restaurants. In this context, multinational pharmaceutical firms

have increasingly high profits and their control over the market becomes increasingly undisputed.

Bringing up insistent questions about the regulation of big pharma business, there have been many journalistic and research projects in the past decades that intend to deal with the legal, economic, political and ethical frameworks of it. One of the best-known examples shedding light on the commodification of mental health in the profit of the pharma industry is the story of Prozac, documented by the online project and book *Let them Eat Prozac* (Healy 2004).⁷ The website includes material and evidence that shows the threats to public safety and academic freedom surrounding the SSRI group of drugs⁸ – Prozac, Zoloft, Lexapro and Paxil (Seroxat/Aropax). This system of economic power relationships is the same that has created – or at least fed – an ecosystem in which pharmaceutical companies play a massive role in determining how mental illness is treated, not always relying on what can be called a “proper diagnosis”.

Our current understanding of “health” is defined by a public discourse reflecting pharmaceutical, governmental and insurance companies’ interests, rather than a complex, many-layered condition that varies from context to context and individual to individual. Within this knowledge and value system, the information we receive is often manufactured to provoke credibility for the kinds of scientific knowledge and research that support the use of certain drugs and treatments, while diminishing alternative knowledges that do not necessarily aid and abet the commodification of health.

Contesting the Colonial Narrative

In line with Adichie’s description of the power and potential violence of stories, Cherokee-Scottish Canadian novelist Thomas King (2003) writes that “the truth about stories is that’s all we are”. King’s statement brings to mind how narratives structure and give meaning to our mindsets. According to this, every person situates themselves, and others’ lives, within a known narrative. But, he adds, “people exist within these stories, and in a way, ‘we’ are these stories. Sometimes stories come to define who people are, and sometimes they are imposed on people from the outside – by others”. The Western approach to knowledge has done exactly this, imposing its own

⁷ See www.healyprozac.com

⁸ Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, also called SSRIs, are the type of antidepressant prescribed most often.

stories on others as universal, while diminishing other forms of knowledge and narratives, especially those coming from the so-called Global South. Processes of definition and categorisation are inherently colonial practices and have gone hand-in-hand with a discrediting of other forms of (indigenous) knowledge as primitive or false, not least within the context of healing practices, as discussed above.

If we look to knowledge systems outside the Western-colonial medicinal one, it is possible to find a diverse constellation of approaches to the comprehension of what health is, what is considered a healthy body-mind and how we relate to our own being and our communities. Often, detached from the idea of universality, these systems are less obsessed with discovering a unique understanding of “truth” and more focused on community-based knowledge structures and diagnoses that provide relief beyond the imperative to know and categorise. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2023) refers to the Indigenous appreciation for plurality and ambiguity through the diversity of languages, spoken and not, in the Aymara community. One of those languages is that of the women weavers, whose practices are based on human and more-than-human care. Cusicanqui explains how they address a great diversity of topics – from politics, social issues and community life – and how these knowledges are transmitted through fabrics. In this manner, weaving also relates to the way care, health and healing processes are understood. In the words of Prentis Hemphill (2024), “I don’t think healing begins where we think it does, in our doing something. I believe it begins in another realm altogether, the realm of dreams and imagination.”

In a more multifaceted understanding of what causes pain and illness than the Western one, Gloria Anzaldúa describes how “during or after any trauma (including individual and group racist acts), you lose parts of your soul as an immediate strategy to minimise the pain and to cope – *hecho pedazos*, you go into a state of *susto*” (2015, 87). The *susto* in many Latin American cultures describes a state where a fright or shock causes the soul to leave the body, resulting in apathy, sadness, distress or restlessness. Translating *susto* into the Western knowledge structure might yield a variety of diagnoses – from depression to anxiety to psychosis – each requiring its own methods of treatment. However, *susto* is not treated through in-depth analysis of its causes or precise form. Instead, relief is reached through rituals like the *limpia*, a cleansing involving herbs, baths, smoke or a raw egg. *Susto* is regarded as a common occurrence that can happen multiple times in a

lifetime, fostering community support and understanding. This communal approach to the healing process is deeply connected to the notion that sharing ancestral knowledge of life is the way to connect and therefore, to share the necessary energy to cope. "To be in *conocimiento*⁹ with another person or group is to share knowledge, pool resources, meet each other, compare liberation struggles and social movements' histories, share how we confront institutional power, and process and heal wounds," adds Anzaldúa (91).

Towards a Plurality of Knowledges

"I am not a woman, I am an ogbanje. I am an embodied spirit,
a god-house, a plural being."

—Emezi 2021, 56

In the contemporary West, there is a growing resistance to the idea that one form of scientific, medical knowledge is sufficient to address health and pain. There are many activist and academic movements advocating for broader concepts of what is "normal" or "healthy". The field of disability studies mentioned above resists conflating disability with sickness, advocating for a plurality of embodiments without a hierarchy of worthiness or an imperative to be healed. This is also becoming more recognised institutionally, like some recent exhibitions on the topic show, for example "Design for All? Diversity as the Norm" in the Museum of Design in Zürich¹⁰ or in the way in which universities and schools are making efforts to accommodate neurodivergent people. This implies moving away from the "one correct way of learning and teaching" and enriches the curriculum for everyone.

The decolonisation of knowledge entails recognising the power of non-Western knowledges in order to revalue certain cultural manifestations historically seen as less culturally and scientifically relevant, and to put them in dialogue with those that are more canonical – ideally in intercultural contexts – in order to de-universalise Western knowledge, according to Ochy Curiel (Trávez and Curiel 2021). Boaventura de Sousa Santos refers to this as "*las Ecologías de saberes*" (the ecologies of

⁹ In the mid-1980s, Chicana author Gloria Anzaldúa started working on the possibility for an openly bilingual literary poetics, critically examining the tensions of her bilingualism, identifying herself as part of marginalised sociolinguistic communities in the United States. "Conocimiento" means knowledge. "*Conocimiento* comes from opening all your senses, consciously inhabiting your body and decoding its symptoms," she wrote. "Attention is multileveled and includes your surroundings, bodily sensations and responses, intuitive takes, emotional reactions to other people and theirs to you, and, most important, the images your imagination creates" (2015, 120).

¹⁰ <https://museum-gestaltung.ch/en/ausstellung/design-fuer-alle/>.

knowledges) in which it is of radical importance to incorporate “popular, secular, plebeian, peasant or indigenous” knowledge to think of new epistemologies (Meneses 2019).

The Igbo and Tamil author and artist Akwaeke Emezi uses the term *ogbanje* to describe themselves. This concept, prominent in Igbo cosmology, describes a spirit that repeatedly dies and is reborn into a family. The *iyi-uwa* are objects that the *ogbanje* hide and use as shortcuts back into the underworld, and if they can be destroyed, the draw to death can be broken. In the case of Emezi, the deities have hidden the *iyi-uwa* within their body, so what they describe in both their first novel *Freshwater* and their memoirs *Dear Senthuran* is not this repetitive cycle of life and death, but rather an entity with multiple embodied spirits, that recurrently fights with death but persists. Emezi describes the experience of being a deity trapped in flesh: “The first madness was that we were born, that they stuffed a god into a bag of skin” (2018, 20). In *Dear Senthuran* Emezi also describes routinely visiting a therapist. Thus, there is a parallel acceptance of the Igbo terminology and the Western tradition of psychotherapy. Nevertheless, one could argue that the concept of *ogbanje* somehow substitutes the diagnosis in this constellation. This is also what Emezi describes: rather than searching for the cause of their pain or trying to avoid it, their work is focussed on living with it. There is an acceptance of recurring phases of struggle, of “being in the ring with death”, but also a strong trust that death will not win (yet). This is in a way an acceptance of opacity, of not knowing exactly what the ring will look like, or when one will be in it.

In line with a more pluralistic approach to body-mind health, the practice of yoga or pilates, different forms of body work, Chinese medicine and acupuncture, homoeopathic medicine and many more, propose more holistic and more opaque positions of engaging with the body-mind. The figure of the doula – be it for birth or death – also offers support in transitional stages of the body-mind beyond a purely medicalised understanding. Of course, the dissatisfaction with the purely “scientific” approach to (mental) health is also being capitalised on. Many people are engaging with self-medication of some form, be it with THC, LSD or through – in the European and US American contexts – new-wave spiritual practices like ayahuasca trips, where people seek relief beyond the dogma of knowledge. This is often a very neocolonial, extractivist practice if we consider how rituals that are embedded in racialised communities are suddenly reinterpreted and consumed as commodities, often

without benefiting the people from where they originated. The WeAreAvalon.love website, for example, offers luxury ayahuasca or magic mushroom retreats in Spain, costing up to €4,100 per person (Avalon 2024). Despite these businesses being exploitative and elitist, their popularity shows a clear discontentment with the purely “scientific” approach to pain and illness that dominates the West and the need to try to understand our body-minds beyond a purely clinical approach.

What Will it Take For us to Heal?¹¹

Circling back to Glissant and his call to embrace opacity, how can we read the shifts towards a plurality of approaches to health that exist and are utilised in parallel? One part of this wide acceptance of practices that were, just a few years ago, confined to the realm of the esoteric and belittled, is a recognition of the limits of a Western understanding of the body-mind. Because of its imperative to know, understand and categorise everything in order to uncover the “truth”, this system is unable to adequately answer to pain it is not able to diagnose and fit into its framework. The complexity of what pain is, what illness is, is superseded by its standardised approach, but “whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language”, points out Elaine Scarry (1985, 4), referring to the impossibility of completely explaining or sharing an experience of pain through words. In contrast, alternative knowledges are open to learning from modes of communication beyond language, and are much more accepting of apparent inconsistencies and “inexplicable” phenomena. “It does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me, and the fact that it amazes me does not mean I relinquish it,” writes Glissant (1997, 192).

An important distinction to make also lies between the Western concept of cure as mending something that is broken and restoring it to a supposed original state, described by Clare, and healing, according to Anzaldúa, among others, the latter being a process towards a wholeness that is transient and non-linear, sometimes exceeding the limits of life and death, that improves quality of life rather than aspiring to an ideal state that was maybe never there to begin with. The best outcome for Western medicine has always been cure, and this has in its path made everything short of it seem lacking, which in turn has

¹¹ Hemphill (2024).

created a hierarchy of health. This hierarchy approaches pain as a problem of individuals, rather than through a community-based approach to health and healing in other cultures. An increasing entanglement of this system with knowledges beyond the Western-colonial medical one may have the potential to return to seeing patients as individual body-minds in all their complexity, rather than puzzles to be solved. Like this, we may hope to be in *conocimiento* with ourselves and our extended communities.

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The Centre of New Media and Feminist Public Practices (CNMFPP) is a research programme, the establishment of which was funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI). Based at the Department of Architecture of the University of Thessaly in Greece, it focuses on issues concerning the relationship between art, feminism and technology, bridging theory, artistic practice and educational work.

In the context of *Care Ecologies*, the CNMFPP has undertaken the distinct role of editing the project's collective volume. We aim for this publication to be a “toolkit for care”; an autonomous work and pedagogical tool, a publication that extends beyond the imprint of this project and enriches the relevant bibliography. The essays by Gigi Argyropoulou, Suzana Milevska, Elke Krasny, Ethel Baraona Pohl and Lisa Maillard have been commissioned for this edition and are being published for the first time. They address issues of both radicality and instrumentalisation of care. Additionally, a text by bell hooks, already translated into Greek, has been chosen for republication in the epilogue in a critical conversation with the questions surrounding matters of care as language and beyond. The publication is going to be launched publicly in Athens to mark the completion of the project.

As part of our exchanges in the *Care Ecologies* project, the CNMFPP participated in October 2024 in the international symposium NOSYMMETRIES in Barcelona, co-organised by Idensitat and the IMARTE research group of the University of Barcelona. Valia Papastamou, researcher at the CNMFPP, engaged in an interactive conversation with Lucia Egaña and Giuliana Racco in the context of the panel “Equity and Diversity”. Their discussion revolved around issues concerning language and care, social justice and artistic practices.

Το Κέντρο Νέων Μέσων και Φεμινιστικών Πρακτικών (ΚΝΜΦΠΠ) είναι ένα ερευνητικό πρόγραμμα, η σύσταση του οποίου χρηματοδοτήθηκε από το ΕΛΙΔΕΚ. Εδράζεται στο Τμήμα Αρχιτεκτόνων του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας. Εστιάζει σε ζητήματα που αφορούν τη σχέση τέχνης, φεμινισμού και τεχνολογίας, γεφυρώνοντας τη θεωρία, την καλλιτεχνική πρακτική και το εκπαιδευτικό έργο.

Στο πλαίσιο του *Care Ecologies*, έχει αναλάβει το διακριτό ρόλο της επιμέλειας του συλλογικού τόμου του προγράμματος. Στόχος μας είναι η έκδοση να αποτελέσει μια «εργαλειοθήκη για τη φροντίδα»· ένα αυτόνομο έργο και παιδαγωγικό εργαλείο, ένα βιβλίο που εκτείνεται πέραν της αποτύπωσης του παρόντος προγράμματος και εμπλουτίζει τη σχετική βιβλιογραφία. Τα κείμενα των Γκίγκη Αργυροπούλου, Suzana Milevska, Elke Krasny, Ethel Baraona Pohl και Lisa Maillard είναι αναθέσεις για την παρούσα έκδοση και δημοσιεύονται για πρώτη φορά. Πραγματεύονται ζητήματα ριζοσπαστικότητας αλλά και εργαλειοποίησης της φροντίδας. Το, μεταφρασμένο στα ελληνικά, κείμενο της bell hooks επιλέγεται να αναδημοσιευθεί στο επίμετρο σε μια κριτική συνομιλία με τις διερωτήσεις γύρω από τα ζητήματα της φροντίδας ως γλώσσα και πέραν αυτής. Η έκδοση πρόκειται να παρουσιαστεί δημόσια στην Αθήνα γιορτάζοντας την ολοκλήρωση του προγράμματος.

Στα πλαίσια των ανταλλαγών μας στο πρόγραμμα, το Κέντρο συμμετείχε τον Οκτώβριο του 2024 στο διεθνές συμπόσιο NOSYMMETRIES στη Βαρκελώνη, που συν-διοργάνωσε το Idensitat και η ερευνητική ομάδα IMARTE του Πανεπιστημίου της Βαρκελώνης. Η Βάλια Παπαστάμου, ερευνήτρια του ΚΝΜΦΠ, σε μια διαλογική ομιλία με τις Lucia Egaña και Giuliana Racco στα πλαίσια του panel “Equity and Diversity”, συζήτησε γύρω από θέματα που αφορούν τη γλώσσα και τη φροντίδα, την κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη και τις καλλιτεχνικές πρακτικές.

Care Ecologies, a multidisciplinary project led by the G. and A. Mamidakis Foundation and co-funded by the Creative Europe programme, focuses on the need to collectively redraw the rules and processes of cultural making. Bringing together five partners from Greece, Croatia and Spain, over the course of two years the project has launched multiple impactful programmes and initiatives that place care at the centre of social, cultural and environmental discourse.

In 2023 and 2024, the Foundation organised two intensive ten-day residencies in Crete, each bringing together ten cultural professionals from Greece, with backgrounds in visual film, dance, psychotherapy, theory, curation, writing, architecture, research and the visual and performing arts. Invited workshop leaders from the USA, Greece, Spain, South Africa and Italy – including Matteo Pasquinelli, David Gilbert, Kostis Kalantzis, Mollie Painter, Andreas Chatzidakis and Angelos Varvarousis – designed workshops and guided participants in discussions on care's broader implications in contemporary society and cultural practice. The residencies provided a collaborative platform and safe space for exploring complex topics and expanded concepts of care such as post-development theory, ethnographic methods, participant observation, knowledge extractivism and the relationship between the Anthropocene and the social history of artificial intelligence. Sessions also delved into discussing themes like consumerism and the commodification of care, degrowth, localisation and sustainability. Participants collectively examined how systemic change could be approached through ethnography, cultural practices and social impact. Each residency produced a small publication comprising new texts by the fellows.

In addition to the residencies, the Foundation launched ON CARE, a series of webinars open to the public inviting guest lecturers like Andreas Chatzidakis (“Can Markets be Caring?”) and Elke Krasny (“Feminist Recovery: Against Care Violence”), Andreas Weber (“Ecosystems are

To Care Ecologies, ένα πολυδιάστατο έργο με συγχρηματοδότηση από το πρόγραμμα Δημιουργική Ευρώπη, επικεντρώνεται στην ανάγκη να ανασχεδιάσουμε συλλογικά τους κανόνες και τις διαδικασίες της πολιτιστικής παραγωγής. Φέρνοντας κοντά πέντε συνεργάτες από την Ελλάδα, την Κροατία και την Ισπανία, στη διάρκεια δύο ετών, το Care Ecologies έχει υλοποιήσει πολλαπλά σημαντικά προγράμματα και πρωτοβουλίες που τοποθετούν τη φροντίδα στο επίκεντρο της κοινωνικής, πολιτιστικής και περιβαλλοντικής συζήτησης.

Το 2023 και το 2024, το Ίδρυμα Γ. και Α. Μαμιδάκη υλοποίησε δύο εντατικά δεκαήμερα residencies στην Κρήτη, καθένα από τα οποία συγκέντρωσε 10 επαγγελματίες του πολιτισμού από την Ελλάδα, με υπόβαθρο στο χορό, τον κινηματογράφο, την εικαστική, την επιμέλεια, τη συγγραφή, την αρχιτεκτονική, την έρευνα, καθώς και τις εικαστικές και παραστατικές τέχνες. Προσκεκλημένοι εισηγητές από τις ΗΠΑ, την Ελλάδα, την Ισπανία, τη Νότια Αφρική και την Ιταλία –μεταξύ των οποίων οι Matteo Pasquinelli, David Gilbert, Κωστής Καλαντζής, Mollie Painter, Ανδρέας Χατζηδάκης και Άγγελος Βαρβαρούσης– σχεδίασαν εργαστήρια και καθοδήγησαν τους συμμετέχοντες σε συζητήσεις για τις ευρύτερες επιπτώσεις της φροντίδας στη σύγχρονη κοινωνία και την πολιτιστική πρακτική. Τα residencies παρείχαν μια συνεργατική πλατφόρμα και έναν ασφαλή χώρο για την εξερεύνηση σύνθετων θεμάτων και διευρυμένων εννοιών της φροντίδας, όπως η μετα-αναπτυξιακή θεωρία, οι εθνογραφικές μέθοδοι, η συμμετοχική παρατήρηση, ο εξορκτισμός της γνώσης και η σχέση μεταξύ της Ανθρωπότητας και της κοινωνικής ιστορίας της τεχνητής νοημοσύνης. Τα workshops εμβάθυναν επίσης σε θέματα όπως ο καταναλωτισμός και η εμπορευματοποίηση της φροντίδας, η αποανάπτυξη, η τοπικοποίηση και η βιωσιμότητα. Οι fellows εξέτασαν συλλογικά πώς μπορεί να προσεγγιστεί η συστημική αλλαγή μέσω της εθνογραφίας, των πολιτιστικών πρακτικών και της κοινωνικής επίδρασης. Κάθε residency παρήγαγε μια μικρή έκδοση που περιλάμβανε νέα κείμενα από τους fellows.

Practices of Care”) and Carlos Segovia (“Towards an Animist Poetics”) among others. Opening a public dialogue, these workshops examined the role of care within cultural institutions and as a transformative force in society.

Επιπλέον των residencies, το Ίδρυμα εγκαινίασε την πρωτοβουλία ON CARE, μια σειρά διαδικτυακών διαλέξεων ανοιχτών στο κοινό, προσκαλώντας διακεκριμένους ομιλητές όπως ο Ανδρέας Χατζηδάκης—«Μπορούν οι αγορές να είναι φροντιστικές;»—και η Elke Krasny— «Φεμινιστική Ανάρρωση: Ενάντια στη Βία της Φροντίδας»), ο Andreas Weber («Οικοσυστήματα ως Πρακτικές Φροντίδας») και ο Carlos Segovia («Προς μια Ανιμιστική Ποιητική») μεταξύ άλλων. Ανοίγοντας έναν δημόσιο διάλογο, αυτές οι διαλέξεις διερεύνησαν τον ρόλο της φροντίδας στους πολιτιστικούς θεσμούς και ως μετασχηματιστική δύναμη στην κοινωνία.

Idensitat's NOSYMMETRIES programme (in collaboration with La Capella Centre d'Art), part of the Care Ecologies project, engages in research and the activation of artistic processes regarding issues connected to various kinds of social inequality. Based on a residency, an exhibition and a symposium, NOSYMMETRIES has attempted to explore the concepts of critical imagination and social creativity, understanding the relationship between them as a collective process embracing a variety of perspectives. Dissidence, disputes, violence, participation, construction of the commons, visibility/invisibility and care are just a few of the concepts which emerged during the residencies, and which were later expanded upon in the exhibition and the symposium. The symposium included talks by guest speakers, and presentations of projects selected by open call. The exhibition formalised the process of the artistic residencies based on the collaborative interaction between the artists.

Participants: Basha Changue, Tjaša Kancler, Maria Prieto, Guadalupe Patricia del Razo Martínez, Yara Haskiel, Mar Machado, Santiago Fernández Honrubia, Elena Sanmartín, Álvaro Corral, Aitana López, Irene Mahugo, Ahmed Mostafa, Steven Moreno Pinzón, Valia Papastamou, Lucía Egaña, Giuliana Racco, dont hit a la negrx, Claudia Rodríguez, iki yos piña narváez funes, Linda Porn, Vera Rodríguez, Cacao Diaz, Andrea Corrales, Xeito Fole, Irati Irulegi, Anna Recasens, Roser Colomar, Laia Moretó, IMARTE research group of the University of Barcelona, Ramon Parramon and La Cappella Centre d'Art..

As part of NOSYMMETRIES, Idensitat, opening its own line of research, has developed the (Un)Open Archive, a curatorial and artistic project structured around a series of concepts which, due to their controversial nature, reinforce the idea of “ecologies of care”. It is

NOSYMMETRIES es un programa de Idensitat en colaboración con La Capella Centre d'Art que, proyecto Care Ecologies, promueve la investigación y la activación de procesos artísticos vinculados a cuestiones que tienen que ver con diversas formas de desigualdad social. A partir de una residencia, una exposición y un simposio, NOSYMMETRIES ha querido explorar los conceptos de imaginación crítica y creatividad social, entendiendo la relación entre ambos como un proceso colectivo que abarca diversas perspectivas. Disidencia, disputas, violencia, participación, construcción de lo común, visibilidad/invisibilidad, cuidados, justicia social son sólo algunos de los conceptos que resonaron durante las residencias, y que posteriormente se ampliaron en la exposición y el simposio. El simposio incluyó charlas de ponentes invitados y presentaciones de proyectos seleccionados mediante convocatoria abierta. La exposición formalizó el proceso de las residencias artísticas basándose en la interacción colaborativa entre las artistas.

Participantes: Basha Changue, Tjaša Kancler, Maria Prieto, Guadalupe Patricia del Razo Martínez, Yara Haskiel, Mar Machado, Santiago Fernández Honrubia, Elena Sanmartín, Álvaro Corral, Aitana López, Irene Mahugo, Ahmed Mostafa, Steven Moreno Pinzón, Valia Papastamou, Lucía Egaña, Giuliana Racco, dont hit a la negrx, Claudia Rodríguez, iki yos piña narváez funes, Linda Porn, Vera Rodríguez, Cacao Diaz, Andrea Corrales, Xeito Fole, Irati Irulegi, Anna Recasens, Roser Colomar, Laia Moretó, IMARTE grupo de investigación de la Universitat de Barcelona, Ramon Parramon y La Cappella Centre d'Art.

Como parte de NOSYMMETRIES, abriendo una línea de investigación propia, Idensitat, ha desarrollado *(Un)Open Archive*, un proyecto curatorial y artístico que se articula en torno a una serie de conceptos que, por el hecho de ser controvertidos, refuerzan la idea de “ecologías del cuidado”. Se presenta tanto en formato expositivo como en formato web mediante una serie de vídeo

presented both as an exhibition and as a website through a series of video interviews which have been organised in two parts. The first part, entitled “Art Ecologies of Care”, explores conditions of production and processual interactions by means of situated artistic projects as case studies. The second part, entitled “Commons of Care”, brings together contributions that focus on the political and social dimensions configured from an expanded view of cultural practices. Concepts such as the anti-racist legal networks, circlution, catalytic processes, reverted vulnerability, social justice, accessibility, collective work, self-transformation, healing in the arts, institutional time, adaptability, flexibility, infrastructures of care, end of institutions, reparations, other voices and border spaces, among others, are discussed in the archive. These concepts, contributed by multiple voices, create a multifaceted debate around the idea of care, illustrating its complexity and depth within contemporary society.

(Un)Open Archive is an ongoing project. In 2024, the participants included Ane Rodríguez Armendariz, Nicolás Dumit Estévez, Ethel Baraona, Florencia Brizuela, Giuliana Racco, Larre, Laura Arensburg, Natalia Carminati, Staci Bu Shean, Wei Yang and Xavier de Luca.

entrevistas que se organizan en dos partes. Una de ellas, bajo el título «Art Ecologies of Care», explora las condiciones de producción y las interacciones procesuales, mediante estudios de caso de proyectos artísticos situados. La otra parte, titulada «Commons of Care», reúne contribuciones centradas en las dimensiones políticas y sociales, configuradas desde una mirada expandida de las prácticas culturales. En su conjunto aparecen conceptos como redes legales antirracistas, circlución, procesos catalizadores, vulnerabilidad revertida, justicia social, accesibilidad, trabajo colectivo, autotransformación, curación en las artes, tiempo institucional, adaptabilidad, flexibilidad, infraestructuras del cuidado, fin de las instituciones, reparaciones, otras voces, espacios fronterizos, entre otros. Estos conceptos, aportados por múltiples voces, crean un debate multifacético en torno a la idea del cuidado, ilustrando su complejidad y profundidad dentro de la sociedad contemporánea.

(Un)Open Archive es un proyecto en proceso, que en 2024 ha contado con la participación de Ane Rodríguez Armendariz, Nicolás Dumit Estévez, Ethel Baraona, Florencia Brizuela, Giuliana Racco, Larre, Laura Arensburg, Natalia Carminati, Stacy Bu Shean, Wei Yang i Xavier de Luca.

State of Concept Athens organised and presented the exhibition *Care Ecologies*, from 10 July to 14 September 2024. Featuring works by artists Adelita Husni-Bey, Fokus Grupa, Hana Miletić, Theo Prodromidis and Idensitat, and co-curated in collaboration with Idensitat and Ana Dević and Ana Kovačić of WHW/What, how & for whom, the exhibition examined care as a multifaceted concept, offering ground for a compelling exploration of how care manifests in contemporary society, and prompting a collective re-examination of cultural practices as acts of care.

The featured works examined the notion of reclaiming care as a crucial strategy which could potentially be applicable in wider social contexts – care as solidarity and sustainability, care and the environment, care as capacity building for well-being, care in education, the sharing of resources and knowledge, care as a mending mechanism for fragile social structures. The exhibition, as part of the broader *Care Ecologies* project, invited visitors to reflect on the importance of care in diverse contexts, including the environment, education and the sharing of knowledge and resources.

Stemming from and building further on the topics explored in the exhibition, the opening event also included a public presentation and discussion led by the G. and A. Mamidakis Foundation team with the fellows of the 2023 residency programme. The discussion fostered an open dialogue on the ongoing societal and cultural relevance of care, highlighting its transformative potential within contemporary practices through the presentation of an edited volume comprising new texts by the fellows.

To State of Concept Athens οργάνωσε την έκθεση *Care Ecologies* από τις 10.07.2024 έως τις 14.09.2024. Παρουσιάζοντας έργα των Adelita Husni-Bey, Fokus grupa, Hana Miletić, Theo Prodromidis και Idensitat, και σε συν-επιμέλεια με το Idensitat και τις Ana Dević & Ana Kovačić των WHW, η έκθεση εξέτασε την έννοια της φροντίδας ως πολυδιάστατη έννοια, προσφέροντας έδαφος για μια δυναμική διερεύνηση του τρόπου με τον οποίο η φροντίδα εκδηλώνεται στη σύγχρονη κοινωνία, προκαλώντας έναν συλλογικό επαναπροσδιορισμό των πολιτιστικών πρακτικών ως πράξεις φροντίδας.

Τα έργα της έκθεσης διερεύνησαν την έννοια της επαναδιεκδίκησης της φροντίδας ως κρίσιμης στρατηγικής που μπορεί να έχει εφαρμογές και σε ευρύτερα κοινωνικά πλαίσια – φροντίδα ως αλληλεγγύη και βιωσιμότητα, φροντίδα για το περιβάλλον, η φροντίδα ως οικοδομική ικανότητα για ευημερία, φροντίδα στην εκπαίδευση, η ανταλλαγή πόρων και γνώσης, καθώς και η φροντίδα ως μηχανισμός επιδιόρθωσης εύθραυστων κοινωνικών δομών. Η έκθεση, στο πλαίσιο του ευρύτερου έργου *CARE ECOLOGIES*, προσκάλεσε τους επισκέπτες να στοχαστούν για τη σημασία της φροντίδας σε ποικίλα πλαίσια, όπως το περιβάλλον, η εκπαίδευση και η ανταλλαγή γνώσεων και πόρων.

Αντλώντας θέματα από την έκθεση, στο πλαίσιο των εγκαίνιων πραγματοποιήθηκε δημόσια παρουσίαση και συζήτηση από το Ίδρυμα Γ. και Α. Μαμιδάκη και τους fellows του προγράμματος φιλοξενίας 2023. Η συζήτηση ενθάρρυνε έναν ανοιχτό διάλογο γύρω από την κοινωνική και πολιτιστική σημασία της φροντίδας, αναδεικνύοντας τη μετασημασιολογική της δυναμική στις σύγχρονες πρακτικές, μέσω της παρουσίασης ενός συλλογικού τόμου με νέα κείμενα των υποτρόφων.

Care Ecologies and WHW's programmes within it promoted dialogue across art, research and activism, aiming to redefine cultural practices as collective acts of care, bridging the gap between contemporary art and social spaces. The project began in 2023 with two key events: iLiana Fokianaki's talk and screening on Survival Kit 13 in Zagreb, which explored institutional neutrality and geopolitics, and WHW Akademija's hosting of artist Adelita Husni-Bey. Husni-Bey's film *Postcards from the Desert Island* addressed anarcho-collectivism and embodied pedagogy through participatory workshops and collective actions focused on learning through the body.

The 2024 exhibition "On Necessary Work" in Zagreb examined labour, colonialism and repair through the works of Adelita Husni-Bey, Hana Miletić, Kader Attia and Fokus Grupa. The exhibition critiqued neoliberalism and advocated for decolonial readings of museum narratives, featuring works reflecting on Covid-era nursing, textile handiwork, the restitution of African artifacts and Rijeka's colonial history. Care Ecologies, curated by State of Concept in collaboration with WHW, Idensitat and the G. and A. Mamidakis Foundation, built on these themes. It explored care in contemporary society, featuring the same artists, delving into intersections of care, labour and social justice while emphasising care as a transformative strategy to reclaim societal well-being.

The final 2024 programme saw WHW Akademija's second phase inaugurated with a public lecture by Françoise Vergès, who critiqued museums as upholders of the colonial order, proposing radical decolonisation beyond mere reforms. Her lecture argued that decolonising museums involves not just addressing the origins of collections but dismantling racial, gendered and social hierarchies embedded within the institution's operations.

Ekologije skrbi i programi WHW-a unutar tog projekta poticali su dijalog između umjetnosti, istraživanja i aktivizma, s ciljem redefiniranja kulturnih praksi kao kolektivnih činova skrbi, premošćujući jaz između suvremene umjetnosti i društvenih prostora. Projekt je započeo 2023. godine s dva ključna događaja: predavanjem i prikazivanjem filma Iliane Fokianaki u Zagrebu o projektu Survival Kit 13, koji istražuje institucionalnu neutralnost i geopolitiku, te gostovanjem umjetnice Adelite Husni-Bey u WHW Akademiji. Film Adelite Husni-Bey *Postcards from Desert Island* bavio se anarho-kolektivizmom i tjelesnom pedagogijom kroz participativne radionice i kolektivne akcije usmjerene na učenje kroz tijelo.

Izložba O neophodnom radu u Zagrebu 2024. godine istraživala je rad, kolonijalizam i popravak kroz radove Adelite Husni-Bey, Hane Miletić, Kadera Attie i Fokus grupe. Izložba je kritizirala neoliberalizam i zagovarala dekolonijalna čitanja muzejskih narativa, predstavljajući radove koji se bave temama skrbi u doba COVID-a, tekstilnim radom, restitucijom afričkih artefakata i kolonijalnom poviješću Rijeke. Izložba Ekologije skrbi, koju je kurirao State of Concept u suradnji s WHW-om, Idensitatom i G & A Mamidakis Foundation, gradila je temelje na ovim temama. Istraživala je skrb u suvremenom društvu, uključujući iste umjetnike, istražujući sjecišta skrbi, rada i socijalne pravde, ističući skrb kao transformacijsku strategiju za povrat društvenog blagostanja.

Završni program za 2024. godinu obuhvatio je drugu fazu WHW Akademije s javnim predavanjem Françoise Vergès. Vergès je kritizirala muzeje kao branitelje kolonijalnog poretka, predlažući radikalnu dekolonizaciju izvan jednostavnih reformi. U svom predavanju, argumentirala je da dekolonizacija muzeja uključuje ne samo suočavanje s podrijetlom zbirki, već i razgradnju rasnih, rodnih i socijalnih hijerarhija usađenih u operacijama tih institucija.

Broken Infrastructures: Inconvenience and Spaces of Care

Gigi Argyropoulou

At a certain point in the writing of this coda, I stood up to get some air. When I returned, the page I'd left open next to the computer shot me the phrase, "Genital life gives way to bubbles, the notebook of a body's two eyes." I didn't understand it, so I decided to read along to see whether I could create a context for it as I proceeded. I read until I realized that I'd actually seen the phrase hours ago and had run my eyes over the surface of it the way people run their mouths during conversations when they haven't quite found what they're trying to say: the phrase that can be returned to that allows for the making of fresh sense.

—Lauren Berlant, "Coda: My Dark Places,"
in Berlant (2022, 149).

Trembling Thoughts Make Trembling Notebooks – Who Cares?

This article starts with a disclaimer. I rarely start like this. I'm trying to write this article while I'm taking care exclusively of two little children, two and four years old. It's summer, and we find ourselves in on a busy touristy island and I cannot simply take care, find care or take time. The care of parenthood never stops. I write and I feel doubtful about this beginning. At the end, who cares? I certainly shouldn't allow caretaking change what I do. Many others think this way... and so did I. In the early years, I struggled to continue as before: I gave talks and wrote articles while breastfeeding and running around the city organising things with a baby on a carrier. Surely I can do it – care work shouldn't change what I do, who I am. In any case, art, writing and parenthood don't sit well together. Art and parenthood have long been viewed as incompatible, a trope that served the canon well. I find myself with two little kids on a busy island and in extreme heat and somehow I'm not alone. I'm with others. Many others, mainly women, that drag themselves every evening to the busy squares.

It was in 2020 that the edition "#Caring" of the New Alphabet School at HKW took place exclusively online. To think of care and caring in a pandemic world seemed to open up other dimensions to think of it in the everyday, a changing everyday.

"Social and ecological interdependence defines the relations of care, and the effort to sustain those relations defines the labour of care," Valeria Graziano et al. (2020) wrote in one of the essays in the blog session. Care also comes with other words: repair, maintenance, healing, support, trust, solidarity, love. Practices of care make visible how we value ourselves and others as well as the natural environment that makes life possible. Perhaps we can think of an ecology of care or caring ecologies as another author in the blog session, Pantxo Ramas (2020), put it, as practising, making care "with the surroundings" and thus acknowledging the "interdependence of care within the social, mental and environmental organisation of everyday life". There are times that certain terms become buzzwords and perhaps even empty signifiers, as they are used again and again. They circulate and have their time. Sometimes, more importantly though, they also mark a moment when many people are thinking together/apart, perhaps sensing there is something relevant, something shared, something undefined, unspoken, ambivalent still. While the pandemic offered specific and fresh understandings of care, today how might we still question ecologies and dependencies of care and the ways that affect how arts and cultural practices operate? In what ways might the arts respond to the ongoing "crisis of care" of our time? Ramas continues Starhawk's reflections on social permaculture to say that to care for the world, one must try to inhabit the thresholds between the past, the present and the future; to analyse and intervene in the structural problems, attempt to transform critique into an instituting intervention and invent ways of transition. Care seems certainly something more than being considerate and nice.

This present article, on a limited scope, will seek to inhabit breaks, gaps and thresholds as it considers broken infrastructures and spaces of care as being always in transition, in brokenness, in relation. Departing from Lauren Berlant's "transformational infrastructures" (2016) in "economies of abandonment" (Povinelli, 2011), I will seek to propose the term "militant curating" as an "inconvenient" practice that attempts to situate critical discourses – as a way to experiment and intervene in a specific landscape. I will seek to unpack modes of "militant care" and by extension "militant curating" as ways of relating, being implicated in and interdependent on a social and cultural landscape, making visible collective critical discourses already present in it; embodying an institutional critique by forming ephemeral critical spaces of care that might collectively sketch broken

infrastructures; to care in brokenness, being broke and continuing to be implicated – with or without credit.

Instituting and the Troubles of Inconvenience

Berlant, in their book *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, seeks to offer terms to “unlearn, and loosen the objects and structures that otherwise seem intractable”. They argue that “we cannot know each other without being inconvenient to each other. We cannot be in any relation without being inconvenient to each other” (2022, 7). The book, which was written during the pandemic, closes the introduction with a question: “How not to reproduce the embedded violence of the unequal ordinary?” (xi). Might the inconvenience always implicit and not always admitted in relations of care offer a framework to discuss cultural practices today? Might cultural practices that inconvenience both us and others offer ways to rethink power relations, inhabited structures and everyday gestures? Can the troubles of interdependence, and what troubles us, offer alternative understandings and experiences of comfort and settlement? If inconvenience is always in relation and thus in a process of working something out, how might inconvenience unravel something integral about sociality itself, as well as relation and interdependency? Berlant further develops the term “transformational infrastructures” to describe generating a form from within brokenness and beyond the exigencies of the current crisis, and as an alternative to it too. They write, “being in the space of broken form and as you proceed transformation can (perhaps) proceed” (2016, 393). In times of massive institutional failure that has led to infrastructural collapse, as they write, how can makers of critical forms offer such terms of transition?

Bojana Kunst, in her discussion about institutionalisation and precarity, refers to a talk by Athena Athanasiou in Athens in 2015: “Her lecture was held in an old abandoned theatre, which was taken over by a collective and transferred into the temporal venue, a conference meeting, but also a temporal retreat at the same time for refugees ... So, in Green Park, Athena Athanasiou talked about the conditionality of the institutions ... the simultaneity between performing the institution and resisting the very process of institutionalisation” (2020). How might art practices make “care with surroundings” while proposing new relations with what is already there? In what ways might such practices of militant care (and curating) give rise to instances of instituting? And how in such processes does inconvenience form both the process and the infrastructure? How do we live

in/with an inconvenient infrastructure? In what ways might the institution (and thus in our case the art institution) or practices of instituting perform and resist at the same time processes of canonisation and structuralisation (as Guattari suggests)? Produced by relations of inconvenience in inconvenient situations, and interdependencies on the cultural and political landscape, cultural practices of militant care challenge established *modus operandi*. Perhaps in inconvenient relations and practices of militant care we ephemerally might find terms of transition through the making of critical collective infrastructures and publics.

Kunst concludes her discussion on institutionalisation and precarity to suggest that experiential processes should behave more “like a plant, a weed, stuck in the ground but nevertheless connected with the surrounding habitat, an earthly infrastructure” (2015, 14) – inconvenient and interrelated perhaps.

On Being Care-Free

The kids in the square make new friends. They are running around, forming ephemeral grouping that disintegrate, little clusters here and there. From a distance it looks like birds flocking, making shapes. Other times they disappear in the distance, climbing trees or fighting monsters. I watch them from the bench and, more often than I'd like, I'm running after them. After some time, I gradually meet the other caretakers/parents who are sitting on the nearby benches. Coincidentally, it's often mainly women looking after these kids in these warm evenings, in this island square. Few words are exchanged, in between running around little kids. Christina, one of the women, after a few weeks starts to talk to me more. She is a single mom, she goes to work in the mornings and her child goes to a summer camp. Not many friends, no family on this island. She talks about being an old mom. In the evenings she is always in this square. Today she is pointing out a group of passersby, dressed up, laughing, as they walk through the square probably heading to dinner. She says to me, “I look at people like them and I don't know what I feel ... It is not jealousy, it's not ... it's just such a different world that I cannot even imagine.” The kids are now fighting over a plane, Christina stops talking to me and runs there, trying to help them. An older kid takes the plane and runs away.

Emma Dowling (2021), in her book *The Care Crisis*, writes that a link between “happiness” and “care” expresses a basic dilemma

of care: "even if care work remains unequally distributed, caring is fundamental to what is meaningful about social life". Dowling returns to the etymology of the word "care", which is derived from the Old English *caru*, meaning "sorrow, anxiety and grief", the "burdens of the mind". "Let's think of the image of 'care-free', as being without a worry in the world" or "care-ful" as being cautious. This etymology is different from the Latin *cura* (which curating is derived from) "that has the meaning of looking after, or ensuring the well-being of, something or someone. A fine line between caring and fretting, between ensuring one's own well-being and someone else's and between being anxious or worried about oneself or someone else, or even about the state of world," between thinking about burdens of a here and now and producing actions that support/sustain others, ourselves – and the world. In a way, this specific tension between *caru* and *cura* might be productive as we consider current artistic practices, keeping in mind that the impulse to care, as Dowling suggests, "can come from fear as much as from a sense of affection and connection". Care inconveniences us as it brings the burdens of the world while sustaining the well-being of something or someone. Comfort and settlement. The burden of sustaining, keeping up.

The green monsters are out again behind the tress in the square and all the kids are running together now, collaborating on how to go about against them.

Making for and With the Landscape

In the summer of 2016, a DIY performance biennial took place in Athens under the title "No Future". It sought to reflect on numerous self-organised cultural practices of care and solidarity that emerged in Greece during the years of crisis as well as to explore practices that appear at moments when the continuity of a projected futurity is destabilised.

The programme was a continuation of a long journey of an ever-changing collective body that initiated cultural actions and spaces. It was in a critical moment after the debt referendum in 2015, when many of the practices that formed the solidarity movement had begun to disappear. By proposing a biennial as a DIY event, it sought to rethink and ephemerally even metaphorically occupy the idea of "a biennial", asking questions about how art operates in the neoliberal context, how conveniently or inconveniently it relates to the cultural and social *modi operandi*, what models it might produce and to whom these belong. It was initiated in the occupied space of

Green Park and extended to the nearby Pedion tou Areos park and then travelled by boat to the island of Kythira. Exploring modes of being in and with the landscape, the biennial proposed the form of "self-curating" as assembling. Prior to each day, participants met and collectively organised the day, asking questions about context and form, and sharing the labour of making things possible.

Reflecting on the numerous self-organised activities of the years of crisis, the biennial proposed that the relationship with a ruptured futurity might be a potent one to explore. The organising team proposed that the destabilisation of this "control over future" could lead to what I have elsewhere called "impotential practices" of a here and now, an inconvenient, impotential here and now that potentially gives rise to transformational infrastructures. Opposing notions of futurity based on normative regulatory culture and an imaginary that embraces a drive for ongoing progress, innovation, improvement and expansion, the event sought to explore what happens to political and cultural practice when it turns its back on "the future" and asks instead: "Can this ruptured futurity offer us new possibilities to engage with the present and produce new relations with time? Can such impotential practices of a 'here and now' offer new ways to engage with a 'then and there' that in turn sketch different worlds to come?"

By setting unexpected public stages in buildings and parks, squares and boats, beaches and other public sites, this DIY event ephemerally reconfiguring the material environment, allowing bodies to be formed by and form the landscape. Unlike most biennials or similar cultural organisations, this DIY biennial did not continue after its first adventurous iteration. It too had no future – as it, like many other bottom-up structures of the so-called solidarity movement, failed to continue after 2016. Yet it marked the quest for a different time, for supportive infrastructures, assembling and participating otherwise, in inconvenient socialities, finding new joys together, for a fugitive cultural practice and publics. It marked an ephemeral practice of setting unexpected stages and critical publics that experiment with the sun and the sea and the limits of the landscape together with institutional strictures and challenges of togetherness. Such publics are not codified and remain unsettled and incomplete – what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call "debtors at distance" (2013, 64).

Politics of the Landscape

After many of the grassroots practices of solidarity and care that emerged in the years of crisis seemed to disappear and Athens faced new radical transformations in the city centre during and after the pandemic years, a peripatetic public programme on the “Hills and Fields” of the city was initiated by Eight, a collective space in the centre of Athens that emerged from previous collective cultural experiments and interventions in the years of crisis. As the very parks of the city that functioned as active public spheres were undergoing a series of privatisations, “Hills and Fields” invited participants to performative inhabitations and interventions in emergent urban hegemonies.

Kike España and Gerald Raunig (2022) offer the term “monstrous complicity” to unpack potentialities in the complicit role of cultural spaces and practices: as a way to both relate with existing structures and unsettle them, being with, for and against at the same time. Monstrous complicity is a complicity that is always incomplete, generating something new by embracing the “ongoing turbulence, the everyday and everynight emergence of the monster in everything”.

Forms of a such monstrous complicity in the everyday took place during the days of “Hills and Fields”, from peripatetic actions, driftings (*dérives*) and workshops to discussions about home foreclosures and privatisations to the limited possibilities for political participation in public space. “Hills and Fields” sought to work with the park, its ugliness and abandonment, its everyday use by different populations, to unsettle privatisation plans, to multiply the monstrous of the everyday, to let the park perform and take centre stage in the hope that it might also create possibilities for ongoing disruption. Critical publics emerged, formed by multiple bodies, invited and impromptu, thereby creating space for methods of militant curating and artistic action that work with and for the landscape. The project unsettled sedimented practices and reconfigured material environments ephemerally, but yet, in a way, it multiplied the monstrous. Admitting its own complicity, involvement and impotentiality, “Hills and Fields” brought about instances of monstrous performativity in unforeseen and yet ephemeral forms.

Militant Curating as Making Spaces of Care

In proposing the term “militant curating”, I wish to point towards, and theorise on, the potential of cultural practices to engage directly with the landscape in inconvenient relationships

and modes of militant care: “making care with surroundings” and, at the same time, proposing inconvenient relations with what is already there, making visible new connections. Radical militant care (and, by extension, curating) might offer new ways to engage with the existing power structures and relations of exploitation and exclusion and thus make visible how to be, and at the same time, with, for and against in emergent modes of “response-ability” (Haraway, 2016).

As Berlant writes, “the way object/scene comes into form is always an outcome of scanning for repetitions: the form is at least an impasse, a semicolon, temporary housing, a transitional pattern on the move – a proposition for an infrastructure” (2022, 150). Might such cultural propositions in all their temporality sketch a field of emergent cultural practice in the production of social space, that through the making of critical publics offers spaces of social and political pedagogy? As Michael Warner suggests, publics necessarily mobilise independently of state institutions, law or formal frameworks of citizenship, since people would feel powerless if “their commonality and participation was simply defined by pre-existing frameworks, by institutions and law, as in other social contexts it is defined through kinship” (2002, 214). At the same time, Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) stresses the importance of spatial and ephemeral dimensions of collective responses to the present that make visible economies of abandonment. Modes of militant curating that as a practice emerged during radical experiments in the years of crisis in Greece and continued with programmes such as the ones I have discussed above offer conditions that others inhabit, ephemerally, in inconvenient relations, engaging with the landscape and, at the same time, such practices also offer new ways to be in the here and now, without fixing the form. In inconvenient relations such practices sketch other ways of dependency and relation, making visible economies of abandonment through monstrous and unexpected forms. Challenging romanticised notions of sociality, care and participation, such publics make visible the awkward, uncanny and inconvenient feeling of doing and being with unfamiliar others in emergent vulnerable social spaces. The opposite of precarity, after all, as Judith Butler reminds us, is not security, but “the struggle for an egalitarian social and political order in which a livable interdependency becomes possible” (2015, 69).

It is this turn towards collectively produced, unfinished, inconvenient, awkward, inoperative, monstrous publics that point towards spaces of shared care and knowledge, that refuse

authored, finished, performed work. Berlant writes that to study inconvenience is to study processes of receptivity. "To study receptivity is to face the idea: when it comes to living in proximity, there is no such thing as passivity. Adjustment is constant action: the grinding of the wheels of awkwardness and the bargaining with life's infrastructures" (2022, 9). Thinking of such emergent practices of militant care as studies on receptivity and thus on adjustment might reveal ways of making/curating in forms that are inseparable from modes of response in a changing here and now. Modes of practice that become instances of imagining and reoccupying the social form, opening up a dimension that "improvises and makes counter-infrastructures for revising what's possible in life" (20).

Broken Infrastructures

Today the square is in crisis. Some public event is coming up and there are workers building a temporary structure in the centre of the square. Kids are in crisis too; they don't want to play together, they keep fighting with one another. "You are not my friend after all," they keep yelling at each other, "This is not fair." Our rational words of advice don't change anything as some kids burst into tears while others disappear behind trees. One of the women is running after the kids, making sure that they don't wander too far. A couple of tourists pass and temporarily pause in the square. One of them has a stroller, they take a baby out, and most people look at the baby. It is around 10 months old. The little secret looks between strangers, a half-smile, a little acknowledgement, secret messaging through looks, saying "I feel for you, or I get it, I sympathise" was something that held me up multiple times. These looks somehow always find you in a crowd. They make up for the many irritated gestures and looks that make you even more upset and guilty for failing, failing them and failing the baby, failing the world. It always felt that these random passing strangers formed little passing caring infrastructures that held me up through these secret signals of understanding. The couple places the young baby in the stroller and we all go back to our other worlds until the baby starts screaming out loud. The parents seem exhausted. One of them asks the other to take baby for a walk while it's crying to make sure it sleeps when they go for dinner. The baby cries, louder and louder and louder. I stay in the bubble of the evening square together with the other caregivers, mainly women.

How much inconvenience does a new life produce and how uncaring are so many familiar practices from the day we arrive in this world? Medicalised environments with bright lights and sounds,

violent and unnecessary C-sections, unjustified separations of mother and child at hospitals, safety protocols, overfeeding, crying it out, sleep training, transition protocols, phasing schemes, endless attempts to embody abandonment from early on, to silence the desperate attempts to find comfort, the endless need for care. There is a fear of spoiling with too much care. Or maybe also a fear of letting this inconvenience change us, and by extension change the world, our world. In a constant state of inconvenience themselves, caretakers give care, withhold care and lose care. Can we receive too much care? Is there a way to measure how much care we give, need and take?

These realisations don't come without contradictions. And then they are personal. How much do I care? And if, as Dowling writes, care is also worrying about the world, why worry so much? Maybe through this care and exhaustion we can also experience another dimension of being in the world. Can we consider care as a practice of brokenness, as a departure towards the other and, in a wider sense, the world? Not from a place of privilege but as an event that happens in a state of inconvenience, displacement, with constant worry, caring, responding, adjusting. Breaking and caring and being broken and in this something shifts. We can see this in multiple contexts of caretaking and caregiving. Might that be a practice of militant care and what might it reveal about the potential of fragile practices of militant curating? The adjustment and responsiveness of making with and in the landscape in increasingly inconvenient relations. Incomplete, indebted formations, in inconvenient settings and relations with the cultural and political landscape that, more often than not, fail to actually make with surroundings, the world stays in disturbance and such practices disappear. They become at times instances of monstrous complicity, at other times transformational infrastructures, yet rarely are they translated into sustainable structures. How can such practices continue in brokenness without losing access to the world's holding capacities?

The kids are now back. They awkwardly sit together. No one seems to want to play anymore today. The monsters are behind the trees again but no one has the energy to fight them today. The workers have almost finished the structure for the event in the centre of the square; looks like a stage. Just as things feel a little calmer, an older child starts screaming really loudly in the corner of the square. The caretaker, probably a mom, hugs the child. The child pushes her back, hitting her hard. She talks

softly. None of us can hear the exact words. She is trying to calm the child but is failing. The child is hitting her harder and harder. She is still trying to hug her, but after a while they are both on the ground. Now passersby pause and look at them. She is not looking at anyone. Eventually she manages to calm the child. They both hug calmly. Now for the first time, as the noise of screaming and hitting eases, we hear her voice. She repeats "it's time to stop, it's time to stop" again and again. No one moves.

Do You Like Children?

One day a little poster appeared around the square in between kids running and playing. Bold letters on top asked the question: "Do you like children?" The text that followed described the genocide in Gaza and the 16,000 children that had died as we write these words and chase kids around the square.

What do we do when we care? Does making "care with surroundings" come in different forms? How does care take space in economies of abandonment? In what ways does it haunt a space and what we do? "Is not sufficient to only look at the present, it is not sufficient to disregard the present moment and the current emergencies," Fred Moten (2023) notes. "Similarly it's not sufficient to pay attention only to what is happening in Gaza but it is absolutely imperative to pay as close as attention as we possibly can to what is happening in Gaza." He continues to argue that, for those of us who actually care about justice, it is important that the people who administer state brutality should have to be made to say "we don't like killing children and we think that's wrong" because, as he argues, referring to the USA, which could be relevant to other places, "we kill children in myriad ways ... we shoot them, bomb them, starve them, we sent them to shitty schools, we subject them to environmental degradation". Moten concludes that now, in the light of what is happening in Gaza, we should "think with one another: how do we renew and refine our anticolonial practices?" from where we are.

Unlearning the World

Practices of militant care and, by extension, militant curating make visible critical discourses already present in the landscape, proposing ephemeral inconvenient and sometimes monstrous contexts in the making. What happens, though, when the tension between *caru* and *cura* is no longer productive? When it feels that are we are losing access to the world's holding capacities?

Berlant (2017), in their video contribution to the public programme "Stubborn Returns and Urban Afterlives" in Athens a few years ago, talked about the concept of transformational infrastructure. They did so in a moment when many of the grassroots practices that formed the so-called solidarity movement had begun to disappear. They proposed that transformational infrastructures have two functions: "one is as a pedagogy of unlearning the world you don't want to reproduce and the other is building other infrastructures, both material and affective, for the extension of life in forms that haven't been consensed to yet but can be produced from within life." Infrastructures are not institutions, Berlant argues, because infrastructures are defined by use. The ongoing production of transitional infrastructures for the extended meanwhile is, as they note, a "critical obligation of the writer, or artist". Infrastructure is the living mediation of "what provides the consistency of life in the ordinary ... lifeworld of structure". Berlant proposes unlearning as transforming your sensorial in personal and political ways and building affective infrastructure by returning to "the same scene of what you are trying to work out". The world, they argue, is always in disturbance and doesn't shift unless many people do the same thing – a refrain doesn't shift unless we test it again and again with new thinking. They conclude that one task for makers of critical forms is to "offer terms of transition" that alter "the harder and softer, the tighter and looser infrastructures of sociality itself". This process, Berlant argues, lies somewhere between ongoing testing and playing, or maybe experimenting with the landscape, testing it with new thinking. In their words: "refrain what it means to be attached while you induce possibility of a repetition".

Increasingly today, as we find ourselves within messy, destroyed, painful, violent, powerlessness landscapes, how do we induce the demand for an otherwise? How do we continue in temporalities, in brokenness and in a state of abandonment as practices of militant curating demand other forms of continuity? Is a broken infrastructure enough? Perhaps it is precisely in such broken instances, in inconvenience, that bodies remake material environments. Perhaps by multiplying the monster in everything, in constant movement, being moved, in broken ways, inhabiting the tension of *caru* and *cura*, that emergent practices of militant curating might test the "making of fresh sense" through reconsidering the limits of care, collective power, comfort and settlement, debt and credit, wasted time: what makes a liveable life.

It is the end of summer. We say our goodbyes. I feel sad for the kids. "Are you all going away forever?" "We will never see you again?" one of the other kids ask me, with almost tearful eyes. I reassure them. It won't be long, we will meet again. Just a year. We exchange small gifts to remember each other in the winter. My broken childhood and all the pain of getting on a ferry to return back to normal life flashes back in a second as I wave from a distance.

Dowling writes: "'Take care,' we say to a friend as time spent together comes to an end. 'Take care' is not just advice, however: it is an imperative – to slow down and take time to be attentive to oneself, to others, to one's surroundings" (2017).

Coda

Books are never finished: one just stops writing them.

—Berlant (2022, 27)

I am speaking of arriving at last at a condition of receptivity ... approaching it through care and mourning ... given up everything except what is most essential. It is like in the autumn. After summer has completely withdrawn, but before winter has begun its descent, all of nature reduces itself to its bones. In the autumn, one can briefly see the structure of the world. That condition comes to resemble youthfulness or even childhood. Innocence and experience find their meeting place in a shared sense of discovery.

—Goulish (2020)

Just as I'm finishing this article, the summer has passed and we find ourselves in the autumn. Today, as I'm nearing the deadline for handing in this article, my two year old had an accident at another square and I find myself unexpectedly in ER. From office to nurse and multiple doctors, with constant crying, while near us a whole other world unfolds: in desperate need for care, elderly, children, middle-aged people, in all stages of life. Accidents, fractures, coughs, IV, what I cannot identify and have no right words to describe. I find myself inside the X-ray room, wearing a heavy gown, holding her hand – she is in a lot of pain; she is tired from the many hours in hospital, she is crying constantly, she is screaming more as they pull her hand. I'm awkwardly holding an ice cream, offering some to her from time to time. She refuses every time, and I keep offering. All of a sudden, this one position causes too much pain, she screams, her face changes. She looks at me, she cries more. I cry with

her. Is it for her pain, my pain, my inability to offer care, the burdens of the world, for not being able to make it better, to show care, to my surroundings, this hospital tonight, the pain of all the kids and people over the last year. The technician is very frustrated, they look tired, they need to go home. The ice cream melts in my hands as she holds me tight; we both cry for some time. "Never again, never again," my two year old keeps repeating.

Practices of militant curating in inconvenient relationships seek to make care/challenge surroundings, through constant adjustment. At times they become transformational infrastructures and instances of instituting, offering terms of transition. Yet these practices of militant curating and the collectively produced, unfinished, inconvenient, awkward, inoperative, monstrous publics that often produce in economies of abandonment have proved precarious, fragile, broken, discontinuous. We can talk about constellations of practice that they formed; about histories of alternative instituting they produced; about broken infrastructures that continue today, haunting other forms. And yet the pain, the loss, the disappearance of an ephemeral worlding doesn't ease the "bargaining with life's infrastructures". In today's monstrous landscapes and dark places, while we often lose our words, sense, methods and even practices, perhaps we should remember to make care with surroundings while we think with one another about "how to renew and redefine" existing practices. Practicing how to lose the world, without losing its holding capacities – "a shared sense of discovery". Forming in brokenness, the terms of transition that induce possibilities of new repetitions that, as Berlant notes, are a transformational infrastructure. Broken, inconvenient, impotential, perhaps yet reoccurring.

"'Once you let in all deaths, all that follows is life' – a thing to be used."

–Berlant (2022, xi)¹

¹ It was somewhere in 2016 that I read for the first time about transformational infrastructures. In a state of brokenness, as I felt I started thinking about transitional infrastructures for the extended meanwhile. I spoke with Lauren Berlant and they also sent me a little video as a contribution to a public programme I organised in 2017. In 2021, on the last day of New Alphabet School edition "On Instituting" in Athens (that was postponed three times due to the pandemic and our insistence that it happen in person), I found out that Berlant had passed away. It felt as if this companionship, this infrastructure that held my thinking (and doing) through these years, had disappeared as well. The book *On the Inconvenience of Other People* was published in 2022 and it became my companion in this text today as I attempted to navigate challenges of care and why it might be also relevant for cultural practices in a post-pandemic world.

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What if Women Built the World? A Think-And-Feel Piece

Elke Krasny

What if Women Ruled the World? This is the title of a film by artist Yael Bartana. I saw this film for the first time in mid-September 2024. I want to begin this text by acknowledging that the title *What if Women Ruled the World* inspired the title “What if Women Built the World”. By way of introducing the title in the way I just did, we, myself as the writer and you as the reader, are already part of feminist praxis.¹ Such a feminist praxis begins by acknowledging that the inspiration and motivation for our work always comes from somewhere. Our work does not begin nowhere. Our work does not begin in isolation. Our work of thinking, creating, feeling, making, caring, is never done without being in conversation with the work of others. We may agree with the work of others and actually find ourselves to be continuing the work they began when we engage with and draw on the work of others. We may disagree with the work of others and actually find ourselves not to be continuing, to be interrupting, the work they began when we engage with and draw on the work of others. We may be inspired to feel, think, do, make, or care about and for things that were never intended by the makings, writings or utterings of those whose work inspires us, but we still acknowledge their work as a source of inspiration, even though we may not be aligned with or continue the original intent. Acknowledging these interdependencies in inspiration is a feminist act and relevant to building the world. The purpose of this think-and-feel piece is to use the question “what if women built the world” to think about the dimensions of feminist worldbuilding. What if women building the world meant a turn to processes of care, repair, reparation and recovery? What if processes of care, repair, reparation and recovery are understood to be acts of rejection, refusal, resistance and, even, revolt? Before I turn to thinking more about and with these questions, I want to devote some more time in the first part of this text to sharing what the question “what if women ruled the world?” led me to think about in the autumn of 2024. “What if” opens up many possibilities previously

¹ “What If Women Ruled the World” was also taken up as the title for a programme at EMST, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens. From December 2023 through January 2025, EMST showed four exhibitions with art works by women and people identifying as female with the intent to show that governance can be imagined differently. See “What If Women Ruled the World,” EMST, <https://www.emst.gr/en/category/exhibitions-en/what-if-women-ruled-the-world>.

unthought of, previously unfelt. Once one starts thinking with the question of “what if”, the perspective begins to change. Writing with the question of “what if” also led me to question some of the constraints and limitations of the conventions of academic writing that still continue to control and subjugate thoughts and feelings. This then led me to understand that what I am trying to do here is to practice a mode of writing which I conceive of as a think-and-feel piece. The second part of this text will explain the ideas behind this.

Moving to the third and last part, I will then return once more to the title of this piece, “what if women built the world?”. I will use this question as a prompt to question the conditions built by colonial patriarchal pasts, which have come to determine the future, our present, and I will also use this question to imagine that building the world otherwise is possible.

In mid-September 2024, the film *What if Women Ruled the World* was already eight years old. For eight years, audiences, who saw the film, had been invited to think, to feel, to speculate what it would be like, what it could be like, if women ruled the world. Much had changed in those eight years. During the previous eight years, the manosphere has more fully evolved, and misogyny, rape threats and the promotion of men’s rights, including alt-right and extreme-right concepts of masculinity, and its hatred of women and rejection of feminism, spread through online content and social media. During the previous eight years, the number of feminicides rose globally. During the last eight years, military expenditure has increased every year and reached \$2,443 billion, \$2,443,000,000,000, in 2023. During the last eight years, the rise in temperature has rapidly increased, resulting in global warming, with 2023 replacing 2016 as the warmest year ever recorded. During the last eight years, the number of violent crises, armed conflicts and wars has risen. During the last eight years, autocracy and dictatorship have become political realities. Putinisation, Erdoğanism, Orbánisation, Trumpism, Ortegaism, Goñiism or Xitocracy or Jinpingism are all derived from the names of leaders of different countries around the world in 2024. These Men base their political rulership on being autocrats, of being dictators, on being fascists.² If anything,

² In this text I capitalise Men to mark the system of patriarchy, which is neither a-historical nor universal, but rather historically specific, situated, and always dynamically changing, transforming, and evolving. Furthermore, Man is different from man. Man impacts on the ways in which people of all genders are imagined and on the conditions that govern their realities. Man marks the modern subject position that places Man at the top of an imagined hierarchy. Invented during the Enlightenment, the figure of Man is a figure of domination, dominating over all others that are not Man. This means that Man is the figuration of coloniality, patriarchy, and speciesism. Anthropologist Anna Tsing (2016, 3) has inspired my usage of Man and Men.

the world has become a more masculinist, more misogynist, more violent, more militarised, more crisis-ridden, more war-torn, hotter, more autocratic and more fascist place.

What if Women Ruled the World? Turning to this question in light of the political, economic, climatic and military realities of the world we live in in 2024 made me feel less hopeless, less alone, less desperate. I felt that feminists had inherited this question in order to think about the state of the world differently and to think about rule, rulership and political systems differently. "What if" is such an inspirational proposition. What if we had a completely different political idea and, therefore, also a completely different praxis of what rule is. Perhaps rule and rulership as we know it now, as we have come to learn it under patriarchy, would not exist at all if women had developed what rule is, if women had been the ones to build the systems with which our world has been created. What if women would simply rule in such a different way, that rule – and rules – the way we know them now would never have come into existence. What if women would not rule the world but would have complexly developed structures and infrastructures of sharing the planet we call home and of inhabiting it with all the creatures, elements and matters that constitute the world. What if?

What if leads one to relate to the given otherwise? What if writing in the context of academia could open up and then hold open a space for both thought and feeling? What if such writing could become a recognised format without becoming a formula, without becoming formulaic? I will now share my considerations on why I have chosen to introduce a new format of writing which I have named a think-and-feel piece. Neither think pieces nor feel pieces are established formats used in conventional academic writing. A think piece is the expression of an author's thoughts. The term is used particularly in journalism to describe a piece published in a newspaper or magazine that represents one author's personal thoughts, one author's specific and particular worldview. A think piece can be speculative. A think piece should always be thought-provoking. While it may sound odd that academic writing has not taken up the think piece as a format, since thinking and the provocation of thoughts are central to what we understand as critical theory, reflection and knowledge production, this exclusion of think pieces from academic conventions also shows that personal opinions, speculation, the voicing of one's personal thoughts and the provocation of thoughts in readers were not what patriarchal epistemologies were about. Rather, patriarchal epistemologies

were based on claims to certainty, not speculation; on claims to provide instructions, not provocations; on claims to offer knowledge, not personal opinions. The term “think piece” makes it understood that the thoughts shared are personal and partial and, therefore, neither objective nor complete. The term “think piece” thus marks the difference between texts considered to be based on thoughts, which are configured and presented in such a way that they are recognised as impartial and objective, and texts called think pieces, which are considered to be the articulation of thoughts that are understood as partial and subjective. I have introduced at the beginning of this text that we always think through the inspiration we gain from the exchanges with others, that is, to put it differently, that our thoughts are never just our own, that we do not own our thoughts, that we are not the sole originators of our thoughts, that our thoughts are not original in the sense that we are the only source of origin of our thoughts. At the same time, it is central to feminist epistemologies that thinking is deeply personal and that academia creates conditions for the articulation and dissemination of thoughts. Creating conditions for writing, editing and publishing feminist thought pieces is a way of opening up space for feminist epistemologies. While “think piece” is an established term in journalism, “feel piece” is not. A feel piece refers, at least in my understanding, to a piece of writing that articulates the feelings of an author. Even more than the thoughts of a person, personal thoughts, the feelings of a person, personal feelings, have been banned, policed and thus annihilated by patriarchal academia. What if thoughts and feelings can, could and will enter more widely, more broadly, and in much more acknowledged ways into academic writing? What if women writing opened up and held open the space for all beings to write with their thoughts and with their feelings so the personal becomes a territory of shared thoughts, feelings and concerns. What if thoughts and feelings can be articulated in their mutual interwovenness in ways that have never been foreseen or supported by academic patriarchy? Drawing on the notion of *sentipensar*, of feeling-thinking, of overcoming the compulsory and violent modern-colonial-patriarchal split between feeling and thinking, between feelings and thoughts (Escobar 2020), I coined the term “think-and-feel piece”.³ Introducing think-and-feel pieces as a writing format

³ The term “*sentipensar*” was introduced by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda. Working with the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos on the Caribbean coast, Fals Borda tried to overcome the hierarchies between “researchers” and “researched” and introduced the idea of *sentipensar*, feeling-thinking. The Colombian-American anthropologist Arturo Escobar has worked with this idea.

opens up possibilities for writing differently. Inserting think-and-feel pieces into the academic context can serve the purpose of creating and opening up space for decolonial feminist queer epistemologies that do not separate feeling from thinking, that change writing by bringing together feeling and thinking.

What if? As observed earlier, the question "what if" is a prompt. It invites questions, speculations, imaginings, beginnings, alternatives. What if women built the world? I would never conflate women and feminists. Not all women are feminists; not all feminists are women. Yet, I do think that the question "what if women built the world" can be taken up as a challenge to feminism and as an inspiration to feminists. In particular, the question "what if women built the world" provides challenging inspirations and inspiring challenges to feminist architects, feminist builders, feminist cleaners, feminist constructors, feminist developers, feminist educators, feminist environmentalists, feminist engineers, feminist health workers, feminist homemakers, feminist parents, feminist planners, feminist policymakers, feminist politicians, feminist theorists, feminist social workers and many other feminists concerned with matters of building.

If you ask me what a world built by women would look like, I actually have to admit that I do not really have an easy answer to this question. I have always lived in a Man-built world. I continue to live in a Man-built world. In this Man-built world women are implicated in contributing to building and continuing the conditions of this Man-built world, in which women resist the conditions of this Man-built world, in which women practice multifold and diverse ways of inhabiting this Man-built world, in which many people refuse to identify with the colonial patriarchal heteronormativity of a world divided into two genders of men and women. I have never lived in a world built by women. I have never lived in a world built for women. But I do think-and-feel that a world built by women would be quite different from the world we know and from the world we have. I feel-and-think that a world built by women would start from very different premises than the Man-built colonial-capitalist-patriarchal world. I think-and-feel that architectures and buildings would not be dominated by the primacy of visibility. A world built by women would not have been built on, would not have been founded on, the triumph of style and the domination through visual appearance. Architectures and buildings would not be defined by the ontology of property, would not be objects of financial speculation, would not be instruments for

financialisation. A world built by women would have started by acknowledging that the world is never empty, that the world is never a tabula rasa, that there is always already something there. If women built the world, the very world that already exists would be acknowledged, would be accounted for, would always enter into the processes of building the world. Man-built architectures and buildings have come to mean domination, dispossession and extraction. Man-built housing has ordered life according to norms of heteropatriarchy. In the Man-built world the gendered and sexist division of labour has resulted in the spatialisation of this gendered and sexist division of labour.

The Man-built world has resulted in a world of climate ruination, the spatialisation of gendered orders, financialised violence and the destructive militarisation of land and bodies. If women built the world starting with and from the conditions of a world dominated by ruination, violence, destruction, extraction and militarisation, they would need to start from the needs of care. Building the world differently would be dedicated to care, repair, reparation and recovery. Not repair, however, in the sense of repairing so that the world is restored to how it was built, but in the sense of feminist repair that understands repair as transformation, repair as change for more care-full ways of existing with many others. Building the world requires never-ending processes of care, repair, reparation and recovery, which importantly include processes of rejection, refusal, resistance and revolt. How to arrive at rejection, refusal, resistance and revolt to build the world otherwise? This is the never-ending feminist work that is needed so building otherwise can be imagined, practiced realised.

I have shared some of my thoughts and feelings here to speculate about and imagine a world built by women. Hoping that these thoughts and feelings provide an opening to imagine building the world otherwise, I want to conclude by staying with the question. What if women built the world? This is an invitation, perhaps even an imperative, to imagine that building otherwise is possible, that giving in to a Man-built world is not an option, that giving up in a Man-built world is out of the question.

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ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ ΕΝΔΕΚΑΤΟ

bell hooks

ΓΛΩΣΣΑ: ΔΙΔΑΣΚΟΝΤΑΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΥΣ, ΔΙΔΑΣΚΟΝΤΑΣ ΝΕΕΣ ΛΕΞΕΙΣ

Μετάφραση: Αφροδίτη Χριστοδουλάκου

Η ΓΛΩΣΣΑ, όπως κι η επιθυμία, αναστατώνει, αρνείται να περιοριστεί· καταλύει τα όρια. Εκφράζεται παρά τη θέλησή μας, με λέξεις και σκέψεις που εισβάλλουν, για να μην πω παραβιάζουν τα πιο προσωπικά σημεία του μυαλού και του σώματος. Όταν ήμουν στο πρώτο έτος του πανεπιστημίου, διάβασα το ποίημα *The Burning of Paper Instead of Children* της Adrienne Rich. Το ποίημα αυτό, μιλώντας εναντίον της κυριαρχίας, του ρατσισμού και της ταξικής καταπίεσης, προσπαθεί να δείξει ότι το σταμάτημα της πολιτικής δίωξης και του βασανισμού των ανθρώπων, είναι ζωτικότερης σημασίας ζήτημα από τη λογοκρισία και το κάψιμο των βιβλίων. Ένας στίχος αυτού του ποιήματος που με συγκίνησε είναι ο ακόλουθος: «Τούτη είναι η γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, αλλά τη χρειάζομαι για να σας μιλήσω». Δεν τον ξέχασα ποτέ. Ίσως να μην είχα καταφέρει να τον ξεχάσω ακόμη κι αν είχα προσπαθήσει να τον διαγράψω από τη μνήμη μου. Οι λέξεις επιβάλλονται, ριζώνουν στη μνήμη μας ενάντια στη θέλησή μας. Οι στίχοι αυτού του ποιήματος γέννησαν στη μνήμη μου μια ζωή που δεν μπορούσα να αποβάλλω ή ν' αλλάξω.

Σήμερα, όταν πάνω τον εαυτό μου να σκέφτεται τη γλώσσα, οι λέξεις αυτές είναι εδώ σαν πάντα να περίμεναν να με προκαλέσουν και να με βοηθήσουν. Τις λέω από μέσα μου ξανά και ξανά με τέτοια ένταση σαν να ήταν ψαλμός. Με ξαφνιάζουν, προκαλώντας με να έχω επίγνωση της σύνδεσης

ανάμεσα στις γλώσσες και την κυριαρχία. Αρχικά αντιστεκόμουν στην ιδέα της γλώσσας του καταπιεστή με τη βεβαιότητα ότι η κατασκευή αυτή έχει τη δυνατότητα να αποδυναμώσει εκείνους από εμάς που μόλις μαθαίνουν να μιλούν, που μόλις μαθαίνουν να θεωρούν τη γλώσσα ως το πεδίο μέσα στο οποίο γινόμαστε υποκείμενα. «Τούτη είναι η γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, αλλά τη χρειάζομαι για να σας μιλήσω», είναι τα λόγια της Adrienne Rich. Διαβάζοντας αυτά τα λόγια πρώτη φορά τότε, αλλά και τώρα, με κάνουν να σκέφτομαι την επίσημη αγγλική γλώσσα, την εκμάθηση ενός τρόπου ομιλίας ενάντια στην ιδιωματική διάλεκτο των μαύρων, ενάντια στη διερρηγμένη και σπασμένη ομιλία ενός στερημένου και παραγκωνισμένου λαού. Η επίσημη αγγλική δεν είναι η γλώσσα της εξορίας. Είναι η γλώσσα της κατάκτησης και της κυριαρχίας· στις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες είναι η μάσκα που κρύβει την απώλεια τόσων πολλών γλωσσών, όλων εκείνων των ήχων των διαφορετικών κοινοτήτων των ιθαγενών που ποτέ δεν θ' ακούσουμε, τις γλώσσες των Gullah, των Yiddish και τόσων ακόμη ξεχασμένων γλωσσών.

Καθώς αναλογίζομαι τα λόγια της Adrienne Rich, ξέρω ότι αυτό που με πληγώνει δεν είναι η αγγλική γλώσσα αλλά τα όσα κάνουν οι καταπιεστές με αυτήν, ο τρόπος με τον οποίο τη διαμορφώνουν ώστε να γίνει έδαφος που περιορίζει κι οριοθετεί, ο τρόπος με τον οποίο τη μετατρέπουν σε όπλο που μπορεί να ντροπιάζει, να ταπεινώνει και να αποικιοποιεί. Η Gloria Anzaldúa μας θυμίζει τον πόνο αυτόν στο *Borderlands/La Frontera*, όταν υποστηρίζει: «Λοιπόν, αν θέλεις να με πληγώσεις πραγματικά, μίλησε άσχημα για τη γλώσσα μου». Γνωρίζουμε ελάχιστα για το πώς αισθάνονταν οι πρόσφυγες, οι υποδουλωμένοι ή ελεύθεροι Αφρικανοί που ήρθαν ή τους έφεραν στις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες χωρίς τη θέλησή τους, σε σχέση με την απώλεια της γλώσσας και την εκμάθηση της αγγλικής. Μόνον ως γυναίκα ξεκίνησα να σκέφτομαι τους μαύρους σε σχέση με τη γλώσσα, να σκέφτομαι το τραύμα τους καθώς αναγκάστηκαν να δουν τη γλώσσα τους να καθίσταται κενή νοήματος με μια ευρωπαϊκή αποικιοκρατική κουλτούρα, στην οποία φωνές που θεωρούνταν ξένες δεν μπορούσαν να ακούγονται, ήταν γλώσσες παράνομες που είχαν αποστατήσει.

Είναι δύσκολο να μην ακούω διαρκώς τον ήχο της κατάκτησης και της σφαγής στα επίσημα αγγλικά, όταν συνειδητοποιώ πόσο πολύς καιρός χρειάστηκε για ν' αναγνωρίσουν οι λευκοί Αμερικανοί τις διάφορες γλώσσες των αμερικανών ιθαγενών, για να αποδεχθούν ότι ο τρόπος ομιλίας που οι αποικιοκράτες πρόγονοί τους δήλωναν ότι δεν ήταν παρά γρυλίσματα ή ασυναρτησίες, ήταν στην πραγματικότητα μια γλώσσα. Τώρα σκέφτομαι τη θλίψη των προσφύγων, άστεγων Αφρικανών, που αναγκάστηκαν να κατοικήσουν σ' έναν κόσμο όπου έβλεπαν ανθρώπους που τους έμοιαζαν, με το ίδιο δέρμα

και στην ίδια κατάσταση, με τους οποίους όμως δεν είχαν μια κοινή γλώσσα για να επικοινωνήσουν και χρειάζονταν τη γλώσσα των καταπιεστών. «Τούτη είναι η γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, αλλά τη χρειαζόμαστε για να σας μιλήσω».

Όταν φαντάζομαι τον τρόπο των Αφρικανών στα πλοία που τους μετέφεραν ως σκλάβους, στους πλειστηριασμούς, να κατοικούν στην άγνωστη αρχιτεκτονική των φυτειών, σκέφτομαι ότι ο τρόμος αυτός υπερέβαινε το φόβο της τιμωρίας, ότι συνίστατο επίσης στο μαρτύριο του ακούσματος μιας γλώσσας την οποία δεν ήταν σε θέση να κατανοήσουν. Το ίδιο το άκουσμα των αγγλικών έπρεπε να τρομοκρατεί. Σκέφτομαι τους μαύρους που συναντήθηκαν σ' έναν τόπο μακριά από τις διάφορες κουλτούρες και γλώσσες που τους διέκριναν, αναγκασμένοι από τις συνθήκες να βρουν τρόπους να μιλήσουν μεταξύ τους σ' έναν «νέο κόσμο» όπου όχι η γλώσσα, αλλά το πόσο μαύρος είναι κανείς ή το πόσο σκούρο δέρμα έχει, θα διαμόρφωνε το πεδίο σύναψης δεσμών. Πώς να θυμηθείς, ν' ανακαλέσεις αυτόν τον τρόπο; Πώς να περιγράψεις τι πρέπει να ήταν για τους Αφρικανούς, των οποίων οι βαθύτεροι δεσμοί ήταν ιστορικά σφυρηλατημένοι στο πεδίο της κοινής ομιλίας, το να μεταφέρονται απότομα σ' έναν κόσμο όπου ο ίδιος ο ήχος της μητρικής τους γλώσσας δεν είχε νόημα.

Τους φαντάζομαι να ακούν την ομιλούμενη αγγλική σαν τη γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, ωστόσο τους φαντάζομαι επίσης να συνειδητοποιούν ότι η γλώσσα αυτή θα έπρεπε να αποκτηθεί, να προσληφθεί και να διεκδικηθεί ως πεδίο αντίστασης. Φαντάζομαι ότι ήταν ευχάριστη η στιγμή κατά την οποία συνειδητοποίησαν ότι η αρπαγή και η ομιλία της γλώσσας του καταπιεστή μπορούσε ν' αποτελέσει πεδίο συγκρότησης δεσμών. Διότι, αναγνωρίζοντας αυτό, κατάλαβαν ότι μπορούσαν ν' αποκαταστήσουν την οικειότητα, να διαμορφώσουν μια κουλτούρα αντίστασης, η οποία θα καθιστούσε δυνατή την ανάρρωση από το τραύμα της υποδούλωσης. Φαντάζομαι τους Αφρικανούς ν' ακούν πρώτη φορά τα αγγλικά ως τη «γλώσσα του καταπιεστή» κι έπειτα να τα ακούν ξανά ως δυναμικό πεδίο αντίστασης. Η εκμάθηση των αγγλικών, το να μάθουν να μιλούν την ξένη γλώσσα, ήταν ένας τρόπος για να επανακτήσουν οι υποδουλωμένοι Αφρικανοί την προσωπική τους δύναμη μέσα σε ένα πλαίσιο κυριαρχίας. Αποκτώντας μια κοινή γλώσσα, οι μαύροι μπορούσαν να ξαναβρουν έναν τρόπο να συγκροτούν κοινότητες και ένα μέσο για τη δημιουργία πολιτικής αλληλεγγύης, η οποία τους ήταν αναγκαία για να αντισταθούν.

Αν και χρειάζονταν τη γλώσσα του καταπιεστή για να μιλούν μεταξύ τους, εντούτοις την ανακάλυψαν εκ νέου, την ξαναέφτιαξαν ώστε να μιλά πέρα από τα όρια της κατάκτησης και της κυριαρχίας. Στον αποκαλούμενο

«Νέο Κόσμο», η αγγλική γλώσσα στα στόματα των μαύρων Αφρικανών άλλαξε, μετασχηματίστηκε και έγινε ένας διαφορετικός τρόπος ομιλίας. Οι υποδουλωμένοι μαύροι πήραν σπασμένα κομμάτια αγγλικών και τα μετέτρεψαν σε αντι-γλώσσα. Συνδύασαν τις λέξεις τους με τρόπο τέτοιο που ο καταπιεστής έπρεπε να αναθεωρήσει το νόημα της αγγλικής γλώσσας. Μολονότι είναι σύνηθες στη σύγχρονη κουλτούρα να μιλά κανείς για τα μηνύματα αντίστασης που αναδύθηκαν μέσα από τη μουσική που δημιούργησαν οι σκλάβοι, ιδίως στα θρησκευτικά τραγούδια τους, πολύ λιγότερα λέγονται για την γραμματική δόμηση των προτάσεων σ' αυτά τα τραγούδια. Συχνά τα αγγλικά που χρησιμοποιούνταν στο τραγούδι αντικατοπτρίζαν το σπασμένο και κομματιασμένο κόσμο του σκλάβου. Όταν οι σκλάβοι τραγουδούσαν: «nobody knows de trouble I see...» η χρήση της λέξης nobody προσδίδει ένα πιο πλούσιο νόημα σε σχέση με το να είχαν χρησιμοποιήσει τη φράση «no one» [κανένας], διότι ήταν το ίδιο το σώμα του σκλάβου που αποτελούσε τον συγκεκριμένο τόπο των δεινών. Ακόμη κι όταν οι χειραφετημένοι μαύροι τραγουδούσαν θρησκευτικά τραγούδια, δεν άλλαζαν τη γλώσσα, τη δομή των προτάσεων των προγόνων μας. Διότι στη λάθος χρήση των λέξεων, στη λάθος τοποθέτησή τους, βρισκόταν ένα πνεύμα εξέγερσης, που διεκδικούσε τη γλώσσα ως πεδίο αντίστασης. Η χρήση των αγγλικών με τρόπο που διερρήγνυε την επίσημη χρήση και σημασία τους ώστε συχνά οι λευκοί να μην καταλαβαίνουν το λόγο των μαύρων, έκανε τα αγγλικά κάτι παραπάνω από τη γλώσσα των καταπιεστών.

Υπάρχει μια άρρηκτη σχέση μεταξύ των σπασμένων αγγλικών των προσφύγων, υποδουλωμένων Αφρικανών και των διαφόρων διαλέκτων που χρησιμοποιούν οι μαύροι σήμερα. Και στις δύο περιπτώσεις η διάρρηξη της επίσημης αγγλικής καθιστούσε και καθιστά δυνατή την εξέγερση και την αντίσταση. Μετασχηματίζοντας τη γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, δημιουργώντας μια κουλτούρα αντίστασης, οι μαύροι δημιούργησαν έναν οικείο λόγο, που μπορούσε να πει πολλά περισσότερα απ' όσα επιτρέπονταν εντός των ορίων της επίσημης αγγλικής. Η δύναμη αυτού του λόγου δεν έγκειται απλώς στο ότι καθιστά δυνατή την αντίσταση στη λευκή υπεροχή, αλλά στο ότι σφυρηλατεί ένα χώρο εναλλακτικής πολιτισμικής παραγωγής και εναλλακτικών επιστημολογιών - διαφορετικών τρόπων σκέψης και γνώσης, που ήταν κρίσιμοι για τη δημιουργία μιας αντιγεμονικής θέασης του κόσμου. Είναι απολύτως απαραίτητο να μη χαθεί η επαναστατική δύναμη της ιδιοματικής γλώσσας των μαύρων στη σύγχρονη κουλτούρα. Η δύναμη αυτή βρίσκεται στην ικανότητα της διαλέκτου των μαύρων να παρεμβαίνει στα όρια και τους περιορισμούς της επίσημης αγγλικής.

Στη σύγχρονη δημοφιλή κουλτούρα των μαύρων, η ραπ μουσική έχει

γίνει ένας από τους χώρους στους οποίους η ιδιωματική γλώσσα χρησιμοποιείται με τρόπο που προσκαλεί την κυρίαρχη κουλτούρα να ακούσει –να ακούσει με προσοχή– και, σε ένα βαθμό, να μετασχηματιστεί. Ωστόσο, αυτή η απόπειρα πολιτισμικής μετάφρασης ενέχει τον κίνδυνο να ευτελίσει τη διάλεκτο των μαύρων. Όταν τα νεαρά λευκά παιδιά μιμούνται αυτόν τον τρόπο ομιλίας με τρόπους που υπονοούν ότι έτσι μιλούν όσοι είναι βλάκες ή όσοι ενδιαφέρονται μόνο για διασκέδαση ή να είναι αστείοι, τότε υπονομεύεται η ανατρεπτική του δύναμη. Στους ακαδημαϊκούς κύκλους, τόσο στη σφαίρα της διδασκαλίας όσο και της συγγραφής, έχουν γίνει ελάχιστες προσπάθειες για την αξιοποίηση της διαλέκτου των μαύρων, αλλά και οποιασδήποτε άλλης γλώσσας πέραν της επίσημης αγγλικής. Όταν, στη διάρκεια ενός μαθήματος για τις μαύρες γυναίκες συγγραφείς, ρώτησα μια ομάδα φοιτητών διαφορετικών εθνοτήτων γιατί η επίσημη αγγλική ήταν η μόνη γλώσσα που ακουγόταν στην αίθουσα διδασκαλίας, εκείνοι στιγμιαία έμειναν άφωνοι. Παρόλο που πολλοί από αυτούς ήταν άτομα για τα οποία η επίσημη αγγλική ήταν δεύτερη ή τρίτη γλώσσα, δεν είχαν σκεφτεί ποτέ την πιθανότητα να πουν κάτι σε μια άλλη γλώσσα, με έναν άλλο τρόπο. Αναμφίβολα, λοιπόν, συνεχίζουμε να σκεφτόμαστε: «Τούτη είναι η γλώσσα του καταπιεστή, αλλά τη χρειάζομαι για να σας μιλήσω».

Συνειδητοποίησα ότι κινδύνευα να χάσω τη σχέση μου με τον ιδιωματικό τρόπο ομιλίας των μαύρων επειδή κι εγώ τον χρησιμοποιού σπάνια στο κυρίως λευκό περιβάλλον στο οποίο κατά βάση κινούμαι, τόσο επαγγελματικά όσο και κοινωνικά. Έτσι, άρχισα να δουλεύω για την ενσωμάτωση της συγκεκριμένης διαλέκτου του Νότου την οποία άκουγα και μιλούσα μεγαλώνοντας σε διάφορα περιβάλλοντα. Ήταν ακόμη πιο δύσκολο να ενσωματώσω τη μαύρη διάλεκτο στα γραπτά, ιδίως στα ακαδημαϊκά περιοδικά. Αρχικά, όταν ξεκίνησα να οικειοποιούμαι στοιχεία της διαλέκτου των μαύρων σε κριτικά δοκίμια, οι επιμελητές μου έστελναν πίσω τα κείμενα στην επίσημη αγγλική. Η χρήση της διαλέκτου συνεπάγεται ότι μπορεί να χρειαστεί μετάφραση στην επίσημη αγγλική, αν κάποιος επιθυμεί ν' απευθυνθεί σ' ένα ευρύτερο κοινό. Στο περιβάλλον της σχολικής τάξης ενθαρρύνω τους σπουδαστές να χρησιμοποιούν την πρώτη τους γλώσσα και να τη μεταφράζουν, ώστε να μην αισθάνονται ότι η αναζήτηση ανώτερης εκπαίδευσης θα τους απομονώσει αναγκαστικά από τη γλώσσα και την κουλτούρα με την οποία είναι πιο εξοικειωμένοι.

Όπως ήταν αναμενόμενο, όταν στο μάθημά μου «Μαύρες Γυναίκες Συγγραφείς» οι σπουδαστές άρχισαν να μιλούν χρησιμοποιώντας διαφορών ειδών γλώσσες και τρόπους ομιλίας, οι λευκοί σπουδαστές συχνά έκαναν παράπονα. Αυτό φάνηκε να ισχύει ιδιαίτερα για τη διάλεκτο των μαύρων.

Ήταν ιδιαίτερα ενοχλητικό για τους λευκούς σπουδαστές, καθώς μπορούσαν να ακούσουν τις λέξεις που λέγονταν, αλλά δεν μπορούσαν ν' αντιληφθούν το νόημά τους. Παιδαγωγικά, τους παρότρυνα να σκέφτονται τη στιγμή στην οποία δεν καταλαβαίνουν αυτό που λέει κάποιος ως ένα χώρο για μάθηση. Ένας τέτοιος χώρος όχι μόνο προσφέρει την ευκαιρία να ακούσουν χωρίς πλήρη γνώση, χωρίς την πλήρη κατοχή της γλώσσας μέσω ερμηνείας, αλλά και μια εμπειρία να ακούσουν μη αγγλικές λέξεις. Τα μαθήματα αυτά φαίνονται να είναι ιδιαίτερα σημαντικά σε μια πολυπολιτισμική κοινωνία όπου η λευκή υπεροχή παραμένει και όπου τα επίσημα αγγλικά χρησιμοποιούνται ως όπλο που επιβάλλει σιωπή και λογοκρίνει. Η June Jordan μας υπενθυμίζει αυτό το σημείο στο *On Call* όταν δηλώνει:

Μιλώ για τα προβλήματα της πλειοψηφίας σε σχέση με τη γλώσσα σ' ένα δημοκρατικό κράτος, προβλήματα αξίας που κάποιος έκλεψε, έκρυψε και κατόπιν ομοιογενοποίησε σε μια επίσημη «αγγλική» γλώσσα, η οποία μπορεί να εκφράσει μόνο μη γεγονότα που δεν αναφέρονται σε κάποιον υπεύθυνο ή ψέματα. Αν όντως ζούσαμε σε δημοκρατικό κράτος η γλώσσα μας θα έπρεπε να ξεχύνεται, να πετά, να βρίζει και να τραγουδά σε όλα τα κοινά αμερικανικά ονόματα, σε όλες τις αναμφισβήτητες και αντιπροσωπευτικές φωνές όλων όσων συμμετέχουν εδώ. Δεν θα ανεχόμασταν τη γλώσσα του ισχυρού και συνεπώς δεν θα χάναμε κάθε σεβασμό για τις ίδιες τις λέξεις. Θα προσαρμόζαμε τη γλώσσα μας στην αλήθεια των πολλών εαυτών μας και θα την κάναμε να μας οδηγήσει στην ισότητα της εξουσίας που πρέπει να αντιπροσωπεύει ένα δημοκρατικό κράτος.

Το γεγονός ότι στο μάθημα για τις μαύρες γυναίκες συγγραφείς οι σπουδαστές καταπίεζαν κάθε επιθυμία να μιλήσουν σε γλώσσες άλλες από την επίσημη αγγλική, δίχως να βλέπουν την καταστολή αυτή ως πολιτική, ήταν ενδεικτικό του τρόπου με τον οποίο ασυναίσθητα συνεργούμε στην κουλτούρα της κυριαρχίας.

Οι πρόσφατες συζητήσεις για τη διαφορετικότητα και την πολυπολιτισμικότητα τείνουν να υποβαθμίζουν ή να αγνοούν το ζήτημα της γλώσσας. Γραπτά κριτικών φεμινιστών, επικεντρωμένα σε ζητήματα διαφορετικότητας και φωνής, έχουν κάνει σημαντικές θεωρητικές παρεμβάσεις, απαιτώντας την αναγνώριση της πρωταρχικής σημασίας των φωνών που συχνά υποχρεώνονται να σιωπήσουν, λογοκρίνονται ή περιθωριοποιούνται. Η απαίτηση αυτή για την παραδοχή και το καλωσόρισμα των διαφορετικών φωνών και, κατά συνέπεια, των διαφόρων γλωσσών και τρόπων ομιλίας, αναγκαστικά διαρρηγνύει την πρωτοκαθεδρία της επίσημης αγγλικής. Όταν οι υποστηρικτές του φεμινισμού διατύπωσαν πρώτη φορά την επιθυμία για ποικιλόμορφη συμμετοχή στο γυναικείο κίνημα, η γλώσσα δεν συζητήθηκε.

Απλώς θεωρήθηκε δεδομένο ότι η επίσημη αγγλική θα παρέμενε το πρωταρχικό όχημα μετάδοσης της φεμινιστικής σκέψης. Τώρα που το κοινό του φεμινιστικού λόγου –προφορικού και γραπτού– έχει γίνει πιο ποικιλόμορφο, είναι φανερό ότι πρέπει να αλλάζουμε τους συμβατικούς τρόπους με τους οποίους σκεπτόμαστε σχετικά με τη γλώσσα δημιουργώντας χώρους μέσα στους οποίους οι διάφορες φωνές θα μπορούν να εκφράζονται σε γλώσσα άλλη από την επίσημη αγγλική ή σε σπασμένη διάλεκτο. Αυτό συνεπάγεται ότι σε μια διάλεξη, ακόμη και σ' ένα γραπτό έργο, θα υπάρχουν αποσπάσματα του λόγου που ενδεχομένως δεν θα είναι προσβάσιμα από τον καθένα.

Αλλάζοντας τον τρόπο σκέψης μας για τη γλώσσα και τον τρόπο που τη χρησιμοποιούμε, αναγκαστικά αλλάζουμε και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο γνωρίζουμε όσα γνωρίζουμε. Σε μια διάλεξη όπου θα μπορούσα να χρησιμοποιήσω τη διάλεκτο των μαύρων του Νότου, συγκεκριμένα την τοπική διάλεκτο της περιοχής μου, ή να χρησιμοποιήσω πολύ αφηρημένη σκέψη σε συνδυασμό με απλό λόγο, απευθυνόμενη σ' ένα ποικιλόμορφο κοινό, θεωρώ ότι δεν είναι απαραίτητο να ακούμε και να γνωρίζουμε όσα διατυπώνονται στην ολότητά τους, ότι δεν χρειάζεται να κατέχουμε ή να κατακτούμε την αφήγηση ως όλον, ότι μπορούμε να έχουμε αποσπασματική γνώση. Θεωρώ ότι μπορούμε να μάθουμε και από διαστήματα ομιλίας και από διαστήματα σιωπής, ότι μέσα από την υπομονετική πράξη να ακούμε μια άλλη γλώσσα μπορούμε να ανατρέψουμε την κουλτούρα της καπιταλιστικής φρενίτιδας και του καταναλωτισμού που απαιτεί την άμεση ικανοποίηση κάθε επιθυμίας και να διαρρήξουμε τον πολιτισμικό ιμπεριαλισμό που υποδεικνύει ότι κάποιος αξίζει ν' ακουστεί μόνον αν μιλάει σε επίσημα αγγλικά.

Η Adrienne Rich τελειώνει το ποίημά της ως εξής:

Γράφω στη γραφομηχανή αργά τη νύχτα σκεπτόμενη τη σημερινή μέρα. Πόσο ωραία μίλησαμε όλοι μας. Μια γλώσσα είναι ο χάρτης των αποτυχιών μας. Ο Frederick Douglass έγραψε πιο αγνεγάδιαστα αγγλικά από τον Milton. Ο κόσμος υποφέρει πολύ μέσα στη φτώχεια. Υπάρχουν μέθοδοι αλλά δεν τις χρησιμοποιούμε. Η Joan, που δεν μπορούσε να διαβάσει, μίλησε σε κάποια επαρχιώτικη μορφή γαλλικών. Μερικά βάσανα είναι: δύσκολο να πεις την αλήθεια, εδώ είναι Αμερική, δεν μπορώ να σ' αγγίξω πλέον. Στην Αμερική έχουμε μόνο τον ενεστώτα. Βρίσκομαι σε κίνδυνο. Βρίσκεισαι σε κίνδυνο. Το κάψιμο ενός βιβλίου δεν μου προκαλεί αίσθηση. Ξέρω ότι πονάει το κάψιμο. Υπάρχουν φλόγες από βόμβες ναπάλμ στο Cantonsville, στο Maryland. Ξέρω ότι πονάει το κάψιμο. Η γραφομηχανή υπερθερμάνθηκε, το στόμα μου καίγεται, δεν μπορώ να σ' αγγίξω και τούτη είναι η γλώσσα του καταπιεστή.

Φαίνεται ιδιαίτερα δύσκολο ν' αναγνωρίσουμε ότι αγγίζουμε ο ένας τον άλλο

μέσω της γλώσσας σε μια κοινωνία που θέλει να μας πείσει ότι δεν υπάρχει τίποτα το αξιοπρεπές στο βίωμα του πάθους, ότι το βαθύ συναίσθημα είναι κατωτερότητα, καθώς στον δυισμό της δυτικής μεταφυσικής σκέψης οι ιδέες είναι πάντα σημαντικότερες από τη γλώσσα. Εμείς οι περιθωριοποιημένοι και καταπιεσμένοι, προκειμένου να γιατρέψουμε το διαχωρισμό νου - σώματος, προσπαθούμε να ανακτήσουμε τους εαυτούς μας και τις εμπειρίες μας μέσα στη γλώσσα. Αναζητούμε ένα χώρο οικειότητας. Αδυνατώντας να βρούμε έναν τέτοιο χώρο στα επίσημα αγγλικά δημιουργούμε το διερρηγμένο, σπασμένο, απείθαρχο τρόπο ομιλίας της διαλέκτου. Όταν με το λόγο μου θέλω να κάνω κάτι παραπάνω από το να αναφερθώ στην κυρίαρχη πραγματικότητα ή να την αντικατοπτρίσω, χρησιμοποιώ τη διάλεκτο των μαύρων. Εκεί, σ' αυτό το σημείο αναγκάζουμε τα αγγλικά να κάνουν ό,τι θέλουμε εμείς. Παίρνουμε τη γλώσσα του καταπιεστή και τη στρέφουμε εναντίον του εαυτού της. Κάνουμε τις λέξεις μας αντιγεμονική ομιλία απελευθερώνοντας τους εαυτούς μας στη γλώσσα.

The republished text by bell hooks was translated into Greek by Afroditi Christodoulakou and was originally published in the collective volume *Κριτική Παιδαγωγική: Μια συλλογή κειμένων* [Critical Pedagogy: A Collection of Texts] (2020), edited by Panagiota Gounari and Giorgos Grollios.

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Gigi Argyropoulou (PhD Roehampton University, MA Dartington College of Art) is a curator, theorist, and performance maker working in the fields of performance and cultural practice based in Athens, Malmö and NYC. Gigi received the Routledge Prize for Psi 18 in 2012 and Dwight Conquergood Award for her work in 2017 and publishes regularly in journals, books and magazines. She is a founding member of EIGHT/To Οχτώ critical institute of arts and politics, Mavili Collective, Institute for Live Arts Research and F2/Mkultura. Gigi is co-editor of “On Institutions” (September 2015) and the forthcoming “On Land/scapes (December 2025), special issues of the journal *Performance Research*, as well as *Instituting: Space-making, Refusal and Organising in Arts and Beyond* (Archive, 2022). She was a member of the curatorial and editorial board of Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW)’s New Alphabet School (2019-2022) and co-curated its editions “On Instituting” (Athens, 2021) and “Commonings” (Berlin, 2022). She is a Research Fellow at Lund University.

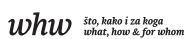
Ethel Baraona Pohl (they/them) is a critic, writer and curator, as well as a co-founder of the independent research studio and publishing house dpr-barcelona, which operates in the fields of architecture, political theory and the social milieu. Their curatorial practice includes, among others, “Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales” (Matadero Madrid, 2020–21); and more recently, “Libres Model” a curated book collection and open library (Model, Barcelona Architectures Festival 2022, 2023). Ethel is Senior Researcher at the Chair of Architecture and Care (Care) in the Department of Architecture ETH Zürich. Their writing has been widely published, both in academic and independent publications. Ethel believes that publishing is a political act, and reading, a form of resistance.

bell hooks (born as Gloria Jean Watkins, 1952-2021) was a prominent feminist thinker, author, cultural critic and educator. She worked extensively on the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, education and art and contributed to black feminism studies, anti-capitalist critique and liberatory pedagogy. She taught at numerous institutions, such as the University of Southern California (1976-1979) and the University of California, Santa Cruz (1981-1984), and from 1985 to 1998 she was assistant professor of African American Studies and English at Yale University and from 1988 to 1994 associate professor of American Literature and Women’s Studies at Oberlin College. Some of her more influential publications, among others, include *Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981), *Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989), *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990), *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (1995) and *Teaching to Transgress: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003).

Elke Krasny PhD, is professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Krasny’s research is concerned with histories and practices of transnational feminisms, politics of memory and dimensions of care and social and ecological justice in architecture, urbanism and contemporary art. Krasny’s publications include: *Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*, edited with Angelika Fitz (MIT Press, 2019); *Curating as Feminist Organizing*, edited with Lara Perry (Routledge, 2023); *Living with an Infected Planet: Covid-19, Feminism and the Global Frontline of Care* (transcript, 2023) and *Feminist Infrastructural Critique* (2024), edited with Sophie Lingg and Claudia Lomoschitz (<https://doi.org/10.57871/fkw742024>).

Lisa Maillard (she/her) is an architect and researcher. She studied at ETH Zürich, Goldsmiths (London) and King’s College London, and has worked in participatory urban planning processes in Zürich. She is part of the chair of Architecture and Care of Anna Puigjaner at ETH Zürich, where she teaches the bachelor and master’s design studio and does research. Her work covers questions related to bodies, gender, sexualities, law, space and their intersections, with a particular focus on the spatialities of street-based sex work and reproductive justice. She works on themes of abortion access and provision through the lens of architecture and spatial practices and has designed *Abort Game*, a board game giving insight into the possible obstacles of accessing a legal, surgical abortion from within different US states and its fragmented geography of access. Lisa also works part-time as a chef and is a founding member of Kollektiv Erika, an informal, non-commercial gastronomy collective.

Suzana Milevska is a theorist and independent curator based in Skopje, North Macedonia. In her projects, she employs postcolonial, feminist and institutional critiques of representational regimes of hegemonic power and addresses their bearing on arts and visual culture. She was Principal Investigator of the Horizon 2020 project TRACES (2016 -2019, Polytechnic University Milan) and curated its concluding exhibition “Contentious Objects/ Ashamed Subjects”. In 2013 she was appointed the first Endowed Professor for Central and South Eastern European Art Histories at the Academy of Fine Art Vienna. She holds a PhD in visual cultures from Goldsmiths (London) and was awarded a Fulbright Senior Research Scholarship. She curated numerous exhibitions such as “The Renaming Machine” (2008 -2011) and “Roma Protocol” (Austrian Parliament, Vienna, 2011), and she initiated the project “Call the Witness”, the Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale. In 2012 she won the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory.



This publication seeks a rapture with the way we speak, taking language-as-care as the starting point for a reflection on what could critically resist the emergence nowadays of “care” both as a buzzword in the contemporary cultural scene and as an, often aestheticised, representation in various artistic and theoretical contexts.

The Centre of New Media and Feminist Public Practices commissioned texts from Gigi Argyropoulou, Ethel Baraona Pohl and Lisa Maillard, Elke Krasny and Suzana Milevska who, in the context of this publication, strive to re-read care and its discontents and clarify antagonistic understandings and significations of care. They aim to better understand the fundamental role of care in the contradictions of social cohesion and social emancipation while addressing issues such as the Global South, care and curating, feminism, situated knowledge and affect. Informed by and based on a feminist perspective, they try to differentiate and raise consciousness on how these exact values are extracted by the globalised market to be invested in the rally of profit. As an epilogue, bell hooks’ “Teaching New Worlds/New Words” which has been included in its Greek translation (“Γλώσσα: διδάσκοντας νέους κόσμους, διδάσκοντας νέες λέξεις”), urges us to embrace new words as pathways to new worlds, as both a critical reflection and a heartfelt call to action, opening up possibilities for reimagining collective futures through language and care and underlining the understanding of our work as part of critical pedagogies.

The publication also includes a feminist index that operates as more than just a cataloguing or referencing system; it is a dynamic practice that brings to light otherwise peripheral or ec-centric positions, pathways, relationships, and interconnections of the partners of the Care Ecologies programme: The Centre of New Media and Feminist Public Practices, Mamidakis Foundation, State of Concept, Idensitat and WHW/What, how & for whom. The publication has been realised as part of the Care Ecologies project, funded by the Creative Europe Program and the European Union.

As the double-faceted care (both radical and capitalized) tricks us, it is imperative to think about care ecologies, power relations and the cultural and geopolitical hegemonies as these are revealed by language and to take care of these ecologies in order to speak differently.

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